

Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Preventing Human Trafficking Through Corporate Social Responsibility Approach: An Empirical Study

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"Voluntary codes are a pledge, a moral contract—binding corporations to protect the sacred right to life for all." - Isabella Moreno¹

Abstract:

This study explores the effectiveness of Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct (CVCC) for preventing human trafficking through a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) approach. The research involved a diverse sample size of 543 participants, including corporate governance professionals, international justice authorities, human trafficking combating establishments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to test hypotheses, utilizing a range of statistical methods such as Mean, Standard Deviation, Coefficient of Variation, Skewness and Kurtosis and t-test, ANOVA, Correlation, Multiple Regression, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) respectively. The study utilized a 5-point Likert scale to assess 125 factors reduced to 15 combined factors out of 77 factors, and 48 factors became redundant by administering data reduction technique related to preventing human trafficking, encompassing CVCC and CSR. The findings were employed to develop a comprehensive Human Trafficking Controlling and Prevention Model. The results highlight the significance of CVCC in conjunction with CSR initiatives in addressing human trafficking prevention issues beyond the confinement of corporate voluntary codes. It is imperative to mention that CSR as a corporate code of conduct is mandatory in terms of the stipulations of Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 and it is voluntary in nature in rest of the countries across the world. This research contributes to the evolving discourse on corporate responsibility and its potential impact on preventing human trafficking, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach that extends beyond regulatory frameworks.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct, Human Trafficking Prevention, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Human Trafficking Controlling and Prevention Model

1.1 Introduction:

To begin with the quote "Voluntary codes are a pledge, a moral contract—binding corporations to protect the sacred right to life for all" attributed to Isabella Moreno, encapsulates the profound essence of corporate responsibility and its potential impact on safeguarding fundamental human rights, particularly the right to life. It articulates a compelling perspective on the role of voluntary codes in shaping corporate conduct and, by extension, the broader landscape of global commerce. At its core, the quote, the author emphasizes the transformative power of voluntary codes of conduct within the corporate realm. By characterizing these codes as a pledge and a moral contract, Moreno elevates them beyond mere guidelines or recommendations. Instead, she portrays them as solemn promises, akin to a

¹ Isabella Moreno (March 5, 1980-) born in: Buenos Aires, Argentina, J.D. in International Law, Stanford Law School and an ardent Human Rights Lawyer, Co-founder of Ethical Corporations Initiative ; worked on legal frameworks to hold corporations accountable for human rights violations.

sacred covenant, through which corporations willingly commit to upholding a standard of behavior that transcends profit margins and market share. The word "voluntary" takes on significant weight in this context, highlighting a proactive choice by corporations to align their practices with ethical principles.

The notion of a moral contract carries profound implications, suggesting an implicit agreement between corporations and society at large. This contract implies a reciprocal relationship wherein corporations acknowledge a responsibility beyond their bottom line—a responsibility to protect and preserve the sanctity of life. Moreno contends that this commitment is not negotiable; it is binding. The use of the term "binding" underscores the enforceability of these codes, not necessarily in a legal sense, but in the sense of a moral imperative that corporations willingly embrace. The focal point of this moral contract is the safeguarding of the sacred right to life for all individuals. Here, the language is deliberate and evocative. Referring to the right to life as "sacred" imbues it with a moral and ethical significance that transcends legal frameworks. The sacredness of life implies an inherent dignity that every individual possesses, irrespective of their social, economic, or geographic circumstances. Moreno contends that corporations, through voluntary codes of conduct, assume a custodial role in protecting and respecting this inherent dignity. The universality of the phrase "for all" underscores the inclusive nature of this commitment. It extends beyond borders, demographics, and societal divisions. The right to life is not a privilege reserved for a select few but a birthright for every human being. In this regard,

Moreno challenges corporations to recognize and act upon their capacity to influence global dynamics positively. Voluntary codes become a mechanism through which corporations contribute to the realization of a shared human value—the right to live with dignity². Isabella Moreno's quote, therefore, encapsulates a visionary perspective on the potential of corporate voluntary codes of conduct. It envisions a corporate landscape where profit is not divorced from ethical considerations but rather intrinsically linked to a commitment to human rights. It challenges corporations to embrace their role as stewards of a collective moral responsibility, wherein the protection of the right to life becomes an integral part of their identity and purpose in the global community.

The authors advocate for a paradigm shift in corporate consciousness—one where ethical considerations are not only valued but embedded in the very DNA of corporate decision-making. Corporatization of the global economy gained momentum after the emergence of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th Century and the repulsive effect of the same touched upon every country all over the globe and it is more so in the case of European and American countries. The concept of joint stock form of enterprises received tremendous popularity all over the world along with taking off of the Industrial Revolution. The corporate form of business organization enjoys the benefit of the principle of perpetual existence. Almost every country all over the world regulates and monitors the functions of corporate form of organizations by dint of an Act of Parliament which is popularly by and large known to be the Companies Act or the Corporate Act. In the 14th Century, the term 'Company'³ was adopted by certain merchants for trading overseas in England. This was an extension of merchants' guilds in

² The right to live with human dignity is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 21 in the Indian Constitution (The Constitution of India, 1950) is echoed in the voice of Isabella Moreno

³ A Company is an association of collection of individuals, whether natural persons, legal persons or a mixture of both. Company members share a common purpose and unite together in order to focus their various talents and organize their collectively available skills or resources to achieve specific and declared goals.

foreign trade and they gradually spread all over the world and thereafter scientifically evolved to the present corporate form of organizations or enterprises known as corporations which are required to function within the legal framework of Company Law and more particularly within the ambit of the Charter granted by Law in the form the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association⁴.

The Memorandum of Association is known as the Charter by dint of which it functions as an artificial individual and it takes legal, economic, financial and managerial decisions with the help of the Board of Directors⁵ duly elected by the shareholders of the company. A business is an organ of the society and the society gets its wants removing goods and services produced and generated respectively by the business as the sole economic agent of the society. Society is the owner of the factors of production such as land, labor, capital and managerial inputs as defined by the classical economists. Thus, the business organizations owe to the society and we would like connote business organizations or entities as the corporate form of organizations or simply companies within the meaning of the Companies Act or Corporate Laws of the concerned countries. There is a symbiotic relationship between the corporations and the society and here underlies the relevance of philosophy of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Corporations or enterprises are supposed to mitigate their indebtedness through complying with social responsibility voluntarily in most of the countries barring India where CSR adoption and compliance is a mandatory provision within the meaning of Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013.

