

UAI JOURNAL OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (UAJAHSS)



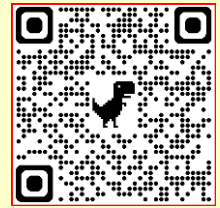
Abbreviated Key Title: UAI J Arts Humanit Soc Sci

ISSN: 3048-7692 (Online)

Journal Homepage: <https://uaipublisher.com/uaijahss/>

Volume- 2 Issue- 12 (December) 2025

Frequency: Monthly



The Role of the Local Church in Anti-Trafficking Governance in Sumba, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking in Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia persists due to intersecting structural vulnerabilities, including chronic poverty, irregular migration channels, and weak law enforcement. While governmental and NGO interventions remain fragmented, faith-based actors—especially the Catholic Church—have become central in filling gaps in community-level prevention and survivor support. Drawing on qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, this article examines how the Diocese of Weetebula's Commission for Justice, Peace, and Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees mobilises religious authority, social capital, and inter-organisational networks to counter trafficking. Using a community-based anti-trafficking and faith-based social capital framework, the study shows that Church interventions extend beyond charity: they constitute local infrastructures of protection, advocacy, and trauma recovery in a context of state insufficiency. The article highlights both the political potentials and the structural constraints of faith-driven action and contributes to debates on community-rooted responses in the global South.

KEY WORDS: human trafficking; faith-based responses; Catholic Church; Indonesia; community protection; migration governance.

Introduction

Human trafficking in Sumba, Nusa Tenggara Timur Province (NTT), has emerged as a critical socio-political problem shaped by intersecting economic, cultural, and legal vulnerabilities. The region is widely recognized as a significant source area for trafficked persons, particularly women and children, who are subjected to forced labor, domestic servitude, and sexual exploitation. Understanding the persistence of trafficking in NTT requires a comprehensive analysis of its structural drivers and an assessment of the effectiveness of state and non-state interventions.

Recent statistics underscore the scale of the crisis. In 2023, the NTT Provincial Government identified 185 victims of human trafficking, consisting of 39 women and 146 men, including 20 children (Bataona, 2024). Complementing these data, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

reported that between 2020 and 2024, at least 657 migrant workers from NTT were repatriated in a deceased condition. In 2024 alone, 51 Indonesian migrant workers died abroad, only one of whom departed through legal channels, while the remaining 50 migrated non-procedurally (Taris & Assifa, 2024). These figures reveal systemic failures in migration governance and persistent gaps in state mechanisms intended to prevent irregular departures and protect citizens from trafficking networks.

Socio-economic vulnerability remains one of the most significant contributors to trafficking in NTT. As of March 2025, the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (2025) reported the province's poverty rate stands at 18.60%, the sixth-highest in Indonesia after Papua (19.16%), South Papua (19.71%), West Papua (20.66%), Central Papua (28.90%), and Papua Pegunungan (30.03%) (Tiyas, 2025). Although poverty has gradually declined, NTT has remained among the poorest

provinces for over a decade. Scholars have long noted the relationship between poverty and heightened susceptibility to trafficking. Gobang and Salesman (2019) argue that limited economic opportunities compel many residents to seek work in urban centers or overseas, creating conditions that traffickers easily exploit. This broader economic landscape helps explain why trafficking persists despite ongoing policy interventions.

In response to this situation, the Indonesian government has implemented national laws and adopted international protocols. Nevertheless, questions remain regarding the effectiveness of these measures. The U.S. Department of Justice continues to classify Indonesia as a source country for trafficked persons, particularly women and children, highlighting weaknesses in the legal and enforcement frameworks (Mayasari, 2023). Coordination gaps between government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) further impede the development of a cohesive anti-trafficking strategy (Paksi & Hutami, 2023). Although NGOs provide essential assistance—ranging from victim support to advocacy—their efforts require stronger integration within broader governmental systems to achieve sustainable impact.

