RESEARCH PROPOSAL

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SOUTH AFRICA:
ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS AND PRACTICES OF COMMUNITIES WHERE HIGH TRAFFICKING EXISTS

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# Table of Contents

1. **Introduction** ........................................................................................................... 4

2. **Problem Formulation** ........................................................................................... 6  
   2.1 Topic ....................................................................................................................... 6  
   2.2 Main Research Aims ......................................................................................... 6  
   2.3 Research Objectives ......................................................................................... 6  

3. **Concept Clarification** ........................................................................................... 5  

4. **Literature Review** ................................................................................................. 8  
   4.1 To investigate what constitutes victim vulnerability for human trafficking in South Africa ____ 8  
   4.2 To explore cultural practices, belief systems and behaviors of communities where trafficking exists ____________________________________________________________ 9  
   4.3 To investigate if cultural patterns and behaviors contribute to trafficking vulnerability______ 11  
   4.4 To provide more research for governments, NGO’s and individuals working in the field in an effort that more policies, programs and services can be implemented for human trafficking prevention in South Africa ........................................................................................................ 12  
   Figure 1 ................................................................................................................... 13  

5. **Reflexivity** ............................................................................................................ 14  

6. **Research Design** .................................................................................................. 14  

7. **Methodology** ........................................................................................................ 15  
   7.1 Sampling ............................................................................................................... 15  
   7.2 Data Collection .................................................................................................... 15  
   7.3 Data Analysis ....................................................................................................... 16  
   7.3.1 Discourse Analysis ......................................................................................... 16  

8. **Ethics** .................................................................................................................... 17  
   8.1 Planning Research ............................................................................................... 18  
   8.2 Responsibility ....................................................................................................... 18  
   8.3 Compliance With Law and Standards ................................................................... 18  
   8.4 Research Responsibilities .................................................................................... 18  
   8.5 Informed Consent to Research ........................................................................... 19  

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2
8.6 Deception in Research  
8.7 Sharing and Utilizing Data  
8.8 Providing Participants With Information About the Study  
9. Limitations of the study  
  9.1 Possible Difficulties  
  9.2 Personal Biases  
10. Time Frame  
11. Budget  
12. Conclusion  
References
1. Introduction

“It ought to concern every person, because it’s a debasement of our common humanity. It ought to concern every community, because it tears at the social fabric. It ought to concern every business, because it distorts markets. It ought to concern every nation, because it endangers public health and fuels violence and organized crime. I’m talking about the injustice, the outrage, of human trafficking, which must be called by its true name – modern slavery.” President Barack Obama September 25, 2012 (TIP Report, 2013:1).

Human trafficking is a complex issue that affects every corner of the globe, there is not a single country that is unaffected by the effects of modern day slavery. Slavery, as commonly supposed was not eradicated during the nineteenth century, it has only expanded over time to form an enormous global trade system of human beings into what is now known as human trafficking or modern day slavery (Emser, 2013:17). It has been alleged that trafficking is more prevalent in modern times “than at any time in history, from the Roman Empire to the transatlantic slave trade,” no country is unaffected by this phenomenon (Emser, 2013:35). There is a lot of confusion as to what human trafficking is. It comes down to three key objectives done against an individual’ will; the trafficking of humans essentially involves the buying and selling of humans through force for sexual exploitation, forced labor, or organ transplantation (Emser, 2013:5). One would question why this is being done in modern society and as common to many crimes the reason comes to profit. The astronomical profits that are being gained from modern day slavery make it one of the fastest growing sources of income for global criminal networks. Trafficking in terms of criminal trade ranks third behind drug and ammunition networks, in generating income for organized crime. Approximately 9.5 billion U.S. dollars is generated each year via trafficking networks. Traffickers risk involvement because profits are high and “unlike other commodities such as drugs, people can be used and resold repeatedly. The risk of detection is relatively low as many of the victims come from countries where the authorities are a source of fear rather than assistance” (Kreeston, 2007:39). According to the 2013 Trafficking In Persons Report (TIP), there are currently approximately 27 million human trafficking victims at any given time (TIP Report, 2013:1).
South Africa is internationally recognized as a main destination for trafficking. It is both a “country of origin and transit for people trafficked to and from Africa and globally” (Tsireledzani, 2010:xi). Despite the knowledge of high trafficking in existence for South Africa, there is very little research done on the issue.

