

**Human Trafficking- An Analysis of Pakistan's Gujrat District Immigrants**



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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, whose prayers and unconditional love have been the cornerstone of my academic success. I also dedicate my work to my supervisor and all those teachers who guided me during this journey. And also to the friends who encouraged me emotionally and morally during this journey

## **Acknowledgment**

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## Abstract

Human trafficking and illegal migration have appeared as the most intricate and persistent universal human rights challenges, motivated by the interaction of economic deprivation, social discrimination, and transnational exploitation. In many developing regions, limited employment opportunities, poverty, and weak institutional management generate conditions in which vulnerable populations become easy targets for traffickers and illegal migration networks. Pakistan, particularly its migrant-sending districts, reflects these international trends at a local level. This study, named "*Human Trafficking: An Analysis of Pakistan's Gujrat District Immigrants*," discovers how these global and domestic forces intersect to shape patterns of illegal migration and human trafficking in District Gujrat, a region well known for its high rate of overseas migration.

The research is grounded in Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory, which explains global inequalities by dividing the world into core, semi-periphery, and periphery regions. Within this framework, Pakistan, and especially District Gujrat, is positioned within the peripheral zone of the global economic system, where limited industrial development, dependence on remittances, and restricted economic mobility push individuals to seek opportunities abroad through both legal and illegal channels.

Methodologically, the study relies on secondary data drawn from national reports, international organisations, government publications, and relevant academic literature. This data is used to conduct a multidimensional analysis of the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors that contribute to human trafficking and illegal migration from District Gujrat. Overall, the study highlights that human trafficking in Gujrat is not merely a local problem but a manifestation of wider global inequalities, making it essential to address both domestic vulnerabilities and international structural imbalances to develop effective policy responses.

**Keywords:** Human Trafficking, District Gujrat, Pakistan, Illegal Migration, Global Inequality, World System Theory, Transnational Exploitation

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1. Introduction

Migration is considered a main feature of human history, enabling the exchange of ideas, culture and labour across borders. However, not all migration is safe, voluntary or legal in the modern world. Illegal migration and Human trafficking are identified as perilous global challenges, hitting millions of people annually and catching notable attention from governments, International organisations and researchers. Pakistan has been recognised as a destination and transit country for illegal migration and trafficking. Particularly, District Gujrat is identified as a centre for illegal migration, mainly towards Europe.<sup>1</sup> Socioeconomic deprivations encouraged the individuals from Gujrat to pursue migration through illegal and unsafe channels. Historical patterns also played an important role in fueling migration as a way of prosperity.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime defines Human Trafficking as “the transportation, recruitment, and harbouring of individuals through deception or coercion for the motive of exploitation”.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, Migrant Smuggling is an illegal transfer of individuals beyond international borders through illegal routes and procedures.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the difference between Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling is the “freedom of choice”. Smuggling is a voluntary action of individuals, while Trafficking occurs by force. These differences are vague in the case of Gujrat because individuals who want to settle in Europe fall under the trap of traffickers.

This study aims to examine how trafficking networks, cultural norms, and social conditions intersect to make a cycle of illegal migration, and how these realities damage not only communities but also security structures and governance. By concentrating on contextual realities and

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Publication, Division for Policy and Public Affairs, *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*, by United Nations, (New York: United Nations Publications, 2020), 176

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Publications New York, Crime Research Section, *Policy Analysis and Public Affairs, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (New York: 2022), 186.

<sup>3</sup> Salman Azam Joiya, Muhammad Hassan Danish, Zubair Ahmad, and Hira Ijaz, “Unveiling the Shadows: Understanding Social and Demographic Awareness of Migrant Smuggling in Pakistan”, *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no.4 (Fall 2023): 285-296, doi: 10.55737/qjss.794632661

community-level narratives, this research work will contribute to both academic understanding and human policy interventions.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Human trafficking and illegal migration have become increasingly rampant in the District Gujrat of Pakistan, making it a hub of illegal migrants, particularly towards Gulf States and Europe. Despite International and national efforts to contain this menace, the region continuously exhibits high migration rates facilitated by established smuggling networks. Existing studies often overlook the deeply rooted cultural norms and structural economic disparities that sustain and normalise illegal migration in this region. There is a need to investigate how local sociocultural factors and global systematic inequalities combine to perpetuate this trend. This research also examines that illegal migration and human trafficking are not only a legal issue but a crucial threat to regional and national stability, because they function as a non-traditional security threat.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. What are the socio-economic situations that contribute to illegal migration in Gujrat, and how do transnational trafficking networks create a non-traditional security threat to the international community and Pakistan?
2. How do international economic inequalities and colonial migration networks influence the contemporary migration patterns in Gujrat?
3. What lessons can Pakistan grasp from Italy and Spain's victim-centred anti-trafficking models, and how are they implemented in Gujrat?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

- To critically observe the socio-economic susceptibilities in Gujrat District that cause individuals to chase illegal migration routes and stumble under the trap of traffickers, and to analyse how illegal migration and human trafficking construct a non-traditional security threat affecting international security and national stability. Also, concentrate on the credibility of international and national legal frameworks in tackling and managing these challenges.
- To inspect the structural constituents and historical patterns, such as global inequalities and colonial labour migration legacies, that frame the illegal migration trends in Gujrat.

- To critically assess the victim protection frameworks adopted by Italy and Spain in confronting illegal migration and human trafficking, and to discover adaptable strategies that can strengthen anti-trafficking interventions in Gujrat, Pakistan.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

This research grasps crucial importance for both policy development and academic inquiry, specifically in understanding the relationship between transnational criminal networks and local socio-economic drivers incorporated in illegal migration and human trafficking from Pakistan's Gujrat District.

##### **1.4.1 Academic significance**

A vast literature is accessible on illegal migration and human trafficking, but localised research is deficient within the context of the Gujrat District in Pakistan. Gujrat District is viewed as a prominent region for illegal migration to Europe, yet there's a slight work on micro-level factors that form this trend. This study fills a research gap by emphasising empirical evidence on illegal migration, particularly from the Gujrat District. This study shifts the lens from global and national level analysis to a localised standpoint, and concentrates on the grounded realities of the vulnerable population of Gujrat.

Furthermore, by conceptualising human trafficking as a non-traditional security threat, the study connects migration and organised crime with state security. It increases the theoretical understanding of this research by compounding security studies with socio-economic analysis, providing an interdisciplinary approach relevant for International relations, development studies, and sociology scholars.

##### **1.4.2 Practical and Policy Relevance**

This research work is correspondingly important for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and practitioners. It offers insights into how unemployment, community pressure, and economic deprivation are the foremost reasons why the population of Gujrat is subjugated by trafficking and smuggling networks. By concentrating on the role of organised crime in empowering illegal migration, the research helps in detecting transnational linkages, recruitment tactics, and criminal patterns. This can make for more active intelligence coordination, policing, and regional collaboration among countries tangled in trafficking.

Additionally, the research also focuses on the preemptive measures, such as youth engagement tactics, livelihood plans, and community-level awareness, which can work as sustainable blockades to illegal migration.

### **1.5 Literature Review**

Human trafficking and illegal migration are heinous crimes, affecting millions of people universally and posing a challenge to the border security of countries and international governance. A group of scholars indicates that in South Asia, Pakistan is considered a major destination and transit country for illegal migration to Europe. Refugees from countries like Afghanistan and Bangladesh migrate to different European countries through Pakistan. Pakistan is among the top ten countries that illegally migrate to Europe through land and sea routes. The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report of 2023 of the US Department states that Pakistan is on Tier 2 in the watch list, containing concerns over the weak institutional mechanisms and policies for traffickers and illegal immigrants.

Among Pakistani cities, in the Punjab District, Gujrat is considered a hub for Human Trafficking and illegal migration. According to a survey, District Gujrat has a literacy rate of 69.49% and a population of 4.75 million. This city is also famous for its electric equipment industry and sending migrants to Europe and other Gulf countries.<sup>4</sup> Still, District Gujrat is among the seven leading immigrant-sending areas in Punjab. Migrants go to foreign countries for better economic opportunities and want to improve their conditions. Many individuals consider international migration to be a symbol of prestige and success in many rural areas of Punjab and other provinces (KP, Sindh, Balochistan, etc.).

In Pakistan, particularly in District Gujrat, migration patterns have developed due to historical events and shifting global demand for labour. The historical background of illegal migration from Pakistan gives various structural and economic insights into contemporary

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<sup>4</sup> Meher Numan, "Assessing the Role of Proximate, Fundamental and Sustaining Factors in Illegal Migration to Europe: The Case of Gujrat", *Pakistan Institute of Development Economics Thesis*, (2020): 1-79. Url: [thesis.pide.org.pk](https://thesis.pide.org.pk)

migration patterns. Historically, Pakistan is considered a country of Refugees and emigration.<sup>5</sup> Pakistan faced different waves of refugees from 1947 to 2021. In 1947, at the time of partition, almost seven million Muslims came from India to Pakistan. In 1971, after the creation of Bangladesh, many Bihari and other refugees came to Pakistan and settled in Karachi. In 1979, after the Soviet Union invasion and then in 2021 after the withdrawal of the US, Pakistan faced an influx of refugees from Afghanistan. These refugees considered Pakistan a transit state for emigration to different European countries.

After WWII, when the British needed labourers for the reconstruction of their industries then they invited labourers from the developing states. In Pakistan, particularly the individuals of Punjab and Azad Kashmir go the Europe. In the 1960s, for the construction of the Mangla Dam, the people of Mirpur were forced to leave their houses, but these people were shifted to the United Kingdom according to an agreement signed between the government of the UK and Pakistan.<sup>6</sup> The neighbouring cities of Mirpur, like Gujrat, Sialkot and Gujranwala, take their migration as an example and started illegal migration to Europe. Mostly Pakistanis from Gujrat illegally migrated to Gulf countries (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait) during the 1970s. But in the 1990s, due to the Gulf War, the economy of GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries suffered a lot, hence Gujrati migrants started their illegal journey to European countries through Greece. The UK government imposed restrictions on immigration in the 1980s, which made it difficult for people from Gujarat and other states to go to Europe. Then they choose the “Dunky Route”, the most famous and unsafe smuggling route for illegal migration.

A bunch of literature analyses that the main phenomenon behind human trafficking and illegal migration is deeply indulged in cultural and socioeconomic factors that shape the decisions of the migrants. Most people migrate from Gujrat mainly due to poverty, limited employment opportunities and socio-economic hardships. Like other rural areas of Punjab, low wages, high

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<sup>5</sup> Government of Greece, Background Report: Migratory System 3, The vicious circle of irregular migration from Pakistan to Greece and back to Pakistan, Kleopatra Yousef, Irregular Migration Background Report (Greece: 2013), 28.

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Huma Butt, Dr. Tauqeer Hussain Shah, & Muhammad Tahir, "They Want to Live a Good Life": Narratives of Irregular Migrants Families in District Gujrat, Pakistan", *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research* 05, no. 1 (June 2022): 113-127, doi: 10.37605/pjhssr.v5i1.364

unemployment rates, and limited industrial development encourage the people of Gujrat to migrate to Europe. However, due to the high cost linked with work visas of European countries, these migrants turn towards irregular pathways, often encouraged by human traffickers and smugglers. The migrants choose European countries only because of the high exchange rate of their currencies. Therefore, poverty, economic hardships and poor living conditions become the push factors behind illegal immigration to European countries. High-earning jobs, currency exchange rates, and successful futures become the pull factors behind illegal immigration.

