

Effective Treatment for Victims of Human Sex Trafficking

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Abstract

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Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify and recommend the best practices for designing treatments for victims of human sex trafficking as there is no specific intervention or approach for these individuals (Duncan and Dehart, 2019). Therefore, it is important to understand what human sex trafficking is while identifying potential risk factors. Human sex trafficking is the act of “recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining” for the purpose of profit through the use of “force, fraud or coercion” (Abas, Ostrovski, Prince, Gorceag, Trigub, and Oram, 2013, p. 1; Anchan, 2016, p. 117; Reid, 2012, p. 259; Williams, 2018, p. 624). Although many individuals have knowledge of what human sex trafficking entails, many fail to recognize the magnitude of human trafficking throughout the United States. Moreover, human sex trafficking is commonly believed to only be an issue in foreign countries; however, men, women, and children are the victims of trafficking every year (Siegfriedt, 2016).

Because human sex trafficking is common in the United States, it is important for law enforcement, victim advocates, and any other professionals working with victims of human sex trafficking to be aware of the needs and challenges these victims encounter. Moreover, it is important to understand the current support which human sex trafficking victims are able to receive following their rescue. It is vital to implement effective treatment and programming for victims of human sex trafficking in order to determine the best approach to avoid less re-victimization and overall positive outcomes for these victims.

Although there are current laws and policies in place to aid and support victims of human sex trafficking, there is a lack of research regarding what is the best approach in order to avoid re-victimization. Furthermore, because victims of human sex trafficking suffer from a variety of complex traumatic experiences, it is imperative to determine what the best approach to effective treatment is, and how to ensure every victim is adequately helped.

Methodology

The information contained within this paper will be gathered through a qualitative review of literature on the effective treatment and programming for human sex trafficking victims. The literature will be obtained through scholarly academic journals. After analyzing the various findings regarding human sex trafficking victims, I will provide recommendations for effective treatment for sex trafficking victims.

Findings

The findings of this research identify recommendations for treatment for those who have been victims of human sex trafficking. It is vital for those who are working with victims of human sex trafficking – whether it be law enforcement officials, victim advocates or other professionals – to recognize and support victims of human sex trafficking. Additionally, the research highlights how individuals may be susceptible to becoming a potential victim of human sex trafficking. Through understanding possible aspects which increase the likelihood of victimization, more individuals will be able to identify risk factors.

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Section 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Human sex trafficking is the act of “recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining” an individual for the purpose of profitable sex acts through the use of “force, fraud or coercion” (Abas et al., 2013, p. 1; Anchan, 2016, p. 117; Reid, 2012, p. 259; Williams, 2018, p. 624). While human sex trafficking is commonly believed to be an issue in foreign countries, it is prevalent in the United States. It is important for law enforcement, victim advocates, and any other professionals working with victims of human sex trafficking to be aware of which treatments are most effective for sex trafficking victims to avoid re-victimization and positive overall outcomes for these victims.

Despite advancements and recognition regarding human sex trafficking, there continues to be inconsistencies in law enforcement determining who is a victim of sex trafficking and who is willfully working as a prostitute (Farrell and Cronin, 2015). Defining the force, fraud and coercion needed to be recognized as a sex trafficking victim may become problematic as well (Reid, 2012). Furthermore, detailed protections including resources and services for sex trafficking victims is needed in addition to deterrence and eradication through legal, political and societal advances (Greenbaum et al, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to uncover the best approaches to treatment for victims of human sex trafficking. When a victim of human sex trafficking is rescued, it is imperative for effective treatment and programming to be implemented immediately. Because human traffickers are known to target individuals who are living in an unsafe living situation or are looking for a “better life” (Williams, 2018), it is vital to ensure this does not recur to a victim.

Additionally, an individual is at an increased risk of becoming a potential victim if they have experienced childhood physical and sexual abuse, as well as suffering from mental health and substance abuse issues as a trafficker can identify this and manipulate the individual (Siegfriedt, 2016).

Therefore, it is additionally important to explore these factors which could potentially result in subsequent victimization if the human sex trafficking victim does not receive the most effective treatment available. Furthermore, victims are at a higher risk if they have dysfunctional family roles, lower socioeconomic status, and have breaks within their schooling (Siegfriedt, 2016). It is imperative for these individuals, who potentially have suffered trauma prior to becoming a victim, to receive the appropriate and necessary treatment in order to reduce re-victimization and provide the victim with a higher quality of life.

