

Globalisation and Vulnerability of Tribal Communities: A Study on Human Trafficking (With Special Reference to Harda & Betul Districts of Madhya Pradesh State, India)

Kiranlata Kerketta, IPS

Assistant Inspector General of Police,
Women's Safety, Bhopal

Abstract

Human trafficking cannot be understood in isolation from the broader processes of globalisation. Economic inequalities, migration flows, the expansion of transnational criminal networks, and gender dynamics are all interconnected phenomena that shape and perpetuate the scourge of human trafficking in today's globalised world. This study explores the ethical and socio-cultural implications of mainstreaming tribal populations in the context of escalating global consumption and limited resources. As urbanisation intensifies, tribal communities—particularly women—face heightened vulnerability to criminal exploitation, including human trafficking. Trafficking in persons is a grave violation of human rights that continues to affect millions globally. The seductive appeal of urban life, coupled with hyper-consumerist pressures, creates conditions where tribal identities are misinterpreted, commodified, and marginalized, deepening systemic risks. Drawing from secondary literature and primary data collected from 1,441 households across Harda and Betul districts of Madhya Pradesh, the research investigates the nexus between globalisation, tribal vulnerability, and human trafficking. The paper is divided into two parts. The first part is based on a review of literature which specifically explores the nexus between Globalisation and Human trafficking along with the vulnerability of tribal women in this regard, and the second part, through primary data, tries to explore the nexus between globalisation, vulnerabilities of tribals, and Human Trafficking through some major findings of the broader research. The study advocates for safeguarding tribal cultural integrity and ecological harmony while addressing the challenges imposed by globalisation to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable populations.

Keywords - Tribal populations, mainstreaming, urbanisation, global consumption, criminal exploitation, cultural misinterpretation, vulnerability, globalisation, competitive nature, undeclared warfare, human trafficking, nuanced approach, cultural preservation, ecological harmony, exploitation, marginalised populations.

Introduction

The mainstreaming of tribal populations raises ethical concerns (Atalay, 2006) as imposing an urban lifestyle on those who prefer to live in harmony with nature is deemed immoral. However, amidst a global ecosystem where per capita consumption is escalating and resources are limited, tribal communities may find it challenging to sustain themselves in

isolation within forested areas. The growing consumption of the urban population inevitably encroaches upon forest lands.

The allure and amenities of mainstream societies are naturally attractive, compelling tribal communities to gravitate towards them (Babu et al., 2015). When tribal individuals come into contact with urban residents, especially at the intersection of hyper-consumerism, opportunities for criminal exploitation, particularly against women, arise. Urban dwellers often interpret tribal cultures differently, viewing their lifestyles, marriage institutions, the role of women in household income, and dietary customs as backward. Despite possessing significant pro-nature and pro-social elements, tribal practices are sometimes misunderstood (Dhal, 2018).

Globalisation has transformed everyone into both producers and consumers of goods and services, contributing to the intricate machinery of globalisation (Babu et al., 2015).

Drawing from secondary literature and primary data collected from 1,441 households across Harda and Betul districts of Madhya Pradesh, the research investigates the nexus between globalisation, tribal vulnerability, and human trafficking. This data evidently exhibits the nexus between globalisation, vulnerability, and human trafficking, of the tribal men and women to reduce the gap of human resource shortages. It advocates for preserving tribal culture and ecological harmony while addressing the challenges imposed by globalisation to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable populations. The aim is to analyse the impact of this global phenomenon on tribal communities (Malyadri, 2020). Balancing the coexistence of diverse communities is crucial to ensuring that globalisation does not lead to the exploitation or marginalisation of vulnerable populations, such as tribal communities (Mitra & Singh, 2008).

