
Understanding the Dynamics of Human Trafficking

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Abstract

This study looked into the dynamics of human trafficking. Descriptive research design and exploratory method were used in the study that aimed to examine the connections between countries of origin, destination and transit. The underlying characteristics of countries with high reported cases of human trafficking both in places of origin and destination were also scrutinized. The data were gathered from the Global Trafficking in Persons Report in 2009 through data mining. The countries with reported high cases of human trafficking were Armenia, Russia, Belarus, and the United States. The economic well-being, graft and corruption, and political stability are considered as contributing factors that facilitate and encourage human trafficking. The study also revealed the dynamics or movement of human trafficking in various levels.

Keywords: Dynamics, human trafficking, places of destinations, places of origin, supply-demand relationship, corruption

Introduction

Trafficking of persons is a global phenomenon. There are cases on human trafficking that show a significant increase during the reported periods of 2003-2008 based on the Global Trafficking in Persons Report in 2009. From this information, the present researchers have hinged their interest to conduct this study. This study aims to understand the

dynamics of human trafficking by identifying the patterns and the characteristics of the places of origin and destination.

The General Assembly of the United Nations Global Plan of Action (UNGPA, 2014) recognizes that poverty, unemployment, lack of socio-economic opportunities, gender-based violence, discrimination and marginalization

are issues that spur trouble. These are some of the contributing factors that make persons vulnerable to trafficking. Studies reveal that a commonly observed human trafficking pattern is that victims are frequently trafficked from relatively poorer countries to comparatively richer areas. For example, victims from Armenia and Uzbekistan which are relatively poor countries go to countries such as Russia to work in construction industries. However, not all trafficking flows fit in this manner, but the economic differences in combination with geographical proximity appear to explain the traffic flows (UNODC, 2014).

Presently, studies fall short in the process of human trafficking as well as the analysis on the connections between countries of origin, destination and transit. For example, North Africa and Eastern Europe show rampant trafficking for forced labor and commercial sex. Through this study, the underlying factors of human trafficking both in places of origin and destination are scrutinized. Hence, appropriate measures to strengthen policies will be most recommended to minimize if not eradicate such occurrence.

Conceptual Framework

This research is primarily anchored on the school of thought of Marxism in history, which is historical materialism. The study on human trafficking involves the lives of ordinary people mostly vulnerable to abuse because of poverty and/or political stability affecting their lives. Marxist historians like Constantino (1975) asserts that “history is not merely chronology of events; it is not the story of heroes and great men”. Essentially, history consists of the people’s effort to attain a better life. It is, therefore, essential that the study of history should include the plight of the people from the “grassroots” or from the “bottom,” in this case, the human trafficking of victims to understand them.

Historical materialism asserts that economic forces are the primary forces that propel people through history as they interact

with social classes. In this case, people have to labor to survive which physically changes the world causing the economic forces to develop as they gain more and more control of their environment. Marx believes that for people to make history, they must first be in a position to live. For people to develop their intellectuality and political ideologies, their economic conditions must be improved first.

Economic factors significantly affect the outcome of the nation or the local history. Koht (1968) states that “the Marxist theory of history asserts that economic conditions, and the forms of labor are decisive for the social structure in all countries and in all ages”. This doctrine gave economic forces of social and cultural history a larger place in historical research than they had before, which has left deep traces in all historical thinking in later times”. Understanding the economic structure has been an essential tool in understanding the past or a present phenomenon. Thus, economic motives and activities have changed the course of man’s history.

Schneider and Cantor (1967) wrote that the dialectical-materialist or the Marxist historians were the first group of historians to examine systematically the development of the lower class which provided new insights into the course of economic and social change. For the Marxist historians, the economic factor caused the political and intellectual development of the society. The non-economic institutions of the society like the legal-political order can be explained by the character of its economic structure. The productive forces of the society are the available means for transforming natural resources to satisfy human needs and wants. These can be in the form of raw materials, labor force, and technological knowledge on how to produce goods and services.