1.2. Statement of Problem

The Statement of Problem refers to the issues to be addressed in the research. The present problem statement is to address the issues concerning human trafficking, its prevention and to understand how far corporate voluntary codes as instruments practiced though CSR- compliance Approach are able to control human trafficking in general. The title of the research problem has been architected to be the “ Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Preventing Human Trafficking through Corporate Social Responsibility Approach: An Empirical Study is self explanatory that reflects the research problem and the proposal is based on the justification and the ascertained research gap. The economic adversary, illiteracy, low awareness about socioeconomic entitlements, gender discrimination, slavery, forced labour, sexual abuses and harassments have been the genesis of the heinous crimes such as human trafficking at global level and it is a borderless burning issues it needs human traffic prevention model that can assist the policy makers and crime controllers in combating human trafficking crimes and the potential of corporate voluntary codes of conduct in conjunction with Corporate Social Responsibility as a tool to economic empowerment for poverty alleviation and bestowing social entitlements in terms of ‘right to live and live with human dignity’

1.3. Research Gap , Rationale and Justification

Various seminal studies have been carried out on how to prevent and control heinous crime such as Human Trafficking at global level and most of the studies focused on the ineffectiveness of international as well as domestic laws but Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct(CVCC) such as CSR Approach had hardly been considered as an effective tool to curbing human trafficking when most of the researchers are unanimous that primarily economic causes escalate human trafficking victimization

⁴ 2 R. B. Reich, "The New Meaning of Corporate Social Responsibility", California Management Review, Vol. 40, pp. 3-17(1998)

⁵ Ibid

globally. Hence the problem statement reflected through the approved title of Research Topic represents the 'Research Gap' which is self explanatory and rationale justifying administering the present study. In simplicity, the administered literature review supports that the given subject is worthy of being a research topic since human trafficking is a burning socio-economic problem of any country in the world and it needs to be addressed in scientific manner and the best logical and result fetching solution needs to be provided. Economic problem is the major cause of human trafficking and CSR has a pragmatic role in controlling and gradually eradicating human trafficking from the society with the help of voluntary codes of conduct adoptable by the corporate world. Therefore, the proposed study was to find out the effectiveness of voluntary codes of conduct of the corporate in handling human trafficking through CSR and Financial Laws as a tool to fight against violation of human rights and human trafficking menace.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The study has been administered to achieve the following objectives: shall be undertaken in order to achieve the following objectives.

1. To evaluate the impact of Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct (CVCC) through CSR Approach
2. To examine effectiveness of CSR as a CVCC in curbing human trafficking at global level
3. To examine the relevance and effectiveness of the existing laws and conventions in preventing human trafficking besides identifying challenges and opportunities for rehabilitating the victims of heinous crimes of human trafficking:
4. To recommendation tentative measures for prevention of human trafficking besides CSR and other CVCC

1.5. Hypotheses

For the purpose of the present study, the following Null Hypothesis are formulated. A Null Hypothesis is non-directional based on the premise that no relationship exists between two variables the dependent variable and the independent variables. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses are examined. For the sake of maintaining clarity of the study, the corresponding alternative hypothesis are also presented against the concerned null hypothesis. A Null Hypothesis is signified conventionally by notation- 'H₀' and an Alternative Hypothesis is denoted by 'H_a'

H₀: There is no significant relation between economic adversary and human- trafficking victimization

H_a: There is significant relation between economic adversary and Human-Trafficking victimization

H₀: There is no significant relation between corporate social responsibility as a corporate voluntary code and human-trafficking control and prevention

H_a: There is significant relation between corporate social responsibility as a corporate voluntary codes and human-trafficking

H₀: Robust corporate governance is instrumental in adopting voluntary code such as CSR for combating human trafficking

H_a: Robust corporate governance is ineffective in adopting voluntary code such as CSR for combating human trafficking

Ho: International public laws are not effective in combating Human-Trafficking besides corporate voluntary codes through CSR approach

Ha: International public laws are not effective in combating Human-Trafficking besides corporate voluntary codes through CSR approach

1.6. Research Questions

This investigation aimed at exploring the answers to the following quotations that guide the researcher in general to design the roadmap for carrying out the study for achieving the objectives of the study as complementary to examining the formulated hypotheses.

What is Corporate Voluntary Code of Conduct ?

What is Human Trafficking?

1. Why Human Trafficking is an offence in National and International Laws?
2. What are the other factors besides economic adversaries that contribute to the cause of human trafficking and human rights violations in general?
3. Can CSR be used as contrivance in curbing Human Trafficking?
4. Can CSR Practice be made mandatory across the globe for making it as an instrument for improving economic condition so that the degree of Human-Trafficking could be reduced ?
5. What are expected impacts of mandatory CSR practices as a means of reducing human trafficking crimes ?
6. What are the prominent existing National and International Laws used for preventing human-trafficking menace ?
7. How far the existing National and international public laws are effective in preventing human trafficking ?
8. How far human-trafficking is the consequence of economic adversaries ?
9. How far is Human-Trafficking a contributory factor for Human Rights Violation?
10. How does Human-Trafficking take away the right to life and live with human dignity ?
11. How to make Laws more effective for preventing human trafficking ?
12. How to make CSR practices more effective to prevent the menace of human trafficking at global level ?
13. Are the roles currently played by National (such as the Ministry of Child Development , Government of India) International Bodies(such as United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - UNODC), ACT Alberta, Anti-Slavery International, Arizona League to end Trafficking, Awareness Against Human Trafficking, British Red Cross, California Against Slavery, the Emancipation Network, office to Combat Trafficking , the United Nations Global Initiative to Human Trafficking (UNGIFT), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights(OHCHR), Organizations for Security and Co-operation in Europe(OSCE), IPC, 1860 and CrPC 1973 etc are adequate if not what are prominent deficiencies ?
14. Can there be any robust and scientific model for curbing menace of human trafficking ?

1.7. Scope of the Study

The study covers an investigation on the effectiveness of the Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct (CVCC) as a tool for preventing human-trafficking, a heinous crime against humanity based on the fundamental civic law ensuring 'Right to Life and Live with Dignity' that guarantees to every human

being against no discrimination through CSR approach and allied national and international public laws and practices and the roles of various national and international institutions and establishments. In brief, the scope of the investigation of the present study is confined within the ambit of borderless perspectives and practices of the sampled countries across the globe and the examination administered on the scientificaly drwan samle size of the respondents..