“While international literature on the topic has been growing exponentially, only a small portion of these studies have focused on Africa and an even smaller portion on southern Africa” (Tsireledzani, 2010:1). Because minimal information is known about the extent of trafficking in the South African context, there is a desperate need for more research. More research would not only help to contribute valuable information for those in the field, but would also help to comply with international laws and protocols which require states to develop trafficking prevention strategies. These designs would help to address victim vulnerabilities and circumstances (Tsireledzani, 2010:26).

There are a number of variables that exist which contribute to vulnerability for those who fall victim to human trafficking namely: poverty, lack of education, globalization, porous borders, immigration, the breakdown of families, a high demand, social inequalities, and unemployment. In regard to trafficking, few studies demonstrate how some populations are more vulnerable than others or why some individuals are more likely to fall susceptible than others (Emser, 2013:47). Some of these vulnerabilities include attitudes, behaviors and practices of communities.

“The perversion of cultural practices, like ukuthwala and forced marriage essentially constitutes trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation receive little sustained attention from counter-trafficking practitioners in practice as most focus is placed on trafficking for forced prostitution. Little research has been conducted on how cultural practices might facilitate human trafficking in the South African context” (Emser, 2013:346).

Understanding the underlying issues and dynamics which contribute to vulnerabilities in communities where there is evidence of high trafficking would be valuable in the field for future prevention strategies in South Africa, better legislation, and better protection and resources for victims.
2. Problem Formulation

2.1 Topic
Attitudes, Behaviors and Cultural Practices of Communities Where High Trafficking Exists

2.2 Main Research Aims

- To explore vulnerabilities which make individuals and communities more susceptible to human trafficking in South Africa.
- To compare and contrast attitudes, beliefs and cultural practices in relation to human trafficking.
- To provide more human trafficking data for NGO’s and other institutions involved in the field.

2.3 Research Objectives

- To investigate what constitutes victim vulnerability for human trafficking in South Africa.
- To explore cultural practices, belief systems and behaviors of communities where trafficking exists.
- To investigate if cultural patterns and behaviors contribute to trafficking vulnerability.
- To provide more research so that more policies, programs and services can be implemented for human trafficking prevention.

3. Concept Clarification

- **Human Trafficking**

In a U.N. Protocol, (South Africa. United Nations, 2000) human trafficking is defined as:

“The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of
payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (Article 3(a)).

**Traffickers**

Perpetrators of human trafficking include a wide range of participants, including international and national organized crime syndicates, less well-organised local networks and family members. Parents have been identified as being involved in trafficking or colluding with knowledge that their child will be exploited. Men make up the majority of traffickers, whether through transnational crime syndicates or looser local networks. While globally, women are heavily involved in human trafficking, this study found that the woman’s role is more commonly that of intermediary rather than primary perpetrator (Tsireledzani, 2010:xiv).

**Muti**

*Muti* (or *muthi*) is a term for traditional medicine in southern Africa. In a *muti* murder, body parts are removed from a living victim to use medicinally, either mixed or other ingredients or used alone…the ‘action’ element of the offence, as defined within the protocol, may be fulfilled if someone is recruited by force or deception, or if a victim is harboured to perform the required tissue and/or organ removal. While *muti* murders have occurred throughout history in South African culture, little is known about them and little research exists on the phenomenon. Muti-related killings have been documented in the provinces of Limpopo, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and North West and have been confined to more rural and/or informal settlements (Tsireledzani, 2010:8).

**Globalization**

Keller-Herzog and Szabo (1997) define globalization as a process through which finance, investment, production and marketing are increasingly dominated by agents whose vision and actions are not confined by national borders or national interests. Global corporate actors are forming complex networks around a hierarchy of technological capabilities, comparative advantage and production practices leading to an increase in cross-border flows of trade, capital and information. One of the most recognizable traits of globalization
is the ease with which human labour is acquired and moved across international boundaries (Tsireledzani, 2010:134).

