



## Knowing the Unknown: The Dark World of Human Trafficking

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### Abstract

Despite its global presence, human trafficking is a problem often unrecognized and overlooked. In this phenomenon, an undue advantage is taken from innocent people through force, fraud, or coercion. This research study, conducted through focus group discussion, tries to make people aware of the problem. The traffickers feed on various kinds of vulnerabilities of the victims through the process of human trafficking. Moreover, the victims express specific signs through which they can be identified at any place possible. The traffickers tame the victims in such a trap that any attempt to escape is virtually impossible.

**Keywords:** Trafficking, Vulnerabilities, Forced Sex, Forced Labor, Signs, Control

### 1. Introduction

Every year, human traffickers make around \$150bn globally by exploiting human beings through force, fraud, and coercion. It is thus the most profitable and fastest-growing business after drugs and arms trafficking. In terms of impact, it is more severe than the above-stated industries, as in arms and drugs, once used, they cannot be reused, while in human trafficking, the victim is used and reused time and again unless and until he or she is productive. According to safe estimates, 21 million people are victims of human trafficking worldwide. Out of this, 71 percent are women and girls, while 29 percent are men and boys. Sexual exploitation is 54 percent, 38 percent is forced labor, and 8 percent is other purposes including organ trafficking. The actual numbers are far higher than the ones estimated above, as human trafficking is a hidden phenomenon. The real purpose of this paper is to make people aware of the dynamics of human trafficking. The process of human trafficking, the traffickers, the reasons behind enslavement, the signs of recognizing the victims, the safe havens of trafficking (in terms of sex and labor), the methods of control over the victims, and the reasons for the silence of the victims are highlighted in detail.



trafficking worldwide. Out of this, 71 percent are women and girls, while 29 percent are men and boys. Sexual exploitation is 54 percent, 38 percent is forced labor, and 8 percent is other purposes including organ trafficking. The actual numbers are far higher than the ones estimated above, as human trafficking is a hidden phenomenon. The real purpose of this paper is to make people aware of the dynamics of human trafficking. The process of human trafficking, the traffickers, the reasons behind enslavement, the signs of recognizing the victims, the safe havens of trafficking (in terms of sex and labor), the methods of control over the victims, and the reasons for the silence of the victims are highlighted in detail.

### 2. Literature Review

There isn't a lot of good research on human trafficking because it has these problems: Firstly, different names are used in literature for the same thing, like human trafficking, trafficking in persons, modern slavery, modern-day slavery, and slavery (Plant, 2014). Such a bombardment of different names makes a person unnecessarily confused. The same confusion will be faced by lawmakers, law executors, and law enforcers. This is not a good sign for the fight against human trafficking. Secondly, there is also confusion in focusing on the problem of human trafficking, as the said term is more than often confused with human smuggling and prostitution (Batsyukova, 2012). One instance is that of consent. In the former, there is no question that the victim will willfully subject himself to human trafficking, while at some point in time, the victim may consent willingly to being used by the latter group of criminals—smugglers or prostitutes. All these activities are different from each other and deserve separate treatment. Thirdly, there is an extreme shortage of accurate data on the subject. The majority of the researchers have either ignored the data or used estimations (IOM, 2005). Accurate data is very much necessary, as knowing the magnitude of the problem can create enough pressure on the states to solve it. Fourthly, the majority of research is devoted to the victims of human trafficking. That is a good step, as preventing the victim from being exploited is the very foundation of the whole movement throughout the globe. But research should be directed towards the traffickers, as the more the traffickers

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and their exploitative mechanisms are known to the public, the more difficult it will be for them to operate with free hands (Hughes, 2008). Last but not least, research has shown that the Palermo Protocol and the United Nations, for that matter, have not created enough pressure on the individual states to make efficient domestic responses against the evil practices in the shape of human trafficking. The net result is that there is a dearth of uniform global resistance against human trafficking (Shoaps, 2013).

