

CHAPTER 6

MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Addressing the gap related to human trafficking from the communication perspective was the aim of this investigation. The three broader research objectives seek to discern the Prevalence of Human Trafficking in Jharkhand, Human Trafficking in Media and analyze Communication Response and Mitigation strategies. This chapter summarises the research results from the activities described in the preceding chapter.

The findings from the different data sets gathered through documents review, in-depth interviews, content analysis, and surveys are discussed in this chapter concerning the three broader objectives and in light of the literature. The study's implications for the prevalence of human trafficking in Jharkhand, the vital purposes and vulnerability factors behind human trafficking, coverage and media framing of human trafficking, and communication and policy intervention to curb modern-day slavery are provided. The researcher's last reflections are included in this chapter. From the perspective of communication, this study used the descriptive approach and tried to determine the level of awareness of human trafficking, the definition and magnitude of human trafficking, and the most significant challenges connected with exposure to human trafficking.

6.1 Discussion of the Major Findings

Significant findings of the study resemble several previous studies arguing that Jharkhand has become a hunting ground for human traffickers and that human trafficking in Jharkhand is a mockery of the promise of woman empowerment. The study finds that Press coverage of human trafficking in Jharkhand adds to concern about the social responsibility of the press. Press in Jharkhand reflects prevailing assumptions regarding ideal victimhood and represents dominant views covering human trafficking. The study also reveals the lack of definitional rigour in media reporting, and the use of Official (Law and Order) is the dominant frame in news coverage. The significant findings revealed by this study are discussed:

6.1.1 Jharkhand: A Hunting Ground

The suspects, Panna Lal and his wife Sunita Kumari, were sought in a human trafficking investigation. The article lines said that they trafficked youngsters from Jharkhand to be employed as domestic helpers in Delhi and the National Capital Region through their placement companies.

The Jharkhand belt is made up of five districts: Gumla, Simdega, Lohardaga, and Latehar. Khunti is one among them. Thousands of families in Delhi and its satellite cities, such as Noida, Gurgaon, and Faridabad, receive domestic assistance from the Jharkhand belt. These characteristics make it a prime hunting ground for traffickers like Mahto, 42, who was apprehended last October due to a joint investigation by the Jharkhand Anti-Human Trafficking Unit and the Crime Branch of the Delhi Police. Mahto is accused of trafficking about 3,000 girls and women. Mahto accumulated assets in Delhi and Jharkhand, totalling more than Rs 65 crore (AHTU).

In Jharkhand, over 4,000 kids have vanished over the last ten years. According to the CID, 1,000 of these have not yet been located. According to the NGO Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC), about 42,000 girls have been transported from Jharkhand to larger cities, making it a significant centre of human trafficking in India.

6.1.2 Human Trafficking in Jharkhand: A Mockery of Woman Empowerment

To empower women, one must first increase their spiritual, political, social, educational, gender, and economic strength. Every economy needs women to function. Only until women are treated as equal participants in advancement with males will comprehensive development and peaceful nation expansion be conceivable. In India, factors such as physical location (urban vs rural), educational attainment, social standing (caste and class), and age significantly impact women's empowerment. At the central, state, and local (Panchayat) levels, policies promoting women's empowerment are in various fields, including health, education, economic opportunity, gender-based violence, and political engagement (Tripathy and Raha, 2019). There are more than thirty-seven schemes that central and state governments are running to enhance the status of women in which massive amounts of money and efforts are being invested. But the finding of

this study which mirrors several other studies, reveals that women in Jharkhand are the most vulnerable section of society to be victims of human trafficking. This raises the critical question of the outcomes of the 37 government pro programs that try to empower women and girls in the state.

Governments boast about its flagship schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Mahila Samakhya being implemented in about 9000 villages (Aajeevika) and the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY). Scheme for “Gender Budgeting (XI Plan), SIDBI’s Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi, National Mission for Empowerment of Women, *Beti padao beti bacho yojana*” and several others which are specially made for poverty eradication and to ensure equal rights to women.

However, this study indicates the feminization of poverty, where most poor women in Jharkhand are denied access to resources. The leading causes of human trafficking in Jharkhand continue to be the low status of women in society, the dearth of educational opportunities for girls, the expectation that women fill particular roles and care for children alone, and discrimination against women in political participation, sexual orientation, religion, customs, and social practices.

