

Contextual Analysis of Human Trafficking and Impacts on Victims: Using a Tripartite Response Model

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Abstract

Human trafficking has increasingly become a global concern to the public, practitioners, researchers and government agencies due to its threat to national security, the rule of law, impacts on basic human rights, and physical and emotional wellbeing. This study examines the current criminological discourse on human trafficking and critically addresses the four main indicators of victimizations on victims of human trafficking. Using an integrated framework of criminological theories and evidence from literature, the study presents a tripartite response model in addressing the problem of human trafficking with special focus on *the victim-oriented response model*.

Keywords: Human trafficking, impacts on victims, United Nations, International Labor Organization, U.S. Department of State, indicators of victimizations, response models.

1. Introduction

Human trafficking is a serious crime of exploitation that is considered a multidimensional human rights violation. It significantly contributes to global security and economic threats that transcends across various demographics characteristics such as race, socioeconomic classes, age, gender and nationalities. According to the United Nations General Assembly Palermo Protocol (2000), in its article 3(a), human trafficking is defined as,

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Therefore, human trafficking entails exploitation of human beings by another or organized criminal groups, with force or threat of use of force with sole purpose of actualizing money or any form of economic gains. Consequently, perpetrators of human trafficking profit at the expense of their victims by compelling victims to perform labor or engage in commercial sex or any form of servitude in any part of the world. This degrading inhuman activity may take place intra-state, inter-state or transnational, such as the movement of people across borders. Notably, the consent of the victim is irrelevant in establishing trafficking so far as illicit means are established (U.S. Department of State, n.d.).

Human trafficking and other related trafficking activities is estimated to affect about 40.3 million people worldwide, equivalent to 5.4 persons for every thousand, with about 29.4 million estimated to be in situations of forced labor (International Labor Organization, 2017). Statistics show that 27.6 million people were estimated to be in forced labor as a result of human trafficking in 2021. Out of the estimated 27.6 million in forced labor, 17.3 million are reported to be exploited in the private sector, 6.3 million in forced commercial sexual exploitation, and 3.9 million in forced labor (International Labor Organization, 2022).

The U.S. Department of State (2023), reported data from Global Law Enforcement from 2016 to 2022 indicating human trafficking investigations, prosecutions, convictions and identified victims. This is a strategic partnership among countries around the world in order to meet the United Nations Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Protocol and the United States' Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, as amended (TVPA) minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking.

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The TVPA is an anti-human trafficking federal law which defines human trafficking as the exploitation of a person or persons for sex or labor using "force, fraud, or coercion" (U.S. Department of State, 2023).

Table 1: Global Law Enforcement Data on Human Trafficking

Year	Prosecutions	Convictions	Victims Identified
2016	14,939 (1,038)	9,072 (717)	68,453 (17,465)
2017	17,471 (869)	7,135 (332)	96,960 (23,906)
2018	11,096 (457)	7,481 (259)	85,613 (11,009)
2019	11,841 (1,024)	9,548 (498)	118,932 (13,875)
2020	9,876 (1,115)	5,011 (337)	109,216 (14,448)
2021	10,572 (1,379)	5,260 (374)	90,354 (21,219)
2022	15,159 (2,670)	5,577 (528)	115,324 (24,340)

Adapted from the U.S. Department of State (2023). The above statistics are estimates derived from data provided by foreign governments and other sources and reviewed by the Department of State.

Table 1 above indicates reports of data from Global Law Enforcements on human trafficking prosecutions, convictions and victims identified from 2016 to 2022. Overall, the aggregate data on the three variables fluctuate from one year to the next due to various characteristics such as the nature of trafficking crimes which are usually concealed, changes in world incidences, lack of consistency in government efforts, variation in data collection instruments and reporting systems, methodological and clerical errors. The data in parentheses (on the three variables) relate to labor trafficking prosecutions, convictions, and victims of labor trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2023). Notwithstanding the fluctuations of data throughout these years, human trafficking is still an increasing global crime problem with 115,324 victims identified, 15,159 prosecutions, and 5,577 traffickers convicted in 2022.

It is important to note that the number of human trafficking identified victims are much higher than the number of prosecutions and convictions for all the years. In the most recent year of 2022, about 15,000 prosecutions and 5,577 convictions were carried out with about 115, 300 human trafficking victims identified. This could be attributable to various reasons. Research indicates that lack of evidence, witness credibility, statute of limitations and the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system in various countries could contribute to the prevailing dark figure of human trafficking crimes globally (Richmond, 2015). Hence leading to lack of reliable information on human trafficking crimes, victims, prosecutions and convictions.

Across the world, human trafficking is a large, well-connected industry making over \$150 billion annually. In 2016, girls and women comprised 72 percent of the overall 40.3 million victims of human trafficking, while over 20 percent of the over 5 million victims of sexual slavery in 2016 were underage minors. It is estimated that close to 25 million individuals globally have been exposed to forced labor, and 15.4 million have been in forced marriages (Toney-Butler et al. 2022, International Labor Organization, 2017). Victims of human trafficking are all linked by a shared experience of restriction of liberty.

In the United States, human trafficking has also created negative societal consequences, including the devaluation of women, decreasing physical and mental health of those who are trafficked, and an increase in the population of organized crime. The U.S. Department of State (n.d.), defines "human trafficking" or "modern slavery" as a "crime whereby traffickers exploit and profit at the expense of adults or children by compelling them to perform labor or engage in commercial sex". Based on this provision, when a person younger than 18 years is used to perform a commercial sex act, it is considered a crime irrespective of whether there is any force, fraud, or coercion involved. Notably, the incidences of human trafficking in the United States are increasing. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2022), a total of 2,198 persons were referred to U.S. Attorneys for human trafficking offenses in 2020, indicating a 62% increase from the 1,360 human trafficking perpetrators referred in 2011. It further reported an increment on the number of persons prosecuted for human trafficking in 2020, from 729 in 2011 to 1,343 in 2020, indicating 84% increase.