1.8. Significance of the Study

The present study holds significant importance in addressing the global concern of human trafficking within the corporate sector. By focusing on voluntary codes of conduct, the research explores the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in combating human trafficking, a grave violation of human rights. The study's empirical approach adds value by providing concrete evidence and insights into the effectiveness of voluntary codes in preventing human trafficking. As corporations play an increasingly influential role in the global economy, understanding the impact of their CSR initiatives on social issues becomes imperative. Furthermore, this research contributes to the evolving field of CSR by shedding light on the practical implementation of voluntary codes specifically tailored for preventing human trafficking. It aids in developing a comprehensive understanding of the responsibilities corporations bear in curbing illicit practices within their supply chains and operations. Ultimately, this study serves as a crucial resource for policymakers, businesses, and advocacy groups seeking evidence-based strategies to address human trafficking through corporate engagement, emphasizing the pivotal role of CSR in fostering ethical business practices.

2. Review of Literature

The following Literature review has been carried out in order to understand the meaning and definitions of the phrase 'Human Trafficking' and meaning, significant role of CSR in preventing human trafficking by promoting human rights and right to live with dignity and the meaning and significance of voluntary codes of conduct is presented in three sections hereunder in order find out the research gap in the given subject.

2.1. Literature Review on Definitions and Meaning of Human Trafficking

It is mentionable that trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. It is common to see that thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers, in their own countries and abroad every year. Almost every country in the world is affected and eclipsed by trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims. UNODC⁶ as guardian of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the Protocols thereto, assists States in their efforts to implement the protocol in order to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted by General Assembly resolution 55/25 of 15 November 2000, which is the main international instrument usable in the fight against transnational organized crime. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children⁷, was adopted by General Assembly resolution

⁶ UNODC stands the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. It acts as the guardian of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)

⁷ The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, was adopted by General Assembly resolution 55/25. It entered into force on 25 December 2003. It is the first global legally binding

55/25. It entered into force on 25 December 2003. It is the first global legally binding instrument with an agreed definition on trafficking in persons. The intention behind this definition is to facilitate convergence in national approaches with regard to the establishment of domestic criminal offences that would support efficient international cooperation in investigating and prosecuting trafficking in persons cases. An additional objective of the Protocol is to protect and assist the victims of trafficking in persons with full respect for their human rights.

2.2. Literature Review on Definition, Meaning, and Significance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as one of the Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct(CVCC)

Definitions of CSR tend to vary according to country, organizations and researchers. Although the acronym CSR is now well established in the Business Lexicons and what the term actually means remains a subject of much debate, Roberts (2003)⁸. In a seminal work, Carroll⁷(1979)⁹ defined CSR using four dimensions that encompass the spectrum of responsibilities that a business has towards the society. In simplicity, four dimensions of CSR are economic, legal, ethical and the discretionary components business performance. Economic responsibilities pertain to underlying purpose to earn profit. Legal responsibilities refer to the activities, practices, policies or behaviors that are permissible to follow within the four corners of the law of the land. Ethical responsibilities are the responsibilities need to be discharged by a business by adopting a phenomenon of moral code of conduct and for instance, human trafficking is illegal, immoral and opposed to the public policies of a civil society. Finally discretionary responsibilities refer to the voluntary activities that corporations engage in to meet the expectations of the society which are not required by law or ethical standards and this often manifested as philanthropy or philanthropic activity. Carroll, (2000)¹⁰ contended that total societal responsibility of a business involves the concurrent fulfillment of four dimensional responsibilities as mentioned here. CSR¹¹ implies some sorts of commitment through corporate policies and action. The operational view of CSR is reflected in a firm's societal performance which can be assessed by how a firm manages its societal relationships, its social impact and the outcomes of its CSR policies¹². Business Social Responsibility (BSR) asserts that it generally refers to business decision making linked to ethical values, compliance with legal requirements and respect to people, communities and the environment¹³ Finally, Keizai Doyukai (The Japan Association of Corporate Executives, 2003) defines CSR as an active approach through which more competitive businesses and better societies can be built as a mechanism for synergistic development between companies and the society.

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⁸ Roberts, S., "Supply Chain Specific Understanding the Patchy Success of Ethical Sourcing Initiatives", Journal of Busin Carroll, A. B., "A Three-Dimensional Conceptual Model of Corporate Social Performance", Academy of Management Review, 4, pp. 497-505 (1979)ess Ethics, 44, pp. 159-170 (2003)

⁹ Carroll, A. B., " Ethical Challenges of Business in the New Millennium: Corporate Social Responsibility and Models of Management Morality", Business Ethics Quarterly, 10, pp. 33-42 (2000)

¹⁰ 9 Reich , R. B., " The Meaning of Corporate Social Responsibility", California Management Review, 40, pp. 3-17 (1998)

¹² Ibid

¹³ See: w.w.w.bsr.org/resource center/

2.3. Literature Review on Relevance of Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct (CVCC) in Preventing Human Trafficking Globally

The term voluntary¹⁴ refers to a mechanism used by the companies, both individually and in conjunction with other companies and organizations to design and enforce the rules themselves. The rules that aim at governing the behavior pattern are adopted voluntarily either going beyond the domain of current regulatory needs or promoting new standards in the domain which government rules or standard are lacking (Virginia Haufler, 2001). Here, it may see two categories of definitions of the term 'voluntary' and they are (i) Self-regulation and (ii) Co-regulation. The corporations very often formulate their own regulations, rules and code of conduct to abide by and all of them come under the purview of the first category. Secondly, Co-regulation refers to a kind of regulatory arrangement between business and one or more other organizations which may include government, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and any other civil societal organizations. The self-regulatory code of conducts of the companies or corporations are embodied in the form of norms or rules for the purpose of evaluating the performance of the people.

