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Ending Modern-Day Slavery: A Research on China and Laos Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts

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Abstract

Human trafficking affects a surprisingly large number of adolescents around the globe, and thus, become a major issue in our decade requesting cooperation between countries to fight against it. To accompany this fight, researchers and scholars must also play the role of the investigator to identify the threats and convoy the smooth implementation of these activities. In this context, we aimed in this paper to assess the Laos-China bilateral anti-human

trafficking cooperation (LC-BLIDC) against human trafficking between the two countries. The data was collected from a sample of 168 professionals who work to fight against human trafficking activities in Laos within the framework of LC-BLIDC. The study's empirical findings revealed that the attributes of individuals who have work experience in anti-human trafficking are associated with the success of the LC-BLIDC. The study, therefore, suggests training and education activities to be implemented with a focus on the individual instead of the department level.

Keywords: human trafficking, inter-department cooperation, and Laos-China bilateral cooperation against human trafficking

Introduction

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery and continues to exist in practically all countries in the world and China and Laos are no exceptions. In June 2000, China, Laos, and other countries such as Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam signed a convention to join efforts to fight the human trafficking mechanism at the UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Mekong River Sub-region, however, there are still men, women, and children enslaved into labor and commercial sexual exploitation in the region. In addition, nowadays, the international human trafficking problem has concerned substantial political and social attention. Thus, awareness-raising initiatives such as effective cooperation with neighboring countries on the bilateral level, that include the departments in charge of combatting human trafficking on a national or international scale (for example, criminal police cooperation agreements) are encouraged.

Since June 2000, the two countries（China and Laos） have established and reinforced the anti-human trafficking agendas and offered resources for law application and the public to help raise awareness and offer much-needed training. However, despite rising awareness of the issue and an influx of resources from such important organizations as the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations, foundations, and non-governmental organizations, the field is still hampered by its incapability to measure the size and scope of trafficking. The statistics used to estimate the occurrence of human trafficking in the two nations are missing in scope and quality. The lack of reliable information and dependence on insufficient evidence has driven disagreement among anti-human trafficking organizations at a bilateral level, and some studies have disapproved of the issue as unsubstantiated and estimates of this issue as doubtful. Unfortunately, challenges also occur in assessing the effectiveness of the bilateral organizations putting in place the working system’s response. Rates of identification, investigation, and prosecution are of limited value in determining the effectiveness of Laos China, and vice versa responses to human trafficking because the data supporting prevalence estimates are not available (Jiao et al. 2021).

Academic study can play a vital role in understanding the criminal justice system’s capability to respond to these modern slavery practices and in categorizing hindrances that hinder the efforts deployed at the joint bilateral level. The need for robust research is an additional persistence given that restricted budgets and declining resources is been cited as common issues in fighting this issue in many countries. At a time when governments progressively

seek to use evidence-based practices, policymakers and practitioners are turning to research institutions to produce the data needed to analyze the impact of anti-trafficking efforts. The problem can be recurring without accurate estimates of the prevalence of human trafficking, it can be tough to know how to allocate resources to study the issue. The Laos government department the country in charge of the implementation of the anti-human trafficking efforts, the Traffic in Persons Report (Laos, 2010) recognizes this data deficiency and recommends that the government improves the data and analysis of human trafficking cases at the national and local level.

This paper explores the China-Laos bilateral anti-human trafficking cooperation by examining the inter-department collaboration at the bilateral level between the two countries. A survey with an individual who has work experience within the institution that is, directly and indirectly, involved in the bilateral cooperation to fight again human trafficking. The paper, therefore, contributes to the existing studies on human-trafficking scholarship by dissecting the “black box” of China Loas' anti-human-trafficking bilateral cooperation. With more awareness of such joint efforts at the bilateral level methods could advance in future cooperation efforts.