- **Culture**

In an online article, (United States. Texas A&M University),

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving…Culture in its broadest sense is cultivated behavior; that is the totality of a person's learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behavior through social learning.

4. **Literature Review**

South Africa is internationally known as a country of “origin, transit, and destination for trafficked men, women, and children who are forced into labor and sexual exploitation” (United States. Department of State, 2013:333). The considerable amount of trafficking being done within the country is reported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as being due to both the socio-political past as well as the vast levels of economic divide (Tsireledzani, 2010:7). Through these economic divides, individuals try to find drastic means of survival such as human trafficking. The review will focus on some of these issues.

4.1 **To investigate what constitutes victim vulnerability for human trafficking in South Africa**

There are many constituents that can lead to vulnerability for those who fall victim to human trafficking. The United Nations as well as additional international organizations are in agreement that poverty is the leading cause of vulnerability followed by lack of education. “Poverty and low educational attainment are often cited as the key root causes of trafficking in women and girls. However, not all poor girls end up in these situations, nor are all girls in these situations from poor families” (Taylor, 2005:411). It has been recommended that researchers and policy makers
investigate other constituents to trafficking beyond poverty and educational levels in developing countries (Taylor, 2005:423).

Other vulnerability factors include: unequal access to formal schooling, and social stigmas (Taylor, 2005:411), economic inequality, unemployment, gender discrimination, cultural and social traditions, inadequate legislation as well as policy protection (Tsireledzani, 2010:5). “Natural disasters, conflict and political turmoil exacerbate the inadequacies of already tenuous social protection measures” (Tsireledzani, 2010:5). On a micro level dysfunctional families and abusive relationships can contribute to susceptibility (Tsireledzani, 2010:88).

Certain systems and practices that are associated with a desperate need for economic survival are damaging to girls and women. In some marginalized communities girls from poor families may be perceived as an economic burden to the family, so as a security measure she is forced to marry a much older man. When some men cannot find a young bride, then trafficking becomes more of a risk entailed to fill the marriage contract (Tsireledzani, 2010:148).

In an interview on human trafficking in South Africa, Mwamuka (2013) representing Anex (an NGO that specializes in the counter-trafficking of children in South Africa) stated that individuals from some of these communities do not view some of their cultural practices as forms of human trafficking, but view them rather as traditions that have been in existence for a very long time.

Vulnerability issues created from economic inequalities and social exclusion are a result of policies that fail to address marginalized groups, thus there is a need for more understanding of the constituents of vulnerabilities in order to fulfill political requirements in this regard (Tsireledzani, 2010:5).

4.2 To explore cultural practices, belief systems and behaviors of communities where trafficking exists

Across the world, numerous belief systems, cultural patterns and practices affect potential human trafficking victims. An example of a cultural belief that was found to impose subjection was a
study done on child trafficking in Thailand, where it was found that a typical belief pattern was for families to view their children as being responsible for helping to provide for the family through means of income, household help, and community labor (Taylor, 2005:413). In the developing world, it is typical to find a lack of accessible resources so parents will readily assign responsibility to their children in the allocation of care in regard to “each child’s perceived potential economic, social and reproductive returns” (Taylor, 2005:414). A child’s birth order and sex are determinates of whether they are deemed as a helper child, particularly for the firstborn daughter. The common belief is that daughters are responsible for the welfare of the family especially their younger siblings and seeing to the well-being of their elderly parents (Taylor, 2005:413).

“Parental spending of daughters’ remittances on aesthetic home improvements and on education for younger siblings suggests that parents still view some of their daughters as being obligated to provide status and quality of life for the family as well as undertake some of the burden of their younger siblings’ care, despite the occupational risks this may involve” (Taylor, 2005:414).

This occupational risk may include parents trafficking their daughters for income. In response to this, one villager responded by stating, “The parents here say, ‘The problem isn’t that our daughter sells her body (khai tua), it’s that we have no food to eat.’ From this perspective, the filial piety of the daughter outweighs any stigma” (Taylor, 2005:416).

In South Africa it would benefit those in counter-trafficking organizations as well as policy makers to understand cultural patterns and belief systems, such as the above Thailand report, that relate to human trafficking in order to create policies and programs that reduce the vulnerability risks in victims.

