

UNIT 11: HUMAN TRAFFICKING: INDICATORS

STRUCTURE

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

Niethammer (2020) quoting UNICEF writes that the Human trafficking is a 150-billion-dollar business with the International Labor Organization (ILO) estimating that in 2024 there are 49.6 million people in modern slavery worldwide with 35% of them being children.

In Unit 6, we saw the extent and magnitude of human trafficking with Unit 10 explaining the various “push and pull” factors which are the cause of people’s vulnerabilities that are taken advantage of by criminals and traffickers leading to human trafficking. Handerson (2019) adds

that environmental conditions that enable trafficking include tourist destinations, large public events, seasonal farm work, online advertising opportunities, truck stop, highway rest stops, military bases, factories, international borders and colleges and universities.

We also saw in Unit 7 how the push factors are causes for countries, regions and communities to become sources for trafficked persons while countries or regions where there is a demand for cheap labour and commercial sex being the pull factors and destinations for trafficked persons. In Unit 8, we looked at the various modus operandi of the traffickers for recruitment of potential victims and how these victims are then transportation for exploitation and how the internet is changing the modus operandi of traffickers. In Unit 9, we explored how these trafficked victims are profiled and identified leading to these trafficked identified individuals getting help and aid and helping law catch with the criminals indulging in trafficking.

Segrave et al. (2009) writes that locating and identifying victims of human trafficking is a much more complex process than traditional crimes primarily due to the hidden nature of trafficking. Added to it is the problem of distinguishing trafficking victims from other similar forms of victimization particularly smuggling. Recognition and identification of victims can be and is usually done through outreach program of NGO's, SOS hotlines and state agencies. Surtees (2007) and Newton et al. (2008) adds more personnel to this list by including law enforcement, staff of non-governmental, international organizations, embassy personnel, social and health workers, labour inspectors as well as including persons who are not directly involved in antitrafficking activities such as transport agencies, religious organizations, citizens, families or friends of the victim. Some victims as seen in Unit 9 are identified by clients and victims themselves. In this Unit itself under the section on case studies we detail the case of Nepali labourers who took a private company to a USA court. This company tricked them and trafficked them into a dangerous warlike situation where some of the compatriots lost their lives.

In this unit, let us explore in detail the various human trafficking indicators which indicate whether an individual is in a state of being trafficked because human trafficking is nothing but a modern-day slavery and as the website of US department of Homeland Security (<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/indicators-human-trafficking>) in its "Blue Campaign" spells

out, “Recognizing key indicators of human trafficking is the first step in identifying victims and can help save a life”.

However, the 2008 Council of Europe’s Recommendation on Identification and Referral to Services of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings states that, indicators should be understood as a “flexible instrument, to be used for case by case assessments,” but at the same time avoiding “further stereotyping and victimization of presumed trafficked persons”.

Hence indicators should be considered as basic tools that require assessment and enhancement and could serve as guidelines for professionals with Surtees (2007) in favour of more professionals trained in identification and equipped with necessary information and Danziger (2006) talking about a need for education to be organized systematically rather than ad hoc as is the case with many countries even today.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, a student will be able to

- Understand the various indicators which point to an individual in a trafficked situation
- Learn about how indicators differ in different exploitative situations
- Deepen your understanding through case studies

11.2 HUMAN TRAFFICKING INDICATORS

Human trafficking indicators can vary depending on the type of trafficking (such as sex trafficking, labour trafficking, or organ trafficking) and the context in which it occurs.

However, there are some common signs and indicators that may suggest someone is a victim of trafficking. It's important to note that the presence of one or more indicators does not necessarily

confirm human trafficking, but they should raise suspicion and prompt further investigation by trained professionals. Some common indicators include:

1. **Signs of Physical Abuse**: Victims of trafficking may show signs of physical abuse, such as bruises, cuts, burns, or other injuries. These injuries may be inflicted by traffickers as a means of control or punishment. As per the website of US Acute Care Solutions (USACS) approximately 88% of trafficking survivors report that while being exploited they had contact with a healthcare professional due the physical abuse.
2. **Restricted Movement**: Victims may appear to be under the control of others and have limited freedom of movement. They may not have control over their identification documents, money, or personal belongings.
3. **Isolation**: Victims may be isolated from the community, not allowed to interact freely with others, or closely monitored by their traffickers. They may exhibit signs of fear, anxiety, or depression.
4. **Exploitative Working Conditions**: In cases of labour trafficking, victims may work excessively long hours for little or no pay. They may lack appropriate safety equipment, be forced to work in hazardous conditions, or live in substandard housing provided by their traffickers. For example, Ferraro (2009) observed that high-tech industries in the present global economy are dependent on local infrastructure created and maintained by low-income, unskilled and semi-skilled workers, many in the informal economy and hence undocumented, untaxed and unorganized. This informal economy added to push factors of poverty, lack of education or employment, makes them vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. Besides High-tech industries, even domestic work has changed. Glenn (1992) describes domestic work today becoming commodified or turned into a commercial product or activity and hence filled with documented and undocumented immigrant workers trying to find a means of subsistence leading to exploitation.
5. **Control of Finances**: Traffickers often control their victims' finances, withholding wages or forcing them to give up their earnings. Victims may have no control over their bank accounts or access to money often working under huge debts.
6. **Inability to Communicate Freely**: Victims may be unable to speak for themselves due to language barriers, threats of violence, or fear of retribution against themselves or their families.

