

A Study on Victimization Factors of Human Trafficking in Sri Lanka

With Reference to Southern Province

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking has become a global problem which affects the universe as a transnational organized crime web. It is a process in which people are being recruited from their community and the country of their origin and transported to the destination where they are being exploited for purposes of forced labor, prostitution, domestic servitude and various other forms of exploitation.

Although "human trafficking" has opened a new direction to social sciences research, there isn't sufficient dialogue on this problem. The objective of the research was to examine the victimization factors of human trafficking in Sri Lanka.

The quantitative data of the research were gathered from the Central Investigation Department (CID) within the period of 2007 to 2013. The sample was limited to 25 victims who were identified according to the CID records and collected qualitative data were collected from them through in-depth interviews.

The research findings revealed that there were multiple factors for being victimized of human trafficking in Sri Lanka. They are poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, unawareness, limited economic and educational opportunities and the necessity of gaining a higher social status.

Key words – *Human Smuggling, Human Trafficking, Organized crime, Victims*

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1 Introduction

With the concept of globalization, borders and barriers no longer exist. This concept brings the entire universe into one global village. At present, one has the communication ability with others who live in every nook and corner of the world within few seconds.

However, immigration and emigration procedures have been introduced by each country in order to limit human mobility. These restrictions have not obstructed intellectuals' research in the world. They have the liberty to work in any part of the world as they wish. It makes a way of revenue to the country while brain drain decreases with the nation's development process.

Except intellectuals, there are millions of men and women who are willing to go abroad for employment and reach a better financial situation. There are groups of people who use illegal means help to go abroad and assist to find employment. Such people are called as "human traffickers". They recruit people and sell them to another party in order to gain profit. At present, "human trafficking" has been recognized as a 'transnational organized crime". Human trafficking has been defined in the following manner:

"...The subject of human trafficking, or the use of force, fraud or coercion to transport persons across international borders or within countries to exploit them for labor or sex, has received renewed attention within the last two decades. Trafficking for forced labor or sexual exploitation is believed to be one of the fastest growing areas of criminal activity..."
(<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/224392.pdf> 2015/09/07).

According to the above definition, human traffickers recruit people, use force to transport them and exploit them. To fulfill a human trafficking there should be a process of three major activities:

- 1 Recruitment
- 2 Transportation
- 3 Exploitation

The dimensions of human trafficking in the world are numerous and complex. In Sri Lanka human trafficking has become a hidden crime and it is rapidly increasing day by day.

There are two denominations of human trafficking.

- 1. Internal Human Trafficking - Internal human trafficking refers to the process of trafficking within a country.
- 2. External Human Trafficking - External human trafficking refers to the process of trafficking within two or more countries.

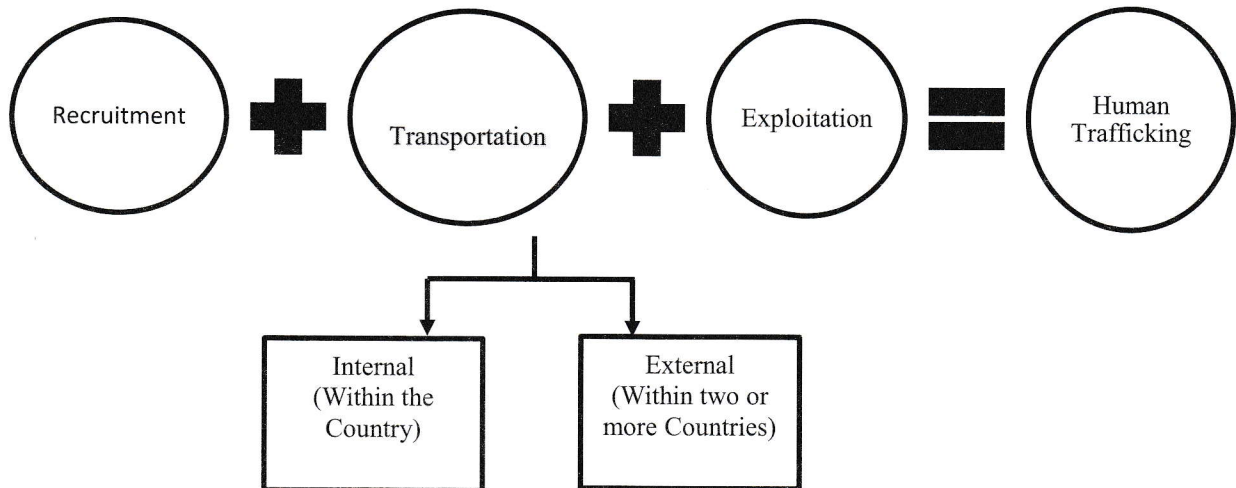


Figure 1: Elements of Human Trafficking Process

Thus, human trafficking is being discussed all over the world, Sri Lanka is different from that. Although human trafficking has strike toot in Sri Lanka, there is an exhaust of researches regarding it. This research paper is based on victimization factors of human trafficking (External) in Sri Lanka with especial reference to southern province.

