Human Trafficking Racial Discrimination and Victimization Patterns

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Introduction

A race is a group of people who are believed to belong to the same genetic stock, for example, the negroid race, the Caucasian race, and the mongoloid race. Human trafficking is the trade of humans for involuntary labor, sexual slavery, or commercial sexual exploitation for the perpetrator or others (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2024).

It involves tricking, selling, coercion, or otherwise forcing individuals, especially women and children, into situations of exploitation from which they are unable to escape. (Farrel, p. 98, 2015). Human trafficking is integrally discriminatory. Women constitute a larger portion of trafficked persons. This makes human trafficking more of a gender issue, mostly in a country like the U.S.

Authentic figures are difficult to obtain, but an estimate of 46,000 to 50,000 women and children are smuggled yearly to the United States only. This means the numbers can be overwhelming globally (Godziak p. 15, 2015). Economic difficulties in developing countries and the bureaucratic nature of legal migration are concurrent with the increase in the number of trafficking cases as well as the spread of the vice to other areas (Finn p. 510, 2016) (International Labour Organization, 2024).

The perpetrators use several methods, among them outright abduction and buying from family members. In most scenarios, the victim is already trying to look for a chance to migrate when they are approached by the perpetrator or the go-between. They are promised employment or marriage in the area of their destination (Farrel p. 120, 2015).

In most cases, the victim’s travel documents are confiscated to restrict their movements. Physical confinement, violence, and intimidation are mostly used to have control of the victim. The perpetrators are rarely arrested or prosecuted due to the inadequate law enforcement response to this vice. Human trafficking cases are rarely reported to the authorities as the victims are, in most cases, treated like criminals (Farrell p. 126, 2015).

Most trafficked persons shy away from seeking justice due to the lack of knowledge of legal rights and entitlements (Farrell p. 87, 2014). Cultural and linguistic constraints are also barriers to seeking justice for the victims.

Literature Review

The Crucial Link between Human Trafficking and Racial Discrimination

Connections between human trafficking and racial discrimination are not instantly clear, but the issue's existence is undeniable. Mary Robinson, the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner, was once quoted commenting on the issue, and she noted that human trafficking is inherently discriminatory. She added that in the case of trafficking into the global sex industry, we should be talking of cases whereby men from developed nations pay for the sexual services of women and girls, and in some cases, men and boys from developing states (Gabbidon P.123, 2015). Robinson Mary noted that the issue is purely a basic human rights issue as it involves such a huge and perilous form of discrimination. She refuted the argument that the issue might be a labor rights issue or an issue of unequal development (Thomas p. 350, 2014) (U.S. Department of State, 2024).

Trafficking is mostly considered a gender-based issue because the majority of the trafficked individuals are women. In this research, however, we take a close look at the races of the victims to base our argument according to race. Race is not only a risk factor for trafficking but also has a fair say, or instead, it determines how the victims will be treated by the perpetrators. The racist ideology further initiates demand in the destination country, hence leading to an escalation in the number of women and girls being trafficked (Gabbidon P.134, 2015).

The link between human trafficking and racial discrimination has been the main topic of discussion at the World Conference against racism and Racial Discrimination. Thailand's delegation at this world conference noted that women of a particular race are often subjected to abuse of greater measures than others. They also noted that specific forms of abuse, namely women and girls trafficking, most of the time involved racist attitudes and perceptions (Thomas p. 98, 2014) (Dimas et al., 2021).

In Bangkok, those who took part in this world conference noted that racist ideology escalates trafficking cases and that the negative culture of viewing women and girls as sexual commodities gives rise to abuse of women and girls (Lerum p. 15, 2016). At the conference, world states were urged to seek ways that could see human trafficking and racial discrimination come to an end.

Available Statistics by Race

This research found that a majority of human trafficking, especially in the US, for labor and sexual exploitation, were persons of a common color. Most victims are women and children. According to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 70% of the victims originated from the same racial group.

A comprehensive analysis is shown in the following tables

Table 1: Race demographics of traffickers between 2014-2016

Race	Labor trafficker	Sex trafficker	Total
Black	5	219	234
White	2	22	24
Hispanic	30	89	119
Asian	10	18	28
Other	15	5	20
Total	62	353	415

Source: US Bureau of Justice Statistics 2017

Table 2: Race demographics of trafficking victims between 2014-2016

Race	Labor trafficking	Sex trafficking	Total
Black	6	161	167
White	1	102	103
Hispanic	34	95	129
Asian	9	17	26
Other	11	23	34
Total	61	398	459

Source: US Bureau of Justice Statistics 2017

As can be noted from the above tables, people from the black race form the greater number of both the victims and the perpetrators of sex trafficking. Also, it can be deduced that a greater number of human trafficking cases are for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

As a matter of fact, the black race constitutes a greater number of sex trafficking victims. The Hispanic race constitutes the biggest percentage of labor trafficking victims.

Conclusion

Human trafficking as a vice has become so rampant of late, and immediate measures need to be put in place to combat it. In fact, quick action is needed. Holistic, interdisciplinary, and long-term measures are needed to address it once and for all. Human trafficking is the modern form of slavery, and it is a gross abuse of human dignity. In Europe, an organization named OSCE, an organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, was set up, and in the year 2003, it set up an office of special representative and coordinator for curbing human trafficking, which will help victim protection, prosecution of the perpetrators and the prevention of the vice.

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