



Human Trafficking

“The Silent Victims”

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Table of Content

Abstract	4
Acknowledgment	5
1. Introduction	6
1.1. Research Problem and Aim	7
1.1.1. Research Problem	7
1.1.2. Research Aim	8
1.2. Research questions	9
1.3. Relevance to Global Politics	10
1.4. Structure	11
2. BACKGROUND	12
2.1. Human Trafficking	12
2.2. Silent trafficking victims	14
2.3. Socially constructed gender roles: Masculinity	15
3. LITERATURE REVIEW	17
3.1. Academic writings	17
3.2. Non-academic writings	18
4. Methods	21
4.1. Design: The comparative and the case study methods	21
4.2. Research ethics	23
4.3. Data collection	24
4.4. Discussions on data reliability	25
5. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK	28
5.1. Theories	28
5.1.1. Theory of Structural Violence	28
5.1.2. Theory of Masculinity	29
5.1.3. Theory of (Mis-)Recognition	31
5.1.4. Theory of Governance	32
5.2. Identifying risk factors of male trafficking victims	33
5.2.1. Lack of knowledge and awareness	34
5.2.2. Social marginalization	34
5.2.3. Social stigma and shame	35
5.2.4. Economic situation	35
6. ANALYSIS	36
6.1. Gaps in Knowledge Regarding Male Trafficking Victims	36
6.1.1. Reversed roles: Female perpetrator of Human Trafficking	38
6.2. Cultural and Societal Factors' Influence on Men Becoming Trafficking Victims	40
6.2.1. The Victims and The Perpetrators	40
6.2.2. Pre- and Post-Conflict in the Concept of Militia	41
6.2.3. Case study: Sex Trafficking and a Look into Thai "Lady Boys"	44
6.3. Contribution of Family Circumstances to Males Becoming Trafficking Victims	45

6.3.1. Case study: Seeking comfort from older men	46
6.4. Economic Influence on Men Becoming Trafficking Victims	47
6.4.1. Organ Trafficking	47
7. CONCLUSION	49
REFERENCE:	54

Abstract

Human Trafficking, also known as Trafficking in Persons, or Modern-Day Slavery, is a multibillion-dollar industry that consumes millions of individuals from diverse social, cultural, racial, national, or gender backgrounds. Human trafficking can take many forms: labor, organ, and sex trafficking. It is a crime where people are treated as objects, goods, and commodities, becoming subjects to mental and physical abuse.

To this day, women and children are the ones receiving the most attention when talking about this crime, for men are neglected and overlooked due to socially constructed gender roles. However, male trafficking victims are often overlooked and under-researched but are just as subjected to physical, forced labor, sexual abuse, or any other form of trafficking as female human trafficking victims.

Therefore, this paper aims to provide an introduction to male trafficking victims through the lenses of structural violence, masculinity, (mis-) recognition, and governance theories. Despite an existing focus on female trafficking victims, this study endeavors to draw upon the experiences of male trafficking victims.

Lastly, acknowledging male trafficking victims could help raise awareness about the main issue and work towards its complete abolishment. Most importantly, it can help break down stereotypes that are circulating around human trafficking and gender roles.

Keywords: Human trafficking, Male trafficking victims, Masculinity, Gender roles, Globalization

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1. Introduction

Human trafficking is a highly profitable business that annually generates billions of euros, and the high profit is one of the main reasons that motivates traffickers and businesses to continue this unlawful act against humanity. It primarily focuses on the most vulnerable groups of society that their family or community may have rejected for their sexuality or one's economic situation (Masci, 2004: 2). In addition, countries' political instability, such as war, conflicts, or unstable governance, commonly fosters an environment that makes it easier for traffickers to conduct their business—considering that people, during times of war or natural disaster, are forced to flee their homes putting them at risk of being lured by traffickers. At the same time, traffickers tend to have well-rounded national and international connections that ensure victims' successful placement to agreed destinations (UNODC, 2020:9-10, 13).

Human trafficking is present all around the world and in most mainstream industries. Although victims of human trafficking can be of any age and gender, women and girls make up most of the victims. Based on the newest statistics reported in UNODC recent report (2022), women trafficking victims consisted of 43 percent (2022: 11). Furthermore, as pointed out in the "*A gendered crime: human trafficking's impact on women*" article by Women Political Leaders (website: <https://www.womenpoliticalleaders.org>). At the 5th EU Day Against Impunity speech, Nadia Murad claimed, "Human Trafficking is overwhelmingly a gender crime [...]". While it is true that female victims make up the majority of the statistics and increasingly attract academic interest, the most recent edition of "*Global Overview*" (2022) on Trafficking in Persons compiled by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime revealed that there is indeed an increase of male trafficking victims. While there is a visible decline in detected victims of human trafficking compared to the year 2021, especially in female victims by 11 %, there is a visible increase in male victims by 3 %. Notably, between the years 2003 and 2020, there has been a 20 % increase in detected male human trafficking victims. However, there is a visible disproportion of reports made on male trafficking victims. For instance, in Madrid, Spain, a few local studies in 2020 have found that an estimated 9.2 male trafficking victims go undetected for 2.5 detected female victims and 5.7 detected child victims in Madrid (UNODC, 2022: 17-20, 28; WPL, 2020).

Perhaps due to the growing media influence, but recent years have shown us a growing number of men who are finally willing to show their vulnerable side and share their feelings

and “traumatizing” experiences from the past or present, such as being victims of trafficking for both labor and sexual exploitation. A few of those examples will be seen later in the paper (see parts 6.2.3 and 6.3.1). Nevertheless, it is important to note that men and boys have been silent trafficking victims for many years (Swarens, 2018; McMahan, 2019).

The number of academic articles on male trafficking victims is incredibly low. However, there is a significant number of articles and interviews related to post-trafficking male victims that will be mentioned and referred to later in the paper. In most cases, those interviews consist of boys - a group that falls into the children’s category. For example, there are authors such as David Masci, who has been interviewing trafficking victims since the late 20th century - the time human trafficking started gaining more attention. One brief example by David Masci, a boy from Sudan who once lived a happy life with his family, lost his parents and freedom by being kidnapped by Arab raiders - slavery that lasted ten years (2004:1).

The focus of this paper is on male trafficking victims of human trafficking, also known as silent trafficking victims, rather than female victims, as multiple researchers have done multiple times thus far.

1.1. Research Problem and Aim

Every academic paper has an aim and the main problem, which will be stated and explained in the following part of this thesis. Thus, this chapter will explain the main problem and aim of conducting this paper.

1.1.1. Research Problem

This thesis research problem involves understanding male trafficking, *what are key characteristics of it, and what different factors, such as social, cultural, economic play in understanding male trafficking.*

When discussing male trafficking victims the lack of knowledge, academic sources, and understanding of the topic becomes the primary research challenge. For instance, in the past, and although changes are seen, to this day, male victims of human trafficking receive little attention, with the perception being that this phenomenon predominantly affects women and children. Foremost, the lack of research and data on male trafficking victims makes it challenging to comprehend the issue's scope and take action to create successful policies or initiatives to address it (Surtees, 2008: 16; Swarens, 2018; Smiragina, 2020: 22). Secondly,

social prejudice and embarrassment associated with male victimization that challenges and questions one's masculinity prevents male trafficking victims from coming forward, resulting in a lack of scholarly research, societal understanding, and support from law enforcement, local communities, and service providers (Swarens, 2018; Smiragina, 2020: 23).

Moreover, due to the mass media's focus on sex trafficking, many people associate human trafficking with only sex trafficking, which commonly consists of female victims, placing forced labor into the shadows of this crime, and labor trafficking more commonly consumes male sex (McMahn, 2019). However, as of last decades, more countries started paying importance to labor exploitation as a form of human trafficking by involving it in their statistics and anti-trafficking legislation.

There is another obstacle that data collection faces in regard to any human trafficking victims, it is the unreported cases by victims themselves. Victims most often find themselves in frightful and dangerous situations because citizens from weaker economy-holding countries commonly find themselves in law-related circumstances preventing them from making any reports or seeking help. The lack of legal knowledge of foreign countries' workfare laws impacts their decisions on reporting illegal activities. Furthermore, once placed or residing abroad, many fear losing their jobs, as in most cases, they are the main source of income for their families in their respective countries. In those cases, living conditions and underpayment are not on their priority list (Chamie, 2015: 77; Hepburn & Simon, 2013: 37, 42).

1.1.2. Research Aim

Considering how much attention and research there is on female trafficking victims in comparison to male counterparties, this thesis aims to raise awareness about male trafficking victims, also known as silent trafficking victims (Smiragina, 2020: 23). Moreover, studying male trafficking victims could assist in combating existing gender perceptions that are potentially responsible for the lack of academic interest and insufficient reporting of male human trafficking victims. Furthermore, in complying with such research, the aim is to reduce any existing stigma and anxiety or shame that male trafficking victims of trafficking may suffer, mostly due to society-constructed gender roles, and encourage them to come forth and seek help if needed.

Additionally, the aim is to analyze existing academic work. Finding missing gaps and identifying characteristics and types of male trafficking victims becomes crucial as well as

understanding how male victims' experience differs from female victims, the different forms of exploitation they go through, how it affects their mental and physical health, and the support and help they may seek.

Human trafficking is a topic that often receives insufficient attention, particularly in the context of male trafficking victims. Therefore, this thesis aims to address this gap by focusing on the experiences of male victims and victims of LGBTQ+ community. While data on these groups is limited, this limit of sources is an advantage for this research, as it seeks to broaden awareness beyond the traditionally emphasized vulnerable groups of women and children in the context of human trafficking.

1.2. Research questions

When talking about Human Trafficking, society immediately thinks of sex trafficking and of women and children as primary victims of this crime (Smiragina, 2020: 22). Forgetting that it also consumes men and boys, not only for forced labor but also for sex purposes. Public ignorance and lack of information shared by various institutions have placed the male population into the “silent victims” group, which should be classified as a “vulnerable” group by gender equality activists and government institutions (Swarens, 2018).

In the context of advancing gender equality, men are susceptible to the threat of abduction regardless of location or time, similar to women. They too face the risks of sexual assault, mistreatment, and human trafficking, which are prevalent in numerous regions across the globe. Instances of sexual assault, trafficking, and mistreatment of men are pervasive in many parts of the world. For centuries they were seen as the “dominant sex”. In most parts of the world, they are still seen as such, so, unlike women, they choose to suffer silently. That mainly concerns socially constructed gender roles and the stereotypical “dominant sex” classification (Santos, Gomes & Duarte, 2010).

Another reason is self-blaming in victims, which applies to all genders. However, men tend to take it more seriously than women (McMahan, 2019). Moreover, due to stereotypical views on gender roles, there is an understanding that females are vulnerable members of society, supposedly making them easy targets for predators, whereas men are viewed as predators that target the most vulnerable group. Additionally, for human traffickers, there is a tendency for women and children to be frequently more profitable than men, as they are frequently paid less than male for the same work (Santos, Gomes & Duarte, 2010). That alone makes it more

appealing to traffickers who want to make money. However, this is not to say that male victims do not experience the same treatment as those who fall into the vulnerable members of the society category. Hence, to study male trafficking victims, the main **research question** has been raised as follows:

1. What are the characteristics and risk factors associated with male trafficking?

To further explain the main research question, the following sub-questions are applied:

- 1.1. What are the gaps in knowledge regarding male trafficking victims?
- 1.2. How do cultural and societal factors influence men to become trafficking victims?
- 1.3. How does family situation contribute to males becoming victims of human trafficking?
- 1.4. How does the economic situation influence men in becoming victims of human trafficking?

1.3. Relevance to Global Politics

Modern-day slavery is a global phenomenon supported by a complex combination of economic, social, and political factors across international and national borders. Globalization is another source that has provided traffickers with new ways to take advantage of victims and move them across transnational borders (also known as “Border performativity”)¹ due to increased global interconnectedness through technological developments, traveling, and ever-growing trade. The study of transnational processes is central to Global Politics (Barnett & Sikkink, 2011: 1) Trafficking networks can now operate across borders by taking advantage of variations in legal systems, law enforcement, and regulatory bodies.

