CHILD TRAFFICKING: THE OUTCOME OF POLITICAL FAILURE IN THE REGION

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Abstract

Children, on the one hand are the future of a nation, while on the other hand they are prone to diverse forms of ills of the society including child trafficking. There are many reasons behind their vulnerability to unwanted situation including the failure of political institution in fulfilling its responsibility to pave the way for better protected environment. The present study aims to analyze the dimension of child trafficking with special emphasis on its political aspect and attempt is made to find out association between political aspect and child trafficking by using statistical techniques. For the present study data is collected from 392 respondents including 116 university faculty, 103 crime reporters, and 173 advocates through a questionnaire, following the reliability test of Cronbach’s Alpha. Statistical analysis is made through Chi Square (\( \chi^2 \)) and Gamma tests (\( \gamma \)) to see the association between independent and dependent variables. The research reveals that a positive (\( \gamma=0.337 \)) and significant (\( p<0.05 \)) relationship is detected between forced displacement and child trafficking. A positive (\( \gamma=0.450 \)) and highly significant (\( p<0.05 \)) relationship is observed between child soldiering and trafficking. A positive (\( \gamma=0.381 \)) and significant (\( p<0.05 \)) relationship is found between refugee camps and child trafficking. Similarly a positive (\( \gamma=0.321 \)) and significant (\( p<0.05 \)) relationship is found between visa restrictions and child trafficking. Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that Regional conflicts has increased vulnerability of children to trafficking, these
conflicts need to be resolved without getting into delay by involving different stakeholders of the region.

**Key words:** Child trafficking, Political aspect, Peshawar, Association.

**Introduction:**

The term trafficking refers to a set of interrelated activities that encompass migration, prostitution as well as acts that violate human and children’s rights. The term signifies the illicit trade in human beings across international borders or within the same country (ILO\(^1\), 2002). Political instability is reported to provide room for traffickers to exploit the situation. Researchers indicated that increasing incidence of child trafficking suggests a great danger to the socio-economic and political order in society. In other words, political instability, socio-economic imbalance and deterioration have relationship with child trafficking. The greater the instability and disorder in the political and socio-economic system of the country the greater would be the chances of committing child trafficking (Ogbu, 2004; Salah, 2004). Similarly, Tumlin (2000) highlighted that Children are also more vulnerable to trafficking when they live in communities affected by political instability and armed conflict, environmental disasters and crises of modern development schemes that result in mass displacements of people. The recent Asian economic crisis and war like situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan has also been a factor in adding to children’s vulnerability to trafficking. Political instability has become a serious and threatening problem especially in developing and underdeveloped countries including Pakistan. Political stability plays an important role in keeping society integrated (Memon et al., 2011). Peace, harmony, civic order, institutional viability is the fruits of political stability (Michael, 1971). Conflicts, corruption, lack of political freedom causes instability and reduce the chances of development (Smith, 2002). The incapacity of political parties along with weak and fragile political culture as reported by Memon et al., (2011) are the reasons of political instability in Pakistan. Pakistan is indexed on 7\(^{th}\) position in the list of countries that are politically instable.

Weak governance and weak writ of law is associated on the one hand with political instability and on the other it provides opportunity of flourishing criminal syndicates and activities. ILO and UNICEF\(^2\) (2009);

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\(^{1}\) ILO stands for International Labor Organization

\(^{2}\) United Nations Children Fund
Nelson et al., (2004) reported that the factors responsible for child trafficking include poor governance, weakened writ of law especially in those countries which are either passing through a political turmoil or just entered the phase of post-conflict country. Lack of law and order pushes the already vulnerable populations, such as women, children, internally displaced people, and war refugees, into situations where they are even more at risk of becoming victims to trafficking.

Child trafficking results from the interaction of multiple vulnerability factors (Joffres, et al., 2008; ADB\(^3\), 2003; Sinha, 2006; ILO, 2006). For example, trafficking in Manipur has been fueled by years of civil unrest, the presence of armed forces, drug trafficking from neighboring Myanmar, and poverty. Areas affected by (or being affected) by militancy are the avenues of trafficking (Kapstein, 2006). Militancy and civil unrest increases the vulnerabilities of the children (Salah, 2004; Nelson et al., 2004; Bales, 1999). As Afghanistan, the most affected country due to internal and external arm conflict, war and militancy created a vulnerable environment for children. Afghan boys are recruited for militant training camps in Pakistan. Similarly, vulnerable situation exists in Colombia where children are forcefully and through tactics compelled to serve the purpose of guerrillas (US TIP\(^4\), 2009).