Bilateral Level Inter-Department Cooperation on Anti-Human trafficking

Bilateral-level Inter-department cooperation is a prerequisite for the success of any cooperation between countries and is a strategy to prevent and fight human trafficking. Inter-department coordination mechanisms at the national or local level, should be competent to elaborate and implement the bilateral level anti-trafficking measures, monitor their implementation, harmonize the actions of all relevant actors at both local and national levels and facilitate bilateral cooperation. Hence, the departments and individuals involved in this bilateral-level anti-trafficking cooperation role should not be limited to the prosecution of criminals, but also cover the development and harmonization of measures to support and protect victims of human trafficking. This could help the bilateral cooperation to be mutually beneficial relationships established for a common goal which is to fight again human trafficking (Mattessich et al. 2001) and is necessary to reach successful results when solving complex problems (McDonald et al., 2014; McGough, 2013; Sheldon-Sherman, 2012; Wellbrock et al., 2013). Bilateral level cooperation between the government, public, and private sectors has amplified widely in recent years (Altshuler, 2005; Banks, Dutch, & Wang, 2008; Bond & Gittell, 2010; Giacomazzi & Smithey, 2001; Murphy & Lutze, 2009). For example, in the area of criminal justice, cooperation between law enforcement and private security organizations has proliferated to promote national security (Liederbach, Fritsch, Carter, & Bannister, 2008), and several studies acknowledged that the benefits of bilateral-level cooperation models for addressing crime are effectively pressing criminal problems, such as drug circulation networks, Internet crime, gangs, and terrorism (Brewer et al., 2007; Jefferis et al., 1998; Marcum et al., 2009). These increases in interagency cooperation between government, private, and public organizations have been strongly influenced by today's social complexity and an increasingly interdependent world (Altshuler, 2005) with social problems that are beyond the scope of individual organizations to address and find long-term solutions without working together (Balaswamy et al., 2004; Bond &

Gittell, 2010; Braun, 2003; Dedrick & Greenbaum, 2011; Green et al., 2008; Jones & Lutze, 2016; Li et al., 2012; Peaslee, 2009; Rajaee et al., 2013; Solansky & Beck, 2009; Wong et al., 2011).

Role of Individual contribution in Interagency Cooperation

Bilateral-level inter-department cooperation allows individuals working to contribute to the anti-human trafficking fight by coordinating their activities, which increases efficiency by reducing duplication of efforts and failure to deliver services. Such coordination of anti-trafficking actions allows for the drafting of a response to the action that matches the complication of the action and the unique way in which the crime manifests itself in a particular community (Sheldon-Sherman, 2012). Moreover, bilateral-level inter-department cooperation allows individuals to work to fight against human trafficking by identifying a common mission, setting goals, and establishing a formalized infrastructure and strategic framework for responding to the activity. Bilateral level cooperation process with a formalized infrastructure and strategic framework can alleviate the challenges of integrating the efforts of multiple agencies working across diverse "jurisdictions, functions, and funding levels" (Farrell et al., 2008, p. 91) is often costly and lengthy cases that, can have victims requiring services for a long time (Clawson et al., 2003; Sheldon-Sherman, 2012). Bilateral-level inter-department cooperation should also enable individuals working against human trafficking to pool their financial and human resources for anti-trafficking activities such as research, education and training, technical assistance, criminal justice system responses, and the provision of services to victims. Such access to shared resources can reduce the strain on financial and human resources that often accompanies organizations trying to independently tackle pressing social issues (Sheldon-Sherman, 2012).

Additionally, bilateral-level cooperation can result in a network contact list for individuals and organizations involved in the fight against anti-trafficking to increase awareness of whom to call and where to refer victims. This list of networks can improve communication between organizations, increase the sharing of information on human trafficking cases, improve the processing of human trafficking cases and follow-up for the rehabilitation of victims, all of which can result in a more holistic and complete approach response to crime (Braun, 2003; Sheldon-Sherman, 2012). While it is recognized that successful outcomes of anti-trafficking efforts require a formal and strategic cooperative approach, it remains unclear whether there is a harmonized response across agencies when responding to crime within the sphere of China and Laos.

Yet, research on human trafficking mostly focuses on the context of the crime, existing legal frameworks, demand factors, victim vulnerabilities, consequences of trafficking, and anti-trafficking recommendations (P. D. Le, 2014; Trounson & Pfeifer, 2020; Vijeyarasa & Stein, 2010). Attention is not paid to search for the challenges on bilateral level cooperation between the departments and individuals that are involved in the anti-human trafficking cooperation like for example police, border guards, and social welfare personnel. But, it is important to note that research on national inter-department cooperation and its limits to effectively responding to the fight against human trafficking has been undertaken. Among

others, T. H. Le et al. (2018) Hoang (2013), Phan (2008), and Hoang (2013) examine weaknesses in cooperation between intergovernmental agencies and concluded that they contribute to a lack of awareness on the part of officials of the needs of trafficked persons. Duong (2014) added that the limitations of information sharing between anti-trafficking agencies could lead that the awareness campaigns not being organized effectively. Thus, this paper aimed to fulfill this gap in the understanding of the bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation.

Methodology

We apply an exploratory research design to investigate the Laos-China inter-department bilateral level anti-trafficking interagency cooperation (LC-BLIDC) grounded on a sample of 168 participants. These data were collected through survey questionnaires of statewide professionals identified as having the potential to be associated with trafficking through the exercise of their functions or as professionals who officially participate in anti-trafficking activities.