Furthermore, when talking about trafficked persons, male trafficking victims are usually rarely spoken of and are overlooked. It mainly concerns the socially constructed stigma that men are less vulnerable than women. However, male trafficking victims are exposed to the same threats as female victims, including sexual and physical abuse, forced labor, psychological

¹ Border performativity - “border performativity takes as its theoretical starting point the idea that borders are not only geographically constituted, but are socially constructed via the performance of various state actors in an elaborate dance with ordinary people who seek freedom of movement and identification. The choreography for this dance is shaped by state policies and laws, but it is increasingly shaped by global forces as well” - Nancy Wonders (Fernandez Bessa, C. & Fabini, G., 2018)

abuse, and even exploitation to unknown destinations against their will. They occasionally experience additional types of maltreatment, such as military service.

Thus, to address not only human trafficking that mainly focuses on women and children but also put a “spotlight” on male trafficking victims requires multiple organizations, government bodies, and other institutions all around the globe. To make sure that male trafficking victims receive the much-needed support and, most importantly, that the victims are identified and perpetrators held responsible for their actions (Farrell & Pfeffer, 2024; Blackstone, 2003: 337).

1.4. Structure

This paper consists of seven chapters. The first chapter will briefly introduce this thesis - the problem, the aim, the research questions, and its relevance to global political studies. The second chapter will present a Background that offers a general overview of what “human trafficking” and “silent trafficking victims” mean, as well as how socially constructed gender roles – masculinity affect male sex visibility in the eyes of human trafficking crime. Chapter three consists of a Literature review of academic and non-academic sources that will be used throughout this research paper. Chapter four offers a Methodological approach that is used throughout the paper. This chapter consists of the research design, which is the comparative and the case study method, research ethics, data collection, and a brief example of discussions that are happening on data reliability of human trafficking. Chapter Five provides an Analytical framework and identifies the risk factors of male trafficking victims. This chapter offers theories of “Structural Violence,” “Theory of Masculinity,” and “Recognition,” which are implemented throughout this study's analysis. Chapter six consists of an Analysis of the main research topic, “Silent trafficking victims.” The chapter will offer an analysis of the earlier raised research questions. Lastly, the seventh chapter will consist of Conclusions.

2. BACKGROUND

This part will briefly explain the main topics of this paper, which are human trafficking and silent trafficking victims, which refer to male trafficking victims and socially constructed gender roles that impact the reason male trafficking victims are a nesh that is under-researched and underexplored.

2.1. Human Trafficking

Human trafficking, also known as “modern-day slavery” or “trafficking in persons,” has existed and has been made legal throughout human history in most parts of the world, with the discovery of new lands, continents, and cultures. Trafficking in persons exists in every type of economy. Despite the country's industrialization or development pace, trafficking is everywhere, globally. It separates families, disrupts social bonds, and damages communities' economic prosperity (Sharmin & Rahman, 2017: 265). For example, Transatlantic Slave Trade (1500-1866). Events that enslaved, forcefully captured, and transported over 12 million people (about twice the population of Arizona) from African continents all over the globe. Only in the 19th – 20th centuries, with the bringing of an international movement, did slavery begin gaining recognition and moving towards its abolishment (Giovagnoni & Schooneveld, 2022). In late 2003, the UNODC enforced a protocol called Punish, Prevent, and Suppress human trafficking. Since then, more countries have started implementing legal actions to prevent the trafficking of persons on both national and international levels (UNODC, 2009). Since 2003, trafficking in persons has been gaining a lot of attention from governing and legal parties worldwide, as well as human rights, gender studies, and health service providers, for it only used to be questioned in debates about migration policies (Laczko & Gramegna, 2003: 179; Chuang, 2014: 609). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines human trafficking as people exploitation for, mostly, financial profit through means of persons' forced recruitment, placement, fraud, and kidnapping (UNODC).

Due to the nature of the crime of human trafficking, it is impossible to collect precise data on actual trafficked victims. However, the annual reports produced by organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the U.S. Department of State, that try to collect as much data as possible, to help us better understand yearly statistics of trafficking in person on a global scale. Despite those reports, it is necessary to be aware of and updated on what is happening nationally. Each country has different perceptions and laws

regarding trafficking and understanding of it. For instance, many countries still have a narrow understanding of the real meaning of human trafficking. Others have a vast range of legal definitions but minimal enforcement to prevent it and even more limited data access. Moreover, other nations barely have any legal background to protect their citizens and punish the perpetrators by legal bindings. Therefore, as Hepburn and Simons (2013) point out throughout their book, government statistics are determined by law or future practices of human trafficking, which means that internal trafficking, or labor, is not included in countries' laws. If it is ignored or remains unpunished, then the data provided by all the global governmental organizations and NGOs will not be precise (2013: 35).

Although there is a considerable amount of collected data regarding human trafficking, there is less data on specific features relating to male trafficking. For instance, as already mentioned, the UNODC yearly reports that include statistical data on human trafficking victims, or the U.S. Department of State yearly reports on trafficking in persons, as well as a substantial number of established institutions and organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, that are working on the shared goal – to prevent human trafficking. Nevertheless, most of them are primarily focused on vulnerable groups, that are, as defined by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), “Women, children and persons belonging or perceived to belong, to groups that are in disadvantaged position or marginalized.” Hence, this definition does not provide words such as “male” or “man” in describing “vulnerable groups.” Additionally, the same pattern to EIGE provided definition is used in other institutions. For instance, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) does not include words such as “man” or “male” either (EIGE; UNESCWA). This brings us to another phenomenon that has been gaining importance in these times of globalization - gender equality.

Gender studies is often an interdisciplinary approach by academics to analyze the circumstances of men and women, gender relations, and the gender component of all other disciplines (EIGE). The study of Gender has caught the attention of many scholars, human rights, and especially Women's Rights activists such as the Global Fund for Women, Rights4Girls, and many more. Nowadays, the fight for women's rights is still commonly seen as full of hardship and struggles as women aim to receive recognition nationally and globally. History has witnessed female names who tried to fight for equal rights, for example, Susan B. Anthony (1820 - 1906) who actively fought for equal voting rights in the United States, or Simone de Beauvoir (1908 - 1986) who set the base for modern feminism, or Ruth Bader

Ginsburg (1933 - 2022) being a US Supreme Court member patiently fought for gender discrimination and supported the uprising of MeToo movement which is a movement primarily focused on vulnerable women and awareness campaign against sexual harassment, rape culture, sexual abuse (Cook, 2023).

While human trafficking involves many forms of exploitation regarding any gender groups or economic-social groups, in most cases, women and children remain the group society, and many academics primarily focus on. Conversely, men are placed into the shadows and rarely included in discussions. Only in recent years, as indicated in the most recent report on trafficking in persons by UNODC (2022), there has been an increasing interest in male victims (UNODC, 2022: 11). Nevertheless, not nearly enough academic and non-academic work has been produced on male trafficking victims, also known as “silent trafficking victims” (Smiragina, 2020: 23).

2.2. Silent trafficking victims

While it is true that women and children of both sexes continue to dominate the statistics of human trafficking, trafficking in persons has seen an increase in male victims in recent years and a decrease in female victims. The recent report (2022) on human trafficking by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) revealed that there was a 3% increase in male trafficking victims in the year 2020 in comparison to 2019 (UNODC, 2022:19). However, society, in most cases, the media, often neglect that male individuals are as fragile and vulnerable as females are to this crime (Caroline, 2022). The underrepresented group of human trafficking is known as silent trafficking victims. To this day, there is no official definition.

However, many NGOs and anti-human trafficking activists and related articles from the last couple of years have started using the “Silent trafficking victims” phrase when speaking of men and boys – the groups that have been placed in the shadows, mainly due to socially constructed gender roles and a man’s portrait of “almighty,” “powerful” and “invincible” (Caroline, 2022). Throughout history, gender role differences depended on culture or religious beliefs, but most commonly, are still viewed based on these socially constructed norms. Men are perceived as the dominant sex at all levels of responsibilities: political, social, economic, or religious responsibilities. It has always been women who have been viewed as a weaker and more vulnerable sex. Nonetheless, gender is usually referred to as social and cultural difference rather than biological (Esudu, 2016).

Male victims are commonly associated with labor trafficking victims. However, that is rather a myth. While media has been used as one of the primary sources for recruiting trafficking victims, it has also allowed people to openly express their thoughts, sexuality, and experiences in the means of social media platforms that allow millions of viewers to see and perhaps gain the courage to openly share their experiences, should there be any. More and more male victims are gaining the courage to speak up and share their experiences, revealing a noteworthy number of male victims for sex trafficking purposes (Collective Liberty; UNODC, 2022: 10, Swarens, 2018).

2.3. Socially constructed gender roles: Masculinity

Gender is a socially constructed concept that is heavily based on biological distinctions between sexes – male and female – masculinity and femininity. Notably, most academic research on nationalism has been done by female scholars. They discovered that the existing literature on nationalism and ethnicity could not adequately explain, much less fully, why women had different experiences with ethnic communities or state politics than men, who share the same professional or ethnic experiences. Rather, they focused on task distribution and placement in collective participation. Previous researchers claim it was easier to research men and their experiences without further diving into opposite-sex cases (Enloe, 2004: 102; Blackstone, 2003: 337).

Many Western nations have historically believed that women are more loving or “nurturing” than men. The traditional interpretation of the female role dictates that women should act lovingly. For instance, one traditional female role is to take care of her family by fully dedicating herself to the household, or in other words, becoming a full-time homestay wife instead of building a career and looking for work outside the home. Men, on the other hand, are traditionally perceived as leaders and providers. Thus, it is automatically assumed that men are invulnerable to being victims of human trafficking (Surtees, 2008: 17). Furthermore, according to the conventional interpretation of the masculine gender role, males should be heads of their household by supporting their families financially and making final decisions regarding family matters – family representatives (Blackstone, 2003: 337).

Nevertheless, every discipline offers a different perspective on gender roles. For example, according to the evolutionary standpoint on gender roles, interactions among people, communities, and their surroundings shape gender roles. In other words, both parties contribute to the constructivism of gender roles with their daily activities. The biological perspective, in

opposition, claims that men and women naturally gravitate towards designated roles of men and women. Nonetheless, that is not to say that the biological viewpoint implies that one role holds more value than the other (Blackstone, 2003: 337).

Moreover, the sociological perspective on gender roles argues that the biological characteristics of men and women are not always related. Sociologists explain the various connotations and ideas that male and female gender roles have in society. For instance, men are viewed as superior figures when they can maintain financial control over their lives and families. On the other hand, women frequently find themselves in poverty should their marriage end. Men, on the other hand, are typically expected to provide most of the family's income, given that males are less likely to lose their authority or social standing if their authority or social standing if their marriage falls (Blackstone, 2003: 335-337).

Differences are seen outside the household, too, for instance, in the workplace, where in many cases, gender roles are crucial. Men and women are frequently required to carry out various jobs and play distinct responsibilities in their workplace, depending on their sex. For instance, exclusively offering a secretary job to a woman and a management position to a man or providing maternity leave benefits to moms while excluding them from fathers. Such cases still exist in many corporations – career segregation-based sex (Blackstone, 2003: 335-337).