In addition to the development of productive forces and productive relations which are the main ideas of historical materialism, Marxism believes that “all history is a history of class struggles”. Material struggle as emphasized by Marx means that the maintenance of life should be the very first and the most enduring

motivation for human activity. Here, the conflict lies between the human trafficker and the human trafficking victims; both are having different and clashing economic interests. For example, the human trafficker is interested in the income they get from trafficking victims who are also concerned with the income they get from commercial sex or prostitution, as construction or domestic workers, or farm laborers. The struggle illustrated here is when victims of human trafficking cross-borders through illegal means just to obtain jobs despite the low wages and other dangers. The historical thought emphasized the importance of human survival through the provision of security of the productive forces.

Figure 1 shows the connection between the places of destination and the places of origin in the process of human trafficking. Here, the demand is created by the places of destination while supply is provided by the places of origin. Hughes (2004) believed that human trafficking begins with demand. Thus, supply and demand in this phenomenon are closely intertwined (Wheaton, 2009). Supply refers to labor provided by individuals, trafficked for both labor and sexual exploitation, whereas demand involves specific desires and preferences of employers and third parties for certain types of persons for particular services. Hence, if there are no consumers and no demand, there would be no income potential, and there is no supply.

Bales (2001) on the other hand, has identified demand-predictors of human trafficking that include economic well-being such as availability of employment. Population pressure, lack of opportunities, conflict, and social unrest are the predictors of supply of trafficking of persons.

The figure reveals the process of trafficking of persons. The arrow located above shows that the places of destination create the demand for human trafficking that are characterized by various factors that include economic well-being, graft and corruption, and stability (peace and order). Economic well-being covers availability of job opportunities that provide promising financial benefits to potential victims.

Graft and corruption can be manifested in the facilitation of travel (cross-border) by using fraudulent documents and means that is also observable in places of origin, while stability is manifested through the absence of conflict and social unrest such as terrorism.

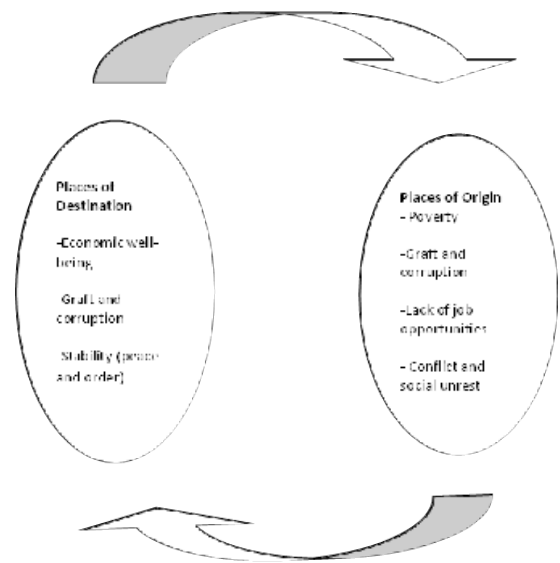


Figure 1. Connection between demand and supply in the process of human trafficking.

On the other hand, the arrow located below signifies the places of origin that supply the need for human trafficking. As shown in the figure, these are distinguished by poverty, graft and corruption, lack of job opportunities, and social conflict and unrest. The poverty that is believed as the most powerful cause of trafficking (Routhier, 2007), refers to the deprivation of quality of life that is observed through the people’s difficulty in satisfying their basic needs. Lack of job opportunities refers to limited work or labor for the people and too few jobs available for them. In the case of graft and corruption, it has similar manifestations in places of destination. Social conflict and unrest refer to situations such as armed conflict, political turmoil, and problems that disturb the equilibrium of the stability of the country. The presence or a combination of these factors may lead victims of trafficking susceptible or vulnerable to exploitation in their respective places or other areas.

