

HUMAN AND SEX TRAFFICKING: A QUANTITATIVE EXAMINATION OF THE
KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF THE COLLEGE-AGED POPULATION

By

Margaret Caroline Weiker

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

2024

HUMAN AND SEX TRAFFICKING: A QUANTITATIVE EXAMINATION OF THE
KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF THE COLLEGE-AGED POPULATION

by Margaret Caroline Weiker

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2024

APPROVED BY:

Kristin Ford Ph.D., Committee Chair

Douglas Gilmer Ph.D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

It is crucial for the public and more specifically those who are a part of vulnerable populations to understand the dangers of both human and sex trafficking. One sub-group of vulnerable populations that are likely to encounter a trafficking situation are college students, as many of these students are unaware of trafficking's prevalence and patterns. While there have been studies of specific populations with prior specialized knowledge, there is little information on the knowledge, perceptions, and awareness levels of the general college-aged population. This study was quantitatively structured into a two-part survey, which collected data from a sample size of 120 students on the campus of Catawba College. Catawba College's student population provided a diverse sample of participants in terms of economic status, sex, gender identity, race, religion, age, and geographical location. Part one of this study measured demographic information including gender, age, race, and socioeconomic status. Part two of this study examined the knowledge and awareness levels of students on the topic of human trafficking. Questions included identification of various trafficking forms, willingness to intervene, and awareness of trafficking's prevalence. A measurement of student's knowledge and awareness of human trafficking will provide future educational and legislative opportunities but will contribute to the dismantling and termination of human trafficking.

Keywords: human trafficking, sex trafficking, college students, vulnerable populations, knowledge, awareness

Copyright Page

© Margaret Caroline Weiker, 2024.

Dedication

To my family and friends, there are not enough words to describe the love and gratitude I hold for each one of you. Your love and support throughout this journey have pushed me to limits far beyond my wildest dreams and I am truly blessed by those who surround me.

To my husband and best friend Russ, you have allowed me to shine and have sacrificed so much time for me to follow this dream. Even on the days where I felt as if I were not capable you helped me to push through. This work would not have been accomplished without your constant love, support, patience, and encouragement. It is truly an honor to have you as my husband and my best friend. I cannot wait to celebrate this accomplishment with you and each one after, and I would not be the woman I am today without you. But above all else, my highest achievement has been becoming your wife. I cannot wait to see where life takes us next.

To my parents Bill and Shari, you have been there from my very first steps, and witnessed all other steps up to this day. You both are a shining example of what love, support, and encouraging people should be, not just as parents, but as members of their community. I cannot think of a stronger example of what it means to accomplish your dreams other than you both. Without you both, this journey would not have been possible. God has truly blessed me with the most loving and supportive parents, and I am forever grateful and love you always.

To my best friend Maddy, there will never be enough days to thank you. Meeting you in college and becoming teammates is one of my favorite memories and it has made me so happy to watch our friendship grow. I am so honored to go through life's biggest milestones with you and be Willa's godmother. I would not have made it to this point without your love, support, advice, and confidence in me when I doubted myself. Thank you for being the most wonderful friend I could have ever asked for.

Acknowledgments

I would like to formally recognize several individuals who helped me to complete this dissertation. First, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Kristin Ford, my dissertation chair, for her support and wisdom during this time. Your guidance, patience, and words of encouragement allowed me to accomplish this goal. I would also like to thank my reader, Dr. Douglas Gilmer, for his support and guidance during this journey.

I would also like to acknowledge several professors, who have provided countless hours of time, support, and advice for me throughout my academic career. Dr. Gary Freeze, Dr. Jim Hand, and Dr. Forrest Anderson. These three men have taught me hard lessons and challenged me to be the best student I could be. You all saw my potential during times that I could not see it myself. I would not be writing this today without you all.

I would also like to acknowledge that this study was influenced greatly by those who have been victimized by human trafficking. These men, women, and children have face indescribable pain and suffering, and deserve to be treated equally as the Lord treats us. I hope that this study may contribute positively to anti-trafficking efforts, and to bring justice to those who have suffered.

Table of Contents

<u>ABSTRACT</u>	3
<u>Copyright Page</u>	4
<u>Dedication</u>	5
<u>Acknowledgments</u>	6
<u>List of Tables</u>	9
<u>List of Figures</u>	10
<u>List of Abbreviations</u>	11
<u>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</u>	13
<u>Overview</u>	13
<u>Background</u>	13
<u>Problem Statement</u>	17
<u>Purpose Statement</u>	19
<u>Significance of the Study</u>	19
<u>Research Question(s)</u>	21
<u>Definitions</u>	21
<u>Summary</u>	22
<u>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</u>	24
<u>Overview</u>	24
<u>Theoretical Framework</u>	25
<u>Related Literature</u>	29
<u>Summary</u>	70
<u>CHAPTER THREE: METHODS</u>	72

Overview.....72

Design.....72

Research Question(s).....73

Hypothesis(es).....74

Participants and Setting75

Instrumentation.....76

Procedures.....79

Data Analysis80

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....82

Overview.....82

Sample Size.....83

Results.....87

Hypothesis(es)87

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS95

Overview.....95

Discussion95

Implications.....98

Limitations99

Recommendations for Future Research..... 100

Conclusion 101

REFERENCES 103

APPENDICES 123

List of Tables

Table 1. Student Participant Demographics	83
Table 2. Frequencies of Student Demographics	85
Table 3. Knowledge Scores Based on Socioeconomic Status.....	89
Table 4. Knowledge Scores Based on Race	90

List of Figures

Figure 1. Mean Knowledge Score of Males and Females.....	88
Figure 2. Student's Feelings Towards Vulnerable to Traffcking	92
Figure 3. Willingness to Intervene in a Trafficking Situation.....	94
Figure 4. Willingness to Learn More about Anti-Trafficking.....	94

List of Abbreviations

United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

United States Department of Justice (DOJ)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to End Child Exploitation of Children Today Act
(PROTECT)

Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA)

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS)

U.S. Customs and Boarder Protection (CBP)

Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC)

Action-Means-Purpose Model (AMP)

United States Sentencing Commission (USSC)

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)

Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform ACT (CAFRA)

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

Quick Response Code (QR)

Sum of Squares (SS)

Degrees of Freedom (df),

Means Squares (MS)

Stop Observe Ask Respond (SOAR)

Senior Policy Operation Group (SPOG)

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Center for Countering Human Trafficking (CCHT)

Trafficking in Persons (TIP)

Registered Nurse (RN)

Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex Asexual Plus (LGBTQIA+)

Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)

The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

At any given time, it is estimated that 27.6 million men, women, and children are victims of human trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2023). While anyone may become a victim of human trafficking, the college-aged population is among several specific populations that have the potential to be victims of human trafficking based on several factors. Trafficking is not as simple as the film *Taken* describes it. Rather, human trafficking may present through prostitution, performing at strip clubs, tourist sites, businesses, and child labor. Moreover, human trafficking may be hidden behind a romantic relationship or sexual acts for means of survival (Youth.gov, 2013). Below, a historical timeline of human trafficking will be provided, including previously established anti-trafficking efforts and a theoretical background of this study. Chapter one will also present the problem statement, purpose, and significance of the current study. This section will conclude with the research questions and definitions utilized throughout this research study.

Background

Many people believe that they will never be a victim to human trafficking, and Sarah, a college student at the University of South Carolina was no exception. Sarah fell victim to trafficking after meeting a man at a club on the West Coast, who claimed to work in the music industry, offering to fulfill her dreams of becoming a star (Lee, 2022). While Sarah's friend felt wary about collaborating with him, Sarah did not notice his odd behavior. After a month of spending time with this man, Sarah agreed to a date that ultimately led her to a life of undeclared expectations, drug abuse, and dependency on her trafficker (Lee, 2022). While Sarah attempted to leave her trafficker several times, her lack of financial independence and lack of familial

support forced her to return. Fortunately, Sarah found a way out, and is now on the path to healing and is now a mother and wife studying human services to help educate and prevent other victims of trafficking (Lee, 2022). Sarah's story is just one example of how vulnerable an individual is to being trafficked, and this vulnerability is further exacerbated by being a young woman who is just beginning to learn how the world works.

Historical Background

While many may view human trafficking as a modern-day issue, slavery's roots have been documented to early biblical times with some of the earliest evidence of human trafficking being traced back to 4000 BCE in Mesopotamia (Aronowitz, 2017). Additional evidence of slavery has dated back to ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, where slavery was considered a spoil of war, punishment for breaking common law, or viewed as a necessity for survival. By 476 BCE, the Roman Empire became home to the largest slave population in the ancient world. Trafficking, also known as chattel slavery, was not gender specific, but required both men and women to participate in domestic labor or agricultural labor. Female slaves during this time were however required, by Roman law, to produce offspring which would in turn replace their parents (Aronowitz, 2017).

The enslavement of humans was exacerbated during the Trans-Atlantic period, or the 18th and 19th century, with the exploitation and enslavement of African men, women, and children (Aronowitz, 2017). During this time, English settlers viewed the African people as property rather than human life. Trafficking was mostly labor-focused, with African people being purchased and forced to work on plantations and collecting crops such as tobacco, sugar, coffee, and rice. As the colonies evolved, so did the severity of the treatment of slaves. The brutal conditions experienced by African slaves resulted in disease, famine, and even death, with

many not surviving the voyage to America. Most slaves experienced the earliest examples of physical abuse and sex trafficking at this time, where men, women, and children were whipped, beaten, and sexually assaulted by their owners as punishment or for control (Aronowitz, 2017).

Anti-trafficking Efforts

With the historical progression of human trafficking, anti-trafficking efforts and practices quickly emerged. The earliest example of anti-trafficking legislation was the Declaration Relative to the Universal Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1815 (Weissbrodt & de la Vega, 2007). This collection of over 300 agreements between the United States and several other European countries were established to diminish and end the international slave trade and other forms of servitude between Europe and the colonies of the United States, however, most were unsuccessful (Weissbrodt & de la Vega, 2007). Anti-trafficking efforts quickly shifted focus in the late 19th century to the protection of women and children who were migrated to the United States and forced into prostitution (Aronowitz, 2017). These prostitution practices were quickly combatted with the establishment of the International Convention for the Suppression of White Slave Trade, which focused on the abolishment of the enslavement and exploitation of white women and children of European origin (Aronowitz, 2017).

Modern examples of legislation have expanded to all ages, genders, and ethnicities including the Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to End Child Exploitation of Children, or the PROTECT Act of 2003. The PROTECT Act ensures that children and minors are protected from all forms of abuse and sexual exploitation, and allows law enforcement to deter, investigate, and prosecute those who commit trafficking crimes against children (Department of Homeland Security, 2022; U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2019). One of the most recent examples of human trafficking legislation is the Trafficking and Victims Protection Act, or

TVPA. The TVPA provides the necessary tools to combat trafficking on a global scale. This act also established the Department of State's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Office and the President's Task for combating trafficking practices (U.S. Department of State, 2021a).

Human Trafficking

Today, various definitions surround the topic of human trafficking, but its foundational components remain consistent. Human trafficking is understood as using force, fraud, or coercion against an individual to provide physical labor, services, or engage in commercial sex acts (U.S. Department of State, 2022a). It is common for human trafficking to be strongly associated with migrant smuggling. However, migrant smuggling does not force individuals to participate in criminal behavior (U.S. Department of State, 2022a). Human trafficking has evolved into a multi-billion-dollar industry at the expense of its victims (Polaris, 2021). Any individual is subject to human trafficking, as it has impacted the world "regardless of race, color, national origin, disability, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, education level, or citizenship status" (The United States Department of Justice, 2017, para. 2).

Global Concerns and Exploitation

Human trafficking is not just a national issue, but "is a multidimensional human rights violation that centers on the act of exploitation" across the globe (Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017, p. 2). Trafficking may manifest in the form of agriculture, labor, drug smuggling, servitude, and organ trafficking (Types of Human Trafficking, 2020). There is a consistent relationship between the needs of the victim and traffickers who seek to fulfill those needs for their own personal gain. The relationship between a victim's desire to satisfy their needs and the immoral exploitation by traffickers has created a healthcare concern on global scale (Sabella & Chesnay 2018;

Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017). Not only do these victims experience hazardous working and living conditions, but drug addiction, loss of limbs, sexually transmitted diseases, famine, mental illness, and most likely death (Zimmerman & Kiss. 2017). Victims and vulnerable populations are in desperate need for their essential needs to be met in a way that does not compromise their health and well-being.

Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is a subset of the term human trafficking and considered as a form of modern-day slavery that grosses an estimated \$3 billion dollars annually in the United States (Meshelemiah & Lynch, 2019). Sex trafficking specifically involves the recruitment, exploitation, transportation, harboring, or solicitation of an individual to perform commercial sex acts by means of force, fraud, or coercion (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). To add, for trafficking to be considered sexual in nature, the elements of acts, means, and purpose are required (U.S. Department of State, 2021b). Unlike other forms of trafficking, sex trafficking has evolved into the second most common form behind labor trafficking (Polaris, 2018). Sex trafficking occurs in various forms including commercial sex work, performance in strip clubs or tourism sites or performance of sexual acts in exchange for food, shelter, drugs, and other necessities (Youth.gov, 2013). As of 2018, it was reported by the Human Trafficking Hotline that sex trafficking had increased 25 percent from the previous year in the United States alone, with 10,949 cases (Polaris, 2018).

Problem Statement

While the world suffers from various global issues such as climate change, war, discrimination, and economic instability, one of the largest issues that fails to be consistently combated is human trafficking. Human trafficking is not only an issue of human rights, but it

undermines the rule of law, undermines both economic and national security, and exploits those who are most vulnerable (United States Department of State, 2022a). While anyone may fall victim to a trafficking situation, college-aged students are especially vulnerable for several reasons including economic instability or dependence on family, immigration status, or experimentation with drugs and alcohol (Department of Homeland Security, 2020a). College students are susceptible to trafficking at any time, whether they are walking through campus, attending social gatherings, spending time with friends, using social media, or experiencing intimacy with a new partner (Human Trafficking in Pennsylvania, 2017).

The current issue is that there is a lack of data on the knowledge and awareness levels of vulnerable populations and more specifically, the college-aged population, on the topic of human trafficking. This lack of awareness forms the basis for why these individuals are susceptible to trafficking efforts (Meshelemiah & Lynch, 2019). The consistent utilization of technology and social media by college aged students has become an easy and untraceable method of luring victims by traffickers. Most recently, it has been discovered through a survey of human trafficking victims, that female college-aged students are disproportionately affected by online sex traffickers at 71 percent when compared to males (LittleJohn, 2019). Additionally, the most common age of these female victims who are affected fall between the ages of 18-20 years old (Littlejohn, 2019). The reason behind women being the majority of those victimized by trafficking may occur for several reasons. According to the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) (2017), women are trafficked more often due to “the exposure of the former to specific forms of exploitation such as sexual exploitation and violence, domestic servitude and forced marriage” (p. 1). Additionally, cultural normalization of violence against women contribute to the vulnerability of women and their likelihood of being trafficked.

The need for data on the knowledge of vulnerable populations is two-fold. First, obtaining this data allows to the generation of future studies which fill gaps for other vulnerable populations (Scott et al., 2019). Additionally, obtaining such data may “generate knowledge through studies and evaluations that guide future policy” (Scott et al., 2019, para. 1). Second, obtaining the data of students with no prior education on human trafficking also allows educators, law enforcement, and the government to gauge where funding and anti-trafficking efforts should be allocated to properly combat trafficking efforts.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to quantitatively measure the knowledge, awareness levels and perceptions of college-aged students and compare them to demographic data. To obtain this data for this study, the variables that will be measured are students’ awareness of human trafficking, or the dependent variable, and student’s demographical data, or the independent variable. Demographic data is categorized as the independent variable in this study as it cannot be changed nor manipulated. For the purpose of this study, college-aged students are understood as any undergraduate or graduate student between the ages of 18-24 who attends an institution of higher education (Legal Information Institute, 2010). Obtaining demographic data from this vulnerable population and comparing it to the knowledge and awareness level of these students will provide a measurement of how environment may influence an individual’s knowledge of human trafficking. The sample population of college-aged students consists of 120 students from Catawba College in Salisbury, North Carolina.

Significance of the Study

While there is an established set of data that has measured the knowledge and awareness levels of specific populations with prior education regarding human trafficking, there is still a

significant deficiency in data on the knowledge and awareness levels of the average college student population. Researchers suggest that further studies must be conducted to both fill the gap in data and determine which strategies are most effective in raising awareness (Browder 2018; Copel, 2016; Cunningham et al., 2014). The overarching goal of this study is to positively contribute to the human trafficking field, by obtaining data from a specific population that is vulnerable to trafficking situations. Currently, legislators and educators alike explain there is a desperate need for education on the topic of human trafficking as it is not easily identified by the general population.

To add, human trafficking is often misidentified and often viewed as forms of prostitution, preventing victims from being identified or given opportunities for rehabilitation (Browder, 2018). However, the data presented within this study will not only benefit the trafficking community, but the public as well. Gathering this data allows for informed decision-making at all levels of government, and aids healthcare professionals with their ability to discern signs of trafficking (Office of Victims of Crime, 2021). Obtaining such data allows for educators, services providers, law enforcement and government officials to both increase awareness and determine if resources are being allocated properly (Office of Victims and Crime, 2021). The second goal of this study is to obtain data from vulnerable populations, such as college students, in order to provide guidance to both educators and policy makers on which programs may be helpful in educating vulnerable populations on trafficking situations (Office of Victims of Crime, 2021). Third, the data gathered from this study will provide information that will aid in the creation of anti-trafficking efforts and awareness campaigns. Finally, the goal of this study is to present data that may positively diminish and contribute to the end of human trafficking.