Apart from economic deprivations, cultural and social dynamics also play an essential role in supporting illegal migration from District Gujrat. The culture of migration is deeply rooted in the social fabric of the region. They considered migration to Europe as a symbol of prestige and success.<sup>7</sup> Hence, migration is a symbol of elevating the social standing of the migrant's family in the society; it's not limited only to economic decisions. The main cultural drivers behind emigration are family expectations and societal pressure. In many areas of Gujrat, a person who is not attempting migration is considered a failure in front of family and society. These factors propel individuals to adopt vicious migration routes in spite of the risks. For instance, almost 2500 people died, and some went missing while crossing the Mediterranean Sea routes from Libya to Europe in different incidents. On the other hand, women are less likely to migrate to foreign countries independently. But they are often exploited by traffickers for domestic work, forced labour and sexual purposes.

Another group of scholars highlights that Human trafficking and illegal migration from Pakistan are promoted by organised networks of human traffickers and smugglers, which operate across international borders and within Pakistan. These networks used different air, sea, and land routes for transferring migrants to Europe, North America, and the Middle East. The network of human traffickers from Gujrat facilitated illegal migration work through the whole process, including local recruiters, International smugglers, and transit agents. Local recruiters are often known as "Dalals"; they played an important role in initiating the process of migration. They promised to provide good jobs and safe passageways to migrants. Then, transit agents present in

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<sup>7</sup> University of Germany, Dissertation, LMU Munich, The Role of Agents in organization of Irregular Migration from District Gujrat, Pakistan to Europe, Shah Tauqeer Hussain, (Germany: 2020), 290.

different foreign countries arranged transportation, documents and accommodation for the migrant. In the final stage, the international smugglers help migrants cross the border illegally.<sup>8</sup>

The most famous land route used for irregular migration from Gujrat is the “Dunky route”. This route is used as an alternative to an air route, in which migrants need legal visas. From the Dunky routes, migrants from Gujrat travelled to Balochistan, Quetta and then were smuggled to Iran. From Iran, migrants pass through mountainous terrain to reach Turkey. And then from Turkey, they entered Greece.

The other dangerous route is the Mediterranean Sea route, in which migrants cross the Sea from North Africa to reach Libya. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IMO), this route is the deadliest in 2024, taking the lives of almost 8,938 migrants worldwide. Last is the Air route, the migrants who can afford air travel enter legally into destination countries and stay there until their visas expire and they become illegal. The most common illegal methods used for entering their destination states are fake work permits that are provided by smugglers, student visas and fake marriages.

The existing literature also emphasised that Pakistan has developed and implemented different institutional and legal measures to combat human trafficking and illegal migration. Despite these legal frameworks, human smuggling and illegal migration remain a core issue, particularly in the District of Gujrat. In 1979, Pakistan adopted the “Emigration Ordinance” a legal way through which migrants can enter Europe. This ordinance provides migrants with legal channels to get jobs and good working conditions in their destination countries.<sup>9</sup> But due to loopholes in the system, smuggling networks still thrive and provide illegal pathways to migrants.

To punish and combat this menace of illegal migration government implemented different laws such as “The Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance” (PCHTO) in 2002, and “The Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Act” (PSMA) IN 2018. Pakistan also signed

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Huma Butt, Dr. Tauqeer Hussain Shah, & Muhammad Tahir, "They Want to Live a Good Life": Narratives of Irregular Migrants Families in District Gujrat, Pakistan", *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research* 05, no. 1 (June 2022): 113-127, doi: 10.37605/pjhssr.v5i1.364

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Ahmar Zahid, “Issue of Human Trafficking; The Legal Framework and Case Study of Pakistan”, *Research Journal of Human and Social Aspects* 01, no. 4 (December 2023): 37-52

various international agreements to enhance global collaboration in addressing these crimes of human smuggling and illegal migration. For this, Pakistan signed “The EU-Pakistan Readmission Agreement” in 2010 and the Bilateral Labour Agreement with GCC countries to provide legal employment opportunities for Pakistani migrants.

In Pakistan, various government agencies are responsible for managing and preventing human trafficking and migration. The “Federation Investigation Agency” (FIA) works with EU agencies and Interpol to trace and dismantle trafficking and smuggling networks. The “Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment” (BE&OE) is responsible for the recruitment of overseas employment agencies and ensures compliance with bilateral agreements for labour migration policies. Pakistan also established “Pakistan Coast Guard and Border Security Agencies”, which is responsible for keeping an eye on Sea and land routes to Combat illegal migration and collaborates with Turkish and Iranian authorities to monitor overland trafficking/smuggling routes.<sup>10</sup> Despite these legal frameworks, Pakistan faced various implementation challenges due to corruption within law-implementing agencies and a lack of awareness plans, leading to repeated patterns of illegal migration.

The author indicates that at the regional level, South Asian states also take adequate steps to combat human trafficking and human smuggling. Such as the SAARC (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation) convention on trafficking (2002). This agreement highlights the importance of promoting rehabilitation centres for trafficking victims, strengthening border security and enhancing cooperation between law enforcement organisations in South Asia.<sup>11</sup> However, due to the weak regional cooperation with border insecurity between Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, it allows these traffickers to flourish in their businesses. At the domestic level, Pakistan started the “National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking” (2021-2025) to probe trafficking networks and strengthen law enforcement capacity. It also works on advanced surveillance and tracking systems to manage border security. Pakistan also engaged with NGOS

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<sup>10</sup> Government of Vienna, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, PARIM Raising Awareness on Migration in Pakistan, Irregular Migration dynamics from Pakistan and the Role of Information Campaigns, by Ayesha Qaisrani, PARIM Final Report (Vienna:2021), 118.

<sup>11</sup> Chanchal Kumar, “Human Trafficking in the South Asian Region: SAARC’s Response and Initiatives”, *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 01, no.2 (January 201): 14-31

and UN agencies to launch awareness campaigns about the menace of human smuggling and illegal migration schemes.

Despite these legal frameworks, Pakistan faced various challenges in implementing these laws due to weak law enforcement mechanisms and corruption within the system. Different reports indicate that migrants and smugglers used fraudulent documentation and bribes to bypass border security and then travel illegally to Europe. The FIA, performing anti-trafficking operations, deal with insufficient training, manpower and financial support, which restricts its ability to take legal action against the trafficking networks. Another key challenge that Pakistan faces is the porous border and restricted border security. Pakistan's border with Afghanistan and Iran is exploited as a transit route for illegal migration towards Europe, using Iran's Taftan border. Pakistan has functioned on its porous borders, but due to the unavailability of surveillance systems and developed technology, it is arduous to fully curb illegal crossings.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the sensitivity of the matter, existing research on illegal migration and human trafficking is primarily based on macro-level viewpoints and generalised outlines, deeply relying on universal migration trends and national statistics. These attempts often ignore the community pressures, local dynamics, and informal arrangements that play a substantial role in accelerating illegal migration from districts like Gujrat. Moreover, the academic literature mainly focuses on traditional migration theories such as neo-classical frameworks and push-pull models, which highlight the economic disparities between states but fail to recognise the role of localised migration cultures, social coercion, and the involvement of organised crime.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, much of the literature emphasises that migration is deeply embedded in the socio-economic culture of Gujrat, making it challenging to discourage illegal migration. Families in Gujrat take out loans and sell their properties to fund migration attempts. They pay substantial sums to smugglers and jeopardise their lives. For instance, in the Greece boat incident of 2023, 700 Pakistani migrants, mostly from Gujrat, drowned at sea. Due to this government should launch

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<sup>12</sup> Sarfraz Khan and Sajid Mehmood Awan, "Case Study of Irregular Migration from Pakistan to Europe: Reflections on the Contemporary Trends", *Journal of European Studies*, (July 2020): 24-38

<sup>13</sup> Ali Nobel Ahmad, "The romantic appeal of illegal migration: Gender, Masculinity and human smuggling from Pakistan", *The ResearchGate*, no. 3 (January 2008): 23.

awareness campaigns to notify migrants about the potential dangers of human smuggling and human trafficking.

### **1.6 Literature Gap**

The existing literature on human trafficking and illegal migration focuses on trafficking networks, legal frameworks and socio-economic drivers. However, specific research gaps exist regarding the dynamics of smuggling/trafficking from District Gujrat, Pakistan. The central gap in the literature is the absence of empirical data focusing on District Gujrat, as Gujrat is regarded as a hub for migration and trafficking. A huge amount of data on illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe, focused on macro-level analysis and ignoring the micro-level analysis of trafficking networks working in Gujrat. And existing studies are also unable to explain the effects of colonial labour migration on the current illegal migration patterns from Gujrat.

Another gap is the absence of comparative studies from other countries focusing on successful anti-trafficking models. Spain and Italy have implemented extensive rehabilitation and victim protection programs. In divergence, Pakistan's response to trafficking/smuggling is predominantly focused on crackdowns and vindictive punishment for traffickers instead of the reintegration of victims. Comparative research offers valuable lessons on integrating victim-centred methodologies in Pakistan's anti-trafficking framework. Additionally, there's also little work on the social and psychological consequences of failed migration on the victims and their families.

### **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

World System Theory (WST), coined by Immanuel Wallerstein in 1974, provides a broader explanation of Power dynamics and global inequalities. This theory is influenced by "Dependency Theory" and divides the world into a hierarchical economic system. According to this theory, the world is divided into three categories: Core countries, Semi-Periphery countries and Periphery countries. Core countries are developed and industrialised states that control the global capital and trade. Semi-periphery countries are developing nations benefiting from global trade, but they remain dependent on core countries. Periphery countries are underdeveloped states and are mainly

exploited by core countries.<sup>14</sup> This theory explains how the exploitative global nature and economic disparities contribute to illegal migration and human trafficking in the case of Gujrat District.

Pakistan, specifically Gujrat District, is considered a periphery, where unemployment, corruption, weak institutional governance and underdevelopment create a push factor for illegal migration. However, industrialised Core states such as Italy, the UK and Germany create a pull factor through high demand for cheap labour in their industries. Hence, this mobility gap is exploited by illegal networks (including traffickers and smugglers). The prevalence of human trafficking and illegal migration in Gujrat is thus not only a criminal issue, but an indication of global economic asymmetries. World System Theory emphasises the structural violence and systematic dependency embedded in a global capitalist system that encourages peripheral actors to strive for better positions even through illegal means. Peripheral states cope with economic inequalities due to corruption and fragile governance, creating a favourable ground for trafficking networks.

World System Theory speculates that states positioned in the peripheral region of the international capitalist system lack the same stage of political autonomy, governing capacity, and institutional power as core countries hold.<sup>15</sup> In this perspective, Gujrat has been counted as ~~as~~-a hub for illegal migration not only due to socioeconomic sufferings but also the ineffectiveness of state institutions to realistically control or manage migration issues. Law enforcement bureaus such as the FIA ~~lacks~~ need sufficient training and funds to demolish trafficking networks that operate inside ~~amand~~ across borders. Thus, from this perspective, the inability of the state (Pakistan) in Gujrat is not simply a governance gap or a local problem. Rather, it is a systematic characteristic of a world economy where peripheral regions are situated in a structurally disadvantaged position, not only economically but also in institutional aspects such as control over transnational issues like human trafficking and illegal migration.

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas F. Tierney, "Michel Foucault, Security, Territory, Population", *The ResearchGate*, no.5 (January 2008): 10, doi: [10.22439/fs.v0i5.1412](https://doi.org/10.22439/fs.v0i5.1412)

<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction", Durham NC, (Duke University Press 2004): 23, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smg3v>.

## **1.8 Research Methodology**

A qualitative research method will be used for this study, focusing on micro-level analysis of broader migration patterns in District Gujrat. An in-depth study of these migration patterns permits the researcher to investigate how and why illegal migration prevails, is experienced and governed. The researcher used a qualitative method to gather data through National and International trafficking reports, and secondary document analysis.

