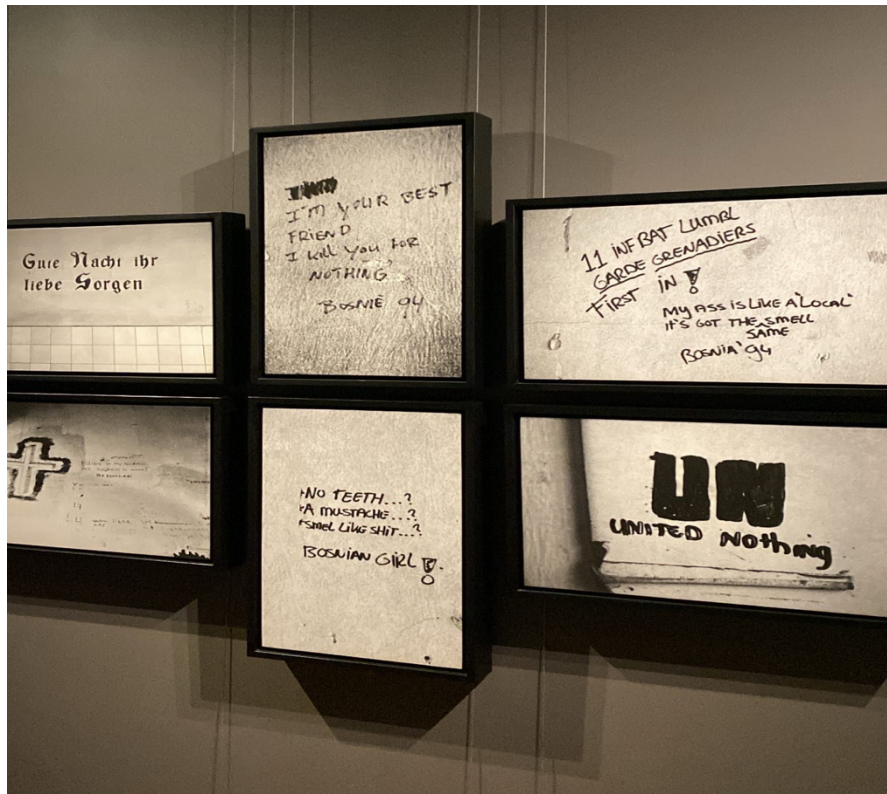


Modern Slavery in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina: Assessing the Needs of Trafficked Women

MSc Thesis International Development Studies



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“On one side you have a poor, frightened woman or girl, and on the other side you have some prominent person who is powerful”

(IFS-EMMAUS interviewee, p. 37)

Abstract

With a focus on the needs of female victims regarding assistance and protection, this study seeks to fill in the gaps in the still sparse body of knowledge on trafficking in women in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH). It does this by analyzing the legal framework and conducting expert interviews to ascertain how the system world functions and influences the life world (e.g. provision of assistance). Previous research has merely only focused on victims of sex trafficking, and other regions outside of the Balkans, and have not included a policy analysis. The focus of this study is on BH, one of the most significant countries in terms of human trafficking in Europe, which is a serious issue that has developed since the conflict at the beginning of the 1990s and continues to have a detrimental effect on the country's security and crime rate today. The feminist theory perspective is used as it enables a greater comprehension of the persistent problem of trafficking in women and displays the oppressive and unequal gender relations. In addition, trafficking in women is a major concern for human rights and has a significant impact on the growth of the country, which is why the Human Rights-Based Approach is also used to assess the essential rights of female victims. Two experts from the International Forum of Solidarity – Emmaus (IFS-EMMAUS) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are interviewed. In addition, a policy analysis is conducted of the relevant legal actions undertaken to combat human trafficking and regarding the support system. The findings show that female victims need to be given higher priority in all types of support provision. Better identification procedures, protection measures, access to all necessary remedies while residing in safe shelters as well as for victims who choose not to do so, and a rehabilitation program that guarantees bright future prospects for reintegration are all factors that are required for female victims. The creation of a suitable support system for trafficked women in BH necessitates a nuanced victim-centered, trauma-informed, and gender-sensitive approach.

Keywords: human trafficking, assistance, policy analysis, Bosnia and Herzegovina, female victims, Human Rights-Based Approach, feminist theory.

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List abbreviations

BH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CATW	Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
CE Convention	Council of Europe Convention
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against
CSW	Centers for social welfare
CTDC	Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
EURC	European Resource Center
GAATW	Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
HT	Human trafficking
IFS-EMMAUS	International Forum of Solidarity – EMMAUS
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SOPs	Standard operating procedures
STOP	Special Trafficking Operation Programme
UN	United Nations
UN-IPTF	United Nations International Police Task Force
UNMBIH	United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina
UNTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

1. Introduction

White slavery—in which white women were traded and coerced into prostitution—became the new beginning point for the trade of women after the legal abolition of black slavery. Unlike today, the movement was primarily from Europe to other parts of the world and the definition of trafficking widened after the phrase "traffic in women" was introduced (Kangaspunta, 2008). Over the years, the tactics of trafficking have remained constant and include deceit, abuse, control, and exploitation. Because they refused to outlaw prostitution, only a few nations ratified anti-trafficking accords in the 20th century (National Institute of Justice, 2022). The United Nations (UN) defines human trafficking (HT) as "... the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, to exploit them for profit.". Most of the time there is use of violence or fake promises to trick survivors. There is no limit to who can be trafficked, or at which place it can occur (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, n.d.-a). Some examples of trafficking are sex exploitation, forced labor, forced begging, or debt bondage (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, n.d.-b). The targets of this organized crime are mostly people who are psychologically or emotionally vulnerable, have economic hardships, and/or lack a safety net. There are a lot of different perceptions of the definition of HT, which makes it harder to combat (Blue Campaign, n.d.). Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) is among the most important countries in terms of HT in Europe, which is a serious issue that has arisen since the early 1990s conflict in BH and, to this day, has a negative impact on the security and crime rate in the nation (Koester, 2020). According to the study by Jahic & Finckenaur (2005), there is still more to learn about HT, specifically in the Balkan region. There is a lot of emphasis on determining the scope of the problem but information about survivors' needs, how to protect them, what kind of help they require, and how to make survivor-centered policies better is inadequate.

This study aims to add to the still limited knowledge on trafficking in women in post-conflict BH, specifically focused on the needs of female survivors in terms of assistance and protection, based on an analysis of the legal framework and expert interviews, to determine how the system world is operating and affecting the life world (e.g. the support system). This thesis will advance existing regional research on recent changes to the system for assisting and protecting survivors of HT, which has been studied by Simeunovic-Patic & Copic (2010) in Serbia, and provide a thus far unprecedented new point of view focused on female victims. The study by Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, & Heffron (2011) showed that victims mostly expressed the need for safety, including reassurance that they are safe and have opportunities to rebuild their lives to feel secure again. It is reported that victims were mostly in need of psychological and emotional support in a safe environment. Hence, it is important to highlight the needs from the perspective of the victim instead of, what has mostly been done, creating a support system based on policies made by people that do not know of their needs. Therefore, this research includes the perspective of victims from the viewpoint of related actors that work closely with them. The study by Lindstrom (2007) reported in her research that there exists a conflict within and

between governments, NGOs, and intergovernmental organizations operating in the Western Balkans, as a result of the incoherence between the system world and life world. Because system norms increasingly outweigh the moral standards of the life world, there is a persistent imbalance in the relationships between system professionals and people with lived experience in that world (Abma, Leyerzaph, & Landeweer, 2016). The life world frequently suffers as a result of the system world's efforts to fulfill its goals as effectively and efficiently as possible (Howlett, 2014). This thesis includes an analysis of the policy framework on the matter of HT to showcase whether this imbalance is present in BH as well, and how this affects the assistance provided for victims.

Trafficking is a critical problem for human rights and has a big impact on the development of a country, especially when it involves women. In addition to the people involved, it affects the social structure, economic stability, and overall development of nations. The development of comprehensive anti-trafficking policies that address the root causes of vulnerability and exploitation as well as placing a priority on the protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration of trafficked women into society are important to combat the issue of women's trafficking (Shahinian, 2002).

There have been various studies on the matter of the trafficking in women and different approaches have been used. The study of Yousaf (2018) uses a migration approach to HT and points out how victims are most often seen as undocumented migrants. This way they are seen to pose a threat to the country, which affects the outcome of victims' recovery. This research is examining whether BH relates to this perspective on HT victims and whether it prioritizes the needs of victims. However, a different approach is used, which is elaborated on in the next paragraph below. A study by Tzvetkova (2002) researched the role NGOs have in assisting and what women explain to be their main necessities. Nevertheless, it was only focused on sex trafficking victims, whereas the current research will include all victims of trafficking. In addition, Gajic-Veljanoski & Stewart (2007) stated in their study that 28 percent of the interventions for women in shelters were not executed and that more health care services are necessary for them, again focused on victims of sexual exploitation. This research, however, will elaborate more on the progress of the implementation of various forms of assistance in BH and how female victims are provided with remedies during their stay in shelters. A lot of research has been done in other regions on the needs of trafficked, especially in North America, for example by Gozdziaik & Collett (2005) and Lepianka & Colbert (2020). Both are, again, focused on sex trafficking. The current study advances available knowledge on the needs of female victims in the region of BH. Lastly, none of the studies above have analyzed the legal framework regarding trafficking in women, which is included in this research as well.

The Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC) (n.d.) shows how 70 percent of the trafficked survivors are female and are mostly controlled by forms of abuse, whether this is psychological, physical, or sexual. Wakgari (2014) discusses in their research how socio-demographic traits are important when attempting to identify the causes of trafficked people. The two key factors used to determine who is at risk of being trafficked are age and gender, which is mostly young women.

Additionally, one of the main causes is poverty, which is brought on by a lack of jobs. As a result, most young women facing poverty are exposed to HT. For these reasons, this study will focus on female victims and what is essential for them. A feminist theory perspective will be used as it allows a deeper understanding of the ongoing issue of trafficking in women and why it is important to shed light on their needs in terms of assistance. The approach can be used to clarify and resolve oppressive and unequal gender relations, criticize victim-blaming theories, and expand on women's perspectives (John, Andreasen, French, & Withcomb, 2019). A feminist theory perspective will be complemented by a human rights-based approach (HRBA), as the victim's right to protection and assistance is central in this research. Combining the focus on the system of assistance and female victims in BH, the key question for this research project is as follows:

What type of assistance is needed for female survivors of human trafficking in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina, and how can this be provided?

To answer the main question, three underlying questions will be looked into as well:

1. What does the legal framework for the combat against trafficking in women and their rights entail in BH?
2. What types of assistance are provided for female victims of HT in BH and what are its main barriers?
3. What additional type of assistance is needed to support and protect female victims of HT in BH?

The thesis consists of (1) a theoretical framework, highlighting the feminist theory and the HRBA in relation to the research question, (2) a brief outlook on the regional framework of BH and its history, followed by (3) the methodological approach that is been used, and (4) the final analysis of the empirical data and where theory will be connected as well. At last, the thesis will conclude with a (5) discussion and (6) a summary that gives answer to the research questions.

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter aims to further elaborate on how the feminist theory perspective and the HRBA perceive the issue of trafficking in women and what their standpoint is on how assistance is needed to be provided. The importance of these theories will be elaborated on below. It will first touch upon the feminist theory, then the HRBA, followed by the pros and cons of these approaches in relation to the

research aim. Lastly, a conceptual model summarizes the significance of the approaches to this research.

2.1.Feminist theory

Feminists have played an important role in the improvement of the combat against trafficking in women, especially when it comes to accurately defining the problem. The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women was established in 1980 with a clear approach from radical feminists. In contrast to the liberal feminists who believed that gender was fundamentally constructed and that feminism should exist outside of the construct that was built around them, radical feminists felt that there was a specific feminine essence that women should embrace (John, Andreasen, French, & Withcomb, 2019). The position taken by feminist organizations most frequently emphasized the distinction between voluntary prostitution/sex work and forced trafficking and called for more appropriate international law to protect both sex workers and trafficking victims. The Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW), which was established in 1994, has played a significant role in this. GAATW approaches prostitution from the perspective of sex work, clearly defining "free" and "forced" labor, prostitution, and trafficking (Sullivan, 2003).

The three important aspects of the contribution of feminists in understanding the trafficking of women are patriarchy, intersectionality, and agency. Firstly, the term patriarchy explains how a societal system affects the way female victims are perceived and how assistance is determined by this, which is an important concept as an evaluation of the system world is conducted in the research (Jones & Kingshott, 2016). Secondly, intersectionality showcases the different ways female victims are oppressed and how providing assistance is interlinked with various determinants (Badejo, Gordon, & Mayes, 2021). Lastly, the agency of women is central to feminist theories and explains the importance of the inclusion of female victims in policy regulations to provide accurate assistance (Lobasz, 2009). These three concepts are elaborated more in the following sections.

