



## Analyzing Family Dynamics in Child Trafficking Perspectives from Pakistan

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This study examines the elements that contribute to the frequency of child trafficking in different regions of Central Punjab, Pakistan. It specifically focuses on the socio-economic, cultural, parental, community, and legal influences on this illegal practice. By conducting semi-structured interviews with 40 households from various socio-economic backgrounds, geographical locations, and cultural settings, a thematic analysis uncovers prevalent themes including the effects on children, cultural factors, parental relationships, community assistance, methods and routes of trafficking, and legal and policy frameworks. The results highlight the immediate necessity for interventions that are culturally appropriate, legal safeguards that are strengthened, community engagement that is enhanced, programs for socio-economic empowerment, and cooperation across borders in order to effectively combat child trafficking in Central Punjab, Pakistan.

**Keywords:** child trafficking, socio-economic factors, cultural influences, parental dynamics,

### Introduction:

Child trafficking is an abhorrent infringement of human rights that persists in afflicting nations around, affecting countless innocent children. Despite extensive endeavors to battle this pernicious offense, its pervasiveness stays remarkably elevated, requiring a thorough comprehension of its fundamental origins. Family relations play a crucial part in child trafficking, among the several aspects involved. [1]. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions between socio-economic, cultural, and systemic factors within families is crucial in developing effective measures to avoid and tackle this serious problem. This study aims to explore family dynamics and analyze the intricate aspects that contribute to child trafficking. Through the process of interviewing 40 families from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, our objective is to provide insight into the complex and diverse nature of this phenomenon. [2]. By conducting qualitative analysis, our aim is to reveal trends, insights, and subtle details that shed light on the routes that lead to child trafficking within familial contexts. The issue of child trafficking is not limited by geographical, cultural, or socio-economic factors. It targets the most susceptible individuals in society, depriving them of their youth, self-respect, and future opportunities. Although there have been notable advancements in the fight against trafficking in recent years, there is still a considerable amount of work that has to be accomplished [3]. It is essential to acknowledge the significant impact that families have in either reducing or perpetuating the risk of trafficking when developing specific treatments and support systems. This study is expected to provide useful insights to the discussion on preventing and intervening in child trafficking. Through the amplification of the voices and experiences of families who have been directly impacted by this harmful issue, our goal is to provide

information that will influence legislation, programs, and initiatives designed to protect the rights and well-being of children. By comprehending the intricate intricacies of family relationships and its consequences for susceptibility to trafficking, our goal is to create a path towards a future where all children are safeguarded, valued, and given the opportunity to flourish. Children are crucial for the future of our society, and every nation has high hopes for them to become leaders. However, they are vulnerable to various forms of negative experiences such as labor, trafficking, physical punishment, and sexual abuse[4]. This global situation has a negative impact on the physical, mental, and moral development of children, impairing their ability to assume future responsibilities. There are various reasons for their susceptibility to unfavorable circumstances, including the failure of families to fulfill their responsibility of safeguarding them from any harm or disaster. Among the various issues concerning children worldwide, child trafficking has emerged as a significant societal problem that has garnered the attention of governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Efforts are being made to address this problem by promoting research studies from various perspectives[5]. Trafficking refers to the illegal trafficking of individuals over national borders or inside the same country. It can manifest in several forms, such as the exchange of children by their parents in exchange for minimal financial gain. This practice typically occurs by placing the child with a family who owes money, in exchange for repayment or a promise of employment, quality education, and training. The trafficked children are then forced to engage in activities such as prostitution, domestic work, and camel racing[6].

### **Global circumstances**

The definition and scope of human trafficking vary in several aspects, and there are diverse interpretations and explanations associated with it[7]. The magnitude of child trafficking can be assessed by the disturbing and precarious depiction offered in research papers and studies. Around 8.4 million children experience various forms of human rights violations. Of the overall number, 5.7 million individuals are engaged in forced and bonded work[8].

### **The acronym ILO (International Labor Organization)**

There are 1.2 million children involved in child trafficking, 1.8 million involved in prostitution and pornography, 0.3 million serving as fighters in armed conflicts, and 0.6 million coerced into engaging in illicit activities. Furthermore, an estimated 0.6 to 0.8 million individuals, consisting of women, children, and men, are reported to be victims of human trafficking each year across international borders. Among these victims, approximately 80% are women and girls, and 50% are children. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that these estimates only pertain to transnational human trafficking and do not account for the millions of children who are trafficked within their own countries[9].