### 3. Methodology

The method used to extract knowledge on the topic of “The Dark World of Human Trafficking” was a focus group discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2001). The ultimate logic behind using this method was to bring together persons of specific backgrounds and extensive experiences around the same table. In this qualitative study, primary data was extracted from nine participants in total—three from each group of workers of NGOs, lawyers, and academicians—selected through non-probability purposive sampling. In this flexible discussion, all the participants shared their opinions about different aspects of human trafficking. Moreover, secondary data was collected by analyzing journals, reports, books, magazines, newspapers, online databases, etc.

### 4. Results and Discussions

#### 4.1. Human Trafficking

Every individual dreams to have all the facilities of modern life. But all these dreams require hard work and a lot of time. The human traffickers play on such dreams and lure the people having them into the dark world of human trafficking. The human trafficking process itself is very complex. It involves the act, the means, and the purpose (Stanojoska & Petrevski, 2014). Let us take an example. A person told his neighbor that he would take him to a construction site that had a very good pay package. When he agreed, he was taken to the construction site. The security arrangements of the place startled him, but he ignored them as he was thinking only about the pay package. Later on, when he worked there for months and received a fraction of what was promised at the outset, he realized that he was trapped. Any

**Table: The Process of Human Trafficking**

Act	Means	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Recruitment</li> <li>❖ Transportation</li> <li>❖ Transfer</li> <li>❖ Harboring</li> <li>❖ Receipt of persons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Threat</li> <li>❖ Force</li> <li>❖ Coercion</li> <li>❖ Abduction</li> <li>❖ Fraud</li> <li>❖ Deception</li> <li>❖ Abuse of power</li> <li>❖ Abuse of vulnerability</li> <li>❖ Giving and receiving of payments</li> </ul>	<p>Exploitation which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation</li> <li>❖ Forced labor and services</li> <li>❖ Slavery and similar practices</li> <li>❖ Involuntary servitude</li> <li>❖ Removal of organs</li> </ul>

resistance or attempt to escape was dealt with iron hands. The security arrangement that he saw at the beginning was not there to secure the place, but it was there to control him and other workers like him. In this example, the entire process of human trafficking is clear. The person was recruited into human trafficking by his neighbor, who gave him a job offer. He was also transported by the neighbor, while the handlers exploited him at the construction site for their benefit. The world is full of such instances. Millions of men and women are trapped by false promises or forced into different versions of human trafficking, like labor exploitation, sexual exploitation, slavery and practices similar to slavery, domestic workers' exploitation, debt bondage, forced marriages (marriages for dispute settlements), selling of brides, forced pregnancies, trafficking for organs' harvesting, child trafficking, illegal adoption, child soldiers, trafficking for begging, usage for theft, usage as drug couriers, trafficking for sports, trafficking for pornography and irregular migration (Cooper, Hesketh, Ellis, & Fair, 2017).

#### 4.2. The Human Traffickers

One thing should be clear: anyone who is involved in the process of human trafficking is labeled a human trafficker. In other words, any person involved in the act, means, and purpose of human trafficking is termed a human trafficker, no matter how small their involvement is. Now, the question is: who are the people who compel innocent people into the exploitative world of human trafficking?

Human traffickers are hidden in plain sight. These vultures can be found anywhere. Research has shown that those people who are very near the victim can be very dangerous in terms of recruiting a person for human trafficking. They have the trust of the victim. In this blind trust, they often become entrapped in the dark clutches of human trafficking. Immediate family members come first in this category. Many of the survivors have claimed that they came into direct contact with human traffickers through their family members. In such a scenario, those who have step-relatives are more vulnerable to human trafficking than those who have no step-relatives.

The next category in this line is that of friends. Friends have tremendous influence over an individual in everyday life. Sometimes a person falls victim to the hands of human traffickers due to peer pressure. A friend may have a direct connection with the traffickers as a recruiter. He or she may have a financial goal in mind, or the element of blackmailing may be involved.

