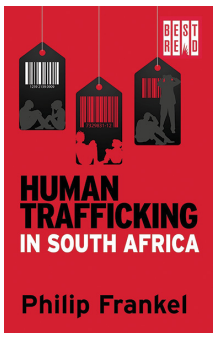
BOOK TITLE:
Human Trafficking in South Africa



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Critical insights into human trafficking in South Africa: A review of Philip Frankel's 2023 analysis

Frankel examines human trafficking as a crime against humanity and an obstacle to sustainable development, emphasising the need for collective efforts to combat it. The book effectively educates and mobilises the public in South Africa, positioning the country's efforts within a global context (p. 12). It is structured into three parts. The first part contextualises the issue globally and nationally, presenting human trafficking as a highly profitable criminal enterprise.[1] Frankel explores various forms of trafficking in South Africa, including sex, child, and labour trafficking, and identifies key drivers such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequalities. He also addresses cultural practices such as fostering arrangements, illegal adoptions, *muti* rituals, and *ukuthwala* (forced marriages), highlighting the tension between modernity and tradition that perpetuates trafficking.

In the second part, Frankel expands his analysis to neighbouring Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, including Namibia, Malawi, Zambia, Eswatini and Mozambique, critiquing weak counter-trafficking mechanisms exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. He argues that without regional collaboration and socio-economic improvements, trafficking – particularly the exploitation of women – will persist. He suggests that restrictive migration policies during the pandemic inadvertently pushed vulnerable individuals towards traffickers. This aligns with Bhagat's[2] study on Nepalese women, whose restricted movement due to government policies increased their vulnerability to trafficking. Similar findings by Adeyinka et al.[3] and Plambech[4] highlight how socio-economic challenges and restrictive migration policies in Europe heightened the risks faced by Nigerian women. Frankel's discussion of the clash between tradition and modernity resonates with Adeyinka et al.[3], who illustrate how traditional practices, including *juju* rituals, contribute to trafficking in Nigeria.

In the final part, Frankel proposes 10 actionable mechanisms to combat trafficking, such as supporting survivors, ensuring foreign investor compliance, combating corruption, promoting regional cooperation, and enhancing law enforcement capacity. He underscores the importance of addressing both socio-economic and cultural drivers that perpetuate trafficking.

The book references international treaties, including the *Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act* (PACOTIP) ratified by South Africa. It analyses different forms of trafficking and suggests mechanisms for their eradication. Frankel critiques neoliberal policies, arguing that market-driven approaches, deregulation, and economic growth priorities undermine social welfare and leave vulnerable populations exposed to exploitation. He asserts that institutions such as the IMF and World Bank encourage governments to prioritise large-scale economic projects at the expense of social protections, weakening state responses to trafficking. For instance, the South African government hesitated to address the rise in sex tourism post-COVID-19, fearing harm to the tourism industry, despite warnings of the increased exploitation of young girls (p. 228).

Frankel applies the Transition between Tradition and Modernity Theory to analyse how traditional cultural practices intersect with modern global pressures, exacerbating trafficking. Practices like *ukuthwala* and black *muti* continue to violate universal human rights standards and intensify the trafficking crisis, reflecting the conflict between preserving tradition and adopting modern human rights norms.

Frankel employs a comprehensive research methodology, drawing on primary and secondary data. His analysis incorporates post-2016 academic resources, including monographs, conference papers, unpublished postgraduate research, and reports from organisations such as UNODC and IOM. He also analyses a wide range of media reports and interviews with key stakeholders, including both perpetrators and victims (p. 13). This diverse range of sources enriches the study by providing theoretical insights and first-hand perspectives. The book addresses a significant gap in academic literature on human trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic – a period when global focus was primarily on health and economic crises. This context allowed Frankel to explore the overlooked intersection between trafficking, mobility, and pandemic-driven vulnerabilities.

Frankel successfully achieves the book's objective of educating and mobilising stakeholders, including educators, civil society, the private sector, law enforcement and policymakers, to engage in counter-trafficking efforts (p. 13). To extend the book's impact, broader dissemination methods, such as radio discussions, could be considered to reach wider audiences. The book highlights the need for further research into interventions, particularly considering the pandemic's complexities.

The book has several strengths, including its comparative approach to South Africa and neighbouring countries, its timely analysis of the pandemic's impact, and its provision of actionable solutions. However, the methodology presents some weaknesses. Frankel's interviews with traffickers provide rare insights, but the lack of transparency regarding how he gained access and trust raises ethical concerns. Without clear disclosure of the ethical safeguards applied, the research may face scrutiny regarding potential biases, participant safety, and informed consent procedures. The absence of detailed information on how these interviews were conducted and verified could affect the reliability of the findings. Similar studies, such as those by Adeyinka et al.[3] and Plambech[4], have struggled with access and confidentiality issues, often relying on anonymous sources and protective measures, which Frankel does not explicitly discuss. Future studies could benefit from a more detailed discussion of the research process to enhance transparency and address potential ethical gaps.

Philip Frankel's book provides a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of human trafficking in South Africa, offering valuable insights and practical recommendations. Future studies should explore the cultural and social dimensions

of trafficking beyond economic factors, contributing to a more holistic understanding of the issue. Ultimately, Frankel's work serves as an important foundation for further discussions and policy interventions. As Frankel notes, "State response to human trafficking in contemporary African states will not be successful unless there is a collective responsibility of all relevant stakeholders" (p. 168). Based on the work done, I have no doubt that Frankel achieved his main goal, which is to educate and mobilise the public to combat trafficking in persons.

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