

## **A Loop between Victimhood and Women with Choice: Case of Trafficked North Korean Women in China**

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**Abstract :** Why are there North Korean women who prefer their life in China, living as an undocumented migrant, to legal residence in South Korea? What is the line between choice and coercion in trafficking and how does it relate to family, especially in Asian culture? Is family function as a haven in the unsecured world or a fetter against the better world? Are the current international mechanisms on trafficked victims fully reflecting the voices of the victims? This study is about the paradoxical conditions of North Korean women situated in China as the trafficked victim and as members of their Chinese family. In order to answer the questions above, this study explored the case of trafficked North Korean women in China. This mixed-methods study employed in-depth interviews of 18 trafficked women living in China and a survey of 98 North Korean origin women residing in South Korea. From the survey, 40 out of 98 women from the survey indicated an unexpected function of trafficking, which was used as a channel of supporting the subjectivity of women in the North Korean context. Such results supported the actual observation and narratives of North Korean women who experienced trafficking from the author's two visits to the Northeastern area of China in 2012 and 2018, respectively. Based on the findings, the last part of the study makes policy implications on international trafficking mechanisms—theories by Gayatri Spivak and Herbert A. Simon was employed to approach the relatively less dealt aspect of trafficking.

**Keywords :** China, North Korean women, trafficking, victimhood

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