

ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNALAvailable Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 04 No. 02. October-December 2025. Page# 2329-2342

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17833938>**Women Trafficking in Pakistan: Patterns, Causes, Consequences, and Legal Strategies for Prevention****Afeefa Zahid**

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Email: imtiazahmad@uosahiwal.edu.pk**Abstract**

Women's trafficking is also one of the most widespread human rights abuses in Pakistan that is a manifestation of innermost socio-economic vulnerabilities, gendered inequities as well as the weakness of institutions. This paper analyses the patterns, causes, and effects of women traffickers in Pakistan through a doctrinal research and secondary data analysis on the topic and analysis of the suitability of legal and policy frameworks that exist. It contends that poverty, political instability, gender-based discrimination and existence of organized criminal networks in the country and internationally contribute to perpetuating trafficking. The article raises issues of the physical, psychological, and socio-economic damage experienced by women in the trafficking business and criticizes loopholes in the enforcement capacity of the country, victim support, and inter-agency coordination in Pakistan. It ends with the suggestions of strategically oriented reforms which are targeted preventive initiatives, better legal systems, survivor focused rehabilitation and improved international cooperation. The research paper also helps to comprehend the intricacies of the issue of female trafficking in Pakistan as well as gives policy-based suggestions on how the state response can be improved.

Keywords: *Women, Trafficking in Pakistan: Patterns, Causes, Consequences, and Legal Strategies for Prevention*

Introduction

The trafficking of women in Pakistan has become an intricate and highly embedded criminal organization. Being one of the nations of origin, transit, and destination, Pakistan has an ambivalent situation in the regional and international trafficking circles. Women and girls get targeted disproportionately towards sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, child marriage, and other coercive actions which function in both formal and informal arenas of society. Combination of poverty, illiteracy, patriarchal society and the continued political unrests has led to the situation that traffickers are now finding it easy to recruit, transport and abuse women without fear and with relative impunity (Bashir, 2025a).

Trafficking remains a hidden phenomenon that is hard to quantify precisely because of its secretive nature and the under level and undesirable image of the victims. There are also major gaps in the official data due to underreporting, fear of retaliation, the shame of the society, mistrust to the law enforcement, and the secret activities of trafficking syndicates. However, the available literature and case studies present an on-going demonstration that trafficking network (usually including organized crime networks, lawless facilitators, local recruiters, and foreign involved systems) still find vulnerability in the governance, borders and social protection structures. It is by these networks that Pakistan has porous borders, the regulators are relaxed, and the socio-cultural norms have ensured an on-going discriminated gender-based system and constrained the autonomy of women and their freedom of movement (Kashif et al., 2025).

The effects of female trafficking go well beyond the direct exploitation. The victims can usually be subjected to extreme physical violence, sexual abuse, psychological consequences, economic loss and social alienation. Most of them experience long-term reproductive health problems, psychological health issues, and profound emotional trauma due to repetitive victimization and intimidation (Meshkovska et al., 2015). Denial of basic human rights, including the freedom of movement, dignity, bodily integrity, access to justice, and membership in society, result in lifelong vulnerabilities that marginalize survivors further. Further, sexual exploitation and forced labour stigma can greatly hinder the process of reintegration, leaving the former victims vulnerable to re-trafficking or re-victimization (Baig et al., 2024).

It is against this wider context that one has to perceive the trafficking of women in Pakistan as a consequence of a combination of socio-economic, cultural and political factors and not criminal activities in themselves. The absence of wealth, lack of employment, sex-based discrimination, lack of education, and weak institutions of a state make good breeding grounds allowing traffickers to infiltrate the communities. At the same time, the fragility is increased by regional crises, internal migrations, and humanitarian crisis, and due to globalization and development of technology, traffickers have been able to develop their businesses with the help of new digital platforms, rental recruitment agencies, and new markets of exploitation (Gerassi, 2015). Exploitative patterns, as well as the dynamics and structure of trafficking networks in and out of the country. It also analyzes the legal and policy frameworks in Pakistan along with their strengths, weaknesses and implementation issues. Through analysis of key topics at the international conventions, domestic laws, the literature of scholars, and practiced cases, the paper aims to discover strategic interventions that may improve adjustments to prevent and reinforce the law enforcement, safeguard victims and destroy the trafficking networks. Finally the study will also help in building a more sophisticated and evidence based concept about women trafficking in Pakistan as well as help in the formulation of holistic solutions to the issue based on national concerns as well as international practice (Omoigberale & Anyanwu, 2025).