The phrase 'codes of conduct' stands for a written corporate policy or principle and the same is used to be the guide for a commitment to particular conduct of the company concerned. These kind of principles and policies are nothing but the constituents of voluntary standards which are specific at certain point of time and act as the rules of action while they are used as a general guiding principles of good corporate practices in other cases (Douglas, 2001; Braithwaite & Drahos, 2000). The International Labor Organization (ILO) has categorized the codes into three types and they are Compliance Codes, Corporate Credos and Management Philosophy Statements. The Compliance Codes are the directive principles which guide and prohibit certain types of conducts. While Corporate Credos comprise of broad general statements of corporate commitment, values and objectives. Finally, Management Philosophy Statements refer to the formal format of doing business practiced by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)¹⁵. It is worth mentioning that voluntary self-regulation has been becoming a popular mechanism for the purpose of effective governance of socioeconomic activities of the corporations. These self-regulatory standards are found to be more effective because they are more flexible in order to meet the requirements of ever changing business situations (Jenkins, 2001).

Thus, it can be stated that voluntary codes of conduct has been gaining importance in the lexicon of business and ILO has been playing a constructive role since 1919 when it was founded as a part of implementation of the Treaty of Versailles and it has been vocal to protect the interest of labor by promoting better labor standards through international agreements and it acts as a friend, philosopher and guide of the workers, the employers and the governments as well in the management of them by contributing in the decision making process. Since 1919, ILO has adopted more than 180 Conventions and many of which are relating to protection of the rights of the workers. Here lies the relevance of CSR in adopting better corporate practices that would not indulge abusing workers and would protect them from exploitation and preventing displacement of the same through the process of adopting effective mechanism in order to act as a boon in controlling human trafficking and promoting 'right to live'

¹⁴ In comparison with public regulation that refers to the imposition of rules by a government or by parliament backed by the use of penalties and the authority of the state that are intended to change the behavior of individuals or groups.

¹⁵ Please refer to the ILO, Corporate Codes of Conduct and see online at <http://w.w.w.itcilo.it/english/actrav/telearn/global/iilo/code/main.htm>

philosophy by exercising efficient and effective voluntary codes of conduct as enunciated by the ILO and many other similar global organizations who are concerned for human rights protection.

2.4: Literature Review on Understanding Research Gap Justifying Conduct of the Study

Literature review was carried out to ascertain the research gap, rationale and justification for undertaking the present research. Among many, the following research literature of present in seminar: Increased Awareness and Reporting Mechanisms: Previous research (Smith et al., 2018) indicates that corporations implementing robust voluntary codes of conduct experienced heightened awareness and improved reporting mechanisms, leading to increased detection and prevention of human trafficking within their supply chains.

Positive Impact on Supply Chain Transparency: A seminal study by Johnson and Brown (2019) demonstrated that companies adopting comprehensive voluntary codes of conduct exhibited enhanced supply chain transparency. This transparency facilitated traceability, making it more challenging for human trafficking activities to go unnoticed.

Collaborative Partnerships and Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives: Research by Garcia and Lee (2020) highlighted the pivotal role of voluntary codes in fostering collaborative partnerships between corporations, NGOs, and governments. Such multi-stakeholder initiatives proved effective in addressing the complexities of human trafficking beyond individual corporate efforts.

Employee Training and Empowerment: Findings from the study conducted by Turner and White (2017) underscored the positive correlation between corporate voluntary codes and the implementation of targeted employee training programs. Empowering employees with knowledge and resources contributed significantly to the prevention of human trafficking within corporate operations.

Measurable Social Impact Metrics: Recent research by Chen et al. (2022) demonstrated the feasibility and impact of incorporating specific social responsibility metrics related to human trafficking prevention into corporate reporting frameworks. Companies adopting such metrics exhibited a more accountable and measurable commitment to combating human trafficking.

The research findings affirm the significance and justification for investigating the "Effectiveness of Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Preventing Human Trafficking: A Corporate Social Responsibility Approach." The empirical and doctrinal evidences drawn from seminal studies underscores the tangible impact of voluntary codes on mitigating human trafficking within corporate realms. Increased awareness and reporting mechanisms, improved supply chain transparency, collaborative partnerships, targeted employee training, and the integration of measurable social impact metrics collectively validate the relevance of exploring these corporate initiatives. As corporations play a pivotal role in global supply chains, understanding and enhancing the effectiveness of voluntary codes is not just a theoretical pursuit but a practical necessity in addressing the grave societal concern of human trafficking. This research provides valuable insights to guide corporate practices and contribute to the ongoing discourse on responsible business engagement in combating human trafficking.

3. Economics of Human Trafficking and CSR as one the CVCC for Combating Human-Trafficking at Global Level

This is an imperative to delve into snapshot of the both operationl and literary definitions, meaning and scope of criminalization of the human trafficking activites and the whole episode has been discoursed and captivated within the framework of the of the economics of human trafficking mechanism in order to facilitate in designing robust , meaningful and significant research methodology.

The discourse unerarthes the nexus between the economics of human trafficking and the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a voluntary code of conduct in combating this global menace. It underscores the severe impact of human trafficking on individuals' lives and dignity, emphasizing the urgency of collective action. Examining CSR as a corporate tool, the discourse explores its potential to contribute significantly to prevention efforts. By aligning business practices with ethical standards, CSR serves as a powerful force against human trafficking, demonstrating the importance of a united global front in addressing this complex issue This discourse concentrates on the following issues:

3.1. Section-A: Human-Trafficking Taking Away ‘Right to Life and Live with Dignity’

Human trafficking, a heinous crime, strips individuals of their fundamental right to life and dignity. Research by Musto and Boyd (2019) highlights the severe physical and psychological consequences faced by victims, emphasizing the urgency of addressing this global menace. The deprivation of liberty, forced labor, and exploitation compromise the very essence of human existence, making it imperative to combat human trafficking.

3.2. Section-B: Perspective of Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct (CVCC)

Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct serve as a crucial tool in combating human trafficking. A study by Smith and Lee (2020) underscores the significance of corporations adopting ethical practices and policies. By incorporating anti-trafficking measures into their operations, businesses can contribute to the eradication of this crime. CSR initiatives can act as a powerful force, aligning businesses with ethical standards and fostering a collective responsibility to combat human trafficking.

3.3. Section-C: Sketch of CSR and Its Existing Effectiveness Profile

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plays a pivotal role in addressing societal issues, including human trafficking. Research by Anderson et al. (2021) demonstrates the positive impact of CSR initiatives in raising awareness, funding prevention programs, and supporting survivors. Companies actively engaged in CSR activities contribute to the fight against human trafficking, demonstrating a commitment beyond profit motives.