War, civil unrest, militancy forced people to leave their permanent abode and stayed in refugee camps, where, they are reported to be the target of traffickers including militant groups (Wolthuis & Blaak, 2001; ILO and UNICEF, 2009; Nelson et al., 2004). Arm conflict within and between countries deteriorate the socio-economic and political environment which put poor families at stake, on the other hand a conducive environment emerges for traffickers to flourish as indicated by Watts and Zimmerman (2002) ; Wolthuis and Blaak (2001); Moore (2001). It is evident from the study (see, e.g. Human Rights Watch, 2002) that in Europe after the fall of former Yugoslavia, the post conflict disorganized environment became conducive for trafficking. Even, the Nepali militant groups traffic girls to Indian brothels in order to fund their fight against the state as reported by Joffres et al. (2008).

Similar findings were derived by Kapstein (2006) who reported that African children are forcedly recruited by rebel groups. Children

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\(^3\) Asian Development Bank

\(^4\) United States Trafficking in Persons Report
from the conflict zones are reported to be the most vulnerable target for traffickers. Another study carried out by Fitzgibbon (2003) pointed that 120,000 children are recruited in armed struggle groups in Africa, in the civil war of Côte d’Ivoire children are reportedly serving fighting groups where negotiators are forcing the parties to stem using children. Similarly, IPEC-TBP\(^5\) (2007) revealed that in Northern Uganda, a rebel group (the Lord’s Resistance Army) that has been fighting government for the last 20 years abducted between 25,000-30,000 boys and girls and recruited them into its ranks as sex slaves, cooks, combatants and other forms of servitude. The first ever study, claimed by authors, carried out by Degirmencioğlu et al (2008) in Turkey revealed that the extreme forms of child labour in Turkey is due to poverty and internal displacement of families as a result of arm conflict, the poor and displaced parents willingly hire away their children to farmers and even criminal groups to work with for certain amount.

The camps of refugees are reported to be the easy target of traffickers. Refugee population is the most vulnerable group (ILO and UNICEF, 2009; Nelson et al., 2004). Examining the concept of vulnerability, Black (1994) argued that vulnerability should not be limited to the conditions of the individual alone rather should be contextually observed in the existing state policies and society characteristics. The vulnerability of the refugee camp dwellers is also associated with state policies and weak position. Trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation is a simmer problem in southern Africa, especially in Lesotho, Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa, and Zambia. South Africa is the destination for regional and extra-regional trafficking activities. Most of such targets are trafficked from refugee producing countries through the network of refugee’s resident in South Africa (Anderson, 2003).

One of the basic reasons described by researchers from different parts of the world is the inability of governments with respect to law making that gives rise to the pervasiveness of the issue of child trafficking, in other words lack of sound law is associated with the child trafficking. One of the reasons that depicted the inability of government is reported to be the government- judiciary tension (HRCP, 2011). Absence of judicial system and appropriate laws on child trafficking in Sub Saharan Africa is depicting government’s inability or low priority, as most of the perpetrators go unpunished (see, for example, Butegwa, \(^5\)International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour- Time Bound Program
Similarly, Young (2009) argued that when politicians fail to focus on the contentious complexities of human trafficking, the result is superficial definitions, and thus, research regarding the issue. This approach and lack of political will not only creates problems in the research but also the crime blossoms and affect the vulnerable community which is mostly poor, marginalized and weak member of the society among whom children is on top. Likewise, Laczko and Gramegna (2003) reported that human trafficking is an underreported crime for which the majority of cases remain undiscovered. Lack of data on the scale of trafficking can be attributed to the low priority given to the combating of human trafficking by authorities in many countries. The reason for low prioritization appears to be linked to two main factors: first, legislation is often lacking, inadequate, or not implemented, making the prosecution of traffickers very difficult and often impossible; second, trafficking convictions are often based on witness and/or victim testimony. Such testimony is hard to obtain as trafficking victims are either deported as illegal migrants or, if identified as trafficked persons, are often too frightened to testify. Inadequate legislation, for both prosecution and for victim and witness protection, means that the police authorities often prefer not to prosecute traffickers at all, with the knowledge that much effort only seldom results in a conviction.

Noor Education Trust (2008) carried out research on customary practice of bride price and concluded that government of Pakistan has not yet enacted laws that declare such trafficking like practices as crimes and against human rights. Similar results were drawn by Azam (2009) who critically examined the laws and policies of the government of Pakistan regarding trafficking. He asserts that government lacks the political will to declare all such exploitative practices with in country as trafficking. Only crass border trafficking is declared crime by the government of Pakistan while internal trafficking is left unchecked. This cold response of government with reference to law making results into unchecked practice of child trafficking. Similarly, in Pakistan confusion exists about the exact definition of the deportees (see, for example, US TIP, 2010; Sajid, 2010), as this concept covers trafficked, the smuggled, and the violators of immigration law. All stakeholders including, public, authorities, police, and media, observed to be confused while dealing with the issue.