Recent studies propose a range of strategies to address the root causes of trafficking. Empowerment programs that enhance education and vocational training are considered particularly effective in reducing vulnerability, as noted by Goma (2020). Yet, Utami (2019) observes that provincial-level initiatives in NTT remain insufficient, particularly in empowering survivors and addressing community-level needs. A collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach—incorporating government bodies, civil society, and local communities—is therefore crucial, as emphasized by Bheni and Purwanto (2022). Stronger law enforcement and improvements in educational quality are similarly identified as essential components for reducing structural inequalities that enable trafficking (Darung & Prasetya, 2022).

Within this complex landscape, the Catholic Church has emerged as a significant actor. Historically rooted in social service provision and adaptable to social change (Dorodonova et al., 2022), the Church possesses extensive networks capable of delivering education, advocacy, and community outreach. Research shows that educational programs—particularly those communicating the risks of trafficking and citizens' rights—can reduce vulnerability (Khamzin et al., 2023). These initiatives are reinforced by Catholic theological principles emphasizing human dignity and the moral imperative to protect the vulnerable (Eliasaputra et al., 2022). Catholic institutions also offer crucial social services, including shelter, counseling, and rehabilitation for survivors, informed by a holistic understanding of human well-being (Barrows, 2017).

Existing research on trafficking in NTT has primarily focused on governance failures, poverty, and the role of recruitment brokers. Yet little has been written about how faith-based actors shape community responses to trafficking, despite their centrality in rural areas like Sumba, where the state is often absent or ineffective. The Catholic Church, particularly the Diocese of Weetebula, has historically been one of the most trusted institutions on the island and possesses deep social legitimacy, extensive networks, and the ability to mobilise collective action at scale. These characteristics make it a critical, yet understudied, actor in anti-trafficking work.

This study examines the role of Catholic communities in Sumba—particularly those organized by the Commission for Justice, Peace –

Pastoral for Migrants and Refugees (JP-PMR) of the Diocese of Weetebula—in preventing trafficking and supporting victims. Working in collaboration with government agencies, NGOs, and humanitarian organizations, these communities ground their efforts in a commitment to human dignity and Catholic social teaching. By documenting their interventions, this study aims to contribute a faith-based framework for anti-trafficking work that may be applicable in comparable contexts facing similar vulnerabilities.

Materials and Methods

The research conducted in this study on human trafficking adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on literature analysis and field studies. The primary aim is to understand the factors contributing to human trafficking and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, particularly the role of the Catholic Communities in Sumba. A qualitative approach was chosen as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perspectives of individuals and groups involved in human trafficking issues.

Data Collection

Data were collected between 2023 and 2024 using three techniques. *First*, In-depth semi-structured interviews. This includes two survivors (women aged 19–27), six stakeholders: Chair of JP-PMR Commission, Staff from Sarnelli Foundation (legal services), Staff from Seraphine Foundation (survivor recovery), Volunteer Network for Humanity representative, Local Ministry of Manpower official, and Indonesian Red Cross staff. Respondents are coded R1–R8. *Second*, Focus group discussion (FGD). A twelve-person discussion (community leaders, youth leaders, Church volunteers, and NGO partners) provided collective perspectives on structural causes and community mechanisms of protection. *Third*, Document analysis. Documents included parish-level reports, JP-PMR activity records, legal case summaries, and government trafficking data. Thus, document analysis helped link local narratives with broader governance failures (cf. David et al., 2019; Lyons & Ford, 2013).

Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy included respondents recruited through purposive and snowball sampling, a standard for research involving hidden or vulnerable populations (Berg & Lune, 2017). Survivors were contacted through Church-supported shelters, while institutional stakeholders were approached based on their direct involvement in anti-trafficking activities.