7. **Lack of Identification Documents**: Traffickers often confiscate victims' identification documents (such as passports or ID cards) to further control them and prevent their escape.
8. **Visible Signs of Substance Abuse**: Victims may be coerced or forced into substance abuse by their traffickers as a means of control or to cope with their situation.
9. **Signs of Psychological Trauma**: Victims may exhibit symptoms of psychological trauma, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, or Stockholm syndrome.
10. **Inconsistent Stories or Scripted Responses**: Victims may provide inconsistent or rehearsed stories when questioned about their circumstances.

Lynch (2024) wrote a news story from Northern Ireland about majority of human trafficking victims coming in from three East African countries of Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. He then quoting the Irish police services spokesperson lists the tell-tale signs that is demonstrated by someone who is a victim of trafficking or modern slavery. These signs the police say vary depending on the type of exploitation, but there are things to look out for which are common across all forms of modern slavery. They include one or more of the following conditions: someone who can't produce their passport or personal documents; someone who is unsure of their home address or the local area; someone who is distrustful of authorities as traffickers may have told victims that police will be violent towards them; someone who has no access to medical treatment; someone who appears to be under the control of others or always has someone else speak on their behalf; an over-crowded house or flat with a regular turnover of new occupants and someone who may not have cash as they don't get to keep the money that they earn.

Identification of victims in trafficking requires a certain period of time due to the complexity of trafficking phenomenon (Kröger et al. 2004). Practitioners who come in contact with victims need to be trained for a more active effort in identifying victims with a need to developing indicators that could guide in the procedure of identification (Ogrodnik 2010) else identifying victims may happen on basic observation and arbitrariness rather than a comprehensive approach (Danziger 2006). Thus, UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2008a) developed lists of general and specific indicators to help with the identification of victims.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

1) What are the various human trafficking indicators?

2) Why are these human trafficking indicators required and how were they developed?

11.3 UNODC HUMAN TRAFFICKING INDICATORS

In its document on Human Trafficking Indicators, UNODC breaks these indicators down into various categories like General Indicators; Indicators of Sexual Exploitation; Indicators of Labor Exploitation (typically in sectors of agriculture, construction, entertainment, service industry and manufacturing (in sweatshops)); Children in Trafficked situations indicators; Indicators of Domestic Servitude and Begging and Petty Crime Indicators. Let's understand these indicators as indicated by UNODC.

11.3.1 General Indicators

These indicators are generally applicable to individuals in all kinds of trafficking situations and most of these indicators are seen together in identified victims. Most trafficked individuals believe that they must work against their will and feel they cannot leave, are unable to leave their work environment and show signs that their movements are being controlled. The individuals show fear or anxiety are worried about violence or threats of violence against themselves or against their family members and loved ones and show signs of injuries which appear to be the result of an assault.

Individuals in certain types of jobs or in certain control situations suffer injuries or impairments which could not have come otherwise, which become an indicator for trafficking. These individuals are distrustful of authorities as either they don't have valid documents or false documents with them being illegally brought in or in many cases the passport, travel and identity documents are confiscated by traffickers and victims are threatened with being handed over to the authorities due to their immigration status.

Trafficked individuals are found in or connected to a type of locality likely to be used for exploiting people, are unfamiliar with local language and don't know their home or work address. Such individuals don't speak for themselves but allow others to speak for them when addressed directly. They act as if they are being instructed by someone else.

Then there are the obvious indicators like forced to work under certain conditions; disciplined through punishment; unable to negotiate working conditions; receive little or no payment; have no access to earnings; work excessively long hours over long periods; not have any days off or holidays; live in poor or substandard accommodations; have no access to medical care; have limited or no social interaction and whole life is focussed on work with limited contact with families or with people outside of their immediate environment and unable to communicate freely with others and be in a situation of dependence and under a perception of always in debt.