2.1.1. Patriarchy

Marxism feminism developed as a result of the fusion of liberal and radical feminists and believe that culture determines gender throughout history. They say patriarchal culture created gender identities in order to make men appear superior to women (John et al., 2019). This brings me to one of the important concepts of feminist studies: patriarchy – a type of structuring of society produced by gender-based political relations, which is created, maintained, and reinforced by various institutions linked closely together to achieve consensus on women's and their roles' lesser value. These institutions interact not only with one another to strengthen male dominance structures over women, but also with other systems of exclusion, oppression, and/or dominance based on real or perceived differences between humans (Facio, 2013). According to feminist theory, women are oppressed not just intentionally but also

unintentionally and implicitly through social standards that often go unnoticed and unknown. Thus, feminist theory seeks to give a critical perspective for identifying harms and their subtly systemic nature in ordinary social norms that we take for granted (Cudd, 2022).

Patriarchy is an interesting factor to look at when understanding the trafficking of women, as the response of the criminal justice system to HT is influenced by patriarchy. Women are expected to be submissive to men, have fewer rights and liberties than men, and have limited or restricted access to social, political, and economic arenas. Patriarchal systems often lead to gender inequalities within societies. Feminist theories vocalize this issue of separation between men and women, where the dominant group takes the better position. This is not only a common problem within patriarchal societies, but it is also perpetrated by other factors such as institutional biases, systematic discrimination, and stereotypes (Walby, 1996). The problematic link between gender inequalities and violence is the widespread acceptance of gender-based abuse, including female trafficking. Patriarchal attitudes hold that women's only duty is to please males, particularly sexually. The impact of patriarchy on the criminal justice system has impacted both the system's approach to HT and the outcomes of such anti-trafficking initiatives (Jones & Kingshott, 2016). The narrow definition of HT victims leads to a lack of adequate victim identification, as victims who cannot prove that their situation is the result of force or coercion are often labeled as prostitutes or illegal immigrants and are quickly labeled as such. Within patriarchal regimes, victims are not recognized as victims. The criminal justice system's goals take precedence over the needs of female trafficking victims, demonstrating a lack of victim-centered solutions to the trafficking problem (Lobasz, 2009). Female crime victims who have acquired legal safeguards have frequently encountered a criminal justice system that is uncaring of their needs as victims and only willing to grant protection to those women who are deemed cooperative and worthy of such protection by criminal justice professionals (Wolken, 2006). However, Levy & Jakobsson (2013) reveal a striking point of view on feminists and their use of the term patriarchy in the understanding of violence against women, where they state that radical feminists assign women as passive victims, especially when it comes to prostitution, and use patriarchy to push through their judgment of blaming men for women's position as sex workers. Nonetheless, the study of Jones (2016) confirms how patriarchy can be of influence on, for example, the criminal justice system policy development and how this affects the system's response to HT.

All in all, providing accurate assistance to trafficked women starts with how the issue is perceived by society and how this influences the support system. Therefore, to analyze the current support system in BH and how policies are regulated, patriarchy will be reflected in relation to this.

2.1.2. Intersectionality

The various forms of discrimination and oppression that women experience are most of the time a result of patriarchal ideologies. Additionally, it is possible for a person's demographic, social, and political characteristics, such as class, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, skills, physical appearance, or political beliefs, to interact and perpetuate particular forms of privilege or oppression. This is known as intersectionality. It acts as a prism through which you can observe the connections and conflicts of power (Badejo, Gordon, & Mayes, 2021). Intersectionality is a way of thinking that has been one of the most important contributions of feminist studies (Ferguson, 2017). Approaches to oppression that are monistic (non-intersectional) are reductive in the sense that they reduce the diverse experiences of several oppressions to simplistic unitary conceptualizations. Instead of reducing oppression to a single basic explanatory category (for example, women), intersectionality thinkers claim that oppression is produced by a combination of several, decentered, co-constitutive dimensions (Carastathis, 2014).

This term in feminist theories has been important in highlighting that trafficked women are not oppressed on one basis, and that being considerate about the various factors that make a woman vulnerable to HT, is crucial in adequately providing assistance to them (Carastathis, 2014). It is a lens from which feminist theories highlight the intersecting factors that increase the vulnerability of certain groups of women and shape their experiences of trauma and services provided afterward. This term helps understand whether the approach to providing assistance to victims is considerate of all involved factors to being trafficked. The study by Badejo, Gordon & Mayes (2021) demonstrated the interaction between push and pull factors, including demands for sex and low-skilled labor, low-risk and high profitability from trafficking, and personal aspirations for a better quality of life, all contribute to HT. Most often, the system of support to female victims is not considerate of these numerous determinants that increase vulnerabilities of being trafficked and the long-term trauma effects afterward. Without this understanding, it is difficult to assist according to the different needs and traumas of female victims with different trafficking journeys. One example from the study of Fehrenbacher et al. (2020) showed how the majority of trans people who reported being exploited neither recognized themselves as victims of trafficking nor were they recognized as such by law enforcement or anti-trafficking organizations. Because trans people were thought to be "less exploitable" than cisgender women, law enforcement gatekeeping was cited by anti-trafficking campaigners as a barrier to fulfilling the needs of trans clients. Hence, intersectionality is an important factor to analyze when looking at the legal framework and the support system for victims.

2.1.3. Agency

To achieve an understanding of the oppression and violence against women it needs the inclusion of their narrative. In feminist theories, it is necessary to imagine a distinct point of view that can be used as a point of juxtaposition in order to define the dominant masculine perspective. To create a voice for women, or specific groups of women, it is necessary to articulate their perspectives on the world, pinpoint the places from which they are speaking, and develop both a critique of the status quo and a vision for an improved future for women (Ferguson, 2017). The realization of the systems and practices that have oppressed women throughout human history served as a major source of inspiration for all feminist studies to recognize autonomy and resilience amongst women and prioritize the concept of agency (Meyers, 2009).

Feminist theory challenges the perception of trafficked women as passive victims and instead acknowledges their resilience, strength, and capacity for decision-making. There are numerous presumptions made about female victims of trafficking, particularly when it comes to sex trafficking. However, it is crucial to comprehend these women's viewpoints and backgrounds to act accordingly. How were these women trafficked, exactly? At some point, was there agreement? Do they desire the same help as others? Such questions ensure that the agency, autonomy, and resilience of trafficked women in diverse situations are recognized (Lansink, 2011). Women must be empowered in a feminist response to HT, not only protected or saved. Actors must be extremely careful when expressing their activism in ways that do not promote the disempowerment of sexually exploited people, who frequently find themselves in precarious situations because they lack authority and control over their life. The rescue rhetoric casts women as victims needing protection from harm rather than as subjects deserving of positive rights (Baker, 2013). It is important to notice the conceptualization of HT in the social context and how this affects survivors. Wrongful framing and a lack of representation from female survivors continuously worsen the outcome of policy implementations for this specific group. Highlighting these factors in the study on HT is one of the main contributions of feminist theories (Lobasz, 2009). Hence, this thesis includes analyzing the way the agency is present in the combat against trafficking and the way assistance is provided.

2.2. Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

The HRBA is important in relation to HT as victims' rights are constantly being violated throughout their journey but also afterward, including "the right to liberty and security, the right to be free from gendered violence, the right to freedom of movement, the right to just and favorable conditions of work...", and the list goes on (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2014). Where and when there occur numerous violations of human rights, HT begins as both a cause and a result, according to both Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against

Women and Children, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking. Therefore, it is crucial to put the safeguarding of all human rights at the center of any actions made to stop and prevent trafficking (Lansink, 2011).

The HRBA is defined as a “framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights”. It aims to address discriminatory practices and unfair power distributions that limit development progress and frequently leave certain groups of people behind by analyzing the inequalities at the core of development issues (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, n.d.).

Several human rights principles guide programming in all sectors of the United Nations, and the most important in researching the trafficking of women are shortly discussed below.

2.2.1. Universality

One of the most significant concepts to be defined in international law throughout the 20th century is the universality of human rights, which highlights that “human rights are universal and inalienable”. Everyone in the world has a right to them and they cannot be deliberately given up by the human being to whom they originate or being taken away by others either. All people have the same access to human rights, regardless of their country of origin, ethnicity, gender, religion, or additional characteristics. The idea of universality acknowledges that everyone has the right to human rights in recognition of their shared humanity (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2003).

There are numerous connections between human rights and HT. No matter their sex, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, or other distinction, victims of trafficking are entitled to the whole spectrum of human rights since those rights are universal. The need for additional or specific protection for particular populations, including women and children, is also acknowledged by international human rights legislation (United Nations Human Rights Office Of The High Commissioner, n.d.-a).

2.2.2. Equality

Another important principle, that is closely related to universality, is equality, which implies that “all human beings are entitled to their human rights without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, ethnicity, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status...” (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2003).

The cycle of the illegal trade in women is perpetuated by gender-based discrimination, which continues to make trafficked women vulnerable. Because of racial profiling and discrimination at border crossings and in criminal justice systems, victims are subsequently imprisoned, arrested, denied assistance and safety, and even forcefully sent back to their countries of origin. Trafficking,

exploitation, and re-trafficking are perpetuated in a loop with no repercussions because of the harmful stereotypes (United Nations Human Rights Office Of The High Commissioner, 2021). The vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking can be made worse by aspects such as gendered poverty, a lack of good employment options, the absence of control over financial assets, and restricted access to education (Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking, n.d.). In a more nuanced list of recommended principles on human rights and HT by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2002), it is suggested to make sure that trafficking victims have a respectable right to equal and adequate remedies, including the tools for the most thorough rehabilitation feasible. These remedies could take the form of legal, civil, or administrative action.

2.2.3. Empowerment

Every person and every group of people has the right to actively engage in, contribute to, and enjoy the civil, economic, social, cultural, and political development that promotes the realization of fundamental liberties and human rights (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2003). The HRBA places a lot of emphasis on the interactions between civil society and public institutions as well as how to hold public institutions accountable to all citizens. Actors frequently find themselves unable to assert their rights because of power disparities. To emphasize the significance of the ability to exercise rights rather than just their ownership, the HRBA's empowerment principle should be given special attention. In order to combat "invisible" power, a following emphasis on developing "power within" aims to alter people's ideas of their rights, potential, and capabilities (Luttrell & Quiroz, 2007).

To ensure that the human rights of all victims of HT are met without discrimination and as rapidly as possible, it is essential to empower all survivors of this crime. A human rights-based strategy puts an emphasis on inclusion, which guarantees that the needs and ambitions of trafficked women are at the forefront of interventions and policies (Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking, n.d.). Empowering females through awareness of their rights prevents (re-)victimization (Pallapothu, 2021). A study by Naik (2018) in India, showed that gaining knowledge on the prevention of HT is important in order for possible victims to be empowered, make informed choices and this way know that they are seen as social agents with the right to make decisions.

2.3.Pros and cons

The importance of the integration of feminist theories and the HRBA's perspectives on the trafficking of women and their post-trafficking needs is what is discussed next. There are several similarities between these approaches, but there are also several other areas where they contribute separately to the understanding of this phenomenon and why it is necessary to incorporate them together.

To start with the similarities, as mentioned earlier, patriarchy is looked at by feminists with the urge to dismantle the power relations between men and women and the male dominance in societies

that reflect upon the trafficking experience of women (Walby, 1996). The HRBA sees importance in equality and no discrimination in the provision of human rights. With this, the approach opposes a patriarchal system where male dominance is favored and rights only apply to some. This goes against their principles of universality and equality (Nilsson, 2010). Furthermore, the agency and autonomy of women are important aspects that are highlighted by feminist theories in order to stand up against these systems of oppression, and women's narrative is given voice to (Lobasz, 2009). This is in line with the HRBA's idea of prioritizing the participation of rightsholders. Applying this approach implies a change from being passive rightsholders to being active ones (Broberg & Sano, 2018).