Research Question(s)

This dissertation was created with the goal of gathering information on the knowledge and awareness levels of the college-age population. More specifically, this study seeks to gather data on the knowledge and awareness levels of college-aged students based on demographic factors. The three research questions compare students' demographical background to their knowledge, and perceptions of human trafficking.

RQ1: *Are female students more likely to have higher levels of human and sex trafficking knowledge compared to their male counterparts?*

RQ2: *Does a student's economic status influence their knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking?*

RQ3: *Does a student's race/ethnicity influence their level of knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking?*

Definitions

1. *College Student*- an individual who is either a full-time or part-time student attending an institution of higher education (Legal Information Institute, 2010).
2. *Demographics* – a derivative of the Greek words people (demos) and pictures (graphy) to represents the characteristics of a person or group of people, including age, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, education, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, political identity, marital status, and health (Salkind, 2010).

3. *Human trafficking*- the use of force, fraud, or coercion of an individual to provide physical labor, services, or sexual acts (The United States Department of Justice, 2020).
4. *Sex trafficking*- a form of human trafficking and modern-day slavery which involves the recruitment, exploitation, transportation, harboring, or solicitation of an individual to perform commercial sex acts by means of force, fraud, or coercion (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022).
5. *Trafficker*- A male or female individual, whether familiar or unknown to the victim, who utilizes force, fraud, or coercion to lure a victim into a trafficking situation. Traffickers often utilize both in-person and web-based platforms to lure victims and are more commonly close to their victims (Fernandes et al., 2020).
6. *Vulnerable Population* – A group of individuals who are more likely to become trafficked based on several conditions including economic status, economic dependence, age, gender, education level, sexual orientation, unstable home life, those in unsafe living situations, and those who are in search of a better life (United States Department of Justice, 2020).

Summary

While human trafficking has been established since biblical times, its occurrence is more prevalent than ever before. To combat trafficking's expansion, legislative efforts have been conducted at a global scale. However, traffickers and their organizations continue to flourish, causing government officials to ask for assistance from the public and academics alike to defeat human trafficking. Vulnerable populations must be educated to aid in preventative efforts and develop adequate legislation that will protect them from harm. Numerous studies have been conducted on the knowledge and awareness of specific populations such as law enforcement and

medical professionals, but there is minimal research on the knowledge and awareness of college students; a population who is highly susceptible to trafficking efforts. In the following chapter, a review of both current and relevant literature to this topic will be presented.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the knowledge, awareness, and perception levels of a college-aged population regarding human trafficking and its forms. While there has been an increase in research and public awareness of human trafficking, there has been minimal effort made to grasp the knowledge, perceptions, and awareness levels of general student populations. This dissertation aimed to understand the knowledge, awareness levels, and perceptions of those college-aged students with no prior knowledge or education of the subject. While there are numerous factors that cause a person to be vulnerable to trafficking, students are at a higher risk due to their independence, relationships, travel, and other experiences (Department of Homeland Security, 2020). The following chapter will begin with the research strategy utilized as well as a description of the theoretical foundation of this study.

This chapter will discuss the relationship between Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory and human trafficking. Next, a presentation of a review of literature related to this study will be provided. This section will include the different forms of trafficking, the difference in trafficking and smuggling, and the differences in trafficking and prostitution. This section will also present trafficking statistics relative to the United States and North Carolina, specifically. Next, several topics related to trafficking and student vulnerability will include the relationship between trafficking and social media as well as notable anti-trafficking efforts. Additionally, a summary of vulnerability, trafficker characteristics, and the impact of trafficking will be examined. Finally, this chapter will also present a comprehensive set of research studies previously completed related to the topic. This set will include studies on general student populations,

studies on the impact of human trafficking education on student knowledge, and previous studies conducted on specific populations. A summary will be provided to conclude this chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

To gather literature related to this topic, several search engines and databases were utilized including Liberty University's online library, Google Scholar, SAGE Publications., Taylor and Francis Online, ProQuest, Springer, Pressbooks, Research Gate, the United States National Library of Medicine, and several government and academic websites. The terms and phrases utilized in this search strategy included human trafficking, knowledge and awareness of trafficking, college student perceptions, student knowledge and awareness levels, sex trafficking, college students, and vulnerable populations. As this topic is rather specific, it was important to begin the search on a broader scale, as applying a broader term utilized both specific population and general student population studies. It was determined through this research strategy that there are both recent and dated sources that provide substantial data related to the present research study. Through this search strategy, the most relevant articles and studies to the current study were included within this chapter.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is one of the most fundamental elements within a research study and is viewed as "the logical master plan for your entire research project" (Kivunja, 2018, p. 47). Presenting a theoretical framework provides numerous benefits including clarity of findings, allows for the researcher to makes sense of the gathered data, and provides justification for the chosen research topic. As a researcher, it is important to aid in the process of understanding and purpose behind the study. While all studies have the potential for positively impacting a

particular field, applying a theoretical framework allows for validity, transferability, objectivity, and reliability when presenting one's findings (Kivunja, 2018).

It was determined through extensive research that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory was most relatable to the current study. Since its proposal in 1943, Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been noted as one of the most compelling theoretical concepts in behavioral science (Kenrick et al., 2011). Abraham Maslow developed this theory based on the notion that human behavior is driven by a specific set of needs, including physiological, safety, belongingness or love, self-esteem, and self-actualization (McLeod, 2018). Maslow's theory is most often presented in a pyramid structure from a person's most basic needs to the need for self-actualization. These elements will be examined further in the following paragraph. This theory is commonly presented in a pyramid-like structure to represent the hierarchy of needs. These tiers within the hierarchy may be simplified into the three categories of basic or physiological needs, safety, love or esteem needs, and self-actualization needs (McLeod, 2018).

The base of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is referred to as an individual's basic or physiological needs. Examples of physiological needs include oxygen, food, water, sleep, sex, homeostasis, and various forms of exertion (McGrath & The American Women's Psychology Department, 2021). Safety needs are the idea of stability in a person's life, such as security, law, and order, and living without fear (McLeod, 2018). Safety needs are most often presentable in adolescents, teens, or adults with mental illness. Those who are raised in unsafe environments will lose trust in caregivers and therefore seek safety from others. While most American people live generally safe lives, a population of citizens still experience unsafe environments such as areas of extreme poverty and crime, abusive homes, disease, and addiction (McGrath & The American Women's Psychological Department, 2021). Maslow's theory also emphasized the

concept of prepotency for physiological needs, or the idea that an individual may not move to the next tier without satisfying the ones before it (Gawel, 1997). The idea of prepotency also suggests that if the most basic needs are not satisfied, that a person will become fixated on fulfilling these basic needs and fail to satisfy others. While humans have evolved into the planet's most intelligent species, primal instincts will begin to take control of a person if needs are not properly addressed (McGrath & The American Women's Psychological Department, 2021).

The next category of needs include friendship, familial, or intimate relationships as well as esteem needs. Maslow (1981) theorized that once the physiological and safety needs are satisfied, the need for love and affection will arise for "this person will feel keenly, as never, before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children" (p. 43). While the desire for belonging has not been scientifically proven, a human's desire for belongingness and affection has existed since the beginning of time. Esteem needs may be broken down by esteem for oneself and esteem from others. Self-esteem in oneself is the idea that an individual has self-respect, independence, confidence, and a desire to be adequate. In contrast, self-esteem is the desire of prestige or reputation. Most humans, with a few exceptions, desire to be respected, loved, admired, or even feared. Maslow (1981) explains that satisfaction within self-esteem needs allows people to gain strength, worth, and self-confidence, but without satisfaction of these needs "produces feelings of inferiority, of weakness, and of helplessness" (p. 45). Those who do not satisfy their self-esteem needs tend to be more desperate in their decision-making skills or have neurotic tendencies (Maslow, 1981).

The top of Maslow's pyramid is the need for self-actualization. The idea of self-actualization is the least important, but focuses on an individual's potential, growth, and

achievements in life, or one's desire "to become everything one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1981., p. 46). Maslow suggested that the need for self-actualization will vary from person to person and that individual personalities will manifest most at this stage. Some people obtain the ultimate goal of being a mother, while others desire to be a famous athlete. However, all self-actualization needs are rooted in satisfaction from physiological needs, safety needs, love or belonging needs, and self-esteem needs (Maslow, 1981).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Trafficking

With the presentation of Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs, human evolution has presented this set of needs in various behaviors. The relationship between Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the current study is congruent. For humans, there is a constant need for satisfaction through this set hierarchy. Based on this desire to satisfy one's needs, it is easy to see why those who are desperate for such satisfaction are drawn to human traffickers. Traffickers are known to take advantage of their victims through the utilization of Maslow's theory, promising some of the most primal of needs including food, water, shelter, and sex (Perkins. 2015). Moreover, traffickers will often offer intimate or familial companionship that may not otherwise be available to a victim, especially among younger victims (Meshelemiah & Lynch, 2019). The relationship between traffickers and victims is rooted deeply in Maslow's theory, especially for vulnerable populations such as college students. College students may have stability within the base of Maslow's hierarchy, but if the desire of love, respect, and self-confidence are not met, students may become desperate. As a result, traffickers see this desperation and will take advantage of an individual with this desire.

One study that examined the relationship between Maslow's theory and trafficking determined that the feelings of love and belonging were "the highest and most effective

recruitment tool” (Rosenblatt, 2014, p. 6). Once a trafficker begins to fulfill the needs of a victim, it makes leaving a trafficking situation much more challenging. It is important to note that fulfilling an individual’s needs is much easier in a stable environment, however the need for satisfaction is non-discriminatory. In order for anti-trafficking efforts to be successful, it is imperative to fill the gaps and provide alternatives for those who are seeking to satisfy basic, psychological, and self-fulfilling needs.

Related Literature

While the basis of human trafficking has been defined as “the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act” there are various other forms of trafficking that also victimize millions each day (Department of Homeland Security, 2022, para. 1). Other forms of human trafficking include agriculture, labor, and indentured servitude (Types of Human Trafficking, 2020)., there is still debate among policy makers and anti-trafficking groups on the way types of trafficking should be categorized. It is important for college students who are considered a vulnerable population to be able to recognize and identify the different forms of trafficking. To prevent human trafficking situations, students must be educated on the signs and behavior of a human trafficking situation. As Parker (2017), suggests “there is an unsettlingly sparse body of literature addressing the problem of human trafficking in the context of higher education” (p. 2).

Labor Trafficking

While a commonly ignored form of trafficking, the Office for Victims of Crime (2020), defines labor trafficking as:

the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person to provide labor or services against their will. A. victim of labor trafficking is not free to make their own basic life choices, such as where and when to work or where to live (p. 1).

In addition, all 50 states have defined within their laws that human trafficking and labor trafficking are two different crimes and should be treated as such (Farrell et al., 2020). Labor trafficking may occur in any industry, but commonly occurs in agriculture, landscaping, factory work, domestic or cleaning services, healthcare, and construction. It is common for those to fall victim to labor trafficking in order to pay off debts or in order to pay fees to secure their visas, pay off fines, or secure housing (Farrell et al., 2020). Those subject to labor trafficking are often immigrants, children in foster care systems, or those in poor economic living situations. As with all forms of trafficking, labor trafficking follows the Action-Means-Purpose (AMP) model (Office for Victims of Crime, 2020).

It is also common for labor trafficking victims to be held in homes or campsites, often by those of the same ethnicity as the victims (California Department of Justice, 2020). Labor trafficking also produces overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions, so victims often succumb to disease or injury. It is common for victims to be suspicious of those willing to help them, as victims of labor trafficking are often mentally or physically abused into believing that no one will believe their story or that they will be deported if they are truthful (California Department of Justice, 2020). Unfortunately, labor trafficking has not historically received the same attention that human or sex trafficking does within the United States (Farrell et al., 2020). While both offenses are heinous offenses, police efforts place their focus on the identification and investigation of sex trafficking (Farrell et al., 2020). Between 2008 and 2010, 11 percent of all cases opened for investigation under the human trafficking umbrella by federal agencies were

for labor trafficking (Farrell et al., 2020). Additionally in 2017, there were only 225 cases of labor trafficking reported by local law enforcement to federal agencies, which made up 28 percent of all reported cases that year (Farrell et al., 2020). Despite law enforcements lack of attention to labor trafficking, the National Human Trafficking Hotline indicates that the general public's awareness of labor trafficking is strong, with the hotline receiving over 6000 calls since 2007. These efforts made by local communities have saved over 2500 labor trafficking victims alone (Farrell et al., 2020).

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking

A subsequent form of human trafficking that is equally important as the forms of trafficking above involves those under the age of 18. Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) is understood as the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” within domestic borders in which the person is a US citizen or lawful permanent resident <18 years of age” (Goldberg et al., 2019, para. 1). The trafficking or commercial exploitation of those under the age of 18 is not only illegal, but can severely impact the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of victims (Clayton et al., 2013). A number of factors may increase the probability of an individual being trafficked, including minors or those part of the LGBTQIA+ community. To add, individuals who are homeless, runaways, suffer from family dysfunction or abuse are also have a higher vulnerability to being trafficked. Finally, individuals who suffer from psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, developmental delays, and risky sexual behavior increase their vulnerability to becoming a victim of human trafficking (Goldberg et al., 2019). It is important to note that minors are vulnerable based upon their based on their lack of independent legal rights, their brain development, and their dependence on adult family members or guardians for safety and basic

resources (Connecticut Human Trafficking Response Team, 2020). As previously mentioned, those who fall victim to DMST will likely experience emotional, physical, and mental consequences. Examples of these consequences include sexually transmitted infections (STI's), untreated medical conditions, unwanted pregnancies, malnutrition, ostracization from peers, and even death (Connecticut Human Trafficking Response Team, 2020).

Human Trafficking versus Human Smuggling

With the development of the term human trafficking, there are often similar events that may be confused with this phenomenon (Szblewska, 2022). Human smuggling and human trafficking are often mistaken for one another but are two vastly different crimes (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2010). While human trafficking is understood as the use of force, fraud, or coercion of a person; human smuggling is understood as “the provision of a service—typically, transportation or fraudulent documents—to an individual who voluntarily seeks to gain illegal entry into a foreign country” (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2010, p. 1). The confusion between human trafficking and smuggling is exacerbated by both policy makers and the media, however, human smuggling involves deliberately violating immigration laws in order to transport and harboring of non-citizens within the United States (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2013).

The distinction between human trafficking and smuggling was not clearly established until 2000, with the United Nations’ enactment of the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the Trafficking Protocol)” (Szblewska, 2022, p. 1183). Szblewska (2022) simplifies the distinction between these two concepts by explaining those who are trafficked have been taken against their will and forced to complete some act or service. In contrast, those who are smuggled have the choice to consent to being

smuggled. However, smuggling may turn into trafficking at any point, as those who are smuggled may choose to withdraw their consent and may be forced to continue anyway (Szblewska, 2022). An additional difference between human trafficking and smuggling is travel. Human smuggling requires that a person move across international borders, while trafficking can occur without movement of a victim.

Human Trafficking versus Prostitution

One of the main misconceptions with sex trafficking is that it is often viewed as a form of prostitution. However, with legalized prostitution in numerous countries, the line between trafficking and prostitution is blurred. One of the first reasons is that human trafficking is an all-encompassing term that may refer to labor trafficking, Domestic and Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) and more. To add, research indicates that those countries with legalized prostitution see a significantly higher number of trafficking incidents (Harvard University Law School, 2014). Another major difference between prostitution and human trafficking is that human trafficking, and more specifically sex trafficking, is an internationally recognized illegal activity. As it is understood, for an act to be considered human trafficking, it must contain the elements of force, fraud, or coercion (U.S. Department of State, 2022a). Moreover, human trafficking differs from prostitution, as it is considered to be a form of modern-day slavery and global health crisis (Alvarez, 2012).

In contrast, prostitution is a global activity that has existed for hundreds of years, and may be “legal or illegal, or regulated depending on what is stipulated by a country’s law” (Batsyukova, 2007, p. 48). Prostitution is understood as the “act of having sexual intercourse or performing other sexual acts, explicitly for material compensation” (Batsyukova, 2007, p. 47). Often, prostitution may be referred to as sex work, or the exchange of sexual services for food,

clothing, drugs, money, or access to other resources (Orchard, 2019). To add, both sex work and sex trafficking are harmful to both men and women, children, those of different races, and those of lower socioeconomic status (Orchard, 2019). While prostitutes typically will be paid in cash, payment may also be in the form of drugs, clothing, jewelry, or property. However, many nations have aimed to legalize prostitution to combat sex trafficking practices (Batsyukova, 2007).

Trafficking in the United States

Human trafficking is often ignored by the general population, as most Americans do not see it as an issue in American culture; rather, Americans view trafficking as a foreign concept (Outman, 2014). Unfortunately, the United States is one of the top nations for human trafficking of all forms. However, this number may vary among researchers, as the extent of trafficking is not fully known within the United States. In 2020 alone, Polaris and The National Human Trafficking Hotline (2020a) received 51,667 contacts and had 10,583 reported cases of trafficking. Cases “represent distinct situations of trafficking reported to the hotline. A case can involve one or more potential victims of trafficking and can be reported to the hotline through one or more conversations via call, text, email, online report, or webchat” (Polaris & The National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2020a, para. 1).

