

NEO-SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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Abstract

This paper delves deep into the harrowing ideologies of neo-slavery and human trafficking, unravelling the intricate tapestry of these contemporary human rights violations. The research involves a comprehensive review of literature and existing data collections. It navigated the complex interplay between various factors, causes, types, and consequences of these crimes, as well as the multifaceted challenges encountered in combating them. Furthermore, it outlined a comprehensive strategy to guide us towards a future where exploitation no longer taints the lives of the vulnerable.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, Neo-slavery, exploitation, minors' victimization, debt bondage, migration.

Introduction:

In the 21st century, humanity's moral conscience is once again challenged by a haunting and persistent phenomenon - the intersection of neo-slavery and human trafficking. The echoes of historical slavery, a practice deemed barbaric and abolished by international consensus, resonate in the shadows of modernity. Despite the considerable progress made in the realm of human rights, these forms of exploitation continue to cast a dark and enduring shadow over our globalized world.

Historically, slavery manifested as a brutal and inhumane institution that afflicted millions, creating an indelible stain on human history. The transatlantic slave trade, in particular, stands as a stark reminder of the depths to which humanity can descend in the pursuit of economic gain and dominance. While the 19th-century abolitionist movement heralded the end of legal slavery in many parts of the world, it did not eradicate the underlying motivations that drive exploitation.

In our contemporary era, the vestiges of historical slavery have transformed into new and insidious manifestations collectively known as neo-slavery. These encompass a spectrum of dehumanizing practices, including forced labor, debt bondage, sex trafficking, and child exploitation. These practices persist and, in some instances, thrive, raising profound questions about the efficacy of international efforts to combat them.

The persistence of neo-slavery and human trafficking in a modern world with robust legal frameworks and increased global awareness is a compelling and urgent problem. Despite international conventions and domestic legislation aimed at eradicating these crimes, they remain pervasive, affecting millions of individuals, particularly the most vulnerable in society.

Conceptualization of Neo-Slavery and Human Trafficking

Today's world is home to a number of transnational criminal enterprises, including human trafficking.

The US Department of Health and Human Services (2011) states that "after drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings with the illegal arms industry as the second largest criminal industry in the world today; it is the fastest growing criminal industry" (Exodus-Cry, 2012, p. 3). Human trafficking is acknowledged by scholars as a crime against human beings (Huntley, 2013) or a crime against humanity (Obokata, 2005; Duru and Ogbonnaya, 2012). A scholarly motion to examine making the crime a "self-standing international crime" has also been made (Huntley, 2013:7, 9). Under a variety of international laws, human trafficking is a common instance of a global crime.

The term "neo" or "contemporary" slavery has been used to describe human trafficking (Exodus-Cry 2012; UNODC 2012). It is "modern-day slavery done for the purpose of sexual and human exploitation," according to Hassan (2012:para.1). Human trafficking thus breaches human dignity and dehumanizes it through exploitation, commercialization, and other forms of maltreatment. The roots of neo-slavery can be traced to historical slavery, particularly the enduring practices that continued after formal abolition. This includes various forms of labor exploitation like sharecropping, peonage, and indentured servitude, which laid the foundation for contemporary neo-slavery (Bales, 2016).

Human trafficking, in its most basic form, is the acquisition of individuals through unethical means, such as coercion, fraud, or deception, with the intention of exploiting them (UNODC,2018). More specifically, human trafficking includes the following: the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of individuals through threats, the use of force or other forms of coercion, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. (Palermo Protocol, Dave-Odigie 2008: 63). The use of coercion distinguishes human trafficking from human smuggling; a victim of trafficking is unlike an illegal migrant not free when the destination is reached (Hernandez & Rudolph, 2011, Danailova-Trainor & Laczko, 2010). Human trafficking involves three fundamental elements: (a) action (b) means and (c) purpose of exploitation. It is seen as a process involving a number of connected actions rather than a single act at a particular time, as described in the table below:

