**Behind the Scenes of Migrant Smuggling: Qualitative Insights from Indian Smugglers**

**Abstract**

The implementation of stricter immigration policies by many countries has increased the number of people searching for alternative routes, such as seeking assistance from travel agents or migrant smugglers. This shift has created a new opportunity leading to an increase in travel agents and migrant smugglers, particularly in countries like India. This paper is based on ethnographic research with travel agents, who are running the migrant smuggling business in India. We have found that they initially operated as conventional travel agents providing services such as ticket booking and visa assistance. However, due the profitable economically rewarding opportunities in illicit migrant smuggling they entered this lucrative business. Further, this paper explores their interpretation of migrant smuggling as a service provided to their clients and the ethics they follow in their enterprises.

Key Words: Migrants Smuggling, Irregular Migrants, Human Trafficking, Illegal Migration

**Introduction**

Migrant smugglers are well-established networks in practically every part of the world, and they offer their services to desperate migrants who seek to move to a destination country without any documentation (Triandafyllidou, A., 2022; Zhang, Sanchez, and Achilli, 2018). Smugglers tend to regularly operate with the assistance of extensive networks, despite the fact that it is an illegal activity against the state and difficult to provide (Richter, 2019; Zhang, Sanchez, and Achilli, 2018). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) definition states: “Migrant Smuggling is the facilitation, for financial or other material gain, of irregular entry into a country where the migrant is not a national or resident”. Even though the phrase "smugglers" appears to be straightforward, many people are involved in it and sometimes, without their awareness, innocent people, such as daily wage labourers, indulge in smuggling activities while working for the migrant smuggling networks, for example, fishermen in the coastal region (UNODC, 2011). Most of the time, unsuccessful illegal migrants become smugglers and engage in smuggling activities in order to earn money for their subsequent attempt to cross the border (Zijlstra and Liempt, 2017). Organised migrant smugglers employ an ad hoc service with the assistance of local criminal organisations or networks, where they are more likely to be used for transit and have a greater understanding of the local environment (UNODC, 2011).

Economic imperatives may be core to migrant smuggling, as the practice is primarily driven by financial gains (Koser, 2008; Reitano and Tinti, 2015). Smugglers use diverse payment methods, including Pay-as-you-go and package deals, to offer services to their clients (Reitano and Tinti, 2015). Pay-as-you-go payment methods involve risky journeys, mostly on land, which often last for months and sometimes years (Reitano and Tinti, 2015). In this method, smugglers often accompany migrants in their travel, which often has very low safety and high risk, with those migrating susceptible to exploitation in the hands of smugglers and other people involve in their movement (Reitano and Tinti, 2015). On the other hand, package or one-time payment deals are more safe, secure, comprehensive and comfortable mode of transportation which include air, land and water routes (Koser, 2008; Reitano and Tinti, 2015). Certain wealthier migrants can afford this type of facilitation easily, but it is not so common for migrants from poorer backgrounds (Koser, 2008; Reitano and Tinti, 2015). Poorer migrants often sell their property, borrow money from family and friends (Kyle and Liang, 2003) and even though it's not guaranteed that they will arrive safely, or they will find work in the destination country, migrants may be exploited or criminalised and afforded precarious social positioning, and exploited into spending more money. Charges for the service provided by the smugglers differ, varying from place to place and person to person. The UNODC report that women pay more than men for migration services (UNODC, 2011). Stricter border controls across Europe and much of the West and global north has meant migrants increasingly depend on smugglers and criminal networks to find ways to migrate (Zhang, Sanchez, and Achilli, 2018). Despite the inherent risks, migrants continue to seek help from smugglers due to increased difficulties of border crossing and the limited legal routes to desired destinations (Triandafyllidou, 2022; Zhang, Sanchez, and Achilli, 2018).

Migrant smuggling involves various methods and routes across land, sea, and air by with different methods often putting migrants at risk (Achilli, 2018, Campana and Varese, 2016; Triandafyllidou and Maroukis, 2012, Triandafyllidou, 2022). Smuggling routes are frequently influenced by a number of variables, including proximity to one another geographically, current migratory trends, and the presence of criminal networks (Cummings et al., 2015). In the Mediterranean, migrants frequently set out on dangerous sea voyages from Northern Africa to Southern Europe, with many of the routes passing via the central Mediterranean on their way to Italy or Malta (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2013). The Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal in Southeast Asia have been utilised as smuggling routes for Rohingya migrants and refugees from Bangladesh and Myanmar, with destinations such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Hoffstaedter and Missbach, 2022). Most of the available literatures focus more on irregular migration and migrant smuggling around Europe, Africa and other countries which are in conflict zones.