Literature Review

Human Trafficking is so widely known to be one of the worst crimes of human rights and their fundamental freedoms. The most authoritative definition is the one developed by the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (2000), commonly called the Palermo Protocol and states as follows: trafficking is defined as the process where a person is recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received

through means of coercion or deception, an abuse of power or the exploitation of his or her vulnerability to provide labour, sexual exploitation, servitude or organ procurement (Perkumienė et al., 2023). It is common among scholars to note that this definition provides a good representation of the multifaceted interaction of forceful schemes and structural weaknesses that have led to the perpetuation of trafficking networks around the world. Present-day literature is often referring to the trafficking as an expression of modern slavery, fuelled by structural inequalities, lax regulation policies, and to grow in criminal activity that capitalizes on gaps in domestic and international legal frameworks (Renzikowski, 2017).

Studies in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas have shown globally that trafficking has the same patterns which are based on socio-economic differences. According to comparative studies, there are some similarities in hiring strategies and in most instances these involve tricks to lure them, job offers, or arranged marriages. Capturing the victims be it domestically or inter-regionally, is usually aided by these middlemen or women who use their fake documents, bribe and or undercover networks. After being trafficked, the victims are then isolated, intimidated, beaten, psychologically manipulated, and their finances enslaved. According to the findings of international research women and girls are subjected to unequal treatment in the majority of cases because of the established gender inequality, low access to education and work, forced gender views of female autonomy and the high gender violence prevalence. Several researchers also emphasize that demand is a key factor that facilitates trafficking as a lucrative global trade in the demand of sexual services, cheap labour, domestic labour, and illegal organ transplants (Rao & Presenti, 2012).

The literary works in South Asia display the interdependence of the practice of trafficking and socio-cultural traditions of dowry, early marriage, bonded labour, and discrimination against caste. The same reasons are indicated in the studied cases in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Afghanistan where simple poverty, political instability, poor enforcement of laws, external borders, and well-structured trafficking networks are also at play. Studies have also shown that geo-political tensions, humanitarian crises like internal displacement, floods and conflicts all contribute considerably to vulnerability and especially to women, who are vulnerable due to the absence of social and institutional security (Rahman, 2011).

In the context of Pakistan, there is an agreed body of scholarly literature which single out poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, gender discrimination and lack of adequate social protection mechanisms as the dominant motivation to perpetuate trafficking. Many of these researches observe that traffickers tend to exploit socio-economic misfortunes, and in this case, provide the vulnerable ladies with fake employment, marriage, or migration. The existence of weak institutions of governance, low state capacity, and political instabilities also contribute to the expansion of the trafficking networks the fact that organized criminal groups play the leading role in both domestic and transnational trafficking is supported by a considerable amount of literature. The networks are run to act in complex networks with recruiters, transporters, handlers and the corrupt officials along with financiers. They use the loopholes in the system of law enforcement, irregularities in border protection, and the absence of global coordination. It was also found that the trafficking networks in Pakistan do gain advantages through the well-entrenched patriarchal cultures in Pakistan that limit the freedom of

movement and the freedom of choice, making women highly manipulated and easy to control (Choudhry et al., 2019).