Scope of the Present Research

The scope of this research encompasses a comprehensive examination of the ethical implications associated with the mainstreaming of tribal populations in the context of increasing global consumption and resource limitations. The study delves into the risks posed by urbanisation, with a specific focus on criminal exploitation, particularly against tribal women, at the intersection of hyper-consumerism. It explores the misinterpretation of tribal cultures by urban dwellers and investigates the broader impact of globalisation on tribal communities, emphasising the inelastic and competitive nature of social associations in this globalised era. The research aims to provide insights and propose nuanced approaches for addressing challenges while preserving tribal culture and ecological harmony.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the nexus between Globalisation and Human trafficking, along with the vulnerability of tribal communities, especially tribal women, in this regard.
2. Analyse the risks posed by urbanisation, particularly criminal exploitation, at the intersection of hyper-consumerism, emphasising vulnerabilities, especially among tribal women.

3. Investigate the impact of globalisation on tribal communities, focusing on the inelastic and competitive nature of social associations.
4. To propose approaches to combat Human Trafficking.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed in this study was systematically gathered from diverse journal repositories. These sources were retrieved from both nationally and internationally recognized journals. The criteria for paper selection were methodically based on regional, geographical, national, and domestic characteristics pertinent to the focus of the study.

Nexus between Globalization and Human Trafficking

Trafficking in persons is a grave violation of human rights that continues to affect millions globally. The number of trafficking victims has seen a troubling rise since the COVID-19 pandemic, with a 25 per cent increase in global detections between 2019 and 2022, according to the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024. This uptick in cases reflects the increasing visibility of trafficking victims across various regions, particularly among the vulnerable population—including women, children, and migrants—who are disproportionately targeted, often falling victim to sophisticated organized criminal networks. Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of individuals. This is achieved through exploitative means such as force, coercion, fraud, or deception. Common forms of exploitation include forced labour, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, forced begging, organ removal, and other mixed and emerging threats(<https://www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/understanding-human-trafficking>).

The nexus between globalisation and human trafficking is deeply rooted in the transformative changes brought about by increased interconnectedness across borders (Atalay, S. 2006). Globalisation, characterised by the free flow of goods, services, information, and people, has both direct and indirect implications for the prevalence and patterns of human trafficking.

On a macroeconomic level, the demand for cheap labour in industries spanning agriculture, manufacturing, and services has risen with globalisation. This demand often outpaces local labour supplies, prompting traffickers to exploit vulnerable populations. Tribal communities, already marginalised and facing economic hardships, become prime targets for traffickers who take advantage of their dire circumstances (Atalay, S. 2006). Expanding global supply chains further complicates the issue. Industries seeking cost-effective production may turn a blind eye to labour practices, inadvertently becoming enablers of human trafficking. The complex web of supply chains, spanning multiple countries, allows traffickers to exploit regulatory gaps and discrepancies in legal frameworks, making it challenging to trace and prosecute such criminal activities. Technological advancements, a hallmark of globalisation, play a dual role in the nexus. While they enhance communication and connectivity, making trafficking networks more sophisticated, they also serve as tools for recruitment. Social media platforms and online spaces become arenas where vulnerable individuals, including tribal women, are targeted, deceived, and eventually trafficked. The issue extends beyond labour trafficking to encompass the grim realities of forced migration and sexual exploitation.

Globalization's impact on migration patterns, both voluntary and forced, exposes vulnerable populations to trafficking risks. The demand for commercial sexual exploitation, fueled by the growth of the global travel and tourism industry, provides traffickers with opportunities to exploit Indian tribal women, subjecting them to sexual slavery and coercion. In essence, the nexus between globalisation and human trafficking is intricate and dynamic, driven by economic disparities, transnational criminal networks, technological facilitators, and the complex web of global supply chains. Understanding this nexus is imperative for developing comprehensive strategies that address the root causes and consequences of human trafficking on a global scale.

Globalisation and Tribal Women in India

The impact of globalisation on tribal women in India is a nuanced interplay of opportunities and challenges (Babu et al., 2015). While globalisation has ushered in economic development, it has simultaneously exposed tribal communities, and particularly women, to a myriad of social, economic, and cultural changes.

