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Challenges in Eliminating all Forms of Violence Against all Women and Girls in Venezuela

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Abstract

The current study aims to investigate all forms of human rights violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, based on cultural diversity. For this purpose, study has followed the review of already published studies with implication of cultural relativism and Human Rights and Diversity. Extreme cultural relativism provoked one's intention to support his culture and contributed to discrimination against the others. Analysis shows that the major challenge to the women of Venezuela are economic, and social and cultural issues. The only solution of this problem is to strengthen the legislative structure and judicial system of the Venezuela, and assurance to implementation of Universal Human Rights Conventions through involvement of international organizations. Moreover, the women and men should be provided equal opportunities of earning, no matter to which culture do they belong.

Keywords: Trafficking, Venezuela, Cultural Diversity and Legislative Structure

Introduction

Human rights are the norms and principles for certain standards of human behavior, which are being protected by the legislative framework and municipal regulations. However, still some of the countries are facing severe human rights issues due to multiple reasons, where the political instability and diversity remain the prominent issues. Venezuela is also one of such countries, which has been facing great humanitarian crises due to political and economic instability.

However, the Venezuelan women are the most prominent victims of the crises, who have been disproportionately affected by the difficult decisions by the government for migrants and due to ever-changing economic situation of the country.

The major challenge of the region is cultural diversity, whereas political parties are playing their favoritism to provide leverages to only those who belong to same culture and show political loyalty to the current government. Previously, women have been one of the main beneficiaries of the social and economic programs of the Venezuelan government. However, current political and economic instability has brought different challenges for the women. The authoritarian leader, *Nicolas Maduro*, has restricted the access to social and economic programs for only those who pledge political loyalty. Such favoritism contributes to the discrimination, that not only affect specific individuals but also to the livelihoods of thousands of families. Such situations also resulted in migration of 5.2 million individuals from the Venezuela (Chavez, 2020, p. 1).

The political and economic instability has contributed to severe social and cultural challenges for every individual. However, the women are found to be the frequent victim of discrimination. Due to lack of facilities and issues with quality of life, people preferred to migrate to nearest regions from Venezuela. However, the government of the Venezuela announced ‘No Return’ (CEPAZ, 2020, p. 17) policy, due to which people remained unable to return to their country. This contributed to severe challenges to the women, who implied the risk of being a victim of different forms of violent; including psychological, sexual, and physical. Though gender discrimination in Latin America is not an issue, but Venezuelan cultural and diversity associated policies have increased the vulnerabilities for women and girls, who are at serious risk of trafficking, sexual violence, and exploitation. Also, the instability in political and economic matters contribute to high crime ratio, through which multiple groups get involve in kidnapping,

sexual harassment, discrimination, trafficking, and sexual victimization. This all results in violation of human rights of the women, where cultural diversity work as plus point. Due to sensitivity of the issue and its high negative impacts on society, the current study aims to investigate all forms of human rights violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, based on cultural diversity.

1.1 Discussion of Concepts of Theories

Venezuela has been facing a wide ratio of immigrants, who had been getting better earning opportunities and equal rights during political and economic stability. However, the current government of the Venezuela is more focused on power can benefits to loyal followers, which contributes to discrimination, political instability, and lack of economic opportunities. This also contributed to lack of opportunities to the diverse groups, where the economic instability led to poverty and rise in crime ratio. Also, the wrong political policies, such as “No Return” policy contributed to severe barriers for the immigrants’ families, left behind at Venezuela. They became the victim of powerful parties, where culture played its part. The political parties supported their loyal people (Mozo & Griffin, 2017). This encouraged the powerful parties to do whatever they found was beneficial for them and thus raised the crime ratio. The powerful forced the immigrant women to work under their influence, sexually harassed them for the sake of economic benefits, got indulged in sexual violations, and remain involved in human trafficking. This resulted in severe cultural discrimination and sexual violations. Now, to study the violation of human rights and cultural diversity specifically with combination to gender discrimination, cultural relativism plays significant role (Glazer, 2007).

The concept of relativism is the view that right and wrong and procedures of justification are products of frameworks to assess how authorities are confined to the context. In other words, relativism morally claim that the action is right for the person due to his/her believes. This enables the person to better understand the perspectives of people within same community and with same culture and prevents judging of other communities through same measures (Glazer, 2007). When we connect the concept of cultural relativism, it is defined as the idea that people believes and practices are justified due to his/her own cultural practices. Thus, one culture's norms and values should not be evaluated using the norms and values of other culture.

Now, the purpose of current study is to investigate all forms of human rights violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, based on cultural diversity. Thus, the implication of cultural relativism theory will be helpful in attainment of research objectives. The cultural relativism theory was initially proposed by Franz Boas. He initially proposed the concept of cultural relativism in 1887 (Boas, 1887). The purpose of Boas was to propose this theory for the better understanding of local relativism principles, which are implacable to specific communities for the sake of maximum benefits whereas understanding of difference in norms and values, based on difference of cultures, should be clear (Herrera, 2019). This idea was also helpful to evaluate civilizations with relative ideas to their cultures, whereas comparison of one to other became easier. The concept is helpful to understand cultural practices of other groups in its own cultural context. However, the concept gradually became racial and led to extreme culture relativism, which was further critiqued by other researchers (Lowerie, 1917; Glazer, 2007).