The conventional sexual division of labour and the rising demand for reproductive services in the globalized market, where women and girls are increasingly being pulled as service providers, are examples of the pull side. They provide a wide range of individualized reproductive services for the sex, entertainment, domestic help, and marriage markets.

6.1.3 Poverty and Weak Family Structure: The Major Push Factors

According to Abdullahi et al. (2014), poverty is the inability of people to lead good lives, which means they lack access to fundamental requirements of life, including food, shelter, safe drinking water, and opportunity for education and employment. In general, being poor refers to an inability to meet life’s bare necessities and uncertainty about their future. According to Katarina (2002),

“Poverty is a human condition marked by continuous or chronic lack of the resources, capacities, options, security, and the authority required to exercise other civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights as well as a reasonable level of living.”

According to Innocenti (2005), human trafficking’s underlying causes are intricate and frequently connected. Examples include inadequate protection against exploitation and discrimination, poor governance, violent conflict, and poverty. However, broad generalizations concerning the reasons for trafficking on the African continent are false. It is crucial to recognize that each nation exhibits particular characteristics or combinations of numerous factors that are particular to each circumstance.

According to a NITI Ayog report, 39.1% of people in Jharkhand live below the poverty line (BPL), compared to national rates of 29.8%, even though reducing poverty is one of the main goals of economic development programs (NITI Ayog). The study resembles the reports of UNDCO and several other researchers and finds that poverty is the root cause of human trafficking in Jharkhand.

Most of the time, it has also been seen during this investigation that traffickers entice victims by making specific false promises. In other instances, parents are asked for their child’s agreement, or coercion or fraud is employed. Human traffickers might be relatives or friends of the victim, famous people, or professional recruiters who offer lucrative jobs, modelling opportunities, etc., according to global research on the subject, finding this study resembles the same. Additionally, there are instances where families are known to have sold their kids.

6.1.4 Globalization and Media Expansion: The Major Pull Factors

Globalization is a process that contains both opportunities and challenges. The global rise in human trafficking is one of the biggest problems. According to Marshall (2001), growing globalization is causing inequalities within and between countries. These differences encourage people to move out for a better quality of life. However, a large portion of this migration is unsafe and unlawful or irregular, leaving migrants vulnerable and encouraging human exploitation and trafficking (Majeed, Tariq and Amna, 2017).

By widening socioeconomic gaps, globalization significantly contributes to the growth of this crime. Through trade routes, economic globalization makes human trading easier.

This study seconds the investigation of Huges (1999) and several other researchers, which asserts that the commodification of women—who are traded, purchased, consumed, and exploited—and economic globalization are strongly related. Traffickers view women as commodities.

A global study finds that the expansion and reach of media, especially the internet, fuels the problem of human trafficking. Social media usage is growing, which makes it easier for people traffickers to find victims. Nearly 90% of people between 18 and 29 use social media (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Additionally, 95% of teenagers have access to a smartphone, and 45% of teenagers say they spend almost constantly online (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Terwilliger, 2021). Resembling several other studies, this study finds that expanding media technology to every household exposes Jharkhand's rural and poor populations to dreamy and prosperous urban lifestyles. This encourages the rural population of Jharkhand to have unsafe migration and be trapped in the hands of traffickers. The study also reveals that apart from exposure to urban life, media technology, especially the internet, has become a convenient tool for human trafficking to connect with a vulnerable section of society.

6.1.5 Lack of awareness is a fundamental cause of vulnerability

Prevention, protection, and rehabilitation are three stages recognized by global agencies and the ministry of home affairs, the government of India, to combat trafficking in human beings (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation Bill, 2021).

A recent study on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) member states' efforts to combat trafficking shows a high level of importance given to advancing preventative initiatives but also demonstrates a diversity of approaches. On the nature of prevention, Member States acknowledged the need for prevention-related initiatives comprising three key categories. The first is prevention through public awareness and education, reflecting a need to inform the public, including individuals who are possibly at risk, of the hazards of being trafficked. The second is prevention, which entails gathering information and conducting studies to comprehend better the breadth and characteristics of trafficking in those nations. The creation of social and economic interventions for human trafficking is the third method of prevention mentioned by OSCE member states, reflecting the necessity to provide alternatives for

people who may be in danger of being trafficked. All three sectors are crucial to establishing comprehensive preventative activities, and all are described in the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. Resembling with the previous studies, this study also finds the need for intensive prevention measures to curb human trafficking in Jharkhand. The study also finds that the government of Jharkhand, in collaboration with several NGOs, is working to raise awareness.