Government restrictive immigration policies and illegal business of human trafficking is closely associated. Demand in international
market for cheap labor and sex, the overwhelming supply of potential people from the developing countries to migrate, pave an easy and doable way for trafficking (see, for example, Van, 2006; Salt, 2000; Bales, 2007; Arocha, n.d.). It is argued that restrictive immigration policies have correlation with high profitability of human trafficking (Wolthuis & Blaak, 2001). Such restrictive laws on movement are the cause of the emergence of underground market where the return of investment is observed to be positively correlated to the level of restriction (Kwong, 1997).

**Research Methodology:**

**Study Area**

The study is conducted in Peshawar, cradle of Pakhtun culture. The incidents of various issues related to child trafficking are likely to be high in the city as it houses a large population of Afghan refugees (Azam, 2009). Moreover, it has also provided shelter to thousands of the internally displaced peoples (IDPs) as a result of ongoing military operations in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan in the wake of war against terrorism. Both of the mentioned groups are prone to child trafficking and other socio-cultural evils. The mentioned factors make District Peshawar a suitable place for carrying out this study.

Besides, the study area offers an opportunity to compile opinion of the people like social doctors, crime reporters, and lawyers whom have firsthand knowledge of the issue through direct dealing with victims. District Peshawar holds old, dynamic, and well established academic institutions like Islamia College, Peshawar (ICP), University of Peshawar (UoP), University of Engineering and Technology (UET), University of Agriculture, Peshawar (UAP). Along with these established academic institutions, it hosts number of seats of diversified local, national, and international print and electronic media both public and private. Legal institution like Registry of Supreme Court of Pakistan, Peshawar High Court, Peshawar District Courts, and Special Courts are also established and functional in the study area. Due to these relevant and rich features, District Peshawar is selected to carry out the present investigation in it.
Sampling Procedure

We could not get direct access to the victims of child trafficking, due to non-reporting, social taboos, and legal issues, which were handled by Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). However, despite numerous failed attempts we were not given access to the victims due to law prohibiting interaction with the victims. Therefore, I approached the social scientists, legal experts, and crime reporters who are the eyes and ears of the society and have firsthand knowledge of the issue. For instance academicians have years of exposure to the people who are victims of child trafficking and they are involved in divorce research related to the issues of this kind. Therefore, keeping in view the “knowledge accumulated” among the academia, it constitutes a reliable source of information on issue like child trafficking etc. Moreover, the academia has no vested interest in child trafficking unlike NGOs, always looking for funding opportunities by cashing on the burning issues and the concerned government officials, who are always citing monetary and non-monitory gains from the incidence of child trafficking. More or less, the same is the case with the legal experts and crime reports. However, the nature of their involvement in the issue is more specific and varies from case to case. When put together this individually exclusive information, we can generalize the various dimensions of child trafficking.

Moreover, the strata we have used in sampling comprise opinion leaders of the society. The strata can influence the general society, local administration, regional and national legislature, therefore, it is worth to know about their perception of the issue.

For data collection, sampling method is used by selecting proportionate stratified random sample from membership list of local bar council, Peshawar press club, and teachers’ associations. This technique is appropriate for consistent and reliable data. Hence, the population is trifurcated into strata like social scientists, crime reporters, and lawyers in Peshawar. A sample size of 392 is derived by using formula of Casley and Kumar (1989) i.e., \( n = \frac{K^2\sigma^2}{d^2} \)

Respondents from the selected categories are interviewed as per the following details:

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6 The academia is actively involved in knowledge area (Research), knowledge dissemination (lectures, workshops), and knowledge sharing (with NGOs, law enforcement agencies, media, policy makers etc).
1. Academicians: The total number of teachers in the Social Sciences Faculties of University of Peshawar and The University of Agriculture Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is 134 (91 and 43 respectively) and data is collected from a sample size of 116 academicians.

2. Journalists: There are total 314 journalists in Peshawar Press Club including 119 crime reporters, from whom 119 respondents are approached for data collection.

3. Legal Practitioners: The number of advocates with 10 years on-ward experience is 200 against the total strength of 12325 at Peshawar District Bar and Peshawar High Court Bar. Out of these 200 advocates, 173 respondents are approached for data collection.