Within the United States, there are over 40 state agencies that are funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance to analyze and deter human trafficking (Panigabutra-Roberts, 2012). It has also been reported that the importance of different forms of trafficking tends to vary by state. For example, the State of California tends to focus its efforts on sex and labor trafficking, while the state of Florida focuses most of its efforts on labor and drug trafficking (Panigabutra-Roberts, 2012). One of the largest concerns for sex trafficking comes from the United States Department of Education. As of 2020, 5,359 minors (under 18) were identified as trafficking victims by the

Human Trafficking Hotline. Many of these students are U.S. citizens and have been a part of the United States educational system their entire lives. With this concern, the United States Department of Education has funded the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments in order to protect or aid students across the United States from potential or current trafficking situations. (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

Trafficking in North Carolina

While human trafficking is an issue of both national and international concern, the location for this study is significant to the contribution of student knowledge data on human trafficking. Currently, North Carolina is ranked ninth in the total number of trafficking incidents reported in 2020, with 260 reported incidents (North Carolina Department of Administration, 2022a). Additionally, Polaris and The National Human Trafficking Hotline (2020b), reported over 1,100 contacts in North Carolina in the year 2020 alone. However, this number is believed to be much higher due to the number of unreported cases. North Carolina has deemed human trafficking as one of its fastest growing crimes and one of the most concerning issues today (North Carolina Department of Administration, 2023).

North Carolina is one of the most affected states based on its major highway systems, desire for cheap agricultural labor, large and ephemeral military population, increasing number of gangs, and growing populations in major cities such as Raleigh, Charlotte, and Wilmington (North Carolina Department of Administration, 2022b). Other areas of concern for those residing in or visiting North Carolina are major sporting events, conventions, shopping malls, and major airports like Charlotte-Douglas International Airport. Such events and locations may cause an increase in trafficking situations or the vulnerability of certain populations (Cape Fear Community College, 2022).

Anti-Trafficking Efforts

With the growth in trafficking practices across the globe, several notable anti-trafficking efforts have been implemented. The earliest forms of legislation as well as modern trafficking efforts will be expanded upon below. The earliest anti-trafficking efforts focused on the protection of women and children who were forcefully immigrated to the United States for the purpose of forced prostitution. Based on information provided by the U.S. Department of State (2021b), addressing trafficking in the appropriate manner “requires an interdisciplinary approach to ensure recovery of mental and physical health, trauma-informed investigation and prosecutorial efforts, survivor-led and centered practices, and interventions, and larger societal education and awareness” (p. 30). Such educational efforts are presented through anti-trafficking legislation. One example of anti-trafficking legislation is the Declaration Relative to the Universal Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1815 (Aronowitz, 2017). This declaration was enacted with the goal of not only making slavery illegal in the United States, but to terminate its practice. Following this declaration was the establishment of the International Convention for the Suppression of White Slave trade in 1910 by thirteen nations across the globe (Aronowitz, 2017). This convention establishes several delineations that would change the way in which trafficking was viewed to this day, including the current definition of trafficking, forms of trafficking, and the question of sexual exploitation versus prostitution (Allain, 2017).

Trafficking Victims Protection Act

With the turn of the century, the United States has increased its legislative efforts against human trafficking. One of the most notable pieces of anti-trafficking legislation that was mentioned previously, is the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA). This law was established under the Clinton Administration and established a clear understanding of human

trafficking and its characteristics. Another notable outcome that defined modern trafficking is the Action-Means-Purpose Model (A-M-P). The A-M-P Model allows for law legislators and law enforcement to determine whether force, fraud, and coercion was present, indicating that a trafficking incident has occurred (Toney-Butler et al., 2022). The TVPA also established the U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Office and the Presidential Interagency Task Force, which implements tools to combat human trafficking and to ensure that there is "just and effective punishment of traffickers, and to protect their victims" (TVPA of 2000, 22 U.S.C. § 7101). The TVPA also focuses its efforts specifically on the prevention and elimination of indentured servitude and sexual slavery (Department of Homeland Security, 2022).

Additionally, the Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform Act of 2000 (CAFRA) ensured that both businesses and organizations across the globe were not facilitating criminal activities associated with human trafficking (Department of Homeland Security, 2022). Today, Trafficking in Persons (TIP) is understood as modern-day slavery and has been made illegal in all 50 states. Other notable anti-trafficking enactments include the PROTECT Act of 2003, and Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. The Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to End Child Exploitation of Children Today Act (PROTECT), focuses on the protection from abuse and sexual exploitation of children from human trafficking efforts (Department of Homeland Security, 2022). The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 amended the National Security of 1974 as well as established the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center. This center allowed for improved effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts by the United States toward labor trafficking, smuggling, and sex trafficking (Department of Homeland Security, 2022). This center was later replaced by the DHS Center for Countering Human Trafficking and will be expanded upon later in this section.

On an international scale, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has provided funding totaling over \$370 million to 88 different nations across the globe to counteract human trafficking efforts through the establishment of the Counter-Trafficking in Persons (C-TIP) Program (United States Agency for International Development, 2023). The C-TIP program is based on four anti-trafficking elements also known as the 4P's: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnerships. These four elements are utilized for both prosecution of traffickers and protection of current or potential victims. It is important to note that the USAID is just one of several United States government agencies that are tasked with the implementation of C-TIP actions (United States Agency for International Development, 2023). The USAID also collaborates with the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking (PITF), which was established by the previously mentioned Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 (United States Agency for International Development, 2023).

Through these collaborative efforts, the USAID has created several educational courses, procedures, and guides to combat human trafficking efforts. One of the more well-known guides is the C-TIP Field guide, which was published in 2013 (United States Agency for International Development, 2023). The field guide is utilized to educate both agency personnel and partners about human trafficking and to "provide technical assistance to integrate, design, implement, and monitor effective C-TIP programs" (United States Agency for International Development, 2023, para. 5). The USAID places strong emphasis on the need for education and awareness to identify and prevent human trafficking situations through an established Code of Conduct means to deter and prevent employees from engaging in any form of trafficking of persons. The required course is an online course which lasts 45 minutes in total. The course covers the standard procedures

that must be utilized when responding to human trafficking situations, as well as a general information session on human trafficking, its forms, and how to identify potential victims or traffickers. The guides and educational programs provided by the USAID allow for both government officials and the public to understand the signs and behaviors of traffickers, creating a potential opportunity to diminish current or future trafficking situations.

Several other anti-trafficking efforts have shifted towards deterrence with rehabilitation opportunities. The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act was signed and put into effect on September 29th, 2014 (Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative, 2022). The purpose of this act is to help identify and assist children who are at risk or have been victimized by trafficking. In addition, provisions of this act improve system response time for foster care runaways. Third, this act provides clearer authority for both foster parents and caregivers so that they are able to make parental decisions on matters relating to the child's life such as extracurricular, cultural, or social activities. Additional efforts include developing court resources for implementation of the act as well as collaborating with the Center for States and Center for Tribes in order to support the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act constituency groups (Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative, 2022).

In more recent years, the United States Government has decreased its overall efforts to combat human trafficking. However, in October 2020, the United States implemented a three-year action plan which allocates funding to several educational and training courses for government personnel, state officers, local government and law enforcement, tribal offices, and private stakeholders (U.S. Department of State, 2021c). One of the most notable efforts made in terms of increasing education and raising public awareness is the Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign. The Blue Campaign, a program within the DHS Center for

Countering Human Trafficking, focuses on raising public awareness of trafficking on a national scale, while also providing educational opportunities to law enforcement, other government partners, the hospitality industry, healthcare industry, transportation industry, universities, and other public and private partners. The Department of Homeland Security utilizes the Blue Campaign and works with groups such as Homeland Security Investigations; Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS); U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) (Department of Homeland Security, 2020).

An additional example of anti-trafficking efforts made by the United States is the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking. Originally created in 2020, this anti-trafficking action plan utilizes trafficking experts, survivor experiences, and government resources to effectively collaborate on anti-trafficking education, “prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership” (The White House, 2021, p. 1). Other efforts made by presidents include the implementation of National Human Trafficking Prevention Month. Since 2010, the first month of each year is dedicated to raising awareness about human trafficking including educating the public on identifying and preventing future trafficking incidents (U.S. Department of State, 2022b).

In order to raise awareness among the public, the Senior Policy Operating Groups (SPOG) Public Awareness and Outreach Committee established a guide on human trafficking awareness as well as collaborative efforts on anti-trafficking education. This guide is provided to the public to find resources, educational materials, and other information regarding human trafficking across the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2021c). The first example of resources included in this guide is the Stop; Observe; Ask; and Respond (SOAR) to Health and

Wellness Program. The SOAR Health and Wellness program is an online or in-person accredited educational opportunity provided to organizations, communities, or individuals who aim to improve response and rehabilitation of victims in health care, social services, or public health settings (U.S. Department of State, 2021c). An additional example is the Department of Health and Human Service's Look Beneath the Surface Campaign, which provides health care, educational, and community organizations to identify and connect victims of human trafficking with the appropriate sources (U.S. Department of State, 2021c). Additionally, in terms of education to prevent human trafficking, several states have implemented human trafficking educational courses in their schools to combat human trafficking at the K-12 level. First, in 2017, California became the first state to require students and teachers to have human trafficking education in schools (Albert, 2022). Following in their footsteps include Tennessee, Florida, and Virginia, who also require formal training on human trafficking at the K-12 level (Albert, 2022). However, the State of Florida was the first state to require child trafficking preventative education for K-12 (Pierce, 2021). For the United States, most foreign-born trafficking victims identified originate from Mexico. As result of numerous federal investigations, the United States Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security established the U.S. Bilateral Human Trafficking Enforcement Initiative. This program was officially launched in 2009. In collaboration with the Mexican government and law enforcement, this program helps to combat trafficking efforts made across borders (United States Department of Justice, 2023). According to the United States Department of Justice (2023), both the Mexican and U.S. law enforcement authorities will:

exchange leads and intelligence to strengthen investigations and prosecutions, restore victims, recover victims' children, and dismantle trafficking networks through high-impact prosecutions in both the U.S. and Mexico (para. 9).

In addition to the bi-lateral coordination of both investigation and prosecution of traffickers, the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and the Mexican government utilize the expertise of both groups to determine the best anti-trafficking and victim-centered approaches to both human trafficking (United States Department of Justice, 2023).

A final example of more recent anti-trafficking efforts made by the United States includes the Countering Human Trafficking Act of 2021. The act, which was signed on December 27, 2022, by President Joe Biden, both codifies and expands the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Center for Countering Human Trafficking (CCHT) (Department of Homeland Security, 2022). This bill provided \$14 million to both staff the Center, led by Homeland Security Investigations, with a minimum of 45 employees and ensured that the department would also have the ability to conduct work which combats human trafficking (Department of Homeland Security, 2022). The CCHT efforts, which are led by The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), work collaboratively with officials from Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), DHS, and subject matter experts and staff across 16 DHS entities in order to implement the centers mission of prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships (Department of Homeland Security, 2020b). Additionally, the act allows for further development of the Blue Campaign, which is designed to educate the public about trafficking and ways to help prevent human trafficking (Department of Homeland Security, 2022). Moreover, the expansion of The Countering Human Trafficking Act increases CCHT's

effectiveness in both the protection of victims and of targeting human traffickers globally (Department of Homeland Security, 2022).

Vulnerable Populations

As previously noted, there are 24.9 million men, women, and children, who are currently victims of human trafficking globally (National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, 2020, 2020). While at any given time a person may fall victim to trafficking, there are specific populations that are more likely to be victimized due to lack of knowledge or awareness of trafficking efforts (Meshelemiah and Lynch, 2019). Those categorized into a vulnerable population include those of any “age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation nationality, immigration status, cultural background, religion, socioeconomic class, and education attainment level” (United States Department of State, 2022a, para. 1). It has been suggested by Sutton (2019) that students are more susceptible to trafficking situations based on economic dependence and new lifestyle changes (The United States Department of Justice, 2020). Scholarship cuts, rises in tuition, and increase in student loans are all factors that push students toward riskier schemes or employment opportunities. Students will also look for quick cash opportunities, as full-time employment for most students is not feasible (Parker, 2017).

To add, those who are at increased risk of being trafficked are individuals who struggle with addiction, immigrants, minorities, those with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ population, and those who reside on Native American reservations (Toney-Butler et al., 2022). With student’s ability to visit “danger zones” such as off-campus housing or locations that are not monitored frequently, the increase in vulnerability becomes simultaneous (Sutton, 2019, p. 5). The ability for college students to be trafficked will drastically increase with experimentation with drugs, alcohol, travel, or studying abroad (Parker, 2017). It 2014 to 2015, over 335,000

college and university students participated in study abroad programs (Parker, 2017). While studying abroad provides an educational and cultural learning experience to students, it also raises their chances of being trafficked (Parker, 2017). Studying abroad raises issues such as understanding cultural practices, language barriers, geographical competency, and general ignorance (Parker, 2017).

Human Trafficking Identification

While this study focuses on the knowledge and awareness levels of a specified vulnerable population, it is equally important to present what characteristics and behaviors to look for when identifying a trafficking victim. These potential signs may also be referred to as “Red Flags” and are not a complete list, but rather more common behaviors among victims (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2023 para. 2) The U.S. Department of State (2021d) presented a list of more common victim identifiers including:

- Living with employer[s]
- Poor living conditions
- Multiple people in cramped space[s]
- Inability to speak to individual alone
- Answers appear to be scripted and rehearsed
- Employer is holding identity documents
- Signs of physical abuse
- Victims are submissive or fearful
- Unpaid or paid very little
- Under 18 and in engaged in commercial sex acts

To add, it is common for those who are victims of a human trafficking situation to be controlled by an individual in their lives, such as a partner, family member or friend. Often, these victims will not be allowed to leave their place of residence unless accompanied by another person (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). An example of this would be an abused female who visits the emergency room for medical treatment but has a person who speaks on their behalf (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Victims will also not be aware of their surroundings or current events, such as the city in which they reside in or what day it is (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Trafficking victims are conditioned to be fearful, humiliated, have specific sleep or eating disorders, emotionally detached from society, and will often have trauma bonding with their abuser which continues their cycle of abuse and dependence, ultimately preventing them from seeking help or escaping.

There are additional situations that may be identified as a trafficking situation, such as an individual who does not speak English and was injured while on their job but shows signs of old bruising (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). More common examples of human trafficking situations include massage parlors, escort services, sweatshops or factory labor, agriculture or large-scale farming, online sexual services, begging, and more (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012) It is important to look for both physical and emotional signs of abuse for trafficking victims, both in and out of healthcare and law enforcement. Victims will often develop medical conditions such as hepatitis, infections, sexually transmitted diseases, bruising, and skin or respiratory issues. However, victims are conditioned not to speak to or trust law enforcement or medical professionals, as victims are told that they will be criminally charged if they share what is happening to them (U.S. Department of

Health and Human Services, 2012). Based on this information, it is imperative that the general public and those of vulnerable populations be vigilant to those around them for their safety and the safety of others.

Trafficking and Social Media

As previously noted, traffickers have begun to utilize social media and the internet to advertise their victims or their product. As society increases its utilization and reliance on technology, traffickers are finding alternative ways to recruit new victims (Crisp, 2021). Globally, there are 4.66 billion internet users which is over half of the world's population (Terwilliger, 2021). To add, social media users are growing at rate of more than 13% a year, doubling in the last five years (Terwilliger, 2021). This growing utilization of the internet and social media has allowed traffickers easier access to connect to buyers, provide illegal services, and exploit their victims (United States Government Accountability Office, 2021). Additionally, recent research has indicated that traffickers are utilizing both the internet and social media apps to solicit and recruit vulnerable populations (Gezinski & Gonzales-Pons, 2022). Recent research shows that 53 percent of children and 84 percent of teenagers will have a smartphone by age 11 (Pierce, 2021). With access to the internet and social media platforms, it is an easy way for traffickers to recruit their victims. Pierce (2021), adds "55 percent of those who were first trafficked in 2015 met their trafficker on a website, app, or via text" (para. 3). With the creation of Instagram, Facebook, X, and TikTok profiles, children, teens, and young adults will unintentionally provide detailed information through their profile. Through their connection with traffickers, these individuals can gather information, behaviors, and patterns of potential victims (Pierce, 2021). Traffickers will often create fake profiles in order to connect with their victims and establish romantic relationships with the goal of exploiting them in the future (Pierce, 2021).

With the recent Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, trafficking efforts have been exacerbated with stay-at-home orders. Vulnerable populations are experiencing a higher risk due to their time at home with abusive parents as well as spending more time at home online for school and entertainment purposes. Additionally, it was reported that there was a significant increase in exploitation in just one month; with online reports to The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children increasing from 2 million to 4.2 million reports (Todres & Diaz, 2020). While there has been a significant increase for vulnerable populations to trafficking, those who are already victims of trafficking have experienced worsening circumstances. Those who are in forced labor or sex trafficking situations do not have access to adequate healthcare or protection. Moreover, the opportunity for teachers or other classmates to identify trafficked individuals has significantly decreased with stay-at-home orders (Todres & Diaz, 2020).

The opportunity for victimization of college students only increases with the use of dating apps, online shopping platforms, and more. Female students are especially vulnerable, with 71% of reported online trafficking incidents being from women (Littlejohn, 2019). This vulnerability is often disguised by celebrated platforms like OnlyFans. The platform, which was founded in 2016, is a digital subscription services which houses various forms of pornographic media (Sanchez, 2022). The platform has become a home to both victims and traffickers alike, with the goal of turning a profit. The popularity of the platform has grown 540% from 2019 to 2020, and many are concerned “about how the platform will be held accountable for exploitative and abusive content bought and sold on the site” (Scaramucci & The Avery Center for Research and Services, 2022, para. 1). One research study concluded that 38% of respondents believed that it was obvious when traffickers were in control of victim’s OnlyFans account. (Scaramucci & The Avery Center for Research and Services. 2022).