Traffickers use physical violence to subjugate their victims. The act of transporting, receiving, enlisting, or housing individuals for exploitation for financial gain or employment is known as human trafficking. Children, women, and adults of all ages can fall prey to human trafficking, which happens in various locations across the world. It involves coercing and misleading people by employing false job agencies, violence, or false job or educational promises. Despite several laws against it, human trafficking is prevalent in many parts of the world, with traffickers adopting innovative techniques to mislead their victims into believing their lies and becoming transported (Cockbain, et al, 2018).

The effectiveness of the current law enforcement-based techniques or laws to combat human trafficking is constrained. Modern prohibitions of human trafficking in the United States originated in the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude in 1865 (Department of Justice, 2022). The United States government has developed regulations guiding the fight against human trafficking, including imposing limitations in several fields that might be advantageous to human trafficking associates and perpetrators. The federal government has implemented regulations that forbid imports that might have been produced using forced labor or labor trafficking, and it has pushed other nations to follow suit. This action has been essential in the fight against crime on a global scale.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Explanation of Human Trafficking

The term "human trafficking" is often used to describe a crime in which victims (typically adults or minors) are exploited to make a profit. Human trafficking may be broken down into parts by examining the traffickers' acts, means, and purpose. Human trafficking requires the occurrence of all three of the violations above. The U.S. defines two main categories of human trafficking: sex trafficking and forced labor. Forced labor, sometimes called "labor trafficking," refers to a broad spectrum of activities in which someone uses coercion, force, or fraud to get someone else's work or services (U.S. Department of State, 2023). Forced labor occurs when a trafficker recruits, shelters, transports, furnishes, or gets a person for work or services.

The "means" used by traffickers to trap victims in forced labor include coercion, force, or deception. Coercion involves violent threats, manipulation of debt, withholding of wages or benefits, seizure of identification papers, psychological pressure, damage to one's reputation, the manipulation of drug abuse, and threats to others. The "purpose" component emphasizes the trafficker's intentions to exploit victims' skills or works. Place and sector are not constraints. Victims of labor trafficking are probably more likely to work in private houses, agriculture fields, industries, cafes, restaurants, parlors, fishing boats, retail shops, mines, and drug trafficking enterprises.

The broad term "sex trafficking" refers to any situation in which an individual employs illegal means to get sexual services from another person, including but not limited to physical force, deception, or coercion. The "acts," "means," and "purpose" structure also applies to the offense of sex trafficking. Each of these three factors must exist for a sex trafficking offense to be established (unless sex trafficking involves children, a case where means do not matter). When traffickers recruit, shelter, transport, furnish, acquire, humiliate, or encourage other humans to participate in commercial sex, they have committed the "acts" that constitute sex trafficking.

Traffickers engage in the "means" component of sex trafficking when they resort to physical force, deception, or coercion. Any forms of coercion included in the concept of forced labor apply to sex trafficking as well. These forms may include harm, mental anguish, damage to one's good name, threatening others, and manipulating debt are all examples. In this case, the "purpose" is to perform a sex act for financial gain. Some places where sex trafficking occurs include houses, massage parlors, hotels, brothels, and even the internet. (U.S. Department of State, 2023). When minors less than 18 years old are employed to engage in forced commercial sexual acts, it is illegal regardless of whether there was any fraud, coercion, or force involved or not.

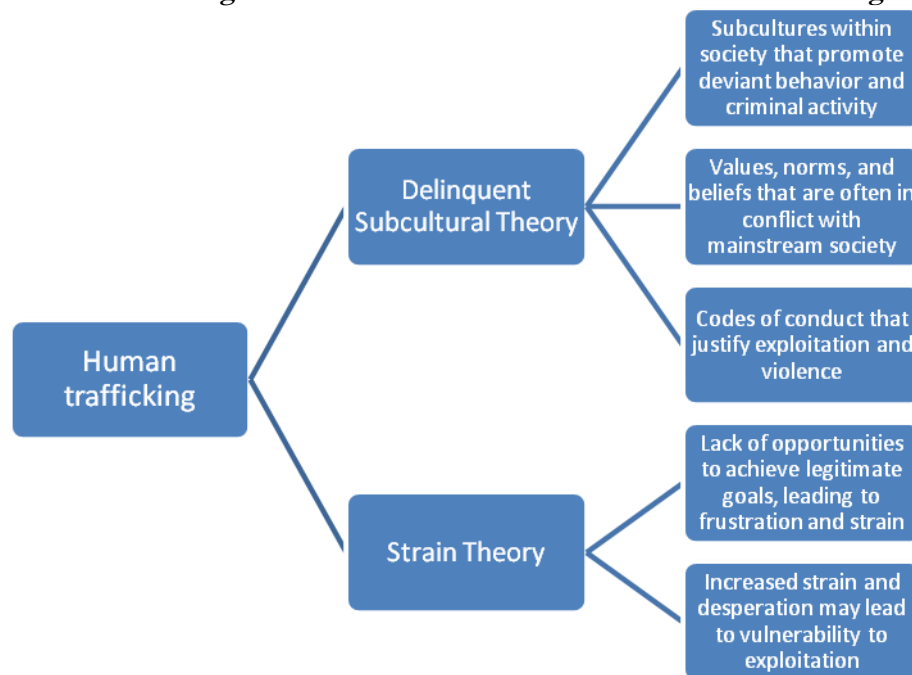
Human trafficking can occur in both the public and private sectors. While countries are urged to take actions against trafficking offenses by the TVPA and the UN TIP Protocol (Enwereuzor, 2013), some nations contribute by subjecting their citizens to forced labor and sexual slavery. Government officials abuse their position to exploit their citizens by using them as slave laborers in various contexts, including domestic or international public works projects, combat activities, and economically significant sectors, as well as in government-sponsored initiatives or missions overseas. Governments use coercion, such as the threat of removal of state benefits, threatening to withhold wages, failure to adhere to limits on national service, taking benefit of the absence of legal standing of forcibly displaced groups and individuals, threatening to punish members of an individual's family, or conditioning freedom of movement on sex or labor to extract this work (U.S. Department of State, 2023).