Some cultural practices that are in existence for South Africa that are harmful for some individuals are: “forced marriages, the ‘placement’ of children with relatives or others in the hope that they will become better educated, the demand for body parts for muti, and trafficking for religious or satanic rite” (Tsireledzani, 2010:93). The 2010 Tsireledzani report emphasized the need for more empirical research to be done on the nature of cultural practices in relation to trafficking (Tsireledzani, 2010:180). If there is more understanding and knowledge that goes into the
complexities of belief systems of cultures, then more can be done to prevent future trafficking in the South African context.

4.3 To investigate if cultural patterns and behaviors contribute to trafficking vulnerability

A complex system of social stigmas and vast economic inequalities generated from South Africa’s apartheid past contribute to current victim vulnerabilities to human trafficking (Tsireledzani, 2010:101), yet a lack of research in this regard is evident.

“Practices which increase their vulnerability include, for example the Zimbabwean practice of *kuripi ngozi* (appeasing the dead spirits) where a member of the family, usually a girl, is married without consent and the use of young boys in Lesotho for herding and chobeliso (marriage related abductions). In addition South African traditional practices, such as *ukuthwala* – the abduction and forced marriage of young girls – which has been identified as taking place in Lusisikisiki in the Eastern Cape, and even virginity testing may put women and girls at risk. While the stated aim of virginity testing is to encourage chastity for purposes of marriage and curbing HIV, sex traffickers are alleged to monitor virginity testing ceremonies to identify those who have been proved to be virgins (Tsirledezani, 2010:xvi).

It appears that these practices affect many people and contribute to their risk of being trafficked, with not enough information or statistics to inform on the matter, it would be beneficial for more research to be done in this regard.
4.4 To provide more research so that more policies, programs and services can be implemented for human trafficking prevention

“Understanding the extent and nature of the problem of trafficking is complicated, not only by contending definitions, but also by the fact that there is so little credible, representative data about trafficking nationally and internationally” (Gould, 2006:22). In figure 1 down below, it can be seen that studies for trafficking in Africa only account for thirteen percent of global studies done on the issue. This significant lack of studies done for Africa and particularly South Africa generates huge gaps in understanding the immense complexity, nature and scope of the problem (Emser, 2013:12).
Human trafficking and counter-trafficking in South Africa remain under-studied from all perspectives. In-depth knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon, as well as the efficacy and impact of responses, are required to formulate effective policies and strategies. Understanding the actors and complex governance structures involved in counter-trafficking, their interactions and their political agendas, and how this translates in practice in the South African context represents a gap in research on preventing and combating human trafficking in South Africa (Emser, 2013:ii).
This lack of information and data has also contributed to a shortage of adequate legislation (Tsireledzani, 2010:5). “South Africa is not collecting even basic data that will facilitate insight into the national situation or meet international standards of comparability” (Tsireledzani, 2010:15). Each state is required to comply with international law in regard to the prevention of human trafficking, to prosecute traffickers as well as offer protection to victims (Tsireledzani, 2010:32). According to the South Africa Trafficking in Persons Report, (United States. Department of State, 2013), “the government has not yet successfully prosecuted any major international syndicates reportedly responsible for much of the sex trade in the country and did not systematically address labor trafficking offenses in the country”.

5. Reflexivity

De Vos (2011), describes reflexivity as “having the knowledge and capacity to comprehend another individual’s perception of reality without allowing one’s own personal opinions and biases to interrupt the research flow”. The researcher has degrees in both social work and social development and has received training in interviewing skills such as clarification and paraphrasing to avoid miscommunication. The researcher has also completed a research project in her social development Honours program and is familiar with fieldwork investigations, research and interviews in marginalized communities. The researcher is aware of personal agendas that may arise from the interview process and will remain neutral throughout the process. The researcher will practice cultural sensitivity and not allow personal biases to come through and interfere with the study.

6. Research Design

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world…At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Emser, 2013:107).
A qualitative approach will be used for this research study in order to comprehend the complex social frameworks that are involved with the participants’ lives. Participants’ experiences, perspectives and histories will be acquired. In using a qualitative approach, it is necessary to find the motivation as well as the beliefs in the “underlying responses to human trafficking” that need established and examined (Emser, 2013:107).