## **1.9 Research Design**

Due to the systematic nature of the study, the researcher adopted a Qualitative Case Study design. A case study method is suitable for this study because it allows an in-depth investigation of the structural drivers and migration patterns within the Gujrat District. This approach also facilitates in the analysis of historical, contextual, and economic aspects behind this issue. This method supports in the theory-driven understanding of data. A case study of District Gujrat is used to explain how peripheral regions operate within the global migration economy.

## **1.10 Research Philosophy**

This study supports the epistemological assumption (Interpretivism), which asserts that social veracities are subjective and cannot be apprehended through objective methods. The interpretivist paradigm is frequently used in social sciences when the purpose is to comprehend how people understand, respond to, and feel the world around them. While this study concentrates on how people of Gujrat are involved in irregular migration and how trafficking networks are entrenched in their social structure, an interpretivist method will facilitate the researcher to discover the roots behind this threat.

### **1.10.1 Ontological Assumption**

The Ontological Assumption is established on relativism; they consider that multiple realities occur, each reality is different for every person, corresponding to their cultural background and social beliefs. For instance, a trafficker and a migrant perceive illegal migration from a distinctive perspective. This attitude allows the researcher to analyse altered perspectives, specifically in the context of intricate issues like human trafficking and illegal migration.

### **1.11 Data Collection**

The research work is completely reliant on secondary data collection techniques. The researcher assembled the appropriate data from official government sources, such as the Annual Reports of Human Trafficking of the FIA, Government National Action Plans, and Law enforcement data, encompassing conviction rates and prosecution.

Secondary data was also compiled through Non-Governmental Organisations, such as Amnesty International, Anti-Slavery International, and from some Pakistani NGOs. Data was further gathered from International Organisations, such as (UNODC Global Trafficking in Persons Report, the IOM International Organisation for Migration, Interpol and Europol operational beliefs, and Council of Europe GRETA evaluations. These sources present independent evaluations and standardised data that justify the statements of the government.

### **1.12 Data Analysis**

To analyse the facts, the research utilised document analysis to recognise perceptions and frequent patterns across texts and reports. Data triangulation was also used to enhance the reliability of the study. Data from the government institutions were evaluated with the EU, UN, and NGOs' findings.

### **1.13 Limitations of the Study**

This study offers new insights about the socio-economic factors of illegal migration and the functioning of human trafficking systems in Gujrat. However, numerous important contextual and methodological boundaries frame its scope, legality and conclusions.

#### **1.13.1 Geographic Scope**

This research is exclusively focused on the Gujrat District and excludes other high-migration districts/areas such as Sialkot, Mandi Bahauddin and Faisalabad in Pakistan. Meanwhile, District Gujrat is considered a crucial case due to its local socio-cultural aspects, such as the rural-urban divide, caste dynamics, and clan affiliations, which limit the generalizability of its findings to other provinces. This research is valuable solely within the context of Gujrat.

### **1.13.2 Access to Trafficking Networks**

Due to the outlawed nature of human trafficking, direct contact/access to operational smugglers or traffickers is not legally or ethically feasible. This confines the exploration and analysis of the domestic functioning of these networks. Rather, the research depends on anonymised case studies and secondary reports. Thus, this study indicates anecdotal verification and objective encounters instead of full organisational facets of trafficking operations.

### **1.13.3 Ethical and Security Considerations**

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, the study pursues a careful ethical protocol to protect applicants from social stigmatisation, legal exposure and psychological suffering. This confines the access to numerous respondents, such as minors, active illegal migrants and their families who are currently retained in smuggling arrangements. In addition, in districts where trafficking/smuggling groups are dominant demands careful navigation which further hampers data collection.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Theme 1. Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration**

### **Theme 2. Illegal migrants from District Gujrat – Local Dynamics, Patterns, and Goals**

#### **2. Introduction**

In the modern era, human trafficking and illegal migration have become one of the most convoluted global challenges, transcending national limitations and strongly intimidating human dignity. It is not only a concern of illegal migration, rather it's a methodical exploitation of human vulnerabilities, comprising abuse of power, deception and intimidation. International organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasise that human trafficking is a transnational industry yielding billions of dollars annually. Although it simultaneously grips millions of persons in sexual slavery, forced labour and other types of exploitation.<sup>16</sup> Unlike outdated crimes, illegal migration and trafficking are deeply ingrained within the broader composition of the system due to globalisation and economic disparities, making it an intensely ingrained phenomenon.

In Pakistan, precisely in Punjab, human trafficking has become similar to illegal migration, often identified as “Dunky”. Where individuals expose their lives in hazardous journeys towards Europe and the Gulf countries through land and sea routes. District Gujrat is deemed as a central area where external migration is deeply embedded in its culture and economic aspirations. However, before going towards the District Gujrat, it is essential to understand the phenomena of human trafficking and illegal migration within a broader regional, global, and National framework.

This chapter describes the causes, structure and implications of human trafficking and illegal migration, particularly in the socio-economic context of District Gujrat. It analyses how trafficking is rooted in systems of inequality and how trafficking networks exploit local individuals and their vulnerabilities. And the broader implications of human trafficking and illegal migration for non-traditional security paradigms.

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<sup>16</sup> Government of Switzerland, Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, International Labour Office, International Labour Organisation, (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2017), 68.

## 2.1 Global Dimensions of Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration

Globally, illegal migration and human trafficking are considered the fastest-growing forms of exploitation and organised crime, including millions of victims annually. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 27.6 million individuals were surviving under the situation of modern slavery in 2021. In the modern slavery system, sexual exploitation and forced labour are the most common factors.<sup>17</sup> These figures illustrate that the industrial scale of trafficking, which usually thrives on the demands of both exploitable and cheap labour in developed countries and the misery of marginalised people in developing states. According to the report of UNODC in 2020, trafficking networks are progressively sophisticated, using falsified documents, transnational links, and even digital platforms to transport, recruit, and identify victims.

The global landscape of trafficking shows the clear corridors of vulnerability. Illegal migrants from Southeast and South Asia are trafficked to European and Middle Eastern countries, usually under exploitative labour contracts. Immigrants from Sub-Saharan African States are trafficked to North African States, while Eastern Europeans are illegally migrating towards Western Europe through informal labour agreements and sex industries. The same pattern is established in the case of Americans, the Central Americans trafficked towards North American countries along perilous routes. These routes signify the dual nature of trafficking; it is both the effect of local misery and an indication of global economic requirement.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, trafficking is uninterrupted due to imperfect enforcement capacity and fragile international cooperation. Accords like the Palermo Protocols (2000) discovered global standards for the safeguard of victims and the trial of traffickers, but still its execution remains bumpy. The destination countries generally prioritise their border security over victim protection; however, source countries are not industrialised enough to disassemble local trafficking networks. Thus, trafficking continues as a shadow economy entrenched in global mobility systems, making revenues of 150 billion dollars every year.

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<sup>17</sup> Government of Switzerland, Global Estimates of Modern Slavery 2021 Update, International Labour Office, International Labour Organisation, (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2022), 144.

<sup>18</sup> Ballard, Roger, "Overseas Migration and Its Consequences for the Family in Gujrat, Pakistan," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 1 (2003): 89, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2003.tb00134.x>.

## 2.2 Regional Perspective: South Asia

The South Asian zone is deemed as one of the leading regions for transporting migrants towards European and Gulf countries, comprising Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan are substantial contributors. Structural conditions in this region, such as widespread poverty, high unemployment, and deeply rooted patriarchal systems, make the population of this region highly vulnerable.<sup>19</sup> Migrants from the South Asian region who migrated towards Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are working under exploitative conditions of the kafala sponsorship system, which deprives them of their basic rights, such as fair wages and freedom of movement.

Trafficking in the South Asian zone is not restrained to International labour migration. Rather, it also incorporates internal and cross-border dimensions. Teens and women are trafficked across borders for bonded labour, sexual abuse, and national work. Nepal and Bangladesh are most important areas for the trafficking of women towards India, while Afghanistan and Pakistan are counted as important transportation points for migrants leading towards European countries. A major section of these trafficked persons are deceived with assurances of a stable job, only to be confined in coerced labour or debt burden upon arrival.

The trafficking pathway from Pakistan through Turkey and Iran towards Europe is substantially tarnished. Different reports uncover that thousands of migrants from South Asia, notably from Punjab, attempt this illegal expedition annually.<sup>20</sup> Due to this, countless migrants fall under the trap of trafficking companies and organised smuggling networks that dump migrants in exploitative chains. Such as leaving them in deserts, holding them in Libya, or pushing them into exploitative working conditions to refund their travel debts. These dynamics disclose that the trafficking problem in the South Asian region is not only insulated but deeply combined with global patterns of migration demand and labour exploitation.

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<sup>19</sup> Government of Switzerland, International Organisation for Migration, *Migration in South Asia: Patterns and Trends* (Geneva: IOM, 2019), 224.

<sup>20</sup> Government of New York, Human Rights Watch, *Migrant Abuse in Libya, No Escape from Hell* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2019), 78.

## **2.3 Key Drivers of Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration in Pakistan**

In Pakistan, human trafficking is continued due to numerous factors/drivers that interconnect social pressures, economic dispossession, weak governance, and criminal abusing. Each of these drivers demands thorough analysis:

### **2.3.1 Economic Drivers**

In Pakistan, economic dispossession is believed a crucial catalyst for illegal migration and trafficking. Due to inadequate employment opportunities, mainly in rural Punjab, many individuals count migration as the only valid path towards growing mobility. Pakistan faces constant unemployment among its youth. In 2021, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics report exposed that youth redundancy in Pakistan escalated from 8% to 15%. However, the actual numbers may be more extreme in rural contexts. This economic depression pushes families to take loans, sell possessions to sponsor illegal migration attempts.

In Gujrat, the reliance on remittances further exaggerates this economic driver. Families that get payments enjoy ostensibly higher ranks of living, often focus on spending in businesses, constructing large houses, and attaining enhanced social status. This produces a ripple effect, where neighboring families want to imitate such success, even if it entails engaging with smuggling and illegal trafficking networks.<sup>21</sup> Hence, trafficking is not only the effect of poverty, but also the desire for relative prosperity and economic expansion.

### **2.3.2 Cultural and Social Drivers**

In diverse rural areas of Punjab, overseas migration is contemplated a cultural norm rather than an individual's personal option. Different reports and sociologists have recognised Gujrat as a “migration hub” where social morals and family prestige are directly coupled to the number of their relatives present in a foreign country. These cultural and social standards exert excessive pressure on young men of each family to choose migration, even when lawfully authorised and legitimate opportunities are not accessible.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Zubair Hussain, Muhammad Siraj ul Huda Khan, Sapna Mumtaz, Tauqeer Hussain Shah, “Drivers and Dynamics of Illegal Migration from Pakistan to Europe Post-2020”, *FWU Journal of Social Sciences* 19, no.2, (March 2025): 16, doi: <http://doi.org/10.51709/19951272>

<sup>22</sup> Ayesha Chaudary, Hassan Javid, “Sociocultural Dynamics of Migration in Punjab,” *South Asian Studies* 35, no. 1, (2020): 17, doi: <https://sasi.pu.edu.pk/9/issue/view/149>

Families often send their sons through illegal passages towards foreign countries not only for economic gains, but also to uplift their social status in society. This burden incites a collective psychology where unsafe routes are conventional, and risks are normalised as part of their migration voyages. Hence, traffickers and smugglers exploit these standards, exposing themselves as mediators rather than criminals. This social and cultural background is important in understanding why smuggling and trafficking networks continue despite well-documented dangers. These patterns elucidate that trafficking is not only an individual's own choice, rather it's a combined survival strategy in economically miserable societies.

