

CHILD TRAFFICKING: THE EXPLOITATIVE ASPECT OF PAKHTUN CULTURE

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Abstract

Children are the asset and future of any nation. However, they are the most vulnerable segment of a society as well. They are prone to various natural and social threats. Among these are, exploitative cultural practices and attitudes that are associated with child trafficking. This study aims to investigate correlation between child trafficking and certain practices of Pakhtun culture. We use chi-square and gamma statistics for analysis in this study. The analyses are based on a survey carried out in Peshawar, the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The survey comprises a sample of 392 respondents which is selected through a stratified random sampling technique. The sample includes crime practitioners, crime reporters, and social scientists. The study shows that forced child marriage, *swara* marriage, bride price, honor killing, gender inequality, social stigma; the exploitative practices of Pakhtun culture, are associated with child trafficking. Based on our investigation, it is suggested that a local level watch dog may be constituted that can initiate a dialogue. The forum among various stakeholders discuss, review the current real practices and find way outs to curb the practices.

Key words: Child Trafficking, Pakhtun Culture, Exploitative aspect, Peshawar, *Swara*, Honor Killing.

INTRODUCTION

Some of the cultural practices and attitudes make a particular segment(s) of society vulnerable to various perils. Hence, the segment(s) can easily be exploited by subjugating them to different immoral, illegal and unethical activities at the hand of criminal outlaws/outfits. The existence of these outfits/outlaws in a society is an open secret. The authorities are well aware of their existence and sometimes support them. The fabric of social control interwoven in the structure of society does not protect this vulnerable segment of society. Some cultures may lack mechanisms to safeguard the vulnerable groups against these perils including child trafficking. Contrary to this, the cultures embed certain practices that foster these malpractices. To investigate the mentioned malpractices, here, in this study we intend to analyze the association between exploitative practices and child trafficking. Some cultures are profoundly manipulated and dominated by males for their vested

interests. This obvious domination can be seen in the form of the discrimination and marginalization of female. The prevalence of patriarchy “male-dominated social structures” worldwide is the clear evidence of persistent gender inequality (Papps, 1993; Ray, n.d.). Gender inequality refers to “the differences in the status, power and prestige women and men have in groups, collectivities, and societies” (Encyclo, 2007) which is portrayed in marginalization, cultural devaluation and stigmatization, lack of employment opportunities, subservience and commoditization of female (Demleitner, 2001; Clawson, 2009; Farr, 2005; Morash, 2006). Gender inequality is reported to be directly correlated with sex trafficking (Schauer and Wheaton, 2006; Klueber, 2003; Demleitner, 2001).

A pilot study carried out in nine Latin American countries by Trujillo (2004) concluded that cultural based gender bias increases vulnerability of female to trafficking. Similar results have been shown

by Chung (2006) while analyzing the cultural perspectives of child trafficking, human rights and social justice. Chung focuses on discriminatory aspects of the Asian culture. He reports that in a male dominated society where boys are regarded more valuable than girls. Such gender biases in culture are easily exploited by traffickers in Asia. Girls, in such countries are deemed to be exchangeable commodities that can be used for trade, sale, or bargaining. Poverty, as the universally accepted push factor, nevertheless, feminist theories declared patriarchal gender structure as the responsible factor for sex trafficking of female children. Victimization of female is deeply rooted in the gender biased cultures of the world (Farr, 2005; Goździak & Bump, 2008; Hotaling, Miller, & Trudeau, 2006; Jeffreys, 2009; Morash, 2006; Raymond et al., 2010).

A study carried out in India reveals that victims of sex trafficking are mostly from socio-economically marginalized groups and particularly families (Joffres et al., 2008). Gender discrimination and inequality that expresses itself in various customary practices are closely related to trafficking. Such cultural based exploitations of females include forced child marriages (Wolthuis and Blaak, 2001; ILO, 2006; Sinha, 2005; Joffres et al., 2008). Even children born of such exploitative marriages are often susceptible to trafficking. In some cases, the traffickers exploit the custom of arranged marriage and traffic the female within the country or out of their countries after paying dowry to the poor families (ILO, 2006; Joffres et al., 2008). Researchers suggest that such marriages mostly end up in sell out to sex brokers and forced prostitution (Sinha, 2005; Joffres et al. 2008; Calandrucio, 2005). This practice is documented in Indian state of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, and Hyderabad. Common destination for women and girls forced to

arranged marriages are United Arab Emirates, and various Indian States (Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh), (Sinha, 2005; Joffres, et al., 2008).

