

Raising a stop sign to human traffic

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Trade in people is not a new phenomenon, but the modern manifestation of slavery, according to US researchers. However, writing in the *Journal of Global Business Advancement*, they point out that human trafficking and trade in human organs has intensified with increased globalization. They hope to raise awareness of the issue among the business research community with a view to finding solutions.

It is a tragic fact of life that the world's most disadvantaged people are often the most easily exploited. Seeing greener grass on foreign shores, many are willing to risk everything with a people smuggler and to spend their life savings to be transported across borders with counterfeit documents. They often leave family behind, hoping to send money home, but more often than not end up beholden to the smugglers' associates and enslaved in a lowly job with little pay and poor accommodation, constantly on the look out for the shadow of immigration officials over their shoulder.

Now, Patriya Tansuhaj of the Department of Marketing and International Business Institute at Washington State University, in Pullman and Jim McCullough of the University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, suggest that international human trade is essentially the dark side of international business. They claim that the problem has been largely ignored by the international business research community.

"International business academicians can no longer leave the understanding of this phenomenon in the hands of political scientists, sociologists and anthropologists," they assert, "We must be actively

involved in providing a more systematic explanation with a clear set of recommendations to governments and the global business sectors."

The researchers suggest there has been a widespread assumption that globalization can only have a positive impact on individuals and societies around the world. This world view is far too simplistic and unrealistic, the researchers say, and ignores the dark side of international business to the detriment of legality and ethics. They cite the example of young Laotians looking West across the Mekong River to Thailand and dreaming of an escape that will give them and their loved ones a new life outside the poverty trap. Illegal crossings facilitated by criminals who trade in people is common here and across borders in the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Tansuhaj and McCullough emphasize that trade in human beings is not restricted to individuals trafficked illegally across borders, but involves the sale of body parts and, increasingly, a virtual trade in pornographic images, often elicited under duress.

As such they have devised a general research classification of international human trade problems that will allow social scientists and others to analyze how such trade takes place in the familiar marketing context of product, price, place, and promotion and so develop a clearer understanding of the drives of human trade with a view to finding ways to tackle the problem.

Source: Inderscience Publishers

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