### **National circumstances**

There is no precise statistics available regarding the number of children who are trafficked in Pakistan. Nevertheless, a limited number of studies have documented instances of trafficking occurring in various regions of the nation[10]. Highlights the grave nature of the trade-sport hybrid that poses a threat to the lives of trafficked minors who are disguised as camel jockeys. According to reports, a total of 19,000 youngsters between the ages of 2 and 11 were relocated to the Middle East. Approximately 20,000 to 40,000 youngsters are said to be engaged in the commercial sex industry in Pakistan. The reports from SAARC7 and UNICEF highlight the utilization of 4500 children for bonded work in a manner that exploits them, following their trafficking to Pakistan[11]. The majority of children under the age of 16 who are trafficked in South Asia are predominantly transported to India and Pakistan. The majority of trafficked women and children in Pakistan originate from

Bangladesh, with 80 percent of the victims located in Karachi. Primarily, individuals are either abducted, wedded to operatives, or deceitfully enticed into a purportedly improved existence, only to be subjected to mistreatment within brothels in Pakistan[12]. Law enforcement agencies possess knowledge regarding the points of entry for these individuals, and even the police themselves are involved, receiving a portion of up to 20 percent in the trafficking of children and women in Pakistan. Discovers that women and girls who are trafficked experience further victimization due to the Pakistani laws of Zina Ordinance 1979 and the Passport Act 1974. Consequently, these laws and the actions of law enforcement authorities subject these victims to distressing circumstances[13]. The majority of countries addressed the issue of child trafficking solely from a legal standpoint. The authorities deemed it a violent act and prioritized the prosecution of the perpetrators. This technique is limited in its breadth since it fails to investigate the underlying elements of the problem, resulting in a lack of an adequate and long-term successful resolution strategy[14]. The problem of child trafficking is deeply connected to various complex variables related to the socio-economic, political, and cultural dimensions. Exploring and analyzing these elements is essential for finding a complete and long-lasting solution to the problem[15].

### **Family involvement in child trafficking:**

Traffickers commonly adopt strategies of persuading parents with deceptive assurances of job, improved prospects, education, or marriage for their children. Studies reveal that families who are readily persuaded and relinquish their children are predominantly characterized by poverty, deprivation, illiteracy, fragmentation, lack of knowledge, and/or having a big number of members. The user's text is empty. Discovered that trafficking youngsters originate from households with limited visibility. These families have a low socio-economic position, which is marked by poverty, illiteracy, and ignorance. Children from such families experience the highest levels of neglect and abuse. Unsupportive home environments force these children to seek ways to contribute to their family's financial well-being. The individuals involved in trafficking, often associated with the victims' families, take advantage of their fragile circumstances and exploit the youngsters who are easily accessible and defenseless[16]. It is estimated that globally, 40,000,000 children experience abuse and neglect. Children from dysfunctional households are more vulnerable to being trafficked. Research has demonstrated that fragmented and fractured families resulting from separation, conflict, death, or divorce[17]. The source of stress and anxiety for parents often manifests as child abuse and neglect. Children residing in such households lack any form of supervision and may even be forsaken by their families. The vulnerability of children is linked to the targeted selection of victims by traffickers. These marginalized and forsaken youngsters are particularly susceptible and persuadable to traffickers, as they are the most vulnerable targets[18].

Homeless and street children are highly susceptible to trafficking. at the United States, approximately 10-15 percent of street children are at danger of being exploited. Research studies have highlighted poverty, warfare, civil unrest, militancy, disasters, and parental death as the factors that force children to live on the streets in developing and impoverished countries. In developed nations, the causes of runaway incidents are often attributed to neglect, abuse, domestic violence, and breakdowns in important familial relationships[19]. A study conducted in the United States examined the circumstances leading up to the runaway and street children phenomenon. The findings revealed that a staggering 81 percent of children reported experiencing physical abuse, while 50 percent reported instances of sexual abuse. Many of these children also disclosed multiple and repeated acts of abuse committed by various perpetrators. Consequently, these young individuals, who have endured a childhood marked by neglect, as well as psychological,

sexual, and physical mistreatment, are highly susceptible to further victimization and exploitation by human traffickers[20].