In spite of the accumulating research, researchers often identify important loopholes in the Pakistan data gathering and surveillance procedures. Trafficking is a hidden problem and stigmatized, which causes poor and frequently inaccurate statistics due to the lack of coordinated country databases. This limits the possibility to measure the actual magnitude of trafficking and test the efficacy of interventions, such as legal and policy ones. Literature also glutathione the lack of efficiency in Pakistan on the application of anti-trafficking legislation, as it is characterized by the low rates of conviction, deficiency in service provision to victims, deficiency in law enforcement training, and absence of victim-focused treatment. Also, the academic literature encourages the necessity of greater empirical research that concentrates on victim experiences, the results of rehabilitation, and socio-cultural dynamics of the trafficking issue in particular areas in Pakistan (N. Khan, 2018).

On the whole, the literature reviewed supports the idea that the problem of trafficking in women is a multidimensional phenomenon, which is predetermined by structural inabilities, socio-economic deprivation, gender disparities, and criminal opportunism. Although much academic interest has already been focused on the identification of causal variables and the possibility of tracing trafficking pathways, there is a severe necessity of more fine-tuned, intersectional, and contextual research that can be utilized to effect evidence-based policy changes and advance the current protection systems (Pulla, 2014).

Socio-Economic Factors Driving Women Trafficking

Women trafficking in Pakistan is well entrenched in the structural socio-economic inequalities that form a facilitating space in which the people can be exploited. The intersecting aspects of these factors determine vulnerabilities, and traffickers make them complex to take advantage of. It has been proposed in the literature that trafficking is not just a crime but a socio-economic situation that is configured by poverty, gender discrimination, lack of education, and political turmoil. Knowledge of such drivers is critical in the development of specific interventions, which focus on the underlying factors and not only on their symptoms (Islam & Khan, 2025).

Poverty and Financial Vulnerability

The most dominant and widespread push factor of women trafficking in Pakistan is the poverty. Quite a good percentage of the population occupy the poverty line, especially in the rural and marginalized regions whereby livelihood is the unstable and low paying agricultural or informal labour. In such settings, the traffickers are likely to easily take advantage of economic desperation as they offer seemingly legitimate opportunities in employment, domestic work, marriage, or migration. Females in the poor families, contributing to the family income by irregular or no-paid labour, are the best targets of the false recruitment techniques (Lundqvist, 2024).

Vulnerability is further exacerbated by the lack of strong social protection mechanisms, including unemployment benefits, welfare or emergency financial assistance. The migration of underdeveloped regions to cities is fuelled by economic disparity between the urban and rural community, and traffickers promise them opportunities to be connected with employment. Acute financial pressures on the family can cause them to help

the victim move without knowing this with the assurance that they have trusted these middle men. Besides, debt bondage which is common in some of the industries establishes environments of exploitation in which women are traded, pressured or sold to traffickers as a form of repaying family debts. Women are also denied access to the formal employment and financial autonomy partly due to the economic marginalization caused by the gendering of labour division and the division of labour. This denies them the capacity to bargain and increases vulnerability to exploit schemes. Therefore, poverty does not have a single influence but rather it works with gendered economies to enhance the increasing risks of trafficking (Gezie et al., 2021).

Gendered Inequality and Patriarchy

In Pakistan, women trafficking is structurally determinant that revolves around gender inequality. Highly patriarchal standards imposed on women keep them at the lowest levels of the household and the society as a whole. Male guardianship, limited mobility, and authority based decision making, among other practices, considerably suppress the autonomy of women, and as a result, it becomes hard to put up against any form of coercion or seek assistance whenever one becomes a victim of traffickers (Aladejebi, 2024).

Gender-based violence is even normalized through patriarchal norms and culture of silence concerning abuse that perpetuates the culture of hiding as well as concealing the exploitations. In most societies, women are restricted to household spheres and going out of that sphere, even to get education or even a job, may be stigmatized. This seclusion lessens the awareness of the women in the tricks of trafficking and leaves them without support groups that would help to guard against their being snared up. Moreover, the vulnerabilities are supported by social norms that undermine the rights and dignity of women. In instances where women are trafficked to the sexual exploitation business, the victims tend to experience serious stigmatization and this discourages them against reporting criminal activities or seeking their justice. The perpetrators of trafficking use this stigma as they are aware that the families will reject and dismiss the survivors because of the perceived disgrace. Therefore, patriarchy serves both as a source of the trafficking and an obstacle to recovery after the trafficking (Banarjee et al., 2025).