Traditional gender roles assume that each sex is naturally drawn to certain activities and actions. Furthermore, it is believed that people who follow traditional gender role patterns are most likely influenced by their close relatives and the environment in which they were brought up (Blackstone, 2003: 337-338). Thus, the aforementioned gender differences leave room for speculation as to why a specific focus on human trafficking has always existed.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

While discussing human trafficking, many scholars unequivocally agree that it is a major human rights violation. Nearly, if not every, country in the world faces human trafficking. Thus, it is not surprising that this crime involves thousands of victims around the globe. For example, the most recent report (2022) by UNODC on trafficking in persons revealed that between the years 2017-2020, 187,915 victims of human trafficking were detected from 141 countries in the world. However, the report itself noted that data provided by the 141 countries were from 2020, and only a few countries provided data from 2021. Implying that they are not accountable for the reliance and accuracy of the provided numbers. As those were the numbers provided to UNODC by the individual countries and that may not be accurate (UNODC, 2022: 10-11). Nevertheless, over the years, human trafficking has caught much attention from regional, national, and international government institutions as well as legal parties worldwide, not to forget human rights, gender studies, and health service providers for it only used to be questioned in debates about migration policies.

To define the phenomenon of human trafficking, the most used definition used by many scholars is a definition by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) which describes “Human trafficking” as *“recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit. Men, women and children of all ages and from all backgrounds can become victims of this crime, which occurs in every region of the world. The traffickers often use violence or fraudulent employment agencies and fake promises of education and job opportunities to trick and coerce their victims”* (UNODC).

3.1. Academic writings

There are several academic writings regarding human trafficking collected by academic institutions, such as universities. Focusing on male trafficking victims, however, academic research becomes limited. Only a few scholarly works are written focusing on male trafficking victims. Even though they are slightly outdated, they provided great assistance for the empirical part of this paper. One such is an article by Jeffery P. Dennis, “Women are Victims, Men Make Choices: The Invisibility of Men and Boys in the Global Sex Trade” (2008). Dennis speaks about the lack of acknowledgment and existence of male sex workers. Furthermore, it discusses

the fact that male sex workers are met with questions about their sexual orientation and are tested for any sexually transmitted disease far more than female sex workers. Another article was written by Rebecca Surtees (2008) on “Trafficked Men as Unwilling Victims.” The paper by Surtees analyzes the reason behind the focus on women and children in trafficking discourse. It also discusses the experiences of male trafficking victims face when encountering the anti-trafficking laws. Lastly, there is one academic research paper compiled by Polina Smiragina-Ingelstrom on “Human Trafficking of Men: A Gendered Perspective on Victimhood” (2020). It is one of the most recent and up-to-date scholarly works that has been found. Like Surtees and Dennis, Smiragina focuses on male trafficking victims. However, Smiragina offers an in-depth analysis of the notion of gender and how it impacts the existing focus on women and children as primary victims of human trafficking. The main focus of this paper is on male trafficking victims for labor purposes in Russia.

An article by R. Surtees will be used in the analysis to provide a brief comparative insight as to why female and the children trafficking victims gain more attention than male victims. Furthermore, Surtees's article will assist in providing cases when male trafficking victims failed to identify. J. P. Dennis's article, although slightly outdated, consists of research data between 2002 and 2007, but highly relevant analysis with a focus on male trafficking victims of the sex industry. Most importantly, Jeffery P. Dennis undercovers topics such as transsexuality and homosexuality and male sex individuals that have encountered and experienced human trafficking, sex trafficking to be precise. Most importantly, the author undercovers vocabulary used by publications to describe male trafficking victims.

3.2. Non-academic writings

Unlike the lack of academic sources regarding male trafficking victims, there are several non-academic writings, such as journals, publications in different newsletter sources, organizations, and recorded as well as filmed interviews that will be mentioned later in the paper.

Nevertheless, despite numerous non-governmental and governmental organizations working on a shared goal, it is known that human trafficking, due to its nature, forbids researchers, officials, and analysts accurate data access. Nevertheless, it is agreed that this dark ‘underground’ business is a multibillion-worth industry, collecting thousands of men, women, and children each year. However, based on collected data compiled by NGOs and GOs, the primary victims of “Modern-day Slavery” remain to be women and children for sex

exploitation. Whereas men are mostly trafficked for the means of labor or organ trafficking, with an increasing number of sex trafficking tendencies (Chamie, 2015: 78; Dennis, 2008: 12).

Essentially, everyone is using social media platforms. Today, a wide range of open and closed networking sites are available to students, researchers, and journal editors where they can express their opinions, learn, and conduct research. Almost every emerging market, depending on one's culture, uses any platform to expand or promote its business, and media or so-called social platforms have drastically influenced and changed the daily lives of many individuals and numerous businesses. Especially when the Covid-19 pandemic took place (Zimba & Gasparian, 2021: 68-69).

One of the primary non-academic sources used in this paper and by other scholars regarding Human Trafficking are made by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Mandated by the General Assembly through the 2010 United Nations Global Plan of Action to combat trafficking in persons, every two years, commencing 2012, UNODC released the “*Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*.” The most recent report involves various quantitative data from 148 countries that provide an overview of the trafficking situation in each country on a national, regional, and global level. Not only that, but it also involves recent events and their made impact in the global arena, such as ‘Global Politics,’ gender statistics, as well as the emerging importance of growing technological influence which assists traffickers with a much quicker pace in looking for new victims, their recruitment and exploitation process. Furthermore, these reports by UNODC have been assisting schoolers with the most recent and at the best accuracy possible data in their field of work. It is worth noting that data collected by UNODC purely depends on the statistics provided by the representatives of those 148 countries involved in UNODC statistics.

Foremost, alongside the UNODC, there are a significant number of GO and NGOs working on the same purpose of preventing human trafficking as well as conducting and publishing interviews of survivors of such kind. A few of those NGOs and GOs that will be used throughout the paper will be the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the U.S. Department of State, the Human Trafficking Institute, The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), International Labour Organization, and more. Moreover, social media has become crucial for scholarly pursuits for over ten years. In order to publicly share their work, criticize their peers, or provide reviews on others' work, researchers have turned to multiple online platforms based on preferences and audiences. Every social site has

its audience, and individuals choose online platforms based on their preferences or intended search results (Zimba & Gasparian, 2021: 68-69).

As mentioned previously, social platforms have become a tool not only for scholars and students but also for traffickers. Nowadays, they integrate their business within their recruitment processes (Zimba & Gasparian, 2021: 69; UNOCD, 2020). Although the internet and social networks provide a vast majority of sources commencing academic to non-academic. When it comes to topics such as male trafficking victims, the majority of the recent sources are of non-academic origin. However, it poses a threat to the readability of information. The chosen non-academic sources will provide examples when talking about the individual experiences of silent trafficking victims. From family rejection for sexual preference to forms of recruitment, the image of a female perpetrator and male being both victim and offender and many more. Most of the experiences of male survivors/victims of human trafficking will be used by WGBH Educational Foundation (also known as GBH) (online: <https://www.wgbh.org/>). As for academic articles and journals, the primary source will be JSTOR (online: <https://www.jstor.org/>).

4. Methods

Topics such as human trafficking can consist of different research methods, and like any other research, it can be qualitative or quantitative. As a matter of fact, in social science studies, qualitative and quantitative data usually go hand in hand, meaning that both provide information and insight to one another that simply cannot be provided separately. Typically, for social science work, positive research methods will be used for case study qualitative and quantitative methods. Some information will explain data that used numbers and scales in explaining annual statistics of human trafficking victims, and the literature review will offer numerous articles, journals, and books related to this research topic (Bernard, 2006).

4.1. Design: The comparative and the case study methods

Due to the lack of existing data and the complexity of the topic, comparative analysis and case study methods were chosen. The main benefit of a case study is that it allows an in-depth analysis of particular examples, even when the researcher only has a few research sources at their disposal. Considering that science is a generalizing endeavor, the case study approach can be problematic for scientific methodology. A single case cannot serve as the foundation for a reliable source of information because it lacks the necessary diversity and repetition to establish a robust and generalizable understanding of a subject or phenomenon. However, as Arend Lijphart said in his article “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Methods”, “[...] case study can make an important contribution [...] to political science,” and as every writer, the wish is to make some sort of impact (Lijphart, 1971: 691). Thus, in an attempt to make an impact on society and scholars who perhaps will wish to take the study of male trafficking victims further in the future, as well as to provide an in-depth understanding of what contributes to male victims falling for this complex crime.

There are several kinds of case studies. One of them is an interpretative case study. *Interpretative case studies* of male trafficking victims and their experiences will be compiled. An *interpretative case study* is one of the comparative study methods of political science that focuses on the topic rather than theory formulation (Lijphart, 1971: 692). Hence, comparative and case study method will be used to understand how male trafficking victims’ experience varies from female trafficking victims. This case study method will have elements of content and ethnographic analysis, for there is to be expected a comparison between male and female trafficking victims. The amount of public documentation covering the issue and the best

practice approach method implemented to assist detected male trafficking victims. Moreover, it provides examples of how social and cultural components can contribute to different experiences, approaches to aid, and understanding of male human trafficking.

Different case studies will follow throughout the analysis part of the paper (see Chapter 6). For instance, the first case study (see 6.1.1.) shows that not only men but also women can be perpetrators. They also receive a lighter punishment should they get caught if we compare it with male offenders. Thus, this case provides examples of what female perpetrators look like and that they exist. The second case study (see 6.2.3.) is closely related to the LGBTQ+ community. It is about the phenomenon widespread throughout Thailand, known as "Lady Boys". This case study showcases the most vulnerable side of male trafficking victims in a sense that in Thailand, men and women play almost identical roles when it comes to sex trafficking. In fact, Thailand is one of a few countries in the world that is publicly known for the popularity of male trafficking victims in comparison to females. However, the general public commonly takes it lightly, especially with the "Lady Boy" terminology used as a coverup for the real crime against male trafficking victims. This example aims to show that there are countries in the world where male trafficking is a booming business but is taken too lightly by the public.

The following case study (see 6.3.1.) involves seeking comfort from more mature individuals, who can support the party classified as vulnerable, such as the homosexual party. As was underlined before, human trafficking tends to consume individuals in a complex social position. The case where a young gay man seeks comfort from an older man because his family rejected him for being of a different sexual orientation is one of many cases that involve male trafficking victims. With this case study, the aim is to show that members of the LGBTQ+ are more exposed to the crime of human trafficking, and it is due to social rejection rather than economic.

The last study case (see 6.4.1.) that has been chosen to analyze was organ trafficking, as it is a crime that involves the highest number of male victims rather than females. Organ trafficking is the least known subdivision of human trafficking. However, it involves the biggest number of male victims. Therefore, it is important to start including it when discussing human trafficking, especially silent trafficking victims.

Accordingly, such case studies assist us with understanding male trafficking, breaking existing stereotypes, such as men being strong and invincible, and women being vulnerable and weak, emphasizing the role of social dynamics, and highlighting the prevalence of male victims in various forms of human trafficking, including the underrepresented issue of organ trafficking. Moreover, these cases underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing the complex and multifaceted nature of this global problem.

Lastly, comparative methods involve the examination of similarities and differences across multiple cases and assisting in selecting relevant cases for this thesis topic by contributing to reaching the desired aim (see 1.1.2.) of the paper. Each study case uses a comparative method, primarily comparing different cases between women and men, focusing on male individuals. That is because this paper wishes to acknowledge that male individuals are equally vulnerable, and as presented in different cases, in cases even more vulnerable, to this crime as female parties.

4.2. Research ethics

When talking about human trafficking, research ethics is critical, especially when conducting interviews with individuals who were victims of human trafficking. Due to the complexity of not only the crime but also the sensitivity of vocabulary used for the sake of individuals affected by trafficking in persons, it is essential to receive consent from participants and to let them know that their stories and experiences will not be used against them. However, as this paper will use already existing interviews and published stories with “survivors,” “victims,” or “people” who have encountered human trafficking, it will, nevertheless, use as much neutrality as possible. Alternatively, midway through the 20th century in the United States, it was common to conduct medical experiments and research on the population considered a vulnerable group, commonly low-income patients and black convicts, as David Bryne in his paper on “Research Ethics” notes (2022).

It is worth noting that this paper will neither conduct a survey, which would require a “put on record” or “proof of individuals’ confidentiality protection”, where it is the researchers' job to inform individuals that they will be observed and that their privacy will be protected at all costs (Bryne, 2022). Although this paper will use already published interviews that are publicly accessible, this paper will not use the names of any survivors/victims of human trafficking.