Forced labor is extensively practiced in the private sector, especially in construction, agriculture, domestic, fishing, and manufacturing. Nevertheless, no industry is exempt. There are several industries where sex trafficking takes place. The hotel sector is the most well-known, but crime also affects the extractive sector since operations are often distant and lack significant government involvement. All organizations, including companies, should be held responsible by governments for human trafficking. In certain nations, criminal and civil judicial systems provide for corporate responsibility. Every legal person in the United States is subject to this responsibility, including companies that profit financially from their participation in human trafficking schemes, as long as they know about the schemes or should have known about them (U.S. Department of State, 2023).

2.1. Theoretical Background

The Delinquent Subcultural Theory and Strain Anomie Theory provide a theoretical framework for understanding human trafficking from a criminological standpoint. In the context of this research, both theories provide insights into understanding the traffickers' motivations, background, beliefs and ideologies. This can help in the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies that target the subcultures involved in human trafficking, such as disrupting the subcultures' networks and changing their norms and values. Additionally, this can provide a foundation for developing programs and policies that promote positive and inclusive subcultures that prioritize human rights and dignity, ultimately reducing the incidence and effects of human trafficking. Strain Anomie Theory also explains why individuals who are unable to achieve their aspirations through legitimate means may turn to trafficking as a way of coping with their unfulfilled goals, such as escaping poverty or gaining independence.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of Human Trafficking



Adapted from Cohen, 1955; Curry & Spergel, 2019; Authors' elaboration from literature

2.1.1. Delinquent Subcultural Theory

The delinquent subcultural theory posits that certain subcultures within society promote deviant behavior and criminal activity. These subcultures have their own values, norms, and beliefs that are often in conflict with mainstream society, leading individuals to engage in illegal activities (Curry & Spergel, 2019). According to this theory, people who are exposed to subcultures that condone deviant behavior are more likely to participate in criminal activities such as human trafficking (Bisschop et al., 2021).

The delinquent subcultural theory was first proposed by Albert Cohen, who argued that delinquent subcultures emerge as a response to the lower class's inability to achieve success through legitimate means (Cohen, 1955). Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin also contributed to this theory, suggesting that different subcultures emerge based on the availability of illegal opportunities in a given area (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960).

Recent research has applied the delinquent subcultural theory to the study of human trafficking. For example, Bisschop et al. (2021) examined the role of criminal networks in human trafficking and found that criminal organizations that engage in human trafficking often have their own codes of conduct that justify exploitation and violence. Similarly, Curry and Spergel (2019) explained why some neighborhoods are more vulnerable to human trafficking than others. Their result indicates that neighborhoods with a high concentration of poverty and gang activity are more likely to have individuals who engage in human trafficking.

2.1.2. Strain Anomie Theory

The strain anomie theory posits that individuals may engage in criminal behavior as a result of the strain they experience from their inability to achieve goals within the social structure (Agnew, 2019).

Accordingly, individuals may experience strain when they are unable to achieve goals through legitimate means, leading to illegal activities such as human trafficking (Havvard, 2020). The strain anomie theory was first proposed by Robert Merton, who argued that individuals are socialized to value success and the achievement of goals within society. However, the social structure may not provide equal opportunities for everyone to achieve these goals, leading to frustration and strain (Merton, 1938). Recent research such as Havvard (2020) applied the strain anomie theory in examining the role of economic strain in human trafficking. The result shows a positive relationship between the two variables, indicating that individuals who experience economic strain are more likely to engage in human trafficking as a means of actualizing economic gains. Similarly, Choi and Choo (2020) used the strain anomie theory to explain why individuals may become involved in human trafficking in the context of the global economic crisis. They found that the economic downturn may lead to increased strain and desperation, making individuals more vulnerable to exploitation and involvement in human trafficking.

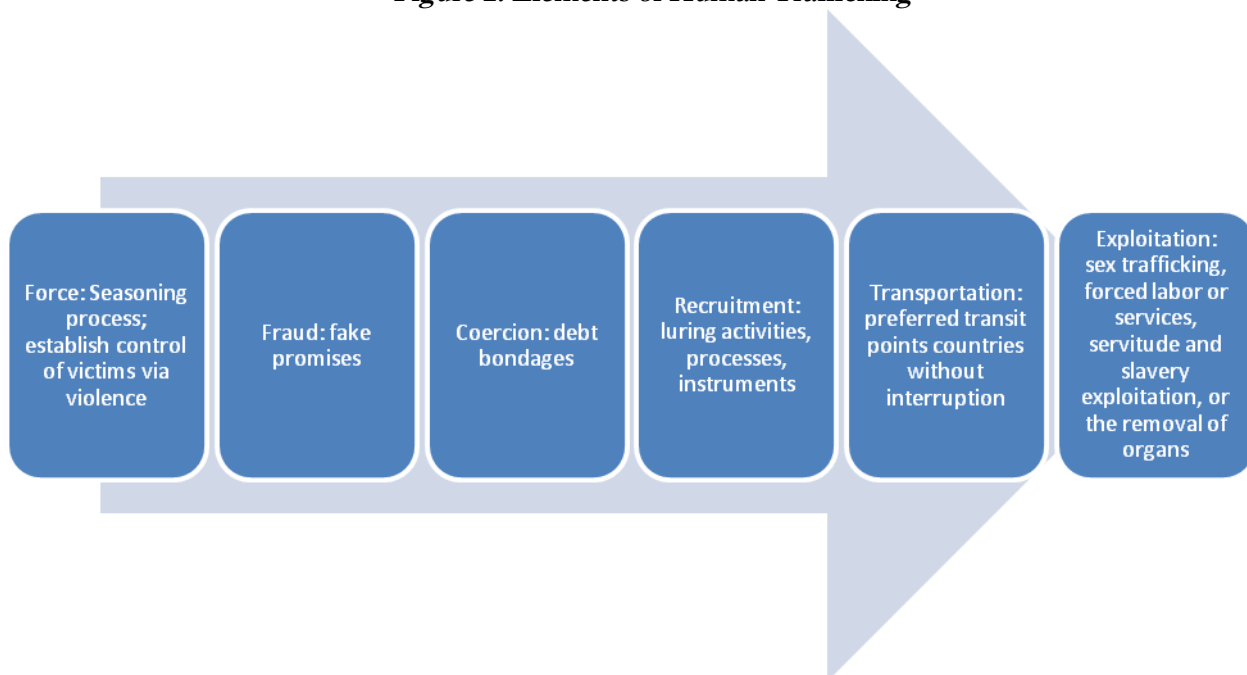
The Delinquent Subcultural Theory (DST) and Strain Anomie Theory (SAT) have been widely used to understand the social and cultural factors that contribute to human trafficking. These theories provide a framework for examining the root causes of trafficking, including the role of economic and social factors in shaping criminal behavior. The DST is particularly relevant to understanding how subcultures contribute to human trafficking. As researchers have noted, trafficking often occurs within specific subcultures, such as migrant communities or underground sex industries (Bales & Soodalter, 2009). These subcultures may develop their own norms and values that are distinct from those of mainstream society, and these norms may encourage criminal behavior as a means of achieving status and success within the subculture (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). For example, in some subcultures, engaging in trafficking may be seen as a way to gain wealth and power or to achieve social status (Bales & Soodalter, 2009).