Elements of human trafficking	What this means
Action	Recruitment, transfer, transportation, harboring or receipt, which includes an element of movement whether national or cross-border;
Means	Threat or use of force, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability.
Purpose of exploitation	For example, sexual exploitation, forced labor or domestic servitude, slavery, financial exploitation, removal of organs

Source: Compiled from Huntley (2013:4)

All three mentioned elements must be demonstrated to prove criminal responsibility for human trafficking, except for child trafficking, where the method of transportation is deemed irrelevant (Huntley, 2013:5). Depending on how it operates, human trafficking can be either national (internal) or transnational (international) (Dave-Odigie, 2008; Duru and Ogbonnaya, 2012; UNODC 2012). While transnational human trafficking

occurs across international borders, internal human trafficking takes place within a single nation. While transnational trafficking is covered by international law, internal trafficking is a matter of state law (Huntley, 2013).

Neo-slavery and human trafficking encompass a wide range of exploitative practices, each with its own characteristics and manifestations. The different types of human trafficking and neo-slavery includes forced labor, debt bondage, child labor, forced marriage, sex trafficking, child trafficking, organ trafficking,

Forced Labor: Forced labor, a form of neo-slavery, involves individuals compelled to work against their will through threats, coercion, or violence. This may occur in various sectors, including agriculture, construction, and domestic work (Bales, 2016).

Debt Bondage: Debt Bondage occurs when individuals are forced to work to repay a debt, often with exorbitant interest rates that keep them in perpetual servitude. It is a prevalent form of neo-slavery in regions with high levels of poverty (Skrivankova, 2010).

Child Labor: Child labor is a significant concern, with millions of children subjected to hazardous work conditions, robbing them of their childhood and educational opportunities. It takes various forms, from agriculture to manufacturing (UNICEF, 2021).

Bonded Labor: Bonded labor involves individuals who have pledged their labor as collateral for a debt. They work for the creditor until the debt is repaid, but exploitative terms often make repayment nearly impossible, resulting in long-term servitude (Anderson, 2010).

Sex Trafficking: Sex trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, or harboring of individuals through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Victims are often subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in brothels, on the streets, or through online platforms (UNODC, 2018)

Labor Trafficking: Labor trafficking encompasses the recruitment, transportation, or harboring of individuals for forced labor or services. Victims may work in various industries, including agriculture, construction, domestic work, and manufacturing, often under exploitative conditions (UNODC, 2018).

Child Trafficking: Child trafficking specifically targets minors for various forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation and forced labor. Children are especially vulnerable due to their physical and emotional dependency (UNODC, 2018).

Organ Trafficking: Organ trafficking involves the illegal trade of organs, often obtained from vulnerable individuals through coercion or violence. These organs are then sold to recipients in need, fueling a black-market trade (Budiani-Saberi et al., 2009).

Forced Marriage: Forced marriage can be a form of human trafficking when individuals, often women and girls, are coerced or deceived into marriages where they endure exploitation and abuse. This includes sexual exploitation and domestic servitude (UNODC, 2018).

Socio-economic factors are primarily the driving force behind human trafficking. The perpetrators view it as a way to amass wealth, while the victims are lured by promises of a better quality of life.

Causes and Contributing Factors Behind Neo-Slavery and Human Trafficking

Understanding the causes and contributing factors behind neo-slavery and human trafficking is essential for effective prevention and intervention.

Poverty: Poverty is a prominent underlying factor in both neo-slavery and human trafficking. Individuals living in poverty are more vulnerable to exploitation due to their limited economic opportunities and desperation to escape destitution (Bales, 2016). Poverty forces people into situations where they are willing to accept low-paying or hazardous jobs, making them susceptible to exploitation.

Lack of Education: A lack of education, particularly among marginalized communities, contributes to vulnerability. Limited access to quality education leaves individuals with fewer skills and fewer opportunities to secure decent employment, making them attractive targets for traffickers and enslavers (Anderson, 2010).

Unemployment: High levels of unemployment, especially among youth populations, create a pool of potential victims. The lack of legitimate job prospects drives individuals to seek employment in riskier sectors, increasing their susceptibility to exploitation (Skrivankova, 2010).