Data Analysis

Data were processed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013), conducted in four stages. *First*, Preliminary coding of interview transcripts. *Second*, collation of codes into thematic categories. *Third*, linking themes with theoretical frameworks—community-based protection, faith-based social capital, and structural violence (Farmer, 2004; Shamir, 2012). *Fourth*, interpretation in relation to migration governance and power dynamics in NTT.

This analysis helped us understand the factors contributing to human trafficking and the prevention strategies implemented by the local Church and other institutions. Triangulation was employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the research data, combining data from multiple sources (interviews, discussions, and documents) to obtain a more comprehensive picture of human trafficking in Sumba. Additionally, feedback from research participants was incorporated to strengthen the findings. The interview topics for the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Topics of interviews with the respondents

Code of Respondents	Status	Topics	Sub-topics
R1 and R2	The survivors	The experience of the survivors' suffering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment process - Temporary shelter before departure - Workplace conditions - The process of liberation, repatriation, and recovery.
R3	Chairman of the JP-PMR Commission of the Diocese of Weetebula	The Work of the Diocese of Weetebula in Combating Human Trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A concern of the Diocese over the many cases of human trafficking in Sumba - Duties of the JP-PMR Commission - Coordination of work within the Catholic Church Community in the fight against human trafficking - Development of a network outside the Catholic Church Community in handling Human Trafficking cases - Establishment of a network to the destination country for the repatriation of the bodies of victims of violence and the rescued victims - Establishment of a network from the parish level to the Basic Ecclesial Community for the monitoring of any actions leading to human trafficking.
R4	An official from the Sarnelli Foundation	Legal assistance for victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reasons and a brief history of the establishment of the Sarnelli Foundation - Routine activities of the Foundation - Activities of the Foundation in collaboration with the JP-PMR Commission for the defense of Human Trafficking Victims' Human Rights
R5	An Official from the Seraphine Foundation	Victim Recovery and Training for Job Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Church's concern for children from low-income families - Trauma recovery for victims of Human Trafficking - Job skills training for victims before returning to their families
R6	An Official from the Volunteer Network for Humanity	Community Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educating the public about the dangers of human trafficking - Building a cross-sector network in educating people - Assisting trafficking survivors.
R7	An Official from the Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia at the district level	Prevention of illegal sending of migrant workers outside the region/country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building public awareness to prevent brokers who deceive prospective migrant workers with various empty promises - Ensuring that young people who want to migrate have legal documents
R8	An Official from the Indonesian Red Cross at the local level	Repatriation of bodies and survivors to their home areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing an ambulance to pick up the bodies of victims who arrive at the airport and send them back to their families - Assisting in the repatriation of the rescued victims to their home areas

Ethical Considerations

Research involving trafficking survivors requires careful ethical navigation. Although formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval had not yet been issued at the time of fieldwork, the study adhered to ethical principles aligned with the World Health Organization's guidelines for interviewing trafficked women (Zimmerman & Watts, 2003) and the ethical protocols articulated in empirical trafficking scholarship (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2010; Gerassi, 2017). Ethical safeguards included:

- 1) Informed consent: All respondents received verbal explanations of the study's aims, risks, benefits, and their rights, followed by verbal informed consent.
- 2) Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw: participants were informed that refusal or withdrawal would not affect their access to Church or NGO services.

- 3) Anonymity and confidentiality: All survivor data were anonymised, and identifiable details were altered or omitted. Codes (R1–R8) are used.
- 4) Trauma-sensitive interviewing: Questions avoided graphic descriptions of abuse, in line with trauma-informed research principles (Hopper, Bassuk & Olivet, 2010).
- 5) Institutional support: Permission to use data was granted by JP-PMR and partner institutions.