Respondents were selected based on their involvement and knowledge of bilateral-level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation activities, and were encouraged to participate in research and provide high-quality detailed information that they seem could be taken into account in the study. In addition, respondents were encouraged to suggest potential participants that they feel are deemed to participate in the study. Respondents came from different government departments which are involved in implementing the Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking interagency cooperation. These departments included the Department of Public Security, the Department of National Defense, the Department of Information and Communication, the Department of Labor and Social Welfare (the Social Welfare Workforce), and the Laos National Commission for Advancement of Women and Mothers and Children (NCAW-MC). In each government department, our focus was on operational staff members who are directly involved in the implement the bilateral-level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation projects. This includes higher-level employees, Managers who oversee these collaborative activities, Supervisor or liaison staff members who report on bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation, and line workers. The particular focus on these staff members is that they are deemed to have a deep understanding of bilateral-level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation.

In addition, some participants were civil societies organizations and former workers and/or retired personnel who have a work experience and knowledge in LC-BLIDC. The reason for including them in the study is that they have a deep understanding of the issue raised in the study but also have not been constrained by government work and may feel more comfortable adding an independent viewpoint that they feel might be taken into account in the study of this issue.

Research Procedure

The data collection in Laos public institutions requires an administrative procedure of asking for permission for data collection. Thus, in the first step, a permission letter for data

collection was sent to all departments included in this study. At each unit including government Departments, after approval of our request for permission for data collection sent to a contacted person in charge of cooperation activities, an appointment for a meeting was taken during which we asked him/her assistance with the contact information of the most suitable respondents that deem to participate in the study. The reason was that the person may have a clear idea of the right people to participate in the study as he/she had regular contact with the staff member in the Department. Contact by telephone was established with the potential participants' list suggested, to solicit them to participate in the study by answering our survey questionnaires.

While few of them accepted to make appointments for filling the research questionnaires, some of them for personal reasons asked for a link to the online questionnaires which were sent in most cases through WhatsApp or email. Anytime, a request was formulated to the respondent to suggest to us other potential participants who also had experience and understanding of LC-BLIDC. A total of 168 questionnaires were filed and returned to us out of 340 sent making a 49.41% rate of participation. The descriptive statistic of participants' demography is presented in table 1 in the appendix.

Research Strategy and Measurement

Descriptive statistics were applied to analyze to study data to provide an overview of the participants' demography. The results are presented in table 1 in the appendix. In addition, the principal component analysis (PCA) technique was applied to summarize the rotated component matrix and determine the components of each factor included in this study. The results are presented in table 2 in the appendix. Furthermore, the descriptive statistic was applied to compare the mean of the component of each factor into important and less important constructs. And a dummy variable for each factor was created and take the value of 1 if the value of the factors falls in the category of important, and 0 if otherwise. Finally, the logistic regression analysis was in addition applied to figure out which individual and department traits are most likely to influence participation in LC-BLIDC against trafficking.

Research Findings

Descriptive statistics of the constructs for the LC-BLIDC shown in table 3 indicate that the department funding budget allocated to LC-BLIDC presents the highest mean score of 3.40, with a standard deviation of 1.062. It’s followed by the department's written report on the LC-BLIDC activities (3.27 of the mean score and .933 standard deviation), and the department mandated LC-BLIDC with a mean score of 2.91, and 1.348 standard deviation.

These findings revealed that the factors such as department budget funding capability, department written report, and department mandated are crucial factors for the success of LC-BLIDC. The findings also show that the department required presents a lower mean score of 2.77 and 1.343 standard deviations follows by the department's written policy (with a mean score of 2.86 and .784 standard), and part of the department's job description (with 2.89 of the mean score and 1.327 of standard deviation). Thus, the department required, department written policy, and department job description, factors are less important for the

success of LC-BLIDC.

Table 3. Laos China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department constructs

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SDv
The Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation is part of a job description in my department	28.0	7.1	14.9	47.6	2.4	2.89	1.327
The Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation is required in my department	31.5	7.1	15.5	44.0	1.8	2.77	1.343
The Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation is mandated in my department	25.6	8.9	23.8	32.1	9.5	2.91	1.348
The Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation is fully funded by my department	5.4	11.3	37.5	29.2	16.7	3.40	1.062
In my department, there is a written report concerning such bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation activities	1.2	20.8	36.3	32.7	8.9	3.27	.933
There is a written policy of the Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation in my department	0.6	35.1	44.0	18.5	1.8	2.86	.784

Note: SD: strongly disagree; D: disagree; N: neutral; A: agree; and SA: strongly agree. SDv: standard deviation; all the constructs' values of the Likert five points-scale were reported with the valid percentage.