Sugaring

An additional method of trafficking specifically targeted as college-aged students is known as sugar dating (Georgia State University, 2020). According to Georgia State University (2020), sugar dating or sugaring is “a relationship where an older, wealthier person secures an intimate relationship from a younger, financially struggling person through money, lavish dates, vacations, and other gifts” (para. 1). Those older individuals are categorized as sugar daddies or sugar mamas and the younger individuals are referred to as sugar babies (Georgia State University, 2020). Sugaring has drastically increased in the last few years, with sugar dating websites enticing students who are not financially stable to join these websites for quick cash, such as 1,000 dollars to any student who signs up with a .Edu email address (Georgia State University, 2020). At the Georgia State University, there were 1,500 students who were signed up via .Edu emails to the sugar dating website researched (Georgia State University, 2020).

Unfortunately, the media coverage that sugar dating receives is often positive, portraying the glamorous lifestyle that accompanies sugaring. While some relationships are not sexual in nature, it is common for sugar daddies and sugar mamas to have an interest in companionship or a sexual relationship with their sugar babies. To add, many sugar babies have noted in interviews that they often feel pressured to provide sexual acts or unlimited phone or social media access to their sugar daddies or sugar mamas because they feel that they “owe them” (Georgia State University, 2020, para 3). This feeling of owing their sugar daddy or sugar mama may develop into more serious sexual activities, such as prostitution, use of other third-party sex trafficking websites. As one student explained during an interview with *The Crimson White*, the University of Alabama’s school newspaper, men were often very straightforward with what they were looking for from their sugar babies, including phone sex, doing drugs, and sending him, her used

underwear through the mail (Elkin, 2018). As one student who quickly realized sugaring was not for her, claims “knowing that that there are people out there who want those things, it’s like watching those crime shows, but instead of it being fiction, they’re there living in the town with you” (Elkin, 2018, para. 20). It is common for individuals seeking arrangements to have their profiles show up on sex trafficking sites such as Backpage by buyers interested in purchasing sexual acts from these individuals (Georgia State University, 2020). The act of sugaring on the surface may seem glamorous and innocent in nature, but this current trend puts college students at risk of being coerced into a dangerous sex trafficking situation with dire consequences (Georgia State University, 2020).

Trafficker Characteristics

While traffickers are often portrayed as violent men with extensive criminal records, this is not always factual. Traffickers are often members of a victim’s family, an acquaintance, friends, an intimate partner, or co-workers (U.S. Department of States 2022a). Traffickers may also work alone rather than in an organized crime group, such as a pimp or procurer. However, there is limited insight into the minds of traffickers and their motives. Troshynski and Blank (2007), sought to obtain information and better understand supporting human trafficking from the perspective of a trafficker. This study was exploratory, with open-ended and semi-structured interviews from several traffickers. Each trafficker interviewed was provided with a pseudonym to maintain their privacy. In total, fifteen hours of interview time was spent discussing trafficking and the local sex industry in London, England (Troshynski & Blank, 2019).

Results from the three interviews indicated five consistent themes “1) Clients who feed the demand; 2) Characteristics of a “good prostitute; 3) Comparing women, specifically, who are “forced” versus “ones that choose; 4) Understanding the exploitation of trafficked women and

girls and 5) Violence against trafficked women and girls” (Troshynski & Blank, 2019, p. 9). All three male participants that were interviewed explained that while recruiting sex workers is not their position, most clients seek out women between the ages of 19-21 who are attractive. Much of what traffickers seek in victims is what is popular to their clients and supplying what is popular to their clients will create a higher reward for the trafficker (Troshynski & Blank, 2019). One compelling opinion provided from this study was that traffickers are like ordinary people. As mentioned previously, traffickers are not always criminals. Rather, these men are husbands, fathers, and legally employed individuals who are trafficking part time (Troshynski & Blank, 2019). While these traffickers claimed to have respect for those forced into sexual trafficking, it is easy to look past the immoral aspects of trafficking when it produces the most profit (Troshynski & Blank, 2019). Moreover, the traffickers agreed that while violence was not necessarily supported, it was “part of the business” (Troshynski & Blank, 2019, p. 20).

An additional study conducted by McCarthy (2019), on the misconceptions of trafficking explains “research has suggested that women are also perpetrators or human trafficking, and that men and boys are frequently victims” (para 1). Traffickers seek out victims based on vulnerability and how easy a victim is to exploit (British Columbia Trafficking Page, 2014). This search for vulnerability is often conducted by women, as they are commonly viewed as “non-violent nurturing and altruistic, although plenty of research shows that many women do not fulfill this stereotype” (McCarthy 2019, p. 85). Results from this study concluded that women were involved in some aspect of trafficking in 94 of 135 cases examined (McCarthy 2019). Additionally, female traffickers were most prominently involved in sex, child, labor, and organ trafficking. Female traffickers are often missed due to the societal standards that women traffickers do not exist. Moreover, female traffickers will often utilize their generous, nurturing,

and maternal instincts to lure in young men, women, and children. However, women may not be as successful in areas such as obtaining older female victims; this is where the “boyfriend” recruiting style will be utilized by traffickers to obtain new victims (McCarthy 2019., p. 86).

With regard to traffickers and college students, social media is not the only method of recruiting students. Traffickers have been known to use specific tactics in order to infiltrate vulnerable populations. For example, traffickers will frequent public campus sights including the student unions, off-campus apartment complexes, sports arenas, campus walking trails, or other areas that students will frequently gather (Department of Homeland Security, 2020). An additional method of recruitment is peer-to-peer recruitment. This process involves other students or “bottoms” creating opportunities for traffickers to recruit other students, or having students recruit fellow classmates on behalf of a trafficker (Department of Homeland Security, 2020, p. 2). Other tactics utilized by traffickers include offers of employment, romantic relationships, or exploiting financial instability. Romantic relationships are often used for mental manipulation and a breakdown of a victim’s independence, while employment may be in the form of cash or pyramid schemes, modeling jobs, or the opportunity to become famous (Department of Homeland Security, 2020).

Buyers

With the presentation of trafficker characteristics, it is important to discuss those equally at fault for the continuation of trafficking around the globe. Buyers are considered any individual “who exchanges something of value, for commercial sex, which may include exchange of money for child sexual exploitation images or videos” (California Sex Offender Management Board, 2020). It has been noted that buyers tend to prefer a number of sexual partners, specifically partners who do not have relational or committed partners (California Sex Offender Management

Board, 2020). Additionally, a study measuring the attitudes of 101 sex buyers indicated that those who were buyers of sexual acts with trafficking victims had both a fear of rejection from women, as well as a deep desire for engagement in sexually aggressive behavior (Farley et al., 2017). Finally, buyers “were more likely to report that they would force a woman to have sex or rape them if they could get away with it” (Farley et al., 2017, p. 3611). Often, traffickers will provide specific descriptions of victims such as their age, ethnicity, or physical description in order to entice buyers (California Sex Offender Management Board, 2020). A study completed in 2006 reported that those individuals who exchanged money for the sexual exploitation of minors online, 42 percent of buyers were over the age of 40, with 40 percent of those being single or never married, and 70 percent of those individuals being white (California Sex Offender Management Board, 2020).

Impact of Trafficking

The dangers of human trafficking have grown into a global health crisis and human rights concern. Both victims and their families experience mental and physical trauma associated with trafficking including headaches, fatigue, memory loss, physical pain, and spells of dizziness. To add, the spread of infectious diseases such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV, Hepatitis C, and more. Research indicates that women who are survivors of sex trafficking are more likely to develop reproductive issues, miscarriages, and mental health issues such as postpartum depression (Haney et al., 2020). Haney et al., (2020) found that trafficking victims have extreme levels of health inequality, higher mortality, and morbidity rates, compared to non-trafficking victims. For children or young adult victims of human trafficking, research has presented that these individuals were more likely to have shortened lifespan, substance abuse, disorders, and mental health disorders (Haney et al., 2020).

While the spread of infectious diseases is more commonly associated with sex trafficking, it is also common for these diseases to be spread via drug abuse (Dalla & Sabella, 2016). Several studies have noted that while men may experience trauma or physical conditions associated with human trafficking, women experience these symptoms at a significantly higher rate (Oram et al., 2016). Understanding and recognizing the signs of trauma is a necessary tool for both vulnerable populations and those in relevant occupations, such as health care, law enforcement, and education (Dalla & Sabella, 2019). From a global healthcare perspective, stopping human trafficking and its detrimental effects will only occur if research is provided “on the determinants of human trafficking and on who is most affected and in what ways” (Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017, p. 8). Providing this research will allow for the government, educators, and healthcare professionals to properly allocate fundings or programs to the prevention and deterrence of human trafficking.

Knowledge of General Populations

One of the main elements of the current study is to obtain data regarding the knowledge and awareness levels of college students on human trafficking. A total of seven studies were gathered based on both style and subject matter (Browder, 2018; Copel, 2016; Dubasi et al., 2018; Farrell, 2018; Gainey, 2021; Patton, 2014; Rapp-McCall et al., 2021). These studies presented methods, population size, and research style that the current study aims to conduct. While these studies have presented several elements of measuring knowledge and awareness, it has been suggested that future research is conducted to determine the “individuals, who are at risk of being trafficked, with the goal of identifying interventions for at-risk populations” (Dubasi et al., 2018, para. 4).

The first study, which focuses on college students' awareness levels at a university located in North-East Tennessee required students to complete self-reported questionnaires requesting demographic data and levels of knowledge about sex trafficking (Dubasi et al., 2018). Most participants agreed (76%) that both human trafficking and sex trafficking are serious issues in the United States (Dubasi et al., 2018). Additionally, 95% of students had agreed they had not received any training or education on human trafficking preparedness (Dubasi et al., 2018). Dubasi et al. (2018), suggests future studies are necessary to examine “individuals, who are at risk of being trafficked, with the goal of identifying interventions for “at-risk populations” (para. 4).

Next, a study at Winthrop University focuses on measuring the knowledge, attitudes, and awareness of a group of undergraduate students (Gainey, 2021). A non-probability snowball sample via social media platforms was utilized, obtaining 100 participants (Gainey, 2021). Results from this study noted that female students had more knowledge compared to males. However, results also indicated that race was not a factor in levels of knowledge among participants. Gainey (2021) noted that it is important to conduct additional studies comparing demographic factors to knowledge levels to fully understand grasp the relationship between college students' knowledge and human trafficking (Gainey, 2021). The current study aims to fill this gap and support these findings.

A similar study conducted at East Tennessee State University examined the attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge of college students on the relationship between human trafficking and prostitution (Browder, 2018). A close-ended survey comprised of 31 questions on prostitution, sex trafficking, victim characteristics, trafficking legislation, and demographic data was provided to students (Browder, 2018). A total of 195 students completed the survey. Findings indicated

that male college students (75%) tend to associate human trafficking with prostitution compared to female college students (65.7%) (Browder, 2018). Data collected from this study also indicated that a majority of those students sampled (72.8%) believed they had received an adequate amount of human trafficking education compared to those who disagreed (13.9%) (Browder, 2018).

Results indicated that there is not a significant difference between political identity and knowledge of trafficking “74% (n= 54) of Republicans, 68.6% (n= 35) of Democrats, and 62.5% (n= 40) of Independents agreed that adults involved in sex trafficking are prostitutes rather than victims” (Browder, 2018, p. 56). However, the findings of this study identified a correlation between education level knowledge of human trafficking (Browder, 2018). Browder (2018) suggests that additional studies be conducted at universities across the United States to measure the trends regarding knowledge levels of other student populations on human trafficking.

One researcher study that differs from the previously mentioned studies examined the awareness, knowledge, and perceptions of U.S. citizens on human trafficking (Rapp-McCall et al., 2021). Results from this study indicated that most participants were aware of human trafficking (76% nationally, 83% from Florida) however, “(53% national sample, 43% Florida sample) were not aware that there was a human trafficking hotline number or human trafficking organizations in their community (59% national sample, 57% Florida sample)” (Rapp-McCall et al., 2021, p. 24). Respondents did indicate that they would intervene in a trafficking situation if given the opportunity.

A similar study sought to examine the public’s awareness and ability to identify a human trafficking situation via film or social media outlets (Farrell, 2018). A closed-ended survey was provided to students providing questions on demographics and their awareness of human

trafficking (Farrell, 2018). Results concluded “that film does not necessarily increase public awareness of human trafficking” but films do increase human trafficking knowledge when compared to social media (Farrell, 2018, p. 98). Moreover, it was determined that watching films was also more effective for raising awareness when compared to social media (Farrell, 2018).

With the common theme among studies being that women tend to be more educated and more aware of human trafficking, one study sought to examine females on their knowledge and attitudes on trafficking compared to a multidimensional scale known as the Sex Trafficking Attitude Scale (STAS) (Houston-Kolnik et al., 2016). The goal and utilization of the Sex Trafficking Attitudes Scale is to identify the attitudes and knowledge levels of women on human and more specifically, sex trafficking topics. The study was divided into two subsequent studies, with study one consisting of 301 students with a mean age of 20.07 years (Houston-Kolnik et al., 2016). Similar to the current study, this study also examined the demographic factors of each participant. Part one of the study had a majority were of Caucasian decent (62.5 percent) and in their first year of college (38.5 percent). The second study had 300 participants with a mean age of 20.26 years. The majority of participants for part two of the study were Caucasian (57.3 percent), with 43 percent of participants being in their first year of college (Houston-Kolnik et al., 2016).

Results from part one of this study concluded that there was a negative view of female prostitutes and that prostitutes were socially deviant ($\alpha = .84$). In study two there was also a consistent negative viewpoint based on the STAS scale toward prostitutes ($\alpha = .72$). Reports indicate that women had higher mean scores on questions on sex trafficking knowledge ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 0.80$) when compared to men ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 0.94$). Next women also had higher mean scores on their awareness of sex trafficking ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.05$) when compared to men

($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.07$). Women also had more positive attitudes toward helping victims of trafficking ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.29$) compared to men ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.12$), and a higher level of desire to reduce sex trafficking ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.13$) when compared to men ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.10$) (Houton-Kolnik et al., 2014). It was also reported that women tended to have a higher level of empathy toward sex trafficking victims ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 0.79$) when compared to men ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.02$). (Houston-Konik et al., 2016). Additionally, This study does note that there are numerous limitations with this type of study, such as the focus on one form of trafficking. Additionally, this study suggests that it is equally important to study the attitudes and beliefs of male students on sex trafficking (Houston-Kolnik et al., 2016). Moreover, this study suggests that students from other locations across the United States be surveyed, as this study was predominately focused on Caucasian female students who attended college in the Midwest. It is also suggested that future studies include a larger group of students as well as greater ethnic diversity which may be better representative of the current student population across the United States (Houston-Kolnik et al., 2016).

Pre and Post-test Style Studies

While the current study is focused on measuring students about their knowledge and awareness of human trafficking at one point, it is also beneficial to test more than once. Pre and Post-test style studies are common to measure knowledge and awareness on topics like human trafficking. Several pre and post-test style studies were provided to support this study's argument of how education may impact one's knowledge of a subject. Additionally, providing educational opportunities allows for increased awareness and a decrease in trafficking. Several studies have measured the knowledge and awareness levels of students before and after completion of

trafficking education programs. The first example sought to gauge the awareness of college-aged students at Wichita State University in Kansas (Patton, 2014).

This researcher aimed to discover levels of knowledge and awareness regarding human trafficking both before and after completion of a Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) course during the spring semester (Patton, 2014). This two-part study design measured knowledge levels and gathered demographical data requiring participants to answer sixteen true or false statements on human trafficking, specifically Domestic and Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) (Patton, 2014). Results from this study indicated that the level of knowledge on human trafficking and Domestic and Minor Sex Trafficking, increased from pre-test to post-test “(m=58.71, s=7.37) to post-test (m=65.63, s=6.27), $t(51) = -6.507, p \leq .05$ (Table 1 and 2)” (Patton, 2014, p. 19). Patton (2014) suggests that future studies should include other demographic factors to gauge knowledge of certain populations including political affiliation and religion.

Copel (2016) conducted a research study measuring the perceptions and attitudes of students at Villanova University. Both demographical information and general opinions regarding trafficking were taken before and after completion of a course on human trafficking (Copel, 2016). It was determined from the data that there was a significant increase in the level of knowledge students had about human trafficking before the course and after its completion. Additionally, students reported feeling positively impacted. Students also reported that they were able to provide informal classes as an educational project to inform fellow students on campus about human trafficking (Copel, 2016).

To provide additional support to the benefit of education on an individual’s level of human trafficking knowledge, a study was conducted during a one-day conference on human

trafficking awareness in the state of Florida. Those who participated in the study were volunteers and were asked to participate in an educational conference that focused on human trafficking awareness and its various forms (Awerbuch et al., 2020). The goal of this study is to both increase awareness and improve outcomes for survivors. The research team provided a ten-question survey to participants on the trafficking information provided during the seminar. A total of 138 surveys were collected with participants in categories of medical, legal, social work, and other or unknown (Awerbuch et al., 2020). From the pre and posttests, there was a significant increase in a participant's level of knowledge of human trafficking 0.355 ($p < 0.05$). Results indicated that participants improved on their ability to identify the most common trafficking type in Florida (Q3) and the elements of trafficking itself (Q8). However, participants struggled with questions such as when to report a trafficking situation (Q4) or self-identification of a victim (Q9). There were no significant changes in questions 1, 5, and 7 (Awerbuch et al., 2020).