Besides, a customary practice of bride price prevails in Afghanistan and Pakistan (IOM, 2004; US TIP, 2008; Mirza, 2010). Bride price refers to a customary practice in which a small amount of money is paid to the parents of the bride in connection with the marriage by the groom or his family. This selling of children mostly by poor parents through the so called marriage contract is reported to be associated with trafficking (Wolthuis and Blaak, 2001; ILO, 2006; Joffres et al., 2008). The girls trapped through forced marriages are recruited by sex and labour industries. Their false marriage contracts end up into forced prostitution and or bonded labour (Clert et al., 2005).

The above mentioned types of marriages constitute child trafficking in different forms and manifestations. A study undertaken by Azam (2009) reported that around 17 percent of the trafficking victims (respondents) were exploited through forced early marriages and 15 percent were sold by their parents.

This practice is backed by the traditions and customs in various parts of the world. Similar exploitative customs are practiced in different areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which are also engulfed by poverty. The local middlemen exploit children and women and sold them to the customers belonging to other ethnic groups (in case of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the customers are from Punjab and Sindh). This custom is found in Bengali and Afghani societies too (Shah, 2004; Muhammad, 2005). It is argued that the traditional practice of bride price is exploited by the traffickers. The reasons behind the practice of bride price are identified by Noor Education Trust (NET, 2008) to be the extreme poverty,

unemployment, and large family size. Furthermore, illiteracy, gender bias, and social injustice play role in its continuity. This traditional practice now acquired the status of trade (Shah, 2004). Reports by Non-Governmental Organizations shown that well established mafias are involved in targeting the poor families (Muhammad, 2005).

Another customary practice by which girls are exploited is known as *swara* (a word of Pashto) that refers to exchange of girls for dispute settlement between rival tribes or families in Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan (IOM, 2004; Mirza, 2010; US TIP, 2008). Besides, cultural disowning of sexually abused children is a cause of trafficking. A study under taken in Nigeria reveals that the deported victims of trafficking are usually not accepted by their communities due to the social stigma attached with trafficking and fear of diseases. This attitude adopted by the society makes it almost impossible for the victims to re-integrate in to their society and hence paved way for further victimization (Afonja, 2001). According to the study carried out by Noor Education Trust (2008) in Pakistan, sometimes even parents disown their children, especially girls who are married by parents in exchange for price or if they are dead, the victim is forced to live on the charity and she remains prone to re-victimization by traffickers. Chung (2006) reveals that Burmese female survivors of trafficking could not go back to their home due to the cultural norms of stigmatization and their disowning by their families. There is no place for the victim to go except brothels. Tumlin (2000) reports that social taboos against premarital sex and rigid concept of “good” and “bad” girls may result in girls’ victimization and sexual abuse.

Due to social stigma attached with child trafficking especially sex trafficking most of the cases are not reported (Child Rights

International Network {CRIN}, 2005). International Organization for Migration (2004) reports that one of the stern challenges to the counter-trafficking strategy in Afghanistan is the social stigma which prevents the victims to report trafficking. Furthermore, the female victims due to the customary practice of honor killing also either remain silent or mostly they run away from their homes. A runaway case, homeless, and sheltered youth, who are entrapped by social stigma or neglected and abused, have been found to be at high risk of entrapment in sex trafficking (Clawson, 2009; Estes & Weiner, 2001, 2005; Arata, 2002; Saewyc and Edinburg, 2010; Whitbeck et al., 2001).

Data collection on these issues that are highly sensitive and stigmatized like child sex exploitation is reported to be hard and the risk of losing honor in society if the case is revealed, mostly prevent families from reporting the incidents to the police (Muhammad, 2005; Azam, 2009). The non-reporting of cases make it impossible to recognize the victims and provide them services (Farr, 2005) and the traffickers get motivation due to the silence of the affected families.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is conducted in district Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in order to investigate association and direction of relationship between exploitative aspect of Pakhtun culture and child trafficking. *Chi square* and *Gamma statistics* are applied for data analysis.

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 people (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.

Sampling Procedure

We could not get direct access to the victims of child trafficking, due to non-reporting, social taboos and legal issues which are handled by Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). However, despite numerous failed

attempts we are not given access to the victims due to law prohibiting interaction with the victims. 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. Against the total population i.e. 453, a sample size of 392 is drawn by using formula $n = \frac{K^2 V^2}{d^2}$ of Casley and Kumar (1989).