The illustration further shows the countries of origin are also serving as countries of transit and destination. On the other hand, the identified countries of destination simultaneously function either as places of transit or origin. Moreover, within these countries emanate the prevalence of internal human trafficking.

Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to look into the connection between countries of origin, destination and transit. It further analyzes the characteristics of both places of origin and destination in the flow of trafficking in persons.

Research Design and Methodology

The study used a descriptive research design to obtain information in describing the dynamics of human trafficking. It also used the exploratory method to achieve the objectives of the study. The researchers used data mining as a tool to classify and determine the countries with reported incidence of such phenomenon between the periods of 2003-2008 in the Global Trafficking in Persons Report in 2009. These countries were categorized according to the highest reported cases of human trafficking. There were 53 reported countries included in the data mining.

The data gathered were subjected to fractal analysis which is a tool that looks into the patterns and self-similarity of a phenomenon. In this study, the fractal dimensions of human trafficking were identified using these formulae:

$$y = \theta_{min} e^x \text{ where } y = \text{transformed values of } x_i$$

$$\theta = \min(x_i), \text{ the least number of cases in human trafficking in every country}$$

$$X = \text{number of cases reported in human trafficking in every country}$$

$$\lambda = 1 + \frac{1}{\bar{y}} \text{ where } \lambda = \text{to the fractal dimension of random variable } x$$

$$\bar{y} = \text{average of all the } y$$

Results and Discussions

Human trafficking is a phenomenon

that has begun over a hundred years with the African slave trade (Suson, 2015). Since then, there have been a vast number of countries with human trafficking as well as increasing number of reported cases. Countries such as Burkina Faso and Belarus reported a total of 2,482, respectively. The increase in number of reported cases of human trafficking is attributed to low law-enforcement efforts which are hindered by limited human and financial sources and general corruption in the judicial system. Hence, the normal state.

Figure 2 shows that the histogram of human trafficking looks like an exponential random variable. Based on the figure, the frequency indicates the number of countries with human trafficking and the reported cases of human trafficking. Based on the report on Trafficking in Persons, 2009, it is revealed that there are at least 34 countries with low reported cases of human trafficking, while 19 cases are considered high. Some countries show an increasing number of reported cases. Eight (8) of these countries have reported 500 incidents, four (4) countries with 1,000 cases, three (3) countries with 1,500 cases, two (2) countries reported 2,500, and another two (2) countries with 4,000 reported cases.

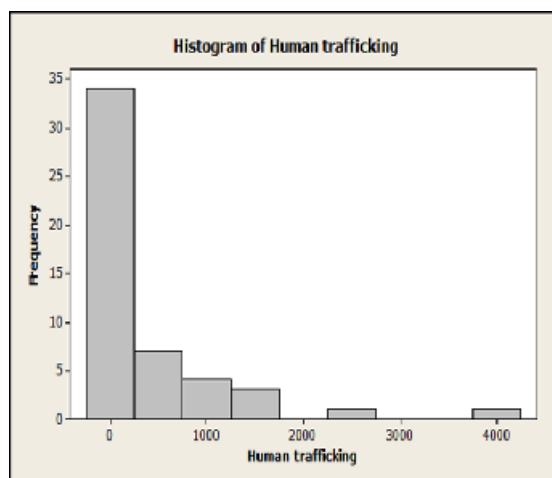


Figure 2. Histogram of countries with reported cases of human trafficking.

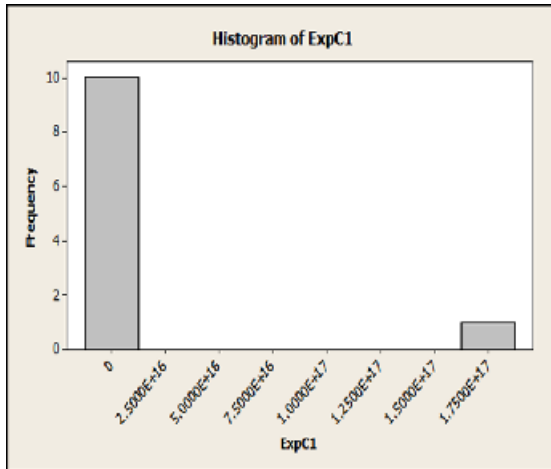


Figure 3. Histogram of hidden fractal dimensions of human trafficking.