Sometimes friends of family are involved in luring people into the web of human trafficking. Many factors are involved when family friends act as catalysts for human trafficking. Financial gain is the first motive. Family friends may be jealous of a particular person. The element of revenge cannot be ignored in this regard.

The most dangerous category of person who recruits potential victims of human trafficking is employers. The employers judge the personality of the victim. A docile person is very easily entrapped in human trafficking. Apart from that, the family background of the victim is also known to the boss. The most important thing is that the employer is not emotionally attached to the employee. All these factors create a very suitable environment for the employer to become a human trafficker or sell the employee to another trafficker.

Life is full of incidents. Sometimes a stranger can force a person into human trafficking. The human trafficker, whether an individual trafficker or a member of an organized group, is always in search of a potential victim. They may entrap a person with the false promise of a bright future. They may use physical force. They even do not hesitate to abduct a person. Sometimes a person is exploited by threatening to abduct or harm a very close relative like a son or daughter to compel them to work for them. In short, human traffickers always look for the vulnerability of others and take advantage of it (Zheng, 2010).

All the offenders in the above cases are human beings. A human being can be a sole trafficker or an organized trafficker. They are called natural persons. The offender can also be a non-human body. They are called legal persons. Corporations, companies, associations, recruiting agencies, etc. are examples of such types of human traffickers (Adriano, 2015).

Similarly, sometimes even states and governments become human traffickers. They use the labor and sex of their citizens for their nefarious designs without their willful consent (UNESCAP, 2003).

#### **4.3. Reasons Behind Enslavement**

Vulnerability is the very fuel on which human traffickers thrive. They search for such individuals who have various kinds of emotional or psychological susceptibilities. They also look for individuals who are facing economic hardships. Lack of social security, the rule of law, natural disasters, wars, political instabilities, etc. also propel people into the chains of human trafficking (Bigio & Vogelstein, 2021).

#### **4.4. Reading The Signs**

It is very difficult to recognize the people who are entrapped by human traffickers. There are, however, signs through which they can be identified if focused on thoroughly (ILO, 2009).

##### **4.4.1. Drugs**

As we all know, drugs are addictive by nature. Often, the handlers make their victims addicted to different drugs. It is obvious that the victims cannot afford to bear the expenses of the drugs. It is at this place that the human traffickers jump in. They provide drugs to the enslaved people, and in return, the victims will perform whichever task the traffickers demand. The lesson drawn from this situation is that when a person's appearance is such that he cannot afford drugs and yet he is using them, this needs to be investigated. He will definitely lead the investigator to the handlers.

##### **4.4.2. Haphazard Behavior (Nervousness and Anxiety)**

Similarly, the behavior of the people is a fine clue in terms of their identification as the victims of human trafficking. In such a case, there is a sudden or dramatic change in the behavior of the victim. He is often confused and disoriented. His mood often swings between different extremes. And this haphazard behavior is shown periodically and without any obvious reasons. Moreover, people who are extremely nervous in everyday life may also fall into this category. A small mistake makes them very anxious. They are in a constant state of unease and fear. Such persons should be looked upon with great care as they might be the victims of human trafficking.

##### **4.4.3. Lack of Knowledge of the Area**

Often, the victims of human trafficking are moved from place to place. The purpose is to not make the victims familiar with the people and the places, as they might think of escaping. The handlers always strive to let their victims know

less about their surroundings. In short, the victims have virtually no knowledge of the areas in which they are placed. This is a fine sign for the investigators.

#### **4.4.4. No Appropriate Job Skills**

Since the victims of human trafficking are forced to perform different tasks, they lack the appropriate skills for the jobs. Such a misfit is easily recognizable among skilled laborers.

#### **4.4.5. Bruises in Various Stages of Healing**

The controllers quite often use physical force to subdue their victims. A person who is bruised repeatedly is an indication of his potential victimhood.