Demand for Cheap Labor and Goods (Global Supply Chains): The demand for low-cost goods fuels neo-slavery practices within global supply chains. Companies seeking to reduce production costs may turn a blind eye to labor exploitation further down the supply chain, perpetuating neo-slavery (Anderson, 2010).

Consumerism: The modern consumerist culture, characterized by the demand for cheap products and services, indirectly supports human trafficking. The need to meet these demands can lead to the exploitation of vulnerable workers (Bales, 2016).

Forced Displacement: Displaced populations, whether due to conflict, environmental factors, or economic hardship, are highly susceptible to exploitation. The loss of stable homes and livelihoods makes them easy targets for human traffickers (Zhang & Zhao, 2018).

Migration: The desire for a better life and economic opportunities drives migration, but it can also expose individuals to human trafficking risks. Migrants, particularly those in irregular situations, often lack legal protection and are at the mercy of exploitative employers or traffickers (UNODC, 2018).

Gender-Based Discrimination and vulnerability: Gender discrimination and inequalities play a significant role in both neo-slavery and human trafficking. Women and girls are disproportionately affected, with sexual exploitation being a common form of trafficking. Unequal power dynamics make them more vulnerable to exploitation (Bales, 2016).

Child Vulnerability: Children are especially vulnerable due to their physical and emotional dependency. Traffickers and enslavers target children for forced labor, child soldiering, and sexual exploitation, exploiting their vulnerabilities (Skrivankova, 2010).

Conflict Zones: Areas affected by conflict and instability provide fertile ground for neo-slavery and human trafficking. Disrupted governance and law enforcement allow trafficking networks to operate with impunity (UNODC, 2018).

Weak Governance: Fragile states with weak governance structures struggle to combat human trafficking and protect vulnerable populations. Corruption and inadequate law enforcement contribute to the perpetuation of these crimes (Zhang & Zhao, 2018).

All these factors contribute to the perpetuation of these grave human rights violations and understanding these underlying drivers is crucial for designing effective strategies to combat neo-slavery and human trafficking and protect those at risk.

Effects of Neo-Slavery and Human Trafficking on Victims

Neo-slavery and human trafficking inflict profound and enduring harm on their victims. This section explores the multifaceted effects and social consequences of these crimes, emphasizing the physical, psychological, and social toll they exact on individuals who are subjected to exploitation.

Physical Abuse and Injury: Victims of neo-slavery and human trafficking often endure physical abuse, including beatings, sexual violence, and forced labor in hazardous conditions. Such mistreatment can lead to severe injuries, chronic health problems, and even death (Bales, 2016).

Neglect and Deprivation: Many victims suffer from neglect and deprivation, including inadequate food, shelter, and medical care. Prolonged periods of substandard living conditions can result in malnutrition and other health issues (UNODC, 2018).

Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): The trauma experienced by victims can lead to PTSD, characterized by flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety. Survivors often struggle with emotional scars long after their exploitation ends (Zhang & Zhao, 2018).

Depression and Anxiety: Victims frequently battle depression, anxiety disorders, and feelings of hopelessness due to the emotional abuse, isolation, and coercion they endure (Budiani-Saberi et al., 2009).

Stigmatization: Many victims face social stigmatization and rejection, especially those who have experienced sexual exploitation. This stigma can exacerbate their trauma and hinder their reintegration into society (UNODC, 2018).

Social Isolation: Victims often experience social isolation, as traffickers employ tactics to alienate them from their families and communities. This isolation can persist even after rescue (Budiani-Saberi et al., 2009).

Loss of Income and Economic Independence: Forced labor victims may experience a significant loss of income and economic independence due to exploitative work conditions. This can have long-term financial repercussions (Anderson, 2010)

Debt Burden: Debt bondage victims may carry a lifelong burden of unmanageable debt, further limiting their economic opportunities and perpetuating their vulnerability (Skrivankova, 2010).

Family Disruption: Neo-slavery and human trafficking can disrupt families as victims are often separated from their loved ones. This separation can result in emotional distress and hardship for families (UNODC, 2018).