4.3. Data collection

Given the vulnerability of this topic and the focus group, gathering data on male trafficking is not easy. On the contrary, it is quite difficult due to the lack of academic sources on male trafficking victims as well as the lack of accurate statistical data from reliable organizations, such as and especially from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which is the primary source when it comes to human trafficking. For instance, most academic articles were found and used using JSTOR online platform. The chosen literature regarding silent trafficking victims or male trafficking victims was found using advanced search methods and filtered by publication date - from 2008 to 2021 and targeted keywords. For the first search, the keyword combination used was “*Silent trafficking victims,*” as is the title of this research paper. Search results showed that the majority of journals (note: results that showed over 130 journals per discipline/journal) with the first keyword consisted of journals from Language and Literature (with 453 titles), Political Science (with 252 titles), Business (with 210 titles), Education (with 175 titles), Art & Art History (with 171 titles), Biological Science (with 164 titles), Sociology (with 154 titles), Philosophy (with 135 titles), Religion (with 130 titles). When selecting the section “*Language and Literature*”, results provided only fewer articles potentially relevant to silent trafficking victims' search. One such example was a book chapter on “The Female Perpetrator: Doing and Undoing Masculinity Through” by Sabine Binder (2021). Lastly, when generating search results using the same time frame (from 2008 to 2021) with the keyword “*Male Trafficking victims,*” results were met with slightly different research categories than the previous search.

However, the results of the Language and Literature, Economics, Religion, Political Science, and Education results remained the same. For this time, journals from History studies (with 337 titles) and Economics (with 183 titles) appeared. Similar to previously generated search result on silent trafficking victims, result generated on the *History* filter provided fewer articles on human trafficking with a focus on female victims but little to no results focusing on male trafficking victims. One article, identified from this search result that will assist in the analysis is “Making Sense of Violence: Voices of Soldiers in the Congo (DRC),” an article written by Maria Eriksson and Maria Stern that focuses on hegemonies masculinity and gender roles, in context of the military.

As mentioned earlier, now, in times of globalization, information travels in seconds. The Internet has become a major player in the fight against human trafficking. The Internet has

been integrated into recruiters' business amplitude, allowing predators to operate within multiple locations rather than just dealing with physical victims within one geographical location, making it more challenging for anti-human trafficking organizations and parties involved to allocate potential crimes. Despite that, the growth of global technological power and its forms of communication, such as exchanges between different nations and data collection, should make it easier for legal institutions to overpower the dark side of this crime (UNODC, 2020).

However, as we can see in annual reports on "*Trafficking in Person*" (TIP) made by the U.S. Department of State, vague data collection and information transfer have been the major issue in many states (Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014). Data may vary from several thousand to millions depending on the source, the country's economic situation, political position within the international arena, or even cultural customs (Santos, B. S., Gomes C., Duarte M. & Caldwell, S., 2010). Nevertheless, this paper will attempt to access data from the most neutral and unbiased sources.

4.4. Discussions on data reliability

As has been established earlier, human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing crime industries in the world that threatens human beings (Sharmin & Rahman, 2017: 265-266). Poverty has been the main indicator that drives women and men to leave their rural households and look for a better quality of life and economic opportunities in urban cities, as well as across national and international borders (Arvidsson & Kiwala, 2003; Sharmin & Rahman, 2017: 269). Although the female population remains the most affected sex within these underground crime activities, there has been a visible increase of interest in the LGBTQ+ community, especially male individuals, that have caught the public's attention and have been fighting for equal rights among communities. One should not forget the ones that have been highly affected by the Global Pandemic that has been in the *spotlight* since early 2020, leaving many in search of jobs and any source of financial aid (UNODC, 2020).

In times of globalization, significant changes occur constantly in people's daily lives due to increased worldwide connections facilitated by technological progress and international trade, resulting in diverse cultural influences, evolving consumer choices, expanded job opportunities, and the rapid spread of global knowledge and concepts, which emphasize the growing importance of adaptability and cross-cultural awareness for individuals adapting to

this ever-changing environment, making it difficult to believe that anyone would even dare to commit such an unlawful crime as human trafficking.

Talking about Governmental and Non-governmental organizations and the work they put into preventing trafficking in persons, Amy Farrell and Rebecca Pfeffer (2014) have questioned the actual work those organizations are putting into preventing human trafficking. Although their focus is the United States of America, it follows a similar pattern and possible failure that NGOs and GO organizations face. The impact of globalization regarding technologies and anti-trafficking laws in the U.S., The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act (TVPA) of 2000 has provided their states and local police authorities with all the necessary resources and assistance in the fight against human trafficking. However, despite all the legal advances, the number of official cases reported on human trafficking has raised questions about how the work has been collected (Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014).

Different sources, such as government institutions, NGOs, and GOs provide different data, making the public question the reliability of their government, and all institutions involved. For instance, critics of the U.S. Human Trafficking policy claim that the data between estimated and identified victims in their reports are exaggerated and untrustworthy. For example, in a 2012 report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), an estimated 1,5 million victims of human trafficking from the years 2005 to 2012 were identified within borders of Western Europe, the United States, and Canada. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Justice report reported only several hundred survivors. Other research suggested that many of the employees of the police force lack the knowledge and training to work in such a field, let alone identify such fastest-growing crimes. Amy Farrell and Rebecca Pfeffer (2014) also point out that most workers in the anti-trafficking force between 2007 and 2010 were ex-victims of human trafficking (Farrell & Pfeffer, 2014; ILO, 2012).

Stephanie Hepburn and Rita J. Simon (2013), on the other hand, criticized the previous reports by the United Nations, and unlike Farrell and Pfeffer (2014), Hepburn and Simon praised the report made by U.S. State Department on “Trafficking in Persons Report.” They argued that the United Nations report on human trafficking is not a self-executing provision and that, by itself, is not sufficient to connect the gap between international and domestic law. They suggest that the protocol must also adopt domestic anti-trafficking laws and ensure it is implemented. However, the tool that Stephanie Hepburn and Rita J. Simons (2014) suggest provides help on a Global scale for anti-trafficking statuses in an annual TIP report by the U.S.

State Department. They argue that this report ranks the Nation's compliance within the minimum standards of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA). This report provides information on actions taken by individual countries to prevent human trafficking. Provided information by the country includes the type of trafficking victims that were identified (sex trafficking, forced labor, slavery, peonage, debt bondage, fraud, in the case of sex trafficking age group is highly relevant). The U.S. Department of State requires as detailed information as possible. Those details should include information such as the destination country where the trafficking victims are exploited, the nation of origin of these victims, and the transit routes used in the trafficking networks. Additionally, the provided information must include the type of sentence each representative government carried out for the crime. Furthermore, the provided information that impacts countries stands in the U.S. Tier list where countries on the Tier 3 list face U.S. sanctions. Not only that, but this can also impact countries' international relations due to the power that the United States holds within the Global Arena. It can thus be a motivation to improve nations' anti-trafficking policies and to rise in the Tier list. However, it does not necessarily mean that countries provide accurate data due to mistrust in one nation's government and internal affairs (Hepburn & Simons, 2013: 36-37).

5. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

First and foremost, it is important to emphasize that trafficking in persons is a severe crime that harms people regarding gender, age, nationality, race, and socioeconomic background. However, because it is believed that trafficking primarily affects women, males are frequently disregarded as potential victims. Therefore, discussing potential risk factors for selecting male trafficking victims becomes essential in this paper. The analytical framework is used to understand better one of the groups affected by Human Trafficking - “Silent trafficking victims,” which are male trafficking victims (Smiragina, 2020: 22-23; Surtees, 2008: 17). Hence, theories of *Structural Violence*, *Theory of Masculinity*, *Recognition*, and *Governance* will be implemented throughout the multiple layers of the analysis this study requires. Furthermore, for further analysis, several risk factors, which will be in-depth analyzed in the next chapter, of male trafficking victims have been identified as following:

- Lack of knowledge and awareness;
- Social stigma and shame;
- Social marginalization;
- Economic situation.

5.1. Theories

Theoretical analysis offers to explain events or a phenomenon from a philosophical point of view. It is a tool that leaves room for interpretation yet allows us to get an idea of what the meaning of the phenomenon is at hand (Benetti, 2009). Lastly, further theoretical analyses will show each theory's similarities, connectedness, and differences in correlation to male trafficking victims.

5.1.1. Theory of Structural Violence

Structural violence theory refers to society's needless restrictions on a particular group of people, preventing them from fulfilling their most basic needs and achieving the desired living quality. These restrictions – which may be of a political, religious, economic, cultural, or legal nature – come from organizations that have authority over certain subjects. People frequently disregard these restrictions as nothing more than common challenges they run through daily lives as they have been ingrained and normalized by social institutions. For instance, due to barriers in the current social order, many people who require education, healthcare, political influence, or legal assistance cannot quickly get them (Lee, 2019: 123).

Structural violence is a method that gradually reduces human dignity, especially poverty, as poverty is one of the worst forms of violence out there, which can make one do unimaginable things to another without one being aware of the wrongdoing. Another critical factor of structural violence is that it is nearly impossible to identify the culprits, for the number of institutions they can seek cover or disappear without a trace. At the same time, the crime continues (Lee, 2019: 124). In the case of male trafficking victims, this theory is used to show how structural elements like poverty, the socially constructed image of a male, the idea of - “men control the means of institutionalized power,” and marginalization contribute to the vulnerability of men becoming victims of human trafficking. One could comprehend the underlying social and political institutions and seek to fix them to grasp the causes of male trafficking (Lee, 2019: 123 - 124; Demetriou, 2001: 338).

5.1.2. Theory of Masculinity

Several scholars have noted that feminist theory can be applied to the research of male trafficking victims as it recognizes the importance gender roles play in addressing trafficking dynamics (Arinder, 2020). Unlike the gender role theory that discards and is unable to grasp the complexity of power relationships within and between genders, as Connell notes (Note: Raewyn Connell is a well-known scholar of gender and sexuality, that has assisted many academics in understanding the differences between roles gender and sexuality play in our society). Based on Connell’s observation, gender role theory regards male and female roles as equal and dependent on each other. However, this theory does not have race or social class in mind. On the contrary, Connell recognizes the difference between femininity and masculinity by defining genders based on usual behavior. Behavior that is common for men or women rather than focusing on behavior set by standards and socially expected of one of the sexes (Demetriou, 2001: 338).

Every historical period and cultural context has a different perception of men's and women's societal roles. In the past, most of the world's cultures viewed men as the dominant sex. This phenomenon is better known as *hegemonic masculinity* - in theory, it means dominance over women and subordinates. To this day, men predominantly dominate the *institutionalized power*, such as church, army, or other organizations. Overall, men dominate three major sectors that contribute to inequality. Those institutions are the labor market, the family, and the state. Moreover, men in patriarchal societies have the luxury of enjoying a

number of benefits, a few of which are greater earnings or better access to education (Demetriou, 2001: 341).

However, if we were to talk about hegemonic masculinity over subordinates, by subordinates, meaning men of the LGBTQ+ community. This group of men most commonly faces marginalization not only by heterosexual male individuals but by political, legal, economic, and social parties. (Demetriou, 2001: 341). Thus, by introducing *complicit masculinity* theory, Connell explains that hegemonic masculinity is a cultural phenomenon that relies on civil society or, better explained, an image of a man that society considers “masculine,” “manly,” “strong,” “dominant,” or “invincible,” with little, to no emotions to spare. This brings us to the point that with the bringing of complicit masculinity and the rise of the feminist movement, or challenging hegemonic masculinity, a visible change has been seen in how society started perceiving gender roles (Demetriou, 2001: 342).