However, there are several drawbacks to and criticisms of these two strategies. Firstly, the HRBA has structural issues when it comes to implementing sophisticated ideas and is criticized for retaining the "moral high ground" without the necessary implementation tools (Katsui, 2008). The problematic things of using this approach in the combat against the trafficking of women is that the implementation of the legal framework is limited to criminalizing this organized crime and prosecuting the offenders, instead of an adequate provision of assistance to survivors and the protection of their rights (Rijken & Volder, 2009). Nonetheless, one of the main principles of the HRBA is accountability, which implies that "states and other duty-bearers are answerable for the observance of human rights". In this sense, they must adhere to the legal requirements and guidelines set forth in human rights documents. Affected rights holders have the right to initiate legal proceedings for an adequate remedy before a competent court or another arbitrator in line with the laws' rules and procedures if they fail to do so (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2003). Advocacy and rights-related conversations with duty-bearers are crucial components of how the holders of those rights can 'claim their rights' (Broberg & Sano, 2018). Secondly, the HRBA highlights equality among human rights (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2003). However, there are frequently "trade-offs" made at the expense of the less fortunate. Because human rights depend so heavily on the power dynamics that exist within a nation or organization, human rights regimes have historically favored the wealthy. Because the HRBA's activities are not accessible to the most vulnerable individuals, such as trafficking victims, the priority-setting procedures and results based on the current power dynamic have the potential to maintain the status quo (Kennedy, 2004). For example, Seppänen (2005) emphasizes the legal authority of states over citizens, while Frostell (2006) suggests that the male-predominant understanding of human rights is the norm in most cases. Despite that, the HRBA acknowledges the need for specific awareness and consideration of the protection of vulnerable or marginalized groups and their rights (United Nations Human Rights Office Of The High Commissioner, n.d.-a). Thirdly, feminist theories emphasize the agency and empowerment of women (Ferguson, 2017), but there are disagreements on whether sex work is voluntary or not. Sex workers are "rescued" from brothels under the assumption that they are being coerced, rather than taking into account the existence of sex workers who do it voluntarily. At the same time, there is a propensity to pathologize women's decisions to immigrate and engage in prostitution. This then makes it possible to impose constraints on and supervise the communication with

those outside the aid system as well as close refuge facilities on victims of trafficking, which cuts victims off their agency (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2008). The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) define all forms of prostitution as the exploitation of women and their bodies, regardless of if they gave consent or not (Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Nonetheless, these claims are most frequently made by conventional or radical feminist theorists. Prostitution is no longer seen from this point of view in postmodern thought, which instead stresses the independence and resiliency of women (Scoular, 2004).

Although some criticism can be made about both the HRBA and feminist theory, incorporating both viewpoints on women's trafficking gives essential and useful perspectives that help and improve the needs of trafficked based on several grounds. When it comes to both substantive human rights norms and the stringent procedural course of action it lays out, this approach dramatically broadens the range of obligations that states have to protect trafficking victims. It is emphasized by Milano (2018) that this strategy has the potential to make accountability and participation important cross-cutting elements. According to the study's findings, from the standpoint of regime interaction, this strategy encourages better coherence in the overall international law response to this occurrence. Furthermore, the HRBA to combating HT prioritizes the victim and necessitates an examination of human rights abuses that occur throughout the cycle (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011). The victim is at the center of any credible and effective action under this approach. The core causes of trafficking, the continuation of traffickers' impunity, and the denial of justice to victims are also brought into sharper focus. Examples of these root causes include discriminatory behaviors, unequal power distribution, consumer demand for products and services that are the result of exploitation, and public sector complicity. The HRBA also recognizes that governments are legally obligated to fight to end trafficking and other forms of associated exploitation because they are responsible for defending and advancing the rights of all people living under their authority, including non-citizens (United Nations Human Rights Office Of The High Commissioner, n.d.-a). The HRBA and feminist theory both advocate concentrating on gendered labor migrations and working conditions across various industries and locations. They recognize discrimination and violence against women (Dragiewicz, 2008). Transnational feminists avoid portraying women as being less strong than men and needing their protection. While it is true that more women than males are trafficked, this is not due to any inherent inferiority of women; rather, it is a function of their global national, racial, and socioeconomic standing. Therefore, the transnational feminist theory incorporates the idea of intersectionality, which looks at the impact of race, sexuality, class, and nationality in addition to the gendered aspect of trafficking. The primary programs have been shown to be less effective, particularly when it comes to the support and aid of victims, as they fail to take into account the aforementioned variances and instead treat all victims equally (Mancarella, 2021).

All in all, feminist theory and the HRBA can be combined to create a more comprehensive understanding of the assistance that is needed for trafficked women. It recognizes that their need go

beyond simple protection and rapid recovery, and require extensive support (Pourmokhtari, 2015). The inclusion of a gender-responsive and rights-based approach guarantees that aid initiatives take into account these various demands and advance the long-term autonomy and well-being of trafficked women (Mancarella, 2021). Combining these approaches makes it easier to comprehend the structural causes of trafficking, combat gender inequality, and develop thorough, survivor-centered, and rights-based interventions that cater to the particular needs of trafficked women while fostering their empowerment and well-being (Pourmokhtari, 2015). Figure 1 shows the conceptual model based on the main points mentioned regarding the two theories.

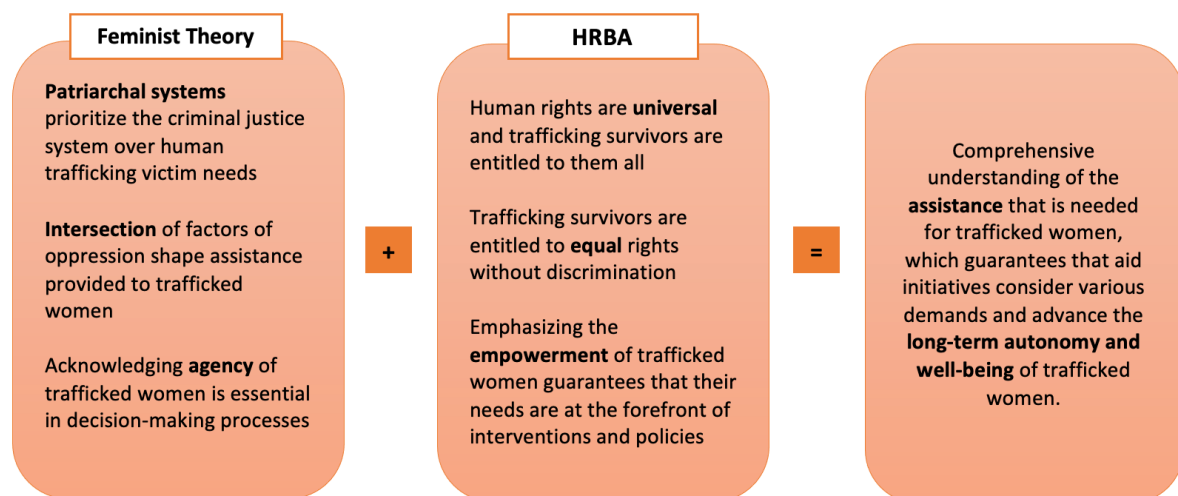


Figure 1. Conceptual model feminist theory and the HRBA

3. Trafficking in BH

This chapter presents a regional framework to indicate the historical context in regard to HT and how BH has become one of the most important transit countries. In addition, trends are mentioned regarding the demographics of victims, and the progress in combatting the issue, followed by the institutions that are central in combatting HT in BH. This chapter is important to show the background of BH in their trafficking journey and helps understand why HT is a major problem in the country.

3.1. The history of trafficked women in BH

The horrific Bosnian war officially came to an end after the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, but the number of cases of organized crimes and corruption flourished quickly after. The hole that was left behind served as a breeding ground for a high demand for, and supply of, trafficked women. Peacekeepers were present in the region to monitor the situation and prevent escalation until stability

and unity were re-achieved (Vandenberg, 2007). Unavailingly, the ones that needed to protect civilians were the ones that had put them in danger, as the influx of international organizations further increased the demand for trafficked women. Most trafficked women were falsely advertised to work in Western Europe, after which they were trafficked to brothels in BH, where the majority of the clients were international peacekeepers. High-ranking UN officials and civilian police have reportedly visited brothels where trafficking women were detained and mistreated. The UN and the states that sent these peacekeepers have failed to hold them accountable, allowing them to carry out their activities without consequence (Murray, 2002). A former officer of the United Nations International Police Task Force (UN-IPTF) in the Balkans, Kathryn Bolkovac, showed in her book and in the movie *'The Whistleblower'* how UN officials were involved in both the exploitation of trafficked women and the trafficking industry as a whole. In an interview she mentions that "... where you have men with a lot of money and free time on their hands, you will have trafficking." (Prügl & Thompson, 2013).

The Special Trafficking Operation Programme (STOP), a scheme to enhance police inquiries into trafficking, was introduced by the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) in July 2001. By June 2002, local police had conducted 476 raids on brothels believed to be holding trafficked women under the supervision of UNMIBH, and 186 trafficking victims had been sent home. However, the UN's efforts to stop the trafficking of women into BH have been significantly hampered by the local police's cooperation in the trade and issues with foreign troops and police officials (Murray, 2002).

3.2.Long-term legacies

The importance of this issue today is the long-term effect that these previous peacekeeping missions have on the current human security in BH. Firstly, the early development of BH as an HT destination is advantageous to criminal groups in several ways, such as the normalization of sex industries, a secure income, and big criminal networks as a result of low detection and punishment in the past (Koester, 2020).

Secondly, the corruption and complicity of state officials in HT in the past remains a difficulty as there is no certainty to trustworthiness. The distinction between criminal organizations and those fighting them is still seen as being quite blurred in general (Koester, 2020).

Lastly, for who it still affects the most is the survivors. The mental health consequences forced drug addictions, and suicide attempts continued for several years after survivors had been trafficked. Additionally, the attitudes towards these survivors upon their arrival in their home country were far from welcoming. Other challenges that they were faced with are financial situations, having a child as a result of rape, and the fear of returning to the hands of traffickers again (Koester, 2020). Research from Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu, & Heffron (2011) showed that a majority of the survivors reported that their self-sufficiency declined in the years after the traumatic experiences.

More generally, rebuilding BH again after the war, includes devotion to human rights, women’s issues, and social and economic development. In this regard, HT continues to pose a threat and prevents the nation from restoring or improving (McMahon, 2004).

3.3. Trends in HT

Between 2017 and 2021, 306 possible victims of trafficking were registered. When a person is recognized as such by the appropriate authority, they are given the status of a "potential victim" of trafficking. An individual must have a final judgment from the appropriate court convicting them of the crime of HT in order to be recognized as a victim. Women and girls made up more than two-thirds (69 percent) of the prospective victims. 62 percent of the prospective victims were children. Many of them are members of the Roma community who are largely used for forced prostitution, forced marriage, and sexual exploitation. 62 percent of the potential victims were trafficked for forced begging, and 17 percent were used for sexual exploitation. Since 2017, just 8 prospective victims—or 2,6 percent of all victims—of trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation have been recorded. 92 percent of the victims were nationals of BH, mainly Roma, and the majority were victims of domestic trafficking. There are reasons to think that there are much more victims of HT than previously thought. Since 2018, there has been a surge in the number of migrants and refugees entering BH (Council of Europe, 2022). The trend in HT has essentially changed from the mid-90s to the beginning of the 2000s with most of the victims being domestic victims, where the focus is no longer on sexual exploitation but the majority of those identified are subjected to criminal begging (Đuderija & Bajramović, 2021).

3.4. Progress in combatting HT

As shown in Table 1, the criminal charges have been decreasing between 2005 and 2009, but the number of victims remained relatively high between 2005 and 2007. The statistics also show that there are still some parts undiscovered regarding the number of victims, which is in line with previous research on the absence of the exact magnitude of the problem (United Nations, n.d.-c).

Table 1. Issued cases of HT in BH between 2005-2009

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Criminal charges	26	33	34	21	10
Convicted	23	77	65	53	20
Victims	54	42	38	n.d.	n.d.

The progression of the legislation against trafficking after the conflict is depicted in Table 2. The fact that there was never a formal anti-trafficking law in place or that it was included in the Criminal Code is fascinating. It was nonetheless eventually included among the various categories of violence against women. Fortunately, the laws have improved and now explicitly list trafficking as a felony. It's interesting to note that, as in earlier research, prostitution and trafficking have yet again been combined (United Nations, n.d.-a).

Table 2. Regulations on trafficking in human beings in BH between 2002-2016

REGULATIONS ON TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN	
2002	<p>The Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Article 172 (Aggravated Bodily Injury), Article 173 (Slight Bodily Injury), Article 203 (Rape), Article 205 (Sexual Harassment), Article 206 (Forced Sexual Intercourse) <p>The Criminal Code of Republika Srpska:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Article 198 - Trafficking in Human Beings for the Purpose of Prostitution
2003	<p>Law on Movement and Stay of Aliens and Asylum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Article 35.1 (a) of the Law on Movement and Stay of Aliens and Asylum (2003) provides that temporary residence may be granted to victims of trafficking on a humanitarian basis . - Article 37 deals specifically with protection and assistance to victims of trafficking. - Article 63.3 provides that victims of trafficking shall not be forcibly removed from the country when they are to testify in court proceedings. <p>Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Trafficking):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Articles 186 and 187 of the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina criminalizes trafficking in human beings
2016	<p>Criminal Code of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Amendments):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Article 210 "Incitement to Prostitution" is now in line with the provisions of the Criminal Code of BiH - The Law also outlines the definition of a hate crime as any criminal offence committed on the grounds of, among other, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity of another person.