2 Statement of the problem

The magnitude of suffering caused by human trafficking is inversely proportional to our current ability to identify victims. Human trafficking, often referred to as modern-day slavery, occurs on an enormous scale in the world as well as in Sri Lanka. But victimization factors of human trafficking have not been examined well.

3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this paper is to initiate an enquiry on human trafficking in Sri Lanka. The paper is based on a study conducted in selected areas in Southern province and the paper draws on the findings of the mentioned study to indicate the victimization factors of human trafficking in Sri Lanka. Moreover, to give recommendations for the control and prevention of human trafficking in Sri Lanka.

4 Review of literature

Much has been written on human trafficking and its victimization. The review found many works and bibliographies on many aspects of “human trafficking”. However, few of these works referenced the problem of victimization factors of human trafficking. These works and bibliographies address the elements of human

Trafficking and also forms of human trafficking. Even works discussing human trafficking seriously affected in Asian countries.

Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines Trafficking in Persons 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 giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html#What_is_Human_Trafficking)

According to the definition given in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, it is evident that trafficking in persons has three constituent elements;

1. The deed (What is done) - Recruitment, transportation
2. The method (How it is done) - Threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception.
3. The objective (Why it is done) - exploitation, sexual exploitation, forced labor

The majority of reviewed documents that address the victimization factors of trafficking provide an overview of trafficking all around the world, rather than a discussion within a particular country. This reflects the fact that most of the reviewed works were studies and conference reports commissioned by regional bodies and international organizations. In Sri Lanka, reports of International Organization for Migration (IOM) revealed the nature of human trafficking within the country. Compared with other regions, although there were remarkably few human trafficking incidents that have been recorded, according to the in – depth interviews there is a high vulnerability of human trafficking in Sri Lanka.

The literature on victimization factors of human trafficking also reflects high percentages of victims are in poor economic conditions, drug and alcohol abuse, and the low status of women is cited throughout the literature as primary push factors related to human trafficking. The literature also notes that many teenagers are dragged into prostitution, pornography, and domestic work by false promises and deceptive practices. Traffickers promise high-paying jobs in other regions or countries or educational opportunities such as scholarships. The literature also recognizes that many people are being victimized in human trafficking due to the unawareness.

5 Methodology

This is a descriptive study which used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The quantitative data of the research were gathered from the Central Investigation Department (CID) during the period from 2007 to 2013. The usage of purposive sample was limited to 25 victims who were identified according to the CID records and collected qualitative data were collected from them through in-depth interviews.

Gathered primary data through in-depth interviews made the value of secondary data underestimated. The Secondary sources did not reflect the whole reality of victimization factors of human trafficking. In the absence of primary data, such as the direct victim testimony, background information was obtained through secondary source such as CID records.

6 Results and discussion

According to the CID records, 64 cases were reported regarding “human trafficking”. There were nearly 200 victims related to these cases. Among them 25 victims were from the Southern Province. They were selected for in-depth interviews.

Majority of the victims domiciled in Rathgama in Galle district. According to the CID records it is 32%. Another 20% victims were from Matara while 16% from Tangalle. 12% from Weligama, 8% from both Mirissa and Hambantota were reported. There were only 4% victims in Boossa area in Galle District.

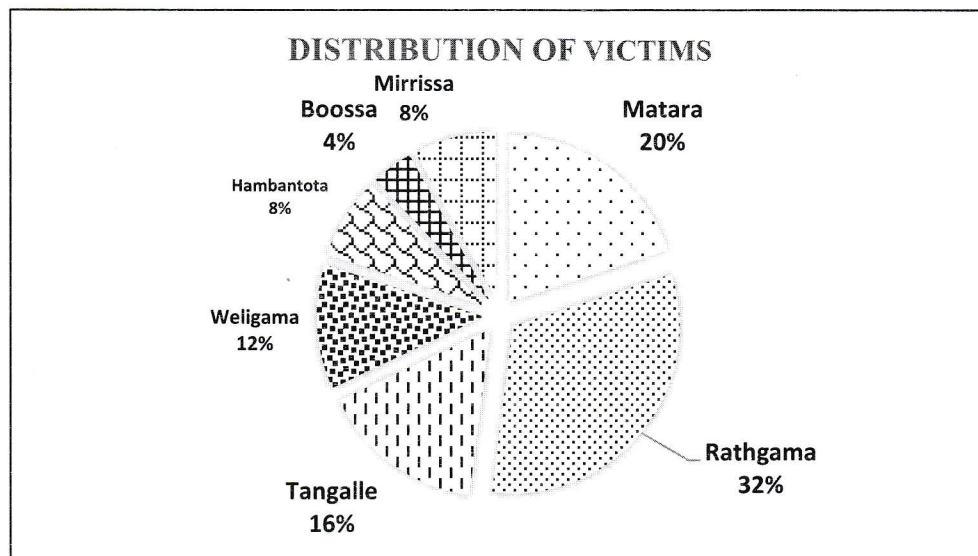


Figure: 2- Distribution of victims of Human Trafficking in Southern province

According to the depth interviews done with the victims, there are several major reasons for being a victim of human trafficking.