While there is a clear distinction between human trafficking and migrant smuggling, they can also be linked. Human trafficking occurs for specific purposes, such as sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced criminality, and organ removal, among other forms of exploitation. A migrant smuggler is a person who, in exchange for financial or other benefits, facilitates a migrant's journey and irregular/illegal entry into a country through various means where the migrant is not a resident or citizen of that country (Campana and Varese, 2016, Tamura, 2010; Triandafyllidou and Maroukis, 2012; Triandafyllidou, 2022; UNODC, 2011).

However, whilst notionally (and definitionally) distinct, human trafficking and migrant smuggling are often connected. In some cases, individuals may willingly start their journey with a smuggler but end up being trafficked upon arrival. The vulnerability of migrants during the smuggling process can make them targets for traffickers. Additionally, the routes and networks used by human smugglers may overlap with those used by traffickers. Understanding these linkages is crucial for developing comprehensive strategies to combat both human trafficking and human smuggling. However, we need to be cautious not to assume that those involved in smuggling and illegal activities are willing to support the exploitative and harmful practices of human trafficking, and alert to the general absence of empirical literature generated with those involved in such practices.

**Methodology**

This study adopted an exploratory research design aimed at exploring various aspects of migrant smuggling, including the motivations of smugglers, working strategies, documentation process, routes and transportation, and the risks and challenges they face in their line of work. The migrant smugglers operations evolved and increased in sophistication over a period of time due to the stringent immigration policies and regulation which decreased regular routes (Triandafyllidou, 2022**;** Zhang, Sanchez, and Achilli, 2018). It is believed that an increase in migrant smuggling is often due to less availability of regular routes to enter a country (Bilger et al., 2006; Havinga & Böcker, 1999; Triandafyllidou, 2022; Zhang, Sanchez, and Achilli, 2018). The subjects of this study were migrant smugglers from India who are involved both regular (legal) and irregular migration, however, most of them did not consider themselves as migrant smugglers (and certainly not Human Traffickers). However, the term ‘travel agents’, suggests a degree of legitimacy in their conduct that was not always apparent, hence the interchangeable used both migrant smugglers and travel agents employed here, reflecting the ambiguity the field setting in terminology and lexicon.

The field researcher adopted an ethnographic research method in this study which is used widely in anthropological research to study a culture in a natural setting (Morgan-Trimmer and Wood, 2016). Creswell (2007) defines ethnography as “a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational and interview data”. According to Treadwell (2019), there is no conclusive definition of "what constitutes criminological ethnography". Traditional ethnographic research, however, entails engaging with participants and learning about their lives in a natural context (Treadwell, 2019). Morgan-Trimmer and Wood (2016) state that ethnography “comprises a collection of different ways of eliciting and collecting data, including the observation of individuals and groups of individuals, unstructured interviews, documentary analysis, and the use of a researcher’s field notes”. We refer to this study as ethnographic research because we have conducted in-depth interviews with 14 travel agents in the natural setting, mostly in their office or operating environment which also involved some observations. Data here is based on extensive interviews and participant observation with travel agents from New Delhi and Chennai who had been involved in the smuggling of migrants across the international borders. All participants have been given pseudonyms.

8 participants were from New Delhi and 6 participants were from Chennai. Participants from New Delhi were interviewed in Hindi language and Chennai Participants with Tamil Language. These interviews were subsequently translated into English when the research team came together to craft this article, the interviews most lasted several hours, often repeated contacts over the six months of the project. Most of the interviews were conducted in the participants offices, but researchers spent considerable time with interviewees.

We chose these two major cities in India, because of the access to participants and very active travel agents or migrant smuggling business and adopted a form of snowball sampling to identify and recruit participants (Sadler, Lee, Lim and Fullerton, 2010). Unstructured interview methods ere employed in field settings as we want to explore more about the migrant smuggling operations (Harrell and Bradley, 2009) Subsequently data was coded using Creswell qualitative analysis techniques to extract the essence from the collected data and construct different themes (Creswell, 2014). The Creswell qualitative analysis technique is a type of thematic analysis that follows a systematic six-step process to analyse the data thematically (Creswell, 2014). Considering the sensitivity of the research area along with the risks involved for participants and researchers, we applied for – and were granted - ethical approval from the ethics committee of Kamaraj College, India as participants were based in India and the collected data were stored in India for further processing.