Findings

To understand the role of the Local Church in the fight against Human Trafficking, the Local Church of the Diocese of Weetebula, on the island of Sumba, Indonesia, was first introduced as a research location. The Diocese of Weetebula is one of 38 dioceses in Indonesia, covering the entire island of Sumba. Currently, the Catholic population within the Diocese of Weetebula numbers 186,986, with the highest concentration in the Southwest Sumba Regency. Organizationally, the diocese is divided into 25 parishes and three quasi-parishes, each led by a pastor and supported by a council and various other officials, following the organizational structure of the Catholic Church. In addition to overseeing the parishes, the Diocese of Weetebula has several commissions that address different aspects of pastoral service. To enhance the management of pastoral services, the diocese collaborates with several religious orders, among which the SVD, CSsR, and the Sisters of Charity of the Precious Blood (in Indonesian: *Amalkasih Darah Mulia*, abbreviated as ADM)) have the longest-standing presence on Sumba.

One of the Diocese of Weetebula commissions is the Commission for

Justice and Peace - Pastoral Ministry for Migrants and Refugees (JP-PMR). The JP-PMR's duties include forming Catholic communities of congregation members committed to humanitarian service. These communities are established from the parish to the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) levels. The operational framework involves a networked approach, in which the community formed at the parish level addresses each incident of human rights violations at the BEC level, in collaboration with the diocesan JP-PMR commission.

Currently, the routine activities of the JP-PMR commission include:

1. Establishing communication and networking with NGOs, both within the Catholic community and across religious lines.
2. Educating the congregation about the danger of Human Trafficking Crimes.
3. Assisting and supporting the recovery of victims of Human Trafficking Crimes.
4. Facilitating legal assistance for cases of human rights violations and violence.

In carrying out these activities, the JP-PMR Commission establishes collaborative networks with various foundations within the Catholic community and interfaith organizations engaged in humanitarian work. The Chairman of the JP-PMR Commission revealed, "We are aware that we cannot work alone. Therefore, we are open to working with everyone who has the same concerns, both from within the Catholic community and from outside." In accordance with this, the Commission collaborates with four main partners: the Sarnelli Foundation, the Seraphine Foundation, the Humanitarian Volunteer Network (HVN), government bodies, and the Indonesian Red Cross (IRC). The activities and partners of the JP-PMR Commission in combating Human Trafficking are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Activities, Partners, and Types of Activities in Combating Human Trafficking

Field of Activity	Partners	Position	Types of Activities
Legal Services	Sarnelli Foundation	Within the Catholic community	Defending human rights, particularly by advocating for victims to reclaim their rights.
The recovery of survivors	Seraphine Foundation	Within the Catholic community	Assistance for survivors in their recovery, trauma healing, and training before reuniting with their families.
Education	Humanitarian Volunteer Network (HVN)	Within the Catholic community	Education for vulnerable populations about the dangers of human trafficking
Prevention of illegal recruitment	Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia at the district level	Beyond the Catholic Church	Preventing the illegal recruitment of prospective migrant workers
Repatriation of victims	Indonesian Red Cross	Beyond the Catholic Church	Repatriation of deceased individuals or the retrieval of human trafficking victims to be returned to their hometowns

In legal services, the JP-PMR works closely with the Sarnelli Foundation. This partnership has proven effective, as the Sarnelli Foundation is an official Catholic institution managed by the CSsR. The legal assistance aims to defend human rights, particularly by advocating for victims to reclaim their rights. Through the Sarnelli Foundation, various issues have been successfully addressed. This Foundation originated from concerns within the diocese, in collaboration with the CSsR, regarding legal pastoral care and human

rights, which began in 2009. The CSsR subsequently established a foundation known as the Legal Studies and Assistance Foundation Sarnelli (In Indonesia, it is abbreviated as YKBH Sarnelli). This Foundation assists the Sumba community by providing legal services. One of the staff of the Sarnelli Foundation stated, "We are basically active in the field of advocacy, including dispute resolution, conflict resolution, and defense for victims of human rights violations and violence, besides defending the victims of Human Trafficking". By

2018, the Foundation had successfully resolved 250 cases, including two that involved severe human rights violations. Although the Foundation is located in Waikabubak, West Sumba, it operates service posts in several locations across the island.