Similarly, the SAT is useful for understanding the economic and social factors that contribute to human trafficking. Economic strain, such as poverty and unemployment, can increase the likelihood that individuals will turn to criminal activity as a means of achieving their goals (Agnew, 2019). This is particularly relevant in the context of trafficking, as traffickers often target vulnerable individuals who are experiencing economic strain or other forms of social disadvantage (Bales & Soodalter, 2010). Together, the DST and SAT provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex social and economic factors that contribute to human trafficking. By examining the role of subcultures and economic strain in driving criminal behavior, researchers and policymakers can develop interventions that address the root causes of trafficking and prevent its occurrence (Choi & Choo, 2020).

The problem of human trafficking has been given the status of a national priority in several countries. Comprehensive strategies that involve the entire government have been put into place to protect victims of crime and prevent further victims from being trafficked. Despite this, human trafficking still requires more policy implementation to eliminate the inequities in human trafficking law enforcement and punishment. A substantial obstacle in terms of injustice is the lack of efficiency among executing or prosecuting the laws that regulate human trafficking. In addition, due to the inherent prejudice that arises from racial and ethnic differences, efforts to combat human trafficking are prone to many injustices and unfair treatments of individual cases.

3. Phases of Human Trafficking

During human trafficking, children, women, and men are subjected to this severe labor exploitation when they are forcibly recruited or obtained and made to work against their will via force, deception, or coercion. False promises of good employment and better lives are commonly used to entice people into becoming trafficked. Due to economic and social discrimination, women are more vulnerable to becoming victims of trafficking. During the process, traffickers use fraud, coercion, or force to commit crimes. The processes include attaining and maintaining control of slavery, debt bondage, and servitude victims (Sanchez & Stark, 2014).

Figure 2: Elements of Human Trafficking

Adapted from Sanchez & Stark, (2014); Stanojoska & Petrevski, 2014; Authors' elaboration from literature

3.1. Force

To control the victim, trafficker may use force, such as raping, beating, imprisonment, and isolation. The initial phase of victimization, known as the "seasoning process," entails traffickers establishing complete control over the victim through violence (Sanchez & Stark, 2014). Research shows that at this stage, victims are most likely terrified that they end up cooperating with their traffickers.

3.2. Fraud

Fraudulent employment promises and the offers of better lives are fraud examples used to lure victims. Teenagers and women, for instance, may be ushered into real-life options such as marriages, modeling careers, or positions as caregivers in other nations (Sanchez & Stark, 2014). After victims arrive, they are forced into various exploitative jobs, including domestic servitude, sexual slavery, panhandling, agricultural work, and sweatshop factory employment.

3.3. Coercion

Coercion involves debt bondages focused on human trafficking crimes where the traffickers' primary method of coercion is manipulating debts. United States law prohibits individuals from utilizing debts as part of their patterns, plans, or schemes to compel individuals to engage in commercial sex or work (U.S. Department of State, 2022). In some places, traffickers' prey on victims by requiring them to assume an initial debt for future employment. In contrast, others pretend the debt was "inherited" from relatives. Once an economic connection is formed, debts can still be controlled by traffickers hence denying victims payment for labor or pressuring them to incur debt to fund expenses such as accommodation, transportation, or food.

3.4. Recruitment Phase

Recruitment in the trafficking context refers to the processes, activities, and instruments via which a person is lured into human trafficking. Organized crime groups choose nations to use as human trafficking sources. This preference is based on factors such as the nations' incapacity to provide employment opportunities, the sophistication of their criminal networks, and the cultural emphasis on women's subordination in such societies. Economic downturns, natural disasters, and armed conflicts may make recruitment easier. Authors provide varying categories of traffickers based on their techniques to attract victims. Among these categories are a breakdown of recruiting methods into those that use force, those that involve no deception at all, and those that include some deception (Stanojoska & Petrevski, 2014).

The use of force is one of the tactics employed in the recruitment phase, which does not necessarily involve kidnapping. An abduction occurs when one person gains physical control over another, putting the victim in a position where the abductor may move, close, use, or dominate (Stanojoska & Petrevski, 2014). As part of the deception, the prospective victim is given a false impression about the recruiting process. Many traffickers and criminal groups also employ the "lover" technique. In this technique, most victims of human trafficking are lured into a relationship with the trafficker via promises of love or marriage and then forced to participate in the trafficking process. Partial misleading recruiting also rely on lying to convince the victims to agree to work for them, especially if they are kept in the dark about the working conditions and the compensation they may expect, especially if they are aware of the dangers of the location, they would be working in. Deceptive recruitment may also include trafficking victims knowingly or unknowingly recruiting new victims.

3.5. Transportation Phase

Human traffickers are experts at coordinating victims' safe and efficient transport over vast regions. According to Stanojoska & Petrevski (2014), traffickers avoid most direct routes that may expose traffickers' to uncorrupted authorities or law enforcements. Most victims of human trafficking end up in the traffickers' country with a criminal network willing to take and distribute them (Lutya & Lanier, 2012). Several regional and local reports have been on transit nations for global trafficking of people during the last decade. When taken as a whole, these factors assist in clarifying why a trafficker would transport victims from their place of origin to their target country through one or more transit nations rather than transferring them straight from one country to the other.