**Motivations for Becoming a Migrant Smuggler**

Like any other career, the first thing which motivated interviewees to people to become involved in-migrant smuggling was financial gain. The smugglers we interviewed as a part of this research study had commenced their involvement in migrant smuggling and illegal forms of migration having commenced their operation as small legitimate travel agents or ticket booking agents, who initially were only involved in legitimate businesses operations. However, eventually, due to the financial difficulties and/or the travel business being a competitive, they started to look for other ways to earn money and to sustain their business.

“When I started my career as a travel agent, at that time only few people were involved in this business [travel agent work] and we used to earn good money…. But now it is not like those days. There are too many people in the business and clients go to those who are ready to provide any services…...” (Mohan, 43, New Delhi)

“I started my business as a small travel agent in 2004. During that time, there were no smartphones, laptops and internet, so most of the bookings and transactions were done over the telephone. Airlines heavily relied on travel agents like us to connect with their clients. But when smart phones and the internet were introduced, the value of travel agents dropped. That's why we had to look for other ways to survive in this business” (Ravi, 46, Chennai)

Based on the interviews, we can easily understand that the migrant smuggling business is all about supply and demand. Subsequently as increased consumption of travel services responded to consumer demand, so too some of that consumer demand came in the form of a demand for illegal migration, which subsequently influenced travel agents, including those who were previously involved only as legal providers to become migrant smugglers by providing various services and facilitating illegal migration, fake documentations, providing information on asylum systems and other travel related services and moving with the market:

“This business is not easy, the client's demand for illegal migration has increased over the time. 10 years ago people scared to talk about these things but now I myself offering the same service. We must adapt to the changing situation. I don’t know maybe, I might not be doing this illegal work, if there is no demand. If we have to survive in this business, we must fulfil the client’s demand” (Hamed, 41, New Delhi)

“People are ready to pay for the services and people are desperate to move out of India. Being a small travel agent, I find this as an opportunity to grow my business as most of the travel agents are not ready to take risks, but I had no choice rather than get involved in this activity to earn money. So, I started to make connections to provide services to the clients who approached me” (Suresh, 38, Chennai).

In contrast to financial and business survival motivations, a peculiar motivation to become a migrant smuggler which we found was turning from irregular or illegal migrant to migrant smuggler was that of a political imperative with a justification founded on political considerations that some marginalised clients faced. This phenomenon of irregular or illegal migrants turning into migrant smugglers for various reasons has already been explained in the existing literature (Zijlstra and Liempt, 2017). Jayendran, a Sri Lankan national, who migrate to India during the civil war in Sri Lanka and decided to become a migrant smuggler, outlined the ethical and political rationale of smuggling and facilitating illicit migration:

“Because of issues like discrimination against refugees and limited opportunities for people like us India... I decided to move out of India with the help of some friends, but it was extremely difficult for me to do that. Over the period, I figured it out how to go out of India and also sent few people illegally without any trouble. When people came to know about this, more people from my community started to approach me to help them and I decided to make this as my career. I like helping people who are stuck in India like me. That's how I started this work” (Jayendran, 47, Chennai).

**Migrant Smuggling Operations**

An important theme that emerged from the interviews regarding the migrant smuggling operations was connections and social networks. Most of the respondents emphasized that their successful business operations depend on their extensive social networks and connections with different organisations. These connections include government agencies like immigration authorities, passport issuing authorities, border control officers and other government departments of both source, transit and destination countries. Additionally, they also relied on fellow travel agents, migrant smuggling networks and other criminal networks. Mohan, a travel agent with over twenty years of experience, illustrates how important is to build social networks and relationships in their line of work:

“It is all about connections…. you know? If you've got solid ties and relationships with people who can make your job easily, then this business is good for you. Otherwise, I'm telling you, it's tough to stay in this line of work. This is not like a 9 to 5 job. See, if we send a person abroad and if he or she was somehow caught by the authorities there, chances are high that they will reveal about us and our operation which is a serious issue for us. So, to tackle these kinds of issues, we make a lot of connections, both here in India and abroad. By doing so can keep things running without any major issues” (Mohan, 47, Chennai).