Intergenerational Effects: The trauma experienced by victims may have intergenerational effects, impacting the mental health and well-being of their children and future generations (Budiani-Saberi et al., 2009).

Challenges of Neo-Slavery and Human Trafficking

Understanding the challenges posed by neo-slavery and human trafficking is essential for developing effective strategies to combat these grave human rights violations. This chapter identifies and examines the multifaceted obstacles faced in the prevention, detection, and prosecution of these crimes.

Hidden Nature of Crimes: Traffickers often operate covertly, concealing their activities behind legitimate businesses or within underground networks, making it challenging for law enforcement to detect and investigate. Victims are often kept hidden, isolated, and under constant surveillance, making it difficult for them to seek help or for authorities to identify and rescue them (Bales, 2016).

Victims are frequently subjected to fear, threats, and coercion, which can deter them from reporting their exploitation to law enforcement agents or seek assistance.

Jurisdictional Issues and Weak Legal Frameworks: Many countries lack comprehensive legislation specifically addressing neo-slavery and human trafficking. Legal gaps and ambiguities make it difficult to prosecute traffickers and provide adequate protection to victims (UNODC, 2018).

According to Bales, (2016). Even when laws exist, varying definitions of these crimes across countries can lead to inconsistencies in prosecutions and hinder international cooperation (Neo-slavery and human trafficking often involve traffickers and victims crossing multiple international borders. This complex, transnational nature of crimes can create jurisdictional challenges. Weak legal frameworks and jurisdictional issues can create a sense of impunity for traffickers who exploit these gaps to avoid prosecution, they may continue their criminal activities with little fear of consequences (Budiani-Saberi et al., 2009). Inadequate legislation and jurisdictional issues can result in insufficient legal protection for victims, and this leaves survivors vulnerable to further exploitation and retribution.

Lack of Comprehensive Data and Underreporting: One of the central problems in combating neo-slavery and human trafficking is the underreporting of cases. Victims often remain hidden due to fear, mistrust of authorities, or lack of awareness of their own exploitation.

Even when cases are reported, victims may not be identified or categorized correctly. The complexity and diverse manifestations of these crimes can lead to misidentification or misclassification, hampering accurate data collection (Budiani-Saberi et al., 2009). Also, data collection efforts are inconsistent across regions and countries. Variations in definitions, methodologies, and resources hinder the comparability of data, making it challenging to assess the global scale of the problem (Zhang & Zhao, 2018) Limited data collection and research on neo-slavery and human trafficking hinder the development of evidence-based policies and interventions (UNODC, 2018). Finally, the lack of comprehensive data impedes our ability to fully understand the scope, patterns, and

dynamics of neo-slavery and human-trafficking and this knowledge gap hinders the development of targeted prevention and intervention strategies.

Corruption: The fight against neo-slavery and human trafficking is profoundly impacted by the insidious challenge of corruption. Corruption within law enforcement agencies can manifest through bribery and collusion with traffickers. Officials may turn a blind eye to trafficking activities or even actively protect traffickers in exchange for financial gain (UNODC, 2018). Corrupt practices can compromise the integrity of investigations, hindering the identification of victims and the gathering of evidence against traffickers and it can infiltrate legal proceedings, leading to compromised trials where traffickers receive lenient sentences or escape prosecution altogether (Budiani-Saberi et al., 2009).

Also, witnesses and victims may face intimidation or threats to remain silent or change their testimony, often orchestrated by corrupt individuals protecting traffickers (UNODC, 2018). Corruption reinforces a sense of impunity for traffickers, as they believe they can operate without fear of legal consequences, and this perpetuates a cycle of exploitation. Finally, corruption erodes public trust in law enforcement and government institutions, making victims less likely to seek help or cooperate with authorities.

Economic Interests: The scourge of neo-slavery and human trafficking is often fueled by economic interests that perpetuate exploitative practices. Industries and sectors that rely on low-cost labor, often provided by exploited workers, find it economically advantageous to perpetuate neo-slavery and human trafficking (Bales, 2016). Traffickers and criminal networks involved in these crimes may reap substantial profits, further incentivizing their continuation and expansion.