In transportation, traffickers have preferred transit point countries. There are four main reasons why these countries are used as transit points: (1) close vicinity by air, sea, or land to targeted nations; (2) inadequate regulatory frameworks and lack of enforcement to respond to migrant smuggling and human trafficking; (3) existence of immigration liberal policies; and (4) organizational criminal facilities that facilitate illegal exit and entry into a country. The most common method of international trafficking is land travel. Land traveling mainly involves walking migrants through "green" borders and using sophisticated means of covert trafficking in trucks and trains. One benefit of land-based trafficking is that many individuals may be relocated in a single operation, using vehicles like buses and trucks. Land trafficking also eliminates the need for bribes and bogus documentation if persons cross borders clandestinely, beyond check stations.

Due to rising international aviation traffic and inadequate transit and immigration procedures in many countries, air trafficking is the fastest-growing mode of organized illicit migration. With a limit on the number of migrants who may be trafficked at once, unlawful travelers must know how to fool authorities at checkpoints. The traffickers must bypass modern travel papers required for air trafficking or else bribe immigration and border control officers and airline staff. By exchanging boarding passes, passports, and tickets at the transit lobbies of international airports, traffickers often ease the further journey of their victims.

Water transportation is considered safer as the likelihood of being caught and prosecuted is substantially lower when trafficking occurs on the water instead of on land or in the air. This method makes it easier for the trafficking group to move many individuals simultaneously. More importantly, the trafficking logistics by water are significantly less complicated than by air. Since they avoid immigration checkpoints, undocumented immigrants do not have to worry about obtaining travel permits or paying bribes to border patrol agents. Human trafficking operates on a global "net," with the most significant responsibilities being those coordinating routes. Besides the major participants, there are also supporting characters like road guides and mules that help people cross borders.

3.6. Exploitation Phase

Human trafficking, as defined in the Protocol of Palermo, includes sex trafficking, forced labor or services, servitude and slavery exploitation, or the removal of organs (United Nations, 2000; Stanojoska & Petrevski, 2014). Forced prostitution and smuggling people are forms of exploitation that manifest as violence against women because they take away their right to choose for themselves. A common misunderstanding and insufficient understanding of people trafficking are that it is only an aggressive form of prostitution. This is due to the multifaceted character of human trafficking, which may be examined from various vantage points (psychological, criminological, victimological, legal, moral, migratory, occupational, etc.). Traveling to influence the commercial sexual interaction between visitors and locals is the major objective of sex tourism, which includes both traditional tourism and the use of the infrastructure and networks of the tourism industry for this purpose.

Women can be exploited through pornography. The pornographic industry is globalizing its production and distribution activities. Considering that the industry facilitates women trafficking, it specifically expands damaging effects on women in countries that do not adhere to western cultures, where pornography is regarded as a new and harmful practice. As the industry expands, it also seeks new and cheaper environments to produce the materials and new markets to sell them. Elements of the pornography industry choose to make porn movies in countries where women are vulnerable to severe exploitation and can be paid a pittance or not at all (Stanojoska & Petrevski, 2014).

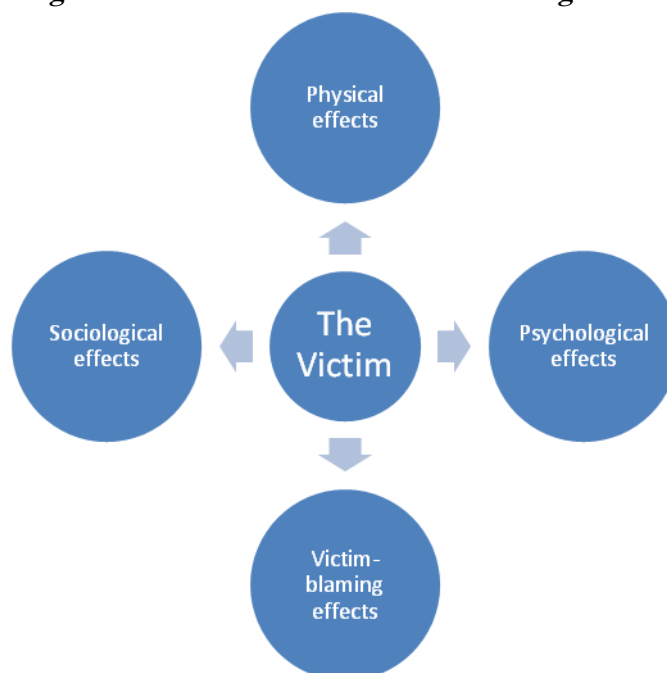
Any work or service required of a person without his consent and under the threat of punishment is considered forced or obligatory labor, which manifests in the exploitation phase (Stanojoska & Petrevski, 2014). Each International Labor Organization member that ratifies this convention pledges to end the use of forced labor in all its forms for the following reasons: (a) as a tool for political education or coercion, or as a punitive action for expressing or holding or expressing political viewpoints or views vehemently opposed to the existing political, social, or economic system; (b) as a means of mobilizing and using labor for economic development purposes; and (c) as a means of lashing out at those who disagree with the government's policies or slavery, acts that amount to slavery, debt bondage, and servitude all fall under the umbrella of forced labor (Stanojoska & Petrevski, 2014).

Trafficked victims can be exploited for organ removal. This involves cases where an individual is exploited so that an organ trafficker may profit in the so-called "organ market" and where a person's organ and body parts are removed for witchcraft or traditional medicine (Stanojoska & Petrevski, 2014).

4. Impact of Human Trafficking on Victims

The impacts of human trafficking are similar to those of other unlawful acts like domestic violence, torture, sexual abuse and terrorism where victims are deprived of their fundamental human rights. During human trafficking, the traffickers mainly use psychological and physical oppression to manipulate their victims. Although these forms of psychological coercion are dependent on the form of trafficking and the personal circumstance of each trafficking case, in most instances, the victims are oppressed by individuals who are well-known to them (Aronowitz & Chmaitilly, 2020). These people first create strong relations with the victims to have power over them. Traffickers then use threats of deportation, personal exposure, and law enforcement to instill fear in the victims (Aronowitz & Chmaitilly, 2020). As a result, the victims adhere to the given commands; hence the traffickers control them without using physical force.