Research studies have discovered that children who experience physical abuse at home are more susceptible and vulnerable to trafficking. It has been suggested in the general strain theory that child abuse and neglect can be seen as a form of family strain. Children who are physically abused are found to be linked with depression, attachment issues, substance abuse, and continued victimization. Research conducted concluded that runaway children perceive their actions as a consequence of the breakdown in significant and primary family relationships. Nearly 81 percent of children reported experiencing physical abuse prior to their involvement in trafficking[21].

Victims of trafficking often originate from large families. Studies indicate that children who are exploited and forced to work are predominantly from larger families. When examining the situation on a broader scale, researchers have concluded that when the population grows at a faster rate than economic development and growth, the available resources are insufficient to meet the needs of the population. These needs include, among other things, healthcare, protection, policing, and facilities that aid in the proper development and care of children. The younger population, being a vulnerable and disadvantaged segment of society, becomes particularly at risk. Furthermore, it is argued that the rapid increase in child trafficking is a consequence of population growth, particularly in developing countries.[22]

A study conducted in Vietnam revealed that children of parents who are addicted to drugs or involved in criminal activities are at a significantly higher risk. These parents create a harmful and abusive home environment that greatly hinders the psycho-social development of their children. As a result, these children often seek to escape from this environment and become vulnerable to being exploited by traffickers or easily influenced by criminal syndicates involved in trafficking[23]. The erosion of social networks increases the susceptibility of children, making them more vulnerable to being targeted by traffickers. These traffickers select victims based on their level of vulnerability, specifically targeting those who are easily controlled. Social networks are structures that are built on social relationships. When these networks are destroyed, lost, or weakened, it creates an environment where social control, care, and moral standards lose their effectiveness. This particularly affects minority groups, women, and children who become more fragile in such situations. In this environment, children are often abandoned by their families, making them easy targets for traffickers. The erosion of social networks can be attributed to both natural and social factors[24].

According to reports, in certain instances, parents' desire for economic gain compels them to hand over their children to traffickers. The situation of camel jockeys in Pakistan serves as an illustration of this type of exploitation. In these cases, parents are the ones responsible for the crime, rather than being victims themselves. Nevertheless, it is noted that financial necessity and distress often drive them to make such choices. Parents in Uganda and Kenya have been observed engaging in the following behavior: selling orphaned girls in their care to traffickers, disguising it as a means to provide them with better education, scholarships, or marriage opportunities. It has been reported that the decision to give up their children to traffickers is driven by the economic necessities of the family, rather than mere greed. This phenomenon has been documented in Sub-Saharan Africa. It has been discovered that the trade is highly profitable, to the extent that in certain instances, even family members such as fathers, brothers, and uncles are enticed by the prospect of obtaining a substantial amount of money quickly and easily. Some individuals even become members of gangs in order to provide girls from their own social circles. The research also

revealed a novel pattern observed among certain parents, who engaged in the practice of selling their daughters many times, sometimes even three times. The presence of this pattern was unequivocally demonstrated by the reactions of three victims[25].

It has been determined that the primary perpetrators involved in the sale of victims are parents, husbands, or boyfriends who collaborate with recruiters/traffickers. Recruiters frequently have a close relationship with their victims, such as being a neighbour, friend, acquaintance, or family friend. Argued that the propensity of parents to pursue rapid and effortless financial gains renders their children susceptible to trafficking. Research conducted in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand has revealed that a significant number of adolescents are drawn to engaging in prostitution due to the allure of quick employment and financial gain[26].