To check whether there were formalized activities within the framework of LC-BLIDC, four (4) constructs were included. The findings show in table 4 that "LC-BLIDC is part of the evaluation during a performance review, presents the highest mean score of 3.75, and .927 of standard deviation. It's followed by a department-written document articulating roles and responsibilities when working with other departments on anti-human trafficking activities with a mean of 3.47 and a standard deviation of .725.

These findings revealed that the factors such as LC-BLIDC is part of the evaluation during a performance review, and a department-written document articulating roles and responsibilities when working with other departments is crucial to formalizing the successful implementation of LC-BLIDC. However, the department's written method and/or plan for monitoring and evaluating with a mean score of 3.14, and .725 standard deviation follows by the department's formal procedure informing the collaborative process (with a mean score of 3.36, and .686 standard deviation), are the factors with the lower mean, consequently, less important to formalize the successful in the implementation of LC-BLIDC.

Table 4. Formalized Activities

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
In my department, there is a written document articulating roles and responsibilities when working with other departments on anti-human trafficking activities	2.4	3.0	43.5	47.6	3.6	3.47	.725
There is a formal procedure informing the collaborative process of the Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation in my department	1.2	6.0	51.2	39.3	2.4	3.36	.686
In my department, there is a written method and/or plan to monitor and evaluate the bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation activities	2.4	26.2	33.3	31.5	6.5	3.14	.960
The Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation is part of the evaluation during a performance review in my department	0.6	10.1	24.4	43.5	21.4	3.75	.927

Note: SD: strongly disagree; D: disagree; N: neutral; A: agree; and SA: strongly agree. SDv: standard deviation; all the constructs' values of the Likert five points-scale were reported with the valid percentage.

In addition, to check whether department collaborative engagement aligns with the framework of LC-BLIDC, two constructs were included. Among them, the department collected data reported cases with the highest mean score of 3.87 and .879 standard deviation, and the department engaged in collaboration networks with other departments with the lower mean score of 3.85, and .497 standard deviations shown in table 5. These findings revealed that the department collected data reported cases is most important for the successful implementation of the department collaborative engagement in LC-BLIDC, while department engagement in collaboration networks with other departments is less important.

Table 5. Department Collaborative Engagement

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
My department engages in collaboration networks with other departments	1.2	13.7	82.7	2.4	1.2	3.85	.497
In my department, there is collected data reported cases on bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation activities	1.2	4.2	26.2	43.5	25.0	3.87	.879

Note: SD: strongly disagree; D: disagree; N: neutral; A: agree; and SA: strongly agree. SDv: standard deviation; all the constructs' values of the Likert five points-scale were reported with the valid percentage.

To check whether employees were aware of LC-BLIDC, individual awareness of the existence of LC-BLIDC with the highest means score of 3.63 and .740 standard deviation, and individual awareness of the list and lead departments directing involve in with the lowest mean score of 3.24, and .643 of standard deviation shown in table 6. These findings revealed that employees' awareness of the existence of LC-BLIDC is crucial for its successful

implementation, however, individual awareness of the list and lead departments directing involve in is less important.

Table 6. Awareness

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
I am aware that there is a bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation network between Laos and China	3.0	44.0	40.5	12.5	3.0	3.63	.740
I am aware of the list and lead departments directly involve in the Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation activities in Laos.	8.3	61.9	26.8	3.0	8.3	3.24	.643

Note: SD: strongly disagree; D: disagree; N: neutral; A: agree; and SA: strongly agree. SDv: standard deviation; all the constructs' values of the Likert five points-scale were reported with the valid percentage.

To check whether the implementation within the framework of LC-BLIDC was successful, department personal training activities with the highest means score of 3.63 and .698 standard deviation, and individuals acknowledged their department implementation of the activities with the lowest means score of 3.55 and .617 of standard deviation shown in table 7. These findings revealed that the department's training activities are crucial in the implementation of activities for the success of LC-BLIDC.

Table 7. Implementation of Activities

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
There is a training activity for participation in anti-human-trafficking inter-department collaborative training activities	2.4	2.4	28.6	63.7	3.0	3.63	.698
My department implements the Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation	3.0	42.9	50.6	3.6	3.0	3.55	.617

Note: SD: strongly disagree; D: disagree; N: neutral; A: agree; and SA: strongly agree. SDv: standard deviation; all the constructs' values of the Likert five points-scale were reported with the valid percentage.

Individual Attributes effects the Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation

Logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effects of individual attributes (gender, age, position, and work experience) on LC-BLIDC. The logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi 2(4) = 83.346$, $p < .05$, shown in table 11 in the appendix. The model explained 53.10% (Nagelkerke R2 in table 9 in the appendix) of the variance in LC-BLIDC and correctly classified 61.1% of cases (table 10 ion the appendix).