To ensure the continuing progress in combatting HT, BH is moderately improving its score on SDG 16 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions', which includes the target to end the trafficking of children. However, challenges still remain. This is the same for SDG 5 'Gender Equality', which advocates the

elimination of violence against women, including trafficking. (Sustainable Development Report, n.d.). This demonstrates how this issue can be given higher priority across the nation.

3.5. Institutions

BH is assists victims of trafficking through various ways and numerous domestic institutions are working together to achieve this. The International Forum of Solidarity – Emmaus (IFS-EMMAUS) is a humanitarian non-profit organization which is the main contributor who aims to “create, support and vivify resources in which everyone, by being free and respected can comply their needs and show mutual solidarity.” (MFS-EMMAUS, n.d.-a). They have several impactful initiatives, of which one of them is the prevention of trafficking in human beings and illegal migrations in BH. Their main activities are providing assistance and protection for those who have been victims of HT in the country, raising awareness on the issue and the prevention of it, capacity building, and continuously doing research on it in collaboration with other relevant organizations, such as the European Resource Center (EURC). This research center helps by publishing reports that address HT in the country and provides relevant literature for local and international actors (MFS-EMMAUS, n.d.-b).

Medica Zenica is a specialized women’s organization that, during their recovery, women, girls, and children who have experienced trauma or abuse are given the accommodations they need. Among other things, living in a safe house entails receiving the proper professional assistance through individual and group therapy, counseling, medical care, legal assistance, and financial empowerment through participation in ongoing six-month occupational training programs (Medica Zenica, n.d.).

Another important one is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which assists host countries in putting the ideas to practice. The field operation in BH is called Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and includes helping with the combat against HT. The Mission collaborates with both local and foreign partners to strengthen the legal and regulatory environment for the detection and punishment of HT. It keeps track of specific cases and promotes bringing the nation's anti-trafficking laws into compliance with international norms. Besides that, it creates educational materials in court and offers training opportunities for all practitioners involved in counter-trafficking as part of its efforts to increase domestic authorities' capacity to combat HT (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, n.d.).

4. Methodology

This chapter displays the methodological approach of the research, including the way of data collection and the reflection of the positionality as a researcher. The data collection is presented first, elaborating on the operationalization of concepts, and the process of conducting expert interviews and policy analysis.

4.1.Data collection

The method used in this thesis is qualitative research in combination with the use of secondary data, which is in this case a policy analysis. At first hand, a qualitative approach had been chosen to shed light on the perspective of female victims and share their opinions on the support system. Due to sensitivity and privacy issues, it was not possible to include victims of trafficking in the research. To provide a well-informed analysis, the research relies on expert interviews. These perspectives are important because, to their professional experience, they have the most knowledge of the victims' living conditions and are best qualified to determine what is required for them in addition to the victims themselves. A policy analysis is conducted as additional information to create a legal framework of the current legislation around the rights of trafficked survivors. Fieldwork has been done in BH for just over one month, after which further data collection had been conducted for two months. Table 3 shows the concepts that are central in the approach of this study and how these are operationalized, resulting from the theoretical insights and related conceptual framework. On the basis of these concepts, the results are analyzed.

Table 3. Operationalization of concepts

Theory	Concepts	Operationalization
<i>Feminist Theory</i>	Patriarchy	Criminal justice is prioritized over the needs of victims
		Separation between men and women in support
		Recognition of female victims
	Intersectionality	Interaction of pull and push factors of trafficking
<i>HRBA</i>	Agency	Oppression of women on different levels
		Inclusion and representation of female survivors
	Universality	Trafficking survivors are entitled to all human rights
	Equality	No discrimination among trafficking survivors
	Empowerment	Survivors' needs are at the forefront of policies

4.1.1. Expert interviews

Expert interviews are conducted to include the perspective of the necessities in terms of assistance and what the main barriers are in providing them. On top of that, it will elaborate more on the legal system that is also part of this research. The first phase consisted of contacting various relevant experts for a

one-on-one interview from numerous organizations and departments: IFS-EMMAUS, Medica Zenica, OSCE, Council of Europe, International Organisation of Migration, Ministry of Security, Center of Women's Rights, United Women Foundation, Association Women from Una, six different social welfare organizations, and two prosecutors of HT. They were searched based on reports on human trafficking and via collaborations between each other during projects. The relevance of these various organizations was based on their participation in the combat against trafficking and their direct work with trafficking victims. However, a majority of the experts were not able to do an interview or did not respond. Nevertheless, from the 23 people that were contacted, seven of them were open to sending useful documents and reports from their organizations to use for the policy analysis, and only two expert interviews have been conducted.

The first one is a female from IFS-EMMAUS, and the other is a male respondent from OSCE. Both interviews were about 40 minutes long and were conducted in the Bosnian language. Despite there being only two interviews, they have been extremely helpful in providing the information needed from different perspectives. The respondent from IFS-EMMAUS works directly with trafficked women but also designs projects for the combat against trafficking and the provision of accurate support. Hence, she had knowledge about various factors and gave a broad, insightful look into how everything is regulated in BH, what the major issues are when it comes to the perception of the problem, how there is a mismatch between policies and implementation, and what has been the experience of trafficked women. The respondent from OSCE is a national anti-trafficking officer and therefore has a lot of experience in the combat against trafficking and the provision of it. Besides that, he has also contributed to a lot of research on necessities for trafficked victims. He gave insightful information about the legal framework and the downsides of it, and how this affects victims. The interviews have been transcribed and analyzed afterward through the program NVIVO, with allocated codes per theoretical concept.

4.1.2. Policy analysis

For the secondary data, a policy analysis was conducted. This included local, state, federal, and international laws, regulations, agreements, and standards that are dedicated to preventing, combating, and protecting against HT. Using a variety of sources and viewpoints will help conduct a thorough policy analysis and comprehend the legal framework around HT. The policy analysis complements the interviews by confirming or invalidating the information shared by the respondents but can also help showcase the (in)consistency of the relationship between the system world and the life world.

I started by generally searching for policy documents on the subject of HT in BH, gathering information on both the legal framework for combating trafficking and how victims are approached. The majority of the data that was selected was dated after the Bosnian war, to indicate the development from the starting point of the increase of organized crimes. Second, I gathered documents from significant field actors who, as previously said, I had originally planned to interview but who were

gracious enough to deliver relevant files. The third step was then to categorize documents based on my research questions, where I selectively looked for data that could give answers to the questions. I looked for information on the development of policy implementations and how they came about, what their impact has been, and what has been lacking. In addition, I searched for information that included the current support system, what the main barriers are, how it has been implemented thus far, and, again, what has been lacking. I organized it this way to have a clear insight into every part that is needed to answer my research questions and to prevent missing any information. Data that has been selected for the analysis has been based on several factors, which are relevancy, legitimacy, and geographic scope. The main focus was for the data to give answers to the research questions, originated from legal sources, and was limited to the area of BH.

The data that has been selected consisted of three themes: policy documents, reports, and websites. Policy documents originated from the Ministry of Security and other governmental sources. Furthermore, reports were mostly originating from the organizations mentioned for the expert interviews. Lastly, websites were used to further analyze information from the relevant organizations mentioned, as well as from newspapers to read about any interviews that have been conducted with related actors.

The documents were coded in the program NVIVO and analyzed based on the categorization of the concepts. The first set of codes was linked to the first research question and is focused on the aim of policies regarding HT, with the codes being: ‘combat against HT’, ‘prevention’, ‘protection’, ‘identification’, ‘improvements’, and ‘cooperation’. The second set of codes was linked to the second and third research questions, aiming to understand the support system: ‘available assistance’, ‘barriers’, ‘lack of assistance’, and ‘improvements’. The third set of codes was used to highlight the concepts of the feminist theory and the HRBA: ‘patriarchy’, ‘intersectionality’, ‘agency’, ‘universality’, ‘equality’, and ‘empowerment’. Then two general codes were used: ‘implementation’, to highlight information on the evaluation of implementation, and ‘gender sensitivity’, to highlight information that showcases the focus on gender.

4.2. Reflection on positionality

When conducting fieldwork, there are a number of aspects that as a researcher one must be aware of and take into account. As a researcher who is familiar with BH’s language, culture, and values, certain drawbacks could have hampered this research. First off, I might have had preconceptions about the objectives of this study and how the interviews would be conducted because of my awareness of the problem of HT in BH and how locals there perceive it. I have been mindful of the possibility that conversations could influence how I view this issue.

Second, participants might have been less interested in discussing this topic with me because they might view it as a casual conversation with a fellow Bosnian who is familiar with local customs and hence less insightful than if they were speaking to outsiders. However, mentioning that I am from

a Dutch university might have helped me get the responses that I eventually got. Positively, having commonality with other participants through language has facilitated meaningful dialogues.

Thirdly, as I am quite young, participants could see me as unskillful or unauthorized to discuss everything with me. However, I have prepared myself with all information needed and have been respectful and empathetic while talking about these sensitive topics with them.

Lastly, because I am a woman, there is a possibility that I will steer the discourse in a more sensitive manner and only highlight the voice of women. However, I have placed most of my attention—and that of the conversation—on the female victims throughout my investigation because it is central. Additionally, my interest in this area sparked talks with interview subjects in which they expressed a lot of their concerns and perspectives. It was simpler for me to discuss specific topics with the female interviewee since we can both relate to them as women because I am one too.

All in all, I planned to undertake this research with the utmost respect, empathy, and gratitude for the participants' involvement. I will be committed to avoiding exploitative practices and instead exploring ways to reciprocate the information gathered by providing benefits that are meaningful to the community.

5. System world vs. life world in post-conflict BH

The findings from the policy analysis and the interviews are presented in this chapter. A summary of pertinent policies is provided for each subsection, along with an analysis based on papers and reports that is either reinforced or weakened by the results of the interviews. All quotes included have been translated into English. This method of presenting the data is crucial because it illustrates how policy analysis and interviews reinforce each other's contributions to the research topics at the heart of this thesis.

A brief overview of important international HT legislations is first presented, followed by a critical analysis of the system approach to trafficking and its barriers. The next main part displays the implementation barriers and the (im)balance between the system- and life world. It is presented according to the different rights that victims have, including the identification process, criminal proceedings, the protection and support system, and non-discrimination. Lastly, the findings of the improvements of this approach on the needs of trafficked women in BH are outlined.

5.1. Combat against HT

5.1.1. *The European Convention on Human Rights*

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) was established in 1950 by the European Union, and eventually ratified by BH in 2002. The importance of this convention is that it was amongst the first to prescribe the ban on slavery and forced labor, which is defined as an absolute human right. It is

stipulated that no one can be required to perform forced or compulsory labor, and the convention highlights how there is no exception, even in the case of a state of emergency that threatens the survival of the nation. The convention does not explicitly mention HT, only slavery. However, HT is also known as slavery of the modern age (Mujanovic, Datzler, Vucinic, & Buha, 2022). The protocols under this convention are directly applied in BH and have prioritization over other all laws. It includes, for example, the multiple human rights declared to all people on the territory of BH. Some that are related to trafficking are the right to life, the right of a person not to be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the right to personal freedom and security (Prcanovic, Kadric, & Ninkovic, 2020).

5.1.2. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized

One of the most important sources that defined HT as a form of transnational crime is the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), ratified by BH in 2002. UNTOC obliges member states to recognize participation in the activities of organized crime groups, money laundering, corruption in the public sector, and obstruction of justice as criminal offenses. This convention indicates that a successful fight against HT is not possible without strengthening the criminal procedural mechanisms in terms of cooperation between states in gathering evidence, mutual legal assistance in conducting research, and determining criminal proceedings. One essential protocol resulting from this convention is the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Person, Especially Women and Children. The goal of the Protocol is to establish a unique basis for preventing and suppressing trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, providing assistance to victims of HT and indicating the need for cooperation between states. States should adopt legal and other measures, as prescribed by the Protocol, which incriminate not only acts of HT but also every attempt to commit HT, as well as complicity, aiding, or abetting HT as an independent criminal offense deed. (Mujanovic, Datzler, Vucinic, & Buha, 2022). As a result of the UNTOC, transnational trafficking in human beings is defined in BH's Criminal Code (Article 186) as the movement of a citizen to another country or the movement of a foreign national within the country for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labor, forced services, slavery or acts that are similar to slavery, servitude, the taking of human body parts, or other forms of exploitation (Council of Europe, 2022). The basic instruments for the fight against HT are in this domestic criminal law.

5.1.3. The Council of Europe Convention on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

The Council of Europe Convention on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (CE Convention), entered into force in 2008, focuses on the protection of victims of HT and the promotion of international cooperation for the prosecution of perpetrators of these crimes. The CE Convention seeks to influence the reduction of the demand for services expected from victims of HT, by discouraging and punishing

the users of these services and clearly seeks to identify and recognize victims of HT as such, in order to prevent them from being treated by the police or state authorities as illegal migrants or perpetrators of criminal acts, and to provide physical, psychological and social assistance to victims of HT. According to the scope of regulation, this Convention has the potential to establish a higher level of obligations for a larger number of member countries than is required by the UNTOC (Mujanovic, Datzler, Vucinic, & Buha, 2022). The Convention's emphasis on victim protection and human rights perspective makes up its primary added value. HT is described in its prologue as an offense against the dignity and integrity of the human being as well as a violation of human rights. Another significant benefit of the Convention is the two-pillared monitoring system that has been established to oversee the performance of its obligations: the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and the Committee of the Parties (Council of Europe, 2005).