### **Material and Method**

A total of forty households were chosen by purposive sampling in order to guarantee inclusivity from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances, geographical areas, and cultural settings throughout Pakistan. The objective of this sample technique was to have a thorough comprehension of family dynamics associated with child trafficking in the Pakistani context. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with each chosen family to collect qualitative data on several issues pertaining to child trafficking. The interviews were conducted with the aim of investigating family dynamics, socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, and any experiences or perceptions pertaining to child trafficking in the Pakistani setting. The interview procedure was established by examining the current body of literature on child trafficking, family dynamics, and socio-cultural issues in Pakistan. The survey consisted of open-ended questions specifically crafted to prompt participants to provide extensive comments, enabling a more thorough investigation of pertinent themes and experiences. Proficient interviewers performed in-person interviews with individuals from each chosen household. The interviews were carried out with cultural sensitivity, ensuring that participants' privacy, confidentiality, and cultural norms were respected. The interviewers utilized active listening strategies and posed probing inquiries to foster participants' willingness to openly express their viewpoints and experiences.

### **Data Analysis:**

The qualitative data collected from the interviews was subjected to thematic analysis in order to discover recurring patterns, topics, and insights pertaining to family dynamics and child trafficking in Pakistan. The theme analysis encompassed a series of sequential steps, which included:

**Data Coding:** The interview transcripts underwent a methodical process of categorization to discover significant concepts, ideas, and repetitive patterns present in the data. Distinct codes were allocated to particular sections of text that symbolize various topics and ideas pertaining to family dynamics and the trafficking of children. The encoded material was subsequently arranged and classified into more comprehensive themes and groups, taking into account the similarities and relationships among the codes. This procedure facilitated the recognition of overarching patterns and trends in the data. The themes and patterns that were observed were analyzed in connection with the research objectives, existing literature, and the socio-cultural setting of Pakistan. This entailed examining the importance and consequences of the discoveries and establishing links between various themes to acquire a more profound comprehension of the fundamental dynamics of child trafficking inside families. Ethical issues were of utmost importance throughout the entire research procedure. Prior to conducting interviews, all participants provided informed consent, and precautions were taken to guarantee confidentiality, anonymity, and the protection of participants' rights



and privacy. Prior to initiating data collection, the necessary ethical permission was obtained from the appropriate institutional review board. Although attempts were made to ensure inclusivity in the sample, the conclusions may not be entirely applicable to all households in Pakistan. Moreover, the dependence on data provided by individuals themselves and the subjective nature of qualitative analysis might induce biases and constraints in the interpretation of results.[27].

## Result and Discussion

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of Participants:

Demographic Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Socio-economic Status</b>		
Low	15	37.5%
Middle	20	50%
High	5	12.5%
<b>Geographical Area</b>		
Urban	25	62.5%
Rural	15	37.5%

The table 1 displays the demographic attributes of the participants engaged in the research on family dynamics and child trafficking in Pakistan. The participants were classified according to two fundamental demographic factors: socioeconomic level and geographic location. The participants were categorized into three socio-economic level groups: low, middle, and high. 37.5% of the participants were from low socio-economic status households, indicating a substantial presence of economically disadvantaged families. The middle socio-economic class group comprised the majority, encompassing 50% of the participants. Concurrently, a lesser proportion, amounting to 12.5% of the participants, were affiliated with homes classified as having high socio-economic status, thus demonstrating a degree of variation in the economic backgrounds of the participants. Participants were categorized based on their geographical location as either urban or rural dwellers. 62.5% of the participants lived in urban regions, indicating a significant urban presence in the study population. Nevertheless, a significant segment, accounting for 37.5% of the participants, originated from rural regions, highlighting a notable presence of rural communities in the study. In general, the intentional distribution of participants across various socio-economic levels and geographical places indicates a conscious endeavor to guarantee inclusivity and representation from diverse backgrounds in the study. This thorough methodology improves the strength and relevance of the results, offering valuable understanding of family dynamics and child trafficking in different socio-economic conditions and geographical locations in Pakistan.

**Table 2:** Identified Patterns and Insights from Thematic Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews:

Theme	Sub-Themes
Socio-Economic Factors	Socioeconomic deprivation and financial destitution
	Insufficient availability of educational and career prospects
	Wealth inequality
Cultural Influences	Traditional gender norms that prioritize male authority and dominance.
	The social stigma associated with poverty and the exploitation of child labor.
	Conventional gender norms and anticipated behaviors
Parental Dynamics	Parental negligence and exploitation
	Obligation to provide financial support for the family
	Parental participation in illicit trafficking networks
Community Support	Lack of communal safety networks
	Insufficient knowledge and comprehension of the dangers associated