### **2.3.3 Institutional and Governance Weaknesses**

Corruption, inadequate institutional capacity and fragile governance notably play a key role in trafficking networks in Pakistan. The involvement of border authorities and local officials grants trafficking networks to work with impunity. Forged documents, enticements at checkpoints, and the unauthorised Hawala systems for illegal payments impede the efficiency of trafficking companies. Law enforcement bureaus such as the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) have made various laws to discourage trafficking networks, but they are dormant due to structural weaknesses. The absence of strong coordination between the labour departments, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the police further exacerbates the problem.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, anti-trafficking laws, constituted of legal statements and inclusive points, but still these laws are not uniformly implemented due to operational flaws. Also, victim protection structures for migrants remain weak and even extradited migrants are criminalised rather than supported. This institutional imparity not only supports traffickers but also deters victims from getting assistance. In District Gujrat and other trafficking-prone districts, due to inadequate governance and an insufficiency of a sustained enforcement system allows these trafficking networks to revitalise even after short-term crackdowns.

### **2.3.4 Education and Globalisation**

Gender discrimination and educational scarcity deteriorate these economic vulnerabilities. The shortage of primary and secondary education for girls, merged with cultural norms curbing

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<sup>23</sup> Government of the United States, Department of State, Human Rights Division, Trafficking in Persons Report June 2023. (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2023), 94.

their mobility, often leads to early marriages and exploitative domestic work. In this scenario, the causes of trafficking are multi-dimensional, structural poverty links with formal corruption and patriarchal culture, forming a long cycle of vulnerability.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, talent mismatches and education contribute to this dynamic.

Finally, globalisation has transformed the geography of exploitation. Now traffickers use social media stages to recruit victims. Digital enrollment through online job portals and social media platforms empowers traffickers to openly reach victims. The absence of online safety responsiveness and digital knowledge in rural Pakistan has accelerated risks, producing cyber-facilitated trafficking as an evolving challenge. This advancement in the system calls for a re-examination of anti-trafficking policies that integrate both online and offline deterrence mechanisms.

#### **2.4 Human Trafficking in Pakistan: Trends and Patterns**

In Pakistan, Human trafficking and illegal migration are complex phenomena, including both internal dynamics and cross-border migration. The country is at the same time a transit, source and destination for illegal migrants. As a source state, Pakistan contributes to the large number of migrants towards Gulf states, the Middle East, and Europe, many of whom are trafficked and illegally migrated through ambiguous recruitment.<sup>25</sup> As a source state, Pakistan enables illegal flows from Iran and Afghanistan towards Europe. Internal trafficking exhibits through bonded labour, especially in carpet weaving, agriculture and brick kilns.

In Pakistan, Punjab province and particularly its ruler areas, have been recognised as the epicentre of trafficking. Different studies suggest that half of Pakistan's illegal migrants emerge from Punjab, particularly from Sialkot, Mandi Bahauddin and Gujrat. This is mainly due to the Intrinsic culture of overseas migration and the high status and prestige linked with remittances. Trafficking agents (dalals) exploit these migrants by charging high fees, often sponsored through land sales or loans and organising illegal journeys towards Europe and the Middle East.

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<sup>24</sup> Yousaf, Aamir and Koser Khalid, "Human Smuggling Economies in South Asia," *Journal of Illicit Economies and Development* 5, no. 2 (2023): 89–108.

<sup>25</sup> Malik Aamir, and Muhammad Hassan, "Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration in Pakistan: Causes and Consequences," *Pakistan Journal of Criminology* 11, no. 2 (2019): 23–45.

The risks linked with this form of trafficking are rigorous. The Mediterranean boat calamity of 2023, in which approximately 350 Pakistanis lost their lives, primarily from Punjab, expresses the disastrous effects of trafficking.<sup>26</sup> Countless victims had been incarcerated in Libya for months, exposed to forced labour, coercion and brutalized before being back to their target states. Such cases reveal the lethal effects of trafficking, altering migration fantasies into a humanitarian catastrophe.

## 2.5 Transnational Trafficking Networks

Transnational trafficking groups operate as multifaceted adaptive systems associating local mediators in Pakistan with a global illegitimate system across the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Europe. These trafficking groups operate as both exploiters and mediators within the illegal migration trips. These groups work through layers of investors, transporters, recruiters and document counterfeiters, each distinguished by jurisdictional and physical boundaries.<sup>27</sup> The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report of 2023 proclaims that Pakistan is both a travel country and a key source region for human trafficking, linking South Asia with Europe and North Africa.

The economic dimension of these illegal desires is notable, as human trafficking and illegal migration from South Asia to Europe produce profits of USD 200 million annually. In Gujrat, smuggling groups frequently present as overseas employment consultancies, proposing visa packages to the Middle East or Europe. Normally, migrants pay advance payments through unauthorised money transfer methods such as hawala, causing financial traps that nurture trafficking groups. The porous border among Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan offers available passages for illegal organisations, often intersecting with arms trafficking channels and narcotics smuggling.

Furthermore, technological innovation has enriched the resilience of these groups. Now traffickers utilise social media to publicise safe migration channels and enlist clients online. Fake job entrances and encrypted connections further strengthen law enforcement efforts.<sup>28</sup> Once

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<sup>26</sup> "Pakistanis Feared Dead as Greece Hunts for Migrant Shipwreck's Survivors," *Pakistan Today*, June 17, (2023), <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/06/17/298-pakistanis-feared-dead-as-greece-hunts-for-migrant-shipwrecks-survivors/>

<sup>27</sup> Nida Shahzad, "Digital Networks and the Transformation of Human Trafficking," *Crime, Media, and Culture* 19, no. 1 (2022): 74–90.

<sup>28</sup> Europol, Europol Operations Directorate, "The Challenges of Countering Human Trafficking in the Digital Era," (October 2020), 7

migrants leave through prohibited channels, their accountability becomes almost impossible, because victims often don't know their rights. These networks operate as transnational businesses, connecting local vulnerabilities with illegal global economies. Their influence undermines border integrity, state authority, and the veracity of legitimate migration systems.

## 2.6 Non-Traditional Security Threats

Human trafficking and illegal migration surpass traditional security paradigms, developing into intricate Non-traditional security threats. According to Buzan and Waeber (2021), non-traditional security threats incorporate social, economic and environmental dimensions that affect human stability and the sovereignty of the state. In Pakistan's case, trafficking networks and illegal migration challenge governance, sovereignty, and regional cooperation.

Firstly, these networks weaken public trust in state institutions. The legitimacy of the state diminishes when citizens find that the government is unable to protect its citizens abroad and to regulate migration patterns.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, trafficking is intertwined with other forms of global organised crime, such as money laundering, narcotics trade, and arms smuggling. However, trafficking at some extent linked to extremist financing networks working in border regions, blurring the lines between crime and terrorism. Thirdly, the individual suffering from illegal migration triggers a direct alarm to human security. Illegal migrants frequently face exploitation, incarceration, and death throughout their journeys. The Mediterranean calamities, comprising Pakistani migrants, explain the humanitarian aspect of uncertainty. According to the Amnesty International report (2023), hundreds of Pakistanis lost their lives in the year 2023 alone while illegally crossing the Mediterranean Sea. The trauma faced by affected families extends psychological distress and social instability at the community level.

The merger of human trafficking with terrorism, money laundering and financing has also drawn attention from International security institutions. Trafficking revenues generate billions of dollars annually.<sup>30</sup> These revenues are generated through informal networks, facilitating criminal

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[https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/the\\_challenges\\_of\\_countersing\\_human\\_trafficking\\_in\\_the\\_digital\\_era.pdf](https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/the_challenges_of_countersing_human_trafficking_in_the_digital_era.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Hamid Rizvi, "Organised Crime and Terror Financing in Pakistan," *Contemporary Security Policy* 43, no. 3 (2022): 233–252.

<sup>30</sup> Government of Vienna, Amnesty International, *Crossing the Mediterranean: Pakistan's Forgotten Migrants* (London: Amnesty International, 2023), 412

groups to interpret legitimate economies. These transnational fiscal flows have created global initiatives such as regional mechanisms under SAARC's Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children and UNODC's Blue Heart Campaign.

Historically, Pakistan's security apparatus has emphasised military threats, but due to the passage of time and increased interdependence. Pakistan has also transformed itself to these non-traditional security risks. But due to the lack of intelligence sharing mechanisms and inter-ministerial coordination allows trafficking chains to exploit bureaucratic fragmentation. The negligence to incorporate human security within the national security framework maintains a reactive instead of a preventive approach.

## **2.7 Institutional Gaps and Policy Responses**

Pakistan has established several legislative measures to tackle trafficking through the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2018) and the creation of anti-trafficking units within the FIA. Although these measures represent progress, but enforcement remains inconsistent. The implementation problem originates from a lack of specialised training, limited resources, and poor victim identification processes. Moreover, the combination of trafficking with illegal migration focuses on the criminalisation of victims instead of their protection.

International organisations such as UNODC and IOM have collaborated with Pakistan to enhance its institutional capacity. However, these initiatives lack sustainability and are still dependent on their donors for external funding. Regional NGOs like SACH and BEFARe have played key roles in victims' reintegration, although their outreach is impeded by financial and administrative restrictions. The unavailability of centralised reporting and inclusive document collection further hampers evidence-based policy-making.<sup>31</sup>

A main difference within the anti-trafficking pattern of Pakistan is the absence of victim-centred methodologies. Prevailing structures emphasise prosecution rather than protection, ignoring the long-term reintegration requirements of survivors, by linking Italy's and Spain's anti-trafficking models, where integration policies are ingrained in their social well-being programs. Additionally, these states offer lessons for the safeguarding of migrants, which is counted as a

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<sup>31</sup> Munawwar Sultana, "Human Trafficking in Pakistan: Legal Framework and Challenges," *The Regional Tribune* 3, no. 1, (2024): 364, doi: 10.63062/trt/V24.049

more humane approach. Concentrating on these inadequacies needs a paradigm shift and political assurance towards human security.



Figure: Law enforcement consequences in human trafficking cases in Pakistan (2024).

*Source: FIA Annual Administration Report 2024; TIP Report 2024.*

Figure shows enforcement effects related to human trafficking in Pakistan during 2024. Whereas the FIA enlisted over five thousand cases and carried out huge arrests, conviction levels remain moderately low. This inequality reveals systemic challenges incorporating weak investigation techniques, the absence of victim testimony, and extended judicial processes, as also prominent in the Trafficking in Persons Report 2024.

## **Theme 2. Illegal migrants from District Gujrat – Local Dynamics, Patterns, and Goals**

### **2.8 Introduction**

Illegal migration from the District Gujrat is deemed one of the most grave security and social challenges which Pakistan is confronting in their governance migration structure. District Gujrat, with its prolonged history and traditions of broad diaspora systems and overseas labour, has constantly evolved into a facilitation centre for resettlement in the Gulf countries and Europe.<sup>32</sup>

This section discovers the patterns, motives and consequences of illegal migration from the District Gujrat. According to the formal data of the Federal Investigation Agency from 2018 to 2023, it signifies that over 3200 persons were involved in illegal migration attempts or trafficking cases from Gujrat. These figures confirm that Gujrat is playing a major role in the human smuggling landscape of Pakistan.

### **2.9 Routes and Patterns of Illegal Migration**

Illegal migrants from District Gujrat follow two main routes. First is the Middle Eastern corridor, and second is the trans-Iran-Turkey-Europe land route. The first incorporates overstaying legal employment or visit visas in the middle Eastern states such as Oman, UAE, and Saudi Arabia. According to the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (2022), demonstrate that almost 11% officially registered migrants from Gujrat in 2021, were later considered as illegal residents in the foreign countries, exhibiting the blurred boundary between illegal and legal statuses.