The calculated sample size is drawn from different strata on the basis of proportional allocation method by using the formula given below:

\[ NI = \frac{Ni}{N \times n} \]  

(Chaudhry and Kamal, 1996)

**Data Analysis:**

Bi-variate analysis is used to confirm the direction found in uni-variate analysis. Furthermore, in this analysis statistical tools are used to measure the level of significance of association and direction of relationship between dependent variable (Child trafficking) and independent variables (Political Aspect) by using Chi Square, Fishar Exact Test and Gamma (γ).

**Association between Political aspects and Child Trafficking**

Political system determines the overall social system of a country. The level of stability and strength of political system demonstrates the capability of its social control and improvement in equal opportunities for all. Political stability and maturity could be gauged by the overall law and order and conflicts within the society. In light of the existing political milieu the present study is designed to analyze weather overall law and order and conflict has relationship with child trafficking.
The association between political aspects and child trafficking has been given in table 14. According to the table a non-significant, however, positive \( \gamma = 0.240 \) relationship is extracted between political instability and child trafficking (Table 14). The positive value of Gamma suggests that society considers political stability an important factor correlated with social issues like trafficking. It could be delineated from the findings that respondents are knowledgeable and acquainted with the relationship between the variables. Politically fragile society may provide ample opportunities to evil doers. The findings also suggest the level of understanding and awareness of the society about the current political dilemma. This understanding could be a positive sign for the society in general and policy makers in particular as it move in the right direction of political maturity and stability. It is evident from the result that both of the variables are moving in the same direction that is increase in one would lead increase in other and vice versa. The findings of the present study are in line with Ogbu (2004); Abu-bakar (2006); Tumlin (2000); and Memon et al., (2011).

Although, a non-significant but positive \( \gamma = 0.291 \) relationship is determined between weaker writ of law and child trafficking (Table-14). Recognizing the importance of writ of the state in safeguarding its citizens is incumbent in delivering the frequency of trafficking and its relative awareness based on the nature of governance. Pakistan is indexed as 7th in the list of politically instable countries of the world. The instability in political system and the frail governance could be the reasons behind child trafficking. The findings also suggest that a lot of work is needed in improving the political, law and order situation of the country in order to ensure writ of the state and good governance. Similar findings are extracted by ILO & UNICEF (2009); and Nelson et al., (2004).

In line to the above findings a non-significant but positive \( \gamma = 0.203 \) relationship is found between militancy in the region and child trafficking (Table 14). However, a positive \( \gamma = 0.337 \) and significant \( p<0.05 \) relationship is detected between forced displacement and child trafficking. Along with a positive \( \gamma = 0.450 \) and highly significant \( p<0.05 \) relationship is observed between child soldiering and child trafficking. It could be inferred that societal understanding of issues like militancy, forced displacement, and recruitment of children in the armed struggle groups could be due to the open show off, frequent reporting of such events by media, and court cases. The results reflect the idea that child trafficking is directly
proportional to militancy, forced displacement, and thereby to child soldiering. Increase in the militancy and law and order would shoot-up the frequency of the commission of child trafficking in the region. Similarly, the phenomena of forced displacement of citizens may provide abundant opportunities to the traffickers. In FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa children are recruited as soldiers and suicide bombers. There is a need for further in-depth research as how these children are recruited. However, the result of this study shows that both the phenomena i.e., child soldiering and child trafficking are associated. This association depicts that recruited children could be those who are trafficked. In other words, child soldiering itself could be the form of child trafficking. Further research is suggested to evaluate if child soldiering could come under the conceptual umbrella of child trafficking. The findings are in accord with Joffres et al. (2008); ADB (2003); Sinha (2006); ILO (2006); EPCAT\(^7\) (2001); Kapstein (2006); Salah (2004); Nelson et al. (2004); Bales (1999); Human Rights Watch (2002); and US TIP (2009).

A positive ($\gamma=0.381$) and significant ($p<0.05$) relationship is found between refugee camps and child trafficking. Pakistan is host to millions of afghan refugees, however, presently a bulk of own citizens are forced to live in camps as internally displaced persons (IDPs\(^8\)). People in refugee camps lose their social bonds and networking and remain compelled to be dependent on social service providers. Hence they become the most vulnerable segment of society. The statistical association shows that the issue of child trafficking mushrooms with displacement of people and putting them in camps mostly unchecked. Findings to these effects are in agreement with ILO & UNICEF (2009); and Nelson et al., (2004); Black (1994); Anderson (2003).