Low level of Education and Skills Development

Poor access to education is another key cause of trafficking that is particularly high in the rural and less-developed areas of Pakistan. The high drop-out rates of girls, gender differences in school enrolments and absence of safe or culturally accepted learning centres limits the role of women to get knowledge and have the ability to acquire important life skills. The lack of literacy also has a negative impact on judgment of the risks, fact check or detects misleading methods of recruiting people adapted by traffickers (Dalziel, 2013).

This vulnerability is intensified by the fact that there are no vocational and skills-development programs that are specific to women. Devoid of being trained in marketable skills, the women are usually stuck in low or informal sectors which are neither legally safeguarded nor are the areas hotspots of recruiting trafficked workers. The traffickers take advantage of this loophole by providing apparently brilliant opportunities either at the factory, in the home or overseas that promise a secure income but only to be abused.

Education is not only improving the socio-economic opportunities but also raising the level of rights knowledge and resources awareness. With fewer school years, women will not be aware of legal safeguards, they are not

prepared to demand terms of employment, and they do not have the strength to request assistance after being trafficked. In such a way, education is both a protective and a means of becoming autonomous, and the lack of it makes good ground to exploitation (Rolleston, 2014).

Political Uncertainty and Strife

Historically, political instability, conflict in the region and internal displacement has all resulted to the increased rates of trafficking in Pakistan. In the conflict-affected provinces including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Balochistan, and adjacent border areas, there are weakened institutions of the state, alienated law enforcement and corruption is rampant. The fact that these conditions give traffickers a free hand to do what they want with little chances of being caught or prosecuted is a plus (Samara, 2022).

Forced migration as a result of military operations, natural calamities, or inter country migration is the generation of acute vulnerabilities. Women who are internally displaced or refugee populations (e.g., in Afghanistan and other conflict areas) tend to lead a precarious life where access to shelter, legal documentation or income generating opportunities is low. Traitors were used to trafficking networks who often exaggerate their services, jobs or transportation with such situations. The women who do not have identity documents or legal status are especially vulnerable as they become feared to get arrested or deported, so they keep their distance with the authorities. Conflict also breaks the community set ups and social support networks which normally offer refuge to women. In places where the government is feeble, there is a threat that other power systems, including militia factions or crime organizations, will take over and help in making the trafficking a source of income. It is also the case that political instability provides a sphere of exploitation, which is both a direct and indirect contributor to the processes of trafficking (Mitchell & Pizzi, 2021).

Trends and Impact of Women Trafficking

The solution addresses the problem of women trafficking in a series of related exploitative patterns each of which mirrors a specific socio-economic and political vulnerability in Pakistan. These patterns can be overlapping and the victims may be subjected to several forms of abuse at the same time. The knowledge of these forms of exploitation is important in formulating specific policy responses and protection systems (Allan et al., 2023).

Forced Prostitution

Coerced prostitution has been the worst and cruel type of trafficking on women in Pakistan. Victims are usually enticed by false employment, marriage, or migration to be taken into the brothels, homes and secret sex markets. After trafficking, women are physically abused incessantly, sexually assaulted repeatedly and also imprisoned and intimidated. Traffickers use various methods of coercion such as threat of family members, debt bondage, seizing identity documents and psychological control to make people do it.

Long-term effects on the health of survivors can be sexually transmitted infections, reproductive complications, chronic pain, and very serious psychological conditions, depression and dissociation. Stigma that is related to prostitution further isolates the victims and re-entry and pursuit of justice by victims becomes extremely hard. To most victims, the fear of being rejected socially and being retaliated against by traffickers does not allow them to report the activities or even seek assistance, and so they remain in various cycles of exploitation (Allan et al., 2023).