7. Methodology

7.1 Sampling

Sampling involves studying a particular population group “or a subset of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study” (de Vos, 2011:224). A sample group involves only a small group of the total population that is being studied, and is used to understand the target population (de Vos 2011:224). Purposive sampling will be used which is characterized by using a sample that is typical of the main population group that is under investigation (de Vos, 2011:32).

The sample population will be acquired from a list of NGO’s and professionals (whom the researcher is already in contact and communication with) working with anti-trafficking coalitions either through research or investigations throughout South Africa. The specific locations of the population groups will not be limited to one area so that the researcher can obtain a broader perspective of these various population groups. The communities involved will be located throughout the country.

7.2 Data Collection

Once located, groups and individuals from communities where high trafficking exists will be contacted via phone or email asking if they would be willing to participate doing in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Each interview will be approximately one hour to 1.5 hours. Each interview will be digitally recorded and extensive notes will be taken if individuals prefer not to be recorded. Each recorded interview will then be transcribed and transferred to electronic documents protected by a password.
The purpose of the interviews is so the researcher can gain a deep understanding of each participants view and perceptions on the issues involved within the community. Once the participants views are collected a broader sense of the community will be obtained based on their attitudes, behaviors, perceptions and cultural practices.

The semi-structured interview will consist of predetermined open ended questions that will be asked by the researcher. The researcher will encourage each individual to fully participate in their knowledge of the issues (de Vos, 2011:352). Questionnaires to be used will be gathered from an assortment of NGO’s gathered from South Africa as well as the United States who are involved in counter-trafficking matters.

7.3 Data Analysis

The type of data analysis to be used in this research will be discourse analysis. The purpose of using this means will be to effectively interpret and evaluate the interviews and questionnaires from the participants.

7.3.1 Discourse Analysis

“Discourse analysis aims to find information through historical and social frameworks and how these constructs affect population groups. It considers all historical events, objects, as well as actions that are made up of social rules. This type of analysis is based on the histories of those who have been vulnerable to the political powers at the time as well as issues that have proven to be dislocatory effects of situations” (Emser, 2013:117). It also attempts to understand the insights and underlying issues about assumptions made on human trafficking in South Africa.

“Discourse analysis is meant to provided a higher awareness of the hidden motivations in others and ourselves and, therefore enable us to solve concrete problems - not by providing unequivocal answers, but by making us ask ontological and epistemological questions” (Emser, 2013:117).

A process which involves eight steps will be used to analyze the texts in terms of human trafficking vulnerability “to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias and how these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced and transformed within specific social, economic, political and historic contexts (Van Dijk, 1998)” (Emser, 2013: 118).
The eight step process will be as follows:

1. The research will begin by the reading and rereading of pertinent related documentation both uncritically and critically in the form of “peer-reviewed journal articles and books, research reports, advocacy briefs and position papers, legislation and policy documents, speeches, interviews and so forth” to gain an overall prospect of the various contexts in relation to the subject (Emser, 2013:119).

2. Document analysis will be used in order to properly determine the story lines, aims and controversies involved in the matter.

3. Interviews will be done with participants to acquire various perspectives of those who are directly involved in the phenomenon.

4. Data will be researched in order to find areas of debate or discussion.

5. The acquired data will be examined and compared to see how individual reports compare to the statistical data already in existence and to determine possible findings and interconnectedness.

6. Historical occurrences will be identified to fully comprehend the dynamics and effects of the situation.

7. Texts will be revisited in order to determine if there is any relation between what was said and “the practice in which it was said” (Emser, 2013:120).

8. Data will be interpreted in order to establish” how the dominant human trafficking discourse is produced and reproduced globally and locally” (Emser, 2013:120).

In following the eight steps from up above, discourse analysis will be helpful in interpreting and discovering the nature and realities of human trafficking and how they relate within South Africa.