Many gender study scholars have noticed that the change in the way society views gender roles, especially the view that biologically born men can also belong among the vulnerable group, has been introduced by the feminist movement (Demetriou, 2001: 341). The interaction of identities such as gender, ethnicity, class, and others to create vulnerabilities and experiences is emphasized by feminist viewpoints on trafficking. This feminist strategy tackles patriarchy, gender norms, and power disparities that contribute to male victimization and the larger problem of trafficking. Feminism was originally created to stop sexist exploitation, oppression, and sexism. However, it also reinforces scholars to review past theories and social roles. Moreover, past works have set the base for the rise of feminism and gender equality studies (Arinder, 2020).

Nevertheless, the feminist movement does not imply that men are the ones who are to blame for the position females were and, in most cases, still are. In addition to focusing on oppression, feminist theory considers the lived experiences of any individual from any group, not just women. For instance, oppressive standards affect females' education in Tanzania. In order to increase the government's level of autonomy, teenage females should explore what empowerment looks like regarding their sexuality and educational access. Such a notion is too limited to the oppression of solely female students. Rather, it is applied to any oppressed minority within an educational context, meaning that male or non-binary students experience oppression and difficulties within educational systems. Not only that, but students are also frequently encouraged to choose studies that are appropriate based on their gender. Moreover,

disrupting oppression is an essential principle of feminist work, even though there may not be agreement on where feminist thought fits as a theory or paradigm (Arinder, 2020).

Gender equality, as mentioned before, continues to be a challenge, and academic work being done continues advancing feminism (Arinder, 2020). As a result, as it was mentioned earlier, there is a significant difference in the amount of work produced about female victims of human trafficking in comparison to male victims. Thus, the theory of masculinity will analyze the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity with a case example and its effect on silent trafficking victims. The reasoning behind denial in recognition as human trafficking victims. Denial of receiving assistance when needed and denial of recognition as a part of a vulnerable group.

5.1.3. Theory of (Mis-)Recognition

Over several decades, many scholars of recognition tend to agree that it is difficult to distinguish between recognition and mis-/non-recognition (Gustafsson, 2016). Nevertheless, most scientists refer to Hegel's political theory of Recognition in the context of social and political theories (Ikakeimo, 2013: 11; Sembou, 2003: 262). To be precise, the study of Hegel's 'recognition' theory is centered on the 'struggle of recognition' and the concept of being 'noticed' by another person, meaning the hardship of being recognized as an individual by another individual (Sembou, 2003: 262).

However, we can notice that Hegel never defined 'Recognition.' He provides fewer main subjects to explain the concept of recognition. Those subjects are: 'Desire,' 'Recognitive self-consciousness,' and 'General self-consciousness' (Ikaheimo, 2014: 20). The idea of freedom and independence is that one can desire things and make independent choices. 'Recognitive self-consciousness' is a fairly new subject and the most well-known one from Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit chapter. It refers to the struggle to recognize one's individuality by the other individual as neither of the parties can identify themselves in another. For them to live in harmony. Through recognitive self-consciousness, both parties get to know each other and gain a mutual understanding of independence. The concept of 'master' and 'slave' also mentioned the struggle of 'life and death' as both parties instinctively want to eliminate one another, yet they want to stay alive. Hence, they must create a social structure to work together (Ikaheimo, 2014: 21-22).

Lastly, 'General self-consciousness' is the knowledge of oneself in the other self meaning that everyone has absolute independence and freedom from one another. In other words, both parties recognize each other's existence without trying to establish their own name, they play as independent individuals with different desires and needs, living off a mutual understanding of each other's presence. Alternatively, living based on mutual recognition of one another. Furthermore, this *mutual recognition* is the key factor in how societies are/or should be functioning (Ikaheimo, 2014: 23-24).

In the context of silent trafficking, victims' recognition theory emphasizes the significance of acknowledging and respecting their experiences, identities, and rights as human beings. Recognition theory in the concept of male trafficking victims underlines the importance of addressing the social, political, and cultural issues that contribute to the marginalization and vulnerability of victims of this crime and, as such, recognizing them as equal and valuable members of society. As male trafficking victims frequently encounter gender norms and cultural preconceptions that make it difficult for them to be recognized as victims or be treated seriously. According to recognition theory, it is important to question gender norms and preconceptions that suggest that men cannot be victims or discount their experiences. Hence, it underlines how crucial it is to comprehend how susceptible men might be to exploitation and how their suffering should not be discounted because of conventional ideals of masculinity (Smiragina, 2020: 229).

5.1.4. Theory of Governance

As described by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Governance (UNESCAP) is *the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented*. It is a rather old concept and can be used in several settings: local governance, corporate governance, international governance, and national governance. The study of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and their implementation, as well as the processes before its put in place. Thus, governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (UNESCAP; Ansell & Torfing, 2022: 4).

There are eight key traits of good governance. It adheres to the rule of law and is participative, consensus-oriented, responsible, transparent, effective, responsive, and efficient. Furthermore, it ensures that corruption is kept to a minimum, minorities' opinions are considered, and the voices of the most vulnerable members of society are heard during decision-

making. In addition, good governance assures that the participation of both females and males is essential and should ensure full protection of the human rights of every individual, particularly minorities (UNESCAP).

Within the context of male trafficking victims, the theory of governance should, in theory, focus on the role of government and different institutions in addressing trafficking and actions taken to prevent it. Furthermore, in theory, it should guarantee the protection of victims and their rights and provide effective governance in combating this crime, including passing laws that make trafficking illegal in all shapes, including the trafficking of organs and labor. Thus, “good governance” ensures that the rules are efficiently implemented, upheld, and frequently revised to reflect shifting trafficking dynamics. Alongside laws and regulations, establishing specialized organizations and processes to combat human trafficking and male trafficking is necessary for effective government. Consisting of specialized prosecutors, victim assistance programs, and specialized law enforcement forces. To ensure a thorough response, it also promotes cooperation between several government departments, immigration, labor and social services, law enforcement, and inter-agency coordination. (Ansell & Torfing, 2022: 2).

The governance theory is bound to ensure the well-being of all individuals in their representative countries, for it strongly emphasizes a victim-centered strategy that prioritizes the interests, rights, and general welfare of all individuals. That includes offering medical care, psychosocial and legal support, and, most importantly, assistance in identification protection (Ansell & Torfing, 2022: 2).

Lastly, Governance theory understands the significance of trafficking and the importance of analyzing efforts aimed at combating trafficking to determine their efficiency as pinpointing areas for development. Entails gathering and studying data on victim profiles, trafficking patterns, and the effects of interventions. Governments can more efficiently spend resources and make evidence-based choices by monitoring and analyzing anti-trafficking initiatives.

5.2. Identifying risk factors of male trafficking victims

The risk factors, as indicated earlier, consist of Lack of knowledge and awareness; Social stigma and shame; Social marginalization; and Economic situation. Factors that are heavily related to the theories mentioned earlier in this chapter. Before further analysis in the

following chapter, we shall briefly look into each one of the risk factors men face in the face of modern-day slavery.

5.2.1. Lack of knowledge and awareness

The common misconception that trafficking mostly affects women and girls is significant in the lack of knowledge and shared awareness of male trafficking victims. This belief or misconception reinforces the idea that men are less likely to become victims of trafficking, which results in a lack of resources and attention in meeting necessary needs when needed. Furthermore, socially understood and perceived gender roles - or set gender norms - contribute to the lack of knowledge of silent trafficking victims. As men are frequently seen as invincible, thus less likely to become victims of this crime. Moreover, such prejudice may cause people to push back the idea that male individuals can become victims of human trafficking. Hence, showing hesitation in acknowledging the vulnerabilities and difficulties they confront. Because of this image that society created around male individuals prevents institutions from creating effective interventions, support networks, and legal enforcement for assisting male victims of human trafficking (Quinley, 2019; Dennis, 2008: 12).

5.2.2. Social marginalization

Discrimination and marginalization based on gender and sexual orientation are additional risk factors. Due to their social isolation and lack of access to resources and support networks, men who belong to excluded groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, are at a higher risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. Males who defy society-constructed gender standards tend to experience social exclusion, discrimination, and violence, which puts them at risk of becoming trafficked, with false promises of employment, comfort, and a sense of security and safety. Although the LGBTQ+ community has gained more recognition and voice over the past years, individuals from the LGBTQ+ community continue to face discrimination in many countries, mostly in culturally masculine dominant countries that have strong conservative and communist roots. Such countries do not guarantee legal protection for members of this group in case of emergency or public humiliation that usually involves physical and mental abuse. The fear of being arrested, imprisoned, or persecuted for sexual orientation. That makes it difficult for those individuals to seek help and assistance in trafficking situations. Moreover, individuals who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community are at a higher risk of becoming victims of human trafficking (UNODC, 2020; Quinley, 2019). Due to social

stigma and exclusion from society, they are most likely to be targeted by traffickers for sex jobs or talked into having sexual relations against their will.

5.2.3. Social stigma and shame

Social stigma and shame are closely related to previously noted ‘social marginalization.’ However, social stigma and shame are more related to the concept of hegemonic masculinity and socially constructed roles. Due to social stigma and shame, silent trafficking victims tend to be more conservative in seeking help and support. That is primarily because of the frequently faced traditional ideas of masculinity. Men are frequently expected to be robust, independent, and resistant to vulnerability. The belief that their victimization undermines their masculinity causes male trafficking victims to feel shame and embarrassment. An impression of coming off as helpless, weak, or powerless further isolates them and prevents them from speaking out and seeking assistance (Blackstone, 2003: 337).

5.2.4. Economic situation

Socioeconomic fragility is a significant risk factor for male trafficking victims. Many men from low-income families are lured by the prospect of employment abroad, only to find themselves subjected to forced labor or sexual exploitation. The prospect of rich career opportunities abroad lures many male victims coming from low-income families, past drug addiction, debts, and countries that are of the low-income. Primarily individuals from post-Soviet countries are the ones who seek a better life and are promised vacancies in the construction, domestic, or hospitality sectors. As a result encountering abusive, inhabitable living and working conditions. Additionally, this is a result of states poor governance (in this context, meaning post-soviet countries) the lack of a social support system that should provide basic needs to survive, and the need for a higher income, that pushes people to seek for better opportunities abroad. Notably, males without shelter or having a history of drug addiction are more vulnerable to trafficking. Furthermore, their lack of knowledge of the legal system and employment experience abroad prevents them from taking legal action once they detect a dangerous situation (Smiragina, 2020: 25 - 26).

6. ANALYSIS

The main purpose of this chapter is to provide answers to the earlier (see chapter one) indicated research question and sub-question.

This paper has already tried to identify risk factors that are intertwined with the characteristics of male trafficking victims and other human trafficking victims, meaning that all trafficking in persons victims share similar characteristics due to the nature of this crime. Human trafficking, consumes individuals from all age groups, all cultural backgrounds, and individuals disregarding gender. Although, as mentioned earlier in the paper, it still consumes individuals from vulnerable groups - groups that exclude men. Thus, this chapter will attempt to focus only on silent trafficking victims by providing an analysis of earlier raised sub-questions that should assist in providing answers as to why this silent group remains silent and under-searched.

6.1. Gaps in Knowledge Regarding Male Trafficking Victims

One of the earlier (see part 5) indicated risk factors of male trafficking victims was the lack of knowledge and awareness of male trafficking victims. That is because, to this day, most academically conducted research has been primarily focused on women and children. Male individuals are usually the convicts of the crime, the criminals. Moreover, when discussing human trafficking, society associates modern-day slavery with sex exploitation, a crime that statistically consumes more female individuals. Exploitation as a means of labor has been pushed aside, and it happens to be that male individuals are most likely to become victims of this crime. That is not to say that labor trafficking has not been recognized, when talking about male individuals, scholars recognize and associate labor and organ trafficking as a crime that consumes more male victims than females. Based on The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) provided data, between 2012-2014, male trafficking victims for labor purposes comprised 63% and 83 % for organ trafficking. Additionally, the UNODC's latest report on trafficking in persons indicated a visible geographical difference when detecting human trafficking victim types worldwide. For example, in North, Central, and Caribbean nations, it is more likely to encounter women and girls who have been tracked for sexual exploitation, while in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, meets men victims who have been trafficked for forced labor and boys for various forced criminal behaviors (UNODC, 2022; ICAT, 2017; Smiragina, 2020: 24).