5.1.4. Barriers resulting from the systems' approach to HT

One major issue in BH when it comes to the approach of the combat of HT and creating an adequate support system is the lack of focus on the victims' perspectives and needs. The following findings are important in displaying this shortage. As highlighted by the respondent from OSCE:

“What is still a big shortcoming in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that in making those strategic decisions, we do not have a clear system in which the method of involving the victims of human trafficking has been worked out. That whole instinctive response is created for what? It should protect the rights of right-holders and not only punish the behavior of traders. That is the difference between state-centric and victim-centric approach.”

The quote above calls attention to an essential problem in the common method of policymaking, where a state-centric approach is focused on how traffickers are a threat to the country and are prioritized over the outcome their acts have on their victims and what is important for them. The quote displays the lack of focus on the victims and confirms the importance of this research where the needs of victims are central. The quote highlights how the criminal justice system has precedence over the needs of trafficking victims, which, according to feminist theory, is called a patriarchal system (Lobasz, 2009). This approach to the issue is creating a barrier in the identification process of victims in BH. GRETA is concerned that the existing system in BH risks leaving a significant number of victims unidentified due to the link between identification and initiation of criminal proceedings for criminal offenses of HT (Đuderija & Bajramović, 2021). It can be expected that BH's approach is this way as the country suffers a lot from mismatches between the three current presidents that rule the country, and the lack of resources does not allow for prioritizing all aspects of the combat against HT. However, it should not be an excuse to totally neglect the voice of victims.

Another striking finding on the problem of the current approach to trafficking in BH highlights the various factors that make victims vulnerable. The OSCE respondent explains how there are no differences made between gender and background:

“There is absolutely no difference made between men and women ... that is very difficult to explain to all those professionals, what it means to take gender into account in prevention, what it means in criminal prosecution, and what about providing support. The whole system was made to have foreign victims in mind, did it take other perspectives into account? Who is the one who provides for the rest ... that is something that is particularly worrying.”

As the interviewee suggests, there is a lack of representation of female victims, and more inclusion is needed. In BH, there is much work to be done to combat gender-based violence and strengthen the institutional and legal basis for a more serious campaign against violence against women (Sitnić, Dizdar, & Hasanbegović, 2022). Additionally, the interviewee further elaborates on how to approach victims as a social worker is different between men and women:

“Boys don’t want women to tell them something, what they have to do or what is good for them. We don’t have a mediator for things like that, where culture also plays a role ... We don’t know much about them and their backgrounds, and approaching girls and boys is very different.”

These findings can be interpreted to indicate that the needs of male and female victims are different and that the background of each of them also influences their trafficking experiences. The quote can be interpreted to highlight how professionals lack the understanding of the various background experiences and how the lack of distinct approaches to men and women, and their cultural backgrounds, makes helping them more difficult. This is an important finding as this can explain the lack of an adequate support system and what the main barrier could be.

The respondent from IFS-EMMAUS touches upon the lack of agency of trafficked women:

“It is essential to admit that she (the victim) has the capacity to know how to stay alive, secondly, admit that she has the capacity to know what she needs, thirdly, admit to yourself that you have no idea what she needs, and if you want to help her, ask. And call things for that they are, then you will be better able to sort out the story and demands that the person is making”

The quote emphasizes the specific call to focus more on female victims and how to specifically respond to their different trauma experiences, which is a significant finding for this research as the female gender is at the center of it. Adding that:

“Those who survived should be more involved in the making of projects and programs, more of them should be asked what would be useful for them. We very often position ourselves as if we know it best, however, this is patronizing, very often we offer them solutions that are not even relevant. I think that practice should be stopped.”

From the quotes above it can be suggested that we as outsiders believe we understand what is important to victims, despite the fact that their agency is neglected in a way that prevents them from having a voice. The feminist theory highlights that, when it comes to the patriarchal system, it often is decided for female victims of trafficking what is essential to them (Walby, 1996), which can be linked to this statement. In addition, the agency of women is again shown to be neglected by BH’s laws, based on these findings, which results in a lack of victim-centered approach to the provision of assistance. The combination of the findings mentioned in this section suggests the possibility of BH following a patriarchal system in the approach to HT.

The OSCE respondent mentions another striking observation:

“In what way are business sectors held accountable? This question is largely neglected in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

This quote emphasizes a group of relevant actors that are frequently overlooked when talking about the combat against HT and who is responsible during this fight. For the complete elimination of HT in BH, preventive efforts are necessary and encourage greater cooperation between political entities and civil society. Organizations for the fight against HT are not included in the work of coordination teams for the fight against HT, which is a big omission. All actors in the fight against HT should really be part of one network or team, coordinating and directing efforts to solve the problem in the right way from every possible angle (Clunan, 2022). The respondent ends his point by explaining which steps need to be taken next in BH’s approach to HT:

“... stronger involvement of victims in the creation of the response of surviving victims, capacity building of all actors involved in the fight against human trafficking on a victim-centered, culturally centered, gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approach. Another thing that does not exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a national reporter: a body that is not a coordinator of the

court, but one that observes and speaks in it, that gives an assessment and recommendations to the authorities on how to progress in the response to the fight against human trafficking. That would be the way forward I would say.”

The last sentence of the quote calls specific attention to the aspect of cooperation in the combat against HT. The study by Reichel (2011) emphasizes that cross-national cooperation can be even more helpful in the fight against HT, as this creates learning opportunities from others' use of methods and help improve it for others where it is lacking. The quotes from the OSCE respondent indicate how the perspective on trafficking and victims' needs in BH's approach is problematic, which shows the main barrier in accurately providing assistance in the country.

All the findings listed above suggest the different factors of the policy framework that can play an important role as a barrier to the provision of accurate assistance to female victims. Below, the incoherence between policies and reality is showcased.

5.2. Implementation barriers

It is essential that human rights be at the center of all measures taken to prevent and stop HT. That is why they are an important starting point in obliging BH to improve and harmonize the legal and administrative framework that prohibits HT and requires that, as a member state of the United Nations, it punishes perpetrators more effectively and protects the rights of victims of HT (Đuderija & Bajramović, 2021). A number of rights for victims of trafficking are outlined in the CE Convention, including the right to be recognized as a victim, the right to protection and assistance, the right to at least 30 days for recovery and reflection, the right to a renewable residence permit, and the right to compensation for any harm incurred (Mujanovic, Datzler, Vucinic, & Buha, 2022). When upholding the rights of victims, as stated by the Ministry of Security, institutions, groups, and organizations engaged in civil society should adhere to the following principles: respecting the rights of human beings, authorities have responsibilities and participating, applying a multi-sectoral approach, non-discrimination, and following a gender-specific approach (Vijeće Ministara, 2020). The principles of feminist theory and the HRBA, such as the interconnectedness of various oppressive circumstances, the universality of human rights to all people, and the equality of rights-holders, are in line with these prioritizations.

The following subsections elaborate on important findings of different rights of victims and the barriers to the current legal framework in protecting them. It shows the (in)consistency between the system world and the life world. These findings answer the research questions on the current support system, the barriers, and how it can be improved to better assist victims.

5.2.1. Identification of victims

The following findings call attention to the first phase of victims entering BH, the identification process. The provision on victim identification (Article 10) opens Special Section III of the CE Convention, which is devoted to the protection and advancement of the rights of victims of HT. The identification of a specific person as a victim of HT is both a legally required and factual requirement for that person to be able to enjoy the rights that are both legally and ethically his. It also safeguards that person from unfavorable treatment by the authorities (such as being treated as an illegal immigrant, worker, or perpetrator of some punishable acts and subject to the punishments or expulsions that such treatment implies) (MFS-EMMAUS, 2019).

Nevertheless, a lot is lacking when it comes to the identification of victims of HT, especially labor exploitation. Only eight alleged victims of labor trafficking have been found in BH between 2017 and 2021. Regarding these identifications, there have been no convictions. In addition, the official data is not broken down by age or gender and does not indicate the sectors in which it occurred. The "Rules on the protection of THB victims who are nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina" and the "Rulebook on the protection of foreign victims of trafficking" envisage the possibility for victims to 'self-identify', which is interpreted by professionals to mean that victims must present themselves to an official and declare that they have been trafficked, as opposed to an identification made by a professional after an official investigation. Labor trafficking is still not widely known. The main justification is the worry about being punished by traffickers (Council of Europe, 2022). The conflict of jurisdiction between law enforcement authorities at the state and entity levels creates additional obstacles to the identification of victims and hinders their access to assistance. GRETA believes that the government should introduce a referral mechanism at the state level, which would define the roles and procedures of all persons and competent NGOs who may come into contact with the victim and ensure that all relevant actors adopt a more proactive approach in identifying possible victims (Đuderija & Bajramović, 2021).

In Sarajevo, the government ran a mobile outreach team for children living on the streets. A total of 165 street children were identified by the mobile team in 2020 (160 in 2019). While conducting outreach, observers said mobile team members were attacked, threatened, and intimidated by traffickers and offenders; however, law enforcement did not go into these claims. Police and social workers at the centers for social welfare (CSW) justified cases of possible forced child begging and forced labor involving Roma as traditional cultural practices, and they occasionally returned children to their families even when parents were involved in their exploitation. An international organization's report also revealed that first responders, such as border police, local police, and the Service for Foreigners' Affairs, lacked uniform guidelines and trafficking indicators for migration flows, interview questions, and interpreters, as well as the general capacity to screen the significant influx of migrants and refugees. International groups found that authorities frequently required victims to help with investigations and prosecutions in order to get support and aid, and that the interview and identification processes lacked

openness (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2021). The respondent from IFS-EMMAUS highlights this issue as well by saying:

“... it is very important to recognize this form of human trafficking, because they are not recognized, they remain undiscovered, unidentified, they do not know who to turn to, and therefore they have no rights. We have to work hard on identification, on understanding the types of exploitation and models of exploitation so that we can adequately protect the people who survived it.”

The above quote suggests how BH lacks a broad identification method that includes different types of victims of exploitation. This is problematic as victims that are not identified properly, will not be provided with the accurate assistance that is needed based on their different backgrounds and traumas. In the worst scenario, they are not identified at all and therefore cannot exercise their rights. This finding can be interpreted to indicate that victims lack the right to universality, where not all victims can exercise the human rights they are entitled to, such as protection and safety.

Despite the governmental commitment, labor trafficking prevention efforts have not been focused or well-coordinated. The root causes of labor trafficking have received relatively little attention. Specific target groups have not been the focus of prevention efforts to raise or decrease their protection or decrease their vulnerability. This is, again, in line with a patriarchal system where there is no recognition of victims made (Walby, 1996). The number of victims who are formally identified in BH when it comes to the migrant population remains extremely low (Ministarstvo bezbjednosti Bosne i Hercegovine, 2023). It is necessary to develop protocols and mechanisms for identifying and referring victims of labor trafficking. There is still a need for effective prevention measures and tactics to be developed around the needs of vulnerable populations and with their involvement, and they must be aware of the social, economic, and structural aspects that make people and communities susceptible to trafficking (Council of Europe, 2022). This finding shows the lack of awareness of the intersectionality of factors leading to the oppression of female victims. Two bylaws provided standard operating procedures (SOPs), including a list of general indicators, for identifying and referring victims to services, but observers continued to report that first responders were unaware of or inconsistent with the guidelines and lacked the knowledge to correctly identify trafficking victims (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2021).

5.2.2. Criminal proceedings

Rules of criminal procedure according to which the municipal or basic courts, cantonal or district courts, as well as prosecutors and other participants in criminal proceedings when acting in criminal matters, such as criminal acts of HT, are prescribed by the Law on Criminal Procedure of BH. For victims of HT during the prosecution of criminal offenses of HT, there is the Law on the Protection of Threatened

Witnesses and Law on Protection of Witnesses in Criminal Proceedings, given that these laws regulate measures that ensure the protection of witnesses under threat and vulnerable witnesses in the proceedings conducted by the courts and prosecutor's offices in BH. According to the CE Convention, victims of HT have the right to advice and information, in a language they understand, about rights and services guaranteed by law (MFS-EMMAUS, 2019).