Figure 3: Dimensions of Human Trafficking Effects on Victims



Adapted from Lederer & Wetzel, 2014; Shamsudeen, 2022; Song, et al, 2021; Polaris Project, 2023; Wallace, et al, 2022

Studies show that individuals who have experienced trafficking are often subject to extreme forms of physical, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, sociological effects, victim-blaming shock and most likely exhibit signs of physical health problems. Oram, et al (2012) evaluated 120 trafficked women who had returned to Moldova

between December 2007 and December 2008. Result shows that during the period of sexual and labor exploitation, the participants experienced various physical health related problems ranging from headaches, stomach pain, memory problems, back pain, loss of appetite, and tooth pain. Given the harmful conditions that victims are subjected to, the health needs of the victims continue to deteriorate in various stages of recovery and reintegration.

Table 2: Indicators of Victimization on Victims of Human Trafficking

Physical/Health	Psychological	Victim-Blaming	Sociological
Physical harm and injuries to body parts	Mental health problems	Loss of self-esteem	Social isolation
Gynecological problems	Suicidal ideation	Damaging to self-worth	Difficulty re-integrating into the community
Memory loss	Mental distress due to alienation from family and community	Social stigma	Lack of interest in sports & other socio-cultural activities
Trauma	Post-traumatic stress disorder	Damaging distress	Shame
Infectious diseases and other illnesses	Dissociative disorders	Depression and anxiety	Family and community discrimination
Weight loss	Anxiety	Post-traumatic stress disorder	Loss of credibility
Genitourinary or reproductive-related issues	Identity loss	Suicidal ideation	Withdrawal from peer group
Unwanted pregnancies	Emotional numbness	Unwillingness to report abuse	Poor performances in education
Eating disorders	Severe depression	Shame and self-blame	Societal stigmatization
Substance dependence	Feeling of guilt and worthlessness	Feeling of guilt	Poor inter-personal relationships
Seizure	Fear and persistent shock	Fear of not being believed	Unwillingness to seek for help or resources

Adapted from Wallace, 2022; Polaris Project, 2023; Schroeder, 2016; Lederer & Wetzel, 2014; Weedon, 2021; Shamsudeen, 2022 & Authors' elaboration from literature

4.1. Physical Effects

Nearly all victims of human trafficking have experienced physical health problems like weight loss due to poor nutrition and deprivation, gynecological problems, memory loss, trauma, infectious diseases, and respiratory illness, injuries, substance abuse (Lederer & Wetzel, 2014; Wallace, 2022). A study by Acharya (2019) showed that 76% of trafficking survivors had been physically abused, while 67% were injured. However, just like offenders of domestic violence, traffickers cause physical harm to parts that are hidden in clothes. Some victims, primarily women and girls, face inside body injuries caused during the sexual assault (Shamsudeen, 2022). While most researchers have majored in their studies on the health effects of sex trafficking, victims of labor trafficking face different health problems due to the nature of their labor (Littenberg & Baldwin, 2017). These health complications are mainly caused by the lack of protective kits required for the complex tasks performed and the poor living conditions the victims are subjected to.

The victims of trafficking may also have genitourinary or reproductive-related issues. Adults and children subjected to sex trafficking have an extremely elevated risk of contracting several sexually transmitted illnesses, notably HIV infection. A study by Weedon (2021) aimed to investigate the effects facing women and girls during trafficking, 90% of the respondents reported being intimidated into sexual acts during the trafficking (Weedon, 2021). Others stated that they were forced to participate in prostitution in locations with a higher risk of HIV infection (Weedon, 2021). In addition to contracting the virus, the victims are also subjected to becoming pregnant and practicing unsafe abortions.

Moreover, female menstruating victims may be coerced into inserting mattresses, sponges, or cotton stuffing into their vaginas to suppress menstruation and continue working despite their health risks (Toney-Butler et al., 2022). Abnormal discharges, recurrent infections of the vaginal and cervical tracts, and pelvic inflammation are all possible outcomes of these abusive practices.

4.2. Psychological Impacts

Due to the exposure to traumatizing acts during the trafficking processes, the victims face mental health issues that are complex to treat and may result in suicidal thoughts. However, the rate of mental health issues correlates with the victim being trafficked. For instance, unlike adults, children have a higher risk of facing psychological distress of being distant from their parents and other siblings and being subjected to traumatizing events (Song, et al, 2021). In addition to facing PTSD, victims of trafficking face other mental health issues like drug abuse, depression, and dissociative and anxiety disorders (Chambers et al., 2022). Dissociation is a long-term reaction of victims that results in memory loss, which can have legal and psychological implications (Shamsudeen, 2022). For some victims, these psychological effects are displayed due to witnessing violent acts.

There are high occurrences of mental health disorders, including PTSD, anxiety, depression, suicide attempts, and self-harm, among human trafficking survivors who reach out to shelter services, as indicated in research from different nations and noted by Ottisova et al. (2016). According to the study, most female survivors (78%) and many male victims (40%) in England report experiencing anxiety and PTSD despair symptoms. Also, 67% of women, 57% of women, and 61% of men in a study of trafficked individuals from the Greater Mekong sub-region noted probable depressive episodes. In comparison, 44% of women, 27% of children, and 46% of men indicated experiencing PTSD.

In addition to facing the above psychological effects, victims of sex trafficking can face mental, emotional, physical, and social interruptions. These mental delays are associated with learning disabilities due to victimization. Other psychological issues like fear, shame, regression, behavioral change, and psychosomatic problems may be seen in the lives of the victims (Altun, et al., 2017). These issues may make the individual feel like an outcast, isolating themselves and significantly impacting their social life. Studies show that 39 to 66% of victims report having suicidal thoughts (Ortega et al., 2022). Individuals reported abusing drugs stated that they began using them in trafficking situations. Some individuals said they use alcohol to deal with situations (Ortega et al., 2022). In contrast, others stated that their behavior resulted from being forced by the traffickers to indulge in substance abuse (Branche et al., 2019). This is mainly true as the victims are forced into drugs for them to be able to recruit more clients and perform the jobs, they would otherwise consider offensive.