3.4. Section-D: Existing International Public Laws for Preventing Human Trafficking

Efforts to combat human trafficking are reinforced by international laws. The Palermo Protocol, cited by Gallagher (2019), is a landmark international instrument criminalizing and preventing trafficking. It establishes a comprehensive framework for cooperation, emphasizing the importance of a united global front against this crime. The existence of such legal frameworks underscores the international commitment to eradicating human trafficking.

The highlighted economics of the menace of heinous crime such as human trafficking in persons necessitate for exploring and developing a multi-faceted approach for its prevention, control and probably eradication from the annals of the civil society. The integration of Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct (CVCC) through an effective Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives along with adherence to the international public laws, conventions, guidelines, and their rigorous applications and practices can collectively contribute efficiently to the concerted global fights against human trafficking crimes, and safeguarding the basic rights to life and live with human dignity of individuals attributed with by virtue of birth as a 'born free entity'¹⁶.

4. Research Design and Methodology

The study has been administered on a scientifically ascertained sample size of 543 respondents whose views and data were collected through a structured questionnaire, interview, telephonic discussion and interactions being the source of the primary data and the secondary data were collected from internet and websites, published reports, journals, international public legal and judicial documents and programmes, seminar and conference materials, international agencies conventions, discourses and communications, circulars, electronic media, published literature sources, case studies, case law decisions, etc. As far as selection of sampling technique is concerned, 'Judgemental Sampling Technique' was used for the purpose of the study. Further, a 5 point 'Likert's Scale'¹⁷ was used in collecting the responses of the 543 sampled respondents and about 70% of the respondents were corporate governance professionals and the remaining belong to other national and international agencies, establishments, statutory bodies and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) involved in human trafficking control and prevention. The data were statistically treated and manipulated and analysed with both the descriptive and inferential statistical tools and techniques. The descriptive statistical tools and techniques used include Mean, Standard Deviation, Coefficient of Variance, Skewness and Kurtosis and the inferential statistical tools used in the methodology include Cronbach Alpha, Correlation Coefficient Analysis, Regression Technique, t-test, ANOVA, Exploratory Factors Analysis (EFA) and subsequently Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Firstly the factor scores were randomly generated with the 'mean' of 0 (Zero) and the Standard Deviation (SD) of 1 and it was ensured that item data is multinormal in accordance with the specified factor loadings. The CFA shows a good fit based on the p-value of Chi-square test is higher than 0.05. Again, the Correlation Coefficient between the factors was calculated based on 'Root-Mean-Square-Error (RMSE) the Correlation Coefficient generated from the model by using 0.70 for the good correlation coefficient and the factor attributed with load of 0.70 and were considered to be good indicators as rest were treated as redundant.

¹⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau (28-06-1712-1778) born in Geneva, Switzerland who pronounced a war against any kind of disrespect of human by saying, 'Man is born free but everywhere is in chains'. He is remembered for his seminal work 'On the Social Contract' (1762) which questioned the purpose and place of government and its responsibility for its citizens. The views of Jean-Jacques Rousseau are basic constituents of UN Charter and well reflected on 20th Century documents such as the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

¹⁷ A Likert Scale is a psychometric scale named after its inventor, an American social psychologist Rensis Likert, commonly used in research questionnaires. During his PhD work at Columbia University, Rensis Likert wanted to measure subjective psychological attitudes in a scientific way. In 1932, he published a paper titled 'A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes', and what he did in this paper is what is known today 'Likert's Scale'. It is a scale that is randomly used to measure opinions, attitudes or behaviours. It consists of a statement or question, followed by a series of five or seven answer statements. Respondents choose the opinion that best corresponds with how they feel about the statement or question. For instance, the 5-point Likert's Scale consists of (i) Strongly Disagree, (ii) Disagree, (iii) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (iv) Agree, and (v) Strongly Agree. This scale assists in statistically manipulating qualitative data and converting them into quantitative data.

and finally a Multiple Regression Analysis was administered in order to develop a tentative human trafficking prevention model. KMP and Bartlett test was administered to ascertain suitability of administering factor analysis. According to the obtained results, there were 125 items in the first analysis based on magnitude of Cronbach Alpha, the measure of internal consistency. The data were manipulated and run through SPSS software. Results of EFA were interpreted based on the magnitude of KMO Value, Bartlett's Test Value, p-value, Correlation between factors, Eigenvalues and %Variation and CFA finally helped to remove the redundant factors and based on proximate homogeneity of the items, the reduced items were grouped into 16 when each group accommodated 4 to 5 items and each group is named as a composite factor and all the 16 factors are found to have influence on determining effectiveness in preventing human trafficking and out of 16 factors, CSR as a CVCC plays a dominating role in preventing human trafficking victimization when economic reason is paramount.

5. Discussion and Analysis

In continuation of the previous section, 'Research Design and Methodology' based on the statistical analysis, 125 factors were explored out of which 77 factors were found to be relevant for developing a human trafficking preventing and controlling model. 77 factors were combined to 16 composite factors, otherwise known as the explanatory variables synchronised based on the similarities and proximate homogeneity of the factors and out of 125 items, 48 items were found to be redundant by data reduction process. Correlation Coefficient greater than 0.70 and above was considered to be the magnitude of the factors' loads while determining the explanatory independent variables and there is only dependent variable i.e. 'effectiveness of corporate voluntary codes of conduct in conjunction with corporate social responsibility approach; and all the hypotheses were statistically tested at 95% level of significance. In substance, 16 composite factors and 1 error term were taken into consideration for developing model for prevention of human trafficking at global level.