The findings present in table 11 revealed that males were .192 times more likely to contribute to the successful implementation of LC-BLIDC than females. The middle-aged individual was associated with a decrease in the likelihood of the successful implementation of LC-BLIDC. In addition, the increase in work experience is associated with the likely high

decrease to contribute to the successful implementation of LC-BLIDC.

Table 11. Logistic Regression Model Summary Predicting Individual Attributes' effects on LC-BLIDC (N = 168)

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B) Lower	Upper
Gender (Male)	-1.651	.499	10.947	1	.001	.192	.072	.510
Age			15.232	3	.002			
18 - 30	.861	.616	1.952	1	.162	2.365	.707	7.908
31 - 40	-1.999	.983	4.136	1	.042	.135	.020	.930
41 - 50	20.447	26.361	.000	1	.999	75.400	.000	.
Position			6.111	3	.106			
Higher Level	1.450	1.959	.548	1	.459	4.264	.092	198.124
Manager	-1.020	1.641	.386	1	.534	.361	.014	8.995
Supervisor	-2.125	1.680	1.600	1	.206	.119	.004	3.214
Work Experience			13.705	4	.008			
1 -5	-2.408	.790	9.292	1	.002	.090	.019	.423
6 - 10	-3.192	1.005	10.096	1	.001	.041	.006	.294
11 - 20	-4.447	1.276	12.141	1	.000	.012	.001	.143
21 - 30	-4.708	38790.676	.000	1	1.000	.009	.000	.
Constant	5.463	1.827	8.942	1	.003	23.820		

a. Variable(s) entered in step 1: Gender, Age, Position, Work Experience.

Department Formalized Activities Attributes

The logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi 2(4) = 26.39$, $p < .05$, shown in table 12 in the appendix. The model explained 19.7% (Nagelkerke R2 in table 13 in appendix) of the variance of department formalized activities in the framework of LC-BLIDC and correctly classified 64.9% of cases (table 14 in the appendix).

The findings presented in table 15 revealed that the individuals working in the northern region of the country are positively associated with their department's formalized activities within the framework of LC-BLIDC.

Table 15. Logistic Regression Model Summary Predicting Department Formalized Activities Effects on LC-BLIDC (N = 168)

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B) Lower	Upper
Dep type			1.473	5	.916			
Security	.719	.608	1.397	1	.237	2.052	.623	6.762
Defense	.609	.560	1.180	1	.277	1.838	.613	5.513
Information	43.594	49.134	.000	1	.999	85.000	.000	.

Labor	-20.462	28.722	.000	1	.999	.000	.000	.
NCAW-MC	21.944	28.722	.000	1	.999	33.000	.000	.
Dep level (State)	-20.462	28420.722	.000	1	.999	.000	.000	.
N of Empl in the dep			2.235	3	.525			
1 - 10	-.580	.449	1.663	1	.197	.560	.232	1.352
11 - 50	.461	1.323	.121	1	.727	1.586	.119	21.200
51 - 250	21.042	28.866	.000	1	.999	13.000	.000	.
Region of Empl			8.142	2	.017			
North	1.276	.447	8.142	1	.004	3.581	1.491	8.600
Central	-20.375	28.722	.000	1	.999	.000	.000	.
Constant	-1.437	.600	5.733	1	.017	.238		

a. Variable(s) entered in step 1: Department type, Department level, Number of employees in the department, Region of Employment.

Department Collaborative Engagement Attributes

The logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi 2(4) = 28.391$, $p < .05$, shown in table 16 in the appendix. The model explained 20.8% (Nagelkerke R2 in table 17 in the appendix) of the variance of department collaborative engagement in the framework of LC-BLIDC and correctly classified 64.3% of cases (table 18 in the appendix).

The findings presented in table 19 revealed that the individuals working in the northern region of the country are positively associated with their department's collaborative engagement with other departments within the framework of LC-BLIDC. In addition, these findings suggest that a department with a small number of employees was likely to associate with a positive collaborative engagement with other departments within the framework of LC-BLIDC.

Table 19. Logistic Regression Model Summary Predicting Department Collaborative Engagement Effects on LC-BLIDC (N = 168)

							95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
Dep type			4.621	5	.464			
Security	-.077	.573	.018	1	.893	.926	.301	2.844
Defense	.706	.531	1.770	1	.183	2.026	.716	5.732
Information	-.266	49.134	.000	1	1.000	.767	.000	.
Labor	-20.851	28.722	.000	1	.999	.000	.000	.
NCAW-MC	.352	1.495	.055	1	.814	1.422	.076	26.633
Nb of empl in the dep			4.559	3	.207			
1 - 10	.972	.461	4.449	1	.035	2.643	1.071	6.521
11 - 50	22.092	22.352	.000	1	.999	39.000	.000	.
51 - 250	1.362	1.507	.817	1	.366	3.906	.204	74.933
Region of Empl			7.369	2	.025			