In the recovery process for victims of human trafficking, the JP-PMR Commission collaborates with the Seraphine Foundation. This Foundation is also an organization within the Diocese of Weetebula, initiated and managed by the Sisters of ADM. The Diocese of Weetebula is particularly concerned for children from underprivileged families who drop out of school. To address this issue, the Seraphine Foundation was established by the Sisters of ADM on June 7, 1991 (Kelen, 2018). The Foundation operates in the following areas: 1) Providing care and guidance to abandoned children from impoverished families. 2) Offering training and motivation to youth and school dropouts to improve their employability through skills training courses. 3) Providing vulnerable families guidance, motivation, and support through productive economic activities. Examples of activities include sewing courses, weaving, processing local food materials to promote dietary diversity, and health education. Thus far, the collaboration between the JP-PMR Commission and the Seraphine Foundation has been fruitful, with several survivors receiving assistance in their recovery and training before reuniting with their families.

The JP-PMR Commission also works with the Humanitarian Volunteer Network (HVN), which has established a presence and built communities in Sumba. HVN was founded in Kupang on June 10, 2014, by Father Leonardus Mali, a priest of the Archdiocese of Kupang. Initially, Father Leo gathered several seminarians from St. Michael's Major Seminary and students to discuss the rising incidence of human trafficking in NTT. This initiative gained laypeople's support, leading to a volunteer community dedicated to the anti-human trafficking movement. Their approach focuses on building cross-sector networks to educate the public about the dangers of human trafficking and to assist trafficking survivors. A distinctive aspect of this community is its focused commitment to combating human trafficking. Soon after its establishment, an HVN community was formed in Sumba. The collaboration between the JP-PMR Commission and the HVN community has been particularly effective in educating vulnerable populations about human trafficking. These educational efforts have significantly enhanced the community's understanding of the issue. In addition to education, the HVN community engages in other humanitarian initiatives and maintains consistent collaboration with the JP-PMR Commission.

Beyond the Catholic Church, the JP-PMR Commission collaborates with government entities and the Indonesian Red Cross (IRC). Cooperation with local government is primarily aimed at preventing the illegal recruitment of prospective migrant workers by irresponsible individuals and facilitating the repatriation of survivors from abroad. In collaboration with the IRC, efforts have primarily focused on the repatriation of deceased individuals or the retrieval of human trafficking victims to be returned to their hometowns. The government and IRC have consistently been open to collaborating with the JP-PMR Commission for these humanitarian services, including the repatriation of victims of human trafficking.

Thematic analysis generated four major themes that illustrate how the Catholic Church in Sumba—primarily through JP-PMR—constructs community-rooted infrastructures of protection in a context marked by structural vulnerability, limited state capacity, and entrenched informal recruitment networks. These themes reflect patterns consistently emerging from interview data with survivors, Church personnel, NGO actors, and local officials. The four themes include:

1) *Mobilising Trust and Religious Legitimacy*, 2) *Community Education and Early Warning Systems*, 3) *Multisectoral Protection Networks*, and 4) *Survivor-Centred Recovery and Trauma Care*.

Theme 1: Mobilising Trust and Religious Legitimacy

The first theme concerns the Church's unique capacity to mobilise deep-rooted community trust and religious legitimacy in addressing trafficking-related vulnerabilities. Across interviews, respondents described the Church as the most trusted institution in their villages, often more approachable and credible than police or government officers. This trust is anchored in the Church's longstanding presence through sacraments, parish life, catechesis, and Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), which positions it at the centre of social life.

Information about suspicious recruiters, sudden migration plans, or dubious financial arrangements frequently reaches parish priests and catechists before it reaches any state authority. A Church worker explained that, *"People come to us not because we have power, but because they believe we will not ignore them. They trust we will listen."*

This moral and relational authority allows JP-PMR to intervene early, offering guidance to families, counselling to youth, and informal mediation when recruiters appear in the community. Religious legitimacy thus becomes a form of practical authority—enabling the Church to act in spaces where state enforcement is limited, inconsistent, or compromised.