“Involving in this type of work is not simply…. clients come with different request, we should have that much capabilities and flexibility to meet their demands. Though, we can use money to influence government officials here in India, but when it comes to foreign countries? That’s completely tough job, believe me…. However, if we manage to connect with the right person and build strong relationships with them, things can run fairly smoothly, to a certain extent…. It took me around 8 to 10 years to build up these connections which include immigration officers, government officials, recruitment agencies, and travel agents – not just in India, but also in difficult countries” (Saleem, 40, New Delhi).

From the above narratives, we can also understand the degree of risk involved in migrant smuggling work, and how people discern different ways to mitigate these risks. Further, the organised nature of migrant smuggling is also evident. However, this organised nature is based on mutual benefits and trust which is may be different to that exists in human trafficking networks (e.g see Spener, 2004, Campana, 2020). Some of the existing literature, suggests that migrant smugglers utalise human trafficking routes and links for their operations (Dandurand and Jahn, 2019; Geddes, 2005; Salt, 2000) however, when we attempted to consider link between migrant smuggling and human trafficking, interviews suggested that the link between these two operations very rarely exist in the context of India:

“We are not kidnappers or traffickers…. we don’t force anyone to go abroad. They themselves come to us to seek help to go abroad for various reasons. Some people seek our help to escape from getting killed from their enemy and some just want to go out to earn money and some just want to go because they are getting any chance to go out…. I don’t know about others, but I have never involved in such kind of criminal activities” (Ravi, 46, Chennai).

“I have my own family, and I can understand the cruelty of human trafficking…… Yes, I agree that we are also dealing with some elements of illegal things, but it cannot be compared with something which is very inhuman like human trafficking” (Deepak, 36, New Delhi)

Most participants mentioned that they do not seek any help from human trafficking networks to operate, and on occasion particular participants were very much offended by any such suggestion of a connection.

“Why are you asking this question? How do you know that these two are connected together? Do you think we are such kind of people? ….. (When we tried to give an explanation for these questions, he said…) I don’t want to answer any questions…. and I don’t want to continue the interview anymore” (Amit Singh, 43, New Delhi).

On one occasion questions on such a link were a reason that a participant stopped the interview. This observation of course does not disprove the presence of at least hidden or less acknowledged links between human trafficking networks and migrant smugglers, which needs to be explored further. An objective of the research was to explore the working strategies and services that providers provide to their clients. This aspect was one of the core areas that we tried to explore, but it was a challenging task to elicit complete information about the migrant smuggling operations. Participants were reticent to provide specific details about the strategies they use and the way in which the services are delivered. Others clearly were unwilling to give much detail in answering questions in detail and were likely seeking to protect themselves, their associates and their trade secrets:

“We provide end to end services, which include documentation, transportation, a safe route to reach the destination…. we also provide accommodation, job opportunities and other guidance in the destination country. Further, we also provide legal advice for asylum claims and the preparation of case as well. So, in simple ,we provide everything to our clients and it’s up to them to decide what they want…. Apart from this, I can’t share more information which is not good for our operation” (Mohan, 47, Chennai).

“Everyone has their own strategies and ways to operate in this line of business. Moreover, these days, people are not only interested in migrating to their choice of destination country and they are also interested in seeking asylum…. And due to this reason, me and my partners have hired solicitors to work with us to understand the immigration laws of different countries to help our clients and we also create cases for them…. (When asked about the asylum case in detail) I can’t share that information as those are our trade secrets and revealing them will affect our business.” (Mathew, 40, Chennai).