The second, most dangerous route is the Iran-Turkey-Greece corridor, usually called “dunky route”, has prominent since the 2000s.<sup>33</sup> Traffickers or smugglers transport group of migrants 20-40 from District Gujrat through Taftan and Quetta border into Iran, and then they followed the route towards Turkey and Europe. UNODC’s Global Study on Smugglers of migrants (2022), recognizes this area as one of the most active smuggling corridors of Asia. And Pakistan ranked among the top five countries of sending migrants illegally towards Europe and Gulf countries. Migrants pay 4.5-6.5 million rupees to facilitators for their illegal journeys.

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<sup>32</sup> Ali, S., & Malik, “Diaspora engagement and local development in Punjab: A case of Gujrat District,” *Pakistan Development Review* 60, no.2 (2021): 155– 178

<sup>33</sup> Government of Pakistan, Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), Annual Migration Report 2022, (Islamabad: Migration Report, 2023), 56

These illegal movements are assisted by a chain of brokers functioning at multiple levels such as document forgers, transporters, village recruiters, and foreign intermediaries. Local police reports show that Tehsil Kharian highly contributes in the dunki cases, indicating its stronger diaspora linkages with Italy and Spain. The continuation of these illustrates not only the resilience of traffickers but also the demand within the social system of Gujrat for foreign opportunities, regardless of legality.



**Figure:** Major global human trafficking routes (2023).

*Source: IOM and UNODC Global Reports 2024.*

The figure focuses on key global trafficking routes recognised in 2023. South Asia to the Gulf corridor remains the most important route, followed by Africa to Europe. These trends highlight the large-scale nature of trafficking and the requirement for synchronised global responses.

## 2.10 Recruitment and Facilitation Mechanisms

In Gujrat, recruitment typically starts with social networks. Local agents personally connected with families, presented migration as a quick, guaranteed, and safe opportunity. Because they function within the structures of society, victims hardly question their legitimacy. According to the interview supervised by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRC,2021), illustrated that more than 60% of illegal migrants from Punjab were enlisted through informal contracts instead of formal legal advertisement or agencies.<sup>34</sup>

The recruitment process of agents generally includes four stages. Collection of payments, initial persuasion, documentation and transportation. At the stage of persuasion, aspiring migrants

<sup>34</sup> Shahbaz Akhtar, "Securitisation of Migration in Pakistan's Policy Discourse," *Journal of International Affairs* 76, no. 3 (2024): 211–29

are shown testimonies and photographs of successful journeys of other migrants to build credibility. Payments are usually collected in instalments ranging from 4.5 to 6.5 millions. In several cases, family jewellery or property deeds are mortgaged to increase funds. The documentation stage includes fake employment contracts, transit visas, or forged travel papers, often fabricated in urban centres like Rawalpindi and Lahore.

Coordination of agents extends beyond the borders of Pakistan. Gujrat-based agents collaborate with foreign handlers in Turkey, Iran, and Greece who handle shelter arrangements and border crossing.<sup>35</sup> These transnational correlations from strong networks are arduous for law enforcement agencies to demolish. The Anti-Trafficking Group of FIA strip down 28 organised units in the Gujranwala sector between 2019 and 2023; however, these groups still swiftly re-emerge with new arbitrators. This agility emphasises the adaptive and dispersed feature of the trafficking economy of Gujrat.

Lastly, digital technology also performs a prominent role in enlistment. Facebook contacts, WhatsApp groups, and even influencers on TikTok publicise European career opportunities and visa bundles. The absence of robust cyber supervising assists traffickers to attract a widespread audience, mainly among youth in rural parts of the District. Hence, recruitment has developed from interpersonal trust networks to online-offline ecosystems, which further complicate the enforcement mechanisms.

## **2.11 Motivations and Profiles of Illegal Migrants**

In Gujrat, illegal migrants typically fall within the age limit of 18-35-year-old males, having limited technical skills and secondary education. The data of FIA (2023) indicates that 71% of captured migrants were under the age of 30 years, signifying that unemployment in youth remains a major driver behind illegal migration.<sup>36</sup> These individuals, mostly from lower middle-class families involved in small trade, daily wage labour and agriculture. Despite satisfactory income, they have high social ambitions fuelled by foreign relatives and their success stories.

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<sup>35</sup> Saima Bashir and Nasir Mehmood, "Community Awareness and Illegal Migration in Punjab," *Lahore Journal of Policy Studies* 7, no. 1 (2021): 99–120.

<sup>36</sup> Government of UK, European Commission, EU–Pakistan Readmission Agreement Report, (Brussels: European External Action Service, 2022), 8–10.

Economic ambitions of migrants dominate initial decisions. The dependence of Gujrat on remittances has created the “remittance trap”. The local economy of Gujrat District is maintained by overseas earnings, influencing the new generation to follow the same trend of migration. Young individuals see migration as the only workable path to achieving family respect and financial security. The decline in the profits of small farms/businesses, combined with limited creation of industrial jobs and inflation, reinforces this perception.

However, sociocultural pressures expand these economic incentives. Within several areas of Punjab, unmarried men are often considered incomplete until they have gone into any foreign state and gathered savings for dowries and marriage. The value of being called an overseas Pakistani in the various areas of Punjab, and particularly in Gujrat, carries huge weight in local hierarchical status. These social expectations, combined with family encouragement and peer influence, make individuals more vulnerable to false promises by traffickers.<sup>37</sup>

Psychological factors also play an important role. Interviews by local NGOs explained that some migrants are conscious of the dangers they will face during their journeys, but still they proceed out of hope for luck. The emotional decision of transforming the lives of their families overrides risk calculation. Therefore, illegal migration becomes a rationalised chance and a socially sanctioned risk instead of a deviant act. Considering these motives is essential for planning prevention frameworks that concentrate on both ambitious culture and material deprivation.

## **2.12 Impacts and Consequences of Illegal Migration**

In Gujrat, the effects of illegal migration are multidimensional, distressing families, individuals, and the socio-economic arrangement of the territory. According to the IOM (2023) and UNODC (2022) data, thousands of Pakistanis have deceased every year in Punjab while crossing deserts, sea journeys or in confinement centres. The terrible event of the Greek boat calamity 2023, in which nearly 200 Pakistanis were killed, involving 60 refugees from Gujrat, underlined the Human suffering of illegal migration.

Families and relatives of migrants who are left at the back face disturbance and economic suffering. When migrants are misplaced or arrested, families endure the burden of debt. HRCP

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<sup>37</sup> Farah Naz, “Civil Society and Human Trafficking Prevention in Pakistan,” *Asian Journal of Human Rights* 14, no. 2 (2022): 143–59.

report of 2021 points out that 38 % of distressed families in Gujrat had offered jewellery or property to sponsor unsuccessful migration attempts.<sup>38</sup> The emotional and mental suffering, loss, and humiliation spread across generations. Notably, for women supervising families in the absence of their companions.

At the public level, Trafficking and illegal migration change development preferences. Remittance-driven spending surges the charges of land, class division, and boosts an unpredictable economy detached from valuable investment. At the same time, popular agents and smugglers typically gain local reputation, which further normalises these illegal practices. This changed ethical values, declined governance authenticity and weakened combined trust in the bodies of states.<sup>39</sup>

On a national scale, the trafficking groups of Gujrat damage the international status of Pakistan and place it under external policy burdens. The US Trafficking In Persons Report (TIP) of 2023 justified that Pakistan is on the Tier-2 watch list, stating unsatisfactory progress in defending victims and accusing traffickers. These arrangements upset visa rules and foreign aid, representing how local changes in Gujrat resonate internationally. Thus, this trend is not only a local emergency but a worldwide and domestic governance challenge.

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<sup>38</sup> Amjad Bhatti, "Fiscal Centralization and Local Governance in Punjab," *Pakistan Journal of Public Policy* 15, no. 1 (2023): 55–74.

<sup>39</sup> Sadaf Shafqat, "Decentralisation and Policy Implementation Gaps in Pakistan's District Administration," *Public Administration Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (2023): 112–35.

## CHAPTER 3

### Historical and Structural Roots, Colonial Migration and Global Inequalities

#### 3. Introduction

Illegal migration in Pakistan cannot be comprehended without calculating its organisational and chronological roots. In the province of Punjab, the migration patterns established during the colonial times, where the transportation of combatants and labourers was encouraged to support colonial economic and armed networks. These primary compositions regulated a tradition of migration linking local mobility goals with global arrangements of prosperity and power.<sup>40</sup>

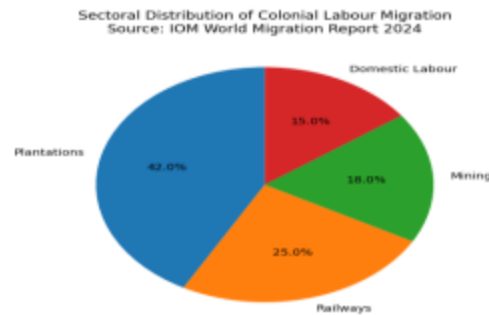
After World War II, postcolonial territories like Pakistan took over this organizational and economic reliance associate with Western labour markets, and it also influences the political expansion of these territories. The illegal migration from Pakistan is not only a result of domestic poverty but mainly due to the global capitalist systems that stimulate inequality through discriminatory mobility regimes. The global order after World War II continuously give benefits to Western markets. And the Western markets work as centres for economic opportunities. Whereas restricting legal access for labourers from the global South region.<sup>41</sup>

This chapter examines how global economic inequalities and colonial migration structures shape the continuation of illegal migration in District Gujrat today. It establishes local migration structures within extensive global systems and explores how historical legacies of states/empires persist to influence migration vulnerabilities and decisions.

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<sup>40</sup> Haris Gazdar, "A review of migration issues in Pakistan", *Migration Development Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia*, no.2, (2003): 31

<sup>41</sup> Yousaf Muhammad and Rukhsana Chaudhry, "Irregular Migration and Smuggling Networks in Central Punjab," *Asian Journal of Migration Studies* 9, no. 2 (2023): 145–172.



**Figure:** Sectoral distribution of colonial labour migration.

*Source: IOM, World Migration Report 2024.*

This figure demonstrates the sectoral distribution of colonial-era labour migration under British rule. Plantation economies reported the largest share, supported by areas with railway and mining infrastructure. These patterns reveal how abusive labour systems were established during colonial rule, laying the grounds for modern-day practices of forced labour and human trafficking.

### 3.1 Colonial Migration Patterns In Punjab

During the early twentieth and the late nineteenth centuries, British colonial authorities intentionally motivated the outflow of labourers from the Punjab region to the different parts of the British Empire, such as the Middle East, Malaya, and East Africa. This policy was somewhat motivated by the demand to maintain the colonial economic order and to reward regions that were loyal to the Britishers politically, such as the “martial races” sectors of Punjab. In Punjab, the primary waves of migration emerged not only as a reaction to economic opportunity, rather a structured consequence of colonial policies that labelled migration as both a privilege and a duty for certain communities.<sup>42</sup>

This colonial system generated a pattern of mobility that continued beyond independence. The Britishers had also organised a network of remittance channels, recruitment agents, and administrative mechanisms to enable labour flows. In 1947, when Pakistan was created, many of these networks, particularly those linking rural Punjab to overseas countries, remained intact. Gujrat District, with its traditional entrepreneurial families and military service, quickly altered

<sup>42</sup> Ian Talbot, “Punjab and the Raj,” 1849–1947 (New Delhi: Manohar, 1988), 142–45, doi: [10.2307/2759840](https://doi.org/10.2307/2759840)

these colonial legacies into new routes for migration to the Middle East and then later on to Europe. Scholars such as Ian Talbot state that the colonial state's commercialisation and militarisation of Punjab generated a migration culture and a shared orientation toward pursuing livelihood and status abroad.