Figure 3 shows the histogram of the hidden fractal dimension of human trafficking obtained by exponentiating the original observations. The hidden fractal dimension refers to the factors that will explain the nature of human trafficking. In this case, the law enforcement efforts in each country are crucial in the prevention of human trafficking phenomenon. Another factor that will explain the increasing

number of cases of human trafficking is the geographical set-up. Human trafficking cases are rampant in countries which are contiguous, such as Ukraine and Uzbekistan. These are countries that are geographically close to Russia, a country of destination for human trafficking victims. The graph highlights the demarcation or the difference between the countries with low reported human trafficking cases and those countries with high reported cases. It is revealed that majority of the countries have low reports of trafficking in persons that are shown in the frequency or the number of countries. However, it is still disturbing that there are countries with extremely high reports of human trafficking as reflected on the right side. The high demand of laborers in capitalist countries induces labor force, be it skilled or non-skilled to venture to any jobs available in these countries. These are Armenia, Russia, Belarus, and the United States.

Table 1 shows the ten countries with reported cases of human trafficking based on the Global Trafficking in Persons Report 2009. In this study, the countries were ranked according to the number of reported cases or

Table 1. Top 10 Countries with Reported Cases of Human Trafficking

| Countries | Location | No. of Cases | Place of Origin | Place of Destination | Place of Transit |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Burkina Faso | North Africa | 3861 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Belarus | Eastern Europe | 2482 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Ukraine | Eastern Europe | 1520 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Benin | North Africa | 1465 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Uzbekistan | Central Asia | 1333 | ✓ | | |
| Russia | Eastern Europe | 1239 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| United States of America | North America | 1082 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Nepal | Southern Asia | 772 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Kyrgyztan | Central Asia | 479 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Armenia | Central Asia | 109 | ✓ | | |

incidents of trafficking. Among these countries, 3 are found in Eastern Europe, 2 in North Africa, 1 in Southern Asia, 3 in Central Asia and 1 in North America. Interestingly, the geographical proximity of Eastern Europe and Central Asia is notable. Historically, Ukraine, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Armenia were part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic. When the Soviet Union disintegrated during the late 80's and early 90's, these countries became independent states. With this geographical location, there is an easy flow of cross border trafficking among these countries. Although Armenia is not characterized as a place of destination and a place of transit, however, it is considered as a supplier.

It is revealed from the figure below that there is more complex interplay in which beyond the explicit linkage comes a multifaceted interaction of the different factors affecting the supply and demand of human trafficking. The figure below shows the hidden dynamics of human trafficking that occurs in various levels such as local, national, regional and international. The underlying cause of all types of human trafficking stems from demand. Demands for sexual exploitation, cheap labor and domestic workers, organ removal and sale, illegal adoption and forced marriages, criminal activities or begging, or for the exploitation of armed groups, all constitute substantial contributing factors to human trafficking. Common knowledge in economics, demand and supply is directly correlated; hence, if demand lowers, so does supply (UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking).

The two-way-pointing arrow in the figure illustrates the interaction between supply and demand in human trafficking from various levels. In the case of Armenia, an international level of connection between supply and demand is revealed. It is primarily a source country for women and girls trafficked to the United Arab Emirates and Turkey. The purposes of trafficking are commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Armenian men and women are trafficked to Russia for forced labor which

is shown in the demand-supply relationship in the regional level. Moreover, a national level of interaction is demonstrated through a small number of Armenian girls and boys who are trafficked internally for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced begging (U.S. State Dept Trafficking in Persons Report, 2009).