The lack of awareness, or perhaps ignorance of the possibility of men being sex trafficking victims, is something that social service providers, government bodies, and academics have neglected. For instance, if we were to compare the 2009 and 2022 UNODC global reports on “*Trafficking in Persons*,” we could find that the 2009 report indicates that women can be offenders of human trafficking as much as male offenders. For instance, the data collected from 46 countries globally revealed that the female sex played a “key role” in the crime against human beings. In Europe, convicted women for any criminal activities consisted of the majority being convicted of human trafficking offenses. Furthermore, the 2009 report promotes the idea that women and men equally can be both victims and perpetrators of human trafficking. Moreover, as seen below, the report indicates a social tendency to focus on male offenders:

*“Crime, organized crime, in particular, is typically a male activity. Men make up over 90% of the prison population of most countries and are particularly **over-represented** as perpetrators of violent crime. It might be **assumed** that human trafficking, where violence and threats are keys to the business, would likewise be overwhelmingly male-dominated. But, surprisingly, the data on the gender of those convicted for trafficking in persons **do not support** this premise.”* - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009.

Whereas the 2022 report joins most scholars in promoting the idea that Trafficking in Persons is a crime that primarily affects women and children. That is not to say that they do not note the growing interest in male victims, but they do indicate a visible growth in demand for male persons – the only victim profile that has seen an increase of about 3% since 2019 (UNODC, 2022). Nevertheless, the main difference between the 2009 and 2022 UNODC reports is that the 2009 report includes the gender dimension in their report. In contrast, the 2022 report focuses on causes and growing global trends that pose a risk of being trafficked.

Jeffery P. Dennis, in his paper “Women are Victims, Men Make Choices: The Invisibility of Men and Boys in the Global Sex Trade” (2008), made an interesting discovery. Men, like women or all sex workers, should we exclude the perception that only the female sex can be a sex worker, can be found anywhere. Male sex workers can be encountered all around the world. They mingle around the streets of Thailand dressed as ladies. They can be found near cafes in Paris, gaming arcades in Prague, and brothels worldwide (Quinley, 2019; Dennis, 2008: 11). They offer their services as escorts, among many other common activities for any sex

worker. However, as Dennis (2008) pointed out, “Yet they are almost completely ignored by social agencies, administrative bodies, the mass media, and scholarship.” Scholarly discussions of sex workers, in most cases, are quick to specify “she,” “the woman,” or “her” when talking about sex workers, creating an impression that no man has ever offered his sexual services for financial gain. Although scholars can discount any popular stereotypes when having discussions, they never act on them when specifying male sex workers. In most cases, that has been disregarded with a continued focus on girls and women as subjects to illegal sexual intercourse (Dennis, 2008: 12).

Last but not least, silent trafficking victims statistically, are the minority. Thus, even if statistically we include the ever so slightly but still growing number of male trafficking victims, as indicated in the latest report by UNOCD (2022), the focus remains on the majority - women and children (Dennis, 2008: 16).

6.1.1. Reversed roles: Female perpetrator of Human Trafficking

As International Labour Organization (ILO) in the most recent report on “Global Estimates of Modern Slavery Forced Labour and Forced Marriage” (2022) stated, “As estimated 6.3 million people are in situations of forced commercial sexual exploitation at any point in time. Gender is a key determining factor: nearly four out of every five people trapped in these situations are girls or women”. One of many statements states that women and girls are the primary victims of sex trafficking. However, what if the roles were to be reversed? As has been indicated above, male sex workers are the minority. As many scholars would agree, minorities are the fragile and vulnerable groups of society that, if needed, require protection from all the legal and governing institutions. Nevertheless, we do not see it being used in the “best practice approach” for male trafficking victims. We see women and girls being shown as weak and vulnerable. Moreover, the possibility of a female being a perpetrator may sound like an imaginary scenario, something unheard of and commonly seen in movies (UNOCD, 2020; Dennis, 2008:16; Wijkman & Kleemans, 2019: 53).

Criminology studies predominantly compile studies of female offenders. Furthermore, scholars of criminology are the ones that focus on female perpetrators. As a matter of fact, and as mentioned earlier in the UNODC 2009 report on trafficking in persons, nearly 40% of detected offenders worldwide of trafficking in persons are women, with most female offenders originating from East Asia and Europe (Wijkman & Kleemans, 2019: 53; UNODC, 2009).

Commonly there is a perception that women are only involved as victims of sexual exploitation. However, the involvement of female perpetrators in human smuggling can differ from case to case, as well as the ways they become perpetrators. There are findings that, should a female become an offender, it is because she has been a victim of trafficking herself. It is fairly common for women who have once been sexually exploited to become perpetrators themselves later and begin exploiting other women. Another factor that is commonly met in female victims becoming offenders is when they develop close connections, having in mind romantic relationships, with offenders who trafficked them. Opening the opportunity for these women to stop the usage of their bodies for material gain. In short, it is a way for them to stop working as prostitutes.

The role that females play as offenders usually consists of involvement in recruitment processes. There is evidence that they also hold administrative positions where they are in charge of the transportation of victims to their destination country. The roles of accountants are also met, where they are responsible for handling income. Additionally, passport fraud, withholding personal documents, and supervising brothel sex workers. However, as Miriam Wijkman and Edward Kleemans, had noted in their paper on “Female offenders of human trafficking and sexual exploitation” (2019), female perpetrators tend to receive less severe convictions, depending on the case (Wijkman & Kleemans, 2019: 57). For instance, a Chinese woman in her early 50s, with her husband, for a short period employed an undocumented Chinese man for a short period to work in their restaurant in the Netherlands. He was underplayed and was forced to hide when authorities came for an inspection. Due to fear of being deported, the man dared to say nothing should the authorities find out about the underpayment conditions and his forged social documents. Nevertheless, in this case, the Chinese lady received a ten thousand euro fine despite admitting the continuity of employing undocumented employees (Wijkman & Kleemans, 2019: 63).

Although crimes that female perpetrators commonly commit are related to sexual exploitation (approximately 10% indulge in Labor trafficking and around 90% in sex trafficking), usually involving crimes that affect other women. There are cases, as mentioned earlier, of the use of a vulnerable male immigrant for “cheap working power” and higher financial profit gain to the Chinese offender. There are fewer cases where female offenders are in charge of male victims. However, it is still common that female offenders are more likely to take the lead in recruiting and managing trafficking work related to other female individuals, mostly for sexual exploitation. A note to be taken is that punishments for female perpetrators

of sex trafficking of fellow females are more severe, resulting in imprisonment, community work, or other, in comparison to offenses they made against male victims (Wijkman & Kleemans, 2019: 63).

6.2. Cultural and Societal Factors' Influence on Men Becoming Trafficking Victims

Many cultural and social factors may influence men in being trafficked. A few of them have already been mentioned and will be analyzed in depth below. However, a few of the cultural factors include *Socioeconomic conditions* prominent in some societies, such as lack of career opportunities, poverty, and economic inequality. Leaving anyone, but mostly men, exposed to trafficking. *Social stereotypes on gender roles* and the image of a strong man might make men relent in seeking help. *Migration* or cultural dimensions such as the language barrier, sexual preferences, or lack of legal knowledge of a foreign country, when an individual leaves their country of origin seeking better economic opportunities that his home country failed to secure, is another factor that makes anyone extremely vulnerable to human trafficking. Lastly, *Armed conflicts* are one of the aspects that are connected to socially constructed gender roles. That is because in times of conflict, when families are torn apart, jobs are lost, and trauma is experienced, men's sense of pride, and self-worth, which originally is drawn from supporting and defending their families, impacts the way men behave in both the pre- and post-conflict times. Conflict and life afterward are both shaped by the concept of masculinity in a man (Smiragina, 2020: 23-26; Vess, Barker, Naraghi-Anderlini & Hassink, 2013:3).

6.2.1. The Victims and The Perpetrators

The meaning of masculinity has gained importance within gender studies. As it was mentioned before, such interest is believed to be influenced by studies of feminism. Furthermore, it is said that the politics of feminism have evoked scholars to look deeper into studies of gender, producing homosexuality studies, meaning gay and lesbian research (Chopra, Dasgupta & Janeja, 2000; Arinder, 2020). In parts 2 and 4, "Socially constructed gender roles – Masculinity" (see part 2) and "Theory of Masculinity" (see part 4), it was explained what gender roles and theory of masculinity are and what is expected of each gender in terms of their behaviors. Should we briefly get back to it, there are expectations for a woman to be vulnerable and carrying and for a man to be the family's protector, provider, and hero (Blackstone, 2003: 337).

Based on the given example, female victims can be both victims and perpetrators. This applies to male counterparties as well. Nevertheless, as the focus remains on female victims of human trafficking, the general public tends to ignore the male population as being anything but perpetrators of such crimes. However, a study compiled by the World Health Organization (WHO), as indicated in Joseph Vess, Gary Barker, Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini, and Alexi Hassink's article, "The Other Side of Gender: Men as Critical Agents of Change" (2013) although the majority of homicide crime is committed by men, above 80% of the homicide victims, on an international scale, are men. Furthermore, when talking about purchasing sex for pleasure, men are also the dominant sex in purchasing sexual services. However, this includes men purchasing other male individuals for sexual pleasure (Vess, Barker, Naraghi-Anderlini & Hassink, 2013: 3; Dennis, 2008: 17). Therefore, as the aim of this thesis part is to show that men can not only be perpetrators, as commonly expected but also victims. This part of the analysis will look into two cases that will focus on 1) Militarism and how the military shapes one's identity and promotes the concept of masculinity as well as the socially constructed male image, as well as how armed conflict can have two outcomes for male individuals. First, being a perpetrator, and second, being a victim. 2) Sex trafficking and male victims, a case of the vulnerability of the homosexual community, and a provided example of Tai "Laidy Boys."

6.2.2. Pre- and Post-Conflict in the Concept of Militia

When discussing war times or post-conflict periods, some things need to be considered when discussing war or post-conflict periods. For instance, men are typically considered the main violent offenders during the war. However, research shows that men do not tend to become instinctively violent. For it is the circumstances that evoke the violent behavior or the dominant masculinity notion. The roles of men and women tend to shift drastically during times of conflict. Making it nearly impossible for governing powers to restore the original order in the post-war/post-conflict phase. For instance, men often know their self-identity from their societal roles in pre-war circumstances. Nevertheless, in the post-conflict phase, individuals, especially men, tend to lose that sense of identity which causes them to feel stressed out and, in most cases, indulge in drug consumption and illegal and violent activities such as sexual violence against all gender groups (Vess, Barker, Naraghi-Anderlini & Hassink, 2013: 3). Enlistment into the military, although it may be voluntary by the man himself, can result in an involuntary trafficking experience. Furthermore, armed conflicts, political instability, and natural disasters result in economic instability, creating opportunities to be recruited by traffickers or to experience physical offenses. With that being said, Men joining the military,

voluntarily or involuntarily, encounter a notion of masculinity through the teachings of their superiors or perpetrators, and other men who developed a sense of manhood or masculinity the same way their superiors did or are about to do (UNODC, 2019; Enloe, 2004: 101, 105, 111).

