

Sex Trafficking: A Modern-Day Slavery and Exploitation in Modern Times

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ABSTRACT

Sex trafficking is a reprehensible offence that entails the abuse of susceptible persons, frequently women and minors, for the objective of sexual exploitation within conditions of enslavement. The contemporary manifestation of servitude has emerged as a widespread and intricate global predicament, affecting millions of individuals across the globe. The objective of this paper is to investigate diverse aspects of sex trafficking, encompassing its etiology, implications on survivors, and societal consequences. The paper additionally examines the obstacles involved in tackling sex trafficking, including insufficient awareness, legal structures, and efficacious interventions. The intended societal outcome of this research paper is to increase awareness regarding the issue of sex trafficking, which is frequently disregarded and neglected. The present study sheds light on the predicament of individuals who have fallen prey to trafficking and advocates for the implementation of efficacious measures by policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders to ameliorate the circumstances of the victims, curtail the likelihood of trafficking among women and children, and ultimately thwart this criminal activity. This study makes a valuable contribution to policy-making endeavors aimed at mitigating sex trafficking and enhancing the safeguarding of its victims.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, Modern Day Slavery, Sex Trafficking, Sex Slavery, Exploitation, Women

INTRODUCTION

The word “slavery” conjures up visions of chains and shackles of a helpless person, however, now-a-days, wherever we look up this word, the term “slave” refers to an individual who is compelled to serve against his/her will, as well as someone who is controlled and manipulated by an exploiter in the modern world. Sex trafficking is a serious infringement upon human rights and a contemporary manifestation of slavery that impacts a vast number of individuals globally and it has gained momentum over time, driven by various catalysts including poverty, the expansion of international trade, and the emergence of cutting edge technology.

Notwithstanding global efforts to address sex trafficking, it persists as a widespread and lucrative business that targets the most susceptible parts of the population, particularly females and minors. As time changes, so do the kind of crimes committed by the criminal gangs that have spread across the world. They are adopting cutting-edge approaches with anything that will lure people right into their traps. In the process, people lose everything, not necessarily living in chains of shackles, yet they are caged by the invisible modern capitalism.

Therefore, in this article, we will explore the issue of sex trafficking in depth, examining its causes, impacts, and the challenges facing those who seek to eliminate it. We will also discuss the measures that are

being taken to prevent sex trafficking and support its victims, and consider what more can be done to end this form of modern-day slavery once and for all. The article will ultimately emphasize the significance of increasing awareness regarding sex trafficking and advocating for a unified, global approach to eradicate this contemporary form of enslavement.

Conceptualization

U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act interprets sex trafficking as modern-day slavery in which persons are forced to perform commercial sex under the threat of violence, deception, or coercion in exchange for monetary compensation [1]. Sex traffickers usually target victims to keep them engaged in sex slavery to gain a financial advantage for themselves and then use violence, threats, deceit, and debt bondage, as well as other means of domination and manipulation to keep them involved. Sometimes those who are trafficked may not even recognize themselves as victims because of the traffickers' usage of love and tenderness as a form of control. Hence, sex trafficking can take place in a variety of settings and businesses that are distinct from one another.

Sex trafficking is not just forced prostitution; it is a multifaceted enterprise that encompasses pornography, the entertainment industry, escort services, massage, wellness spas, etc. Like any other crime syndicate, sex trafficking is also driven by demand and is established on the notions of supply. Therefore, persons who consume commercial sex boost the demand and pressure for cheaper commercial sex and, in turn, generate a profit motive for traffickers, who want to enhance their earning potential by stimulating the demand for commercial sex. Sex trafficking is propelled by a low-risk/high-reward dynamic as traffickers can anticipate earning a substantial sum of money due to the low likelihood of prosecution or legal ramifications. Unlike the most profitable criminal syndicate, expenses in this process are a bare minimum, yet profits of the traffickers keep soaring, as the product i.e., trafficked victims can be sold again and again.