When further investigating the theory of cultural relativism with reference to the human rights, the violation of universal human rights in Venezuela becomes prominent. The radical

cultural relativists argue that world is perceived and organized by multiple cultural forms, and it is must for all governments of countries to respect all norms and values and establish diversity within the region. Also, the purpose of Franz Boaz's cultural relativism was also to respect all cultures as per their norms and values and consider them unique and equally valid (Boas, 1887). However, Venezuela is continuous in violation of cultural diversities, and has imposed several restrictions for the immigrants, where the sexual harassment and violation has also contributed to severe violation of female rights.

Now the current study will apply Cultural Relativism with reference to several indicators, including human rights conventions, identity and cultural rights, recognition, and essentialism. These indicators are helpful to investigate how the women of the Venezuela are facing violation of human rights via sexual harassment, cultural discrimination, and destruction of their recognition and essentialism (Wilpert, 2012). In the current scenario, the power game has affected the law of the region, where people are being supported based on their loyalty to the current political parties and cultural backgrounds. The immigrants are considered to be the root cause of all issues in Venezuela and therefore powerful authorities violate their human rights, victimize them through racism and violation of their cultural rights, and women are forced to get involve in sex sales for the sake of their economic desires. Thus, this all result in strong imbalance of power and issues or recognition where every woman and girl face insecurity and thus miss their essentialism.

Analysis

The current political and economic instability contributed more towards violation of human rights, but the practice was common since the beginning of twenty first century. In 2011, a woman named Linda Loaiza was raped and tortured in 2001 after which the case was sent to multiple

courts and was heard by 59 different judges. However, none of the judge gave decisions and court hearing delayed 38 times (Zuniga, 2018, p. 2). Despite of availability of all evidences, the court did not give decision in favor of the woman and government also disregarded the American Convention on Human Rights in 2012. The reason of such violation of human rights was the weakness of legislative authorities and role of power to prevent provision of justice to the woman. The situation is still same for the women in Venezuela and getting worst for the women, belonging to other cultures and communities. Currently, in April 2021, the dummer Alejandro Sojo was denounced for being involved in sexual abuse against the minors (AFP, 2021). Despite of these allegations, the justice system and Public Ministry has not taken any decision due to involvement of powerful authorities and weak legislative structure to protect the minorities. Such practices also contribute to worst impact on recognition factors and essentialism, where people feel unsafe in adopting and reflecting their links to their cultures.

The major challenge to the women of Venezuela is lack of opportunities, economic challenges, and social and cultural issues. The country has been facing a wide ratio of immigrants, who had been getting better earning opportunities and equal rights during political and economic stability. However, the current government of the Venezuela is more focused on power can benefits to loyal followers, which contributes to discrimination, political instability, and lack of economic opportunities (Zuniga, 2018). This also contributed to lack of opportunities to the diverse groups, where the economic instability led to poverty and rise in crime ratio. Jobs, better health facilities, and food funds were provided to only those who supported the current political party (Government of *Nicolas Maduro*). The remaining had to face economic barriers and lack of opportunities, due to which they found it better to migrate to other American regions and earn something better for

their families. Thus, this resulted in movement of 5.2 million immigrants from the Venezuela (CEPAZ, 2020, p. 18).

The migrants of the Venezuela are facing severe economic challenges due to which the poverty and lack of facilities are becoming the major barrier to their quality living. Thus, the men and women have no other option to work on low wage jobs under influence of powerful authorities, who force them to fulfill their desires and discriminate the women via sexual assault. Also, the law in the country is only for weak individuals, and so no one dare to speak against the powerful individuals, which has also contributed to higher ratio of crime and more rape scenes (Herrera, 2019). Such scenarios have made the lives of women worst at Venezuela where they are do not have right to speak up for their rights. Thus, the cultural relativism and human rights theory is helpful to investigate how rights of women have been violated in Venezuela, and how cultural discrimination has remained a major challenge for all.

Most of the immigrants moved out of the Venezuela and left their females and families at their homes with the expectations of returning back to their country with better earned amount and improve their quality of life. However, the wrong political policies, such as “No Return” policy contributed to severe barriers (CEPAZ, 2020). The women, left alone at Venezuela, became the victim of powerful parties, where culture played its part. The political parties supported their loyal people, whereas the immigrants faced severe discrimination at all levels. This left immigrant women and families alone with no economic opportunities, hunger, and poverty. They were then discriminated, based on their cultural background where the law was not applicable to the loyal followers of the current government. This encouraged them to do whatever they found was beneficial for them and thus raised the crime ratio. The powerful forced the immigrant women to work under their influence, sexually harassed them for the sake of economic benefits, got indulged

in sexual violations, and remain involved in human trafficking (Zuniga, American court opens historic hearing into Venezuela rape and torture case, 2018).