Concerning male human trafficking, it is known that terrorist organizations and other nonstate and even state entities frequently choose to recruit young men who are vulnerable and frustrated in conflict zones. Such a form of militarization of young male adults takes many different forms and is occasionally covered up by state institutions and power structures, where a strong sense of patriotism and nationalism exists. For instance, according to the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons by UNODC (2019), recruiting children for use as soldiers has been extensively recorded in conflicts worldwide, mostly within the Middle East and Central Africa. These organizations also traffick adults and children for labor, such as mining and other industries. In some cases, the public display of trafficked victims evokes fear among the locals. Moreover, criminal groups often use their beliefs to justify their violent actions, gradually making such violence a part of everyday life. Which can result in continuity should the group lose its primary goal or ideological emphasis (Vess, Barker, Naraghi-Anderlini & Hassink, 2013: 4). For instance, groups founded for political reasons, such as community defense, have recruited individuals for the same ideology in Northern Ireland. After successful peace negotiations, they found themselves indulged in organized criminal activities, having lost their primary goal of restoring peace, and have been left without a further purpose. This is a sign of bad governance and structural violence, for the governing institutions have not provided their citizens with the right opportunities to prevent them from indulging in organized crime. As structural violence deprives people of accessing opportunities for them to meet their basic needs so that they can have a comfortable life, that 'good governance' should offer (Lee, 2019: 123-124; Ansell & Torfing, 2022: 2; Vess, Barker, Naraghi-Anderlini & Hassink, 2013: 5).

Returning to the concept of masculinity and how it prompts hegemonic masculinity and brings forth the concept of man being vulnerable, gangs and armed organizations are examples of militarized masculinity, a topic that has been touched upon above. The armed forces present a concept of manhood that offers safety, security, power, and a source of income and defines what a real man should look like, among other things, such as access to women. However, in the concept of post-conflict, this does not apply to every man. Once a nation is in conflict, it does not mean that every individual is a part of the militia force. Thus, it can become challenging for many men, especially young adult men, to fulfill their socially defined and expected duties in times of crisis and post-conflict circumstances. Events such as conflicts leave

behind newly developed traumas, fears, and problems that need solutions. It is fairly common that in a post-conflict state, an individual experiences identity crises and has trouble adjusting to societal changes. Ex-combatants are the group that usually finds themselves facing mental health issues and newly found comfort in using drugs due to developing a drug addiction, which can result in joining illegal criminal organizations as a fallout of past experiences. For instance, an experience such as sexual abuse. In addition, many young males, especially those recruited into armed groups during violent conflicts, are the targets of sexual violence. According to studies, male sexual abuse is a familiar concept in post-conflict cultures and within armed organizations. Rape during wartime is a concept that affects not only women but men as well. However, it is a concept that is silent and unspoken. Nevertheless, there is evidence of men being raped by another man in private or, in the worst case, in front of a group of people to establish ultimate dominance or recognition over a subordinate party. Thus, many psychological issues, such as depression, and low self-esteem, can result in one committing suicide, and many other serious issues follow these victims of sexual abuse (Vess, Barker, Naraghi-Anderlini & Hassink, 2013: 3-8; Demetriou, 2001: 341-342).

To conclude, the concept of masculinity is a concept that differs from culture to culture. Armed conflicts, political turmoil, and natural disasters are additional risk factors for male trafficking victims. Men and boys may be coerced into military duty, used as child soldiers, or enlisted into armed organizations in various situations. Despite biological differences, most academics agree that traditional gender roles are fruits of social constructivism. Whereas, in most countries, the military has been viewed as a patriarchal institution, which is possibly the most stereotypically patriarchy of all institutional structures. Women and men had designated roles, men being soldiers and serving their country, while females were used to please men's sexual desires, comfort them, and attend to their needs. A portrait of a weaker sex that is suitable to provide love and tenderness to the dominant sex, who carries the burden of protecting the country or their household. However, with the changing understanding of gender roles, as seen in a few examples above. Armed groups, including the military, can evoke male individuals in violence and display dominance against females and other men. Hence, it displays that men can both be offenders and victims, despite the traditionally defined gender roles. Moreover, this implies that male trafficking victims should also receive more exposure and recognition from the general public (Segal, 1995; Lynch, 2022; Enloe, 2004: 103-105; Esudu, 2016; Blackstone, 2003: 335; Vess, Barker, Naraghi-Anderlini & Hassink, 2013: 5).

6.2.3. Case study: Sex Trafficking and a Look into Thai “Lady Boys”

As disclosed earlier, there is published evidence of men being victims of sexual abuse in the eyes of crime against human beings. When talking about sex trafficking, based on the UNODC Press release of the 2019 human trafficking report revealed that 27% of boys were trafficked for sexual exploitation and other forms such as criminal activities, child soldiers, and begging. Whereas the majority (50%) of boys were trafficked for forced labor purposes (UNODC, 2019). That is the shocking reality of trafficking. However, when talking about human trafficking and its form of sexual exploitation, the majority of clients using sex services remain to be straight men. Thus, the focus remains on women as the victims in the eyes of the public. As for homosexual male individuals involved in providing sexual services. Such statistics have not given a valid reason to further investigate the issue (Dennis, 2008: 17). However, in the last years, we have seen that demand for male trafficking victims for sex trafficking has increased, thus creating an opportunity for scholars to dive into the research on silent trafficking victims.

Having underlined that in most societies, gender roles heavily depend on the social construct, Thailand is no exception. The norms, values, religious beliefs, and power ideologies that explicitly define the position and responsibilities of both genders in the capacity of marital status have dominated gender roles within not only Thai but also Tai society. For instance, in Tai society, men are higher than women regarding access to sexual entertainment. For instance, visiting brothels for a man is not an unwelcoming idea within Tai society. There is a common belief around Tai men that their significant other is trying to take full control over their life, thus resulting in such activities as visiting prostitutes. Tai men fear their women. They fear losing their masculinity and dominance (Chang, 2008: 133-134). However, this part of the paper exposes the dark side of Thailand's sex trafficking industry and its consumption of male victims.

As Thailand is a popular travel destination for many individuals from all around the world. Moreover, many are familiar with the term “Ladyboy” as many have made jokes or heard stories about a beautiful-looking Thai lady who is found to be a man. However, few wonder how these people get involved in prostitution (Quinley, 2019).

Caleb Quinley interviewed one of the “Ladyboys” (refers to a transgender woman or a man, or a gay man that dresses as a woman. Terminology most commonly used within East Asia, Thailand in particular (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries website:

<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>) for his article “A Behind the Scenes Look at Thailand’s ‘Ladyboy’ Sex Industry” published in Vice.com (website: www.vice.com). One of the Ladyboys that Quinley interviewed confessed that having obtained a degree from higher institutions and having found no job after numerous company rejections, they had been sent to study beauty courses by her mother. When the beauty world has not provided enough money to support herself and her family, with a friend's encouragement, she follows ‘her’ friends into the sex industry. She admitted having experienced dangerous situations with a few clients that could have resulted in ‘her’ catching sexually transmitted diseases. As well as the fear of speaking out and seeking help from governing institutions due to the industry she is working in (2019). Lastly, in ‘her’ point of view, ‘she’ views boys and transgender people as a group that is more vulnerable than women, as they are not exposed but ignored when it comes to various organizations and receiving help when needed (Quinley, 2019).

Such a case is not the only one in Thailand. There are many cases like this, and only the fortunate survive. Most continue to work in this industry for the rest of their lives. In the worst case, as explained to the organization Operation Underground Railroad (OUR) by one of the male sex trafficking victims from Thailand, some males are made to change their gender against their will and forcefully become “ladyboys” in order to increase their income (2021). Nevertheless, the primary reason for turning to sex work for all transgender people in Thailand remains to lack of access to career opportunities, even having obtained a degree in higher education. If they chose to work in beauty or any other industry, they would receive low salaries and have to work many hours. Thus, the only solution they see is to turn to prostitution (Quinley, 2019; Operation Underground Railroad, 2021).

6.3. Contribution of Family Circumstances to Males Becoming Trafficking Victims

In Thailand and other poor economy-holding countries, families commonly send their offspring to earn money from a very young age (Operation Underground Railroad, 2021). As a matter of fact, child trafficking is statistically four times higher than adult trafficking, and it starts with family involvement (International Organization for Migration, 2017).

Gender roles again play a vital role within a family's situation as an indicator that exposes men to becoming trafficking victims. Socially constructed gender roles and, as earlier explained image of a man who is seen as the family's main income provider carries a responsibility to earn enough so his family can have a comfortable life. Such male individual

has characteristics of a vulnerable man that is instantly attractive for labor trafficking because of the pressure to provide for the family. Factors such as poverty related to social, family, and economic factors have been and are yet to be explained (Smiragina, 2020: 22-23, 25-26). Nevertheless, this part of the analysis would like to focus on the marginalization by an individual's family due to sexual preferences.

6.3.1. Case study: Seeking comfort from older men

Around the world, individuals from all age and gender groups fall victim in the eyes of human trafficking. However, it tends to affect individuals experiencing domestic abuse, lack close connections with whom they can talk, and most importantly, experience marginalization for their sexual preferences by society, including family and friends. Youth identifying themselves as members of the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning) community are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking as they lack proper community support due to their sexual preferences, pushing them to seek comfort everywhere, and in times of Globalization, the Internet plays an important role among governing bodies and trafficking industries (Polaris, 2019).²

Rejection by the family for being gay is a case of a male trafficking survivor from the United States of America who experienced misrecognition by his family and his social circle and was thrown out of his home at the age of 15. With no one to look after him or care for him, the survivor turned to social media, seeking love and recognition. The newly found love was with an older man, who, at a young age, the survivor had thought was the love of his life, as he received care and attention that the environment he was brought up in did not provide him. At one point, the ex-victim tried to return to his family but again experienced marginalization and was advised to seek counseling help (Polaris).

The first love did not flourish, and soon after, the survivor found another lover. However, this time it was not just an abusive relationship. It was a “grooming” type, and with that, meaning that this perpetrator was preparing the young man for his soon-to-be modern-day slavery experience. The perpetrator was making him exercise, and the pictures that the young victim, at that time, sent him were posted on online platforms, attracting future clients. Having

² Note: In the following exploitation case, the survivor's name will not be displayed. He will be addressed using terminology such as: “survivor,” “ex-victim,” and “young man” Although this particular story is publicly published by Polaris (website: <https://polarisproject.org/survivor-story-jose-alfaro/>) and can be accessible by everyone, this paper will not be using names. The interviews were not conducted personally, as indicated under “research ethics” (see part 3.2.3).

detected early signs, the survivor managed to escape and, since then, has tried to share his story publicly in hopes of assisting future victims targeted by these criminal activities (Polaris).

6.4. Economic Influence on Men Becoming Trafficking Victims

The complex phenomenon of human trafficking is influenced by various factors, including economic and cultural. However, it is mostly an issue within global inequality that primarily affects individuals from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds looking for better life possibilities. Furthermore, poverty, injustice, a lack of social and economic opportunities, a lack of respect for basic human rights, instability in one's society, conflicts, or natural disasters are the major causes of human trafficking. One of the main factors pushing people to look for better prospects outside of a conflict zone is the destabilization, structural violence concept, and lack of government in place. Such conditions tend to motivate people to move to nearby towns, cities, or beyond the country's borders. For instance, many post-Soviet states experienced economic hardships that led their residents to search for employment overseas. Russia became one of the major countries in the world for receiving migrants, mostly from fellow post-Soviet countries, after the fall of the Soviet Union (Simiragina, 2020:22; Lee, 2019:124). Although these factors have been mentioned several times throughout the paper, it will never be enough to stretch the importance of the causes of human trafficking, especially regarding male trafficking victims.

6.4.1. Organ Trafficking

Transplanting illegally obtained organs from living or deceased people is called organ trafficking, one of the darkest human trafficking forms. It is a crime driven by poverty, desperation for money, and lack of access to healthcare. Moreover, it is one of the most profitable and gendered crimes that generate much money. As a result, attracting a significant number of male trafficking victims. Liver removal is one of the most commonly reported organs. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, male victims are most likely to fall for this crime. The main difference between other forms of trafficking and organ trafficking is that it involves health sector specialists and the necessary facilities and equipment to perform such a crime. Most of the professionals of organ transplant belong to illegal organizations that deal with organ trafficking, or they are individuals who are committing unlawful acts against human rights for their personal gain. Additionally, organ trafficking is one of the most profitable trafficking crimes and the most difficult to detect. Statistically, there have been detected only around 300 victim cases of organ trafficking between the years 2010 and 2018 (ICAT, 2021).