To add support to the benefit of education of student populations on human trafficking, a qualitative study conducted in Tennessee sought to examine the baseline knowledge of random students on human trafficking, and if educational programs were the solution to the potential lack of knowledge (Cavender, 2023). Five students were randomly chosen from the student population and interviewed on their general knowledge of human trafficking. The study consisted of 11 interview questions and allotted 15-20 minutes per interview (Cavender, 2023). Once the interviews were completed, two of the five participants were chosen to participate in a "Trafficking 101 educational presentation by GrowFreeTN" covering general trafficking facts, identifying a potential victim, and testimonies (Cavender, 2023, p. 11).

Four weeks post-educational course, the same five students were asked the same questions that were previously answered in the first interview. Participants were told to not review any trafficking information before re-interviewing with the researcher. Results of the interviews concluded that those who did not participate in the educational course did not improve their scores but did show an increased interest in learning about human trafficking and anti-trafficking practices. In contrast, the two participants that did participate in the Trafficking 101 course four weeks prior saw a significant jump in their level of general knowledge of human trafficking topics. Additionally, those students who participated in the course were able to provide more detail in their answers compared to those who did not participate in the educational course (Cavender, 2023).

Student and Victim Relationship

One research study that was conducted in the southern region measured college students' knowledge of human trafficking (Mullaney, 2016). This researcher recruited 35 students from various universities across the south aged 18 and older (Mullaney, 2016). Participants concluded that over half (55%) were aware of how many types of trafficking there were, however, 13% of were able to identify the different forms of trafficking (Mullaney, 2016). Moreover, students indicated that education level does not impact acceptance of survivors at their school. Mullaney (2016) suggests future human trafficking studies should include more demographic information when comparing human trafficking and the college-aged population.

From a similar study, researchers quantitatively examined a student population in Portugal on their perceptions of student and victims' relationships (Fernandes et al., 2020). Results of the study concluded that most of the participants (89.9%) believed that there was a relationship between a victim's sociodemographic factors and vulnerability (Fernandes et al., 2020).

Participants of the study also agreed that those who had poor decision-making skills, were in dysfunctional relationships, and were of lower-income status were more likely to be victimized (Fernandes et al., 2020). Participants also agreed that students who chose to study abroad or live alone would be more likely to fall victim to trafficking (Fernandes et al., 2020).

Cunningham et al., (2014) conducted a survey a private university in the Northeast of the United States to examine the relationship between gender, sexual trauma, victim-blaming, and attitudes related to human trafficking. The first part of this study asked questions regarding demographics with part two asking questions on knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of human trafficking. This survey provided a hypothetical child trafficking situation for students to read and answer questions on (Cunningham et al., 2014). 409 students participated in the survey with 57% female student participation and 42% male student participation (Cunningham et al., 2014). Results from the study indicated that almost a quarter (23%) of students did not believe the hypothetical trafficking situation that was provided in the survey prompt (Cunningham et al., 2014). Additional results from this study indicated that participants did credit victims with some responsibility for why they are trafficked (31%) (Cunningham et al., 2014). This researcher suggests that future research studies should be conducted in other colleges across the United States for a more accurate representation of college students' knowledge and perceptions of human trafficking.

Measurement of Educated Populations

As previously noted, this researcher discovered that there are minimal research studies that have gathered the knowledge and awareness levels of general student populations. However, there are several studies that have researched the knowledge, awareness, and perceptions of specified populations of students and first responders. While the current study seeks to obtain

knowledge of college students with no prior education on the topic of human trafficking, these studies provide insight into why education on human trafficking may be beneficial to all groups of students. Additionally, presenting these studies on knowledge and awareness provides insight on how knowledge of trafficking may influence a student's knowledge and awareness.

One study completed at the East Carolina University measured the relationship between students' media consumption on trafficking and levels of knowledge (Overholt, 2013). Each student was provided the opportunity to receive course credit for completing the survey, but these students were chosen from an established anti-trafficking organization on campus (Overholt, 2013). Additional participants who were not members of the anti-trafficking organization were provided with the opportunity to win a \$25 gift card for participating (Overholt, 2013). The results from the study noted that those students who had watched non-fiction media on the topic of human trafficking had higher levels of knowledge when compared to those who had no exposure (Overholt, 2013). Next, students who retained higher levels of knowledge and awareness were more likely to "commit to practices to rid [the world of] human trafficking" (Overholt, 2013, p. 26).

An additional study examined the relationship between knowledge levels, attitudes, and their specific major (Welch-Brewer et al., 2021). Students who majored in social work were compared to those who majored in other areas via a cross-sectional survey across two university campuses. This study also utilized demographic data when comparing the knowledge levels, attitudes, and awareness of each student. A total of 321 student responses were collected from site one and 201 students from site two, with a majority of responses being from female students. (Welch-Brewer et al., 2021). It was determined that those with a specific major related to human trafficking issues retained higher levels of knowledge than students with studies not related to

trafficking (Welch-Brewer et al., 2021). Researchers encouraged educational courses for non-specific populations based on the collected data (Welch-Brewer et al., 2021).

Medical Student Studies

A second group of specific student population that may have an increased level of knowledge of human trafficking are students in healthcare or the medical field. As human trafficking developed into a global health crisis, medical students are a population that must also be aware of trafficking. Moreover, healthcare professionals must have the ability to identify trafficking victims, as victims are involved with healthcare more than any other profession (Stoklosa et al., 2015). With the increased need for awareness and knowledge in the medical field, undergraduate students seeking degrees in this field are a strong example of the needs for human trafficking education. The medical student population provides considerable evidence as to the benefits behind educating general student populations on the topic of trafficking. To add, educating students on trafficking increases the probability of recognizing trafficking behavior and one's willingness to intervene in a trafficking situation (Murray, 2016).

The first example is from a study from a Canadian medical school, measuring the knowledge of first- and second-year medical students on their perceptions, knowledge, and awareness levels of human trafficking (Wong et al., 2011). Of the 262 anonymous questionnaires gathered, almost half (48.5%) were somewhat knowledgeable regarding human trafficking. It was suggested by Wong et al. (2011) that obtaining knowledge levels from students regardless of major is necessary for developing curriculums that educate students on human trafficking. Also, it was suggested that the population measured had a higher level of bias due to their medical background and increased the level of knowledge presented (Wong et al., 2011).

A similar study completed in Pennsylvania provided an online anonymous survey to two academic hospitals and one medical school. Researchers asked questions regarding students' knowledge, awareness, and experience with human trafficking as well as demographic information (Sinha et al., 2018). Additionally, researchers requested students provide information regarding any previous education they had received on human trafficking (Sinha et al., 2018). A total of 867 participants completed the survey with 96.88% of these participants being somewhat knowledgeable about human trafficking (Sinha et al., 2018). Researchers also concluded that students with previous education on human trafficking had higher levels of knowledge (12.11 ± 1.50) than those who had no prior education (11.49 ± 1.49) ($p = .0005$) (Sinha et al., 2018).

A third study which places emphasis on the importance of educating students sought to determine how integrating human trafficking into nursing students' curriculum would impact their knowledge and awareness (Lutz, 2018). The study used a non-probability sample of adults, family, and pediatric nursing students ($n=73$) (Lutz, 2018). Students were required to complete a pre-test and post-test measuring both demographic data and knowledge of human trafficking. Lutz (2018) suggested that it is necessary for future studies to be conducted measuring knowledge levels of current students. Additionally, it is suggested that if educational improvement is not made for students, identifying, and preventing human trafficking will not change (Lutz, 2018).

As previously mentioned, providing educational opportunities to students of all backgrounds allows for increased ability to identify and prevent a trafficking situation. A study which supports this theory measured the knowledge and awareness levels of nursing students before and after completing a human trafficking education course (Murray, 2017). This study

also gathered demographic data to compare student knowledge levels. Participants from this study includes females (92.1%), and Males (7.9%), who ranged from 21-25 years old (Murray, 2017). Results from the study indicated that there was an increase in knowledge levels among nursing students and that educational courses provide students with knowledge and provide students with the opportunity to build upon existing knowledge. Furthermore, these educational opportunities allow students to increase their confidence levels to both identify and aid victims of human trafficking (Murray, 2017).

One of the most recent studies conducted sought to determine what registered nurse (RN) students' knowledge and exposure to human trafficking information during their undergraduate years (Bono-Neri & Toney-Butler, 2023). This cross-sectional quantitative study surveyed students via email and survey provided to 49,000 students which fit the criteria of the study had $n=852$ participants and collected a total sample population of $n=644$ which was measured by their own tool known as the Student Nurse Human Trafficking Education Assessment Tool. Students were asked to answer 21 questions about their knowledge of human trafficking as well as any human trafficking education they had during their undergraduate career. Like the current study, this research study utilized descriptive statistics, One-way ANOVA, and SPSS to measure their data collected.

Results from this study presented several patterns. A majority of participants were female $n=578$ and between the ages of 18-24 $n=234$. Data collected from the students indicated that these students had minimal or no education on human trafficking topics during their undergraduate education. However, results indicated that a most students agreed that it was important for them to learn about human trafficking during their courses, with a mean score of 86.3 percent. Overall, this study concluded that nursing students are not prepared to recognize or

treat trafficking victims and their specific needs. It is important for nursing students to be educated on human trafficking and the toll it takes on its victims, as a majority of these victims interact with healthcare professionals at some point (Bono-Neri & Toney-Butler, 2023).

Law enforcement studies

While there are both medical and general students that must learn about the dangers of human trafficking, the measurement of law enforcement knowledge and awareness is equally important. The examination of law enforcement knowledge may show the need for further education among first responders, the general population, and specific vulnerable groups. With the importance of previously educated students understanding human trafficking and its different forms, it is equally important for those in law enforcement to have strong knowledge and awareness of this issue. Law enforcement officials are on the front line of the fight against human trafficking, making these studies a notable example of how education should be conducted and how it may be improved for vulnerable populations. One study measured the knowledge and awareness levels of police officers from eight different police departments (Mapp et al., 2016) These police departments varied in size and in geographic location. A paper survey was administered to department advisors via email and then each department chose how to distribute the survey.

Results from the study only included a total of seven department's responses due to a large quantity of missing data (Mapp et al., 2016). From these seven departments, a final sample of 175 police officers volunteered to participate. Response rates varied among the departments with 41 to 88 percent (Mapp et al., 2016). A majority of responses were from Caucasian males at an average age of 39 years (Mapp et al., 2016). The mean average of respondents' law enforcement experience was 13.23 years (Mapp et al., 2016). Of the 175 respondents, only 17

percent (n=29) had reported that they had received any form of training on human trafficking (Mapp et al., 2016). Results of this study discovered that there was a weak relationship between the experience, or years of service and officer had and how much training they had received of human trafficking topics (n = .198). Officers that had been trained had at least ten or more years of experience in the field, while 31 percent responded to have only 0-5 years of experience. It was reported that officers gained most of their knowledge from their annual academy training or other federal conferences (Mapp et al., 2016).

To add, 14 of the 175 police officers who participated stated that they have had any experience with human trafficking, with only one officer stating that they had experience with sex trafficking at any level (Mapp et al., 2016) Law enforcement officers were asked to state where their experience or understanding of human trafficking had originated from. Categories for these responses were broken down by official and unofficial sources. Official sources include government publications and law enforcement training, while unofficial sources include media, magazines, movies, and church. From the gathered responses 62 percent (n=108) of officers reported gaining knowledge on human trafficking from the movie *Taken* (Mapp et al., 2016). Other respondents stated media (n=20) as their main source for knowledge. Respondents who reported learning of trafficking via official sources including training (n = 23), law enforcement sources (n = 14), other agency training (n = 5,) with organizations such as the FBI, ICE, and the State Police), and finally there were some officers (n = 19) who stated that they had learned of human trafficking from law enforcement publications. (Mapp et al., 2016). This study confirms that education of officers positively impacts both their level of knowledge as well as their ability to aid potential and current trafficking victims.

An additional study that was conducted in the state of Georgia sought to examine the Awareness and involvement of Georgia law enforcement on human trafficking, and more specifically, sex trafficking related incidents. This study aimed to establish a baseline of the Georgia law enforcement's knowledge of human trafficking and the way in which trafficking is perceived among officers. Finally, the goal of this study was to aid in the development of future human trafficking educational opportunities (Bailey & Wade, 2014) An online survey via SurveyMonkey was provided to a total of 783 agencies across the state inviting them to participate. However, a total of 206 agencies completed the survey, providing the study with a 38 percent response rate (Bailey & Wade, 2014). Of the 159 counties in the state of Georgia, 138 counties participated; those who did not participate were rural or did not have significant population sizes (Bailey & Wade, 2014). These law enforcement agencies were provided with a fourth-month time period to complete the survey.

Results from the survey included several interesting findings. First, there was a significant difference between the number of cases that were documented (n = 190) and the number of victims that were documented by victim service organizations (n = 500). However, it is important to mention that agencies believe that cases are more important to record rather than a number of victims (Bailey & Wade, 2014). Results also indicated that a majority (32 percent) of officers felt that human trafficking only occurred some of the time or often (31 percent). With regard to demographics, officers felt that Minor Non- U.S. citizens were most often victims of trafficking within the state of Georgia (35 percent). In contrast, participants were asked which group was least likely to be trafficked in the state of Georgia. Responses indicated that most officers (64 percent) believed that Adult U.S. citizens were least likely to be victims of human trafficking in Georgia, while Adult Non-U.S. citizens were at six percent (Bailey & Wade,

2014). Results from these questions indicate that there is some bias that officers have among victims and non-victims of human trafficking.

Similar to the current study, officers were asked to choose a response on a Likert Scale on their level of agreement toward specific statements. On a statement regarding whether minors should not be charged with the crime of prostitution, respondents were provided with options from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Bailey & Wade, 2014). Of all survey responses, Sixty percent disagreed that minors should not be charged with prostitution while 40 percent agreed. Researchers noted that officers tend to be apprehensive toward not being able to have the power to arrest someone as well as that these minors would not willingly participate in prostitution. A majority of officers (80 percent) noted that trafficking tends to occur in more urban areas and officers believe (61 percent) that human trafficking has receive more government and media attention in recent years (Bailey & Wade, 2014). With the topic of preparedness, Officers (63 percent) disagreed that their department or agency was adequately trained in handling cases involving sex trafficking. To add, 67 percent of officers disagreed that their department of agency was adequately trained to handle cases involving labor trafficking (Bailey & Wade, 2014). Finally, 53 percent of officers felt that their agency was not adequately prepared to manage human trafficking cases. This study has provided a strong example of the need for understanding the knowledge and perception levels of both first responders and those who are vulnerable to being trafficked. It is imperative that future programs be established to educate specific populations on trafficking statistics as well as preventative measures. Researchers from this study suggest that future studies be conducted surrounding human and specifically sex and labor trafficking in order to provide improved educational and training opportunities to officers (Bailey & Wade, 2014).

Summary

This chapter included several elements which supported the significance behind measuring the knowledge and awareness of vulnerable populations. This chapter has three parts: the theoretical framework, related literature, and a summary of the previous information. This chapter began with an overview of the importance of human trafficking awareness among college students, as well as the search strategy utilized for collecting related articles. It was determined by this researcher that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory was the most suitable theory to describe why human trafficking occurs, and what drives both traffickers and victims to one another. Understanding the relationship between both victims and traffickers allows for both policymakers and educators to work towards more effective policies and programs.

The related literature section discussed the importance of trafficking identification and its various forms, as well as the distinction between human trafficking and smuggling, and the differences in trafficking verses commercial sex work. As the current study is conducted at a college in North Carolina, an overview of the prevalence of trafficking in the United States and in North Carolina were presented. With the global rise in social media and internet usage, traffickers have also taken advantage of this opportunity with platforms such as OnlyFans to maintain anonymity and increase profits. Several anti-trafficking efforts have been made, including the TVPA, which have brought the importance of anti-trafficking education to the forefront of U.S. policymakers list. Other examples of anti-trafficking efforts include the Blue Campaign, which focuses its efforts on trafficking and education to vulnerable populations including college students.

Researchers and legislators have appealed for future studies to measure the knowledge and awareness of vulnerable populations to allocate resources more effectively. While the

knowledge levels of the college aged population have been studied in the previously mentioned literature, there is a significant gap that remains. This study provided a collection of previously conducted studies on general student knowledge, studies on educated populations, medical student studies, and the benefit of human trafficking education. The current study seeks to fill the current gaps in the previous studies and to positively contribute to the human trafficking field. The following chapter will provide the methods of the current study, including participants, setting, and how this data will be analyzed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

As previously mentioned, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between a student's demographic factors and their level of knowledge of human and sex trafficking topics. The literature presented above shows that there is a gap in the current research that examines this topic. The purpose of a methods section is to present how the study occurred. The methods section should be presented in chronological order with the presented problem, the research questions, and hypotheses, followed by how the participants were obtained and how the data was collected (James Madison University, 2021). This chapter presents several key elements to this study. First, the study design as well as the research questions and hypotheses will be provided. Following, an examination of both the participants and setting will be presented. The instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis applied in this study will be discussed below.

Design

To accurately measure the knowledge and awareness levels of the college-aged population on the topic of human trafficking, an effective research design must be implemented. Research designs are necessary for studies, as they provide a "conceptual blueprint" for how the study will be conducted (Akhtar, 2016, p. 1). Establishing a research design also provides the researcher the opportunity to determine collection methods, measure data, define variables, and choose which methodology is most effective in answering the research question or questions. A quantitative, non-experimental research design was chosen to answer the research questions of this study. Quantitative research seeks to understand or investigate certain theories or trends that surround a topic or issue (Williams, 2021).