North	-1.236	.455	7.369	1	.007	.291	.119	.709
Central	20.585	28.722	.000	1	.999	87.900	.000	.
Dep level (State)	-20.851	28.722	.000	1	.999	.000	.000	.
Constant	-.088	.556	.025	1	.874	.916		

a. Variable(s) entered in step 1: Department type, Number of employees in the department, Region of Employment, Department level

Department Awareness Attributes

The logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi2(4) = 37.00$, $p < .05$, shown in table 20 in the appendix. The model explained 26.7% (Nagelkerke R2 in table 21 in appendix) of the variance of department awareness in the framework of LC-BLIDC and correctly classified 70.1% of cases (table 22 in the appendix).

The findings presented in table 23 revealed that the defense department is negatively associated with the department's awareness within the framework of LC-BLIDC.

Table 23. Logistic Regression Model Summary Predicting Department Awareness Effects on LC-BLIDC (N = 168)

							95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
Dep type			21.284	5	.001			
Security	-.570	.624	.835	1	.361	.566	.167	1.920
Defense	-2.125	.592	12.859	1	.000	.119	.037	.382
Information	40.080	49.134	.000	1	.999	25.000	.000	.
Labor	-.895	1.512	.350	1	.554	.409	.021	7.912
NCAW-MC	-22.098	28.722	.000	1	.999	.000	.000	.
Nber of empl in the dep			1.345	3	.719			
1 - 10	.201	.442	.208	1	.648	1.223	.515	2.906
11 - 50	1.613	1.402	1.324	1	.250	5.016	.322	78.229
51 - 250	20.819	28.293	.000	1	.999	11.000	.000	.
Region of Empl			2.379	2	.304			
North	-.685	.444	2.379	1	.123	.504	.211	1.204
Central	-20.457	28.722	.000	1	.999	.000	.000	.
Dep level (State)	-22.098	28.722	.000	1	.999	.000	.000	.
Constant	1.378	.623	4.897	1	.027	3.969		

a. Variable(s) entered in step 1: Department type, Number of employees in the department, Region of Employment, Department level.

Department Implementation of Activities Attributes

The logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi2(4) = 23.67$, $p < .05$, shown in

table 24 in the appendix. The model explained 17.7% (Nagelkerke R2 in table 25 in the appendix) of the variance of department implementation of activities within the framework of LC-BLIDC and correctly classified 63.7% of cases (table 26 in the appendix). However, all the indicators of the department attributes are statistically non-significant.

The findings presented in table 27 revealed that the department attributes have a non-significant effect on the department's implementation of activities within the framework of LC-BLIDC.

Table 27. Logistic Regression Model Summary Predicting Department Implementation of Activities Effects on LC-BLIDC (N = 168)

							95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
Dept type			4.259	5	.513			
Security	19.833	28.902	.000	1	.999	41.000	.000	.
Defense	21.043	28.902	.000	1	.999	13.000	.000	.
Information	20.451	28.902	.000	1	.999	76.300	.000	.
Labor	63.464	56.349	.000	1	.999	36.000	.000	.
NCAW-MC	.000	40.805	.000	1	1.000	1.000	.000	.
Dep level (State)	19.833	28.696	.000	1	.999	41.700	.000	.
Nber of empl in the dep			3.693	3	.297			
1 - 10	-21.465	27.350	.000	1	.999	.000	.000	.
11 - 50	-22.073	27.350	.000	1	.999	.000	.000	.
51 - 250	-20.409	27.351	.000	1	.999	.000	.000	.
Region of Empl			.300	2	.861			
North	21.281	28.702	.000	1	.999	17.000	.000	.
Central	21.058	28.702	.000	1	.999	13.000	.000	.
Constant	-40.021	56.269	.000	1	.999	.000		

a. Variable(s) entered in step 1: Department type, Department level, Number of employees in the department, Region of Employment.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our finding shows that individual attributes, such as work position has a non-significant association with the LC-BLIDC. This can also mean that an individual determination to engage in the fight against human trafficking has nothing to do with his/her work position in the department. Thus, there seems to be consistency between an individual from different positions in the department and whether they participate in the bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation. Not surprisingly, when an individual has contact with trafficking, are involved in anti-trafficking activities, and are more knowledgeable about others dealing with the issue, they are more likely to engage in bilateral-level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation. These findings raise important questions about whether individual involvement in bilateral-level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation

affected their ability to identify victims and traffickers, or whether individuals began to engage in such efforts of collaboration in response to their contact with the traffickers. Regardless of the direction of this relationship, these findings highlight the need for education and training on trafficking for individuals most likely to have direct or indirect contact with the traffickers. While it is plausible that individuals engage in anti-trafficking activities and knowledge of other departments involved in such activities are positively related to their inter-department collaborative efforts, these findings underscore the importance of applying a focused human approach trafficking agenda among institutions that are likely to be in direct or indirect contact with activities aimed at fostering the bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation. This program should, at a minimum, include outreach events, education and training on trafficking, and educational resources, including an up-to-date list of networks, to provide the professional community with basic information on the agencies best prepared to respond to crime.