Economically, globalisation has brought new avenues for income generation, often in the form of employment opportunities in industries like agriculture, manufacturing, and services. However, the benefits of this economic growth are not evenly distributed. Indian tribal women, despite their active participation in traditional livelihoods, may find themselves marginalised in the new economic landscape. They often face challenges in accessing education, skills training, and formal employment, perpetuating cycles of poverty. Cultural dynamics are significantly impacted by globalisation. Traditional practices and indigenous knowledge may be threatened as external influences penetrate tribal communities. The commodification of culture, driven by the global market's demand for exoticism, sometimes results in the exploitation of tribal cultural practices without due respect for their significance. Education, a key component of empowerment, is positively and negatively impacted by globalisation. While there is increased access to formal education, there are also challenges such as cultural clashes, language barriers, and the relevance of the curriculum to the tribal context. As a result, tribal women's educational experiences can be a mixed bag, with both opportunities for advancement and hurdles to overcome. Health disparities also come to the forefront (Datta & Sahu, 2020). Globalisation can bring improvements in healthcare access, but it may also introduce health challenges, especially with the encroachment of industries into tribal territories. Environmental degradation, often associated with globalisation, can adversely affect the health and well-being of tribal communities, disproportionately impacting women who are primary caregivers. In essence, the relationship between globalisation and Indian tribal women is complex and multifaceted. While globalisation offers opportunities for economic advancement and access to resources, it also poses challenges to traditional ways of life, cultural integrity, and social well-being. Balancing the positive and negative impacts requires nuanced policy frameworks that prioritize the inclusion and empowerment of tribal women within the broader context of globalization.

Tribal Women and Human Trafficking

The vulnerability of tribal women to human trafficking is a grim reality shaped by a convergence of socioeconomic factors, cultural dynamics, and the adverse impacts of globalisation. Tribal communities, often marginalised and economically disadvantaged, become prime targets for traffickers seeking to exploit their vulnerabilities (Heggade&Heggade, 2012). Economic hardships within tribal communities, exacerbated by factors such as land displacement, lack of access to formal education, and limited economic opportunities, create fertile ground for trafficking. The promise of better livelihoods, jobs, or education can lure tribal women into situations where they become victims of trafficking. Traffickers exploit the economic disparities widened by globalisation, capitalising on the desperation of individuals seeking improved living conditions.

Cultural dynamics play a crucial role in tribal women's vulnerability to trafficking. Traditional social structures and community ties may be disrupted or weakened by the influences of globalisation, leaving individuals more isolated and susceptible to exploitation. The commodification of tribal culture, driven by external demand, can lead to the objectification of tribal women, making them targets for various forms of trafficking, including sexual exploitation (Heggade&Heggade, 2012). Globalization's impact on migration patterns further exposes tribal women to trafficking risks. As economic opportunities shift, tribal communities may be forced to migrate in search of livelihoods. During these migrations, women can become particularly vulnerable to trafficking, facing risks of forced labour, sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse. Lack of awareness and education compounds the vulnerability of tribal women to trafficking. Limited access to formal education, often exacerbated by globalisation-related challenges, leaves tribal women with insufficient knowledge about the risks and tactics employed by traffickers. This lack of awareness makes them more susceptible to deceptive recruitment practices.

Efforts to combat human trafficking among tribal women in India must address the root causes, including economic disparities, cultural vulnerabilities, and the impact of globalisation. Empowering tribal communities through education, economic opportunities, and cultural preservation can contribute to resilience against trafficking. Additionally, robust awareness campaigns and legal frameworks are essential to protect tribal women and prosecute traffickers effectively. The nexus between globalisation, tribal women, and human trafficking forms a complex web of interrelated dynamics. The interconnection lies in the intricate ways in which the forces of globalisation influence the vulnerabilities of tribal women, subsequently creating conditions conducive to human trafficking.