#### **4.4.6. Disconnected from Family and Friends**

Man is a social animal. He is always in the company of his near and dear ones. This is not, however, the case of the victim of human trafficking. The victim is often kept aloof from their family and friends. They are even not allowed to have frequent contact with strangers.

#### **4.4.7. Lack of Personal Possessions**

Similarly, victims of human trafficking travel from place to place with no or very little luggage. They carry the minimum necessities of life with them. This factor cannot be ignored while looking for victims.

#### **4.4.8. Presence of a Dominating Person**

The boys or girls who are under the possessive control of the handlers are never allowed to keep out of sight. A dominant person always watches over them. This is done to block any escape plan.

#### **4.4.9. Dependent on the Controller for Necessities**

A person who is constantly reliant on the handler for basic necessities of life (tea, dinner, lunch) may also be considered a victim of human trafficking.

#### **4.4.10. Unpaid Work**

In human trafficking, the profit of the labor is taken away by the handlers. The captives are provided with the bare minimum to survive. Any worker who works for long hours and is not paid regularly or at below-market wages indicates that he is not doing the work of his own free will but rather is forced to do so.

#### **4.4.11. No Break and Long Working Hours**

Similarly, the victim of human trafficking will work longer hours than others, and he will not be allowed to take the routine breaks that are allowed for other workers.

#### **4.4.12. Unhealthy Working Environment**

The victims of human trafficking are kept in unhygienic and dirty working places. Even their working conditions do not fulfill the basic safety standards. Gloves, fire extinguishers, and covered wires, for example, are not often present in such places.

#### **4.4.13. No Working Contract**

In a normal business, the workers have a definite working contract. In the contract, everything is specified, like working hours, wage limits, breaks, etc. The victims of modern-day slavery are deprived of this right because they are forced to do the required task whether they like it or not (Ayrshire, 2021).

### **4.5. Places To Look For**

Human trafficking is divided into two broad categories: sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Each category of victims of human trafficking is kept in its own hiding place. Let us discuss that in terms of sex trafficking first.

#### **4.5.1. In Terms of Sex Trafficking**

If a researcher or any member of the anti-human trafficking agencies of the state is familiar with the above-stated signs of victims of human trafficking, then it will be very easy for them to identify them among ordinary people. The first place that comes to mind when looking for the said individuals is the hotels. In many parts of the world, hotel owners attract customers by offering them the incentive of providing young girls and boys with cheap entertainment. Moreover, private and government-owned hostels are also places to be investigated. Here, the people belonging to the lower strata go, as they cannot afford hotels. The victims in such places are either maneuvered into sex trafficking or they are blackmailed into human trafficking by making their illicit videos. Similarly, a great majority of the girls working in nightclubs and bars are either forced or blackmailed to entertain the customers. Furthermore, the strip clubs where young girls will expose all their bodies are also the abode of human trafficking. After all, who would like to dance naked in front of so many people? In addition to that, brothels are illegal in many states, but they are still present in virtually all of them. Many of the entertainers in the brothels do not sell their sex willfully. They are rather forced to do so. Likewise, many human traffickers have turned private homes into brothels. In the same vein, massage parlors are not exempt from the charge of connection with human traffickers. Also, some of the human traffickers are bold enough to even let their victims sell sex on the street. The victims in such cases are so tightly controlled that when they are on the street, they cannot escape (Wilson & Dalton, 2007).