The calculated sample size is drawn from mentioned strata on the basis of proportional allocation method by using the formula $NI = \frac{N_i}{N} * n$ of Chaudhry and Kamal (1996).

Table No. 1 Breakup of Composite Sample Size

S.No	Sample Groups	Total Population	Sample Size
1	Social Scientistes	134	116
2	Crime Reporters	119	103
3	Lawyers	200	173
Total		453	392

Data Collection

A comprehensive questionnaire, based on Likert Scale, is developed for data collection. The questionnaire was pre-tested.

Indexation

According to Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) it is the process of measurement of one variable with the help of incorporating different items/scores wherein the minimum range of items could be two. The practice is usually materialized for those attributes or statements which reflect attitude or perception of the respondents. This process which involves merging of two or more than two items for measuring a variable (i.e., dependent variable) is known as indexation. The practice of indexation is one of the standard approaches prevailing in the disciplines of social sciences. In the present study, same procedure was followed where the different items of the dependent variable

(Perception on Child Trafficking) were indexed for drawing into logical inferences.

Reliability Analysis

We use Cronbach's alpha reliability test for measuring internal consistency in the present study. It is commonly accepted opinion that the value of the coefficient from 0.7 to 1 is considered the most reliable index. However, 0.6 value of coefficient is also acceptable in social sciences (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992). In our study the coefficients were around 0.7. Hence, the internal consistency of the data has been proved.

Data Analysis

We use Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 2010 computer software for data analysis. We carried out Bi-variate analysis to measure the level of significance of hypothetical association and direction of

relationship between dependent variable (Child trafficking) and independent variables (Exploitative Aspect of Pakhtun Culture) by using Chi Square (χ^2) and Gamma (γ).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section major results are discussed and presented in Table No. 2 with either to show association and direction of adverse cultural practices of Pakhtun society and child trafficking. The results are presented and discussed as follows;

A positive ($\gamma=0.356$) and significant ($p<0.05$) relationship is delineated between gender inequality/bias and child trafficking (Table-2). These findings suggest that gender inequality is considered to be associated with negative bearings for society. This realization by society is a positive sign for the development of society. The findings are in line with Schauer and Wheaton (2006); Klueber (2003); Chung (2006); and Demleitner (2001) who found that gender inequality is directly correlated with sex trafficking. The gender biased cultural values and attitudes reported in this study are consistent with Farr (2005); Goździak and Bump (2008); Hotaling et al., (2006); Jeffreys (2009); Morash (2006); and Raymond et al., (2010).

Similarly, a positive ($\gamma=0.521$) and highly significant ($p<0.05$) relationship is detected between child trafficking and forced child marriages (Table-2). On the one hand, the result indicates the prevalence of the practice in the study area; however, on the other hand, it also reveals that society is aware of the negative bearing of the forced child marriages and its association with child trafficking. Findings of the present study match with Wolthuis and Blaak (2001); ILO (2006); Sinha (2005); and Joffres et al., (2008); and Calandrucchio, (2005).

Moreover, a positive and significant result is observed ($\gamma=0.363$; $p<0.05$) between child trafficking and purchased marriage (Table-2). Statistically positive value of Gamma suggests that opinion leaders of society perceive a strong positive association of bride price and trafficking. International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2004); United States Trafficking in Person (TIP) (2008); Mirza (2010); Wolthuis and Blaak (2001); ILO (2006); Joffres et al., (2008); and Clert et al. (2005) also had similar inferences.

In addition, a positive ($\gamma=0.274$) and significant ($p<0.05$) relationship is found between exchange of children for disputes settlement (*swara marriage*) and child trafficking (Table 2). This may be disapproval by Pakhtun society to the cultural practice of *swara*. The findings are consistent with International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2004); Mirza (2010); and United States Trafficking in Person (TIP) (2008).

A positive ($\gamma=0.324$) and significant ($p<0.05$) relationship exists between cultural rejection of sexually abused children and child trafficking (Table 2). Pakhtun culture is extremely sensitive towards illegal sexual relations of male and female. However, this is also a fact that girls are highly vulnerable segment of Pakhtun society especially in the context of their physical relationship with male. The study also suggests that Pakhtun society is not a place conducive for girls who are exploited by traffickers. Similar results are derived by Chung (2006); and Tumlin (2000).