Infrastructure development and colonial education further enhanced this outward orientation. The establishment of railways, canal colonies, and cantonments under British rule modified Punjab into an extremely connected region, both ideologically and economically. Gujrat District, situated at the junctions of these canal colonies, benefited a lot from getting access to mobility corridors and markets, which later became the routes that enabled illegal migration. The recollection of early migrants who had prospered in colonial militaries changed into social possessions for future generations.<sup>43</sup> This intergenerational transmission of migration desires persists to affect District Gujrat's modern migration arrangements, as families believed migration not merely as an economic choice, but rather a traditional corridor of success and honour.

In addition, the colonial construction of caste and class hierarchies played an important role in constructing who could migrate. The British specifically empowered service-class and landowning communities, giving them both the administrative exposure and resources essential to drive the migration process. In postcolonial times, these early arrangements of privilege have sustained unequal access to migration opportunities. Today, various illegal migrants from the Gujrat District still come from families that possessed military or land connections in historical times. The reflection of colonial stratification is rooted within contemporary mobility systems.

The ideology of abroad (Pardes) was also institutionalised during the colonial rule. As migrants from Punjab returned from abroad with new experiences and material goods, the concept of successful migration became interlinked with local prestige and masculine identity. This socio-cultural recognition of overseas success has continued, resulting in risky migration decisions. The notion of migrant masculinity persists to motivate young people in the Gujrat District to undertake risky journeys across seas and deserts, only to seek validation by crossing transnational pathways that their ancestors once used.

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<sup>43</sup> Nasra Shah, "Emigration Dynamics from and within South Asia", *ResearchGate* 32, no. 3, (February 1994): 559-625, doi: [10.1111/j.1468-2435.1995.tb00035.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.1995.tb00035.x)

Lastly, the colonial migration structure normalises the role of recruiters, transporters and agents.<sup>44</sup> These intermediaries were the predecessors of today's human traffickers and smugglers, many of whom function within Gujrat's local networks. The difference between illegal and legal migration was weak even during colonial times, as migrants avoided bureaucratic restrictions by depending on patronage and kinship ties. Hence, the hidden lines between unauthorised and conventional migration routes formed under colonial control still continue to enlighten the present-day dynamics of unlawful migration in Punjab.

### **3.2 Economic Inequalities and Global Dependence**

In Gujrat, the major factor behind illegal migration is the structural economic Inequalities that connect global independence systems with the economic system of Pakistan. After independence, Pakistan got a rough and uneven economy inherited from the British. This colonial economy has restricted agrarian concentration, regional Inequalities and industrial modification.<sup>45</sup> In the province of Punjab, Gujarat is deemed a flourishing area due to its high agricultural productivity and remittance flows. During the 1970s, the phenomenon of "remittance economy" was utilised as a survival strategy for countless people, due to the oil boom economy of Middle Eastern countries. Reliance on these countries further exacerbated the problem of illegal migration.

In Gujrat's case, this dependence on the outside labour markets established economies that were deeply linked with migration. However, due to these remittance flows, the economy of Gujrat is strengthened, and these remittance is used to fund marriages, increase social status, and build large houses. This system of migration has established a paradox, where migration supports the local economy, but on the other hand, enhanced the vulnerability of the people due to continuous fluctuations in the international markets and restrictions on visas. When foreign countries apply restrictions on visas, then migrants follow illegal channels to reach their destination countries.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, this global inequality intensifies the dependence of peripheral countries on the capitalist states of Europe and North America, as Immanuel Wallerstein mentioned in his

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<sup>44</sup> Ali Khan, "Migrant Masculinities and the Desire for Abroad: Pakistan's Irregular Routes," *Ethnography* 24, no. 2 (2023): 157–78.

<sup>45</sup> Haris Gazdar and Asad Sayeed, "The Political Economy of Migration in Pakistan," *Development and Change* 52, no. 4 (2021): 837–59.

<sup>46</sup> Asmat Safdar, Naima Nawaz, and Ayesha Riaz, "Gender Inequality Worsens Poverty in Rural Punjab, Pakistan", *Remittances Review* 9, no. S 1 (February 2024): 280-300, doi: <https://doi.org/10.33282/rr.vx9i2.17>

theory. In this context, illegitimate migration from Gujrat towards foreign countries illustrated a growth of this unequal system. To reach the capitalist countries, the labourer used illegal channels to enhance their social status in the society. The global necessity for low-income labour in service industries, agriculture, and construction successfully retains the trafficking systems that support illegal migration.

In Gujrat, societies achieve an elevated social status who successfully deliver their migrants abroad, producing domestic imbalances between non-immigrant and immigrant groups. This remittance hierarchy stimulates a motivational way of life in which even low-wage families are forced to sponsor lethal channels of migration. The expense of illegal migration to Europe varies from 7,000 to 12,000 dollars, compelling families to take loans and offer their land.<sup>47</sup> This progression causes economic vulnerability and debt burden, deceiving several families and also using them by the trafficking mediators.

The international economic order also affects illegal migration arrangements through border administrations and restraining visa programs applied by the global North. After the 1990s, illegitimate groups presented different channels for illegal earnings of mobility, because European countries improved legal migration passages. This move formed a shadow market of migration where organisers, recruiters, and traffickers gain from global disparities. The illicit migration industry in Gujrat thrives because it interferes between universal closure and local misery.<sup>48</sup>

Ultimately, the reliance of Gujrat on international migration unveils the limitations of local economic procedures in handling structural differences. The development strategies that hardly concentrate on export growth and infrastructure are weak to tackle the social and spatial differences between marginal districts and urban centres. Hence, the disaster of illicit migration is not simply a setback of law enforcement, but an illustration of systematic economic reliance entrenched in both international and domestic disparity. We need to turn the centre of the expansion model of Pakistan into a production-based, workable economic model from a remittance-based structure.

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<sup>47</sup> B.S. Chimni, "The Geopolitics of Refugee Studies: A View from the South," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 11, no.4, (1998): 350-374.

<sup>48</sup> Hein de Haas, "Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective," *International Migration Review* 44, no. 1 (2010): 227-64, doi: <http://www.comcad-bielefeld.de>

### 3.3 Social and Cultural Drivers of Migration in District Gujrat

The population of Gujrat believes migration is a sign of status and respect in society, where leaving abroad is linked with increasing social progress, honour, and masculinity. Within local areas, the term abroad (Pardes) holds aspiring and moral implications. Families who have any member employed in the Gulf region or Europe often experience improved social status, frequently indicated to as passport families. This cultural promotion of migration, retained by noticeable success and remittance wealth, enforces massive burden on young people to embrace dangerous journeys for the completion of public and familial beliefs.<sup>49</sup>

In various villages of Gujrat, the decisions of migration are collectively made by families who contribute to finance one member's departure. This process converts migration into a source of collective identity and shared investment strategy. Families who send one of their members abroad are emulated and admired by others, maintaining a cycle of ambitious migration journeys. This whole process is termed as chain migration, which guarantees the continuity of transnational linkages of Gujrat, as each prosperous migrant becomes a helper/facilitator for their neighbours or relatives seeking migration. Yet, as legal migration opportunities reduce, these social networks have turned towards illegal intermediaries to sustain the tradition of foreign mobility. The social belief of migration remains intact even when the economic and legal environments become restrictive.

The role of masculinity and gender is specifically notable in the migration culture of Gujrat. Anthropological research exhibits that migration is usually considered a masculine duty, a plan for young individuals to show independence, courage and responsibility. The individuals who are unable to migrate can be regarded as a social failure, causing humiliation within society. Therefore, several individuals risk their lives on dangerous routes through Turkey, Iran and the Mediterranean to protect their family reputation and self-worth.<sup>50</sup> This gender-related dynamic also creates household structures such as men send remittances from abroad, while women handle the internal domestic affairs, strengthening patriarchal hierarchies instead of deconstructing them. Despite

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<sup>49</sup> Roger Ballard, "Migration and Cultural Change in Punjab," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 22, no. 1 (1988): 55–77.

<sup>50</sup> . Zulfqar Shah, "Transnational Family Networks and Migration Decisions in Punjab," *South Asian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2021): 105–22

women's critical role in maintaining transnational families, their engagement in the decision-making of migration remains restricted.

Ethical and religious descriptions also strengthen the foundation of migration in Gujrat. Some migrants describe their journeys through a spiritual lens, similar to destiny (taqdeer) and divine specification. This divine description restricted the dangers of uneven migration and authorised the function of mediators or smugglers as organisers. Historically, religious advisers have blessed migrants for the act of going abroad. This linking of success and devotion gives migration a spiritual aspect that hinders government-controlled discouragement campaigns. For people of diverse localities in the Punjab region, mainly Gujrat, migration is not simply a chance; rather, it is about belief, according to the religious viewpoint.<sup>51</sup>

Social groups stimulate migration by organising large-scale societies that give sensitive and realistic assistance to new settlers abroad. Gujrati immigrants in Spain, Greece, and Italy belong to village-based zones that look after new migrants in learning jobs, legal support, and finding new households. However, this unity offers security and also restructures reliance on unequal economies. In specific cases, vendors and smugglers influence kinship connections. The hope that once permitted safe migration now assists exploitation, as trafficking representatives usually evolve from within these passages, confusing the lines between the industry of illegal migration and kinship.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, a robust community structure and local distinctiveness in Gujrat means that migration is counted as a shared accomplishment instead of a person's escape. Migrants from overseas countries financially sponsor the improvement of religious institutions, humanitarian causes, and village development projects, which further deepens the symbolic value of migration. At the same time, the economy repeatedly suppresses the suffering and manipulation encountered by illegal migrants. Countless returnees suffer in silence and shame, as disappointment counters the description of success. Therefore, the threats of illegal migration are still not discouraged in the local societies of Gujrat, continuing the cycle of lethal progress.

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<sup>51</sup> Rauf Iqbal and Shabana Arif, "Faith, Risk, and Mobility: Religious Perceptions of Migration in Rural Punjab," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 33, no. 1 (2022): 67–89

<sup>52</sup> Pervaiz Mehmood, "Digital Connectivity and Transnational Aspirations in Punjab," *Media, Culture & Society* 45, no. 3 (2023): 543–61.

### 3.4 Community Networks and Migration Industry

In Gujrat, the propagation of illegal migration is maintained by a complex web of highly organised migration industry and community-based channels that work at both transnational and local levels. These networks are shaped by village agents, travel representatives, investors, document counterfeiters, many of whom have vigorous social authority within their groups. The migration business is ingrained in the social composition of Gujrat, making it firm to state interferences. Trafficking representatives represent themselves as contributors, not as offenders, managing families to accomplish their migration dreams. The migrants' casualties and misfortunes are framed as luck instead of deception.<sup>53</sup> This framing conceals the margins between manipulation and assistance, escalating the outrageous trafficking in Gujrat.

The economic organisation reflects the rationality of informal capitalism in the migration industry of Gujrat. Payments for the services of migration are divided into instalments, which are tied to the success of migrants through different transit stages such as Turkey, Iran, Greece and Europe. The partial system of payment limits direct risk for families and links the incentives of clients and smugglers.<sup>54</sup> At each stage, various actors such as transporters, local recruiters, border guides, and document handlers take their share. This modular structure alters migration into a sequence of micro enterprises, framing the industry as decentralised and flexible.