Domestic Servitude and Forced Labour

Forced labour and domestic servitude is also another condition of women trafficking in Pakistan especially in urban households, fields of agriculture, brick furnace, and informal industries. Women and girls trafficked as domestic workers have limited mobility, surveillance, and total reliance of employers to get food, shelter and safety. Abuses are those related to excessive work hours, no remuneration, verbal and physical abuse, sexual harassment, and absence of medical treatment. Domestic spaces are invisible hence difficult to detect and rescue. Workers who were trafficked can hardly interact with the outside world, their rights are not informed, and they are often in isolation. In the factories or farmlands, trafficked women can also be exposed to risky working conditions without the use of protection gears or regulation. Forced labour is also enhanced by bonded labour arrangements whereby debts, either real or fictitious, tie forced women to exploitative managers in such a way that they have no chance of evading the same (Lee, 2005).

Child Marriage

In Pakistan, child marriage is a cause and effect of trafficking. Traffickers take advantage of socio cultural traditions like dowry, vani, and watta-satta through the practice of creating sham marriages to exploit and abuse an individual either through sexual exploitation, domestic slavery, or cross borders selling. Minor girls are forced to marry because of economic crunch, family feuds, or through force thus becoming part of the marriages which covers the tracks of trafficking. The repercussions of trafficked child brides are so harsh. They also encounter early pregnancies with great maternal health risks namely obstetric complications and reproductive trauma. Domestic violence is a social norm, since young girls are deprived of bargaining forces and are controlled by much older husbands. Their education is terminated crucially, which restricts economic opportunities in the future and traps cycles of dependency and poverty. Child marriage therefore identifies with trafficking in the aspects of accepting exploitation in the pretext of cultural heritage (Muzaffar et al., 2018).

Organ Trafficking

Organ trafficking, however, being less common, is a very extremist and exploitative side of human trafficking in Pakistan. Impoverished women and girls can be manipulated or fooled into taking out organs and especially kidneys in exchange promise of money, medical treatment or even a job. These business activities are provided by the absence of regulatory control over certain medical institutions and the collaboration of criminal producers. Health effects of the victims include pain that is not cured, infection, disability and psychological trauma to the victim throughout a lifetime. Fear, ignorance or informality surrounding the procedures is as a result of which the exploitation is rarely reported. Organ traffic further highlights how poverty, crime opportunity and ineffective enforcers converge (Ambagtsheer, 2025).

Consequences of Women Trafficking

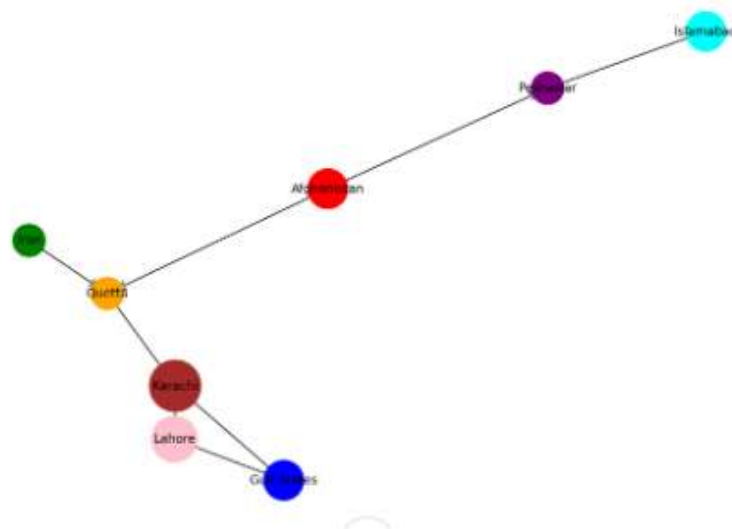
Trafficking has far-reaching and prolonged effects. Survivors suffer great emotional, physical and psychological trauma that may have repercussions in all areas of life. There is social stigmatization and community rejection, which complicates the process of reintegration, and many of them hide their experiences or become susceptible to re-trafficking. Lack of education, absence of job prospects and discrimination contribute to poverty in form

of economic deprivation. The compulsory summation of these damages strengthens the structural disparities and reinforces the wider processes of gendered fringe in the Pakistani society (Naik, 2018).