A highly positive ($\gamma=0.608$) and significant ($p<0.05$) relationship has been witnessed between non-reporting of trafficking cases and child trafficking which is as per our expectations and in line with social stigma for the victim's household associated with spread of news of child especially girl child (Table 2). Child Rights International

Network (CRIN¹) (2005); and International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2004) found the same results.

A positive ($\gamma=0.524$) and highly significant ($p<0.05$) relationship is found between excessive dowry and child trafficking (Table 2). The findings suggest that opinion leaders are sensitive to the ill effects of excessive dowry in Pakhtun society.

Similarly, a positive ($\gamma=0.693$) and significant ($p<0.05$) relationship is found between child trafficking and females' fear of honor killing (Table 2). This result is in line with Clawson (2009); Estes and Weiner (200, 2005); Arata (2002); Saewyc and Edinburgh (2010); Whitbeck et al. (2001); and Muhammad (2005).

Table No.2 Relationship between Cultural Aspect and Child Trafficking

Statements	Attitude	Child Trafficking			Total	Statistics
		Agree	Disagree	Not sure		
Females' fear of honor killing	Agree	183(46.7)	21(5.4)	0(0.00)	204(52)	$\chi^2 = 15.201$ (.004) $\gamma = .693$
	Disagree	101(25.8)	19(4.8)	1(0.3)	121(30.9)	
	Not sure	48(71.6)	19(28.4)	0(0.00)	67(100.)	
Due to cultural constraints (shame, insult) families do not report trafficking cases.	Agree	240(61.2)	21(5.4)	1(0.3)	262(66.8)	$\chi^2 = 37.104$ (.000) $\gamma = .608$
	Disagree	77(19.6)	26(6.6)	0(0.00)	103(26.3)	
	Not sure	15(3.8)	12(3.1)	0(0.00)	27(6.9)	
Gender inequality increases	Agree	173(44.1)	17(4.3)	1(0.3)	191(48.7)	$\chi^2 = 12.633$ (.013) $\gamma = .356$
	Disagree	97(24.7)	23(5.9)	0(0.0)	120(30.6)	
	Not sure	62(15.8)	19(4.8)	0(0.0)	81(20.7)	
Forced child marriages	Agree	215(54.8)	21(5.4)	1(0.3)	237(60.5)	$\chi^2 = 33.900$ (.000) $\gamma = .521$
	Disagree	86(21.9)	17(4.3)	0(0.0)	103(26.3)	
	Not sure	31(7.9)	21(5.4)	0(0.0)	52(13.3)	
Excessive dowry compels families to sell out their children to traffickers.	Agree	189(48.2)	14(3.6)	1(0.3)	204(52)	$\chi^2 = 27.93$ (.000) $\gamma = .524$
	Disagree	86(21.9)	20(5.1)	0(0.0)	106(27)	
	Not sure	57(14.5)	25(6.4)	0(0.0)	82(20.9)	
Cultural disowning of sexually abused children	Agree	194(49.5)	20(5.1)	1(0.3)	215(54.8)	$\chi^2 = 13.763$ (.008) $\gamma = .324$
	Disagree	72(18.4)	23(5.9)	0(0.0)	95(24.2)	
	Not sure	66(16.8)	16(4.1)	0(0.0)	82(20.9)	
Purchase marriage (receiving bride price)	Agree	228(58.2)	28(7.1)	1(0.3)	257(65.6)	$\chi^2 = 11.184$ (.025) $\gamma = .363$
	Disagree	61(15.6)	16(4.1)	0(0.0)	77(19.6)	
	Not sure	43(11.0)	15(3.8)	0(0.0)	58(14.8)	
Exchange of children (Swarra) for disputes settlement	Agree	169(43.1)	23(5.9)	1(0.3)	193(49.4)	$\chi^2 = 12.200$ (.016) $\gamma = .274$
	Disagree	90(23.0)	11(2.8)	0(0.0)	101(25.8)	
	Not sure	73(18.6)	25(6.4)	0(0.0)	98(25.0)	

Source: Field Survey, 2012

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

CONCLUSIONS

It was found a few of the cultural practices of Pakhtun society were quite exploitative and associated with child trafficking. In a

male dominating Pakhtun culture, the study shows that gender bias and inequality, forced child marriages, purchase marriages, prevalence of excessive dowry, and the

customary practice of *swara* marriage are associated with child trafficking. Further, it has also been observed that the social stigma associated with acts like child trafficking prevents families from reporting heinous crimes of this nature. This non-reporting of crime motivates offenders for further exploitation of the vulnerable segment of society. All have to join hands to end this menace.

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