As a result of trafficking, parental attachment, and family ties are weakened. Research by Morero and Tseko (2020) found that victims of human trafficking agree that although the modern concept of a family has expanded to include partners who are not biologically related to each other, they still believe that the conventional family unit of children, a mother, and father, where the children thrive under the guidance of their parents, is the most effective in raising happy, healthy, and responsible adults. Additionally, Morero and Tseko (2020) state that it becomes clear that trafficking victims witness the devastating effects of human trafficking on families, including the inability of individuals to cope with their feelings of loss and grief, fear, anxiety, and the incapability of the family unit as a whole to function normally, all of which can be transmitted to subsequent generations (Morero & Tseko, 2020). Most of those who participated in the research also believed that working with those trafficked to establish a service plan is important to the DSD's family-centered policies. Individuals brought to the notice of DSD authorities should be given an atmosphere that makes them feel as safe and secure as they would in a typical, well-functioning household.

Notwithstanding that human trafficking increase the prevalence of common mental disorders, it also increases drug dependence. According to Morero and Tseko (2020), many survivors of human trafficking usually need medical attention and assistance, not because they are physically unwell but because they have developed an addiction to illegal substances. These victims are always fighting an uphill struggle since their drug traffickers first exposed them to narcotics and then used those substances to keep them compliant and dependent. As a result of the local police treating them like criminals, most survivors find it difficult to collaborate with them. It made things much more traumatic since these victims felt pressured to act cooperatively (Morero & Tseko, 2020).

4.3. Victim Blaming Effects

Victim Blaming is one of the most stressful conditions for victims of human trafficking whereby victims are blamed for being a victim. In this case victims are blamed for their own victimizations and held either partially or completely responsible for subsequent abuse from traffickers (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016).

Victim blaming is usually based on factors such as illegal immigration status, engaging in commercial sex activities, securing a questionable job offer, accepting promise for better life and impulsiveness. Notably, these erroneous perceptions contribute to lack of support for social services and victim assistance; law enforcement ineffectiveness in the detection, prosecution and conviction of traffickers; unwillingness to disclose victimizations; lack of legal protections for victims; perpetrator's wrongful acquittal and poor court decisions against the victims (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Sanford et al., 2016; Silver et al., 2015; Krahé, et al, 2008; Ullman & Filipas, 2001). Such negative reactions to disclosures of victimizations may lead to other disastrous effects including social stigma, rejection by community, suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress disorder, mental imbalance, anxiety and severe depression.

As research indicates, victim blaming can occur in the form of negative social responses from family members, the media, community, legal, medical, as well as mental and health care professionals. Usually, such responses toward human trafficking victims stems from a misunderstanding of the circumstances that led to the crime, the character effects of those involved, misconceptions about victims, perpetrators, and the nature of violent acts. Plethora of research have explained victim blaming using the theory of "Belief in a Just World (BJW)", to explore predictors of victim blaming attitudes and effects (Lerner, 1980; Clark, 2020; Silver et al., 2015; Stromwall et al., 2013). This theory is based on the idea that the world is just a safe place where people get what they deserve or reap what they sow. Thereby shifting the focus of the justice system from blaming the perpetrator to the victim. According to Melvin Lerner,

The "belief in a just world" refers to those more or less articulated assumptions which underlie the way people orient themselves to their environment. ... In order to plan, work for, and obtain things they want, and avoid those which are frightening or painful, people must assume that there are manageable procedures which are effective in producing the desired end states (Erikson, 1950&Merton, 1957 as cited in Lerner, 1980, pg. 9).

In practical terms, individuals tend to agree with certain belief systems when experienced injustice, victimizations or helplessness. He further argued that such individuals remained in the state of denial rather than accepting the truth, thus rationalizing victimizations by finding reasons to justify the perpetrator's offensive acts (Lerner, 1980). Many studies on victim blaming relied heavily on the principles of "Belief in a Just World" to inform societal tendencies to blame the victims of crimes for their victimizations (Clark, 2020; Stromwall, et al, 2013; Lerner 1980; Van den bos & Maas, 2009).

Other factors that impact victim blaming attitudes as indicated in research are the role of myth acceptance and gender (Clark, 2020; Cunningham & Cromer, 2016). The role of myth acceptance involves misconceptions, fallacies or delusions generally believed against victims of human trafficking. Cunningham and Cromer (2016), developed human trafficking myths scale which contained 17 human trafficking myth items to assess victim blaming attitudes in human trafficking among 409 college students. Among the myth items that contribute significantly to victim blaming in human trafficking are items 4,6,7,9 and 12. As shown below;

If someone did not want to be trafficked, he or she would leave the situation; Human trafficking victims will seek help as soon as they have the opportunity; People from other countries who are trafficked in the United States are always illegal immigrants; Human trafficking victims will tell authorities they are being trafficked as soon as they have the opportunity; If a child solicits sex from an adult in exchange for money, food, or shelter, he or she is not a victim. (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; pg. 240)

These are all misconceptions that amplify victim blaming in human trafficking, thereby subjecting victims to be more vulnerable in accepting faults in their own victimizations. The survey result indicated that human trafficking myth acceptance is a significant predictor of both belief and victim blame which serve to justify violence against victims. Consequently, acceptance of trafficking myths not only vilify the victim, excuse the perpetrator, complicate human trafficking but also contaminate the method of providing social and health service, and judicial process. According to research, many disturbing myths prevent the delivery of justice in human trafficking and the media are part of the channels that intensify these myths (Richmond, 2015; Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Johnston et al, 2015). For instance, academics have argued that the mass media have played a significant role in empowering human trafficking especially the sex trade to flourish (Johnston, et al, 2015; Hughes, 2002; Johnston, et al, 2012). Media coverage of sex trafficking is usually misrepresentative as victims of human trafficking are usually portrayed as young, naive, white girls while neglecting other survivors' voices due to the attitude of myth acceptance (Johnston, et al, 2015).