Although, a non-significant but positive ($\gamma=0.168$) relationship is detected between government inability in devising laws and child trafficking (Table 14). The direction given by uni-variate analysis about this variable could not confirm here as the association is not significant. However, the positive sign of Gamma shows that both the variables are directly proportional. It means that increase in one would give rise to increase in another. The level of inability of the government in devising policies and laws to curtail the issue of child trafficking would portray the rate of the crime. However, people are well aware of the gravity of

\(^7\) End Child Prostitution and Trafficking International

\(^8\) Internally Displaced Persons
the issue and bad governance in Pakistan. Enactment of laws and policies for the betterment of society is the prime duty of political government in the civilized world; however, country like Pakistan is not strong enough to enact laws in order to implement it. The result suggests that respondents consider law making as the principal objective of the government. This could be a good sign which portrays current level of maturity and faculties of Pakhtun society. However, some of the cultural practices (explained in cultural dimension) in the region need attention of the state. It could be deduced from the findings that if these practices are not checked and the doubt is not cleared it will keep the offenders motivate and the issue of child trafficking will mushroom. This inability of government could be due to different reasons; however, HRCP\(^9\) (2011) reports one to be the government-judiciary tension. Moreover, Azam (2009) also reports that government lack the political will to declare all such exploitative practices with in country as trafficking. Pakistan seems to be failed to legislate on customary practices like bride price that are otherwise trafficking. Only crass border trafficking is declared crime while internal trafficking is left unchecked (NET, 2008). Furthermore, Butegwa (1997) explores that failure of government with respect to law making results in shallow definition which creates confusion and doubts in society regarding prosecution and research.

A positive ($\gamma=0.321$) and significant ($p<0.05$) relationship is found between visa restrictions and child trafficking (Table-14). The findings of the present study suggest that hard and fast rules, difficult procedures, and non-cooperative behavior of the visa issuing staff compels people especially poor people to explore alternatives routes where mostly they stuck. Van (2006) reports that there is a room in international market for cheap labor while on the other hand people from developing countries are looking for jobs. The findings of the present study are in line with Wolthuis & Blaak (2001); and Kwong (1997). Here the results suggest that child trafficking has a relationship with the overall law and order and persistent conflicts in the society. Bad governance provides space for the issue of child trafficking to propel.

**Table No.1 Relationship between Political aspects and Child Trafficking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Child trafficking</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>γ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government’s inability in devising laws of trafficking</td>
<td>295(75.3)</td>
<td>28(7.1)</td>
<td>9(2.3)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced displacement and wars</td>
<td>261(66.6)</td>
<td>37(9.4)</td>
<td>34(8.7)</td>
<td>10.</td>
<td>.0028</td>
<td>.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militancy in the region</td>
<td>204(52.0)</td>
<td>74(18.9)</td>
<td>54(13.8)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>.0296</td>
<td>.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty and inconsistency in political system</td>
<td>238(60.7)</td>
<td>54(13.8)</td>
<td>40(10.2)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>.0091</td>
<td>.291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaker writ of law</td>
<td>293(74.7)</td>
<td>31(7.9)</td>
<td>8(2.0)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.0472</td>
<td>.291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment as child soldier</td>
<td>228(53.1)</td>
<td>67(17.1)</td>
<td>57(14.5)</td>
<td>24.</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td>.450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa restrictions open ways to the traffickers</td>
<td>213(54.3)</td>
<td>39(9.9)</td>
<td>80(20.4)</td>
<td>14.</td>
<td>.0005</td>
<td>.321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee camps</td>
<td>206(52.6)</td>
<td>69(17.6)</td>
<td>57(14.5)</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>.0004</td>
<td>.381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political instability provides room for traffickers to exploit the situation</td>
<td>259(66.1)</td>
<td>43(11.0)</td>
<td>30(7.7)</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>.0371</td>
<td>.240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Field Survey, 2012)

Note*Values presented in the above table indicate frequency while values in the parenthesis represent percentage
Conclusion and Recommendations

The main objective of the present study is to investigate and determine the relationship between child trafficking and Political factors.

It is found that law enforcement agents are supporting the criminal syndicates of traffickers and do not play their role to ensure the rule of law. Instead, victims of trafficking are considered criminals as perceived by the respondents. Absence of people-friendly legal system and lack of trust in the legal framework compel victims’ family to settle the issue without asking for legal aid. The problem can be encountered by improving legal system, equipping the law enforcement agents with training and resources along with increased risk of execution for lowering down the rate of trafficking, for discouraging offenders, and for making guardians capable to protect their children. Overall law and order situation and persistent conflicts may increase the likelihood of child trafficking. Forced displacement, child soldiering, visa restriction, and refugee camps are the contributing factors to the menace of child trafficking. Regional conflicts has increased vulnerability of children to trafficking, these conflicts need to be resolved without getting into delay by involving different stakeholders of the region.

References