But status level of awareness in terms of knowledge, exposure, and consciousness about government initiatives among the population of trafficking-prone areas raises the question: Is the emphasis on education and public awareness sufficient?

6.1.6 Press coverage of human trafficking in Jharkhand adds to concern about the social responsibility of the press

The media, which set the informational agenda and the tone of the evaluation of information in the study domain, have a highly challenging job in globalization and integration. It should be highlighted that the media need particular skills to educate the public about the issue of human trafficking within the national information field. They must simultaneously choose for themselves what stance they will take toward the events. Whether they will back the position of users of global information, they would stand by their convictions or support their government's position.

The role of mass media is to work in the public's interest, But sadly, in reality, contemporary media fall short of their duties. For instance, this study supports Kara's claims that despite the media's best efforts to cover the issue, the general population suffers from a lack of knowledge about the issue as a whole. In the media, there needs to be a clear picture of what qualifies explicitly as trafficking (Kara, 2009). Because of this, Gallup Polls found that only in America between April and July 2016 did Americans surveyed believe that human trafficking is a significant economic or non-economic concern (Most Important, 2016, as cited in Snow, 2017).

Additionally, it is crucial for media professionals to avoid falling prey to societal prejudices regarding human trafficking and the victims of it. The media should actively work to dismantle ingrained societal preconceptions and aid in forming a fresh perspective on events that take place in society. However, media coverage in Jharkhand

demonstrates, resembling other research, that in the majority of news materials in Jharkhand, human trafficking is merely seen and confused with prostitution, migration, or human smuggling issue, and their authors fail to go deeply into the root of the problem (Wallinger, 2010; Papadouka et al., 2016). A different approach is to combine the ideas of “human trafficking,” “prostitution,” and “sex trafficking” (Chuang, 2014; Jahic & Finckenaue, 2005; Stolz, 2007, as quoted in Austin, 2016).

6.1.7 Newspapers reflecting prevailing assumptions regarding ideal victimhood

Human trafficking victims are frequently portrayed as helpless and defenceless in news reports and NGO awareness campaigns (Bouché, Farrell, and Wittmer-Wolfe 2018; Johnston, Friedman, and Shafer 2014). At the same time, those who take advantage of them are painted as evil villains who benefit from the suffering of others (O’Brien 2019). According to the conventional victimization narrative, victims quietly tried to live and did not cause their unfortunate circumstances (O’Brien 2019). Previous studies on human trafficking have shown that the media primarily covers female victims while portraying men who have been victimized in the same way as “irregular migrants” who face deportation (Gallagher and Pearson, 2010). Gendered presumptions regarding “women’s vulnerability in the migration stream,” associated with paternalism, can explain this difference in framing (Chuang 2010, p. 1710).

These concepts frequently rest on cultural notions and presumptions. Built on a long history of symbolic interactionism in sociology (Blumer 1969; Goffman 1978). Christie (1986) ’s concept of the “ideal/iconic victim” demonstrates that the victim concept cannot be considered “a rigid objective truth,” but rather a label that refers to “a person or a category of individuals who - when hit by crime - most readily are given the comprehensive and sincere status of being a victim” (Christie 1986:18). Other researchers have expanded on these theories and come to the conclusion that the victim concept is a socially constructed label that was created through processes of meaning-making by significant societal actors, including policymakers (Herkes 2018; Kenney 2002; Lima De Perez and Vermeulen 2015). It involves making assumptions about the circumstances under which people “deserve” to be considered victims, which suggests “a societal duty to morally persuade others to sympathize and pity them because of what they have undergone” (Herkes, 2018, p. 28; Loyens and Paraciani, 2021).