This study utilized non-experimental research design, as the independent variable is not being manipulated in any way (Paladino & Hill, 2017). To add, as this study is providing a survey for students to complete regarding their knowledge and awareness of human topics in a natural setting, a non-experimental research design was most appropriate (Paladino & Hill, 2017). The study was designed in two parts. The first part of the study measured demographic data of each participant and Part Two of the study provided questions and/ or statements for students to answer based on their level of agreement on various human and sex trafficking facts. Students were allowed to choose only one answer for each question and each answer would be scored based on which answer was chosen.

Research Question(s)

With the presentation of previously included studies, the overall goal of this research study aimed to examine the relationship between human trafficking and a specific vulnerable population. This goal is broken down by several research questions which measure the relationship of a student's knowledge based on their demographic factors.

RQ1: *Are female students more likely to have higher levels human and sex trafficking knowledge compared to their male counterparts?*

RQ2: *Does a student's economic status influence their knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking?*

RQ3: *Does a student's race/ethnicity influence their level of knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking?*

Hypothesis(es)

For the current study, three demographic figures were chosen to determine their correlation with knowledge and awareness among the college-aged population. In order to determine this correlation, this study requires a hypothesis. A hypothesis is a clear statement which a researcher must determine is true or null (Binoy, 2019). Moreover, a hypothesis may be viewed as a prediction for how the data will present itself, such as an educated assumption or guess (Binoy, 2019). For the purpose of this study, the null hypotheses are:

RQ1: *Are female students more likely to have higher levels human and sex trafficking knowledge compared to their male counterparts*

- H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on gender
- H_a1: There is a statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on gender

RQ2: *Does a student's economic status influence their knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking?*

- H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on socioeconomic status
- H_a1: There is a statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on socioeconomic status

RQ3: *Does a student's race/ethnicity influence their level of knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking?*

- H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on race or ethnicity.
- H_a1: There is a statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on race or ethnicity.

Participants and Setting

The participants for this study were gathered from Catawba College located in Salisbury, North Carolina, during the 2022-2023 academic year. Catawba College was chosen as the setting for this study for numerous reasons. First, Catawba College is located in North Carolina, and in the Southeastern region of The United States, but more specifically the piedmont region of the North Carolina. Based on the previously discussed studies in Chapter Two, this area has had little data gathered on students' knowledge and awareness levels of human trafficking. Additionally, this setting was also chosen for its high level of diversity among students. As of 2022, Catawba College had approximately 1,200 students representing 32 U.S. States and 19 foreign countries (Catawba College, 2022). As an alum of Catawba College, there was also a desire to gather information from students on their knowledge of this specific subject. This study however remained anonymous to allow respondents to provide answers confidentially and anonymously to retain ethical integrity.

Anonymity is utilized as an additional precaution for respondents and provides them with a greater sense of privacy (Tourangeau, 2017). Additionally, the truthfulness of a participant's responses is increased with the use of anonymity. Moreover, the use of an anonymous online survey which is self-administered is likely to receive a higher response rate (Tourangeau, 2017). Utilizing a self-administered and anonymous survey provided students with the highest opportunity for both response and convenience. The total number of students who began the survey was 122. However, only 120 responses were measured due to two participants exiting the survey early.

Among those respondents who participated, the sample consisted of responses from 68 males and 49 females and three students who identified as other/non-binary from the student

population. Among the responses gathered there were 28 freshman, 27 sophomores, 30 juniors, 25 seniors, and 10 graduate students. The age range of students who responded was between 18-24 years of age. In terms of ethnicity, responses were provided from 83 White/Caucasian, 23 Black/African American, 11 Hispanic or Latino, 1 Asian/Pacific Islander, 0 American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 2 Other/Multiple Ethnicity students. Regarding socioeconomic status, respondents were divided into nine students Under \$15,000, nine students Between \$15,000 and 29,999, 18 students Between \$30,000 and \$49,999, 23 students Between \$50,000 and \$74,999, 25 students Between \$75,000 and \$99,999, 25 students Between \$100,000 and \$150,000, and 10 students over \$150,000. One student chose to not respond or skipped their annual family income question, and their response was omitted from the testing. In terms of location, there were 114 students from the United States and 06 Students from other nations.

Instrumentation

To have a valid and successful research study, specific instruments must be applied. Research instruments are any tools that are used to “collect measure and analyze data” that is relevant to the subject matter of a study (Duquesne University, 2023, para. 1). Instruments used in quantitative research include surveys, tests, scales, checklists, questionnaires and more (Duquesne University, 2023). Quantitative research is the focus on the relationship between variables (Andrade, 2020). Samples are necessary for studies as it is difficult to measure a general population and obtaining a sample that is representative of that population is critical (Delice, 2010). It is believed that the larger number of participants participating in the study will yield a stronger and more accurate representative result to the student population. To add, the use of sampling allows for the study to be a representation of the thoughts, feelings, or responses of that population (Andrade, 2020). For quantitative research and studies which utilize parametric

testing it is suggested that 30-500 subjects be obtained (Delice, 2010). Choosing a research instrument will usually occur once a researcher has conceptualized their topic and chosen their research questions. However, there are several factors that must be examined to determine whether a researcher instrument is beneficial to the study; the first of these characteristics is reliability. Reliability focuses on whether the instrument is consistent with its measurement each time that it is utilized under the same conditions. This may be simplified as to whether the tool is able to be repeated or not.

The second characteristic is validity, or the ability of a chosen instrument to measure what it claims to measure for a research study (Groggett, 2019). Test validity is arguably the most important of these characteristics as a test must be valid for the results to be analyzed and presented accurately. The third, fourth, and fifth factors to consider for research instrumentation are practicability, usability, and measurability. Practicability is the idea that a research instrument should be pragmatic as well as useable in the study. This is followed by useability of an instrument, or the ease of utilizing the instrument in the study. Examples may include the cost of the instrument, application, makeup, interpretation and more. (Groggett, 2019). Finally, measurability is the idea that the instrument “should measure the object to be achieved” (Groggett, 2019, p. 1).

While there is not a standardized survey instrument measuring students’ knowledge and awareness levels of human and more specifically, sex trafficking, the online platform SurveyMonkey was chosen based on its utilization and validity in several peer-reviewed studies with similar subject matter to the current study (Administration for Children and Families Office on Trafficking in Persons, 2021, Bailey and Wade, 2014, McKnight, 2022). These studies provided the same concept of understating the knowledge and awareness of certain populations

regarding various human trafficking topics. The online platform SurveyMonkey was utilized for both creation and participation in the study. SurveyMonkey was chosen based on several factors including reliability and convenience. (Survey Monkey, 2023). Additionally, SurveyMonkey has the ability to provide a consent form and include anonymous participation features to protect both participants' information, responses, and limit bias within a study (SurveyMonkey, 2022). A pilot test was not conducted for this study as it was approved by Catawba College and sent out via e-mail to students and asked to be completed anonymously. However, each survey question was sent to the IRB and approved for publication and administration to students.

The survey was presented to participants in two parts: part one measured demographic information while part two examined students' knowledge and awareness of both general human trafficking topics and sex trafficking. Demographic information is beneficial to research studies as it allows participants to be categorized by their attributes at a specific time. Examples of demographic information include age, race, religion, education level, and income status (Connelly, 2013). The survey was estimated to take students 15 minutes to complete. Before beginning the survey, participants were provided with a notice of consent to participate in the study. Participants were required to agree to this notice of consent before beginning the survey and were allowed to exit the survey at any time.

For part two of the survey, or the knowledge and awareness section, a Likert scale was utilized to measure student responses. The Likert scale is designed to measure items such as the knowledge, perceptions, attitudes, values, and other changes (Parker, 2020). Likert scales are also designed to provide several statements for participants to choose from in a survey (Parker, 2020). Providing a Likert scale for this survey allowed students to choose which answer best aligned with their knowledge and awareness level. Providing a Likert scale also provided

direction and prevented interference with participant responses. Implementing a Likert scale into this study allowed for a clear interpretation of both the questions and answer choices, in turn also increasing chance of completion of the survey and improved response rates (Allen, 2017). All questions for part two of the questionnaire were on a Likert scale based on levels of agreement 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Agree, and 5= Strongly agree.

Procedures

The procedure for this study began with a submitted application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. The IRB “is an administrative body established to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects recruited to participate in research activities conducted under the auspices of the institution in which it is affiliated” (Oregon State University, 2017, para. 1). For this study, the IRB approval was through Liberty University. This researcher was also required to obtain approval from Catawba College, as the study was conducted on its campus. Written approval was obtained to conduct the study, and that students were allowed to participate.

However, access was not needed for data or records of students, as they were to complete the study anonymously in their own time. The survey was sent to Catawba College’s academic provost, who agreed to provide the survey as well as information regarding students’ response anonymity for participating in this study. Students were provided with both a hyperlink and a QR code to participate in the study via computer or cellular device. Students were allotted one month to participate in the study. In order to participate in the study, students were required to read the notice of consent at the beginning of the survey of their rights, privacy, and other information. Students were asked to select OK to agree and continue to the survey itself. Students were also

informed that they may exit the survey at any time if they did not feel comfortable answering the questions.

Data Analysis

The chosen data analysis methods that were utilized for this study were the independent samples t-test and a One-Way ANOVA. The purpose of an independent samples t-test is to compare the means of two independent groups to determine whether the means of those populations are significantly different from one another (Kent State University, 2022a). Additionally, the independent samples t-test can be used to determine statistical differences between the means of two distinct groups, between the means between two change scores, or the means of two different interventions (Kent State University, 2022a). However, a t-test is only appropriate for tests which compare differences in two groups. For research question demographic between males and females and their level of knowledge of human and sex trafficking, an independent samples t-test would be most useful.

For the hypotheses measuring knowledge and awareness compared to gender and socioeconomic status, an analysis of variance or One-Way ANOVA was most appropriate. ANOVA models are used in research to determine the proportion and variation to several elements (Cronk, 2020). Specifically, a One Way ANOVA compares “the means of two or more independent groups in order to determine whether there is statistical evidence that the associated population means are significantly different” (Kent State University, 2022b, para. 1). One Way ANOVA models provide several pieces of information or attributes, which are divided among several columns. While these columns include the Sum of Squares (SS), Degrees of Freedom (df), and Means Squares (MS), the most significant result is in the F column (Cronk, 2020). While both the One-Way ANOVA and independent samples t-test have the ability to compare

the means of two groups, a One-Way ANOVA was necessary to compare the means of three groups or more (Kent State University, 2022b). Applying a One-Way ANOVA was necessary when measuring the demographic groups which contained three or more.

The current study utilized IBM SPSS Statistics 29 software to process all collected survey data. Using IBM SPSS software allowed the current study to compare demographic data to the knowledge and awareness of both human and specific sex trafficking related topics. Student responses were categorized as Knowledge Scores for this study. Each response provided by a student was categorized by number (Strongly agree = 1, Agree = 2, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 4, and Strongly Disagree = 5). There were two questions in this survey that were (Q11 and Q15) which were labeled in opposing order. Student responses were measured based on their answer choice and its level of correctness. As research question one focused on the differences between male and female students, any participants who identified (as Other (n =3), were omitted from this test. The variables for research question one are Male = 1 and Females = 2. To add, one respondent omitted a response for their annual family income and their response was omitted for the One-Way ANOVA test measuring socioeconomic status in comparison to knowledge and awareness levels.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This quantitative study sought to examine the relationship between demographical factors and the knowledge and awareness of college students on human and specifically sex trafficking topics. The first research question focuses on knowledge levels in relation to a student's gender. Specifically, the first research question asks: *Are female students more likely to have higher levels human and sex trafficking knowledge compared to their male counterparts?* The second research question focused on the relationship between a student's socioeconomic status and their levels of knowledge. Research question two asks: *Does a student's economic status influence their knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking?* Research question three examines whether a student's race or ethnicity impacts their knowledge and awareness levels of human and sex trafficking topics. Research question three specifically asks: *Does a student's economic status influence their knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking?*

RQ1: *Are female students more likely to have higher levels human and sex trafficking knowledge compared to their male counterparts?*

- H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on gender
- H_a1: There is a statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on gender

RQ2: *Does a student's economic status influence their knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking?*

- H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on socioeconomic status
- H_a1: There is a statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on socioeconomic status

RQ3: *Does a student's race/ethnicity influence their level of knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking?*

- H₀1: There is no statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on race or ethnicity.
- H_a1: There is a statistically significant difference in the knowledge and awareness levels regarding human trafficking based on race or ethnicity.

Sample Size

A total of 122 students began the survey for in this study with 120 students completing or hitting "finished" the provided survey, or a 98 percent completion rate. Any participants who did exited out of the survey were omitted. It was estimated that it would take participants an average of 15 minutes to complete the survey. However, the time for students to provide their responses was an average of 2 minutes and 32 seconds. Unlike previously reviewed studies, this study produced a larger number of male participants than females. Additionally, most students were of White or Caucasian descent (n =83). There was a total of males (n =68), females (n=49) and (n = 3) students who identified as other. A majority of the students (n = 63) were ages 18-20 and were located in the United States (n = 114)

Table 1

Student Demographics

Demographic	Variable	Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	68	56.67
	Female	49	40.83
	Other	3	2.5
Age	18-20	63	52.50
	21-22	45	37.50

	23-24	12	10.00
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	0.00
	Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.83
	Black/African American	23	19.17
	Hispanic/Latino	11	9.17
	White/Caucasian	83	69.17
	Other	2	1.67
Academic Year	Freshman	28	23.33
	Sophomore	27	22.50
	Junior	30	25.00
	Senior	25	20.83
	Graduate Student	10	8.33
Estimated Total Family Income	Under \$15,000	9	7.56
	Between \$15,000 and \$29,000	9	7.56
	Between \$30,000 and \$49,999	18	15.13
	Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	23	19.33
	Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	25	21.01
	Between \$100,000 and \$150,000	25	21.01
	Over \$150,000	10	8.40
Student Location	United States	114	95
	Outside of the United States	6	5.00

Descriptive Statistics

While the data in Table 1 presents an overall breakdown of the various demographics provided by the participants, it is beneficial to include the descriptive statistics or frequencies of this data. Descriptive statistics are an essential component in providing insight into a study's data. Descriptive statistics are understood as a summary or description of a sample of data without drawing any conclusions. Additionally, using descriptive statistics within a study allows the researcher to present the relationships between variables. However, it is important to note that descriptive statistics may be utilized in describing univariate or single variables, or more than one variable (bivariate or multivariate) (Kaliyadan and Kulkarni, 2019). For this study, it was determined that because the student demographics were measured by students choosing which category they fell into for their demographics, frequencies were most appropriate, as frequencies are used to show the number of participants for each category (e.g., Gender, Age, Race/Ethnicity, Academic Year, Estimated Family Income, and Location). Below is a table presenting the frequencies of the participants for the current study out of $n=120$.

Table 2:

Frequencies of Student Demographics

Demographic Data	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
	n	%
Male	68	56.67
Female	49	40.83
Other	3	2.5
Age		
18-20	63	52.5
21-22	45	37.5
23-24	12	10.0
Race		
Black/African American	23	19.2
White/Caucasian	83	69.2
Other	14	11.7
Academic Year		
Freshman	28	23.3
Sophomore	27	22.5
Junior	30	25.0
Senior	25	20.8

Graduate Student	10	8.3
Estimated Family Income		
Under \$15,000	9	7.5
Between \$15,000 and \$29,000	9	7.5
Between \$30,000 and \$49,999	18	15.0
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	23	19.2
Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	25	20.8
Between \$100,000 and \$150,000	25	20.8
Over \$150,000	10	8.3
Location		
United States	95.0	95.0
Outside the United States	5.0	5.0

Results

Hypothesis(es)

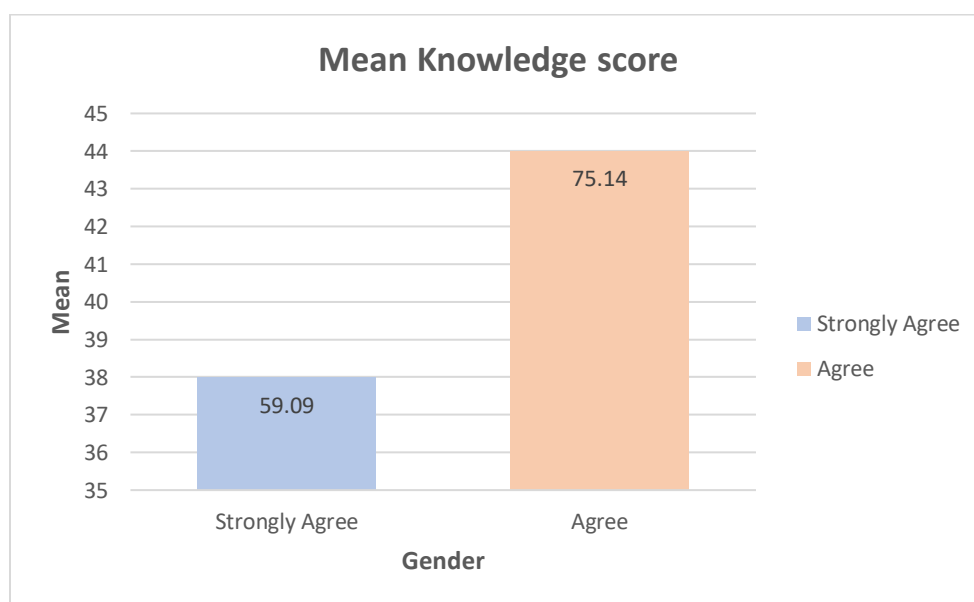
Research Question One Results

The first research question focused on the relationship between gender and knowledge of human and sex trafficking topics. Specifically, *are female students more likely to have higher levels of human and sex trafficking knowledge compared to their male counterparts?* The null

hypothesis of this research question assumed that there is no significant difference between a student's gender and their level of knowledge of human and sex trafficking topics. To obtain these results, an independent samples t-test was conducted on all male and female responses. The grouping variables for these students were Males = 1 and Females = 2. Those who identified as Other were omitted for research question purposes. The independent samples t-test comparing the means scores of both male and female students found a significant difference between the groups ($t(115) = -5.947, p < .001, d = -.1.114$). The mean of the female group ($M = 75.14, sd = 15.39$) was significantly higher than the mean of the male group ($M = 59.09, sd = 13.65$). Thus, the null hypothesis for research question one was rejected.