Trafficking Routes and Criminal Networks

The trafficking patterns in Pakistan are determined by the geography, economy and socio political factors. Traffickers use a blend of both cross-border and internal routes having the aid of well-developed networks comprising recruiters, transporters, facilitators, brokers, and corrupt officials (A. Khan et al., 2022).

Fig. 1 Routes and Network



Cross-Border Trafficking

The strategic location of Pakistan makes the country a transit and destination of the regional trafficking. The open borders to Afghanistan, Iran and India help the traffickers to transport victims across countries and with few checks. The women are trafficked to the Gulf States, Iran, and Afghanistan and in other cases, southeast of Asia and Europe. A significant number of victims are carried with the help of forged traveling papers or crossings on the border, which are controlled by criminal syndicates.

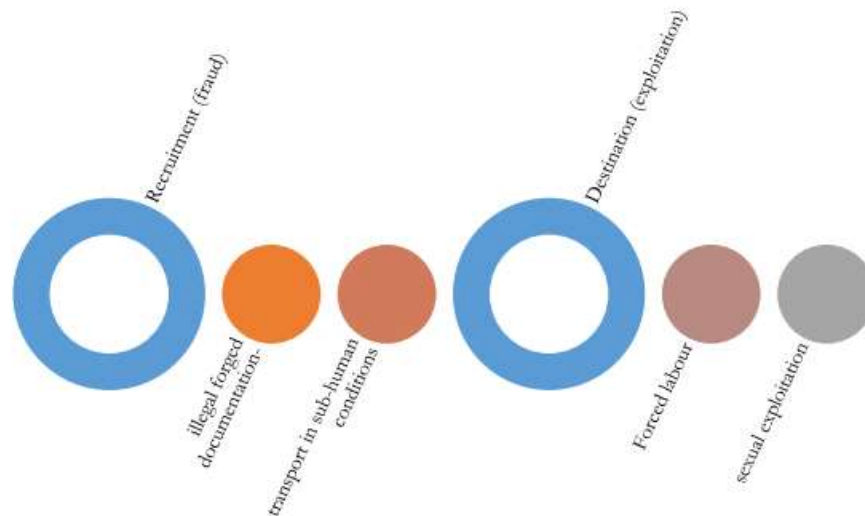
A weak border security coupled with certain border officials being corrupt encourages the movement of trafficked women. Migration basing on conflicts in Afghanistan has increased vulnerability and the women refugees are mostly targeted as they lack legal status and protection. The routes of transnational trafficking are also dynamic and they will adapt rapidly to the political situation, enforcement patterns, and the alteration of migration flows at the regions (Zahid, 2023).

Internal Trafficking and Process

Internal movement is widespread in Pakistan and in many cases is not easily observable as compared to cross-border. Rural and poor areas such as Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan are left without

women and girls, who are transported to such cities as Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and Faisalabad. These sources provide victims in domestic servitude, forced prostitution, begging rings, agricultural labour and informal industries. Natural disasters, floods, droughts, and conflict make people vulnerable to internal displacement. Desperate families can hand over their daughters to traffickers who masquerade as agents of employment or marriage brokers. Lack of internal monitoring of migration and poor enforcement of the law in the rural areas permits the traffickers to act freely (Bashir, 2025b).

Fig 1. Trafficking Process



Source: <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Human-Smuggling-and-Trafficking.pdf>

Organized Crime Networks

In Pakistan, human trafficking is prevailed by well-organized and cross border linked criminal groups. The networks work with complex hierarchies that include local recruiters, transposes, document forgers, financiers and global facilitators. They use recruitment, transportation, confinement, exploitation and money laundering in their activities. Criminal networks are taking advantage of the institutional vulnerabilities such as corruption, inadequate training, inability to coordinate activities between agencies, and resource deficit. Lack of good forensic capacity, poor witness protection mechanisms, and lack of fear of retaliation often hamper investigations. Consequently, trafficking continues to be a non-risk and a high profit business by the criminal groups (Campana & Varese, 2022).