As stated in GRETA's third report on BH (2022), victims of trafficking may pursue restitution from the perpetrator in both criminal and civil processes for both material and immaterial losses. According to the legislation, courts may opt to grant compensation in criminal proceedings, provided that doing so does not cause the proceedings to be unduly delayed. According to GRETA, judges typically refer victims to civil processes in criminal instances when the perpetrator is found guilty rather than deciding on the property claim because they believe doing so would significantly lengthen the proceedings. The problematic thing about the approach during criminal proceedings is that, as stated by the respondent from OSCE:

“... in the period 2009 - 2012, in only 3 cases brought against traders, the victims exercised their right to compensation for damages, of which in only 2 cases the victims were awarded that compensation in criminal proceedings, while one of the cases succeeded in the lawsuit ... of all those procedures in which damages were awarded, in none of them, to the best of our knowledge, did the victims actually collect the compensation.”

This quote once more demonstrates the discrepancy in balancing the importance of criminal prosecution with that of victim protection and support. In other words, it can be suggested that there is an inconsistency between the system- and the life world. Domestic laws on criminal procedure do not ensure consistently that the interests of the victim are presented and considered in the appropriate stages of the criminal proceedings against the perpetrator (MFS-EMMAUS, 2019). Investigations and prosecutions that were victim-centered were not routinely carried out by the government. For instance, prosecutors frequently questioned children who were victims without the presence of a psychologist or social worker and they were not required to be certified to work with minors. When conducting interviews, police did not always tell the victims' attorneys, and some courts demanded testimony from victims without giving them a chance to prepare (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2021). GRETA advised BH's authorities to continue their efforts to ensure that victims of trafficking have effective access to compensation, particularly by systematically advising victims of trafficking of their right to seek compensation in criminal and civil proceedings, ensuring that they are given effective legal assistance from the very start of the proceedings in order to exercise this right, and ensuring that victims of trafficking are provided with effective legal assistance from the outset of the proceedings (GRETA, 2022). However, without the proper definition of the problem during criminal proceedings

and calling things for what they are, it is hard to expect that the outcome will be adequate as well, as elaborated by the respondent from IFS-EMMAUS:

“... "forced to do sexual services" was mentioned regularly. No, it's being raped all day long. It's not going to the salon to get someone's nails done as a service. You have before you a woman who survived rape!”

As the interviewee highlights, an additional problem during criminal proceedings is the lack of defining things for what they are. This finding is essential in how de-victimization is currently an issue in BH, which is also stated by Đuderija & Bajramović (2021), mentioning that during criminal processes, BH is problematically de-victimizing, where the issues are being downplayed and not taken severely.

The respondent arises another barrier when it comes to protection during criminal proceedings:

“What is somewhat an obstacle is that judicial proceedings take a very long time, so people who are witnesses ... sometimes that person stays in a shelter for several years for security reasons... however, the shelters are closed, there is limited movement ... no going to the cinema, no going here and there. There is no going out. So, people - especially young people, young women - very quickly feel like prisoners. And it is not fair that due to security reasons, those girls have to somehow finish school part-time during that period, have no peer communication etc.”

This quote reveals how the needs of victims are not prioritized, yet again. It also suggests that criminal proceedings are not as prioritized as is mentioned in policies, as they can take several years to be handled. This is an important insight as it continues to confirm the inconsistency between the system's approach to HT and how this eventually unpacks in reality. The respondent adds by mentioning that there is a lack of:

“... day care centers, which are focused on the safety of street children - children who work on the street -, so that they have a place where they can do homework, where they can eat a warm meal, where they can shelter, and where the cooks and teachers monitor these children, their behavior. And I am telling you, no one will kick the victims of human trafficking out of the shelter, and those who want to leave they will be let out because they might be with their mother ... That could be an alternative.”

This quote mentions an interesting alternative that could be used and improve the need for victims to have safe and comforting housing that is stress-relieving and helps the rehabilitation process.

5.2.3. Protection and support system

Within the CE Convention it is stated that members need to take measures to help victims for their physical, psychological, and social recovery, taking into account the victim's safety and the need for protection, in cooperation with nongovernmental organizations and other organizations dealing with helping victims. This assistance must be provided on a consensual and informed basis, considering the special needs of persons at risk, as well as for children (MFS-EMMAUS, 2019). However, there are several main barriers to communicating and assisting victims, especially foreigners, as mentioned by the respondent from IFS-EMMAUS. Firstly, minors are hardly believing that the traffickers from their origin country are not having ties in BH and therefore have trust issues when it comes to accepting aid in BH:

“On one side you have a poor, frightened woman or girl, and on the other side you have a prominent person who is powerful ... Then a child to be able to report? The principle of punishment is not applied to them, but that's why the children are silent, you can't convince them that nobody will touch them and punish them here.”

The respondent highlights an important factor in providing assistance, which is child sensitivity. It can be interpreted that there is no concise method for approaching girls and assigning them adequate support. This can be suggested as another barrier to the provision of assistance. Secondly, there are minimal translators, and a lot of times they still do not understand each other, which results in the lack of aid provision. Thirdly, there is no way to end the conversation in a way that will help them feel better, therefore any attempt to get them to talk about their experiences simply causes discomfort, as pointed out by the respondent:

“With the best intentions, you're never sure if you've hurt those people in some way ... These children are grown up on the street, they are street smart, and now I want to help them in a way, while having no idea about their life. I'm a woman and I have no idea about them, so it's very challenging.”

This quote suggests a very difficult point in terms of being ethically responsible in the approach to victims. The position of a social worker is suggested to be challenging and affects the way assistance is provided.

The Rules on the Protection of Victims and Victims of Witnesses of Trafficking in Human Beings of BH regulate the issues of placing victims in shelters. The rules stipulate that the physical protection of the victim is among the basic forms of victim protection and that the individual needs of the victim must be taken into account when making decisions on how to ensure the protection of victims (MFS-EMMAUS, 2019). One of the standards for supporting victims followed by BH's government is that the victim is provided with safe and secure transportation from the place of identification to the shelter, and from the shelter to her place of residence, i.e., to the country of origin or the country of habitual residence, as well as during her stay in the shelter. The shelter should also provide a safe environment for victims 24 hours a day. Protection of the shelter facility is ensured in accordance with current legal regulations (Đuderija & Bajramović, 2021). The victims of HT and exploitation may suffer from major psychological and physical effects, such as mental health issues and a loss of self-worth. To help victims of trafficking cope with the trauma they have experienced, achieve a sustainable recovery, and gain social inclusion, psychological treatment is required during their stay in shelters. Due to the violence, they experienced, some victims need ongoing therapy care. Every victim of trafficking should undergo a clinical evaluation from a qualified clinician that is specifically designed to determine their level of readiness for therapy (GRETA, 2022). The CE Convention determines that victims of HT have the right to living conditions that ensure their appropriate and safe housing, and psychological and material assistance are rights that belong to all victims of HT, including those who participate in criminal proceedings.

Nonetheless, in reality, there is a huge barrier regarding this law, as the respondent from OSCE states:

“What is important and what is problematic in the entire framework for the protection of victims is essentially that the entire support system that guarantees the rights of victims is conditioned by the fact that victims are located in the shelter ... you cannot receive rights if you are not in the shelter. If the victim does not want to be in the shelter, they will not have those rights and that is what is particularly problematic.”

This, again, showcases the neglect of the focus on the victims' needs. In addition, it suggests that a major barrier to providing adequate support to victims is that it is determined by their placement in a shelter. IFS-EMMAUS respondent also highlights this

“... they have no alternative in Bosnia and Herzegovina to provide protection and other services to victims if they are not sheltered in a shelter, which means there is absolutely no system either here or outside Bosnia and Herzegovina

*in the region ... There are enough women who don't want to stay in a shelter,
I wouldn't either."*

The above quote suggests there is no system on how to provide protection to victims. However, the legal framework says otherwise. The Handbook on "Shelter Standards for Victims of Human Trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina", is published by the International Organization for Migration, the Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Ministry of Security - Department for Combating Human Trafficking. This manual is a reference reading and a guide for those who provide direct assistance to victims of HT and contains unique standards in the management of safe houses in BH, and is based on international documents and domestic legislation, as well as standards for the protection of human rights of victims of HT. According to the available data, organizations that provide direct assistance to victims have undergone certain checks by the before mentioned ministries, which determined whether they meet the requirements in terms of professional staff and capacities that a safe house must possess. Most of the organizations that provide direct assistance to victims of HT have been checked by them regarding the professional qualifications of the staff and the technical conditions and capacity of the accommodation that the safe house must have (MFS-EMMAUS, 2019). The interpretation of the combination of the findings can indicate that there is, yet again, a misunderstanding between the system- and the life world and that this issue negatively affects the outcome for victims.

The legislation on assisting victims states that a victim is released on the basis of the decision of the center for social work, or after the end of the court proceedings, and at the request of adults. After leaving the safe house, the victims are mostly still available for various services, from legal and psychosocial assistance, rehabilitation, and reintegration processes, with cooperation with the competent services, i.e., social protection centers in the case of minors. Centers for social work are responsible for ensuring further services after leaving the shelter when it comes to minors (MFS-EMMAUS, 2019). BH follows the standard where victims should be provided with appropriate training/courses that will help them in their professional development and enable them to be employed and integrated into society. Economic independence is a basic condition for the complete and sustainable reintegration of a victim of HT. The reintegration process begins after the completion of the assessment procedure of the victim of HT and the place of reintegration. The assessment is conducted to ensure the victim's safety in their place of residence (Đuderija & Bajramović, 2021). However, what is lacking and is still needed in terms of rehabilitation during their stay in BH, is stated below by the respondent from IFS-EMMAUS:

"What is required and what must be done and what needs to be worked on more is measures to support rehabilitation and restitution, especially bearing in mind that it is known that someone will be there (shelter) for a minimum of

6 months, then it is necessary to establish work with that person, that is, on in some way, shock and trauma stabilizing, to work on psychological recovery for the protection of mental health, and to start preparing for the field and for economic research, qualification, in a way giving insight into normal life courses, which will prevent the person from ending up in the same position again and becoming a victim again.”

The respondent highlights with this quote that not only the time of shelter is important to victims, but also the preparation for the period afterward. From the findings above it can be assumed that they do not currently have a strategy in place to empower female victims, which is a right they are entitled to, and provide an effective rehabilitation program that also increases victims' awareness of their vulnerability to re-victimization. Although reports mention that rehabilitation projects are available in previously mentioned findings, it is not reflected in the life world, as suggested by the respondent. This links back to the most significant concern in the country, as stated by the respondent from OSCE, which is the implementation of laws:

“Services are a particular problem, what happens after the criminal proceedings, there is only one law in social protection that guarantees the rights of victims after criminal proceedings, but then the laws do not regulate anything ... when the procedure is over the victim has almost nothing left.”

He adds by saying:

“Implementation is the biggest problem in Bosnia.”

These quotes further enhance the big elephant in the room, the inconsistency between policy and implementation. What is additionally emphasizes and is important to mention is that this inconsistency is not in one aspect of the combat against HT and providing assistance but comes back in every department of the victim support system. Although practically every significant aspect of providing protection and help to victims of HT is covered by the law, the victims never actually benefit from it. This implementation problem is also highlighted by the respondent from IFS-EMMAUS:

“Laws are not a problem, the laws are good, what is a problem is implementation. The problem is only how they are implemented and how material and other resources are desirable for the implementation of the law. The laws have covered everything, but the question is how to finance it.”

As the interviewee mentions, resources are one of the main reasons for the lack of proper implementation. Hereafter, it is showcased how big this inconsistency is based on data on implementation activities.

Although the current regulations in BH regulate the right of victims of HT to appropriate and safe accommodation, minimum standards for shelters for the victims have not been established. International instruments provide the basis for standards, but the agreement and implementation of standards at the national level remain a barrier to the accurate provision of assistance to victims (MFS-EMMAUS, 2019). Table 4 shows the results of the collected data indicating the implementation of planned activities from the action plans for the institutions of BH in the course of 2020 and 2021. The government of BH is urged by GRETA to provide enough funding to NGOs that provide housing and support to trafficking victims, further enhance cooperation and coordination with these NGOs, and create programs for the long-term integration of these victims (GRETA, 2022).

Table 4. Implementation activities

	Planned activities	Implemented	Started	Not started
Support system	352	198	54	100
Prevention	318	105	48	165
Criminal prosecution	298	90	60	148
Protection of victims	365	101	50	214
Partnership	72	31	10	31
Total	1405	598 (42.60 percent)	222 (15.80 percent)	585 (41.60 percent)

Source: Ministry of Security BH, 2022

5.2.4. (Non-)discrimination

Another important right that victims hold is non-discriminatory behavior in providing assistance. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) explicitly prohibits the trade and exploitation of women for the purposes of prostitution (Mujanovic, Datzler, Vucinic, & Buha, 2022). The principle of non-discrimination is highlighted in the standards for supporting victims of HT in BH. It is mentioned as important to recognize that HT has significant gender aspects, given that mostly women and girls are the victims. All actions taken to suppress victims of trafficking should be considered discriminatory practices by the standards followed in BH (Đuderija & Bajramović, 2021).