4.4. Sociological Effects

Apart from the sociological impacts of human trafficking on victims, certain social factors subject people at risk of human trafficking such as poor or lack of education, poor family structure, poverty, social isolation or social ostracism, drug use, unemployment, cultural practices that devalue and abuse women and children (Wallace, et al, 2022). Stigmatization is one of the significant sociological effects of human trafficking. Stigmatization of survivors of human trafficking is a complex process that may arise from various avenues such as from family members, community, peer-group, social and health care services providers, work places, churches, school and other social circles. Its effects may also lead to self-stigmatization, shame, feeling of worthlessness, and suicidal ideation (Polaris Project, 2023). Wallace et al, (2022), argued that intersecting social stigmatization intensifies the effects of stigmatization, hence leading to reduced access to care, lack of funding and resources, mental health problems, health and social disparities such as social isolation, inability to reintegrate into the communities because of fear of disapproval and discrimination.

Apart from the impacts of stigmatization on trafficking survivors in itself, stigmatization and discrimination of people based on race, gender, class, or other social factors subject especially women and children to a level of vulnerability that promotes trafficking. About 70% of those who are subjected to trafficking and forced marriage, are women and girls (International Labor Organization, 2022). Consequently, these people are deprived of the opportunities to good education, gainful employment, access to resources and opportunities to good life. Stigmatization conditions, socially isolates both human trafficking survivors and at-risk youths in communities. Such narrative portrays a sense of defeat, weakness and further vulnerability to exploitation (Cody, 2017).

Other sociological effects of human trafficking on victims include, language barriers, lack of cultural familiarity, thereby making it difficult for victims to easily find means of escape, access assistance nor re-integrate into the community; social ostracism or isolation constrains community efforts to effectively strategize on the best approach to stop or prevent human trafficking; human trafficking harms family structure, community, and the society at large; loss of trust and credibility in businesses, religious and political positions.

5. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Human trafficking is a heinous crime that significantly violates human rights through denial of free will, restricts freedom of movement, tarnishes human dignity and impedes freedom of speech. It is a form of modern-day slavery that spans across nations, states and communities. It typically involves exploitation and compelling of others into forced labor and/or commercial sexual activities for financial gains. It is estimated that human traffickers generate global profits of \$150 billion yearly, victimize an estimated 25 million people worldwide, where 80% of the victims are in forced labor, and 20% are involved in sex trafficking activities (International Labor Organization, 2022; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022). Human trafficking is still a very big global pandemic as stipulated on *table 1* above. Among others and as indicated above, victims of human trafficking are subjected to various excruciating victimizations ranging from physical, psychological, sociological and victim-blaming abuses (*see table 2 & figure 3 above*).

Presently, there are several approaches adopted by various governments, international organizations, law enforcement practitioners, agencies, academics and researchers in responding to the challenges of human trafficking especially regarding the devastating effects of human trafficking on victims. Lutya and Lanier (2012) argued that the expanding area of Epidemiological Criminology might be useful in creating the strategies for responding effectively to human trafficking. The framing of epidemiological criminology is based on a holistic approach that integrates public health into the study of crime and criminal justice responses to crime. In this context, there is need to provide “public health, justice, victim support and investigation to victims of human trafficking” (Lutya & Lanier, 2012; Akers & Lanier, 2009). As indicated in this study, the impact of psychological abuse and mental health related problems on victims of human trafficking is very alarming and requires urgent workable solutions.

In dealing with the issue of human trafficking, this study employs a tripartite response models: victim-oriented model; traffickers-oriented model; and policy-oriented model.

a. The victim-oriented response model:

- i. Policies should prioritize victim-centered approaches, focusing on the needs and experiences of survivors, including providing comprehensive services such as housing, healthcare, legal support and assisting affected family or community members (Sulley, et al., 2021).
- ii. Provide community partnerships and culturally competent services to help immigrant victims and agencies overcome language barriers, enhance communications with nonverbal and non-English speaking survivors.

- iii. Provide easy accessibility to resources such as substance use and mental health treatments.
- iv. Provide professional services to help victims overcome the psychological, physical, victim-blaming and sociological effects of human trafficking victimizations with special emphasis on overcoming “*fear and courage to speak up*”.
- v. Assigned medical practitioners must have complete knowledge of the evidence-based treatment (empirical data) for proper diagnoses and capacity to provide the best mental health care (Costa et al., 2019).
- vi. Use of cognitive-behavioral therapy to treat mental health problems, post-traumatic stress and mood disorders including exposure therapy and cognitive restructuring, (Moreno et al., 2019).
- vii. Mental health practitioners must effectively combine scientific results with clinical judgment and individual patient preferences (Williamson et al., 2010).
- viii. Victims successful treatments must be measurable.

b. The traffickers-oriented response model:

- i. Need for worldwide concerted efforts in dealing with the problem of human trafficking which must include global law enforcement collaboration in reporting, prosecution and conviction of traffickers.
- ii. Improved collaboration between law enforcement, service providers, and antitrafficking organizations.
- iii. From the epi-criminological standpoint, create opportunities for rehabilitating traffickers (Lutya & Lanier, 2012).

c. Policy-oriented response model:

- i. The need for adequate funding for prevention and intervention efforts. This includes funding for research that can help develop evidence-based strategies for addressing trafficking, as well as funding for service providers, resources for victims and law enforcement agencies to effectively identify and respond to trafficking (Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking, 2017).
- ii. Policies should also prioritize the allocation of resources to communities that are most vulnerable to trafficking, including communities with high levels of poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion (International Labor Organization, 2017).
- iii. Policies should aim to create more awareness on human trafficking and address the root causes of trafficking, including poverty, gender inequality, and other forms of social injustice. This requires a comprehensive approach that includes investment in education, healthcare, and other social services, as well as addressing issues such as corruption, political instability, and conflicts that can contribute to trafficking (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018).
- iv. Mandatory training for law enforcement agencies and service providers on the indicators of human trafficking.
- v. Effective implementation of the 2000 United Nations General Assembly of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons; the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA); the U.S. Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act 7 of 2013.

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