“We have enough capacity to help people migrate to developed countries like the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy ... .Somewhere, we are very comfortable operating in these countries compared to the USA, Canada and Australia which are very far from India and where the risk is higher…. We have different networks for different destination countries and based on the requirements, we use different modes of transport…. (When asked about strategies, he said) I can’t share those information…. You know it’s not just me and we are a group of people work together, our network is purely based on trust, this information not only affect me but also others in our network, so please ask something else” (Saleem, 40, New Delhi)

**The morality of providing Illicit Migration**

Aloyo and Cusumano (2018) discuss the morality of human smuggling and argue that human smuggling can be permissible under certain circumstances. The authors argue that even though human smuggling is illegal, it can be allowed if the following conditions are met: both smuggler and migrant provide mutual consent to a smuggling agreement, both smuggler and migrant do not intend to or violate the human rights of any individual, the migrant or others’ lives may improve if the migrant reaches the destination and finally, the smuggler accurately depicts the potential risks involved and smugglers undertakes measures to mitigate those risks (Aloyo and Cusumano, 2018). Likewise, Hidalgo (2018) provides a substantial justification in support of migrant smuggling and argues that it can morally justified when it aids refugees in escaping imminent threats to their rights and lives. Further, Achilli (2018) who conducted ethnographic research on field research on Syrian refugees and smugglers in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Italy, and the Balkan route (Greece, Macedonia, and Serbia) has found that the smuggler operates within shared frameworks of morality. The interviews with migrant smugglers in India also revealed some sense of ethics and morality in their line of work:

“Though, we are involved in illegal activities but sometimes, we feel that this is also a kind of social service as we help people to migrate to the destination of their choice, who are facing different levels of issues and threats in India…. we always try to keep our clients safe during the travel, which also protects us from any kind of risk” (Ravi, 46, Chennai).

“I have been in this business for the last 12 years. I have managed to send more than 500 people abroad, most of them are refugees from Sri Lanka and now they all are doing well in their life somehow. I always feel happy for them because I myself is a refugee from Sri Lanka who came to India in 2007. Before I got into this business, I tried to go abroad, but luck wasn't on my side. But honestly, I am happy with this work…. as I have helped so many people, an opportunity for a better life. Moreover, I have never felt this work as something illegal (Jayendran, 47, Chennai).

From above the narrative, one can interpret that the travel agents in India who are involved in migrant smuggling are aware of the illegal work there are involved in, however, they are happy with their work as they are transforming their client’s life by facilitating them to reach the destination country. It would seem that the accounts of Indian smugglers at least support assertions that relationship between the smugglers and the smuggled can be more diverse than sometimes is recognised (Van Liempt and Doomernik, 2006).

**Economic Aspects of Migrant Smuggling**

The primary motivation for an individual to engage in the migrant smuggling business is typically attributed to financial and other gains (Koser, 2008; Reitano and Tinti, 2015). This study has also explored economic aspects of migrant smuggling which include service charges, the determination of service charges, the nature of the transaction and other aspects. It was found that charges for the services vary from country to country of destination. When it comes to the determination of service charges, it depends completely on two things: distance and complexity of the journey and border controls and security measures in the destination country. Based on the interviews, we have found the average range of amounts charged by agents in India (Convert from INR to GBP)

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| Country/region | Amount |
| United Kingdom | £5000 to £8000 |
| European Countries other than UK | £4000 to £6000 |
| Malaysia | £2000 to £3000 |
| Middle Eastern countries (UEA, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia) | £2000 to £3000 |
| Australia | £6000 to £8000 |

It was also found from the interviews that most agents in India, prefer not to work with a migrant who wants to migrate to the USA, Canada and even sometimes Australia because of various difficulties like distance, complex immigration system, time consuming processes, high risk and being less rewarding. The agents have revealed that for the financial transaction, they have a system in place that they follow within their network. Mostly the agents deal in cash since financial transactions through banks often create suspicion due to the involvement of a huge amount of money. In addition, a few well established agents expressed that they have started using crypto currencies instead of cash as they are easy to operate and there is no risk of getting caught by tax departments in India.

“We always take hard cash as online transactions like internet banking or UPI transfers, has specific upper limits for both sending and receiving funds…... you know, the income tax department closely monitors bank accounts that engage in frequent transactions with a lot of money and because of this we mostly prefer cash” (Anil, 40, New Delhi)

“We used to ask people to pay cash but nowadays we avoid taking cash…… (When we asked the reason) it was very simple, it is not safe…. cash comes with a huge amount of risk and we need to spend separately to protect this cash. Also, we cannot receive the money into our bank, due to the tax department…. because of all these issues, we ask people to pay in crypto currencies like bitcoin or Ethereum which are very safe, secure and often not monitored by government organisations” (Mohan, 47, Chennai).