Figure 1

Mean knowledge score of male and female students on human trafficking



Research Question Two Results

Research question two aimed to discover whether a student's socioeconomic status influenced their level of knowledge on human and sex trafficking topics. More specifically, *does a student's economic status influence their knowledge and awareness of human and sex*

trafficking? The null hypothesis assumed that there would be no statistically significant difference between a student's socioeconomic status and their level of knowledge on human and sex trafficking topics. Student's responses were compared by using a One-way ANOVA. One student chose to skip over this question, so their results were not included in this test. Results concluded that there were no significant differences found between a students' knowledge level and their socioeconomic status ($F(6,112) = .483, p = .820$). As this test produced non-significant results, further testing was not needed, and the null hypothesis may be accepted. A table is provided below with RQ2 data.

Table 3

Knowledge scores of students based on socioeconomic status

Socioeconomic Status	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	767.783	6	127.964	.483	.820
Within Groups	29691.276	112	265.101		
Total	30459.060	118			

Research Question Three Results

The final research question of this study examined whether a student's race or ethnicity is a factor in their level of knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking topics.

Specifically, *does a student's race/ethnicity influence their level of knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking?* Research question three also utilized the One-way ANOVA test to obtain accurate results. For a One-way ANOVA, it is assumed that first the data is normally distributed and there is homogeneity of variance. For this specific test, there were certain categories of race or ethnicities that had either one or zero individuals. For the purpose of this study, results were combined into three categories. White or Caucasian (n = 83), Black or

African American ($n = 23$) and Other ($n = 14$). The table presented below shows that there were no significant differences between a student's race and their level of knowledge on human and sex trafficking topics ($F(2,117) = 1.44$, $p .240$, $\eta^2 = .024$). Based on these results, no further post hoc testing was needed, and the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 4

Knowledge level of students based on race or ethnicity

Race or Ethnicity	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	762.428	2	381.214	1.444	.240
Within Groups	30884.266	117	263.968		
Total	31646.694	119			

Further Education and Willingness to Intervene

The final part of this survey included several declarative statements on human and sex trafficking education and situations. Students were asked to choose their level of agreement to specific statements regarding anti-trafficking efforts made by the United States and other anti-trafficking related efforts with a scale of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. These questions provided significant information for both future research and anti-trafficking educational opportunities. First, Question 7 stated "I understand what human trafficking is or I have had prior education on human trafficking topics" 35 percent ($n=42$) students Strongly agreed, 56.67 percent ($n=68$) Agreed, 6.67 percent ($n=8$) Neutral, 1.67 percent ($n=2$) Disagreed, and 0 Strongly Disagreed. Questions 8-9 asked students if they knew that human and sex trafficking were two different forms of trafficking 17.5 percent ($n=21$) Strongly Agreed, 55.83 ($n=67$) Agreed, 22.3 ($n=28$) were Neutral, 2.5 percent ($n=3$) Disagreed and 0.83 percent ($n=1$) Strongly Disagreed.

Question nine asked students if they believed that prostitution and sex trafficking were two different crimes with 36.67 percent (n=44) Strongly Agree, 49.17 percent (n=59) Agree, 10.83 percent (n=13) Neutral, 5.0 percent (n=6) Disagree, and 0 percent Strongly Disagreed.

Following, questions 10-12 began with the statement that “Human trafficking is a global health crisis”, having a majority of students 55 percent (n=66) Strongly Agree, 40 percent (n=48) Agree, or 5 percent (n=6) felt Neutral. Question 11 stated that “All human traffickers are male” in turn having students respond with 0 percent Strongly Agree, 0.83 percent (n=1) Agree, 8.33 percent (n=10) Neutral, 55.33 percent (n=64) Disagree, and 37.50 percent (n=45) Strongly Disagree with this statement. Question 12 proposed the statement that “Females make up the majority of sex trafficking victims”. In response, students chose 13.33 percent (n=16) Strongly Agree, 60.83 percent (n=73) Agree, 16.67 percent (n=20) Neutral, 6.67 percent (n=8) Disagree, and 2.50 (n=3) Strongly Disagreed.

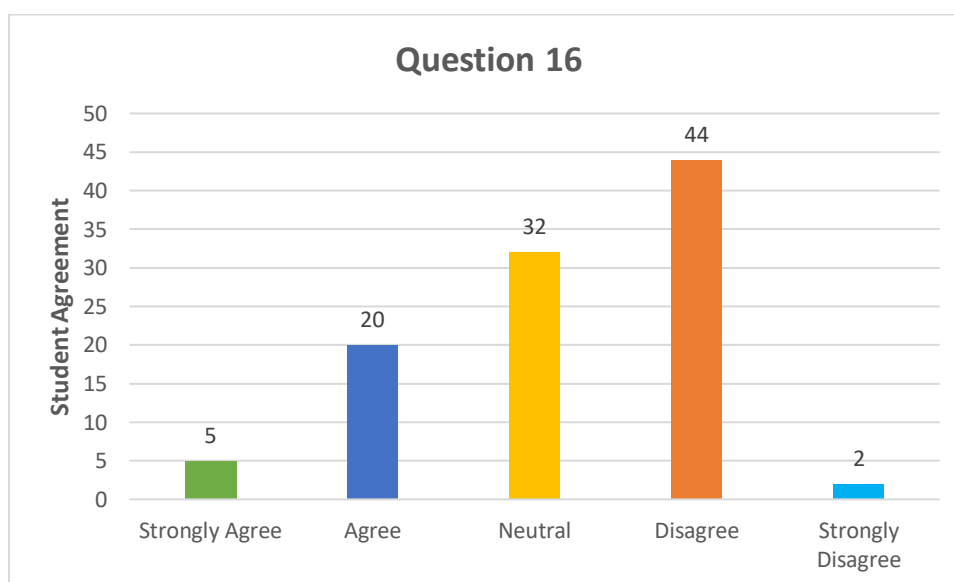
Questions 13-15 focused on specific vulnerable populations and how students viewed their vulnerability levels. 24.17 (n=29) Strongly Agreed, 42.50 (n=51) Agreed, 23.33 (n=28) Neutral, 9.17 percent (n=11) Disagreed, and 0.83 percent (n=1) Strongly Disagreed that people of low socioeconomic status were more likely to be trafficked compared to those individuals of higher socioeconomic status. Question 14 stated “People who are of racial or ethnic minorities are more vulnerable to being trafficked”. In response, many students 23.33 percent (n=28) Strongly Agreed, 37.5 percent (n=45) Agreed, 30 percent (n=36) Neutral, 5.83 percent (n=7) Disagreed, and 3.33 percent (n=4) Strongly Disagreed. Finally, Question 15 asked students on their level of agreement with the statement of “Children (persons under 18) are rarely victims of human trafficking”. Students responded with 1.67 percent (n=2) Strongly Agree, 1.67 percent

(n=2) Agreed, 8.33 percent (n=10) Neutral, 43.33 percent (n=52) Disagreed, and 45.0 percent (n=54) Strongly Disagreed.

Several questions are highlighted below to present some of the most interesting findings. Question 16 asked if students if they felt vulnerable to being trafficked. In this question (n =120) students provided a mixed response with a majority of students (n = 44) disagreeing. Question 17 of the survey asked students whether they believed they were a part of a vulnerable population, with students' 5.83 percent (n=7) Strongly Agree, 18.33 percent (n=22) Agree, 21.67 (n=26) Neutral, 37.50 percent (n=45) Disagree,16.67 percent (n=20) Strongly Disagree.

Figure 2

Student agreement on trafficking vulnerability



Next, questions 18-20 of the survey provided statements related to students' opinions of anti-trafficking legislation and willingness to intervene in a trafficking situation. Question 18 states "I feel that the United States has done their part to stop human trafficking (ex. law enforcement, anti-trafficking campaigns, educational programs)". Students responded with 1.67

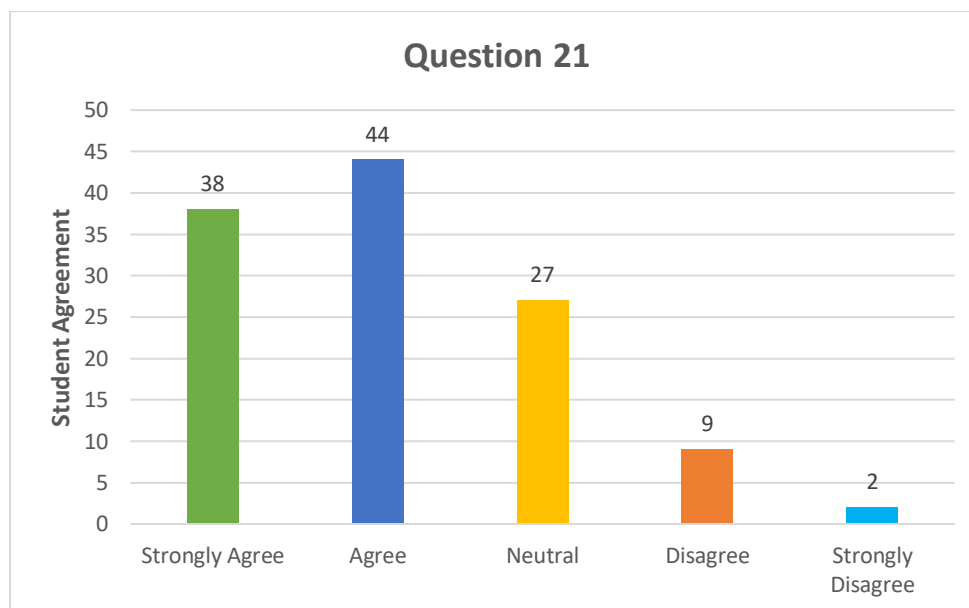
(n=2) Strongly Agree, 6.67 percent (n=8) Agree, 35.0 percent (n=42) Neutral, 34.17 percent (n=41) Disagree, and 22.5 percent (n=27) Strongly Disagreed.

Of the students surveyed (n =120), a majority 52.5 percent (n = 63) agreed that anti-trafficking social media campaigns or educational programs would be beneficial in the elimination of human trafficking. 13.33 percent (n=16) Strongly also agreed with this statement. However, a large number of those surveyed felt Neutral 24.17 percent (n = 29) or Disagreed 8.33 percent (n =10), and 1.67 (n=2) Strongly Disagreed. Following, question 20 asked students whether they believed the United States should implement more anti-trafficking legislation. This question produced only positive and neutral responses, with 43.33 percent (n = 52) students strongly agreeing, 48.33 percent (n = 58) agreeing, and 8.33 percent (n =10) feeling neutral.

Finally, questions 21 and 22 presented the topics of willingness to intervene and if students would like to learn more about anti trafficking efforts. First, question 21 proposed a statement about whether a student would be willing to intervene in a trafficking situation. Results varied among students (n =120) with a majority of students 36.67 percent (n = 44) choosing Strongly Agree and Agree 31.67 percent (n = 38). However, 22.5 percent of students (n =27) felt Neutral about intervention of a trafficking situation, while 7.5 percent (n = 9) Disagreed, and 1.67 percent (n = 2) Strongly Disagreed.

Figure 3

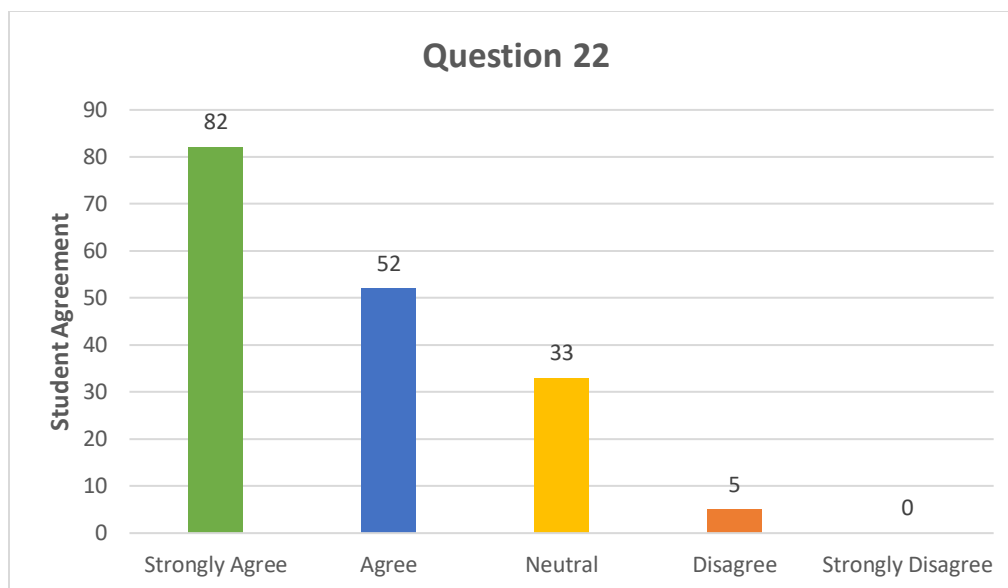
Students' willingness to intervene in a trafficking situation.



The final question of the survey posed a statement on student's willingness to learn more about human trafficking and anti-trafficking efforts through an educational course or program. A majority of students 43.33 (n = 52) Agreed or 25 percent (n = 30) Strongly Agreed. The remaining students were 27.5 percent (n = 33) Neutral, and 4.17 percent (n = 5) Disagreed. There were zero students who strongly disagreed with this prompt.

Figure 4

Students' willingness to learn more about anti-trafficking efforts through educational courses



CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The following chapter will present a summary of the current study. This section will provide an in-depth discussion of the current research and its relationship with previously mentioned studies, including an examination of all research questions. Additionally, this section will discuss how this body of work contributes to the field of human trafficking research. Following, any limitations that the current study experienced will be presented. Finally, this study will provide recommendations for future research studies on knowledge and awareness of human trafficking.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the knowledge, awareness, and perception levels of a college-aged population on the topics of human and sex trafficking. While there have been several research studies that measure the knowledge of the general population on human trafficking, little research has been conducted on the knowledge levels of specific vulnerable

populations (Browder, 2018; Copel, 2016; Dubasi et al., 2018; Farrell, 2018; Gainey, 2021; Patton, 2014; Rapp-McCall et al., 2021). College students were chosen for this survey for their higher risk of being trafficked based on relationships, economic instability, travel, and more (Department of Homeland Security, 2020, Dubasi et al., 2018).

Research question one compared the knowledge scores of both male and female students on human and sex trafficking topics. It was concluded that female students have a higher level of knowledge and awareness compared to their male counterparts. This result is congruent with previously mentioned studies and theories that women tend to have a higher level of knowledge on human trafficking topics (Cunningham et al., 2014). However, this study differed from previously mentioned studies which had a higher level of female participation than males (Cunningham et al., 2014, Murray, 2017, Welch-Brewer et al., 2021). From the earliest recordings of human trafficking, humans were not discriminated against in terms of gender, race, or socioeconomic status. However, women have experienced the majority of sexual slavery throughout history (Aronowitz, 2017).

Research question two focused on whether there was a correlation between a student's socioeconomic status and their level of knowledge on human and sex trafficking topics. As previously noted, the college-aged population is more susceptible to being trafficked based on their lack of economic independence and lifestyle changes (The United States Department of Justice, 2020). This study mirrored several completed studies measuring demographic factors such as socioeconomic status (Browder et al., 2018, Copel, 2016, Cunningham et al., 2014, Dubasi et al., 2018, Farrell, 2018, Gainey, 2021, Mullaney, 2016, Patton, 2014, Welch-Brewer et al., 2021). One study noted that students were more likely to be trafficked due to their socioeconomic status (Fernandes et al., 2020). However, this study concluded that there was not

a significant difference regarding a student's knowledge and awareness and their socioeconomic status. The current study is one that specifically examines the relationship between knowledge and socioeconomic status, but further research must be produced on this specific relationship for a definitive result.

The final research question of this study examined the relationship between a student's race or ethnicity and their level of knowledge on human and sex trafficking topics. It has been noted that anyone is subject to human trafficking regardless of their race (The United States Department of Justice, 2017). Based on this knowledge it was imperative that this study examine the relationship between race and human trafficking awareness, especially among those of a vulnerable population. It is understood however, that those of racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be trafficked in correlation with their low socioeconomic status (Toney-Butler et al., 2022). This study concluded that there was no significant difference between these factors, and that race did not impact a student's knowledge level. The data produced by the current study is consistent with previously mentioned studies that there is no correlation between a student's race and their level of knowledge on human and sex trafficking topics (Gainey, 2021).

While these three research questions provided insight into the knowledge and awareness of students based on their demographic factors, this study also examined student's opinions on the United States' effort to combat trafficking, willingness to intervene, and whether students would like to learn more about trafficking via an educational course. Similar to this study, previously completed research. concluded that students would be willing to intervene in a trafficking situation if the opportunity were presented (Murray, 2017, Overholt, 2013, Rapp-McCall et al., 2021). Additionally, this study was consistent with previously completed studies in that students agreed would be interested more about anti-trafficking efforts via educational

courses (Copel, 2016, Murray 2017, Overholt, 2013). It has been suggested by several studies that educational courses would be beneficial to the prevention of human trafficking situations (Lutz, 2018, Murray, 2017, Stoklosa et al., 2015).