Theme 2: Community Education and Early Warning Systems

The second theme captures JP-PMR's preventive strategies through community education and the development of local early warning systems. Rather than relying solely on rescues or legal interventions, the Church emphasises proactive, parish-based prevention that equips villagers with skills to recognise risky recruitment patterns.

Education programmes—carried out in parishes, schools, youth groups, and village meetings—explain the tactics commonly used by traffickers, including contract deception, debt-based recruitment, and document confiscation. Several participants noted that these sessions not only warned them of dangers but also helped them understand why recruitment pressures are so prevalent. One youth participant observed, *"The training helped us see the bigger picture, not just fear the recruiters. It helped us ask why so many young people feel they cannot stay."*

Early warning systems arise organically from the Church's dense grassroots presence. BEC leaders routinely share information about upcoming departures or interactions with unfamiliar intermediaries. These signals travel quickly to JP-PMR, which then investigates the recruiter's legitimacy, advises the family, or alerts NGO and government partners. A local official admitted, *"Often the Church knows what is happening in a village long before our office does."*

Through these mechanisms, JP-PMR becomes a central actor in detecting and preventing exploitation at the earliest stages of the migration process.

Theme 3: Multisectoral Protection Networks

The third theme concerns how the Church coordinates multisectoral protection networks that link local communities, NGOs, humanitarian actors, and government agencies. Given the fragmented nature of labour governance in Sumba—where resources are limited and administrative coordination is inconsistent—responses to trafficking require collaboration across institutions with different capacities and mandates.

JP-PMR functions as a convening institution, mobilising partnerships that include legal aid organisations, women's shelters, social workers, labour migration offices, and humanitarian groups. For instance, the Church frequently receives the first notification about a potential trafficking case, NGO partners provide legal consultation, and government offices handle documentation or reporting. One partner organisation stated, "When there is a case, it is usually the Church who calls us first. Their backing gives weight to our advocacy."

The Church's convening capacity also offers political protection to smaller NGOs that risk backlash when confronting powerful brokers or local elites. Through these coordinated actions, JP-PMR acts as a hybrid governance node—filling institutional gaps, building trust-based bridges between actors, and shaping a more coherent community protection system.

Theme 4: Survivor-Centred Recovery and Trauma Care

The fourth theme highlights the Church's central role in facilitating survivor-centred, trauma-informed recovery for trafficking survivors returning to Sumba. Many survivors experience not only physical and psychological harm but also family conflict, community stigma, and loss of livelihood. State rehabilitation services are sparse, particularly in rural areas, leaving survivors with limited avenues for support.

Church-affiliated shelters and partners provide integrated care, including safe housing, psychosocial counselling, spiritual accompaniment, medical referrals, legal assistance, and skills development. Survivors consistently emphasised the emotional safety these spaces provide. One survivor said, "At the shelter, they didn't blame me. They helped me feel human again."

Reintegration support focuses on restoring relationships with families, addressing stigma, and rebuilding livelihoods. Parish-based networks help connect survivors with education, training, and small-business opportunities. These efforts address the structural vulnerabilities that often lead to re-trafficking and highlight how the Church functions as a substitute welfare provider in regions where state services are insufficient or inaccessible.

Taken together, these four themes illustrate how the Church's embedded presence in everyday community life, its ability to mobilise trust, and its coordination with multiple actors position it as a central figure in the local governance of anti-trafficking protection in Sumba. The findings show that JP-PMR's interventions extend beyond pastoral outreach to shape community decision-making, influence migration trajectories, and compensate for gaps in state protection. These dynamics raise broader questions regarding the political role of faith-based organisations, the uneven distribution of protective responsibilities, and the structural conditions that generate vulnerability. The following discussion situates these findings within wider debates on anti-trafficking governance, community-based protection, and the politics of faith-based engagement.