11.3.2 Indicators for Children in exploitative and trafficked situations

Indicators for trafficked children are marked different and very specific unlike trafficked adults. One of the most important indicators as per UNODC is the absence of access to parents or guardians. Besides that other indicators include: look intimidated and behave in a way that does not correspond with behaviour typical of children their age with no access to education, not time for playing, no friends of their own age outside work i.e. living apart from other children, eat apart from families they are put up with and given leftovers to eat; engaged in work that is not suitable

for children and travel unaccompanied by adults or travel in groups with persons who are not relatives.

UNODC document also list indicators which point to situations where children have been trafficked like the presence of child-sized clothing typically worn for doing manual or sex work, presence of toys, beds and children's clothing in inappropriate places such as brothels and factories, finding of unaccompanied children carrying telephone numbers for calling taxis, illegal adoptions and claims made by adults of finding an unaccompanied child.



Poster from Lifeway Network which works towards ending human trafficking.

<https://lifewaynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/human-trafficking-red-signs.jpg>

11.3.3 Indicators for Sexual Exploitation

Individuals trafficked for sexual exploitation show specific indicators which will be over and above the general indicators described above as per UNODC document. Indicators listed include: being escorted whenever they go to and return from work and other outside activities; have tattoos or other marks indicating “ownership” by their exploiters; move from one brothel to the next or work in various locations; sleep where they work; live or travel in a group, sometimes with other women who do not speak the same language; have very few items of clothing or have clothing that are mostly the kind typically worn for doing sex work; only know how to say sex-related words in the local language or in the language of the client group

The additional indicators listed for children who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation include; evidence that suspected victims have had unprotected and/or violent sex based on bruises or other injuries with evidence that suspected victims cannot refuse unprotected and/or violent sex; advertisements in brothels or similar places offering the services of a particular ethnicity or nationality and sex workers providing services to a clientele of a particular ethnicity or nationality and finally the sex worker not smiling.

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RED FLAGS FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING



Poster by Texas state in USA, Red Flags on Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation.
<https://images.theconversation.com/files/231970/original/file-20180814-2903-1rjx0jy.jpg?ixlib=rb-1.1.0&q=15&auto=format&w=600&h=800&fit=crop&dpr=3>

11.3.4 Indicators for Labor Exploitation

Individuals trafficked for labor exploitation show specific indicators which will be over and above the general indicators described above as per UNODC document. Indicators listed include: such victims live in groups in the same place where they work and leave those premises infrequently, if at all, and the places they live in are degraded, unsuitable places, such as in agricultural or industrial buildings; they are not be dressed adequately for the work they do, for example, they may lack protective equipment or warm clothing; have no labor contracts, no access to earnings, work long hours; given leftovers to eat and depending on employer for services include transport and accommodation.

Some additional factors might also indicate that people have been trafficked for labour exploitation. For example, notices have been posted in languages other than the local language, there are no health and safety notices and health and safety equipment is of poor quality or is missing, the employer or manager is unable to show the documents required for employing workers from other countries or show records of wages paid to workers and there is evidence that workers must pay for tools, food or accommodation or that those costs are being deducted from their wages.

11.3.5 Indicators for Domestic Servitude

Individuals trafficked for domestic servitude show the following indicators as per UNODC document: they live with a family but do not eat with the rest of the family and are given only leftovers to eat, have no private space and sleep in a shared or inappropriate space, be reported missing by their employer even though they are still living in their employer's house, never or rarely leave the house for social reasons and never leave the house without their employer and are subjected to insults, abuse, threats or violence.

11.3.6 Indicators for people trafficked for Begging and Petty Crimes

Individuals trafficked for begging and petty crimes show the following indicators as per UNODC document: they be children, elderly persons or disabled migrants who tend to beg in public places and on public transport; be children carrying and/or selling illicit drugs; have physical impairments that appear to be the result of mutilation; be children of the same nationality or ethnicity who move in large groups with only a few adults; move in groups while travelling on public transport, for example, they may walk up and down the length of trains; participate in the activities of organized criminal gangs and live and travel with members of their gang.

11.4 CASE STUDIES

These case studies will give a student an overview of how based on various indicators, sensitive practitioners and law enforcement identify trafficked individual followed by retribution for the trafficker or organizations by the legal system in some cases. D'estrée (2012) adds that there are various commonalities in the various stories which are quoted below, i.e., economic desperation and desire to feed, clothe, educate and provide medical care to families; the taking of great risk to leave hearth and home and being a double victim after being exploited by traffickers. International victims face further hardship by being in a strange country, their passports/means of identification taken, a language they don't know, no access to consular services, families back home under risk and forced to work in dangerous conditions under debt bondage and thus not able to flee.