Laws and Implementation Problems

Tremendous efforts have been made to combat trafficking in Pakistan by reforming legislation and undertaking policy actions. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (PTPA) 2018 can be seen as an important step forward as the national law is now in line with the UN Palermo Protocol by making different forms of trafficking a crime, increasing the punishment, and now defines the various offenses within legal contexts aligned with

international standards. Pakistan has formed bilateral and multilateral association with the UN, regional organizations and international law enforcement as the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has constituted special anti-trafficking units. The enforcement is weak and inconsistent despite these developments. The discrepancies between law and practice remain to sabotage Pakistan anti-trafficking (Hussain & Bashir, 2025). Law enforcement bodies do not always have the technical skills, investigation equipment and special training to cope with the complicated cases of trafficking. In a few instances, government officials also support trafficking by being bribed or not responding to complaints or even by being involved in recruitment or border trafficking. The high rates of low conviction due to complex legal processes, lack of preservation of evidence, and intimidation of witnesses are sources of deterrent degradation. Survivors have to encounter criminalization, detention, or deportation instead of protection and rehabilitation. Poor rehabilitation services- Shelters, psychological counselling, legal aid, and reintegration programs are minimal, with the exception of these services to major cities. There are cultural taboos about sexual exploitation in the society whereby the victims do not report crimes or do not seek support. These obstacles indicate that law changes will not help to counterattack trafficking effectively unless they reinforce institutional capacity, community involvement, and systems that can help their survivors. The combination of prevention and protection, prosecution, and partnerships, which are the main pillars of anti-trafficking systems, should be approached holistically.

Recommendations

Women trafficking in Pakistan needs to be approached in a multi-sectoral and rights-based approach including structural inequalities, strengthening institutional structures, and victim protection. The recommendations below give a roadmap to the policymakers, the law enforcement agencies, the civil societies, and international partners.

Enhance Prevention and Awareness Programs

The community is the most vulnerable area where prevention should be initiated. Integrated crisis awareness programs need to be incorporated in curricula through school approaches, women community centres and local systems of governance where families and young women will be educated on the tricks employed by the traffickers. The traditional and digital media platforms should be used to distribute culturally sensitive, multilingual messages to counter myths, illuminate the fraudulent recruiting networks and encourage reporting systems. The partnership with religious authorities, educators, and social workers will help increase the outreach within conservative communities where the trafficking stories are considered the taboo.

Increase Capacity of Law Enforcements

To achieve successful enforcement, police, border officials, prosecutors, and judges need special training on the use of trauma-informed approaches to investigate, collect evidence and interview victims in ways that are sensitive to victims. Incident specialized anti-trafficking courts can be used to consolidate the trials and minimise the delay caused to the proceeding as well as the rate of conviction. Internal accountability mechanisms have to be reaffirmed in the law enforcement agencies to fight corruption and complicity issues which are the catalysts making trafficking networks to go on without being detected.

Enhance Border Management Systems

The trafficking routes can be disrupted by modernizing their border management using biometric technology, sophisticated surveillance equipment, and tight-knit passenger data systems. The border guards and immigration officers should be given continuous education on how to identify the potential victims as well as detecting forged documents. There should be a coordinated joint operation with other countries especially those adjacent such as Afghanistan, Iran, and China to destroy transnational trafficking rings and assist victims in safe repatriation.