Causation

Trafficking and sex slavery thrive in domains distinguished by poverty and inequality, which is fueled by the insane amount of profit that traffickers potentially generate through existing demand, making these occurrences more widespread. People especially women who are desperate enough to do anything to alleviate their hardship are prone to sex trafficking. As a result, most marginalized and extremely impoverished people are more susceptible to sex trafficking since they lack basic rights and access to fundamental needs such as education. Often, traffickers use "debt bondage" as a way of freedom to keep their victims under their control. Recruitment of sex slaves through trafficking involves a deliberate scam, conspiracy, or kidnapping. Even when victims have the chance to leave, the circle of dependency driven by fear holds them. Coercion, drug intimidation, and physical and sexual abuse are used as methods to manipulate the victims. Victims of sex trafficking are forced to work in recruiting or transporting other sex trafficking victims.

Sex trafficking can thrive in a bondage/bonded labor context in developed countries as well. A documentary by Rebecca Bender^[1] which broke all of the myths that forced slavery only happens in the developing world, that is why authors like Dominika Jansson [2] advocate that we must confront the traditional perceptions we have of sex trafficking, and the stereotypes of its victims and offenders. Because, the internet, as well as the simplicity with which traffickers can execute a transaction discreetly through social media, dating websites, and online adverts, have contributed to a rise in the supply and demand of sex trafficking throughout the years. In these cases, victims are notoriously difficult to identify due to the covert nature of sex trafficking.

Therefore, the vast majority of crimes go unreported because the victims are underprivileged and vulnerable and thus this illegal work sustains and flourishes in an environment where accountability is non-existent. To

sum it up, the nature of the crime itself helps the causation as many of the victims willingly trust and follow the traffickers as they are not aware of the consequences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A rudimentary knowledge of the infringement of basic human rights establishes a set of fundamental assumptions about the societal and individual contexts which will help us to explore the topic through multidisciplinary lenses. Bringing to light the extent to which women and girls are being sexually exploited around the world, Siddarth Kara, a modern-day slavery expert, explains in his book *Modern Slavery: A Global Perspective* how economic globalization has made the sex trade so profitable and easier for global crime syndicates [3]. In contrast to Kevin Bales' argument in *Disposable People* [4], Kara explores more of the "business" perspective of sex trafficking [5]. This paper establishes an interesting conflicting argument between these authors. Professor Bales imposes all of the concern on capitalism and the western world, while completely ignoring the fact that the highest concentrations of the flesh trade are found in developing countries i.e., India, Thailand, China, etc. Kara profoundly delves into the discussion of the push factors that contribute to sex trafficking such as – poverty, power relation, global economic forces, etc.

When it comes to the above-mentioned aspects, it can be related that conflict theory, which seeks to analyze injustice and power hierarchies [6], is suitable to explore and clarify broadly how existing inequalities, imbalance of power, and why oppression can emerge in connection to sex trafficking. This philosophy explains that social order is maintained by coercion of the downtrodden and less powerful individuals by the dominant and elite classes. Likewise, traffickers and pimps rule their victims' lives with power and control either through drugs or force. As a result of inequality in the world, a system is created in which those people in power may easily dominate and exploit those who are powerless. The global sex industry or human trafficking for sex is one of the most devastating current repercussions of inequality between and within nations [6]. Furthermore, the social communication of sex trafficking victims is established and regulated by their pimps or madams. These victims are enslaved and their world is one of anxiety, tension, injustice, and a total lack of freedom. Scholars demonstrate how sex trafficking is fuelled by socioeconomic disparity, not just between the rich and poor, but also between developed and developing nations [7]. In all instances, we have noticed that instead of traffickers or pimps, the victim of sex trafficking is criminalized brutally by society and most importantly by themselves [8]. Here the victims conform to the standard paradigm of labeling theory and identify themselves as deviant felons, sustaining and blaming themselves for their engagement in trafficking as a lifestyle choice. Therefore, trafficked women are intimidated from stepping forward and seeking aid because they are labeled and stigmatized.