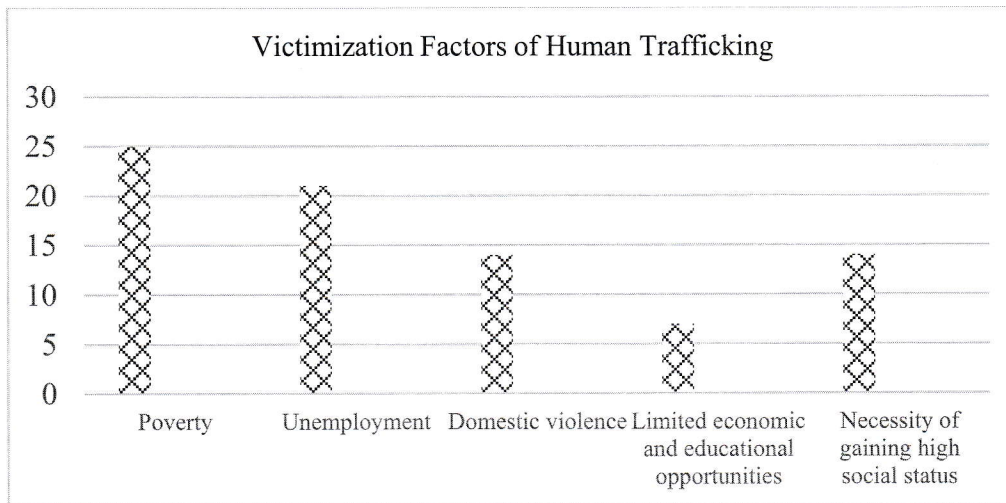


Figure: 3- Victimization factors of Human Trafficking in Sothern Province

According to the interviews, “poverty” is the primary risk factors to create vulnerability of trafficking. Many people do believe in foreign jobs as having treasures. Majority of the victims of human trafficking are suffering from poverty. They recognize “going abroad” as the only one way of gaining a wealthy life. But “Poverty” alone would not push people into human trafficking. There are many other factors. Unemployment, domestic violence, Limited economic and educational opportunities, necessity of gaining high social status are some of them. But all these factors could be able to called as “poverty plus” factors. Another group of people were “unaware” as the victimization factor of human trafficking. They have been victimized due to the poor knowledge of laws and regulations. Many of them even had not known even they were being victimized for a transnational organized crime.

7 Conclusions and recommendation

Donors and implementers of counter trafficking programmes face trade-offs in allocating scarce resources. In the long run, better understanding of successful interventions would make efforts more efficient and would help achieve the strategic goal of the progressive elimination of human trafficking. Since little is known about what causes this crime and how to prevent it, evaluation could improve our understanding about the effectiveness of interventions.

Human trafficking is a profitable and low-risk business with ample supply and growing demand. But in Sri Lanka, it is a new issue. Human trafficking in Sri Lanka has been growing along with the development of the country. This study identified different victimization factors in Human Trafficking in Sri Lanka as poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, unawareness, limited economic and educational opportunities and necessity of gaining high social status.

Different countries have had different approaches when attempting to prevent human trafficking. These attempts are different from each other due to the nature of the problem. In Sri Lankan context, government leadership at national, sub-regional and local levels, socio-economic development of the vulnerable groups, and planning awareness programmes focus on the integration of at risk communities, developing cooperation and partnerships between government sectors and organizations regarding the problem, respect for the rule of law and human rights could be recommended for the prevention of human trafficking. Also crime prevention through social development includes a range of different kinds of social, educational, health and training programmes. Crime prevention which aims to change the conditions in neighborhoods influences victimization of human trafficking and builds on the knowledge and experience of community members.

As a whole rules and regulations play the major role for crime control and prevention process. Reduce the opportunities for people to commit human trafficking, to increase the risks and costs of being

caught, and to minimize the benefits. However, the study has revealed the inefficiency of rule of law on human trafficking. Many people are unaware of the laws and regulations related to human trafficking. It has become an exact reason for the increment of the problem. The most important conclusion which is drawn from this study is the real need for future research is to study about the victimization factors of human trafficking and the nature of human trafficking as a transnational organized crime.

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