

**COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE UNITED STATES:
CAUSES, MISCONCEPTIONS, AND INDICATORS**

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COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE UNITED STATES:
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Abstract

Human trafficking is one of the biggest human rights issues today, with millions of men, women, and children being trafficked across the world. Of those millions of people, it's estimated that roughly 14 to 17,000 foreign nationals are brought into the United States each year, in addition to our own citizens recruited into the industry. The largest issue that hinders the ability to combat human trafficking is the research surrounding this problem. There are many misconceptions about human trafficking, especially the fact that many people do not believe it is happening in the U.S.

Modern day human trafficking takes many forms. Individuals may be held against their will with no way to support themselves. Some may be forced into prostitution and separated from the rest of the world. The hidden victimization surrounding human trafficking allows predators to offend without notice. This makes it even more important to bring awareness and knowledge to the subject, because it can happen to anyone, anywhere, maybe even the people in your own community. This thesis will provide information on human trafficking in the United States, including; statistics, causes, misconceptions, and indicators of human trafficking. It will also review current efforts to stop human trafficking, while providing new solution ideas. The hope for this thesis is that it will impart new information, bring awareness, and give everyone the opportunity to be part of the fight to stop human trafficking in their own way.

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List of Figures

Figure 1 “*2015 Human Trafficking Law Enforcement Data*”. UNICEF, 2017

Figure 2 “*Percentages of States That Require Human Trafficking Training for Law Enforcement Officials*”. Shared Hope International, 2017

Figure 3 “*Percentages of States that Offer Human Trafficking Training to Law Enforcement Officials*” Shared Hope International, 2017

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Figures	iii
Chapter I	1
Chapter II	4
Chapter III	7
Chapter IV	10
Chapter V	13
Chapter VI	16
Chapter VII	21
References	24

Chapter 1

What is Human Trafficking?

This chapter will define human trafficking, and identify the different forms of this issue. Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. (McLaughlin, 2018) Exploitation can include sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery or practices similar to slavery, or removing organs.

Human trafficking consists of three elements that are always consistent. These elements are; the purpose for which human trafficking is done, the act of trafficking persons, and the means by which the act is carried out. The purpose of human trafficking will always be with the intent to exploit the person or persons. The act of human trafficking can vary, and have different stages. For example, not only physical transporting is considered the act. Recruiting and harboring people to be trafficked is just as liable as actually transporting persons. The means by which a person is entangled into human trafficking varies as well. Predators will use any tactic they feel will get a person to join their operation. Some tactics include; threats, use of force, coercion, and abduction. (McLaughlin, 2018)

Human trafficking can take various forms, such as; forced labor, bonded labor, and sex trafficking. (USDS, 2008) Forced labor occurs when vulnerable workers are exploited. Immigrants are especially susceptible to forced labor, but they can also be forced into work in their native countries. Forced labor can be harder to detect than most other forms of human trafficking. Going hand in hand with forced labor is bonded labor. Bonded labor is a form of force or coercion is the use of a bond, or debt, to keep a person under subjugation. (USDS, 2008) Many workers fall into bonded labor when traffickers exploit an initial debt the worker assumed as part of the terms of employment, or when workers inherit debt in more traditional systems of bonded labor.

Sex trafficking and prostitution are another form of human trafficking, and makes up a large part of trafficking as a whole. The U.S. Government adopted a strong position against prostitution in a December 2002 policy decision, which notes that prostitution is inherently harmful and dehumanizing, and fuels trafficking in persons. (USDS, 2008) The idea of prostitution produces a territory that is more susceptible to human trafficking. The secrecy of human trafficking does not allow a definite count of the number of victims that are trafficked internationally. However, research suggests that more people are victims of forced labor than sex trafficking, when including trafficking within borders.

Because no one has a clear perception of what is going on in the human trafficking world, it makes it very difficult to combat. Human trafficking in the United States is different than human trafficking in other countries. Understanding the ins and outs of human trafficking and how it is being handled in different countries is very important when trying to solve the issue. The form of trafficking is also just as important,

because the different forms of trafficking all have different purposes. Bringing awareness to the causes, misconceptions, and indicators of human trafficking in the United States, as well as already established efforts to combat this problem, can help find new solutions.