However, the supply-demand relationship in human trafficking does not display a typical producer-consumer relation where both parties gain equal benefit at the end. In human trafficking, the concept of materialism is evident where the dominant class in the society tends to take advantage over the marginalized group. Marx argued that profit is the driver behind the capitalist production. Accordingly, individuals (trafficked persons) hold labor power that the capitalist buys and has the right to make use for a particular period for the individual to receive a wage. While an individual(trafficked person) produces labor or forced to work longer for subsistence, many of these belonging to the labor group are being exploited (Lapon, 2011).

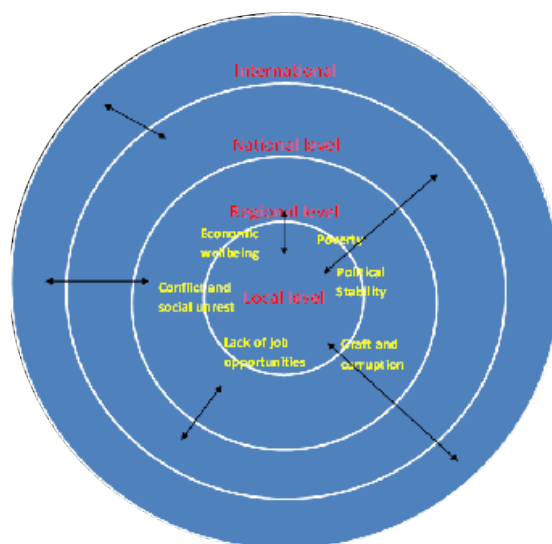


Figure 4. The dynamics of human trafficking.

Based on the top 10 countries with relatively high to very high reported incidence of human trafficking, certain features were commonly evident among these places such as the place of origin, destination, and transit. The places of destination are characterized

by economic well-being, low prevalence of graft and corruption and stability. While the places of origin is characterized by a lack of job opportunities, a high prevalence of graft and corruption, conflict, and social unrest. These countries include Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Armenia, Russia, Nepal, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and the USA. The World Bank classifies these countries as belonging to the lower and upper-middle income economy. Countries classified as low middle-income earners are experiencing high unemployment rates resulting from low job opportunities thus, leading to poverty. The countries that provide the larger percentage of victims based on the report on Trafficking in Persons (2006) include Belarus, Ukraine, Albania, and Lithuania. Armenia is also known as the primary source of trafficked persons; migration is evident for employment and higher wages. Cases of human trafficking are apparent since there are a few legal means for migration. Hence, they are forced to find alternative channels, where they are often exploited by traffickers. Nepal is another country with high reported cases of human trafficking. Victims are trafficked within the country. They are seen in brick kilns and zari industry in bonded labor. Nepal also served as a transit country for trafficked victims to the Middle East, China, Malaysia, South Korea, India and Sweden where they work in massage parlors and entertainment industry.

The places of destination create the demand for services of labor force depending on the kind of industries predominant in the area. The presence of activity and traffickers are crucial factors of demand for laborers or workers (Hughes, 2004). As an offshoot of a booming construction industry in some Russian cities, human trafficking victims from Central Asia such as Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are employed as construction workers. The USA, as a destination is a melting pot of both legal and illegal immigrants from different countries around the world. The country is seen as a place for better opportunities for economic upliftment. These situations are used by human traffickers as the opportunity for human

trafficking through fraudulent means such as facilitating fake travel documents, temporary work, and shelter.

A statistical report can be explained by Nepal's rank as the 19th poorest country based on Gross Domestic Product Per Capita 2009-2013 and ranked 102nd out of 144 countries in the Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015. It has its primary indicators on the institution, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, labor and good market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, innovation and business sophistication. Though few of these countries highly involved in human trafficking are categorized in the upper-middle class economy, it did not discharge them from being sources of trafficked persons. For example, Russia which was considered as upper-middle class economy is one of the leading sources of trafficking victims. Its relatively high rate of organized crime and weak family structure places it as the country with high reported incidence of human trafficking.