From the interviews, it was also found that some agents provide their services to their clients in an instalment payment method. In this type of transaction, the migrant pays an initial amount or half of the payment and once they reach the destination country, they start paying instalments on a monthly basis to the agent’s associate in the destination country. There is a common narrative that the migrant smuggler exploits their client by charging a huge amount of money and using violence to recover their money from the client. However, this study has found something quite different from these common narratives and perceptions:

“Yes, I agree that we charge a lot of money to help transport our clients to their destination country…. But the fact is that we don’t have all these. Like any other business, we need to pay other people who provide help running this business such as immigration officers, passport authorities, my office workers, solicitors and agents who help our clients in the destination country etc. Sometimes, after paying all of them, I left with nothing…. It very easy to blame us but we have our own values…. there are situations where we charged them less or even, they paid us in instalments” (Karthik, 37, Chennai).

“I have been in that situation and I know how much difficult it is to arrange for huge money…. it’s always my principle that I charge 20% to 30% less than actual market value to people who are struggling or poor, especially people from Sri Lanka who are refugee in India. I have sent people to European countries by charging minimum amount of £1500” (Jayendran, 47, Chennai).

The above narratives have been reflected in few studies, in which the authors have argued that smugglers or agents are not always profit driven and exploitative in nature. There is always some sense of ethics and moral value that they follow to help their clients to migrate to their choice of destination country to escape persecution or have a better life or to escape from any other problematic situations (Achilli, 2018; Aloyo and Cusumano, 2018; Hidalgo, 2018) and that this ‘ethical’ positioning of migrant smuggling is present alongside a financial imperative. Furthermore, this political ideology positions the activity as quite the antithesis of human trafficking.

**Migration Routes from India**

From the interviews, it was found that the agents use different methods to transport their clients from India to their destination country. Further, it was found that the migration routes are very dynamic, and the agents often change their routes based on operational issues and risk involvement. From the literature, it was found that the smugglers or agents play an essential role in determining the destination country, as they often influence the choices made by migrants (Robinson and Segrott, 2002; Zijlstra and Liempt, 2017). Likewise, it was found in this study that often the agents are the ones who recommend or choose a particular destination country for their clients based on their financial ability and the current situation of the operating environment.

During the interviews, most of the agents denied talking about the routes and strategies they use to transport their clients to a destination country. It is evident from the interviews that the agents are very cautious about the routes they use which are often considered as trade secrets or unique selling point of their business. A few agents revealed the routes they use to operate from India, however, they still are reluctant to provide details about the routes. To transport their clients to any European country including the UK, they transport them by flight to UAE or Yemen or Saudi Arabia. Thereafter, they mostly use roadways and very rarely railways to reach Turkey, from where they enter Southeast European Countries depending on the situation.

“It’s only difficult until our clients reach Europe…. we have a strong network in Greece and Romania, that can easily transport any person to any European country from there…. (When asked how they operate, he said) I don’t know, and they usually don’t talk about this...my responsibility is to make sure people reached Greece safely and from there they manage everything” (Anthony, 39, New Delhi)

The agents also mentioned the African countries' routes which they very rarely use to reach European countries, due to the high-risk involvement and which can be sometimes life threatening their clients. Further, the interviews revealed that Turkey is one of the major operating grounds for migrants smuggling and most of the agents prefer Turkey routes from India as they have a strong network to support them. Mohan (47), a 20 years experienced agent shares his experience about operating in Turkey:

“We can do anything in Turkey if we have the right money and the right people. We have a good network of government officials and agents in Turkey, who can navigate anything for us at a reasonable price. However, we must be careful about scams and frauds, which affect the reputation of our business” (Mohan, 47, Chennai).

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this ethnographic study and its field generated data has shed light on and revealed the dynamic interplay between demand for irregular migration and transformation of travel agent into migrant smuggler. These agents have understood the growing demand for irregular migration and adapted to this opportunity by offering a range of services, including facilitating illegal migration, fake documentation, providing information on asylum systems and other travel related services. It is very much evident from the findings that these agents are high adaptable to situation and highly responsive to both prohibitions and opportunities that emerge within the dynamic landscape of migration. It is interesting to find that these agents often consider themselves as services providers, framing their activities within the context of facilitating movement and assisting the migrant rather than acknowledging their involvement in criminal activities. Further, these agents’ views migration as business and a form of economic enterprise, but it predominantly arises within an individual context where the official framing around legitimacy and legality is not particularly influential.

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