Discussion

An examination of the local Church's strategies and operational methods for combating human trafficking—focusing particularly on the Diocese of Weetebula's JP-PMR Commission—reveals a multifaceted, contextually attuned approach. Local Church bodies employ a range of interventions, including advocacy and policy engagement, community mobilization, public education, inter-organizational collaboration, and efforts to confront structural vulnerabilities. These strategies collectively constitute a critical framework for countering human trafficking. The JP-PMR Commission exemplifies this comprehensive orientation through its

prevention, victim support, and rehabilitation initiatives, thereby making a substantive contribution to broader anti-trafficking efforts.

Advocacy and policy influence remain central to the Church's strategy, particularly the JP-PMR Commission's work. Drawing on moral authority and deep-rooted community ties, the Commission seeks to raise public awareness of trafficking and shape policy responses. Its active engagement in anti-trafficking campaigns not only cultivates communal responsibility but also challenges the social norms that facilitate trafficking practices. This emphasis resonates with scholarship highlighting the importance of community-based approaches, which position local actors as those most attuned to the challenges and needs of their specific contexts (Beck et al., 2017). Moreover, JP-PMR's advocacy helps create supportive environments for survivors—an essential precondition for recovery and reintegration.

Community engagement and direct support services constitute another core dimension of the Commission's strategy. The JP-PMR Commission conducts educational outreach programs designed to raise public awareness, particularly among at-risk groups such as youth, regarding the signs and dangers of trafficking. Fraley and Subedi argue that such educational initiatives equip individuals to identify and report suspicious activity, thereby strengthening community vigilance (Fraley & Subedi, 2022). Collaboration with organizations such as the Humanitarian Volunteer Network further amplifies these efforts, exemplifying the value of the collaborative partnerships underscored by (Begum, 2020). Through these engagements, the Commission not only disseminates information but also mobilizes collective action against trafficking.

A robust collaborative network is equally essential to the Commission's approach. JP-PMR fosters communication and coordination among Church commissions and governmental and non-governmental partners. Franklin and Koszalinski highlight that such multi-sectoral frameworks are indispensable for effective anti-trafficking responses, enabling stakeholders to address the diverse needs of victims and communities (Franklin & Koszalinski, 2022). The Commission's partnerships with the Legal Aid Institute Sarnelli and the Seraphine Foundation further demonstrate this principle, embodying the collaborative orientation identified by (Mostajabian et al., 2019). Through these partnerships, survivors gain access to comprehensive services, including legal assistance and rehabilitation support.

Addressing the structural and socio-economic drivers of trafficking forms another foundational element of the JP-PMR Commission's work. Recognizing that economic precarity heightens vulnerability, the Commission invests in skill development and educational opportunities for out-of-school youth. As Hammond & McGlone (2014) observe, equipping individuals with relevant skills mitigates the factors that place them at risk of exploitation. Similarly, JP-PMR's collaborations with organizations specializing in recovery and reintegration reflect the holistic approach identified by Munsey et al. (2018), which emphasizes the importance of psychological care, life-skills training, and long-term support in facilitating survivors' reintegration. Such interventions are vital for reducing the long-term impacts of trafficking and supporting a sustainable return to community life.

These initiatives align closely with international anti-trafficking frameworks. The United Nations and numerous NGOs stress the importance of community-based strategies, recognizing that local organizations are best positioned to respond to context-specific manifestations of trafficking (Schwarz et al., 2017). By integrating

local wisdom, resources, and networks, the Diocese of Weetebula contributes meaningfully to the global struggle against human trafficking. Its emphasis on community engagement, cross-sector collaboration, and structural prevention reflects a nuanced understanding of the complexity of trafficking and the necessity of multidimensional solutions.