In addition, department type and department size have a non-significant relationship with formalized activities within the framework of LC-BLIDC. This is mean that the department type does not influence individual engagement in the anti-trafficking formalized activities. Furthermore, the department type and department level have a non-significant relationship with department collaborative engagement with other departments within the framework of LC-BLIDC. This means that none of the departments at the State level and/or local level have implemented meaningful formal collaborative practices within other departments. This finding is not surprising given that the bureaucratic structure of these departments makes it difficult and does not encourage easy collaboration between inter-department. This can be justified by the fact that collaboration is not possible without a formal mandate. Moreover, department type has a limited association with awareness of LC-BLIDC, but the defense department shows a negative and significant association with awareness. This could be explained by the protection and security purpose of not disclosing information on State security. In addition, department size, department level, and region of employment show a non-significant association with the department's awareness of the framework Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation. This means that individual awareness does not depend on their department's level, size, or employment region. Finally, the findings show that none of the department attributes have a significant association with the department's implementation of activities within the framework of LC-BLIDC.

In this regard, the study suggested building the capacities needed to improve LC-BLIDC, serious efforts should be made to integrate all individuals and departments that may come into direct or indirect contact with traffickers within this framework of the fight against trafficking. This is especially true for fields that are largely on the periphery of the anti-trafficking movement, such as human/social services and related. These finding matters because failure to establish a mandate for activities and set goals to guide collaborative efforts are unlikely to produce measurable results. Outcome evaluation is necessary for securing the continued commitment of individuals and/or departments involve and for the collaborative capacity to advocate for collaborative funding over time. These findings support trafficking research that characterizes current collaborative anti-trafficking activities as

informal, reactive, occurring on an ad hoc basis, with no formal infrastructure or policy framework to support systematic and ongoing collaborative exchange. Literature on the topic shows that a lack of institutional support, infrastructure, and formalized standardization can impede the production of truly meaningful anti-trafficking inter-department collaborative results. Future research should empirically assess the impact of collaborative inter-department anti-trafficking formalization on trafficking outcomes such as victim identification, case processing, and victim rehabilitation.

These findings come in support of the empirical existing empirical studies that advised that trafficking activities may continue to increase (Macy & Graham, 2012; Ortiqov & Sayfiddinov, 2021; Zhang, 2022). While several studies grounded on these findings advised that with the increasing human trafficking activity it is important to implement sophisticated criminal methods, a collaborative and highly coordinated response became increasingly necessary (Jones & Lutze, 2016; Sheldon-Sherman, 2012). Further examination of the topic of inter-department collaboration against trafficking can provide the type of "solid research" (Jones & Lutze, 2016; Weitzer, 2014) on how departments respond to crime, the outcomes of the responses, and how they can be improved, which can be used to build an empirical base from which evidence-based anti-trafficking policies and best practices can be developed (Farrell, Pfeffer, & Bright, 2015; McGough, 2013; Zhang, 2022). Furthermore, such research can provide valuable information that can contribute to a better understanding of crimes, as criminal justice, human rights, public health, labor, immigration, and national security issues, deserve continued attention.

Although this study shows that the majority of the departments involved in collaborative anti-trafficking activities are not formalized, individuals who work in the provision of services to victims are the most likely, of all types of the department, to engage in formalized collaborative activities. Since that often requires limitations which include referral of victims, assessment of victim services, or assisting victims with reintegration (Macy & Graham, 2012), individuals who work in anti-trafficking may have more experience working with other departments outside of their professional sector and, therefore, may have built the infrastructure and resources to support collaborative engagement between these institutions. Moreover, given that individuals who work in anti-trafficking have historically played an active role in anti-trafficking efforts (Macy & Graham, 2012), their formal collaborative activities can only be recognized as an integral part of successful inter-department collaboration. Future research should examine what has been learned and practiced by individuals who work in anti-trafficking and can be extrapolated to other types of departments.

