

Gender-Based Violence and Trafficking in Women

Trafficking in human beings, a modern day slavery, is a transnational phenomenon that affects all countries of the world in varying degree. According to the United Nations, human trafficking has become the second largest, and the fastest growing criminal industry in the world. Trafficking is considered a gendered phenomenon because a substantial majority of trafficked persons includes women. Mainly guided by feminist standpoint epistemology, this study draws upon gender and human rights literatures to analyze the intersecting macro and micro structural factors to understand the issue of women's trafficking in Pakistan. Drawing upon the experiences of trafficked women, I argue that trafficking should be considered, not simply in terms of patriarchal cultures and power of men over women, but in terms of women's vulnerable positions within a larger political economy. Trafficking cannot be studied as a standalone category of violence, where women are victims of violence that results from the oppression of men against women, but it must be seen as a phenomenon that occurs within a multidimensional continuum of violence, which intersects with entrenched structural inequalities and make some segments of society vulnerable to exploitation, often repeatedly, by others. Moreover, I analyze trafficking related policies to explain how the understanding and construction of "victims of trafficking"-based on specific (often narrow) understandings of the causes of such violence-lead institutions and policies to address trafficking in specific ways, which not only often fail to address its root causes, but also the needs of trafficked women.