Chapter II

Human Trafficking in the United States

The Global Slavery Index estimates that on any given day in 2016 there were 403,000 people living in conditions of modern slavery in the United States. (GSI, 2018) In 2017, the National Human Trafficking Hotline reported 8,524 cases of suspected human trafficking. (NHTH, 2018) Woman and children are the major targets of human trafficking. Statistics show that 46 children in America are taken and sold into slavery per day. (ECT, 2018) Traffickers are not very selective when it comes to the type of neighborhoods they choose or the type of child they exploit. Both poor and rich neighborhoods are at risk and every child.

Traffickers exploit the fears of children and manipulate them in order to trap them. Once trapped, traffickers use abuse and torture to condition a child into submission. Trafficked children can be lured to the U.S. through the promise of having a better life. Some children are sold by their families, who might not have understood the situation. Children born in the U.S are also trafficked within the country. Exploitation of children like this are common in large cities because there are more people willing to pay. Some children are immediately put on airplanes and sent to other countries, while others are sent to meet demand in cities and states around the US. (ECT, 2018) Shipping children to other areas allows traffickers to reduce the risk the children being spotted in the local area. Another tactic trafficker uses to avoid this risk is to use the airport as a hunting

ground. Airports provide a means of escape quickly. A trafficker can take a child and disappear within minutes.

Women are also an at-risk population for human trafficking. Traffickers use some of the same tactics for trapping children and women. Force may be used to ensure that the victims of trafficking do everything their abuser says to avoid harm to themselves or their loved ones. Fraud is a method used where a trafficker will blackmail their victims into thinking they have no other choice but to follow their instruction. Coercion is used as a way for a trafficker to trap their victims into a debt they will never be able to repay. A common scenario is that the trafficker will explain to the victim all of the expenses that they put into transporting them. This initial debt is to be paid off, however, most victims are paid little to nothing, and have no realistic chance of paying off their debt. Drugs are also used in order to control a victim, and keep them indebted. Drugs are sold at an extremely high price and taken out of pay, along with other items that a victim may need to survive, and is left having no money.

Hope is a human trafficking survivor that went through a cycle similar to what is described above. Hope was discovered in jail by a nonprofit outreach center. Hope had what they call a “gorilla pimp”, who is an abuser that uses force and violence as a form of control. (McKenna, 2018) Hope is eventually released from jail and placed in a safe house. Within 24 hours of being placed, Hope ran away. Hope was found by the organization that was assisting her, in the hospital. Once found, Hope was then placed in another safe house. Because Hope had developed a drug addiction, she runs again, within 5 hours. When Hope is found again, she is dead upon arrival at another hospital. When she is revived, her pimp is able to lure her back into the abusive situation.

Hope returns back to the cycle of being arrested and put in jail. She again gets released from jail, but this time Hope was doing well in her recovery. However, Hope found herself in an abusive relationship again. This cycle seems to be common with victims of human trafficking. However difficult it is, it is important not to give up. Hope is now a survivor that can tell her story and inspire more victims to come forward. Because people never gave up on Hope she is able to call herself a survivor.

Chapter III

Causes of Human Trafficking

This next chapter will give insight on some of the factors that contribute to human trafficking. It is important to know these things because it gives us a chance to find common underlying issues that may need to be solved in order to find solutions to human trafficking. Poverty, inequality, the lack of opportunity, and the high reward/low risk dynamic are what fuel the issue of human trafficking. Because people live in poverty, and do not have much opportunity, they are quicker to take risky deals. They also lack awareness, making them vulnerable to the efforts from traffickers. Many young people are desperate to improve their living conditions, so they are willing to move to another country at the chance of a better job and life. Lack of opportunity is the underlying issue for victims to jump at opportunities. If a country has a young population profile, there creates intense competition for employment. There also shows a view of there being no opportunities. This makes people more susceptible to trafficking schemes.

Inequalities and differences make certain groups much more vulnerable to exploitation. (UNICEF, 2017) Known forms of inequality are those between richer and poorer countries and developing and developed nations. Social inequality is defined as the social, financial, and political power struggle between those who hold power and those who do not. (Burner, Koch and Camp, 2014) Because of the imbalance concerning social inequality, it causes people to seek financial opportunities in illegal acts. (Burner,