This study also resembles the previous studies and finds the prevailing assumption regarding ideal victimhood depicted in newspaper coverage. Interestingly, newspapers' depiction of perfect victimhood presents a fascinating contrast to recent data from the UNODC (2014) that numerous journalists have used to describe the global scope of trafficking. Although children were most commonly listed as victims in newspaper articles, the UNODC estimates that adults (67% of all recognized victims) make up the bulk of the population. Additionally, 37% of victims who got aid from IOM field offices in 2011 and 30% of all victims recognized by the UNODC were men (IOM, 2012). But when guys are mentioned in news articles, it's usually in conjunction with female victims rather than on their own.

6.1.8 Press in Jharkhand represents the dominant views

The most potent influence that media portrayals of human trafficking can have on public opinion and official policy is through the social construction of gender and victim/perpetrator ideology. The public's stories might be made to seem the most convincing by the pictures they decide to use to report on human trafficking.

According to the class-dominant hypothesis, a minority elite that dominates the media reflects and projects its viewpoint through its media output. This elite is made up of those who own and run media production companies or are part of the government (CliffsNotes). Prior studies have shown that using official sources, namely law enforcement and government authorities, including their reports, press releases, and other documents, dominates mainstream media coverage of human trafficking. This study's findings support this conclusion. Curiously, despite the possibility that investigative reporting might have given journalists a chance to highlight more alternative, non-dominant views on trafficking, the preference for official sources (even when other sources were also used) and a continued emphasis on sex trafficking (as discussed in the following section) suggest that journalists nonetheless continued to present and legitimize the dominant trafficking agenda in their work.

Comparable to Sanford et al., most sources cited in articles from The Atlanta Journal-Constitution were activists and government representatives. Journalists who rely on these information sources help shape the conversation on human trafficking. Newspapers rarely, if ever, challenge even some of the official government assertions that are

covered, much less act as a forum for expressing opposing viewpoints. This is partially due to how strongly the news industry relies on authoritative sources.

6.1.9 Lack of definitional rigour in media reporting

The finding that these well-known newspapers ignore this matter, given the more considerable discussion surrounding the definition of trafficking, may indicate that most journalists believe clarification is not required or that their readers are already sufficiently informed about what constitutes trafficking. The difficulty is that journalists don't always define what they mean by "trafficking"; they risk conflating it with other problems like human smuggling, prostitution, or slavery.

The extent of human trafficking, as reported by publications, also raises an issue. Do journalists portray the data they offer as may be inflated or as understated?

These findings are significant for several reasons. First, news media may believe readers are less aware of the scope of trafficking than they think because more pieces supplied numerical estimates of trafficking than they did definitions. However, given the wide disparity in official statistics, it is possible that journalists chose not to address the scope of trafficking because they felt it was preferable to do so in silence rather than run the risk of misleading their audience or opening themselves up to criticism due to the unreliability of trafficking data. Second, it is interesting that not a single piece questioned whether these numbers were overstated, given the considerable fluctuation in trafficking statistics and the academic research exposing their unreliability. Investigative journalists would be compelled to address the flaws with trafficking estimates (established by scholars). If investigative journalism, in particular, is intended to "report on a subject of substantial public concern that uncovers facts not previously known and perhaps even suppressed" (Aucoin, 2005, p. 3).

The newspapers rarely challenge government assertions about the scope of the issue, and they rarely characterize human trafficking for their readers, which supports a similar claim made in research conducted by Kessler in 2015. However, the lack of definitional rigour may be caused by the assumption that the general public is aware of what human trafficking entails. But the fact that so few articles attempt to define or quantify the issue or challenge widely held notions about its scope and that these newspapers openly

support existing or harsher anti-trafficking laws shows how thoroughly the press has accepted the dominant discourse.

6.1.10 Official (Law and Order) is the dominant frame in news coverage

The most potent influence that media portrayals of human trafficking can have on public opinion and official policy is through the social construction of gender and victim/perpetrator ideology. Framing is “a process by which politicians and policymakers relay their messages to attract media attention and put the best face on the events, by which journalists construct messages under organizational guidelines and professional values, and by which audience members interpret, think, and reassess those media messages,” according to the American Political Science Association (Zhang, 2000, p. 5).