#### **4.5.2. In Terms of Labor Trafficking**

The exploitation of individuals also takes place in terms of labor. The most hapless category is that of the people kept for housekeeping. They are engaged in household chores like cleaning, cooking, washing dishes, ironing, etc. all the time. Wages are the minimum for them. Their routine needs, like sufficient sleep and food, are even ignored. They are scolded or beaten up when they commit small mistakes. Similarly, people working in the agriculture sector live a very harsh life. This is more so in the developing and underdeveloped worlds. The workers raise the crops, which is a very lengthy process, and when the crop is ready, they are not given what their labor demands. When they demand their due share, they are brutally dealt with. The inhuman practice of debt bonding is also common in the agriculture sector. Likewise, forced laborers can be found in abundance in the manufacturing sector. Apart from the minority of enterprises in the developed West, people are exploited to the fullest in various industries. They work like machines for long hours without any breaks. When they raise objections over the meager wages that they receive, they are either physically abused or kicked out of the job. Out of the fear of their handlers, they bear all the maltreatment. Moreover, forced laborers can be found in abundance in the construction business. They are forced to work in an unsafe environment. And to add salt to the wound, the workers are not paid what they deserve. Also, people working in food processing units, ports, mines, the garment industry, fisheries, janitorial services, landscaping, etc. are in many cases either living in or on the edge of human trafficking (Morehouse, 2009).

#### **4.6. Methods of Control**

Human traffickers use different tactics to subdue their victims. The most effective tool in their arsenal is the use of raw force. The victims are regularly tortured. In some cases, the victim is entrapped by creating a situation of debt. The victim is given a small amount of money, which he is unable to return. On this pretext, he is put in the vicious circle of exploitation. This circle continues for generations. This technique is called debt bonding. Similarly, the victim is threatened with being given to the police as he is forced to do illegal activities by them. Out of fear of the law enforcers, the victims continue to follow their whims. In some cases, the victims are manipulated into working for them by misrepresenting the laws to them. They are told, for example, that they will go to prison for a long time if they are caught in the acts that they have performed on the orders of the handlers. The other thing worth noticing is that they are constantly moved around. This is done to prevent them from becoming familiar with the people and the surroundings. As they become familiar with the people and places, they will sow the seeds of revolt in their minds. More importantly, the controllers make the victims dependent on them for their basic necessities like food, clothes, shelter, etc. It is very difficult for them to escape from this dependency. In some cases, the victims are kept in isolation, and the flow of customers is strictly controlled. This is done to prevent them from getting any outside help. In some extreme cases, the victims' essential documents, like identity cards, passports, visas, etc., are taken from them, and they are thus blackmailed (Lombardi, Di Nicola, Cauduro, & Ruspini, 2009).

#### **4.7. Reasons For The Silence of The Victims**

The main problem is that the victims of human trafficking realize sooner or later that they are deceived, but still, they follow the dictates of the human traffickers in terms of forced labor or commercial sex. Why can they not escape perpetual exploitation? It is so because of the following reasons:

Since the victims are forced to do illegal work regularly, they think that if they are caught by law enforcement personnel, they will be punished. Resultantly, once the fear of being caught is ingrained in their brain, they will never attempt to escape. The human traffickers use this vulnerability of the victims to their advantage. Some victims of human trafficking submit to the wishes of their handlers as their families are threatened with being hurt. Any attempt to escape will jeopardize the safety of their family. Similarly, many of the victims of human trafficking are not familiar with their rights. For example, they are not familiar with the fact that they are not responsible for the illegal activities that they are forced to perform. Their handlers will be punished for the acts that the victims have performed. If they know that, then they will easily escape from the dark chains of modern-day slavery. More importantly, leaving the world of exploitation is not an easy task. The handlers have very long hands. The person who escapes from their hands temporarily is caught again and severely tortured. And the reality is that the person caught again is tortured in front of other victims. When the other victims see this, the plan of escape vanishes from their minds for eternity. Similarly, living in the world of human trafficking is not all roses. A person has no control over his labor or sex. If by chance someone escapes from the human traffickers, then a sense of shame never leaves his body or soul. He is ridiculed everywhere. Such a person becomes isolated from his near and dear ones. In the end, the escapee thinks that in the world from which he escaped, he had some value. This is the main reason that he or she decides to join the dark world of human trafficking again. This has happened many times. Also, it is worth mentioning that people from poor countries who are enslaved in a well-off country bear the abuses of human traffickers while thinking that though they have no control over their bodies, the situation is still way better than the conditions in their native land. They are also aware of the fact that if they do not perform as their handlers demand, then their families back home will not be safe. Last but not least, the very term freedom is wrong for them. The human traffickers work as an organized group. The revenue generated from trafficking is used to clear their way not only inside a state but throughout the globe.