Despite knowledge and recognition on likelihood of victimization, there continues to be a lack of research surrounding the best approach following a human sex trafficking victim's rescue. Due to the complexity of trauma that victims have endured, both prior and during their trafficking victimization, it is vital to implement specific strategies in order to avoid future re-victimization and other difficulties following a victim's rescue.

Significance or Implication of the Study

Over 150 years ago slavery was abolished, yet innocent men, women and children throughout the United States are still being imprisoned for the purpose of financial gain by human sex traffickers (McGough, 2013). Despite efforts by law enforcement and other criminal justice professionals to measure the severity of human sex trafficking, it is truly a struggle to capture data as insufficient evidence has caused disagreements in determining the sheer number of victims (McGough, 2013). Nevertheless, human sex trafficking is occurring at exponential

rates with the range of data reporting anywhere from 14,500 to 50,000 victims throughout the United States annually (McGough, 2013). Furthermore, it has been determined that victims of human sex trafficking not only experience catastrophic psychological trauma, but they may also suffer Stockholm syndrome (McGough, 2013). Because victims may not be able to fully navigate effective treatment and programming for themselves, it is incredibly important for individuals working with human sex trafficking to know and understand the best approaches to help these victims.

Methods of Approach

The information for this paper will be gathered through a qualitative review of literature on the effective treatment and programming for human sex trafficking victims. The literature will be obtained through scholarly academic journals. After analyzing the various findings regarding human sex trafficking victims, I will provide recommendations for effective treatment for sex trafficking victims.

Contribution to the Field

The key contribution to the field from this research will be to identify best practices in treatment for sex trafficking victims. Despite specific laws in place to protect sex trafficking victims, there continues to be difficulty in identifying and prosecuting human traffickers in addition to law enforcement distinguishing who is a victim versus prostitute (Farrell and Cronin, 2015).

Anticipated Outcomes

It is anticipated that the best practices for treatment and programming will be discovered for victims of human sex trafficking within the United States. Through the use of secondary analysis, the best approaches will be included within this paper to ensure individuals working

with victims of human sex trafficking are aware and knowledgeable regarding the most effective treatment for the victims. Additionally, laws within the United States will also be included as a way to better understand the current legality regarding rights which human sex trafficking victims have.

Limitations

Human sex trafficking is occurring not only throughout the United States, but also in foreign countries. Researchers have discovered similar findings when analyzing human sex trafficking domestically and foreign (Reid, 2012). Additionally, this study will not address labor trafficking as it requires additional analytical methods.

Section II: Literature Review

Human sex trafficking is the act of “recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining” an individual for the purpose of commercial sex acts through to use of “force, fraud or coercion” (Abas et al., 2013, p. 1; Anchan, 2016, p. 117; Reid, 2012, p. 259; Williams, 2018, p. 624). Although many individuals recognize what human sex trafficking entails, many do not understand the magnitude throughout the United States. It is often believed that sex trafficking is an issue occurring in other countries; however, human sex trafficking in the United States is occurring at similar rates as other countries with United States men, women, and children at risk of becoming victims of human sex trafficking daily (Siegfriedt, 2016).

Human sex trafficking is commonly believed to be only occurring in foreign countries; however, men, women, and children from the United States are trafficked domestically each year (Siegfriedt, 2016). Because human sex trafficking is occurring within the United States, it is important for law enforcement, victim advocates, and any other individual working with victims of human sex trafficking to recognize the needs and struggles these victims face. Additionally, it is vital to understand how and why an individual becomes a victim of human sex trafficking in order to work towards both decreasing and subsequently ending human sex trafficking.

Any man, woman, or child can become a victim of human sex trafficking regardless of background as trafficking has the potential to occur within any community throughout the United States (Williams, 2018). However, traffickers are notorious for targeting individuals who are underprivileged, defenseless, living in unsafe conditions, or are searching for a “better life” (Williams, 2018, p. 624). Moreover, an individual is at a heightened risk of being victimized if they have suffered from either child physical or sexual abuse (Siegfriedt, 2016). In addition, both mental health and substance abuse dependencies may increase the likelihood of victimization as

a trafficker can identify the susceptibility and then take advantage of the individual (Siegfriedt, 2016). Furthermore, victims are at an increased risk if they have unconventional family roles, of lower socioeconomic status, and have hiatuses within their education (Siegfriedt, 2016). Being able to recognize the factors which increases one's potential of being victimized is important for individuals, such as law enforcement and victim advocates, in order to reduce human sex trafficking throughout the United States.