Transnational linkages strengthen the industry's capacity. Gujrati communities in foreign states, specifically in Spain and Italy, give logistical support for new migrants, such as employment referrals, temporary housing, and even financial assistance. However, various migrants act out of cooperation; these transnational linkages are also exploited by criminal networks that incorporate local agents in Pakistan with facilitators in Europe. The other informal financial networks and hawala system facilitate the movement of money, often avoiding the formal banking systems. This

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<sup>53</sup> . David Kyle and Rey Koslowski, eds., *Global Human Smuggling: Comparative Perspectives*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 93–99.

<sup>54</sup> Mohammad Waseem, "Kinship and Migration: Biradari Networks in Pakistani Punjab," *South Asian Studies* 39, no. 2 (2022): 181–200

combination of criminal coordination and familial trust considers Gujrat a hub of illegal migration within a broader transnational economy.<sup>55</sup>

In Gujrat, technology has revolutionised the migration system. Social media platforms, WhatsApp, and mobile phones are now operating as primary means between families, migrants, and agents. Visual updates, such as pictures of the migrants crossing transit points, work as proof and help agents sustain their credibility. At the same time, digital advertisement on social media further promotes fake job offers, safe routes, and visa packages to Europe.<sup>56</sup> This digitalisation of handling and smuggling prolongs the range of industry beyond outdated systems, assisting new players to enter the business. While it also unveils migrants to fraud, as diverse online recruiters hide after collecting expenses and abandoning families with no sign and ruin their financial gains.

To sum up, in Gujrat, the opinions of the population about the migration industry stress the irony of manipulation and social trust.<sup>57</sup> However, representatives are frequently criticised after calamities, and at the same time, respected when migrants successfully reach their dream countries. This contradiction retains the ethical economy of the industry. The normalisation of illicit migration has become so embedded that even awareness campaigns haven't changed the attitude of the people. For several families, migration is deemed a sensible choice in an imbalanced universal system.<sup>58</sup> Hence, migration is not only counted a disgraceful venture rather as a deeply ingrained social foundation that signifies broader objectives, historical traditions, and disparities.

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<sup>55</sup> . Nadeem A. Malik, "Hawala, Informality and Transnational Financial Flows from Pakistan," *Global Networks* 20, no. 3 (2020): 447–63.

<sup>56</sup> Saba Gul, "The Silence of Returnees: Shame and Social Reintegration in Punjab," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 42, no. 2 (2024): 55–73.

<sup>57</sup> Saima Bashir and Nasir Mehmood, "Community Awareness and Illegal Migration in Punjab," *Lahore Journal of Policy Studies* 7, no. 1 (2021): 99–120.

<sup>58</sup> Tariq Mehmood, "Political Patronage and Human Smuggling in Punjab," *Pakistan Journal of Political Science* 12, no. 2 (2023): 65–81.

## CHAPTER 4

### Policy Lessons: Victim-Centred Anti-Trafficking Models from Spain and Italy

#### 4. Introduction

Spain and Italy have created victim-centred anti-trafficking structures that concentrate on impediment, integration, and rehabilitation.<sup>59</sup> Authorised structures of both countries, such as Law 4/2015 in Spain and Legge 228/2003, represent a standard shift from punishing and criminalising migrants to defending the rights of the victims. These structures are deeply entrenched within the comprehensive demands of the European Union (EU), such as Directive EU/36/2011 on reducing and discouraging trafficking in human beings.

This chapter reviews these structures in detail and then assesses their transferability to Pakistan, explicitly in the case of Gujrat. The comparative investigation unveils how inter-agency management, social support systems, and community arrangement can urge Pakistan to improve its anti-trafficking patterns under the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (PTPA).<sup>60</sup>

#### 4.1 Overview of European Anti-Trafficking Frameworks

During the 2000s, anti-trafficking programs of Europe have improved drastically, propelled by multinational organised crime, escalating illegal migration, and the moral requirements to defend victims of exploitation. The European actions against Human Trafficking are the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2015), which clarifies a rights-based, and victim-centred methodology.<sup>61</sup> This framework induces member states to approve that trafficked persons are safe, recognized, and supported irrespective of their immigration status. The European Union reinforced this with the Ordinance EU/36/2011 on tackling and averting Human Trafficking, integrating security, action, and hindrance into an

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<sup>59</sup> Government of Europe, European Commission, EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2021–2025 (Brussels: European Commission, 2021), 5–7

<sup>60</sup> Julia Planitzer, “Human Trafficking in the European Union: Policy Coherence and Implementation Challenges,” *European Law Journal* 27, no. 3 (2021): 251–73.

<sup>61</sup> Government of Itali, Paola Monzini, *Smuggling and Trafficking along Mediterranean Routes*, (Rome: CeSPI, 2019), 14–17.

absolute legal structure. These instruments verified the legal tenets upon which Spain and Italy created their national models.

Anti trafficking strategies of Italy have been clearly affected by municipal welfare groups and Catholic social organisations. While Spain has adopted human rights discourses and a feminist approach entrenched in the democratic system of the country. Regardless of these differences, both states focus on multi-agency coordination, early recognition of victims, and the long-term opportunities of social integration.

The European Union's framework on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025 emphasised from punitive to protective and preventive approaches, enhancing partnership with NGOs and survivor participation. This Framework recognises that trafficking is different from labour exploitation and illegal migration, and needs a holistic approach that integrates social inclusion and migration management.<sup>62</sup> The victim-centric policies of these states prioritise empowerment, reintegration and recovery over excuses. The "3P model" of these states concentrates on trial, safety measures, and impediment through unified systems connecting social services, law implementation, healthcare, and the judiciary.

At the performing level, Spain and Italy back National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs) in forming coordination amongst NGOs, local experts in supporting and finding victims, and law enforcement groups. Yet, the Italian structure underlines individualised support through protection programs sponsored by states, whereas the model of Spain integrates trafficking into larger migration structures and gender-based violence.<sup>63</sup> This difference exposes unique institutional beliefs; Italy emphasises social welfare to inspire its victims. Whereas Spain engages in trafficking within its comprehensive program of impartiality and human rights. These organisational variations of both states make a comparative study greatly significant for countries like Pakistan, who needs victim-oriented support systems.

Finally, both Spain and Italy have entered into mutual pacts with source states in Asia and Africa, supporting repatriation assistance, awareness campaigns, and knowledge exchange.

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<sup>62</sup> Government of Europe, European Union, Directive 2011/36/EU on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (Brussels: *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2011), 165

<sup>63</sup> GRETA, Report Concerning the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Italy (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2022), 33–38

Pakistan's collaboration with the IOM and EU is considering the experience of these states as valuable benchmarks. The adaptability of these frameworks to non-European states depends on the legal frameworks, cultural attitudes, and institutional capacity towards victims. These factors must be considered carefully when observing their application in Pakistan and Gujrat more broadly.

#### **4.2 Italy's Victim-Centric Model**

In Europe, the anti-trafficking framework of Italy shows one of the most socially grounded and advanced systems, differentiated by its strong integration of civil society and human rights orientation. Italy has transformed itself from a punitive immigration model to a protection-oriented, welfare-based system, primarily due to sustained support by feminist networks, faith-based organisations, and municipal governments. Article 18 of the Italian legislative decree 286/1998 (Integrated Immigration Act) is the most important legal victim-centred approach of Italy. This article established the "social protection permit", an accommodation granted for trafficking victims and severe exploitation.<sup>64</sup> This approach is considered a paradigm shift, because the Italian state treats trafficked persons as right-bearing people entitled to healthcare, shelter, and legal assistance. Thus, the result is a framework that is dependent on prevention and protection before prosecution, linking with international norms of human rights.

The Italian system functions through a multi-layered structure that combines national cooperation with decentralised execution. Under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Department for Equal Opportunities assists as the central cooperating body, regulating national anti-trafficking finances that fund municipal and regional programs. Local agencies collaborate with religious groups and NGOs to prepare services containing mental and emotional counselling, professional training, authorized aid, and safe housing.<sup>65</sup> This model guarantees that anti-trafficking endeavours stay close to the most disturbed societies, relating social work with considerate, survivor-centred care.

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<sup>64</sup> Government of Italy, Trafficking in Women and Girls in Italy: *Social Policy and Protection Frameworks*, Paola Monzini, (Rome: CeSPI, 2021), 18–21.

<sup>65</sup> Government of Italy, Legislative Decree No. 286/1998: *Consolidated Immigration Act* (Rome: Government of Italy, 1998), Art. 18.

Italy's key facet is its emphasis on voluntary teamwork between law execution and victims instead of intimidating witness demand. The victory of the anti-trafficking model of Italy is also associated to its resilient National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which stimulates coordination among labour supervisors, NGOs, law enforcement, and health care workers. The NRMs' focus on interagency collaboration has upgraded the recognition of victims and more innovative data collection for designing the policy. The use of multidisciplinary methods in Italy, such as "mobile outreach units", is explicitly creative; these teams stay at exploitative workstations and give support, avoiding bureaucratic suspensions. Such defensive policies signify Italy's commitment to revealing the gap between institutional assistance and the exposed population.<sup>66</sup>

However, the system of Italy faces tenacious challenges, mostly among emerging anti-immigrant sentiments and altered migration patterns. Under the Conte government, the Security Decree of 2018 restricted protection categories and decreased funds for integration initiatives.<sup>67</sup> These policy changes stimulate criticism from international actors such as the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), which noted that security-driven migration strategies are eroding the victim-centred norms of Article 18. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic ruined the operations of NGOs, leading to enhanced vulnerabilities among non-verified migrants who lost access to social services and shelters.<sup>68</sup> Despite these tasks, NGOs and local governments have persisted in working through community-based reporting plans, digital treatment and emergency aid for labourers and women.

#### **4.3 Spain's Multilevel Integration and Protection Model**

The Anti-trafficking organisation of Spain is embedded in the legal grounds of its Organic Law 4/2000 on the liberties and rights of refugees in Spain. Their community grouping, as altered in 2009 to associate with the EU Directive EU/36/2011 on Reducing and Stopping Trafficking in Human Beings. Article 59 of this law contributes to victims' recovery and thinking period, during

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<sup>66</sup> Department for Equal Opportunities (DPO), *National Action Plan against Trafficking in and Serious Exploitation of Human Beings 2022–2025* (Rome: Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2022), 5–9.

<sup>67</sup> Amnesty International, *Italy: Security Decree and Human Rights Concerns* (London: Amnesty, 2019), 10–12.

<sup>68</sup> Government of New York, *United Nations, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* (Palermo: UN, 2000). 143

which they acquire medical, legitimate, and psychological support.<sup>69</sup> This clause provides protection-first links with Article 18 of Italy, but extends it by including child-sensitive and gender considerations. The Spanish model also established specialised police units, such as UCRIF Central Unit for Illegal Immigration Networks and Counterfeit Documents, and incorporates victim protection mechanisms within its broader immigration policies.

At the operational level, the anti-trafficking framework of Spain is coordinated with the Government Delegation against Gender Violence and the Ministry of Interior under the Ministry of Equality. These institutions focus on prosecution, protection, partnership and prevention. This framework of “4Ps” stemmed from international conventions. A major feature of the Spanish framework is its incorporation of gender-based violence programs into trafficking responses, especially through funding mechanisms that permit NGOs to give protection services for both migrants and Spanish nationals. The association of civil society organisations in the multilevel framework of Spain. NGOs such as Adoratrices and Proyecto Esperanza offer specialised aid integrating psychological therapy, professional training and emergency accommodations.<sup>70</sup> They also play an influential role in outreach and recognition, working as mediators between victims and law enforcement.