Another common characteristic affecting human trafficking is corruption. The Corruption Perceptions Index measures the perceived levels of public sector corruption worldwide. Corruption is a problem for all countries. A poor score is likely a sign of high corruption incidence. With corruption at hand, people of a particular country who are denied of basic goods and services are forced to migrate to other places making them more susceptible to human trafficking occurrences. Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Ukraine are among those countries with the lowest score in the Corruption Index. Thus, it signifies widespread bribery, lack of punishment for corruption and public institutions that do not respond to citizen's needs. Hence, corruption is a prominent factor pressing on the prevalence of human trafficking. Ukraine is identified as a country of origin of victims of human trafficking trafficked to Russian Federation, Turkey, Poland, Czech Republic and other countries. In the last decade, an increased number of sources identify Ukraine as a country of destination for victims trafficked

from Central Asia and Moldova. Russia on the other hand, is a source, destination, and transit for human trafficking. As an offshoot of a booming construction industry, the labor force is needed from other countries for this purpose. Human trafficking victims from Eastern Europe are used as construction workers. As a source, Russian human trafficking victims can be found in other parts of Europe as commercial sex workers.

An influential element in the supply of trafficked individuals is the high rate of unemployment in one particular country that is also true in the case of Armenia which has a disturbing score of 17.3 basing on the ILO's 2015 estimates of the unemployment rate. Also, the fall of the Soviet Union changed the economic landscape of Armenia and caused many individuals to travel abroad for employment opportunities. The most common purpose of trafficking from Armenia is sexual exploitation, including forced prostitution. Trafficking of persons for forced labor has also been included.

Another major factor in human trafficking is social unrest and conflict. Based on the 2015 Global Peace Index, some countries cited with the highest reported cases of human trafficking have low to a very low state of peace. These cases are also observed in Ukraine and Russia with low to a very low state of peace. Heightened geopolitical competition between Russia and the West raises the likelihood of further conflict across the region. State of peace is measured absence of small arms, the intensity of an internal conflict, terrorism impact, and violent crime. Such state is a push factor for some Russians to find employment prospects in other territories.

In terms of Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), the tier placement is a component that constitutes the incidence of human trafficking. The tier placement of a country provides various implications on how human trafficking is managed within its jurisdiction. Tier 1 countries give services to victims such as housing, food, legal services and others. They also enact legislations to protect its people against trafficking. Countries ranked in tier

2 are not fully compliant with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. These countries have done little to moderate efforts to combat human trafficking. Tier 3 countries are not at all compliant with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. It implies that fewer detection of cases, slow prosecution and few or no convictions are done to human traffickers

Conclusion

Trafficking as a major global problem threatens both the lives of individuals as well as the relationship of the countries in conflict. Failure to address such problem worsens the situation to a great extent. This paper shows the dynamics of human trafficking from various levels that need to be accurately understood by the society in general. Understanding the interplay of human trafficking would lead to the identification of a feasible solution of eradicating if not reducing the prevalence of such phenomenon. This paper addresses the phenomenon by looking into the interaction of the different characteristics of countries with human trafficking cases at various levels such as local, regional, national and international. In this case, inter-agency efforts beginning from the local level are very crucial to deterring the occurrence of human trafficking incidents. Preventive mechanisms at the local level can help reduce the incidence from escalating up to the macro-level. Reduction of human trafficking can be done by providing sustainable economic opportunities, stable human relations, transparency in governance, and strengthening law enforcement and compliance to trafficking in person protocol. Understanding the various factors and the interplay at each level will serve as a good basis for a deeper understanding of the human trafficking phenomenon. Consequently, it will provide a greater number of alternatives in fighting exploitation and human trafficking.

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