Expansion Via the Internet

Understanding how an individual may be more vulnerable to become a victim is vital to distinguish. However, it is also imperative to recognize how human sex trafficking has been affected with the expansion of the Internet. Within the last decade, various websites (i.e., Craigslist, backpage.com) have been profiting at the expense of victims of human sex trafficking (Heil and Nichols, 2014). Law enforcement officials not only have knowledge that websites are profiting greatly, but also that online sex trafficking advertisements are one of the main forms in which purchasing and selling of sex with young women and children are occurring (Heil and Nichols, 2014). However, there continues to be major struggles with catching and prosecuting human sex traffickers (Heil and Nichols, 2014). After recognizing the expansion through the Internet, law enforcement officials began to provide harsher requirements for free Internet websites in an effort to stop human sex trafficking (Heil and Nichols, 2014). Therefore, some free advertising websites, such as Craigslist, shutdown their adult services section (Heil and Nichols, 2014). However, law enforcement continues to face issues as traffickers have been moving to different free websites in order to continue the use of selling their victims through the Internet (Heil and Nichols, 2014).

Additionally, law enforcement officials are attempting to uncover human traffickers who utilize the Internet. For example, in 2008, nearly 3,000 advertisements of children for sex services were posted on free Internet websites according the FBI (Heil and Nichols, 2014). Prior to Craigslist ending their adult services advertisements, which drastically contributed to human sex trafficking, Craigslist profited nearly \$45 million through these advertisements (Heil and Nichols, 2014). Moreover, when Craigslist did shut down their adult services advertising, websites such as Backpage.com and several other free websites saw a drastic increase in their adult services advertising which accounted for an increased profit of approximately \$33 million. Additionally, approximately one-quarter to one-third of human sex trafficking cases are exposed through Internet and undercover operations (Heil and Nichols, 2014).

Furthermore, law enforcement face constant struggles with identifying and reprimanding human traffickers via the Internet as traffickers have developed code words in order to elude law enforcement (Heil and Nichols, 2014). For example, traffickers are not advertising the specific ages of their victims – especially when they are under the age of 18 years old – rather, traffickers are using phrases such as “cheerleader” or “daddy’s little girl” (Heil and Nichols, 2014, p. 429). Additionally, traffickers learned that specific wording was being flagged by law enforcement which subsequently lead to new phrases, wording, and other tools in order to further avoid law enforcement detection. When an individual is interested in an advertisement by a trafficker, they are able to see a photograph of the victims which also includes the phone number in order to contact the trafficker (Heil and Nichols, 2014). Because human sex trafficking victims are advertised largely via the Internet, it is important to recognize the need for greater restrictions and sanctions for traffickers utilizing the Internet for unsavory purposes.

Size and Scope

In addition to recognizing the prevalence of sex trafficking in the United States through the use of the Internet, it is also important to recognize the size and scope of trafficking as it is hard to measure by law enforcement officials and professionals (McGough, 2013). Research suggests there may be anywhere from 14,500 to 50,000 victims as reports vary greatly from one to another regarding the actual number of human sex trafficking victims (McGough, 2013).

Furthermore, human sex traffickers continue to buy, sell, and trade men, women and children throughout the United States due to the large profits they receive for this (Heil and Nichols, 2014). Human sex trafficking is much more profitable than selling drugs or guns as traffickers are able to profit from their victims multiple times— sometimes even up to twenty times per day (Heil and Nichols, 2014). Additionally, the FBI estimates that human trafficking generates approximately \$9.5 billion annually (as noted by Heil and Nichols, 2014). Moreover, a human sex trafficker is able to profit anywhere from \$150,000 to \$200,000 per year for one single trafficking victim. It is imperative to recognize that most human traffickers have anywhere from four to five victims in any given year – which could provide a profit of nearly one million dollars annually (Heil and Nichols, 2014).