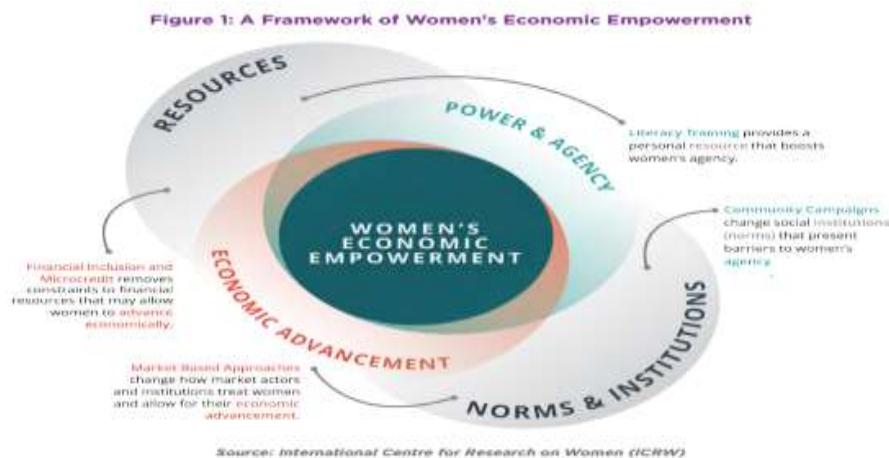
Offer Survivor-Centered Support

Protection and healing should rest upon a survivor-focused approach which places dignity, safety, and empowerment in the long term as its core values. The government must increase and empower shelters that are able to provide medical services, trauma counselling services, legal services and psychosocial services. Extensive reintegration plans, including vocational training, microfinance access, and educational scholarships, play an important role in diminishing predispositions to re-trafficking. To make the support programs responsive to the experiences of the survivors, they should be actively engaged in the designing of the programs.

Find Long-lasting Solutions by Structural Reform and increase women empowerment

The socio-economic causes of trafficking need long-term infrastructural investment in education, economic empowerment of women, and poverty-reduction efforts. By increasing the access of girls to schools, creating job opportunities to marginalized women, and improving social safety nets, it is possible to dramatically reduce vulnerability to manipulative ways traffickers, which will get them into the trap of sex trafficking. Gender equality policies, including inheritance, equal pay laws, etc. are also essential to enhance the socio-economic status and independent life of women.

Figure 1: A Framework of Women's Economic Empowerment



Source: <https://pakistan.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/pk-c972-national-report-on-the-status-of-women-s.pdf>

The International Cooperation should be encouraged

Due to the transnational character of trafficking, Pakistan needs to enhance partnership with international organizations, such as Interpol, UNODC, IOM and the cooperation with the countries in the region. The bilateral agreements must be centered on information exchange, mutual investigations, mutual legal assistance and repatriation of victims. Pakistan is able to deal with cross-border networks more effectively, which can be improved by participating in regional anti-trafficking forums and adopting the best practices.

Conclusion

Women trafficking in Pakistan are a human rights dilemma depending on an interweaving of a socio-economic, cultural, and political context. Extreme poverty, gender inequality, lack of education, and poor governance provide an easy avenue of exploitation, whereas institutional loopholes together with social weaknesses are exploited by organized criminal networks. Nevertheless, the recent legislative progress, along with the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2018, does not lead to the elimination of considerable enforcement difficulties, such as the lack of training, corruption, low rates of convictions, and the unavailability of the services focusing on the needs of the victims, in Pakistan.

Trafficking remains a persistent issue that should be addressed using a broader strategy beyond criminalization. The prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships, which protect the fundamental dynamics of the anti-trafficking tools across the world, have to be incorporated into a holistic approach. In order to build a more resilient and fair system, it is necessary to strengthen institutional capacity, improve cooperation across the borders, and empower survivors with the help of rehabilitation and socio-economic assistance. Of equal importance is dealing with the structural imbalance on which trafficking is based; specifically gender inequality and socio-economic marginalization.

Finally, the sustainable development presupposes the long-term political determination, where the rights of women take precedence and the accountability is enhanced, and the cooperation between the state institutions, civil society, and international organizations is encouraged. It is through this kind of coordinated efforts and inclusion that Pakistan will be able to fight the problem of women trafficking, protect vulnerable communities and fulfil her responsibilities as mandated by the national and international human rights law.

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