Globalisation, marked by increased interconnectedness and economic transformation, has both positive and negative implications for Indian tribal women (Potluri et al., 2020). While it introduces economic opportunities, it also exacerbates existing vulnerabilities. Economic disparities within tribal communities, often heightened by globalisation, create conditions where tribal women may seek better livelihoods or employment opportunities, making them susceptible to deceptive recruitment by traffickers (Sazzad Parwez et al., 2023). The economic shift brought about by globalisation can disrupt traditional livelihoods, pushing

tribal communities towards more precarious conditions. Limited access to formal education and skills training, coupled with the encroachment of industries into tribal territories, can further marginalise tribal women (Thakur & Ray, 2020). The disruption of traditional social structures and cultural dynamics under the influence of globalisation leaves tribal women more isolated and economically disadvantaged, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation.

Globalisation, Economic Disparities, and Human Trafficking

The economic dimensions of globalisation, such as the demand for cheap labour and expanding global supply chains, directly contribute to the prevalence of human trafficking. As industries seek cost-effective production, traffickers exploit the resulting economic disparities. Tribal women, facing economic challenges and enticed by promises of better opportunities, may fall prey to traffickers who take advantage of their desperate circumstances (Potluri et al., 2020).

Technological advancements facilitated by globalisation, while providing connectivity and communication, also serve as tools for traffickers. Social media and online platforms become spaces for recruitment and exploitation. The global reach of trafficking networks, enabled by transnational criminal activities, further underscores the interconnected nature of human trafficking and globalisation (Sazzad Parwez et al., 2023).

The vulnerability of Indian tribal women to human trafficking is intimately linked to their socioeconomic conditions and cultural dynamics. Economic hardships, lack of education, and the erosion of traditional community structures contribute to the susceptibility of tribal women to trafficking. Traffickers exploit this vulnerability by offering false promises of economic improvement or deceptive opportunities, trapping tribal women in situations of forced labour or sexual exploitation (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014).

Cultural dynamics play a crucial role in shaping tribal women's vulnerability. The commodification of tribal culture, driven by external demands and globalisation, can lead to the objectification of tribal women. This cultural exploitation, coupled with economic desperation, creates a fertile ground for traffickers to exploit and manipulate individuals within tribal communities. The nexus between globalisation, tribal women, and human trafficking is a complex and interrelated phenomenon. Globalisation influences the vulnerability of tribal women through economic shifts, technological advancements, and cultural dynamics. This heightened vulnerability, in turn, becomes a key factor in the prevalence of human trafficking as traffickers exploit the economic, social, and cultural conditions shaped by globalisation. Addressing these interconnected issues requires holistic approaches that consider the economic, social, and cultural dimensions to effectively combat human trafficking and protect the rights and well-being of tribal women. Against this backdrop, the present study was carried out in the selected areas to explore the dynamics of Human Trafficking. Further, the study revolves around understanding the intricate relationship between familial needs, globalisation dynamics, and vulnerability to human trafficking.

Research Methodology

The researcher aims to examine the dynamics of human trafficking and vulnerabilities of the population within the context of Madhya Pradesh, India. To ensure feasibility, the study confines its scope to four villages within these districts.

Primary Data Collection

A substantial sample size of 1441 households have been surveyed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the victims' backgrounds and circumstances. The primary objective is to explore the underlying needs within these families that have led them to become vulnerable to exploitation by human traffickers. By investigating the intersection between these needs and the global phenomenon of supply and demand, the study seeks to uncover the complex dynamics of globalisation.

Secondary Data Collection

The FIRs/Reports found in SCRB & Old records of judgment from the police department were sourced to cross-tally the primary data. The process involved collating efforts to infer a comprehensive picture of the districts in terms of human trafficking and its relationship with these two districts. By establishing correlations between seemingly disparate factors, such as the socio-economic needs of tribal populations and the processes of rapid globalisation and urbanisation, this research aims to provide valuable insights for developing policy frameworks. These frameworks can address the specific needs of vulnerable populations and mitigate the risks of human trafficking within the context of broader societal changes.

Sampling Method

The sampling method employed in this study involves a purposive selection of villages from the Harda and Betul districts of Madhya Pradesh, India. Betul and Harda districts were chosen purposefully, guided by the purposive sampling method and judicial reasoning, because of the increasing incidents of vulnerability among communities in this region.