Violence Against Women Act

Sex trafficking victims are more likely to suffer from cognitive, developmental, physical, social and emotional health effects (Greenbaum et al., 2018). Additionally, human sex trafficking victims often suffer from psychological trauma and may experience Stockholm Syndrome, or displaying positive feelings or statement towards their captors (McGough, 2013). Because of the severe effects that human sex trafficking victims are at an increased risk to suffer from, the need for effective treatment for these victims is vital. In 1994, the Violence Against Women Act

(VAWA) was passed by Congress in order to provide services to victims and to hold perpetrators of violence responsible by the criminal justice system (Mutter, 2018). VAWA created change for victims by supporting them navigate and find services including phone hotlines, protection orders, and temporary housing (Mutter, 2018).

Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act

Human sex trafficking victims are more likely to have experienced trauma prior to becoming trafficking victims, which leads victims to suffer from complex trauma due to the likelihood of multiple captors, physical assault, manipulation, separation from family, and various other reasons (Greenbaum et al., 2018). Additionally, human sex trafficking victims require housing, food, medical care, and mental health counseling following their rescue (Greenbaum, et al., 2018).

With the implementation of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act in 2000, adult prostitutes are now able to be considered victims of human sex trafficking due to the coercion and violence committed by their abuser(s) (Farrell and Cronin, 2015). After the enforcement of human trafficking laws, such as the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, prostitution rates decreased by roughly 17% (Farrell and Cronin, 2015).

Moreover, within the last decade, the United States federal government, in addition to all fifty states, has passed laws in order to protect any individual who is forced or coerced to sell sex which redefines these individuals as victims, instead of labeling these individuals as prostitutes (Farrell and Cronin, 2015). However, there continues to be discrepancies in law enforcement officials determining who is a victim of sex trafficking and who is a prostitute resulting in a nearly 30% difference in arrests (Farrell and Cronin, 2015).

Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act

In 2015, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act was established to increase programming and funds for services for survivors of human sex trafficking (Mutter, 2018). Through the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, human traffickers, as well as sex offenders and human smugglers, are required to pay a victim \$5,000 for programs for their victims (Senate RPC, 2015). Additionally, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act provides additional federal resources for human trafficking support and supports law enforcement tactics to convict traffickers criminally (Senate RPC, 2015). Moreover, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act also identifies child pornography as a form of human trafficking (Senate RPC, 2015). Through recognition, understanding, and application, victims of human sex trafficking can have the appropriate and necessary services needed following their rescue through resources such as Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, Violence Against Women Act, and the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act.

How to Move Forward

Despite efforts from law enforcement, victim advocates, legislators, and additional professionals working with victims of sex trafficking, there continues to be no solid approach to support and aid these victims following their rescue. Because it is known that victims of human sex trafficking likely suffered from traumatic experiences prior to their trafficking victimization, it is vital to have effective treatment which deals specifically with individuals who have suffered complex trauma.

Complex Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Posttraumatic stress disorder was discovered and established following the Vietnam War as soldiers returning to the United States were struggling in many aspects of their personal and

professional lives (Landy, Wagner, Brown-Bowers, and Monson, 2015). However, since the posttraumatic stress disorder was developed, there have been further instances where complex posttraumatic stress disorder is needed for not only proper diagnosis, but additionally to ensure an individual is receiving appropriate treatment for the disorder.

An individual suffering from complex posttraumatic stress disorder can be diagnosed based on one or more of the following symptoms: a history of being enslaved and controlled over a period of time ranging from months to years, changes in affect regulation, fluctuations in consciousness, changes in one's self-identification, variations in one's feelings towards their abuser(s), deviations in one's relationships with others, changes in an individual's personal feelings (i.e., loss of faith) (Landy et al., 2015). Initially, complex posttraumatic stress disorder only included interpersonal experiences; however, it now includes additional experiences such as acute and chronic illness, sex work, and displacement due to cultural conflict (Landy et al., 2015).

In addition to specific events that have occurred in one's lifetime resulting in complex posttraumatic stress disorder, there are also specific symptoms which contribute to one's diagnosis of complex posttraumatic stress disorder (Landy et al., 2015). An individual may suffer from emotion regulation problems, disturbances in interpersonal relationships, changes in both attention and perception, and somatic distress, and negative self-identification (Landy et al., 2015).

