

## An Intelligence-Led Methodology for Detecting Dark Actors in Human Trafficking Networks

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**Abstract :** Introduction: Human trafficking is an increasingly serious transnational criminal enterprise and social security issue. Despite ongoing efforts to mitigate the phenomenon and a significant expansion of security scrutiny over past decades, it is not receding. This is true for many nations in Southeast Asia, widely recognized as the global hub for trafficked persons, including men, women, and children. Clearly, human trafficking is difficult to address because there are numerous drivers, causes, and motivators for it to persist, such as non-military and non-traditional security challenges, i.e., climate change, global warming displacement, and natural disasters. These make displaced persons and refugees particularly vulnerable. The issue is so large conservative estimates put a dollar value at around \$150 billion-plus per year (Niethammer, 2020) spanning sexual slavery and exploitation, forced labor, construction, mining and in conflict roles, and forced marriages of girls and women. Coupled with corruption throughout military, police, and civil authorities around the world, and the active hands of powerful transnational criminal organizations, it is likely that such figures are grossly underestimated as human trafficking is misreported, under-detected, and deliberately obfuscated to protect those profiting from it. For example, the 2022 UN report on human trafficking shows a 56% reduction in convictions in that year alone (UNODC, 2022). Our Approach: To better understand this, our research utilizes a bespoke methodology. Applying a JAM (Juxtaposition Assessment Matrix), which we previously developed to detect flows of dark money around the globe (Henshaw, A & Austin, J, 2021), we now focus on the human trafficking paradigm. Indeed, utilizing a JAM methodology has identified key indicators of human trafficking not previously explored in depth. Being a set of structured analytical techniques that provide panoramic interpretations of the subject matter, this iteration of the JAM further incorporates behavioral and driver indicators, including the employment of Open-Source Artificial Intelligence (OS-AI) across multiple collection points. The extracted behavioral data was then applied to identify non-traditional indicators as they contribute to human trafficking. Furthermore, as the JAM OS-AI analyses data from the inverted position, i.e., the viewpoint of the traffickers, it examines the behavioral and physical traits required to succeed. This transposed examination of the requirements of success delivers potential leverage points for exploitation in the fight against human trafficking in a new and novel way. Findings: Our approach identified new innovative datasets that have previously been overlooked or, at best, undervalued. For example, the JAM OS-AI approach identified critical 'dark agent' lynchpins within human trafficking that are difficult to detect and harder to connect to actors and agents within a network. Our preliminary data suggests this is in part due to the fact that 'dark agents' in extant research have been difficult to detect and potentially much harder to directly connect to the actors and organizations in human trafficking networks. Our research demonstrates that using new investigative techniques such as OS-AI-aided JAM introduces a powerful toolset to increase understanding of human trafficking and transnational crime and illuminate networks that, to date, avoid global law enforcement scrutiny.

**Keywords :** human trafficking, open-source intelligence, transnational crime, human security, international human rights, intelligence analysis, JAM OS-AI, Dark Money

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