There has been a consistent rise in cases of exploitation, a lower percentage of formal employment, and post-trauma disclosures that confirm human trafficking. The selection criteria also included considerations of viability, feasibility, and the availability of resources necessary for conducting the research effectively. Specifically, two villages were chosen from each of the Harda and Betul districts, resulting in a total of four villages being included in the study. This approach likely accounts for factors such as geographic proximity, accessibility, and the presence of relevant community structures.

Once the villages were identified, a total of 1441 households were contacted to gather data for the study. The data collection process involved administering an exhaustive sampling schedule instrument consisting of 68 questions. This instrument was designed to comprehensively capture information relevant to the research objectives, likely covering aspects such as demographic characteristics, socio-economic status, and experiences related to human trafficking.

Overall, this sampling method aligns with the research goals by ensuring representation from both districts and capturing a substantial number of families to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. However, it's important to acknowledge potential limitations, such as the possibility of selection bias inherent in purposive sampling approaches. Major findings of the broader research are as follows-

Table 1- Numbers of Members in the Households

S.No	Gender	No. Family Members In the families contacted	Percentage (%)
1	Male	3546	49.5%
2	Female	3611	50.4%
3	N/A	4	0.1%
Total		7161	100%

Table 2. Caste Configuration of Households in Selected Villages

S. No	Caste	Stats	%
1	Not Answered	15	1.04%
2	Balai	10	0.6%
3	Chamar	6	.4%
4	Dhobi	3	.2%
5	Gabli	1	0%
6	Gond	627	43.5%
7	Jain	1	0%
8	Jatav	2	0%
9	Kahar	6	.04%
10	Kalal	7	.2%
11	Korku	711	49%

Table 3. Details of Victim Families Found in the Selected Villages

S.No.	Type of Victim Family	Count
1	Victims of Human Trafficking	14
2	Families migrated for livelihood	65
3	Families never found (Mysteriously)	47
4	Families having cases of human trafficking under trial in district courts (Harda & Betul District)	40
5	Victim families under trail in other parts of the MP state	19
Total		186

The data mentioned below presents the details of victims of Human trafficking(total 14), as mentioned In table no.3(point-1)

Table 4. Gender wise number of victims of Human Trafficking in the Households surveyed in two districts

Gender	Victim	% of Population
Female	4	28.5%
Male	6	42%
Boy	1	7%
Girl	3	21%

Table 5. Educational Status of the victims in the Household surveyed in the selected two districts

S. NO	Education	Victim	%
1	Illiterate	3	21%
2	Minimum Literate	8	57%
3	Literate	3	21%

Table 6. Cases and verdicts of victim families from District Betul & Harda as per Table No. 3(Point-4) cases under trial since 2011 to 2021 (10 years).

S. No	Number of cases Under Trial	Found Guilty	Acquitted	Case Eliminated	Total
1	11	7	21	1	40

Data Analysis

Due to rapid urbanization, communities in rural areas are experiencing both positive and negative impacts. Urban expansion has led to increased demand for modern goods and products, as well as a surge in digital services and information technologies. This has resulted in the establishment of new industries and heightened activity in roadside markets and transportation hubs. Consequently, many vulnerable individuals—including women—have been drawn from villages and remote regions into informal labor and domestic work. The use of smartphones and mobile media has also connected rural women to the internet and social media platforms. However, due to low levels of education and limited awareness among most rural women, they often become passive consumers within the broader system of exploitation. In the study, it was found that 65.2% of the population is using smartphones and mobile internet.

The provided data offers a comprehensive understanding of human trafficking within the sampled villages, covering various dimensions of victimisation, demographics, and outcomes. In Table 1, a total of 7161 members of 1441 families were contacted in group settings, with nearly equal representation of male and female family members. Table 2 reveals the caste configuration of the villages, with the Gond and Korku castes comprising