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Appendix

Table 1. Summary Statistics of Participant Demography Characteristic

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	107	63.7
Female	61	36.3
Age		
18 - 30	53	31.5
31 - 40	64	38.1
41 - 50	47	28.0
51 - 60	4	2.4
61 - +	53	31.5
Position		
Higher level	8	4.8
Manager	15	8.9
Supervisor	43	25.6
Line Worker	102	60.7
Work Exp		
1 - 5	36	21.4
6 - 10	60	35.7
11 - 20	48	28.6
21 - 30	22	13.1
31 - +	2	1.2
Dep type		
Security	22	13.1
Defense	41	24.4
Information	100	59.5
Labor	1	.6
NCAW-MC	2	1.2
Other	2	1.2
Dep level		
State	166	98.8
Local	0	0
Non-government	0	0
Social	2	1.2
Nbr empl		
1 - 10	61	36.3
11 - 50	102	60.7
51 - 250	3	1.8
251 - +	2	1.2
Region		
North	71	42.3
Central	94	56.0
South	3	1.8

Table 2. Rotated Component Matrixa

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
The Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation is part of a job description in my department	.753	.241	-.439	.096	.058
The Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation is required in my department	.746	.268	-.378	.182	.113
The Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation is fully funded by my department	.734	.042	.008	.090	.144
The Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation is mandated in my department	.713	.240	.001	-.148	-.038
There is a written policy of the Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation in my department	.535	.227	.145	.477	-.127
In my department, there is a written report concerning such bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation activities	.530	.224	.345	-.525	-.259
There is a formal procedure informing the collaborative process of the Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation in my department	.155	.734	.121	.109	-.009
In my department, there is a written document articulating roles and responsibilities when working with other departments on anti-human trafficking activities	.436	.701	.002	.041	-.056
The Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation is part of the evaluation during a performance review in my department	-.069	.697	-.250	-.412	.306
In my department, there is a written method and/or plan to monitor and evaluate the bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation activities	.315	.689	.087	.323	-.134
In my department, there is collected data reported cases on bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation activities	.038	.005	.834	.053	.055
My department engages in collaboration networks with other departments	-.225	.091	.680	.017	.121
I am aware of the list and lead agency directing involve in the Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation activities in Laos.	.208	.140	.103	.638	.293
I am aware that there is a bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation network between Laos and China	.188	-.099	.105	-.584	.561
My department implements the Laos-China bilateral level anti-trafficking inter-department cooperation	.171	.007	.110	.010	.713
There is a training activity for participation in anti-human-trafficking inter-department collaborative training activities	-.125	.004	.003	.115	.674

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Table 8. Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	83.346	11	.000
	Block	83.346	11	.000
	Model	83.346	11	.000

Table 9. Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	140.881[a]	.391	.531

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 20 because maximum iterations has been reached. Final solution cannot be found.

Table 10. Classification

			Predicted		
			IDAHT1		%
	Observed		.00	1.00	Correct
Step 0	IDAHT1	.00	0	65	.0
		1.00	0	103	100.0
	Overall Percentage				61.3

a. Constant is included in the model.

b. The cut value is .500

Table 12. Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

	Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step	1.458	1	.227
Block	1.458	1	.227
Model	26.390	11	.006

Table 13. Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	197.838[a]	.145	.197

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 20 because maximum iterations has been reached. Final solution cannot be found.

Table 14. Classification

			Predicted		
			Formal1		Percentage
	Observed		.00	1.00	Correct
Step 1	Formal1	.00	97	6	94.2
		1.00	53	12	18.5
	Overall Percentage				64.9

a. The cut value is .500

Table 16. Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	28.391	11	.003
	Block	28.391	11	.003
	Model	28.391	11	.003

Table 17. Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	202.119[a]	.155	.208

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 20 because maximum iterations has been reached. Final solution cannot be found.

Table 18. Classification Tablea

	Predicted	
Observed	CollEng1	Percentage

Table 20. Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

	Chi-square	df	Sig.

		.00	1.00	Correct
CollEng1	.00	40	34	54.1
	1.00	26	68	72.3
Overall Percentage				64.3

Table 21. Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
	190.753[a]	.199	.267

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 20 because maximum iterations has been reached. Final solution cannot be found.

Table 24. Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	23.670	11	.014
	Block	23.670	11	.014
	Model	23.670	11	.014

Table 26. Classification Table a

		Predicted		
		Impl of activities		%
Observed		.00	1.00	Correct
ImplAct1	.00	74	24	75.5
	1.00	37	33	47.1
Overall Percentage				63.7

a. The cut value is .500

Step 1	Step	37.001	11	.000
	Block	37.001	11	.000
	Model	37.001	11	.000

Table 22. Classification Tablea

		Predicted		
		Awarness1		Percentage
Observed		.00	1.00	Correct
Awarness1	.00	74	22	77.1
	1.00	27	44	62.0
Overall Percentage				70.7

a. The cut value is .500

Table 25. Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	204.539[a]	.131	.177

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 20 because maximum iterations has been reached. Final solution cannot be found.