Policemen, judges, border security forces, jail officials, etc. are on their payroll. With their help, the person who gets freedom from the enslavement of the human trafficker will be caught again very soon. Thus, any escape from the eyes of human traffickers is not an escape in the real sense (Bigio & Vogelstein, 2021).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Exploiting innocent human beings has continued since the beginning in one form or another, but its modern version is human trafficking. In terms of commercial sex and labor, this advantage is taken from downtrodden people by using positions of strength, deception, or threats. Billions of dollars are extracted from millions of people throughout the globe. But the real problem is that there is virtually no place in this world where there is no human trafficking, but still, it is not as exposed as it should be. The main goal of this research endeavor is to sensitize people about the injustice of human trafficking, which takes place right in front of them in plain sight. In this regard, it was determined that human trafficking is not an activity but rather a process consisting of the act through which an individual is initiated into the dark world of human trafficking. Then comes the turn of the means by which the victim is transferred to the places of exploitation. Moreover, there is a need to be vigilant about human traffickers, who can be members of an organized criminal group, family members, friends, employers, and strangers. All these human parasites feed on human vulnerability. The greater the emotional, psychological, economic, social, legal, natural, and political vulnerabilities, the greater the chances are of being entrapped in the web of human trafficking. Furthermore, the victim of human trafficking gives various indications to the sharp eyes based on which they can be easily identified. These clues are drug addiction, haphazard behavior, nervousness or anxiety, lack of knowledge of the area, no appropriate job skills, bruises at various stages of healing, being disconnected from family and friends, a lack of personal possessions, the presence of a dominating person, unpaid work, no break and long working hours, unhealthy working conditions, being dependent on the controller for necessities, and no working contract. Such destitute people can be found in hotels, hostels, nightclubs, strip clubs, brothels, bars, massage parlors, on the streets, in private homes, etc., where their sex is misused. Similarly, they are put to the sword of exploitation in terms of labor in the fields of housekeeping, food services, mining, agricultural labor, construction, manufacturing, etc. The victims are never allowed to escape by employing various tools like threatening to harm, creating situations of debt, threatening their arrest, misrepresenting laws, moving them regularly, creating their dependency on the handlers, restricting their movement, isolation, and confiscation of important documents. But the controllers are not to be blamed entirely as the victims are also responsible for their ordeal as they remain silent over the maltreatment due to various false assumptions like fear of the law enforcement personnel, staying to keep family safe, not being familiar with their rights, fear of physical abuse, a sense of shame, the current situation being better than the past (home country), the safety of family back home in case of another state and a wrong belief in freedom.

If serious effort is made based on the following recommendations, then they can see the light at the end of the tunnel very soon.

- Every state must establish an anti-human trafficking helpline so that the victims can reach the respective authorities whenever they get the opportunity.
- Make sure that the product you buy was not made through forced labor. Financial loss will prevent companies from engaging in trade relations with those involved in human trafficking.
- Put pressure with pen and voice on the representatives at every level of government about the fight against human trafficking.
- Everyone should be made familiar with the indicators of human trafficking through media campaigns and anti-human trafficking literature should be included in the educational curricula.
- Help all those who are combating human trafficking through charities and fundraisers.
- Help those who are having a difficult patch in their lives as they might fall into the hands of human traffickers.
- Every parent and guardian must guide their offspring about the tactics human traffickers use to entrap innocent boys and girls. And more importantly, they should teach them who to call in case of emergency.

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