the majority of the population. Data mentioned in Table no 3 shows that 14 victims of Human Trafficking were found in the study area. 40 victims were found whose cases were registered in police stations and having cases of human trafficking under trial in district courts (Harda & Betul District), 65 families were migrated for livelihood, 47 families were never found in the location, and no one in the neighbourhood was aware of their whereabouts. This means these families might be the victims of human trafficking. Although these cases are not included in this study but their chances cannot be ruled out. Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) has said that children missing should be registered as human trafficking cases, and that the court should presume that the child has been abducted or trafficked unless the investigation proves otherwise. In 2013, the Supreme Court of India ruled in a landmark case that missing children are presumed to have been abducted or trafficked, unless the investigation proves otherwise. The court also recognized trafficking as an organized crime and defined it in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). Male victims accounted for the largest proportion in Table 4, followed by females, boys, and girls. Regarding education levels in Table 5, most victims were minimally literate or illiterate. Table 6 outlines the cases and verdicts of victim families, with a notable number found guilty. These insights contribute to a nuanced understanding of the challenges posed by human trafficking in the sampled villages, guiding efforts towards targeted interventions and policy formulation to combat this pressing issue effectively.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The data reflects that human trafficking is intricately linked to globalisation, as reflected in the provided data. One significant aspect is the economic dimension: the lure of lucrative jobs in urban areas or other countries where victims are often trapped under the pretext of promising employment opportunities. This phenomenon is a direct consequence of globalisation, which has led to increased migration and mobility of labour across borders and regions.

Moreover, globalisation has facilitated the expansion of human trafficking networks and organised crime syndicates. Victim families may abscond, fearing harm from previous trafficking incidents, indicating the existence of entrenched trafficking networks that operate across geographical boundaries. The transportation of victims by contractors as daily wage labourers, as highlighted in the study, further underscores the role of globalisation in facilitating the movement of individuals for exploitative purposes. Additionally, the data reveals how globalisation intersects with socio-economic factors to exacerbate vulnerabilities to human trafficking. For instance, Table 2 illustrates the caste configuration of the villages, with marginalised communities disproportionately affected. Globalisation often perpetuates inequalities and marginalisation, with certain populations being pushed to the margins of society, where they are more susceptible to exploitation and trafficking.

Globalisation has implications for the gender dynamics of human trafficking, as depicted in Table 4. Women and girls are often disproportionately affected, with forced marriages and other forms of gender-based violence being prevalent. The commodification of women's

bodies and labour in the global market exacerbates their vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation.

Human trafficking cannot be understood in isolation from the broader processes of globalisation. Economic inequalities, migration flows, the expansion of transnational criminal networks, and gender dynamics are all interconnected phenomena that shape and perpetuate the scourge of human trafficking in today's globalised world. Addressing human trafficking effectively requires holistic approaches that tackle root causes, including structural inequalities and injustices perpetrated by globalisation.

Based on the above analysis, the present research calls for the development of more effective policies aimed at preventing and combating human trafficking in Madhya Pradesh and beyond, and proposes intervention in the following areas-

1. Mapping the Nexus Between Globalization and Human Trafficking-

The world is being woven in a single thread of seamless communication and coordination. Human trafficking cannot be treated as an isolated case. It is essential that the law enforcement agencies develop a global map of human trafficking incidents to connect the loose threads in solving this problem.

2. Analysing Vulnerability Factors-

To identify and analyse specific vulnerabilities within tribal communities that make them susceptible to trafficking. Explore socioeconomic, cultural, and geographical factors influencing vulnerability.

3. Assessing the Impact on Tribal Communities-

To investigate the direct and indirect consequences of human trafficking on the social fabric, culture, and well-being of tribal communities. Analyse how globalisation-induced trafficking affects community structures and dynamics.

4. Global Interventions and Their Efficacy

To examine existing global interventions and policies to combat trafficking and evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions in addressing the unique challenges faced by tribal communities.

5. Policy Recommendations for Tribal Empowerment-

To propose policy recommendations and strategies to protect tribal communities from trafficking and identify how globalisation policies can be adapted to mitigate the vulnerabilities of tribal populations.

6. Community Empowerment and Awareness

To explore the role of community empowerment and awareness programs in preventing trafficking and assess the effectiveness of educational initiatives in building resilience within tribal communities.

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