After understanding both the signs and symptoms of complex posttraumatic stress disorder, it is imperative to recognize treatment for this as many human sex trafficking victims may potentially suffer from this disorder due to their life both before and during the time they were being trafficked. After an individual has been diagnosed with complex posttraumatic stress disorder, the initial step would be to implement a phase-based treatment approach which focuses

on the specific aspect(s) of the diagnosis of complex posttraumatic stress disorder (Landy et al., 2015). When utilizing a phase-based treatment approach, an individual begins with both stabilization and strengthening one's specific skills (Landy et al., 2015). After the first step, the individual then move towards working on the specific trauma they have endured leading to their diagnosis, including detailed memories (Landy et al., 2015). Lastly, the individual shifts out of therapy and begins engaging in one's life in public again (Landy et al., 2015).

Human sex trafficking victims may suffer from a variety of trauma both prior to their sex trafficking victimization, including childhood physical and sexual abuse, as well as during their time being trafficked. Because of the likelihood of severe trauma experiences, it may be concluded that many sex trafficking victims may potentially suffer from complex posttraumatic stress disorders. Therefore, it is vital for individuals who are suffering from complex posttraumatic stress disorder, such as human sex trafficking victims, to understand the signs, symptoms and treatment in order to be able to continue positively in their lives following their rescue from victimization.

Responsive Integrative Treatment

Individuals who have suffered from recurrent trauma or a lengthy abusive circumstance (i.e., kidnap/hostage situation) do not respond to the basic method of trauma-focused therapy (Edwards, 2013). Human sex trafficking victims, due to their extensive trauma both during childhood and into adulthood, are likely not to respond to the basic method of therapy; therefore, it is vital to recognize the best approach in order to help these victims including five level treatment approach (Edwards, 2013).

Level 1: Crisis Intervention and Stabilization

The first level begins with ensuring a victim is safe while also detailing the victim's needs in order for the victim to be stable in their day-to-day life (Edwards, 2013). For example, a major factor in level one is making sure the victim has both housing and food, as this is vital in stabilizing a day-to-day routine with the victim following their rescue (Edwards, 2013).

Additionally, it is imperative to ensure the victim does not have any immediate safety or risks that need to be addressed, such as behavior which could lead to further exploitation (i.e., substance abuse, prostitution) or suicidal/homicidal thoughts or actions (Edwards, 2013).

Furthermore, level one specifically focuses on developing responsiveness, reducing pain (physical and emotional), building one's sense of self-protection, growing both social support and support in relationships while also learning how to problem solve appropriately (Edwards, 2013). Before moving forward with the next level, it is important that each step is established (Edwards, 2013).

Level 2: Establish Necessary Conditions

Before level three – trauma-focused work – can begin, conditions which need to be developed have to be established in level two (Edwards, 2013). Level two works on building a variety of supports for the victim including trust and understanding of goals in order to move forward in the five levels (Edwards, 2013). Additionally, level two focuses on expanding motivation in order to advance in treatment appropriately. Continued growing of social supports, self-awareness, impulse control, and problem-solving proceeds through level two and expands from level one (Edwards, 2013).

Level 3: Promote Processing to Trauma Memory and Integration into Autobiographical Memory

As previously mentioned, level three focuses on trauma-focused treatment for a victim (Edwards, 2013). Trauma-focused treatment entails a variety of approaches to aid in a human sex trafficking victim work towards the recovery process following their victimization (Edwards, 2013). Therefore, level three focuses on triggers with a victim through awareness, monitoring, identifying, and understanding how triggers can affect a victim (Edwards, 2013). Additionally, during level three, a victim engages with one's trauma memory through therapeutic methods including reliving, detailing, expressive (i.e., drawing), and additional ways to further work through the complex trauma. Furthermore, victims in level three discuss all of their emotions, including anxiety, disgrace, guilt, anguish, et cetera, surrounding their trauma (Edwards, 2013).

Level 4: Address Vulnerabilities and Consolidate Resources

Moving forward, level four specifically aims towards remembering the traumatic experiences which have occurred in one's life and relates them to dysfunctional occurrences (Edwards, 2013). Through working on the past trauma and identifying the manipulation and deceptive ways in which one was victimized, it further helps them understand coping. In addition to the previously mentioned social supports, self-awareness, impulse control, and problem solving continues through level two and expands from level one (Edwards, 2013).

Level 5: Reclaiming One's Life and Rebuilding a New Life Post Trauma

Lastly, level five encourages victims to think about their life following their trauma (Edwards, 2013). Through visualizing one's life following the trauma they have endured, the victim is able to identify change while focusing on growth following traumatic experiences

(Edwards, 2013). Furthermore, level five has additional five dimensions for victims regarding growth including:

“A new way of experiencing the world in which priorities are different and there is a great appreciation of simple things, a greater capacity for human connection, an increased sense of one’s own strength through discovering the capacity to cope with extreme adversity, a greater appreciation of life as a source of new opportunities, and a sense of spiritual awakening or deepening” (Edwards, 2013, p. 13).