Following this labeling and stigmatization, it can be established that condoning the victims always manifests itself in a variety of ways, and is frequently more subtle and intuitive. Although the oppression model works against this, many philosophers and thinkers believe that the radical feminist effort becomes nullified. Hence, it may be bewildering that some scholars like Weitzer criticize the sex trafficking discussion from a feminist perspective and say it is driven by moral crusades, scare stories, and unreliable data [9]. In recent times, he believes because of the contributions of a compelling moral crusade, the concern of sex trafficking is becoming more and more "politicized", which is partially true. Weitzer explains that the oppression model is responsible for the "robust mythology of trafficking", however, this research does not support Weitzer's claim [10]. We understand from Weitzer's dissertation that the worldwide political economy of sex is dependent on the demand of the trade organizers, the men from developed and developing countries, and the supply for the consumers, the women from the third world, poor nations [11]. However, the entire phenomenon is much more complex than it looks on the surface.

Socio-economic status, displacement due to war, natural disasters and conflict, social norms, and a scarcity of educational and employment options are some of contributing factors that need to be addressed other than

blaming the men for the existence of sex slavery.

Theoretical Framework

Existing literature on human trafficking addresses many dimensions to contemplate why and how sex trafficking happens and following that flow of the discussion, the theoretical framework will discuss which theory will be best suited to deal with sex trafficking. Among Oppression, Polymorphism, Prohibition, and Empowerment Paradigm, none of these singly recognizes the issue extensively. A hybrid model of the Polymorphism and Empowerment Paradigm would be the best way to address and make satisfactory work conditions for sex workers. The reason this research does not use the term 'eradicate' the way the oppression model did, is because eradicating a multi-billion dollar industry without addressing the socio-economic position of females is simply a fanatic opinion. Without challenging the social structure, the oppression model blames men for the existence of the sex industry whereas we have seen that many pimps are females (madams) and many victims themselves bring other females to exchange their position. Therefore, radical feminist screeching in the oppression model does not validate and examine the causes of sex trafficking completely. On the other hand, polymorphism provides us with an evidence-based paradigm that helps us to comprehend the heterogeneous justifications for the sex trade. The approach acknowledges the complex structure, and multi-dimensional engagement of sex workers, and does not advocate normative claims of the sex industry being wrapped up in criminal offenses.

Moreover, it makes more sense when Polymorphism theory endorses more research, data, and analysis as this problem has more dimensions such as globalization and westernization to consider. Even though the Prohibition model has been supported by scholars like Siddarth Kara, this particular model does not fit into today's world as looking through this problem through moral lenses only gives us hope without any strategy. Again, the assertions of prohibitionists are also anchored in the oppression model [11]. Lastly, the Empowerment paradigm is accommodated to make the life of sex workers better as it recognizes systemic reformation, consumerism, legalization, bargaining power, liberty of choice, and unions. The checks and balances that this approach delivers may result in promising working conditions for sex workers. However, this theory does not deal with the process and causation of sex trafficking but rather focuses on consequences.

This research believes that a tailored combination of the Polymorphism and Empowerment paradigm will be the most effective way to address the sex trafficking problem. As polymorphism demands more research and analysis, we will be able to identify the process and causation of sex slavery to such an extent that it propagates many plausible rationales and solutions, therefore, can serve the drawbacks of the Empowerment paradigm. Even if the Empowerment paradigm is to be implemented thoroughly, it will be needing more research and data as systemic reformation varies from community to community. Some might disagree with what this research is asserting here, however, if the near-impossible employee/worker favorable relationship between the pimps and sex workers is to be established then we need help from polymorphism to find out how to make it sustainable. Without proper examination and assessment, no sex worker will have dignity in their workplace. Moreover, if someone is only involved in research and does not implement any checks and balances, that research will be worthless. To make a person accountable to the state and provide checks and balances by law enforcement requires solid data and study. Therefore, Polymorphism and Empowerment paradigms go hand in hand and will work better together if implemented.

CONCLUSION

However, while most of us connect slavery with a bygone era, the reality is that it continues to exist today. In part, this is because many of us are unwilling to challenge what we believe. It is feasible to strengthen the economic opportunities available to girls and women, as well as other traditionally

disadvantaged groups, by developing programs that are related to financially empowering women, which include training and financial literacy. This will reduce the likelihood of girls and women becoming victims of trafficking and sex slavery. Preventing sex trafficking, dealing with criminals, and providing healthcare for the victims are all crucial aspects of the fight against sex trafficking.

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FOOT NOTES

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