Current political and economic crises have also contributed to increase in indirection physical violation to racial women in Venezuela. The indirect physical violation reflects their preferences to the sexual trafficking due to being unable to deal with their social and economic demands. Most of the minorities are unable to get better jobs in Venezuela, whereas sex selling is welcoming job for all women. This left them with no other opportunities but to get involve in sexual activities to get better amount for their housing needs and children's grooming. Also, beauty and fashion are becoming prevent factors at Venezuela, due to which people are getting indulged in drug usage and sexual parties with beautiful ladies. Thus, the women from low-income backgrounds and extreme beauty get opportunities to earn better by fulfilling the sexual desires of the powerful authorities. Even in some cases, the women are being forced to fulfill sexual needs of the native powerful authorities and threatened for raising their voices (Humanosphere, 2017).

Also, the beauty pageant in the Venezuela has contributed to more sexual trafficking, where no legislation actions have been taken to prevent such activities. The women, belonging to different cultures, do not have any links with powerful authorities to get leverages in their careers. Thus, they are left with no other option but to get involve in prostitution and sexual exploitation for the sake of sexual favors for their career (Lozano, 2018). Especially, such practices are very common for the Miss Venezuela contestants in which the girls are passed to powerful native individuals in the society, where they are forced to fulfill their sexual desires. Such practices work as ladder and becoming common day by day.

The corruption is another major issue in the Venezuela, due to which people remain unable to get better jobs. The powerful authorities get easy favor by their native links, whereas the immigrants are left jobless and hopeless. In such scenario, women are being more affected than men. Even sometimes, men are forced to indulge their women in sex trafficking to get benefits in their jobs. Also, the minorities with low economic backgrounds are offered tens of thousands of US dollars for being involved in sexual activities. However, these all activities are result of weak legislative structure, violation of human rights, and absence of strong diversity associated regulations.

The public of Venezuela is concerned to improve their justice system and therefore they demand for the constitution amendments. Such change is demand of time as Venezuelan State is multiethnic and multicultural, and strength to legislative structure is the only way to guarantee the full exercise of cultural rights. Currently, articles 90 to 101 of the constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (1999) provide solid legal framework to drawing up of public policies for the safeguard of nation's cultural diversity and assurance to protect identities and essentialism (UNESCO, 2020, p. 3). Despite of these struggles, the attacks of ethnic women's dignity and imposed sexual practices are clear violation of the universal human rights. Further, the policy makers of the Venezuela have established a Human Rights and Cultural Diversity convention, which is established by the Ministry of Culture Identity and Diversity. This convention is established to protect essentialism of the minorities and ensure that justice is for everyone. Special focus of this convention was kept at women's rights and prevention to gender discrimination along with protection to cultural rights (UN, 2015, p. 10).

Conclusion

The current study aims to investigate all forms of human rights violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, based on cultural diversity. For this purpose, study has followed the review of already published studies with implication of cultural relativism and Human Rights and Diversity. Extreme cultural relativism provoked one's intention to support his culture and contributed to discrimination against the others. Many political entities took decisions which were beneficial for their cultural community and neglected the diversity, which later led to the discrimination and violation of human rights. The same is the case in the Venezuela, where the current government is of the view that they can do better for their cultural community and can lead the country to better political and economic position. For this purpose, the government violated the election terms and forcefully got control over the political matters.

The current government is in favor of power influence and thus it took racial decisions, through which it supported the loyal followers. The situation led to the worst economic situations for the immigrant, by which women were highly affected in terms of sexual violations and human trafficking. The human rights of the women and girls, belonging to other cultures, were highly violated where the freedom and preference was always given to the native people due to legal cultural relativism approach and favoritism, imposed by the current government of Venezuela. Also, the beauty pageant in the Venezuela has contributed to more sexual trafficking, where no legislation actions have been taken to prevent such activities. The women, belonging to different cultures, do not have any links with powerful authorities to get leverages in their careers. Thus, they are left with no other option but to get involve in prostitution and sexual exploitation for the sake of sexual favors for their career (Lozano, 2018).

Though the government and policy makers have established several legislative frameworks to ensure cultural rights, identity protection, and essentialism but still the Venezuelan women are facing severe economic and social challenges. They are left with no other option but to get indulge in sexual selling or else they are sexually forced to fulfill the desires of powerful entities. The only solution of this problem is to strengthen the legislative structure and judicial system of the Venezuela, and assurance to implementation of Universal Human Rights Conventions through involvement of international organizations. Moreover, the women and men should be provided equal opportunities of earning, no matter to which culture do they belong. Merit should be priority, and government must not get involved in racial activities, such as favoritism to natives and racism to the minorities. The sexual activities and sex trafficking should be banned by the international powers, where investors should be encouraged to invest in Venezuela and help the public in their economic downfall.

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