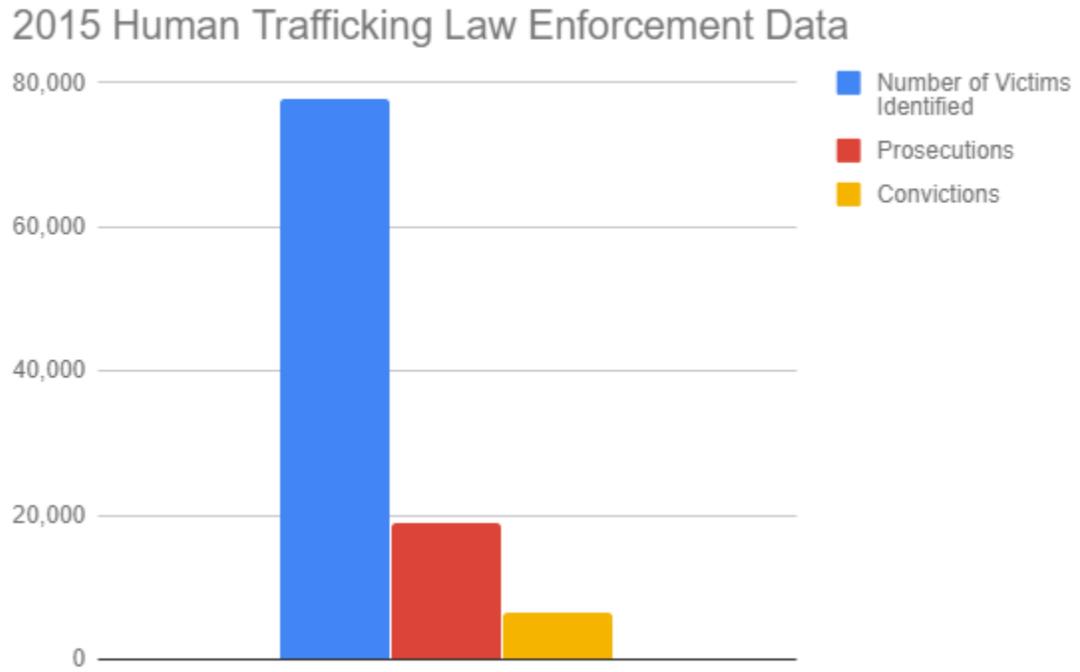
Koch and Camp, 2014) Human trafficking is a form of the violence that poverty-stricken populations have to deal with due to the inequalities.

Wars, displacement, absence of opportunities, and harmful environments are factors that drive people to accept situations that lead to trafficking. Harmful environments and inequality give traffickers the perfect environment to target the vulnerable. Wars create chaos that often drives people to flee. This allows traffickers to prey on the displaced population.

Human trafficking is powered by a high profit and low risk. This means that traffickers make a lot of money with no regard for punishment or legal repercussions. Human trafficking is the second most profitable illegal industry— second only to the drug trade. The International Labor Organization estimated that profits from human trafficking and forced labor are \$150 billion annually. (UNICEF, 2017) The risk of being convicted is extremely low compared to the number of victims it affects each year. This shows traffickers that they can do whatever they want and there is a great chance that they will get away with it.

Below is a chart that shows the 2015 rates of the victims that were identified, the cases that were prosecuted, and the cases that were convicted. Prosecuting is when there are charges filed with the intention of a conviction. A conviction is when someone is found guilty by a judge or jury and is sentenced. You can see in the chart that the prosecution rate is low, but the convictions are even lower. Compared to the number of victims that are affected each year the conviction and prosecution rate are nowhere near where they should be.

Figure 1



The above table is an estimate, due to the fact that definite numbers are very hard to determine.

Chapter IV

Misconceptions and Myths of Human Trafficking

There are a lot of misconceptions when it comes to the act of human trafficking, and what it may consist of. For example, many people believe that human trafficking is only sex trafficking. As you read earlier, there are many different types of human trafficking that do not necessarily involve sexual exploitation. Victims can be found in legal or illegal businesses like hotels, sweatshops, factories, etc. Victims can be found in many places people do not realize.

Another misconception is the difference between smuggling and trafficking. Smuggling is a crime against a country's law. Usually the smuggler or smugglers has the consent of the person to take them across the border illegally. Smuggling can be turned into an act of trafficking if the smuggler uses force, fraud, or coercion to hold people against their will. (DHS, 2018) Human trafficking does not require a movement between countries, or even states. It does not require any movement at all. Human trafficking also does not always have to be carried out by physical force or restraint. This is another tactic that is used to keep the act hidden. Traffickers use psychological means of control, such as threats, fraud, or abuse of the legal process, are sufficient tactics that traffickers use. (DHS, 2018)

Human trafficking can happen to anyone. A common myth is that human trafficking only happens to women and young girls. However, men and young boys are at

risk of being trafficked just as much as female victims. The most frequently cited global statistics on human trafficking indicate that men and boys represent nearly half of the total number of human trafficking victims. (USDS, 2017) This common myth can exclude this vulnerable population, which means that a large part of victims in the human trafficking world are not getting the help they need.