Trafficking Methods and Routes	with human trafficking
	Inadequate resources for intervention and assistance
	Duplicity and deceitful commitments
	Hiring via middlemen
	Transnational trafficking networks
Impact on Children	Post-traumatic experiences and mental anguish
	Interruption of educational and social progress
	Increased susceptibility to additional exploitation and mistreatment
Legal and Policy Frameworks	Deficiencies in legal safeguards
	Obstacles in implementing and pursuing legal actions
	Importance of enacting comprehensive legislation to combat human trafficking

The table 2 presents a summary of the patterns and insights that were identified through the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews done as part of the study on family dynamics and child trafficking. The phenomenon of child trafficking in Pakistan is influenced by various elements, which are explored through multiple sub-themes within each overarching theme.

**Socio-economic factors:** This theme emphasizes the significant influence of socio-economic disadvantage, restricted availability of education and job prospects, and inequalities in wealth distribution on the susceptibility of families to child trafficking.

**Cultural Influences:** Cultural norms and beliefs, such as traditional gender roles, societal shame associated with poverty and child labor, and expectations about gender-specific actions, have a substantial impact on family dynamics and increase the likelihood of child trafficking.

**Parental Dynamics:** The sub-themes in this area explore how parental neglect, exploitation, and financial pressure contribute to child trafficking. It also examines cases where parents are involved in illegal trafficking networks.

**Community Support:** The absence of collective safety measures, insufficient knowledge about the dangers linked to human trafficking, and insufficient resources for intervention and assistance underscore the difficulties faced by communities in effectively preventing and addressing this issue.

**Trafficking ways and Routes:** The use of duplicity, recruitment through intermediaries, and participation in multinational trafficking networks highlight the many and sometimes secretive ways used to exploit vulnerable children.

**Effects on Children:** The significant and enduring consequences of child trafficking, such as the enduring psychological impact, interruption of educational and social growth, and increased susceptibility to further exploitation, underscore the immediate necessity for protective measures and treatments.

The inadequacies in legal safeguards, difficulties in enforcing and prosecuting, and the significance of implementing comprehensive legislation highlight the crucial function of legal and policy frameworks in fighting human trafficking and guaranteeing justice for victims. These identified patterns and insights offer vital information about the complex dynamics of child trafficking in Pakistan. This information can be used to build specific interventions and policies that focus on prevention, protection, and prosecution.

**Table 3** Analysis of Family Dynamics and Child Trafficking: Insights from 40 Semi-Structured Interviews:

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Socio-Economic Factors	35	87.5%
Cultural Influences	38	95%
Parental Dynamics	37	92.5%
Community Support	30	75%
Trafficking Methods and Routes	32	80%

Impact on Children	39	97.5%
Legal and Policy Frameworks	28	70%

The table 3 provides a thorough examination of the topics that were identified through a thematic analysis of 40 semi-structured interviews that specifically focused on family dynamics and child trafficking in Pakistan. Each subject is accompanied by its frequency and percentage representation within the interview sample, providing significant insights into the prevalence and significance of different elements driving child trafficking dynamics. The prevalence and complexity of the issue are highlighted by the significant frequencies and percentages observed across all themes. Significantly, categories such as "Impact on Children" and "Cultural Influences" garnered very high percentages, suggesting the deep and extensive ramifications of cultural norms and the devastating consequences of trafficking on the lives of children. The frequency and percentage distribution provide insights into the relative prevalence of certain facets of family dynamics and child trafficking. During the interviews, it was found that "Socio-Economic Factors" and "Parental Dynamics" were commonly mentioned themes. However, the topic of "Legal and Policy Frameworks" came up less frequently, indicating possible areas for enhancement in the legal and policy aspects related to child trafficking. In summary, the analysis emphasizes the intricate interaction of socio-economic, cultural, parental, communal, and legal elements in influencing family dynamics and contributing to the continuation of child trafficking in Pakistan. These useful findings can be used to inform specific interventions, legislation, and support systems that try to address the underlying causes of child trafficking and safeguard vulnerable children and families.

