

Abstract

This research critically explores 'sex trafficking' in Nepal. It draws from the historical context to the present status of sex work and sex trafficking in Nepal. Nepal applies an abolitionist approach to the issue of sex trafficking and sex work, which is conflated with sex trafficking. The study finds that the Nepalese government's stand on the whole sex trafficking discourse is confusing and weak as it is highly influenced by the ideology, funds and support from developed countries and disregards the local socio-economic and cultural context of the country. Furthermore, the study emphasises that sex trafficking is a borrowed concept from Western countries that has neither benefitted sex workers or indeed the women of Nepal. The study examines the weaknesses of ongoing anti-trafficking interventions in Nepal and claims that the concept of sex trafficking itself is problematic and forms a barrier to improving the lives of women in Nepal. The study is conducted through a sex-positive feminist and intersectional approach and proposes that the abolition of sex work would never be a solution to trafficking. It suggests that sex work should be acknowledged as any other occupation and sex worker's rights should be protected. Furthermore, Nepalese women should be identified as individuals who can make their own decisions and consent to their work and to travel. The research concludes that sex workers should be consulted in the discourses, designing, and implementation of the anti-trafficking programs. These discussions should be people-centric and conducted with the aim of empowering Nepalese women, enabling them to work in safe conditions, and entitling them to lead dignified lives within their communities.