However, competent institutions often, in the name of protecting women, actually deprive women of their human rights or apply these rights in a discriminatory manner, where they prevent freedom of movement or contact with family, “because of security”, and treat them differently because of disability, age, race or belonging to a minority. For some persons who are victims of HT, their safety is threatened by revealing their identity. In some cases, although there was information about exploitation, the reactions were not as rapid as they should be (for example, in the case of members of the Roma minority), attributing it to customs or traditions (Đuderija & Bajramović, 2021). IFS-EMMAUS respondent highlights the specific discrimination against the Roma community:

“The biggest problem is that people don't recognize children who go from town to town as something problematic because they are Roma children, they don't care if they are Roma children. Well, it is a problem because she's a small child, she just couldn't do all that by herself, someone has brought her. “Well, they do it that way, it's their custom” they say ... If it's not ok for your children it's not ok for anyone's, end of story! ... We must work on our racism.”

The quote above suggests the act of racism in BH's society against victims from the Roma community and it can be interpreted from the quote that people are reserved in the provision of help when it comes to this certain group. Roma women in BH are particularly vulnerable because of a variety of forms of discrimination, including anti-Roma biases and gender-based discrimination. These findings suggest the lack of an intersectionality lens on the issue and where it is considerate of the multiple ways of oppression. Professionals must understand that among the human rights that are denied to victims of HT, the following are threatened: the right to freedom, the right to dignity and security, the right to live without slavery, that it is necessary to treat victims of HT humanely and to provide them with different economic and social rights without any form of distinction in the provision of services (Đuderija & Bajramović, 2021). These findings suggest that there is no equality among victims in exercising the rights they are entitled to. In order to be effective prevention measures, anti-trafficking strategies should take into account how certain groups in society are vulnerable to discrimination, which increases the risk of becoming a victim of HT. For example, women belonging to national minorities face additional problems because of their gender, but also because they belong to a minority marginalized group (multiplied discrimination) (Đuderija & Bajramović, 2021). Integration of Romani advocates into victim protection decision-making processes is also still insufficient (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2021).

5.2.5. Improvements made by BH

On the plus side, BH is attempting to enhance the support system through training, awareness-raising campaigns, and different improvements to the way it is implementing law. Especially in this period of the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, BH is preparing for a new influx of trafficking victims. It is requesting to work with the affected communities to raise public awareness about the tactics used by the traffickers and to ensure that the community does not unintentionally increase its vulnerability to HT. It also requests that they identify the communities that are most at risk and work with community-based and civil society organizations to understand the underlying cultural contexts and practices, as well as to ensure that all necessary services are provided (The Anti-Trafficking Coordinators of South-East Europe (SEE), 2022).

Considering the complexity of the minimum standards (MS) for providing support to victims of HT and the very large number of involved institutions in BH, it is extremely important to ensure the monitoring of the implementation of the MS in order to evaluate and supplement the MS in the coming period and thus improve support for victims of HT in BH. Training and education contain training modules related to the observed problems in the implementation of MS, the solution of which requires the strengthening of professional competencies for all involved professionals. The training plan is drawn up for a two-year period and follows the reporting cycle. Ensuring the dynamics of improvement and application of MS is achieved through organizing at least two cycles of education in one year in cooperation with civil society organizations, the civil service agency, and training centers for judges and prosecutors (Đuderija & Bajramović, 2021).

The non-discrimination of Roma and promoting awareness of the need for their inclusion in all social processes in BH are stressed in the country's strategy for resolving Roma-related issues. Action plans for Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina specifically focus on housing, health care, employment, and education. A draft Action Plan of BiH for the social inclusion of Roma for the years 2021–2025 has been finalized by the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees based on the regional Declaration of Roma Integration from 2019. The Action Plan has five important objectives: (1) improving the coordination, monitoring, and support systems to lessen discrimination against Roma men and women; (2) enhancing the employability and employment of Roma men and women; (3) enhancing the living conditions of the Roma population in BH; (4) enhancing the accessibility and quality of healthcare for members of the Roma population in BH; and (5) enhancing the coverage of education of Roma men and women through a more effective (Council of Europe, 2022).

BH was promoted to Tier 2 by the U.S. Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Person, because the government showed overall increased efforts compared to the last reporting period, taking into account the COVID-19 pandemic's potential impact on its capacity to combat trafficking. These initiatives included bolstering the anti-trafficking strike force by distributing funds for honoraria and operational costs, increasing the strike team's membership, and establishing a network of prosecutors and investigators to aid in coordination. By identifying more victims, integrating domestic and foreign

victim funds, funding anti-trafficking NGOs, and developing standards to standardize victim aid, the government increased its total victim protection efforts. The government formed 18 regional monitoring teams (RMT) to coordinate anti-trafficking initiatives and constructed a new database to standardize data collection on trafficking victims (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2021).

6. Discussion

This chapter aims to discuss the research and empirical data on various aspects, including a brief comparison between theoretical principles and the empirical findings, followed by the main limitations of the research, suggestions for future research, and the relation to the field of international development.

6.1. Comparing theory with empirical data

This section presents an overview of the important factors of the two approaches, the feminist theory and the HRBA, in explaining the difficulties and hurdles in providing adequate assistance to female victims of HT. First, the feminist theory perspective is compared to the findings, followed by the HRBA.

The feminist theory perspective consisted of three main concepts: patriarchy, intersectionality, and agency. Firstly, feminists have spoken up about the gender-based power disparity in society and the negative perception of female victims of human trafficking, called a patriarchal society. Women are seen as less and are also entitled to a lesser value of human rights (Facio, 2013). This approach creates gender inequalities in all aspects of life (Walby, 1996), including the criminal justice system, where female victims are not taken seriously and de-victimized (Jones & Kingshott, 2016). The findings of this research show that a pattern of a patriarchal system is recognized in BH. The state takes precedence over the female victims in the combat against HT, where the threat of traffickers is a greater issue than the support and help for victims that have experienced the traumatic trafficking journey. It focuses on the combat against HT instead of victim-centered policies. Criminal proceedings can take months, which further shows the lack of consideration for victims. Secondly, Badejo, Gordon, & Mayes (2021) stated in their study that an intersectional lens to human trafficking is important to display the connections and conflicts of power regarding the combination of ways that women are oppressed. This term in feminist theories has been important in highlighting that trafficked women are not oppressed on one basis, and that being considerate about the various factors that make a woman vulnerable to HT, is crucial in adequately providing assistance to them (Carastathis, 2014). The findings of this research show how this lens is lacking in the identification process of victims, where there is an insufficiency of thorough identification investigations based on their background and vulnerabilities. As both interviewees suggested, there is no difference made between men and women in the approach to helping them, while this is essential as their background experiences differentiate

from each other, and therefore assistance should be provided accordingly. The findings indicate that the lack of proper identification results in multiple disadvantages for victims, such as the unavailability of support services, protection, shelter, etc. As stated by Adams (2011), without proper aid and financial support, there is a higher chance of victims being re-trafficked. Even if assistance programs are available, most of the time these are insufficient, short-term, and very rare. In addition, the results show that the victims in BH are oppressed based on multiple forms of discrimination, including anti-Roma and gender-based. Lastly, the autonomy and resilience of female victims is another major factor that feminists see as a priority in the provision of sufficient aid (Meyers, 2009). It is important to ask questions and not have presumptions about the needs of victims before implementing policies that affect the support they eventually receive (Lansink, 2011). Lobasz (2009) explains how this wrongful framing of the demand and necessities for female victims cannot lead to a fact-based and reliable support system. The findings show that there is a clear lack of such a victim-centered approach to HT and that policies fall short of the inclusion of victims in the understanding of their needs. The findings indicate that policymakers have an idea of what is needed for them, without admitting that victims have the capacity to explain that to them. The interviewee from IFS-EMMAUS suggested that it should be admitted by policymakers that victims have the capacity to think for themselves, and decide what is important for them, and that acknowledging this it will prevent from irrelevant assistance being provided.

The HRBA prioritizes the human rights of victims, including universality of rights, equality among victims in the provision of human rights, and the right to empowerment. Firstly, the right to the universality implies that everyone has the right to all fundamental human rights (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2003). This term is important as the rights of victims are constantly being violated throughout their journey, but, as the findings show, also afterward. The victims must be identified properly before their rights can be exercised, and, according to the findings, this is not done properly in BH. The findings show that as a result of not identifying them as victims, they are not entitled to the rights they should be. Secondly, victims have the right to equal access to human rights where there is no form of discrimination (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2003). The HRBA emphasizes that victims have the right to equal remedies and aid (Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, 2002). However, the findings show that the victims in BH experience discrimination based on ethnicity, as victims from the Roma community are looked down on and are not perceived as people that are deserving of aid. Thirdly, the HRBA lay stress on the principle of empowerment, where people have the right to actively engage and contribute to the development of social, economic, political, etc. conversations that lead to the realization of human rights (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2003). The interviewees call attention to the involvement of businesses in providing help to victims on this matter. Empowerment for victims of HT means preventing re-victimization by creating suitable rehabilitation programs and raising awareness about the vulnerabilities (Pallapothu, 2021). The findings present that BH is in the absence of such programs,

where victims are not prepared for the return back into society. As mentioned by the respondent from IFS-EMMAUS, while the victims stay in shelters for a couple of months, waiting to finalize the criminal proceedings, there are no intentions in working on the recovery of these victims and use the time efficiently. They feel imprisoned and there are no alternatives provided. The interviewee added that daycare centers could be such an alternative.

Both theoretical approaches have called attention to essential parts of providing assistance to victims during various stages of their recovery. The empirical findings are in line with the principles of these approaches and display the barriers that result from being deficient in acknowledging the impact of these principles on the support system.

6.2.Limitations to research

This section critically reflects on the limitations of this research and how this has resulted in different outcomes than was initially expected. The initial aim was to communicate with numerous female victims in BH themselves and have expert interviews to strengthen the empirical data. In addition, I expected to conduct the interviews over a period of several months and observe the field in depth. However, it turned out differently, which is elaborated on below.

A major limitation is that the voices of female victims were not possible to include in this research. Undeniably, the main goal of this research was to create a podium for them where they can speak out about their difficulties and needs as victims of HT in BH. In addition, this way the research could be more in-depth about their experiences and their backgrounds. This is important as it emphasizes how they differentiate from each other and how that affects the use of the support system. However, it is justifiable as it is a sensitive topic, and the study group is not accessible that easily. The reason for that is that a complicated procedure is necessary before it is possible to talk to victims, as not everyone is competent to talk about sensitive topics. Unpacking traumatic experiences in the wrong way can only lead to more harm. Furthermore, the experts have provided information that has created a broad, informative picture of the situation in BH

This leads to the next limitation, which is that a small number of expert interviews have been conducted. Unfortunately, no other actors were open to conducting the interviews as a result of busy scheduling, and, possibly, because of the touchy issue. By only having two interviewees it is not possible for the generalizability of their information. Moreover, as they stated that they were not in the ability to do a long interview because of busy scheduling, I was only able to access the material for a little time. Nonetheless, the interviewees have been in assisting me to understand a great deal about the subject and everything I needed to know. They clearly had an immense amount of enthusiasm for their work and the subject matter since they freely revealed many of their own viewpoints, which helped to paint a complex and thorough picture of HT in the country. Additionally, the actors who have been contacted, but were not able to conduct an interview, have provided me with beneficial files to append

to the information I needed. In addition, it is a limitation that the effectiveness of policy implementation could have been challenging in evaluating as there have not been additional interviewees to expand the information I received on this.

Another implication that is in relation to this is that even though the files provided by all actors were informative in their own way, they all concluded similar statements. The data supplied from the internet and from personal interactions were all telling similar stories and in the same tone, without a lot of dissimilarities in opinions. This was also interesting to see reports from various related organizations. Nonetheless, this also says that the information retrieved from these sources can be considered reliable and truth-telling.

Furthermore, as this research is focused on the specific context of BH, the findings could limit the generalizability to other countries or regions, especially as BH is one of the main contributing countries to the expansion of this organized crime, and other countries are not on the same level.

While I speak the Bosnian language well, language barriers in the policy reports and other files could have affected the accuracy of the analysis, as things could have been interpreted differently, especially quotes from the interviewees.

While I have been in BH for over a month, I have not experienced a proper fieldwork adventure as I could not visit a shelter where victims were residing or make any notes about the field. The reason for this is that organizations were not open to inviting me for interviews at the time and advised me to mail them about it afterward because of busy scheduling. Hence, the only communication that came about was through the mail. In addition, I was not successful in organizing an in-person interview, as both interviews were conducted online before and after my departure to BH. Nevertheless, it gave me new insights into better scheduling of future research interviews and what needs to be taken into consideration when planning them out. I did not expect that people were so unwilling to do, even, a short interview, but this only expand my experience in doing research and I will be aware of this during my future research journeys.