The multilevel security structure of Spain, although insufficient, still offers an effective pattern for combining victim support into the local structure of Spain. Its reorganisation authorises context-specific adjustment and experimentation, whereas its rights and gender orientation ensure uniformity with international norms.<sup>71</sup> The Spanish model underlines the significance of intersectional policymaking, fiscal obligation, and participation of civil society in the execution at the local level. For Pakistan and, explicitly, District Gujrat, the example of Spain emphasises the capability of faith-based organisations, women’s groups, and municipal affiliations in operationalising victim protection. Emerging survivor-led mentorship, social inclusion desires and

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<sup>69</sup> Ana Serrano, “Decentralized Responses to Human Trafficking in Spain,” *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 12, no. 3 (2020): 473–89.

<sup>70</sup> Government of Spain, Organic Law 4/2000 on the Rights and Liberties of Foreigners in Spain and Their Social Integration (Madrid: BOE, 2000), 54

<sup>71</sup> Government of Europe, Council of Europe, *Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* (Warsaw: Council of Europe, 2005), 78

referral mechanisms could create the establishment for a rights-based and culturally grounded anti-trafficking model in Pakistan.

#### **4.4 Comparative Analysis for Policy Learning**

Spain's and Italy's anti-trafficking structures, while formed by diverse governance methods and legal customs, revolve around the same beliefs of the security of victims. Both states believe trafficking is an intrusion on human rights instead of a mere outrageous problem or immigration. This view has shaped their governmental models and execution mechanisms. The effective success of Spain and Italy's victim-centred structures lies in their community arrangement and institutional coordination. Italy's National Anti-Trafficking Plan involves civil society, police forces, and local administrations in a collective governance model.<sup>72</sup> The decentralised application of Italy's model improves local responses while safeguarding national standards.

On the contrary, Spain formed a centralised management framework, where the Ministry of Equality oversees achievement across sovereign regions. Local agencies are tasked with forming Victim Assistance Units (VAUs), confirming availability even in less important municipalities. Spain's partnership with organisations such as APRAMP and Proyecto Esperanza endorses long-term social restoration and victim rescue attempts.

Both structures of Spain and Italy profoundly depend on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). NGOs offer shelters and handle psychological support, whereas government organisations manage employment support, deportation agreements and legal documentation.<sup>73</sup> According to the UNODC report of 2021, this joint venture between civil society and the state intensifies the resistance of victims and facilitates breaking the cycle of re-trafficking.

Technology also performs an influential role. A digital checking platform of Spain, such as Sistema Viogen, was primarily proposed for gender-based violence. Now this platform has been utilised to trace the protection level of trafficking victims. In contrast, Italy utilises Banca Dati Antitratta, a national database structure of Italy combining social service and police reports to

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<sup>72</sup> Department for Equal Opportunities (DPO), *National Action Plan against Trafficking 2022–2025* (Rome: Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2022), 14–17.

<sup>73</sup> Ministry of the Interior (Spain), *Plan Estratégico Nacional contra la Trata 2021–2023* (Madrid: Ministerio del Interior, 2021), 11–14.

confirm the monitoring of victims. These new skills emphasise how digital authority can improve accountability, victims' security and transparency in anti-trafficking work.

#### **4.5 Lessons and Applicability for Gujrat and Pakistan**

The Anti-trafficking structure of Pakistan, while resilient on paper, but confronts rigorous operational challenges. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (PTPA) report of 2018 specifies the protection of victims, but implementation remains bumpy due to resource scarcities, fragile identification of victims procedures, and incomplete coordination. District Gujrat, counted as a crucial point of remittances and migration, wants prevention frameworks for societies and institutionalised procedures for victim support. Learning from Spain's decentralised associations and Italy's Article 18 system, Pakistan can also plan a victim-centred framework that concentrates on protection within comprehensive social inclusion strategies, instead of considering trafficking as an outrageous concern. The Spanish and Italian structures offer diverse, manageable instructions.<sup>74</sup>

The first lesson is the significance of legal identification of trafficking victims as persons. Pakistan's Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Act (2018) shares a legal framework for victims but lacks clear clauses giving social rehabilitation assistance or residence rights to victims. Spain's "recovery and reflection period" and Italy's "social protection permit" reveal how legal authorisation increases trust in institutions. By applying the same framework in Pakistan, it confirms that victims are not criminalised for illegal migration in Gujrat, but, in its place, are offered healthcare, legal support, and psychological facilities.<sup>75</sup> This modification could be encouraged through the Punjab Provincial Human Rights Department and the Ministry of Human Rights, with tentative programs in high immigration tehsils such as Lalamusa and Kharian.

The second lesson is the implication of multi-actor coordination, exhibited by both Spain's regional governance arrangements and Italy's National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Fragmented institutional landscape of Pakistan with overlapping directions between the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis, provincial social welfare departments, and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

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<sup>74</sup> Government of Italy, UNODC, Pakistan Country Assessment on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (Vienna: UNODC, 2023), 49–53

<sup>75</sup> Hussain Ahmad, "Migration, Remittances, and Development in Gujrat District," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 39, no. 2 (2022): 227–45.

These organisations hinder coherent victim rehabilitation and identification. The initiation of a provincial NRM in Punjab, combining the police, NGOs, FIA, and district administrations, could largely strengthen responsiveness.

The third lesson is civil society involvement and decentralisation. Both Spain and Italy greatly depend on NGOs for accommodation provision, rehabilitation, and victim outreach, with governments offering stable financial support and supervision. In Pakistan, NGOs such as Rozan, Aurat Foundation, and Sahil have significant experience in human rights support and gender-based violence. But have controlled arrangements in trafficking programs.<sup>76</sup> By offering small allowances through the Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA), the state could encourage local NGOs to launch awareness campaigns and victim support facilities in Gujrat.

Lastly, Spain and Italy's structures emphasise that public mobilisation and cultural sensitivity are necessary for retaining victim-centred frameworks. In both states, local groups and faith-based organisations have facilitated victims to reestablish their social identities. In Pakistan, where gender restrictions and honour traditions often silence survivors, influencing cultural and religious narratives around impartiality and compassion could modify public attitudes.<sup>77</sup> In Gujrat, teachers, local influencers and imams could play helpful roles related to faith-based NGOs in Spain and Catholic parishes in Italy, formulating social protective environments. Implanting such stories within media, education, and local administration would regularise protection-oriented replies to migration and trafficking vulnerabilities.

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<sup>76</sup> Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, "The Italian Approach to Trafficking in Human Beings," *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice* 20, no. 2 (2012): 167–83.

<sup>77</sup> Rosa Rossi, "Civil Society and the Moral Economy of Protection in Italy," *Migration Studies* 10, no. 2 (2022): 133–51

## CHAPTER 5

### 5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

To wrap up, this thesis has reviewed the complex dynamics of human trafficking and illegal migration from Pakistan, predominantly focusing on District Gujrat. This analysis is entrenched in a human security framework and emphasises on three major questions. First is the administrative and socio-economic foundations behind illegal migration. Second is the effect of global economic disparities and colonial inheritances on the current migration patterns. And third is the applicability of Pakistan's anti-trafficking model with the European frameworks, mainly the models of Spain and Italy. The results of this study prove that illegal migration and human trafficking are not merely an isolated action of violation of law, but rather an indication of lasting cultural standards, socio-economic weaknesses, and transnational disparities.

The study exhibited that the migration culture of the Gujrat District is deeply entrenched in both present-day and historical structures of economic motivations. Post-colonial legacies, such as reliance on agrarian stagnation, remittances, and social respect connected with migration, continue to influence future mobility decisions. These local patterns are implemented by restrictive migration administrations, global labour market disparities, and the security of overseas prosperity. Together, such dynamics uphold transnational trafficking and smuggling networks that misuse the gap between validity and opportunity. In return, these groups represent notable non-traditional security threats for Pakistan, undermining human rights protection, governance, and social cohesion.

At the global level, ongoing North-South differences support irregular economic relations. Industrialised economies need cheap labour, while continuously restricting the legal relocation, generating a paradox that fuels illegal migration. World-systems theory by Wallerstein gives a convincing lens to understand how the individuals of Gujrat, living in the peripheral states, are structurally pushed due to global economic inequalities towards the core countries through dangerous routes.

The in-depth study of District Gujrat is a representative of global migration trends. Here, illegal migration works through complicated kinship networks, local patronage systems, and prestige economies. Consequently, migration has become part of the cultural identity of Gujrat.

The mediators and representatives of migration are reflected as community intermediaries instead of criminals, received this local respect from family trust. This confusing of legitimacy and legality reveals state alone fails to combat illegal migration.

A comparative analysis of European models, mainly Spain and Italy, explained that robust anti-trafficking effects rely on established governance that combines law enforcement with victim rehabilitation, fortification, and social reintegration. Spain's decentralised community-based model and Article 19 of Italy's residence permit emphasised the ability of victim-centred approaches, concentrating on empowerment rather than criminalisation. Explaining these lessons in Pakistan needs institutional modernisation, NGOs' partnership, economic integration programs, and provincial referral mechanisms planned for districts like Gujrat.

Finally, the research concludes that migration governance in Pakistan must alter from vindictive punishments/control to protective empowerment. Countering illegal migration and trafficking needs not only border management but also civil awareness, data-driven policymaking, and social protection. A hybrid model shaped by Spain's participatory localism and Italy's welfare structure could prepare a sustainable path forward. Implanted in the principles of impartiality, inclusion, and human dignity, such strategies enable Pakistan, and primarily District Gujrat, to transform migration from a challenge of security into an opportunity for practical human development.

## **5.1 Policy Recommendations**

An extensive plan should contain safety, prevention, collaboration, and prosecution. The four "Ps" framework was supported by UNODC (2022).

### **5.1.1 Prevention and Awareness**

In Gujrat, the key urgency is to transform the mindset of the people. The state can do this through local religious leaders, community-based awareness campaigns, diaspora figures, and instructors who should deliver correct facts regarding migration threats. Educational programs at the college and secondary levels should integrate migration learning platforms to point out migration vulnerabilities and legal pathways. Civil society organisations, for instance, Society for Human Development, could be sponsored to increase these efforts in rural areas.

### **5.1.2 Protection and Reintegration**

Returnees and victims of failed migration attempts need institutional support. Establishing District Migration Resource Centres (DMRCs) under the Labour Department of Punjab could give debt assistance, professional training, and counselling sessions. Rehabilitation strategies must focus on diminishing stigmatisation and restoring dignity. Lessons can be learned from the Model of IOM Reintegration (2023) imposed in Bangladesh, which relates psychological support with financial assistance.

### **5.1.3 Prosecution and Legal Reforms**

Law enforcement procedures in Pakistan must transition from reactive to intelligence-driven tasks. The Anti-Human Trafficking Circles, such as FIA in Gujrat and Gujranwala, should get improved cybercrime units, an inter-agency intelligence platform, and digital investigation tools. Legislative clarity, separating migrant smuggling from human trafficking, and would support prosecution. Nominated judges or specialised courts for trafficking cases could speed up trials and improve conviction rates.

### **5.1.4 Partnership and Developmental Alternatives**

Viable solutions for this challenge demand collaboration across sectors. The TEVTA and the Punjab Skills Development Fund (PSDF) should broaden training shared with foreign legal labour markets (Malaysia, Qatar, Japan) to lift migration flows. Cooperation with European governments to launch bilateral labour passages would give safe choices while undermining the productivity of smuggling and trafficking. Moreover, using remittances for constructive investments through cooperative venture bonds could reduce economic reliance on illegal migration.

These agendas, if framed under a district-level governance of migration patterns, would manage both organizational causes of illegal migration and abrupt weaknesses.

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