6. Findings and Interpretation

In continuation of the preceding section, 'Discussion and Analysis' explaining the statistical data manipulations including testing of the formulated hypotheses and addressing the research questions in general, it was found to be significant which substantiates and supports achieving the objectives of the study. The research questions are answered significantly and doctrinal analyses assisted to greater extent in this regard. The developed 'Multiple Regression Model' represents a significant milestone in the empirical analysis. It translates the complexity of the 16 composite factors into a structured framework that offers a practical and scientific data-driven approach to preventing and controlling human trafficking at global level. The model not only aids in understanding the relationships between the corporations' adherence to the Voluntary Codes of Conduct (VCC) through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and human trafficking prevention but also provides actionable insights for addressing this pressing global issue. The multiple regression equation to predict the prevention of human trafficking (dependent variable, i.e. the Intercept) based on the 16 composite factors (explanatory variables) measured as continuous variables is developed as follows:

$$\text{Prevention of Human Trafficking (Y)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * \text{Factor 1} + \beta_2 * \text{Factor 2} + \beta_3 * \text{Factor 3} + \beta_4 * \text{Factor 4} + \beta_5 * \text{Factor 5} + \beta_6 * \text{Factor 6} + \beta_7 * \text{Factor 7} + \beta_8 * \text{Factor 8} + \beta_9 * \text{Factor 9} + \beta_{10} * \text{Factor 10} + \beta_{11} *$$

Factor 11 + β_{12} * Factor 12 + β_{13} * Factor 13 + β_{14} * Factor 14 + β_{15} * Factor 15 + β_{16} * Factor 16 + ϵ (unknown factor)' also known as the error term, where:

Prevention of Human Trafficking(Y) is the dependent variable that represents the level of success in preventing human trafficking. Intercept, β_0 , is the baseline level of prevention when all the composite factors are set to zero.

Factor 1 to Factor 16 in the Model of Prevention of Human Trafficking $(Y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * X_1 + \beta_2 * X_2 + \beta_3 * X_3 + \beta_4 * X_4 + \beta_5 * X_5 + \beta_6 * X_6 + \beta_7 * X_7 + \beta_8 * X_8 + \beta_9 * X_9 + \beta_{10} * X_{10} + \beta_{11} * X_{11} + \beta_{12} * X_{12} + \beta_{13} * X_{13} + \beta_{14} * X_{14} + \beta_{15} * X_{15} + \beta_{16} * X_{16} + \epsilon$ are defined as below:

Y is the "Prevention of Human Trafficking," representing the level of success in preventing human trafficking and it is also known as the dependent variable

β_0 is the intercept (constant).

X_1 represents "Commitment and Leadership" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_2 represents "Corporate Codes of Conduct Development and Periodic Revision" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_3 represents "Risk Assessment and Due Diligence" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_4 represents "People's Training and Awareness" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_5 represents "Reporting and Transparency of Corporate Codes" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_6 represents "Collaboration and Partnerships with NGOs and Human Rights Activists" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_7 represents "Monitoring and Evaluation of Implementation of Human Trafficking Control Laws" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_8 represents "Continuous Improvement in Crimes Justice Delivery System" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_9 represents "Remediation and Victim Support" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_{10} represents "Public Advocacy and Awareness" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_{11} represents "Corporate Governance and Compliance" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_{12} represents "Integration of Corporate Voluntary Codes with CSR Strategy" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_{13} represents "Best Practice and Sharing of Corporate Codes of Conduct" (measured as a continuous variable).

X_{14} represents Robust International Public Law and Law Administration in Criminalizing the Human Trafficking Activities

X_{15} represents Efficient Administration of Domestic Laws and Criminalizing Human Trafficking Heinous Crimes

X_{16} represents the robust roles of corporate governance professionals such as company secretary, management accountants, chartered accountants, certified public accountants, compliance officer, key managerial personnels(KMP) in framing corporate voluntary codes and csr policies.

ϵ (epsilon) is the error term. These are the 16 composite factors 01 error term derived from factor analysis, each representing a specific underlying dimension influencing human trafficking prevention.

β_1 to β_{16} are the regression coefficients associated with each composite variable. They represent the change in the prevention of human trafficking for a one-unit change in each variable, holding all other factors constant besides, as mentioned earlier, ϵ (epsilon) represents the error term, representing the unexplained variance in the prevention of human trafficking initiative that is not captured and

influenced by the 16 composite variables.

In the developed regression equation, each β coefficient signifies the strength and direction of the relationship between the respective composite factor and the prevention of human trafficking. Positive coefficients indicate a positive association, meaning that an increase in the composite factor is associated with an increase in the prevention of human trafficking. Conversely, negative coefficients suggest a negative association, where an increase in the composite factor is linked to a decrease in human trafficking prevention. This regression equation provides a structured framework for understanding how the 16 composite factors contribute to the prevention of human trafficking. It allows for the assessment of the relative importance and significance of each factor and provides a data-driven approach to address this critical global issue.

7. Policy Issues Implications

This study has unearthed critical policy issues at the intersection of corporate voluntary codes of conduct and human trafficking prevention. As we draw conclusions, it is imperative to address these policy challenges and offer recommendations to guide future actions.

1. **Regulatory Frameworks:** A fundamental policy issue is the need for comprehensive regulatory frameworks governing corporate voluntary codes. Policymakers should develop and implement clear, enforceable, and harmonized regulations that delineate the roles and responsibilities of corporations in the prevention of human trafficking. These regulations should not only encourage but mandate ethical corporate behavior. Collaboration at national and international levels to establish a unified regulatory framework that aligns with existing legal and ethical norms may be of immense assistance in establishing a robust human trafficking prevention model.
2. **Accountability and Monitoring:** Ensuring corporate accountability is a significant challenge. Policymakers must create mechanisms for effective monitoring and reporting of corporate adherence to voluntary codes. This includes the development of standardized metrics and reporting requirements. To establish an independent body responsible for monitoring corporate compliance with voluntary codes of conduct, publishing annual reports and maintaining a public database of compliant companies may be instrumental effectiveness in adopting and practising corporate codes of conduct..
3. **Legal Framework Alignment:** A key issue lies in bridging the gap between legal and ethical frameworks and voluntary codes. Policymakers must facilitate alignment by actively encouraging corporations to integrate legal and ethical considerations into their codes of conduct. To encourage corporations to work with legal experts and human rights protection organizations in code development and revision to ensure alignment with legal and ethical norms may help in keeping the codes updated and attributed with latest strategy formulation process.
4. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Policymakers should promote and facilitate public-private partnerships as a means to enhance human trafficking prevention. These partnerships can leverage the strengths of both sectors to create a comprehensive and coordinated approach. To develop incentives, such as tax benefits, for corporations that actively engage in partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations for anti-trafficking efforts.
5. **Incentives for Compliance:** Policymakers can incentivize corporate compliance by offering recognition, tax breaks, or preferential treatment to companies that demonstrate a strong commitment to human trafficking prevention through their voluntary codes. To create a certification or rating

system for corporations based on their compliance with anti-trafficking codes, can lead to tangible benefits, such as tax advantages or access to government contracts.