6.3.Future research

This section provides suggestions for future research on the needs of trafficked women in BH. These suggestions can help make valuable contributions to the study of HT and the challenges faced by female victims in this research context.

Even though this research was unable to include the voice of female victims, it would be extremely beneficial for future research to do so. Future research could be designed with an approach that considers the interests and concerns of female victims and is inclusive of them. To guarantee that trafficking survivors' views and experiences are heard, this may entail partnering directly with regional NGOs or community organizations. In addition, to locate and contact female victims who could be hard to reach using conventional methods used in this research, future studies could use snowball sampling

approaches, starting with a small number of well-known examples and gradually widening the participant pool by asking people to recommend researchers to other possible participants. Furthermore, to get more complete knowledge of the issue and find regional variations in experiences and support mechanisms, research in multiple sites or areas should be considered. Especially conducting a longitudinal study would be beneficial in this case, as it can track the trajectories of female victims over time. This way changes in their lives, the impact of assistance programs, and possible vulnerabilities to re-victimizations can be displayed and examined.

There are various specific topics that could be focused on in future studies resulting from the findings. Firstly, future studies can concentrate on looking more into the intersectional vulnerabilities experienced by Roma women who become victims of HT in BH. It can dive further into how discrimination based on gender and ethnicity interact to exacerbate vulnerability. Secondly, it can be interesting to examine the effects of de-victimization on trafficking victims in further detail throughout criminal procedures. The findings of this research provide insight into how the judicial system affects victims' access to justice and empowerment. Thirdly, examining the success of Bosnian women's trafficking victim's reintegration programs could be considered by future studies as well, where the focus is on the assistance given to them while they were residing in shelters and the assistance given to get them ready to rejoin society. Fourthly, future research can assess BH's anti-trafficking laws in practice to find any gaps between legislative intent and actual execution. This assessment can be used to identify the variables influencing policy implementation. Fifthly, analyzing the degree of coordination and cooperation among the various businesses, non-profits, and governmental organizations in preventing trafficking and assisting victims, where obstacles to cooperation are determined and measures to enhance it are looked into. Sixthly, it can be interesting to look into innovative ways to include victims' voices in the formulation of policies and decision-making. Practical strategies for including victims' perspectives in policy formation can be the subject of research. Seventhly, comparison studies can be conducted with other countries or regions dealing with comparable trafficking issues to find best practices and effective approaches that can be modified for the Bosnian context. Eighthly, it has been suggested by the interviewees that there is no adequate system for an appropriate approach to child victims, which can be investigated more in BH's context. Lastly, future studies can assess the efficacy and results of any policy changes made in response to this study's suggestions in terms of victim support and anti-trafficking initiatives.

Future researchers can undertake more thorough, ethical, and significant studies that shed light on the experiences of female trafficking victims while upholding their rights and dignity by combining these methodologies. Gaining access to difficult-to-reach people and making sure the research makes a strong contribution to preventing trafficking and helping victims will require close cooperation with regional actors and organizations.

6.4.Relation to international development and recommendations

This research and the findings resulting from it are related to development as it addresses critical issues within the field of international development and emphasizes the interconnectedness of various economic, political, and social factors. This section will explore how each aspect of the research is relevant to the study of international development, which can aid in educating the public, guiding policy suggestions, and promoting more inclusive and sustainable development initiatives in the fight against HT.

Firstly, trafficking, particularly the trafficking of women, is a serious issue for human rights with a significant effect on development. It has an impact on the social structure, economic stability, and general development of countries in addition to the individuals involved. What is necessary to combat the problem of trafficking in women is developing comprehensive anti-trafficking policies that tackle the underlying causes of vulnerability and exploitation, as well as prioritize the protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration of trafficked women into society. Secondly, the research on the trafficking in women following the war in BH in 1995 highlights how crucial it is for international development to comprehend post-conflict contexts. The governance, justice, and social inclusion issues that post-war civilizations most often encounter have an impact on HT and victims' assistance. It is important to include anti-trafficking measures in programs for development and reconstruction following a war to lessen vulnerabilities brought on by disrupted social structures and to increase victims' access to justice and support. Thirdly, in international development, the discrepancy between the system world and the reality on the ground is a common issue. Although policies may have the best intentions, poor execution, a lack of resources, and insufficient coordination can hinder their efficacy. To ensure the efficient enforcement and execution of anti-trafficking laws and regulations and to close the gap between official institutions and the needs of trafficking victims, institutional capacity and coordination mechanisms should be strengthened. Fourthly, the emphasis on victim-centered, gender-sensitive, and trauma-informed methods is consistent with international development ideals, which place a strong focus on strengthening vulnerable and marginalized people. Such strategies try to meet the demands and difficulties experienced by people. It is essential to follow this approach throughout all stages of support, offering complete assistance that is catered to the unique needs of trafficked women. Lastly, it is critical to consider all aspects of identity and how they affect vulnerability and access to resources. The intersectionality of gender- and ethnicity-based discrimination highlighted in the context of the Roma community serves as a good example of this. The necessity to address the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination is emphasized by international development studies. By acknowledging this intersection of factors and assuring victims of equitable access to support services, specialized policies can be designed and implemented to address the vulnerabilities of marginalized communities, such as the Roma.

7. Conclusion

The primary focus of this study is on trafficking women in post-conflict BH and their critical requirements for support, with the main question driving the research being: *What type of assistance is needed for female survivors of human trafficking in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina, and how can these be provided?* The findings display how victims need to be prioritized more in all various forms of assistance provision. Female victims are in need of a better identification procedure, being protected properly, all necessary remedies during their stay in the shelters but also for victims who do not prefer to reside in safe shelters, and a rehabilitation program that ensures promising future prospects back into society. A nuanced victim-centered, trauma-informed, gender-sensitive approach is required for the development of an adequate support system for trafficked women in BH. The main takeaways from this research highlight the critical areas where immediate improvement is required to develop a more successful and victim-centered strategy in the provision of assistance to female victims. The results of this research indicate that, in creating a legislative framework to combat human trafficking and aid victims, BH has achieved significant process. However, the policies and support systems in place are still unable to adequately address the complex and varied needs of female victims. This section provides answers to the research questions on what the availability of support for trafficked women is, what the primary obstacles to providing them are, what is lacking, and how this needs to be provided.

Shift from a state-centric to a victim-centric approach. The outcomes of this research point out that BH possesses solid foundational laws that guarantee the prosecution of traffickers, and offer victims compensation, safe housing, and counseling while they reside there. The results show, however, that the absence of victims from the processes involved in creating policies is one of the main flaws of creating a support system that covers all needs of female victims. Directly including victims in decision-making is critical to ensuring that their views are heard and that their perspectives inform the laws that have an immediate impact on their lives. This conclusion can advise policymakers to build more relevant and responsive support systems by consulting victims about the assistance they need. The results show that an imbalance exists between the state-centric approach and the actual experiences of the victims since trafficking is primarily seen as a threat to the state rather than prioritizing the needs of victims. This result suggests that policymakers ought to use a victim-centered strategy that prioritizes the rights and agency of the victims in their fight against trafficking.

Holistic identification protocol. The findings point out that a concise law that assures the right to be identified as a victim of trafficking and the protection during this process. However, the results indicate that there is no comprehensive strategy for identifying victims. Their background is not considered, which is a crucial component to consider because, without it, there is a chance that victims will not even be recognized. Additionally, victims of labor trafficking are not recognized, as shown by the data, since different types of trafficking are not separated and acknowledged during the identification procedure. This may be related to the very low number of victims in the country that have

been discovered, which is a serious issue, because, as the findings point out, unidentified victims risk missing out on important rights they are entitled to. A strong identification method is required to avoid missing prospective victims during identification procedures and make them entitled to various rights as victims. Policymakers ought to think about a comprehensive strategy that considers the backgrounds, circumstances, and specific forms of trafficking that victims have gone through.

Prompt and compassionate criminal proceedings. Laws on criminal proceedings are indicated to assure victims of witness protection against the trafficker, the provision of legal advice and a translator, and the right to compensation from their offender. Nonetheless, the results also show that these compensations are not always granted and that trials take too long of a time. In addition, for victims to be entitled to this compensation, they are required to reside in a shelter where they are felt as trapped because of the strict rules and no opportunities to self-development. Furthermore, female victims are shown to often be de-victimized and not taken seriously, where things are not called for what they are, for example, when it comes to rape. Victims' experiences are shown not to be validated and disregarded as the truth. These findings confirm the prioritization of BH's state over trafficking victims. For victims' empowerment and justice, the right to take part in criminal trials against their perpetrators is crucial. The results show that more successful prosecution outcomes may result from ensuring that criminal proceedings are swift, sympathetic, and encouraging of victim protection.

Individualized support and rehabilitation programs. While trafficked women are allowed to reside in shelters across the nation, there are many issues with how well they can be cared for there because the policy framework does not appear to provide much for victims beyond the criminal proceedings. Without the intention of healing, trauma relief, or preparing them for their reintegration into society, they are abandoned. The findings indicate that these women are home-schooled from the safe houses while being denied the opportunity for hobbies or peer interaction. Additionally, victims have no right to any remedies or assistance if they do not choose to stay in a shelter. It has been shown that there is a lack of viable alternatives. The results also point out that there is a need for a variety of shelter choices that can accommodate various victim types. Reducing the reliance on protracted status in shelters and creating substitutes that offer the necessary care and support can enable victims to take charge of their recovery. For victims of trafficking, efficient rehabilitation and recovery programs are essential, as stated by the results. For their successful reintegration into society and long-term well-being, it is crucial to provide support that is specifically tailored to meet their needs, including mental health services, recovery, and reintegration programs.

Gender sensitivity and intersectionality. Lastly, the fact that BH's strategy on HT does not make a distinction between men and women is a significant problem, as their experiences during the trafficking journey differ from each other, and therefore are in need of discrete assistance. The results show how the lack of understanding of various background experiences between men and women creates difficulties in aiding. In all facets of the identification and recovery process, women's needs are not taken into account in a different way than those of males. Furthermore, it is troubling how

discrimination affects empathy for victims of human trafficking, especially when it comes to women. As the results show, it is crucial to incorporate gender sensitivity within the structure of BH's policy for dealing with HT. Results indicated that oppressive behavior intersects with gender-based discrimination for victims, with ethnicity also playing a part. Roma victims are de-victimized and considered as not being entitled to help because they are "custom" to trafficking practices, which shows how adversely BH's society views the Roma community. Having Roma victims' rights to freedom and security violated is problematic. The convergence of gender- and ethnicity-based discrimination must be acknowledged by policymakers, who must then create policies that address this particular point of vulnerability.

This study's findings potentially have a beneficial impact on a number of factors. Policymakers may recognize the value of integrating victims in decision-making processes, leading to policies that better meet their real-life experiences and needs, such as contributing to the establishment of more thorough and personalized support programs for female victims. The findings may inspire multidisciplinary cooperation between gender specialists, social workers, psychologists, and legal experts to create more comprehensive and successful strategies to fight HT and assist victims. By sharing this research's findings through public awareness campaigns and advocacy work, it can influence public opinion and gain support for better victim assistance and anti-trafficking laws. Additionally, this study can add to the amount of academic literature already available on policy analysis, gender, and HT. It might stimulate more research and academic debate on related subjects. All in all, this study's conclusions could lead to improvements in BH's laws, practices, and attitudes concerning the trafficking of women. It can significantly impact how trafficking is addressed and how the lives of victims are improved through focused advocacy, interaction with policymakers, and dissemination of the findings to relevant parties.

In conclusion, overcoming the shortcomings of BH's anti-trafficking initiatives necessitates a fundamental shift towards a victim-centered, gender-sensitive, and trauma-informed strategy. Developing this strategy to combat female trafficking is not only morally required but also tactically essential. In addition to improving our ability to combat this crime, empowering survivors and giving priority to their needs in policymaking will also help BH close the gap between the formal legal system and the reality experienced by female victims, and move towards a more just and compassionate society where the voices of the most vulnerable are heard and their rights are protected.

8. Bibliography

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9. Appendices

9.1. Interview guide

Opening questions

1. Could you please introduce yourself?
2. How long have you been working in this department?

Background questions

3. How big is the issue of human trafficking in BH?
4. What does the process of arrival look like for victims?
5. How are victims categorized?
6. Who are mostly victims?

Key questions: Legal framework

7. What are the rights that female victims have?
8. What policies are there in regard to the combat against HT?
9. How are policies implemented?

Key questions: Assistance

10. Which forms of assistance is available for female victims?
11. What are the main barriers?
12. What is still missing?
13. How can these be provided?
14. What is your organization doing to help?

Closing questions:

15. How does the future for BH look like regarding human trafficking?
16. What is the way forward?
17. Anything else you would like to add?
18. Any questions?