D'estrée quotes two sex trafficking case studies from the USA and two cases from the international arena. In the sex trafficking case the first one she quotes is of *People v. Rodney Lyndell Tillis* [(2010) Cal.App. Unpub. LEXIS 958] set in San Diego, California where a professional pimp Rodney Tillis encounters a young, inexperienced woman, Breanna, prostituting herself in an area called the "Blade," a popular area for sexual services. Breanna is 21 years old and was prostituting herself in the absence of a job or income. Tillis spots her as a beginner, sexually abuses her and physically intimidates and threatens her and puts her under the charge of a more experienced prostitute. She is put in a motel where she can be watched over at all times so that she does not escape. She reports her kidnapping to the police and Tillis is arrested. D'estrée adds that Breanna's sexual assault by Tillis' or her kidnapping or being forced to work for no compensation would not have elicited much sympathy from the police had she been an experienced, professional prostitute. It was because of her innocence that the actions by Tillis constituted the elements of sex trafficking.

The second case quoted is *State of Iowa v. Leonard Ray Russell* (2010) where two girls, aged 15 and 16, run away from a juvenile home and are picked up by two adults (Russell and his girlfriend Jazzie) on their way to Washington, D.C. The girls are given an option to pay their way across the country by performing in strip clubs and engaging in prostitution. Both girls agree willingly and

there is no indication of force or sexual assault or holding of their earnings. The girls then separate with one going to Washington DC while the other staying in Iowa, both in commercial sex trade including their services featured on an internet website. Russel was arrested as the critical element in this story is the age of the girls and an adult moving minors which is by definition is an abuse of power as the minor lacks the ability to give consent.

In the international cases she quotes are the ones that wind up in the U.S. Courts. She mentions two laws i.e. "The Alien Tort Statute" which has been used extensively to bring human rights violations that take place outside the United States into U.S. Courts and RICO (Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) which is an effective tool in bringing multiple defendants together as co-conspirators. The first case is Alberto Justo Rodriguez Licea, et al., v. Curacao Drydock Company, Inc. (2008) which played out in Southern District Court of Florida which tells a story of government complicity in human trafficking and modern slavery. She writes that the Cuban government to generate US dollars and foil the embargo on Cuba by the USA sent Cuban workers to Curacao company to work 16 hours a day for up to 45 days straight on oil ships and cruise liners belonging to international community with the company making huge profits. Meanwhile the workers passports were taken, they were made to stay in slave like barracks and they worked in dangerous conditions with no safety measures taken or medical care provided. The workers were threatened with harm against them and their families if they tried escaping.

The second case is Ramachandra Adhikari et al., v. Daoud and Partners et al. (2009) in Houston Texas which was brought by 12 Nepali men under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) against KBR and its Jordanian subcontractor, Daoud & Partners for their participation in the trafficking and forced labour scheme. KBR has its headquarters in Houston and had been the engineering, contracting, and construction arm of Halliburton. The Nepali labor were recruited by an agency in Nepal charging a substantial brokerage fee with the promise of work in luxury hotels and restaurants in the Middle East. After their passport were confiscated they were flown to Al Asad Air Base, north of Ramadi, Iraq, where they were under constant mortar fire. Even though KBR was aware of the unsafe conditions they were forced to complete their 15-month contract.

Simeunović-Patić (2009) was of the opinion that many researchers have indicated a lack of recognition of trafficked victims outside of the sex industry both by general public and professional engaged in antitrafficking activities. It almost feels like a stereotype of an “ideal victim”. (Kapur 2002; Goodey 2004; Milivojević and Čopić 2010) feel that the official discourse reinforces the image of trafficking as something happening to young, naïve, impoverished, helpless, and disadvantaged women with prior experience with victimization, who are coming from undeveloped or developing countries and who are abducted, forced, or deceived by “evil” people and trafficked for sexual exploitation. Čopić and Simeunović-Patić (2012) feel these establishing stereotypes regarding “ideal victims” impact recognition/legitimacy of those victims who may or may not share such defined demographics or personal characteristics for example it minimizes recognition of adult male victims which take place in the broader context of economic migrations or using stereotypes might prompt non trafficked women to compete for a victim status.