8. Ethics
A strict code of conduct must be adhered to while doing research. Because there are varying opinions across cultures and countries on what defines ethical behavior, the following code is taken from the “Ethical Code of Professional Conduct (The Professional Board for Psychology, Health Professions Council of South Africa 18/5/B) 26/03/200” from Babbie & Mouton (2011). This code will be adhered to because it falls under the research and publishing guidelines in South Africa where the study will be done. Even though the guidelines are for psychologists, the ethical guidelines are good standards for social development practitioners to adhere to during the research process.

### 8.1 Planning Research

The researcher will “design, conduct, and report research in accordance with recognized standards of scientific competence and ethical research” this will include the planning of research to avoid any misleading results. Researchers will take all measures to protect the well-being and the rights of each participant. If any questions arise during the process, the researcher will consult with the proper authorities under the research process.

### 8.2 Responsibility

The researcher will complete research in a professional manner regarding “the dignity and welfare of the participants”. The researcher will only perform obligations under which he/she is trained for and will consult with professionals in the field for the population group who is being investigated.

### 8.3 Compliance With Law and Standards

The researcher will perform the research process in a professional manner that is in accordance with provincial and national laws and regulations.

### 8.4 Research Responsibilities
Prior to the research process, the researcher will obtain an agreement with the participants where the research will be explained, clarified and the responsibilities will be defined for each party.

8.5 Informed Consent to Research

Informed consent will be obtained prior to the research process and will be properly documented. Researchers will clearly explain to each participant the nature of the research, and make it clear that each participant is “free to participate or withdraw from the research while explaining the foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing. They shall inform participants of significant factors that may be expected to influence their willingness to participate (such as risks, discomfort, adverse effects, or limitations on confidentiality)” . The researcher will take precautionary measures to protect participants from possible adverse consequences.

8.6 Deception in Research

The researcher will not use any deception that could affect participants’ decisions in participating in the research process, or any other measure of deception during the research.

8.7 Sharing and Utilizing Data

The researcher will inform the participants of any possible sharing of personally identifiable information as well as possible future uses.

8.8 Providing Participants With Information About the Study

The researchers will give the participants the liberty to receive the results as well as conclusions of the research. Researchers will also clarify any misperceptions the participants may possibly have as well as honor the commitments to each participant (529-531).
9. Limitations of the study

9.1 Possible Difficulties

Because of the hidden and underground nature of human trafficking, it could be difficult to locate communities where trafficking exists. The researcher is in communication with several NGO’s in South Africa who are helping with locating appropriate communities. There is a physical danger involved in going into some of these communities and it has been advised that the researcher always take another party while conducting research.

9.2 Personal Biases

The researcher is aware of possible personal biases that may inhibit the research process. Personal biases could affect the interviewing process and the researcher must be neutral during both and the findings of the process. The researcher will be attentive during interviews and use clarification and paraphrasing to avoid possible misinterpretations.

10. Time Frame

It is estimated that this research process will take from start to completion approximately one and a half years to two years. The research will begin end of February 2014 and will take anywhere from August 2015 until February 2016 to complete.

11. Budget

In order to get a full scope of the nature of human trafficking in the South African context, the locations of the communities will be throughout the country. There will be three possible locations depending on the amount of trafficking that occurs in these communities. The budget will include flight prices, accommodation, car rental, printing costs through the years, and devices that will be
needed for the process. The total estimated cost for the research over a two year period is approximately 31,500 Rand or $3,500 U.S.

12. Conclusion

As can be seen from the information above, there is a need for more academic research in South Africa on human trafficking. It has been demonstrated that certain behaviors or cultural attitudes seem to contribute to victim vulnerability for trafficking; more research needs to be done in relation to South African as to how these practices affect various communities throughout the country. If the nation is to comply with international laws and policies, more must be done to protect victims. More organizations need to collaborate and share information so that more can be done in terms of trafficking prevention. There have not been many studies done on community behaviors, attitudes and cultural practices in the South African context. If practices and belief systems can be identified and understood in a contextual way it will benefit researchers and politicians in creating more efficient policies. The question arises in relation to attitudes and beliefs in comparison to human rights issues and the safety and protection of all people no matter what culture they may come from. This research would not only benefit South Africa, but would benefit other societies, cultures, and nations in understanding how various practices and attitudes can relate to human trafficking throughout the world.
References