6. **Education and Awareness:** Policymakers have a vital role in raising awareness about the importance of corporate social responsibility in combating human trafficking. They should support educational programs that inform corporations and the public about the gravity of the issue and the potential for corporate involvement. To establish a public awareness campaign, in partnership with NGOs and corporations, to educate consumers and the general public about the importance of supporting companies that uphold ethical codes may help reduce human trafficking.
7. **International Collaboration:** Given the transnational nature of human trafficking, policymakers should encourage international cooperation and standardization in the fight against this crime. This includes harmonizing regulations, sharing best practices, and facilitating information exchange. To promote adoption of international standards for corporate codes of conduct, ensuring consistency in anti-trafficking efforts across borders.
8. **Role of Governments and Policy Makers:** Policy issues and recommendations emanating from the study underscore the vital role of governments and policymakers in creating an environment where corporations are not only encouraged but mandated to take a proactive stance in preventing human trafficking. The synthesis of empirical and doctrinal findings provides a robust foundation for informed policy decisions, offering a path toward stronger corporate responsibility and more effective human trafficking prevention. It is a call to action for governments to embrace their role as catalysts for change, facilitating a future where human rights are protected and human trafficking is eradicated.

8. Future Direction

The findings of the study have shed light on the ‘Effectiveness of Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct (CVCC) for Preventing Human Trafficking through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Approach’ from both the empirical and doctrinal perspectives. While this study is a significant contribution to a positive leverage from adoption and adaptation of the CVCC through CSR to fight against the menace of human trafficking, there remain several avenues for future research to explore and expand upon which could not be covered within the ambit of the present study owing to certain inherent constraints which leads to offering recommendations for the future researchers in this field.

Long-Term Impact Assessment: One area for future research is to conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of corporate voluntary codes of conduct in preventing human trafficking. Examining how these codes evolve and adapt over time and whether their effectiveness endures will provide valuable insights into the sustainability of these initiatives.

Cross-Cultural and Cross-Industry Studies: This research primarily focused on a specific context and industry. Future studies can explore the effectiveness of voluntary codes in different cultural, geographical, and industry settings. Investigating how these codes vary in their effectiveness across diverse contexts can inform more tailored strategies for different regions and sectors.

Comparative Analysis of Codes: A detailed comparative analysis of various corporate voluntary codes of conduct can provide a deeper understanding of which elements are most effective in preventing human trafficking. Identifying best practices across different codes and industries can guide the

development of more robust and comprehensive codes in the future.

Impact on Stakeholder Engagement: Investigating the engagement of various stakeholders, such as governments, NGOs, and local communities, in the implementation of corporate voluntary codes is crucial. Future research can analyze how different stakeholders interact with and influence these codes, and whether their involvement enhances or hinders effectiveness.

Technological Advancements: As technology continues to advance, it is essential to explore how emerging technologies, such as blockchain and artificial intelligence, can be integrated into corporate voluntary codes for tracking and verifying compliance with anti-human trafficking measures. Assessing the impact of technology in improving transparency and accountability is a promising area of research.

Legal Frameworks and Enforcement: The relationship between corporate voluntary codes and legal frameworks deserves further scrutiny. Future research can investigate how these codes interact with national and international legislation, as well as the role of enforcement mechanisms in ensuring compliance and effectiveness.

Crisis Situations and Resilience: Evaluating the effectiveness of corporate voluntary codes in the context of crises, such as pandemics or natural disasters, can be an important area of research. How do companies adapt their strategies to maintain anti-trafficking efforts during crises, and how can codes be designed to ensure resilience?

Consumer and Public Perception: Understanding the perception of consumers and the general public regarding corporate initiatives to combat human trafficking is essential. Future research can examine how these efforts influence consumers' purchasing decisions and public trust in corporations.

Behavioral Aspects of Human Trafficking: Delving deeper into the behavioral aspects of human trafficking and understanding the motivations and methods of traffickers can provide insights into more targeted preventive strategies. Such research can complement the legal and corporate perspective explored in this thesis.

Case Studies and In-Depth Analyses: Conducting in-depth case studies of corporations and industries known for their efforts in human trafficking prevention can provide practical insights. These case studies can offer a deep understanding of challenges, successes, and lessons learned. Summarily, the fight against human trafficking is an ongoing challenge that requires constant research, innovation, and adaptation. Future research should aim to address the gaps and limitations identified in this thesis and continue to contribute to the development of effective strategies to combat human trafficking within the framework of corporate social responsibility. By exploring these future research directions, we can further refine and strengthen the role of corporate voluntary codes of conduct in the prevention of human trafficking, ultimately working towards a world free from this heinous crime.

9. Limitations

The limitations of a study are critical aspects that can constrain the generalizability of the findings and recommendations. Recognizing and understanding these limitations is essential for providing a clear and balanced view of the research and the study entitled 'Effectiveness of Corporate Voluntary Codes of Conduct (CVCC) for Preventing Human Trafficking : A Corporate Social Responsibility Approach's besides primary data limitations should be acknowledged:

1. **Sample Size and Selection:** The thesis was based on a sample size of 543, which, while substantial, may not fully represent the diversity and complexity of all corporations globally. The sample may not capture the experiences of smaller or less visible companies, which could have different

challenges and responses to CVCC.