Many people also have a misconception that human trafficking victims are only foreign born individuals and those who are poor. Even though poverty is a factor that increases the risk of human trafficking, poverty alone does not cause human trafficking. This way of thinking does not help to combat the issue, instead it is a naive theory that overlooks many victims. Trafficking victims can come from all different types of socioeconomic statuses, and many can come from wealthy families or neighborhoods.

One myth that is hindering the ability to combat human trafficking, especially in our country, is the fact that a lot of people do not know, or believe, that human trafficking occurs in the United States. Not only can human trafficking happen to anyone, it can happen anywhere. It can happen in large cities, rural communities, or the suburbs. It happens nationwide, as well as internationally. Human trafficking could be present in your own community.

The fact that human trafficking is occurring everywhere, one would think that it would be easy to recognize, or that it would be easy for a victim to seek help. There is a myth that human trafficking victims will try to get help when they go out in public. However, this is not the case in almost all scenarios. Human trafficking is mostly a

concealed crime. Victims are forced, threatened, or are scared of the consequences from their abusers.

Victims of human trafficking will also refuse to look for help because of things like lack of trust in the organizations or self-blame. (USDS, 2017) Often, when victims of human trafficking are discovered, they are not treated like victims. Most victims are arrested for prostitution, and are treated like criminals. This treatment of human trafficking victims, is a big reason that most victims do not look to organizations or the police for help. There is also a misconception about human trafficking victims such as, “If the trafficked person consented to be in their initial situation or was informed about what type of labor they would be doing or that commercial sex would be involved, then it cannot be human trafficking or against their will because they “knew better.” (NHTH, 2014) Consenting to any kind of arrangement before the use of force and threats take place, have no effect on the crime itself. No one can agree to be forced into any situation such as human trafficking.

It is essential that no one jumps to conclusions about who can or cannot be a victim of human trafficking. These types of myths and misconceptions makes it easier for the traffickers to abuse these victims and get away with it. It also impacts the way we can help fight this problem. By debunking these myths, it provides a chance for another victim to be helped. Even though human trafficking victims are hard to determine, there are indicators to look for that could help save a life.

Chapter V

Indicators of Human Trafficking

There are general indicators for human trafficking. There are also physical, mental, and developmental indicators that can be detected in certain cases. The following indicators are usually easier to detect on a healthcare, but some can be detected in everyday situations. Being aware of these indicators could possibly save a life. Not all situations will have these indicators, but just knowing them could help detect this problem.

Physical indicators of human trafficking could be signs of physical abuse and injuries, bruises, cuts, long term scars. Other indicators include; malnourishment, poor dental health, and appearing destitute. Psychological or mental indicators can include; avoiding eye contact and social interaction, and authority figures/law enforcement; sticking to scripted or rehearsed responses in social interactions. (ONAG, 2017) More behavior indicators include paranoia, anxiety, fear, and nervousness.

There are different indicators that are more specific to certain types of human trafficking. Labor trafficking will not always have the same indicators as sex trafficking. Some indicators for labor trafficking include; being abused at work or threatened by an employer, is not allowed to take adequate breaks, is not provided with adequate protective equipment for hazardous work, and is required to live in housing provided by employers. (NHTH, 2018) Some indicators of sex trafficking could be; tattoos or other forms of branding, does not have appropriate clothing for the weather or venue, and uses

language common in the commercial sex industry. (NHTH,2018) While all these indicators may not lead to a human trafficking case, there is a chance that it could help a victim.

Now that some of the indicators are established, what can you do if you think you have identified a trafficking situation? Assuming you can speak privately to the victim or victims, there are questions you can ask to better assess the situation. Some of these questions are; Are you able to leave your job if you wanted to? Have you ever been threatened when trying to leave? If you think that you have identified a trafficking situation, the first thing to do would be to contact the authorities to report the situation. Never try to rescue a trafficking victim by yourself. This can make the situation worse and be unsafe to you and the person you are trying to help. When trying to help adult victims, it is necessary to obtain permission from the victim before providing any personal information to the service providers.