An examination of the frequency of themes derived from the semi-structured interviews yields a comprehensive comprehension of the complex processes that encompass child trafficking inside Pakistani homes. The remarkably elevated frequencies seen across all themes highlight the seriousness and intricacy of the issue, underscoring the pressing requirement for comprehensive responses. The high occurrence rates of the "Impact on Children" and "Cultural Influences" themes, at 97.5% and 95% respectively, emphasize the significant consequences of trafficking on children's lives and the deeply rooted cultural influences that worsen their vulnerability. This implies that in order to effectively combat child trafficking, it is crucial to prioritize interventions that are culturally responsive, address societal norms, and provide strong support for victims. Furthermore, the great prevalence of the themes "Socio-Economic Factors" and "Parental Dynamics" (87.5% and 92.5% respectively) highlights the importance of economic deprivation and parental neglect or exploitation as major factors contributing to trafficking. This highlights the need for socio-economic empowerment programs and parental assistance measures to reduce financial stress and enhance family cohesion. The comparatively lower occurrence rate of the "Legal and Policy Frameworks" topic, which stands at 70%, indicates the existence of possible deficiencies in the legal and policy environment pertaining to child trafficking. It is crucial to fill these gaps by implementing and enforcing comprehensive legislation against trafficking. This will help establish strong legal protections and ensure that victims receive justice. Furthermore, the recurring theme of "Community Support" in 75% of interviews highlights the need of promoting community participation and awareness campaigns. These efforts aim to create supportive settings and enable communities to recognize and prevent instances of trafficking. To summarize, the analysis of thematic frequencies emphasizes the complex and varied aspects of child trafficking in Pakistan, emphasizing the interaction between socio-economic, cultural, parental, communal, and legal elements. To tackle these intricacies, it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive approach that combines preventive, protective, and prosecutorial measures, all the while giving utmost importance to the welfare and rights of



trafficked children and vulnerable families.

### Conclusion:

Ultimately, the results obtained from the theme analysis of semi-structured interviews provide a thorough comprehension of the fundamental mechanisms involved in child trafficking within Pakistani households. The presence of themes such as "Impact on Children," "Cultural Influences," and "Parental Dynamics" highlights the complex nature of the issue, exposing the deep and interconnected elements that contribute to the susceptibility of children to trafficking. The prevalence of the "Impact on Children" motif underscores the pressing necessity for treatments that emphasize safeguarding and promoting the welfare of trafficked children, addressing the enduring physical, emotional, and psychological consequences they suffer. Moreover, the widespread impact of cultural norms and the social disapproval associated with poverty and child labor emphasize the significance of culturally responsive strategies that actively involve communities in challenging detrimental attitudes and practices. The prominence of themes associated with socio-economic determinants and parental dynamics emphasizes the crucial importance of poverty alleviation initiatives and family assistance programs in addressing the underlying causes of trafficking. Enhancing economic autonomy and implementing social welfare programs might mitigate families' vulnerability to exploitation and offer viable alternatives to engaging in trafficking for sustenance. Furthermore, the recognition of trafficking techniques and pathways emphasizes the necessity for focused interventions intended to disrupt trafficking networks and improve international collaboration in order to successfully combat transnational trafficking activities. The comparatively infrequent occurrence of themes pertaining to legal and policy frameworks and community support highlights the need for attention and enhancement in these areas. To create a thorough anti-trafficking plan, it is crucial to reinforce legal protections, improve methods of enforcement, and raise awareness and support within the community. To effectively tackle the intricate issue of child trafficking in Pakistan, it is imperative to adopt a comprehensive approach that encompasses prevention, protection, and prosecution measures. To create a safer environment for vulnerable children and families and reduce child trafficking, stakeholders can address socio-economic disparities, challenge cultural norms, strengthen legal frameworks, and foster community support. This will also help safeguard the rights and dignity of all individuals.

### Recommendations:

- Execute culturally tailored awareness programs to confront detrimental ideologies and behaviors related to child labor and poverty.
- Enhance the legal frameworks and enforcement procedures in order to effectively prevent child trafficking and guarantee justice for the victims.
- Strengthen community-based support mechanisms to empower communities in recognizing and preventing occurrences of child trafficking.
- Allocate resources towards initiatives that promote socio-economic development, aiming to alleviate poverty and enhance the resilience of families against exploitation.
- Facilitate international collaboration to dismantle transnational trafficking networks and effectively combat trafficking routes.

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