Finally, the JP-PMR Commission's attention to psychological and emotional care underscores the centrality of trauma-informed approaches. Research shows that survivors frequently experience profound and complex trauma as a result of their exploitation (Bucken-Knapp et al., 2012). Through partnerships with organizations offering psychological counseling and rehabilitation services, the Commission provides vital support that fosters healing and empowers survivors to reclaim agency in their lives (Macy & Johns, 2011). This trauma-informed orientation is indispensable, acknowledging the deep mental health consequences of trafficking and addressing them as integral to the broader process of reintegration.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations

The activities of the JP-PMR Commission in dealing with human trafficking have limitations because many cases are beyond the reach of the local Church. In carrying out the fight against human trafficking, the Commission and its volunteers often encounter complicated cases. Some volunteers found that there are new modes of labor recruitment through online media that are very disguised, making them difficult to handle. In addition, there is also the involvement of government officers and security forces who facilitate the smuggling of prospective migrant workers abroad because of the motive of accepting bribes from candidate recruitment agencies, which also perpetuates human trafficking cases. Some of the examples presented include falsifying identity documents for prospective migrants abroad to make minors eligible. In addition, when cases of human rights violations related to human trafficking are reported to the security forces, even though the report is received, the handling is very slow or not handled at all if the community does not continuously urge it.

Therefore, law enforcement from the central government is urgently needed so that officials at the local level are dealt with firmly. This opinion aligns with several scholars' views, who emphasize the importance of law enforcement, especially in areas that have not been explored (Islam, 2024; Winterdyk, 2017). In addition, the role of the media in widely voicing the act of human trafficking is critical (Hadjira et al., 2023). The media is expected to be more agile in speaking out so the central government can hear it, and to form public opinion that is more concerned with eradicating human trafficking. Interfaith cooperation also needs to be encouraged, both to jointly handle concrete cases of human trafficking as well as to educate the public to be more concerned and more involved in the anti-human trafficking movement. Leary (2018) emphasized that world religions and religious organizations have the same concerns and are experienced in dealing with human trafficking, so it is essential to be partners in efforts to handle these humanitarian problems.

Conclusion

The role of the local Church in combating human trafficking, particularly as exemplified by the Diocese of Weetebula in Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara (Indonesia), underscores the critical intersection of faith, community engagement, and advocacy in addressing this pervasive issue. The socio-economic vulnerabilities of the region, coupled with its complex cultural dynamics, necessitate a multifaceted approach to combat human trafficking effectively. The

Commission's strategies, which include advocacy, community education, and collaboration with various stakeholders, highlight the importance of leveraging local knowledge and resources to create sustainable solutions. Integrating faith into these initiatives enhances community trust and provides a moral framework that resonates deeply within the local context. By fostering partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations, the Commission for JP-PMR exemplifies how collaborative efforts can amplify the impact of anti-trafficking initiatives. Furthermore, the emphasis on addressing the root causes of trafficking through education and economic empowerment is essential in mitigating the vulnerabilities that lead individuals to become victims of traffickers. As the global community continues to grapple with the complexities of human trafficking, the experiences and strategies of the Church's Commission like the Commission for JP-PMR serve as valuable models for other regions facing similar challenges. Their commitment to upholding human dignity and providing holistic support to victims not only aids in recovery but also fosters a culture of resilience and empowerment within the community. Ultimately, the fight against human trafficking requires a concerted effort that harnesses the strengths of faith, community, and collaborative action, paving the way for a future where human dignity is respected and protected.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the Institute for Research and Community Service at Widya Mandira Catholic University for providing financial support for this research. We also thanked Father Christo Ngasi, the Chairman of the JP-PMR Commission of the Diocese of Weetebula, for the good cooperation with the researchers to obtain accurate field data. We are especially grateful to Father Leonardus Mali, Mr. Herman Seran, and their fellow activists for their research assistance. Their rich insights and experience in anti-human trafficking movements have significantly helped us improve the quality of this paper.

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