Through utilizing Edwards’ (2013) five levels of working through trauma, victims of human sex trafficking have the potential to have a solid, appropriate and effective treatment following their victimization. Furthermore, through Edwards’ (2013) five-level approach, victims of human sex trafficking will also be able to utilize this treatment method to move forward from trauma prior to their trafficking victimization.

Section III: Theoretical Framework

The following section examines two criminological theories and then applies them to both human sex trafficking victims, as well as human sex traffickers.

Life Course Theory

Life course theory was developed based on specific factors from Sampson and Laub's age-graded theory of informal social control (Reid, 2012). However, life course theory provides for advanced examination for both adequate and necessary theoretical foundation in order to explain complex human tendencies (Reid, 2012). Life course theory encompasses four specific factors regarding human development: historic and geographic background, social control, timing, and personal control (Reid, 2012).

When analyzing human sex trafficking and life course theory, it is vital to understand how the two are connected. Victims of human sex trafficking are at a higher likelihood of past trauma, such as childhood physical or sexual abuse, as well as mental health issues (Williams, 2018). Therefore, life course theory specifically relates to individuals who are at a higher likelihood of becoming victims of human sex trafficking. Through understanding life course theory as it relates to human sex trafficking victims, there can be effective and proper interventions in place to help those who have been victimized.

According to Reid (2012), victims of human sex trafficking experience specific vulnerabilities regarding where they reside, gender and their age at the time of victimization. Additionally, if an individual was subjected to certain victimizations within his or her childhood, this further exasperates the likelihood of future victimization – potentially through sex trafficking. Moreover, due to the victimization within one's childhood, the need for acceptance is sought resulting in seeking an ideal life and familial approval (Reid, 2012; Williams, 2018).

Application of Life Course Theory and Sex Trafficking Victims

Human sex trafficking victims are known to be sought due to living in an unsafe living situation or are looking for a “better life” (Williams, 2018). Additionally, an individual is at an increased risk of becoming a potential victim if they have experienced childhood physical and sexual abuse, as well as suffering from mental health and substance abuse issues as a trafficker can identify this and manipulate the individual (Siegfriedt, 2016). Therefore, when identifying life course theory and human sex trafficking, it is evident there is a connection between the two.

Life course theory specifically details how key factors –historic and geographic background, social control, timing, and personal control – impact an individual’s life (Reid, 2012). Moreover, instances which have occurred in one’s childhood may potentially lead to needed love and acceptance into adulthood (Reid, 2012). Therefore, when a human trafficker preys on an individual, due to life course theory, the individual is more likely to become victimized based on the theory’s key factors (Reid, 2012).

Routine Activities Theory

The routine activities theory entails three specific factors which contribute to criminals engaging and obliging in criminal behavior (Karmen, 2016). The first variable is a motivated offender. Motivated offenders and human sex trafficking undoubtedly go together. Human traffickers seek out their victims specifically motivated by the financial gain they receive through selling their victims (Heil and Nichols, 2014). Although there are varying reports, according to the FBI, human trafficking provides approximately \$9.5 billion of revenue annually (as noted by Heil and Nichols, 2014). Likewise, a human sex trafficker is able to profit anywhere from \$150,000 to \$200,000 per year for one single trafficking victim. Therefore, a human trafficker

could profit nearly one million dollars annually as most traffickers have anywhere from four to five victims in any given year (Heil and Nichols, 2014).

The second variable within routine activities theory includes the convenience of suitable targets (Karmen, 2016). As previously noted, human traffickers specifically target their victims through vulnerability which allows for the trafficker to take full advantage of their victim (Williams, 2018; Siegfredt, 2015).

Furthermore, an absence or lack of a guardian is the last variable of the routine activities theory (Karmen, 2016). Human traffickers seek potential victims due to a variety of susceptibility reasons. However, when an individual is seeking a “better” life (Williams, 2018), this allows a trafficker to fully take advantage of a victim through manipulation and acknowledgement that the victim does not have any close friends or family members (e.g., lack of guardian).