If you have come across a victim that has already escaped, there are many organizations that can help provide shelter, legal aid, a medical assistance. Calling 911 in cases of emergency is a great option, but calling the National Human Trafficking Hotline will make sure that the proper law enforcement, who have been trained to deal with these situations, are called. The National Human Trafficking Hotline is a 24-hour, toll-free, multilingual anti-trafficking hotline.

You can report a tip, connect with anti-trafficking services in your area; or request training and technical assistance, general information, or specific anti-trafficking resources. (USDS, 2018) The Hotline is able to take calls from all areas of the United

States and many different callers. Some states have different rules regarding whether or not you are required to report a human trafficking situation. You should check local and state requirements about mandatory reporting. Contacting the National Human Trafficking hotline may not be considered satisfying reporting rules, but the Hotline can generate a report to get the right people to handle the case.

1-888-373-7888 National Human Trafficking Hotline

Chapter VI

Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking in the United States

Due to the growing rates of people being trafficked, Congress enacted the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. This act was the first federal law to address human trafficking. The law provides a three-pronged approach that includes prevention, protection, and prosecution.

The act was reauthorized in 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2013. In 2003, the TVPA was reauthorized due to factors such as: victims facing obstacles in the process of securing needed assistance, additional research was needed to find the most effective strategies to combat trafficking, corruption among foreign law, and more training was needed to handle trafficking situations. (Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003) The Amendments that were added to the TVPA included: cooperation between foreign governments and non-governmental organizations, assistance for family members of victims of trafficking in the United States and certification of victims of a severe form of trafficking in persons.

In 2005, this policy was amended to include prevention of trafficking in conjunction with post conflict and humanitarian emergency assistance. (Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005) In 2008, the TVPA was reauthorized as the Wilber Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008. William Wilberforce was a member of a committee that worked towards the abolition of the slave trade and the eventual emancipation of slavery. The reauthorization including

adding things such as additional measures to prevent trafficking. The President would establish and carry out programs to prevent trafficking like technical assistance for foreign countries to research and inform their people in their native languages, in an effort to reduce trafficking. (William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008) It also included investigation of individuals and entities that may be involved in trafficking in persons involving sexual exploitation. (William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008) This reauthorization also went on to establish and maintain an integrated database within the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center. In 2013, the TVPA was reauthorized under Title XII in the Violence Against Women Act. A subsection was added and stated the following: Each regional bureau in the Department of State will contribute to the realization of the anti-trafficking goals and objectives of the Secretary of State. Each year, each regional bureau shall submit a list of anti-trafficking goals and objectives to the Secretary of State for each country in the geographic area of responsibilities of the regional bureau along with cooperation from the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. (Trafficking Victims Reauthorization Act of 2013)

A section was added to promote the partnership between the United States and other countries and organizations to combat trafficking together. The reauthorizations of this act coincide with the main objectives of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, which consisted of Protection, Prevention, and Prosecution.

The Long-Term Goals of the TPVA is to:

- provide protection to trafficking victims and encourage other countries to enact anti trafficking legislation

- Prevent human trafficking overseas
- Protect victims and help them rebuild their lives in the US with Federal and State support.
- Prosecute traffickers of persons under stiff Federal penalties.
- To combat trafficking in persons, especially into the sex trade, slavery, and involuntary servitude, to reauthorize certain Federal programs to prevent violence against women, and for other purposes.

In order to reach these goals, the strategy is to provide prosecution, protection, and prevention. The aspect of protection in this policy is identifying victims and providing them with medical care and shelter. The prevention part of the policy is raising awareness of the inhumane practice involved in the trafficking trade and promoting a paradigm shift that seeks to reduce the demand for human trafficking.

Each year since 2008, Congress has devoted money to Department of Justice for programs for victims of trafficking. They also give funding to the Department of Health and Human Services to carry out the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. Health and Human Services funding to combat trafficking remained stably between 2002 and 2013 at \$10 million dollars. In 2014, Congress increased funding to almost 14 million dollars for Health and Human Services to combat trafficking. In 2015, the Conference report provides \$15.7 million to HHS to combat trafficking.

Funding was not always equally distributed either. Originally, the TVPA of 2000, primarily targeted services toward noncitizen victims because they were not eligible for existing federal human service programs. There have been disagreements about whether

the services and programs authorized by the TVPA are available to all victims, regardless of their citizenship status. Because foreign victims are treated with more services and help, it is harder to secure services for U.S. citizen victims. There have been steps made to bridge the gap between the inequalities of services offered, in 2005, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act enacted policies to assist U.S. citizens.