As stated by UNODC, 2018, regions with limited economic opportunities, communities may become economically dependent on industries or sectors that engage in exploitative practices, perpetuating a cycle of exploitation and victims often come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds with few alternatives for employment, making them susceptible to traffickers promising better opportunities. Also, economic interests may extend to lobbying and influencing policymakers, shaping legislation and regulations in ways that favor exploitative industries and government officials may be hesitant to enforce regulations and labor laws against industries with significant economic influence, perpetuating conditions that enable exploitation (Bales, 2016).

Addressing the challenges associated with neo-slavery and human trafficking is paramount for the global community.

The Way Forward

In the relentless battle against the dark underbelly of neo-slavery and human trafficking, a comprehensive strategy emerges. To move forward effectively, we must connect the dots and build a cohesive plan that draws from international frameworks, best practices, and the lessons we have learned. This serves as a roadmap, a clear and interconnected path toward a world free from the manacles of exploitation.

As a starting point, our commitment must be to bolster the legal underpinnings of our crusade. We must enact and enforce comprehensive legislation that unequivocally

condemns all forms of human trafficking. These laws should also encompass robust provisions for victim protection and support.

To complement this, international collaboration becomes paramount. As these crimes transcend borders, bilateral and multilateral agreements must facilitate the extradition and prosecution of traffickers operating across these unyielding boundaries and at the core of our strategy lies the unwavering resolve to support survivors. We must, therefore, enhance victim identification processes, victim-centered approaches must be the cornerstone of our endeavors, prioritizing the well-being and safety of survivors.

This commitment extends further into long-term rehabilitation and reintegration programs. By addressing the physical, psychological, and economic needs of survivors, we empower them to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society and we must embark on a mission of awareness and education. Public awareness campaigns will illuminate the path, equipping communities with the knowledge to recognize trafficking and the courage to report it.

Simultaneously, we invest in education programs, particularly in vulnerable communities. By empowering individuals with information and resilience, and the importance of self-esteem, we fortify them against the siren call of exploitation, also we turn our attention to the economic engines that drive these crimes. Companies must assume responsibility for their supply chains, ensuring that they remain untainted by exploitation. Transparent supply chains and ethical business practices become our weapons against the chains of slavery and similarly, consumers wield influence through their choices. By consciously supporting businesses that adhere to ethical labor practices, they help to erode the demand for trafficked goods and services. Moreover, we must consider poverty alleviation as an integral prevention strategy, by lifting individuals and communities out of poverty, we reduce their vulnerability to traffickers. Economic stability provides individuals with choices and the ability to resist exploitative offers.

Poverty alleviation disrupts traffickers' recruitment tactics. When potential victims have access to education and better employment opportunities, traffickers find it increasingly difficult to find willing victims, poverty alleviation programs empower communities to protect themselves against trafficking.

Equipped with knowledge and determination, our law enforcement agencies are poised for action. Investment in their capacity through training and resources is imperative. This will enable them to effectively investigate and prosecute traffickers.

Concurrently, we must safeguard the rights of victims throughout legal proceedings. Specialized units within law enforcement should oversee cases with sensitivity to victims' needs, ensuring their protection and support. Ultimately, it is through collective action, both at the international and community levels, that we can hope to eradicate these grave human rights violations.

Conclusion

Neo-slavery and human trafficking represent dark corners of our world that demand our unwavering attention and concerted efforts. While the challenges are significant, the collective yelling, but the much-challenged eager will to eradicate these crimes seem

stronger. By recognizing the diverse forms and far-reaching consequences, and adopting a multifaceted strategy, we can hope to create a future where every individual can live free from the chains of exploitation.

However, as this paper has demonstrated, we are not powerless in the face of these challenges. We have proposed a strategic roadmap that connects the dots, weaving together legal frameworks, victim-centered approaches, awareness campaigns, ethical business practices, and strengthened law enforcement. This roadmap leads us toward a world where exploitation will be vanquished, and human dignity restored and upheld.

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