Organ trafficking does not involve the trafficking of human beings whose organs are being taken because “organ trafficking” refers to the nature of the illegal trade of organs for money or other material gain. Interestingly enough, prior to the adoption of the Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs, there was no international agreement that stated trafficking in organs, even though the vast majority of nations had long forbidden the sale, purchase, and, most importantly, removal of organs without national bodies consent (ICAT, 2021)

Lastly, effective identification and reporting of organ trafficking involves a number of difficulties. In addition to taking legal actions against organ trafficking under the current trafficking laws, little is known about the scope of this underreported and poorly researched crime. There are a few efforts made to collect data, as professionals find it difficult to distinguish between trafficking in persons and organ trafficking causes. Thus, a low priority has been given to trying to detect any possible victims of organ trafficking. Besides many other inefficient methods, another struggle is indicated that due to different understandings and imposed laws in different jurisdictions, it is difficult to access information on a global scale (ICAT, 2021). With that, we can conclude that male victims of organ trafficking will remain silent trafficking victims for as long as it will take for institutions and legal parties to recognize, find ways to detect, and implement regulations to help prevent this crime.

7. CONCLUSION

Nowadays, we can see women playing equal roles as men have been doing for many years. They are taking up entrepreneurial roles in leading conglomerates, managing big organizations, or owning their own enterprises. This is one of the outcomes of the rise of feminist studies. As touched upon earlier in the paper, many scholars believe that it is, in fact, the feminist studies that made scholars view men through a gender lens, which entails understanding gender as a social construct as opposed to biological determination, which also entails understanding that traditionally constructed gender roles have changed and will continue to change. It is for the feminist movement that studies on the male sex started gaining more attention. However, it is still barely noticeable but it is happening. (Vess, Barker, Naraghi-Anderlini and Hassink, 2013: 1; Esudu, 2019). Male victims of human trafficking have the right to protection from all forms of exploitation, such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, and organ trafficking. Effective legal systems, law enforcement actions, and victim assistance programs are necessary to protect these rights and combat male trafficking.

The main thesis question was raised: **“What are the characteristics and risk factors associated with male human trafficking?”**.

This essay previously attempted to identify risk factors and characteristics associated with male trafficking victims. However, what was found is that the share common traits of male and other trafficking victims are linked. This brings us back to the Human trafficking definition, which states that human trafficking is a crime that enslaves people of all ages, despite one's ethnic origins and regardless of gender. Nevertheless, it does lure vulnerable people, and as was already underlined, the official definition of ‘vulnerable group’ does not include men.

Nonetheless, throughout the paper, it was identified several most common characteristics that are associated with male trafficking victims. One of the main characteristics is vulnerability, and although men are not included in the group of vulnerable individuals, they are vulnerable. Those factors include socioeconomic vulnerability and the belief that men who come from economically underprivileged families and have few educational and employment possibilities are more likely to be victims of human trafficking. Poverty, unemployment, and lack of social support increase their vulnerability to exploitation. Following that, young male adults, who lack life experience, naivete, and willingness to accept risks, especially teenagers, are especially vulnerable to trafficking. They can be lured by trafficked with falls promised of

existing job opportunities and better life. Not to forget, the decriminalization and marginalization characteristics, especially of Homosexual people. Some marginalized groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, immigrants, refugees, and members of racial minorities, are more likely to become victims of trafficking. They are more vulnerable to exploitation due to discrimination, social isolation, and a lack of legal protection. When talking about migration, either internal or external, men who are seeking better economic prospects or to escape conflicts or disasters are more likely to become victims of trafficking. Targeted for traffickers due to their lack of legal rights and unfamiliarity with new surroundings (UNODC, 2022: IX, 28, 31-33, 36).

The main research question was followed by four sub-questions for a more thorough analysis of the main question. The first sub-question was, “**What are the gaps in knowledge regarding male trafficking victims?**”. To conclude this question, the gap in knowledge about male trafficking victims is because, to this day, scholars tend to focus on women and children. Commonly labeling men as criminals and offenders in the eyes of Human Trafficking (see 6.1.), neglecting the thought of a man being a victim of sex trafficking is something the public needs to accept and normalize. Let alone, the idea that women can play offenders' roles as much as a man in the eyes of human trafficking. Furthermore, the knowledge gap exists because the majority of academics and the public associate human trafficking with only sex exploitation. When the majority of labor trafficking victims are, as a matter of fact, men. The gap lies also within the socially constructed gender roles and the different roles that men and women play in society. The man is an image of a ‘hero,’ and the woman is a caring ‘housewife.’ (Wijkman & Kleemans, 2019; ICAT, 2017; UNODC, 2022; Blackstone, 2003: 335-338).

The following sub-question, “**How do cultural and societal factors influence men in becoming trafficking victims?**”. Socioeconomic conditions, lack of career opportunities in one’s home country, poverty, and economic inequality are the primary reasons that influence men to be trafficked. Once abroad, several other factors follow, such as not knowing the foreign language and the foreign country's laws. Nonetheless, one of the most important cultural and social factors has been used in the theory of masculinity or socially constructed gender roles. Militia has been used as an example in the analysis of this sub-question (see 6.2.). For instance, it is common knowledge that men commit most violent crimes during wartime. However, evidence indicates that men do not naturally have the propensity to become violently aggressive. Because the conditions are what inspire aggressive behavior or the idea of powerful masculinity. During times of conflict, men's and women's roles can drastically change. Making it nearly impossible for ruling authorities to reimpose the previous order in the phase following

a war or other conflict. For instance, men frequently have a sense of their self-identity from their social responsibilities in pre-war times. However, during the post-conflict period, people, particularly men, tend to lose their sense of identity, which makes them feel anxious and leads them to engage in unlawful and violent acts like sexual assault against people of all genders and societies. (Vess, Barker, Naraghi-Anderlini & Hassink, 2013: 3-5). Even though a man may voluntarily enlist, doing so could lead to an unintentional experience with trafficking. Additionally, military conflicts, political unrest, and natural catastrophes cause economic instability, which makes it easier for people to fall victim to physical assault or be recruited by traffickers. Having said that, men who enlist in the military—whether freely or involuntarily—experience a sense of masculinity through the lessons of their superiors or abusers, as well as other men who have or are about to develop a similar sense of manhood or masculinity (UNODC, 2019; Enloe, 2004: 102).

However, this does not apply to every guy in the sense of post-conflict. Not every person who lives in a country at war is a member of the militia force. Therefore, it can be difficult for many men, especially young adult men, to carry out their socially defined and expected responsibilities in emergency situations and post-conflict situations. unintentionally encounter a concept of masculinity from the lessons of their superiors or perpetrators, as well as other men who have or are going to develop a similar sense of manhood or masculinity. Conflicts, for example, leave behind freshly created traumas, phobias, and issues that require remedies. It is typical for someone to have identity problems and struggle to adapt to social changes in a post-conflict state. Studies show that male sexual assault is common in militaries and post-conflict societies. Men and women are both impacted by the concept of rape during times of conflict. As a result, these victims of sexual abuse often experience a wide range of psychological problems, including despair, low self-esteem, and many other grave problems. (Blackstone, 2003: 335; Vess, Barker, Naraghi-Anderlini & Hassink, 2013: 3-8; Demetriou, 2001: 341).

Therefore, we can conclude that different cultures have different ideas of what it means to be a man. For male trafficking victims, other risk factors include armed conflicts, political unrest, and natural catastrophes. In various circumstances, men and boys may be forced into military service, exploited as child soldiers, or enlisted in armed groups. Despite biological distinctions, most scholars concur that social constructivism has produced traditional gender roles. While the military, which is arguably the most stereotypically patriarchal of all institutional organizations, has historically been perceived as a patriarchal institution in most societies, meaning that men and women had different roles, with men acting as troops and representing their country, and women being employed to gratify the sexual demands and

comforts of men. An image of the lesser sex, which is ideal for giving love and tenderness to the dominant sex, who is responsible for guarding the nation or their home. However, as demonstrated in a number of the aforementioned situations and with the evolving knowledge of gender roles. Armed groups, particularly the military, tend to act violently and domineeringly toward women and other men. Thus, men can have dual roles as perpetrators and victims despite conventionally established gender roles. (Enloe, 2004: 111- 118; Esudu, 2016; Blackstone, 2003: 337; Vess, Barker, Naraghi-Anderlini & Hassink, 2013 3-5; Demetriou, 2001: 341). The concept of manliness and masculinity in society is a concept that still needs to be discovered. Men who have experienced these crimes are frequently looked down on since they cannot defend themselves. As a result, leading to less reporting and fewer males seeing assistance and help.

Sub-question: **“How does family situation contribute to males becoming victims of trafficking in persons?”** can be connected to gender roles and cultural and social dimensions. As earlier explained, according to socially constructed gender roles, a man who is perceived as the family’s primary breadwinner has an obligation to make enough money to provide a pleasant living for his family. Thus, due to the strain of supporting his family, this male displays the traits of a vulnerable man who is immediately appealing for labor trafficking. However, in the analyses chapter (see 6.3.1.), the case study was chosen to analyze through marginalization of a person because of their sexual preferences by their family. Shortly put rejected by the family for a different sexual orientation. This analysis part showed a case explaining this thesis research sub-question in hand, but it also undercovered the importance internet has been playing within recruitment processes of luring in potential victims.

Last but not least, the sub-question that has been analyzed is **“How does the economic situation influence men in becoming victims of human trafficking?”** Due to the complex nature of human trafficking, all the previously mentioned aspects could be implemented to this sub-question, such as poverty, culture, society, economics, and many more. However, this part of the analysis (see 6.4.1.) attempted to purely show one of the main human trafficking crimes that primarily involve men and is one of the most profitable human trafficking crimes out there. Organ trafficking is one of the human trafficking branches that is highly in overshadowed by sex and labor trafficking but is one of the most profitable and darkest crimes out there (ICAT, 2021). The aim of this part was to shed an awareness on this crime as it consumes the most male individuals, and it is purely connected to the economic situation of a person that signs up to be involved in this crime.

Lastly, this paper would like to stress the importance of researching and understanding male trafficking victims, as many people are still unaware that men can become victims of trafficking, and awareness of this problem can be essential to finding effective solutions. Furthermore, the identification of male trafficking victims challenges the existing notion about males as tough, and invisible. This could create a pattern to destroy existing gender norms and help develop a more inclusive perspective of human trafficking by acknowledging that men can be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Foremost, studying male trafficking victims could enable the development of support systems and services specifically tailored to meet their requirements. It could enable organizations and governing institutions to distribute funds effectively and to develop programs that could meet the special issues and experiences that male victims endure. Additionally, for the purpose of creating efficient legal frameworks and policies, it is crucial to comprehend the scope and nature of male trafficking victims. Any victim of trafficking, regardless of gender, can benefit from enhanced protection and support if research is used to inform evidence-based policymaking (Smiragina, 2020: 22).

Moreover, by sharing awareness and putting the spotlight on the minority group, which is male trafficking victims, we could combat the stigma and discrimination that male trafficking victims frequently experience by doing research and expanding information about these silent victims. In order to foster empathy, compassion, and fair treatment for all trafficking victims, stereotypes and prejudices should be eliminated. Thus, it is critical to conduct research on male trafficking victims in order to raise awareness, offer necessary support, push for legislative changes, break ongoing social gender roles and advance inclusivity and justice for all trafficking survivors. Not only that, but the minorities are also affected by this unlawful act. Men have been neglected in regard to victimhood and the possibility of being considered a vulnerable group. As was already underlined, Human trafficking has primarily focused on women and children, and most sources related to male trafficking victims are focused on labor trafficking (Smiragina, 2020: 22).

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