There are also may be local organizations around you that are working to combat human trafficking around your area. For example, the Virginia Beach Justice Initiative work to prevent and end human trafficking in the United States. They provide support and services to trafficking victims. They work with women who have been victims of sex trafficking, and in jails across the lower region of the state. They have helped over 200 people, and have grown from advocating in one jail to four jails since 2016.

There have been successes and downfalls this organizations have had when addressing this issue. Some successes that VBJI has had is bringing awareness to the victims that they are in fact victims. Many of the women that are given services from this organization do not realize that they are the victim in these situations. Other successes include new partnerships with organizations that can help. Many of the women deal with issues such as a trauma bond and total dependency with their abuser. Because of these situations, there are a lot more challenges that come up when trying to get a victim out of this lifestyle.

Some of the challenges that the VBJI face when helping victims are; victims going back to the exploitive situation, some may or may not have substance abuse issues, and many are treated like criminals. (McKenna, 2018) There are law enforcement that are not trained to identify or help in these types of situations., so often victims are arrested

for prostitution. This can create a cycle of a criminal record and makes it hard for victims to obtain jobs and move forward from the abusive situation. Like I stated before, many victims form a trauma bond. Trauma bonding is a term developed by Patrick Carnes, is the misuse of fear, excitement, sexual feelings, and sexual physiology to entangle another person. Many primary aggressors tend toward extreme behavior and risk taking, and trauma bonding is a factor in their relationships. (Samsel, 2018) This is what can cause a victim to go back to the same situation.

Substance abuse is another challenge that organizations may go through when trying to help. Some victims are abused by being force addicted or self-medicating to get over the trauma. (McKenna, 2018) This makes it more difficult for a victim to leave, because they have gotten dependent on drugs, as well as their abuser. Another challenge is the misconception that victims have about authorities or organizations that want to help them. Many victims get arrested for prostitution and treated like criminals. Most of these victims are brainwashed to not talk the authorities, abused if they speak, or threatened into remaining silent. In my opinion, when victims are treated like criminals, it is hard to get them to open up about how they may have ‘ gotten there in the first place. An expression from a survivor at VBJI, that really puts into perspective, the difficulties that victims and organizations have to overcome was, “If I had known how painful it was to get out, I wish they would have killed me then.” (McKenna, 2018)

Chapter VII

Moving Towards More Effective Solutions

This section will look at some of the challenges that were discussed in the previous chapter and offer some potential solutions. It will also explain ways that everyone can contribute to eliminating human trafficking. One of the challenges that came up was the fact that most law enforcement officers were not trained to handle these situations. Below is a table that shows how many states require human trafficking training, how many offers them, and which states do neither.

Figure 2



Figure 3



(SHI, 2017)

As seen above, majority of states do not require mandatory training on human trafficking for their law enforcement, and less than half have been confirmed to at least offer it. In my opinion, it is especially important to train law enforcement officials because they have the highest potential of coming across these situations. In my opinion, if all states required mandatory training, it would have a greater effect on the amount of cases that are intercepted. Then, with the training that is required, they will be able to effectively handle the situation and get the appropriate services. I believe this would cause an ongoing effect, that would lead to more discoveries and information on the problem, and more ways to end it.

Another thing that can help victims when dealing with getting help from law enforcement is enacting a law that would expunge or seal the records of the victims of

trafficking. This would make a big difference when trying to obtain resources. For example, if a victim of sex trafficking was convicted of prostitution, it may be difficult for them to find a job with a record. This law would recognize that these victims were in fact victims in the case. It would also allow victims to not disclose that situation on job applications, which may give them a better chance at being able to become self-sufficient.

There are many different ways that anyone could become involved in fighting human trafficking. One way is to be informed on the topic and bring awareness to the issue. Ways you can do this, is by hosting a fundraiser or community awareness event. Even volunteering to help with a fundraiser or event is a way that you can get involved. Mr. McKenna, from VBJI spoke about how they can use anyone with any kinds of talents to help. For example, they could use advocates, lawyers, outreach volunteers, designers, and information technology specialists.

Anyone can use their gifts or talents to help fight trafficking. Even if you feel that there is nothing you can do, just talking about this issue could cause a ripple effect, and possibly lead to bigger solutions. This crime is steadily increasing all around us. It is affecting a large number of people, and more and more every day. Being aware of the issue, knowing the signs, and finding ways you can help could assist in ending human trafficking. Get involved in your local organization and see how you can use your gifts to possibly save a life.

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