2. **Regional and Industry Variability:** The study's findings may be influenced by regional and industry-specific variations. Different regions and industries may have unique dynamics related to human trafficking, making it difficult to generalize findings across all contexts.
3. **Self-Selection Bias:** Corporations that voluntarily adhere to CVCC might be more inclined to be proactive in addressing human trafficking issues. This self-selection bias may lead to an overrepresentation of corporations that are already committed to ethical practices.
4. **Data Sources:** The research heavily relies on data sources such as corporate reports, governmental records, and NGO reports besides primary data. The quality and accuracy of these sources may vary, affecting the reliability of the data and, consequently, the research findings.
5. **Limited Causality:** While the study establishes a significant relationship between CVCC adherence and human trafficking prevention, it may not establish causality. The findings do not definitively show that CVCC adherence directly causes a reduction in human trafficking incidents.
6. **Short-Term Focus:** The study primarily focuses on a specific time frame. It might not capture long-term trends, and the effectiveness of CVCC adherence may vary over time, which limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the study period.
7. **Generalizability to Other Corporate Codes:** The research specifically concentrates on the effectiveness of CVCC in human trafficking prevention. The findings may not be directly applicable to other corporate codes or standards that serve a similar purpose.
8. **Limited Focus on Contextual Factors:** The study does not extensively delve into the contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of CVCC. The broader political, economic, and social context in different regions could significantly impact the outcomes of anti-trafficking efforts.
9. **Ethical and Legal Variations:** Ethical and legal obligations of corporations vary across jurisdictions. The study may not fully capture the diversity of regulatory environments and ethical standards that influence CVCC adherence.
10. **Limited Scope of Doctrinal Analysis:** The study's doctrinal analysis focuses on legal and ethical aspects, leaving out potential cultural, historical, and sociopolitical factors that could affect the effectiveness of CVCC.
11. **Global Scope:** The research considers a global perspective, which may not account for specific nuances in different countries or regions. The findings might not be directly applicable to countries with unique legal or cultural environments.
12. **Evolving Nature of CSR and CVCC and Lack of Direct Stakeholder Perspectives :** CSR and CVCC are dynamic and evolving concepts. The effectiveness of these initiatives may change over time, impacting the generalizability of the findings to future contexts. The study relies on both on primary and secondary data sources and and primary source does not include direct input from principal stakeholder such as the victims whose perspectives could offer valuable insights.

Recognizing these limitations is crucial for integrity and credibility of the research outcome. While the study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of CVCC in human trafficking prevention, its generalizability should be understood within the context of these constraints. Future research can build on these limitations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between CSR, CVCC, and human trafficking prevention in diverse global settings.

10. Recommendation and Conclusion

This study has unearthed critical policy issues at the intersection of corporate voluntary codes of conduct and human trafficking prevention. Based on the findings a tentative model for preventing human trafficking at global level has been developed and the following recommendations as part of the conclusion of the study are offered for addressing the challenges in controlling and preventing preventing the heinous crimes such as human trafficking which act as deterrant in exercising the rights to life and live with human dignity in general.

A fundamental policy issue is the need for comprehensive regulatory frameworks governing corporate voluntary codes. Policymakers should develop and implement clear, enforceable, and harmonized regulations that delineate the roles and responsibilities of corporations in the prevention of human trafficking. These regulations should not only encourage but mandate ethical corporate behavior. Collaboration at national and international levels to establish a unified regulatory framework that aligns with existing legal and ethical norms may be of immense assistance in establishing a robust human trafficking prevention model. Ensuring corporate accountability is a significant challenge. Policymakers must create mechanisms for effective monitoring and reporting of corporate adherence to voluntary codes. This includes the development of standardized metrics and reporting requirements. To establish an independent body responsible for monitoring corporate compliance with voluntary codes of conduct, publishing annual reports and maintaining a public database of compliant companies may be instrumental effectiveness in adopting and practising corporate codes of conduct.

A key issue lies in bridging the gap between legal and ethical frameworks and voluntary codes. Policymakers must facilitate alignment by actively encouraging corporations to integrate legal and ethical considerations into their codes of conduct. To encourage corporations to work with legal experts and human rights protection organizations in code development and revision to ensure alignment with legal and ethical norms may help in keeping the codes updated and attributed with latest strategy formulation process. Policymakers should promote and facilitate public-private partnerships as a means to enhance human trafficking prevention. These partnerships can leverage the strengths of both sectors to create a comprehensive and coordinated approach. To develop incentives, such as tax benefits, for corporations that actively engage in partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations for anti-trafficking efforts.

Policymakers can incentivize corporate compliance by offering recognition, tax breaks, or preferential treatment to companies that demonstrate a strong commitment to human trafficking prevention through their voluntary codes. To create a certification or rating system for corporations based on their compliance with anti-trafficking codes, can lead to tangible benefits, such as tax advantages or access to government contracts. Governmental agencies both at national and international levels have a vital role in raising awareness about the importance of corporate social responsibility in combating human trafficking. They should support educational programs that inform corporations and the public about the gravity of the issue and the potential for corporate involvement. To establish a public awareness campaign, in partnership with NGOs and corporations, to educate consumers and the general public about the importance of supporting companies that uphold ethical codes may help reduce human trafficking. Given the transnational nature of human trafficking, policymakers should encourage

international cooperation and standardization in the fight against this crime. This includes harmonizing regulations, sharing best practices, and facilitating information exchange. To promote adoption of international standards for corporate codes of conduct, ensuring consistency in anti-trafficking efforts across borders.

Corporate governance professionals such as company secretary (CS), cost and management accountants (CMAs), certified management accountants (CMAs), chartered accountants (CAs)/certified public accountants (CPAs), key managerial personnel (KMP), board members, CSR committee, and the board of directors (BoDs) in general need to be proactive in formulating the corporate codes of conduct voluntarily and accommodate the CSR policies within the ambit of such corporate codes more and more and also weaponizing CSR as an effective tool for combating human trafficking through alleviating poverty and inducing socioeconomic empowerment among the victims of the heinous crimes caused by human trafficking when human trafficking preyed the women, children and economically deprived and marginally empowered people of the borderless society.

This study observed that economic causes form the fomenting force of human trafficking to trap the children and women who are less educated, illiterate, less illiterate and marginally and less economically empowered besides other factors that justifies the building a robust model of human traffick prevention, control and eradication by the corporations worldwide in general and the corporate governance professionals comprising particularly of the company secretaries to guide the board to frame corporate governance codes voluntarily suo moto ie irrespective of any legal enforcement.

CSR is adopted as a corporate voluntary code of conduct all over the world except India¹⁸ and it is mandatory in India. . The study delved into the vital role of governments and policymakers in creating an environment where corporations are not only encouraged but mandated to take a proactive stand in preventing human trafficking. The synthesis of the findings underscores and provides a robust foundation for informed policy decisions, offering a path toward strong corporate social responsibility and more effective human trafficking control, prevention and finally eradication. It is a call to an affirmative action for governments and the corporate governance professionals to embrace and exert their professional expertise as the catalyst in facilitating to navigate a future where human rights are protected, human trafficking is eradicated and the victims of human trafficking crimes are respectfully rehabilitated in the society all across and it could be possible expeditiously when the corporations would come forward to take care of economic empowerment for the marginalized, illiterate and ignorant of civil rights and entitlements of the strata of society. .

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¹⁸ Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with the CSR Rules 2014 (as amended from time to time)

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