Bjerkan and Dyrliid (2005) while analysing link between media, foreign donors, NGO’s, professionals and researchers, identified “a call for suffering” which means physical violence/brutal force being a normative description in stories involving trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Čopić and Simeunović-Patić (2012) thus feel that a developed list of indicators can provide some consistency and transparency in identification but no list can reflect the complexities and fluencies of the trafficking phenomenon. They go to write that these instruments actually deepen and strengthen the already prejudiced and stereotype around trafficking resulting in professionals finding themselves trapped with stereotypes on how a victim must look and behave thereby affecting victim identification. That is the reason Simeunović-Patić (2008) feels why lists of indicators cannot be considered a “perfect tool” that will by itself improve the procedure of identification of victims.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

1) What are the various indicators which point towards children in trafficked or exploitative situations?

2) What are the various indicators which point towards individuals trafficked for domestic servitude?

11.5 LET US SUM UP

This unit covers the essential indicators of human trafficking, which vary depending on the type of exploitation but generally include signs such as physical abuse, restricted movement, isolation, exploitative working conditions, control of finances, and psychological trauma. The unit emphasizes that identifying trafficking victims requires careful observation and a comprehensive approach, as relying on superficial or stereotypical indicators may lead to missed cases or misidentification. Practitioners and law enforcement officers must be trained to recognize these indicators to ensure victims are properly identified and assisted.

The UNODC has developed a detailed set of trafficking indicators that are categorized by the type of exploitation: sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, domestic servitude, begging, and petty crime. For instance, trafficked individuals may be found in poor living conditions, isolated from the community, and forced to work excessively without pay. Children in trafficked situations, in particular, exhibit distinct indicators such as a lack of access to education and being engaged in work unsuitable for their age. The unit also explores how these indicators have been applied in various case studies, illustrating the complexities of identifying and addressing human trafficking across different contexts.

Finally, the unit discusses the challenges of using indicators for identifying trafficking victims, pointing out the risks of reinforcing stereotypes and the importance of developing more nuanced and flexible identification tools. It highlights that while these indicators are crucial for guiding practitioners, they should not be considered definitive proof of trafficking, and a more in-depth, contextual understanding is necessary to address the issue effectively.

11.6 KEY WORDS

Human Trafficking: A form of modern-day slavery which involves the illegal transport of individuals by force or deception for the purpose of labour, sexual exploitation and/or activities in which others benefit financially.

Practitioners: A practiser; one who acquires knowledge from actual practice; one who has practical experience. In case of human trafficking it means professionals from social services, law enforcement, border guards etc who in the field find out from indicators which individuals have been trafficked.

Push Factors: In trafficking these factors describe the supply side. The reasons why individuals are pushed into trafficking, for example economic and social vulnerabilities.

UNODC: The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime was formed by combining the United Nations International Drug Control Program and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division in 2002. One of its focus is trafficking and abuse of illicit drugs.

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11.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

Answer 1: The various human trafficking indicators which indicate whether an individual is in a state of being trafficked because human trafficking is nothing but a modern-day slavery. These can vary depending on the type of trafficking (such as sex trafficking, labor trafficking, or organ trafficking) and the context in which it occurs. Some common indicators include: Signs of Physical Abuse, Restricted Movement, Isolation, Exploitative Working Conditions, Control of Finances,

Inability to Communicate Freely, Lack of Identification Documents, Visible Signs of Substance Abuse, Signs of Psychological Trauma and Inconsistent Stories or Scripted Responses.

Answer 2: Recognizing key indicators of human trafficking is the first step in identifying victims and which can help and aid the victim and help law catch the perpetrators. Identification of victims in trafficking requires a certain period of time due to the complexity of trafficking phenomenon (Kröger et al. 2004). Practitioners who come in contact with victims need to be trained for a more active effort in identifying victims with a need to developing indicators that could guide in the procedure of identification (Ogrodnik 2010) else identifying victims may happen on basic observation and arbitrariness rather than a comprehensive approach (Danziger 2006). Thus, UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2008a) developed lists of general and specific indicators to help with the identification of victims.

Check Your Progress 2

Answer 1: Indicators for trafficked children are marked different and very specific unlike trafficked adults. One of the most important indicators as per UNODC is the absence of access to parents or guardians. Besides that other indicators include: look intimidated and behave in a way that does not correspond with behaviour typical of children their age with no access to education, not time for playing, no friends of their own age outside work i.e. living apart from other children, eat apart from families they are put up with and given leftovers to eat; engaged in work that is not suitable for children and travel unaccompanied by adults or travel in groups with persons who are not relatives.

Answer 2: Adults or children living with a family who rarely leave the house or leave only with the employer, do not eat with the rest of the family and are given only leftovers to eat, have no private space and sleep in a shared or inappropriate space, be reported missing by their employer even though they are still living in their employer's house and are subjected to insults, abuse, threats or violence to them or their families.