Application of Routine Activities Theory and Human Traffickers

Sex trafficking victims are specifically targeted due to their vulnerability by motivated offenders seeking significant financial gain (Heil and Nichols, 2014; Williams, 2018). Although any individual can become a sex trafficking victim, individuals who are struggling more than others and lack a sense of guardian, whether it be close friend or family member, contributes to routine activities theory and human sex trafficking being associated (Williams, 2018).

Furthermore, routine activities theory and human sex trafficking are directly linked as traffickers are motivated by profit, target precise victims who are vulnerable and defenseless, and victims who do not have someone who is very close with them in order to protect them.

Therefore, when analyzing sex trafficking victims, it is imperative to identify the similarities

between routine activities theory and sex trafficking in order to better protect victims and understand how and why these individuals are chosen by traffickers.

Section IV: Recommendations/Conclusions

Recommendations

Although law enforcement officials are aware that human sex trafficking is occurring to men, women and children throughout the United States (Williams, 2018), there continues to be struggles with identifying and prosecuting traffickers (Heil and Nichols, 2014). Nevertheless, through policies such as the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, Violence Against Women Act and the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act there are positive strides in order to effectively and appropriately aid victims of human sex trafficking. However, the lack of research surrounding how precisely to aid and support a human sex trafficking victim ceases to exist.

Human sex trafficking continues to be an issue and more programming is needed in order to help a victim receive the maximum benefit of services following their victimization. Greenbaum et al. (2018) describes the need for additional services such as legal defenses. Additionally, prevention and elimination are ultimately needed for human sex trafficking through supporting families with strengthening their relationships, decreasing violence, securing both health and education, and building overall stronger communities (Greenbaum et al., 2018). If law enforcement, politicians, social workers, and other professionals working with victims of human sex trafficking work together to analyze and address the factors which lead to victimization while working to reduce end human sex trafficking completely (Greenbaum et al., 2018).

Complex posttraumatic stress disorder can encompass a variety of signs and symptoms for individuals who are suffering. However, it is important to understand that human sex trafficking victims may potentially suffer from complex posttraumatic stress disorder as these victims have potentially endured abuse prior to their trafficking victimization. Therefore, it is

vital to understand the appropriate treatment for individuals suffering from complex posttraumatic stress disorder as it not only will help these individuals, including human sex trafficking victims, to move past their trauma, but also effectively handle and cope following their victimization(s).

Edwards' (2013) integrative treatment for individuals with complex trauma includes five levels: crisis intervention, establish necessary conditions, promote processing of trauma memory and integration into autobiographical memory, address vulnerabilities and consolidate resources and reclaiming one's life and rebuilding a new life post trauma. Through Edwards' (2013) five level trauma-focused approach, victims of complex trauma, such as human sex trafficking victims, have an opportunity to appropriately and adequately grow following traumatic experiences which have occurred throughout their life. Additionally, Edwards (2013) describes how each level positively impacts victims with complex trauma through understanding the importance of how each level cannot be completed before the previous level is fully accomplished.

Because human traffickers are known to target individuals who are living in an unsafe living situation or are looking for a "better life" (Williams, 2018), it is vital to ensure this does not recur to a victim. Additionally, an individual is at an increased risk of becoming a potential victim if they have experienced childhood physical and sexual abuse, as well as suffering from mental health and substance abuse issues as a trafficker can identify this and manipulate the individual (Siegfriedt, 2016). Furthermore, victims are at a higher risk if they have dysfunctional family roles, lower socioeconomic status, and have breaks within their schooling (Siegfriedt, 2016). Therefore, approaches like Edwards' (2013) which focus specifically on complex trauma

are vital for victims of human sex trafficking to ensure effective, trauma-informed, treatment is accomplished to aid and support the victim.

Conclusion

Human sex trafficking is a calculated, precise and motivated crime committed by traffickers. The routine activities theory includes motivated offenders, suitable targets, and lack of guardians (Karmen, 2016) – all of which revolves around human sex trafficking. Therefore, it is vital for law enforcement officials, victim advocates, and other professionals working with human sex trafficking to implement specific training and education in order to prevent and reduce human sex trafficking worldwide. It is vital to recognize Congress has also enacted several acts which protect victims including the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, Violence Against Women Act and the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. However, the continued need to help and support victims of human sex trafficking is imperative while also enabling law enforcement officials, politicians, social workers, and other professionals to work together in order to put an end to human sex trafficking as a whole.

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