Human rights and the battle against human trafficking go hand in hand. Human rights law has categorically stated that it is morally and legally wrong for one person to take advantage of another’s legal identity, labour, or humanity from its inception to the present. But the study’s finding completely contradicts the views that human trafficking is an essential human rights issue. Newspaper coverage in Jharkhand predominantly used official law and order frames while depicting causes or recommending solutions to human trafficking.

Framing of the cause and solution of human trafficking mirrors the dominant view in media research, which puts crime above human rights while giving coverage to human trafficking.

6.1.11 Need for an integrated communication approach

UNODC seeks the need for an effective communication strategy to curb human trafficking. The communication strategy raises knowledge of human trafficking and its detrimental effects; discusses/addresses human trafficking as a worldwide crime against humanity; stresses the need for protective aid mechanisms; calls for increased help to end the practice. The communication strategy is also needed to support interventions that disseminate messages and encourage behaviours that reach various audiences, such as women and children, the youth, parents, landowners, owners of commercial sites, etc.

Interventions in the strategy promote behaviours that do not support this horrible conduct and strive to empower people to obtain accurate and critical messages. The communication strategy and the corresponding implementation plan recognize the necessity to explicitly develop the abilities of immigration officers, Ministry of Gender employees, social welfare assistants, and police officers who serve as the law's gatekeepers. The concept claims that the "silent epidemic" can only be adequately stopped with the help of a trained and skilled workforce.

The study's finding supports the claim made by UNODC and other global agencies regarding the need for an integrated communication strategy in Jharkhand that can intervene at all risk levels approaching every stakeholder.

6.2 Implications of the Findings

Making human trafficking a social issue has attracted a lot of resources and attention. Sadly, statistics on the number of confirmed cases and victims of human trafficking prompt the frequently asked question, "Where are all the victims?" (McDevitt, Fayh, & Farrell, 2010). It has been suggested that the absence of victims is due to the lack of trafficking. According to research, the public and the police hold this view (Farrell, McDevitt, & Fahy, 2010; Farrell, Pfeffer, & Bright, 2015; Wilson, Walsh, & Kleuber, 2006).

The prevalence of human trafficking in Jharkhand supports that Jharkhand has become a hunting ground, which can not be overlooked. Finding related to the cause and purpose of human trafficking in Jharkhand add to the concern that despite several efforts made by the government, the situation is worsening daily. The issue of human trafficking in Jharkhand, directly and indirectly, affects every household, and as a society, everyone should think seriously about it. Another thing that government agencies must consider is irregularities and differences in data about human trafficking. Data published by NCRB varies with state CID data on human trafficking. This difference in record-keeping among government agencies is a significant challenge in curbing this issue.

However, the consequences of the analysis of media coverage of human trafficking in Jharkhand can also not be taken lightly because both the general public and enforcement

personnel obtain their information regarding human trafficking through media, including the media included in this sample.

The most important finding of this media analysis is probably the misrepresentation of the issue and misidentification of victims since the media in Jharkhand created a victim that resembled the ideal victim. The claim that victims are misdiagnosed when they are “bad” victims who are not indicative of the perfect victims of the media is supported by research on human trafficking victims (Farrell, Owens, & McDevitt, 2014; Haynes, 2006). Because the more typical human trafficking victims have historically been perceived as criminals, judges, police officers, and other law enforcement authorities have reportedly been outspoken in their opposition to and mistrust of these individuals.

The depictions of the problem of human trafficking, its origins, and potential remedies give rise to further consequences. As mentioned in the literature review, framing problems as crime-related ones enables policymakers to overlook complex issues in favour of simpler ones. Since human trafficking was presented in Jharkhand’s newspapers as a criminal issue, more resources will be allocated to fighting crime than to addressing issues like poverty, corruption, and work visa policies that encourage trafficking. Police officers still lack the training to recognize human trafficking situations, victims, and criminals despite the money being spent on crime control (Farrell, McDevitt, & Fahy, 2010; Farrell, Owens, & McDevitt, 2014; Farrell, Pfeffer, & Bright, 2015).

And lastly, the lack of definitional rigour and magnitude of human trafficking in media coverage gives rise to confusion about the issues, which was quite visible in the level of awareness about human trafficking in the Khunti district of Jharkhand. The media has a responsibility not only to inform the people but also to educate them about issues of public concern. The representation of a problem with accurate definition and articulation of fact also acts as a guide for policymakers.