Implications

The results of this study present a dynamic that has rarely been seen in previously related research projects before it. This study not only confirmed that females generally have a higher level of knowledge of human and specific sex trafficking topics, but that race, and socioeconomic status was not influential in knowledge level. While this study provided a smaller pool of participants, it did provide a higher level of male participants which has not been presented in many previous studies. As mentioned above, it was noted that both male and female students were interested in learning more about anti-trafficking efforts or taking an educational course on the subject and would be willing to intervene in a trafficking situation.

This dynamic may differ than previously completed studies, due to several factors. This research believes that generational differences play a significant role in these specific results. Generation Z has become more interested in the companies who focus on anti-trafficking efforts and those who place emphasis on anti-trafficking legislation (The Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020) As a result, it is likely that this higher level of interest on the subject may coincide with higher levels of knowledge of human trafficking knowledge and awareness. Additionally, this study filled a gap in existing literature on a specific vulnerable population that had been scarcely researched. While this study did not obtain significant results from the socioeconomic and racial knowledge score comparisons, it provided insight for future researchers on the dynamic between knowledge of human trafficking and an individual's demographics.

Limitations

While researchers aim to provide a significant impact in their specific field through research, each study will have its shortcomings. These constraints may result from methodology, research design, participation, and more. It is important as a researcher to accept that all studies will have their limitations; however, this should be accepted as fact and not seen as discrediting towards the study that has been produced. To add, it is beneficial to both the current study and future researchers to see these limitations to improve upon future studies that are conducted. For the current study, a convenience sample was utilized via online survey and voluntary participation. As a result, the representativeness of Catawba College's student population may not be exemplary. To add, the study was conducted on a small college campus in the piedmont region of North Carolina. This location may not be representative of the knowledge and awareness levels of college-aged students across the nation. However, this study did not seek to be representative of the nation, but instead aimed to fill the gaps where previous studies have not been conducted.

The concept of internal validity examines several factors including research design, conduct, and whether research questions may be analyzed without bias (Andrade, 2018). This study chose to have students voluntarily participate in the study as well as provided an anonymous platform for students to feel comfortable in their responses. Additionally, providing an anonymous survey to students allows for an increase in honest feedback, which may be skewed in an in-person setting or a survey that requires identifiable information. The downside to this study is that students cannot be followed up with on their responses and this study is unable to gather more in-depth information on student's opinions. In contrast, external validity examines whether the findings of a study may be applicable to other studies (Andrade, 2018).

For the current study, a population of college students were measured on a Likert Scale survey on their level of knowledge of human and sex trafficking topics. While the goal of this study was to sample a specific vulnerable population within the trafficking community, this study also focused its efforts on furthering the field of studies that also measured knowledge and awareness.

Recommendations for Future Research

For the current study, students were measured on their level of knowledge and awareness about human and specific sex trafficking topics, their willingness to intervene, and their desire to learn more about trafficking. While this study provided a significantly larger pool of male participants, females still proved to obtain higher level of knowledge of human trafficking consistent results with previously published studies with a higher level of knowledge. However, there was no significant difference in the level of knowledge a student has and their race or socioeconomic status. Based on the results presented there are several recommendations for future research studies. First, this study presented very general statements about human and more specifically, sex trafficking. The purpose of this was to gauge the basic knowledge of the student population. If the study were to be repeated in the future, it would be beneficial to measure the knowledge and awareness levels of students on more specific forms of trafficking, such as labor, or domestic minor sex trafficking. It is also suggested that a social media approach be applied to future studies, as the world continues to rely on technology to function and socialize. As a result, traffickers may increase their use of technology to support their illegal enterprises.

Additionally, it is suggested that future studies be conducted which focus on other vulnerable or ill-represented populations such as ethnic minorities, those of low-socioeconomic status, or specific genders. While this study concluded no significant difference in knowledge of human trafficking and socioeconomic status, this may not be consistent with other locations

across the United States. Moreover, future research studies should aim to gather information on a larger pool of male students. While this study produced a significantly larger population of male students compared to females, there is still a disparity in male's level of knowledge and awareness of human trafficking. It is imperative that both female and male students be aware of human trafficking of all forms, but the true measurement of the male population will be presented through further research.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the knowledge and awareness levels of the college-aged population in comparison to their demographic factors. As previously noted, legislators and educators alike are in desperate need for education of human trafficking, which will only be improved by additional research studies. In order to provide beneficial data to the de-escalation of trafficking, a quantitative research design was created. A survey was provided to students asking them questions on their knowledge and awareness of human and sex trafficking topics compared to their demographic factors. The examination of this relationship provides a unique perspective which both presents the gaps in knowledge among vulnerable populations and shows a student's willingness to learn more. Additionally, the information provided by this study may guide further educational and policy practices in the future.

This study presented several interesting elements. First, the majority of students who participated in this study were males. From previously examined research, most studies had a majority of female participants. Next, results from this study indicated that even with a lower number of female participants, women tended to have a higher level of knowledge and awareness of both human and sex trafficking topics. The second research question examined the relationship between a student's socioeconomic status and their knowledge of general human

knowledge and specifically sex trafficking. It was concluded that there was no significant difference in their level of knowledge and socioeconomic background. Similarly, the results of this study determined that a student's race or ethnicity has no effect on their level of knowledge of trafficking topics.

This study also set itself apart by asking students their opinion on their willingness to intervene in a trafficking situation and their willingness to learn more; both yielding positive responses. With this information schools such as Catawba may begin to implement educational opportunities for students to increase their level of knowledge and awareness and contribute to the end of human trafficking. The goal of this study was to positively impact both the research of human trafficking awareness as well as the knowledge of specific vulnerable populations. Identifying these knowledge and awareness levels allows for both future educational opportunity and anti-trafficking policy implementation. As previously noted, the prevention and goal of ending human trafficking will only occur through continuous research, improved policy, and available educational opportunities to both vulnerable and non-vulnerable populations.

REFERENCES

- Administration for Children and Families Office on Trafficking in Persons,. (2021, September).
Human Trafficking Community Readiness Guide.
- Akhtar, I. (2016). Research Design. In *Research in Social Science: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (1st ed., pp. 68–84). essay, Social Research Foundation. Retrieved April 22, 2022, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308915548_Research_Design.
- Albert, L. (2022, January 25). *Schools join the fight against human trafficking*. SOURCE.
<https://source.colostate.edu/schools-join-the-fight-against-human-trafficking/#:~:text=In%202017%2C%20California%20became%20the,intended%20to%20stop%20human%20trafficking>.
- Allain, J. (2017). White Slave Traffic in international law. *Journal of Trafficking and Human Exploitation*, 1(1), 1–40. <https://doi.org/10.7590/24522775111>
- Allen., M. (2017). Scales, likert statement. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381411.n546>
- Alvarez, M. B., & Alessi, E. J. (2012). Human trafficking is more than sex trafficking and prostitution. *Journal of Women and Social Work*, 27(2), 142–152.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109912443763>
- Andrade, C. (2018). Internal, external, and ecological validity in research design, conduct, and evaluation. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 40(5), 498–499.
https://doi.org/10.4103/ijpsym.ijpsym_334_18

- Andrade, C. (2020). Sample size and its importance in research. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 42(1), 102–103. https://doi.org/10.4103/ijpsym.ijpsym_504_19
- Aronowitz, A. A. (2017). *Human Trafficking: A Reference Handbook*. Google Books. ABC-CLIO Interactive.
<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=XBsIDgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=history+of+human+trafficking+aronowitz&ots=kcEwZnSUBQ&sig=19C-ppjbe1CP7pNzAWawNlhDdTW#v=onepage&q=history%20of%20human%20trafficking%20aronowitz&f=false>.
- Awerbuch, A., Gunaratne, N., Jain, J., & Caralis, P. (2020). Raising awareness of human trafficking in key professional fields via a multidisciplinary educational approach. *International Journal of Human Rights in Healthcare*, 13(2), 159–169.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/ijhrh-07-2019-0053>
- Bailey, M., & Wade, J. (2014, May 1). *Human Trafficking in Georgia: A Survey of Law Enforcement: Assessing Georgia Law Enforcement's Awareness and Involvement in Human Trafficking Activity*. Georgia Bureau of Investigation.
- Batsyukova, S. (2007). Prostitution and human trafficking for sexual exploitation. *Gender Issues*, 24(2), 46–50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-007-9001-0>
- Binoy, S. (2019). Significance of hypothesis in Research. *Indian Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 10(01), 31–33. <https://doi.org/10.24321/2348.2133.201905>

Bono-Neri, F., & Toney-Butler, T. J. (2023). Nursing students' knowledge of and exposure to human trafficking content in undergraduate curricula. *Nurse Education Today*, 129, 105920. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2023.105920>

British Columbia Trafficking Page. (2014). *What Makes Someone Vulnerable to Human Trafficking?* British Columbia. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/human-trafficking/human-trafficking-training/module-1/vulnerabilities>.

Browder, F. (2018). *Public Perceptions on Domestic Sex Trafficking and Domestic Sex Trafficking Victims: A Quantitative Analysis* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). East Tennessee State University.
<https://dc.etsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4946&context=etd>

California Department of Justice. (2020, January 17). What is human trafficking? State of California - Department of Justice - Office of the Attorney General. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://oag.ca.gov/human-trafficking/what-is>.

California Sex Offender Management Board. (2020). Sex Traffickers and Buyers of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children.

Cape Fear Community College. (2022). Not4\$ale human trafficking awareness initiative: Student success starts with service. Not4\$ale Human Trafficking Awareness Initiative | Student Success Starts with Service. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <http://www2.cfcc.edu/servicelearning/not4ale-human-trafficking-awareness-initiative/>.

Catawba College. (2022). *About Catawba*. About Catawba College | About Catawba. Retrieved October 2, 2022, from <https://catawba.edu/about>.

Cavender, T. (2023). *Do College Students Have a Lack of Awareness Around Human Trafficking?* (dissertation). East Tennessee State University. Retrieved July 2, 2023, from <https://dc.etsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1989&context=honors>.

The Center for Generational Kinetics. (2020). *The State of Gen Z 2020: Gen Z as Consumers, Influencers, and Trendsetters*.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, February 4). *Sex trafficking sexual violence/violence prevention/injury Center/CDC*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved May 22, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/trafficking.html>.

Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative. (2022). *Preventing sex trafficking and strengthening families act*. Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act - Center for Courts - Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/courts/topics/preventing-sex-trafficking-and-strengthening-families-act>.

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2023). *What is human trafficking?* Child Welfare Information Gateway. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/trafficking/identifying/>

- Clayton, E. W., Krugman, R. D., & Simon, P. (2013). (Committee on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States, Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Committee on Law and Justice, Institute of Medicine, & National Research Council, Eds.). *Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States*. <https://doi.org/10.17226/18358>
- Connelly, L. M. (2013). Demographic Data in Research Studies. *MedSurg Nursing*, 22(4).
<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA341687270&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=10920811&p=AONE&sw=w&userGroupName=anon%7Ece4a21cb>
- Connecticut Human Trafficking Response Team. (2020, November). Serving Young Adults Involved with Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking and/or Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.
- Copel, L. C. (2016, March 17). *Student Perceptions of Human Trafficking: It's in Our Community?* (dissertation). *Sigma Repository*. Retrieved from https://sigma.nursingrepository.org/bitstream/handle/10755/601572/Linda_Carman_Copel.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
- Crisp, J. (2021). 54.2 use and abuse of social media in human trafficking. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 60(10), 80–80.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2021.07.336>
- Cronk, B. C. (2020). *How to use SPSS: A step-by-step guide to analysis and interpretation* (11th ed.). Routledge.

Cunningham, K. C., & Cromer, L. D. M. (2014). Attitudes about human trafficking. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 31*(2), 228–244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514555369>

Dalla, R. L., & Sabella, D. (2020). *Routledge International Handbook of Human Trafficking: A multi-disciplinary and applied approach*. Taylor & Francis Group (1st ed.). Oxon. Retrieved August 9, 2022, from <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9781315277035/routledge-international-handbook-human-trafficking-rochelle-dalla-donna-sabella?refId=abc38db9-d389-4bd6-a2d8-53e9964ad6d1&context=ubx>.

Delice, A. (2010). The Sampling Issues in Quantitative Research. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice, 10*, 1–18. Retrieved October 7, 2022, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ919871.pdf>.

Department of Homeland Security. (2020a, September 17). *Human Trafficking Response Guide for Campus Law Enforcement and Public Safety Officials*.

Department of Homeland Security. (2020b, October 20). *DHS launches New Center for Countering Human Trafficking: Homeland Security*. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2020/10/20/dhs-launches-new-center-countering-human-trafficking>

Department of Homeland Security. (2022, April 13). *About the blue campaign*. About the Blue Campaign | Homeland Security. Retrieved August 01, 2022, from <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/about-blue-campaign>.

Department of Homeland Security. (2022, December 29). *President Biden signs legislation that codifies and expands DHS fight against human trafficking*. President Biden Signs legislation that codifies and expands DHS fight against human trafficking | Homeland Security. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/12/29/president-biden-signs-legislation-codifies-and-expands-dhs-fight-against-human>

Drug Enforcement Administration. (2022, January). Social Media: Drug Trafficking Threat.

Dubasi, H. B., Rotimi, O., Yadav, R., & Mildred, M. (2018, April 5). A pilot study on the knowledge of sex- trafficking in the United States among a sample of college students at a university in North-East Tennessee. East Tennessee State University. <https://dc.etsu.edu/asrf/2018/schedule/52/>.

Duquesne University. (2023, May 16). *Libguides: Research Instruments: Home*. Home - Research Instruments - LibGuides at Duquesne University. <https://guides.library.duq.edu/researchinstruments>

Elkin, E. (2018, February 22). *College-age “Sugar babies” make cash, gifts for companionship*. The Crimson White. <https://thecrimsonwhite.com/42881/news/college-age-sugar-babies-make-cash-gifts-for-companionship/>

Farley, M., Golding, J. M., Matthews, E. S., Malamuth, N. M., & Jarrett, L. (2015). Comparing sex buyers with men who do not buy sex: New Data on prostitution and trafficking. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 32(23), 3601–3625. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515600874>

- Farrell, A., Bright, K., de Vries, I., Pfeffer, R., & Dank, M. (2020). Policing labor trafficking in the United States. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 23(1), 36–56.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-019-09367-6>
- Fernandes, Ângela, Mariana Gonçalves, and Marlene Matos. 2020. “Who Are the Victims, Who Are the Traffickers?’ University Students’ Portrayals on Human Trafficking.” *Victims & Offenders* 15 (2): 243–66. doi:10.1080/15564886.2019.1711276.
- Forget, J. (2021, January 28). Violent drug organizations use human trafficking to expand profits. DEA. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://www.dea.gov/stories/2021/2021-01/2021-01-28/violent-drug-organizations-use-human-trafficking-expand-profits>.
- Gainey, K. A. (2021). (dissertation). *Undergraduate Students’ Perceptions, Knowledge, and Attitudes Toward Human Trafficking*. Winthrop University. Retrieved April 3, 2022, from <https://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/mcnair/WMRB2021.pdf#page=37>.
- Gawel, J. E. (1997). Herzberg's Theory of Motivation and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 5(5), 1–3.
<https://doi.org/10.7275/31qy-ea53>
- Gawronska, S. (2019). Organ trafficking and human trafficking for the purpose of organ removal, two international legal frameworks against Illicit Organ Removal. *New Journal of European Criminal Law*, 10(3), 268–286. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2032284419862387>
- Georgia State University. (2020, December 18). *What is sugar dating?* Victim Assistance.
<https://victimassistance.gsu.edu/2020/12/18/what-is-sugar-dating/>

- Gezinski, L. B., & Gonzalez-Pons, K. M. (2022). Sex Trafficking and Technology: A Systematic Review of Recruitment and Exploitation. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2022.2034378>
- Goldberg, A. P., Moore, J. L., & Barron, C. E. (2019). Domestic minor sex trafficking: Guidance for communicating with patients. *Hospital Pediatrics*, 9(4), 308–310.
<https://doi.org/10.1542/hpeds.2018-0199>
- Gonzalez, J., Garijo, I., & Sanchez, A. (2020). Organ trafficking and migration: A bibliometric analysis of an untold story. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(9), 3204. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17093204>
- Haney, K., LeBeau, K., Bodner, S., Czizik, A., Young, M. E., & Hart, M. (2020). Sex trafficking in the United States: A scoping review. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 17(6), 714–748. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26408066.2020.1765934>
- Harvard Law School. (2014, September 9). *Does legalized prostitution increase human trafficking?* Harvard Law and International Development Society. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://orgs.law.harvard.edu/lids/2014/06/12/does-legalized-prostitution-increase-human-trafficking/>.
- Houston-Kolnik, J. D., Todd, N. R., & Wilson, M. (2016). Preliminary validation of the sex trafficking attitudes scale. *Violence Against Women*, 22(10), 1259–1281.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801215621178>

Human Trafficking in Pennsylvania. (2017). *The Jurist*, 1-10. from http://www.htcourts.org/wp-content/uploads/PA-Jurist_humantrafficking_06202017.pdf

The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. (2017, September). *The Gender Dimensions of Human Trafficking*.

James Madison University. (2021). Method Sections for Empirical Research Papers: an overview. Retrieved October 10, 2022, from https://www.jmu.edu/uwc/files/link-library/empirical/annotated_method_section.

Kaliyadan, F., & Kulkarni, V. (2019). Types of variables, descriptive statistics, and sample size. *Indian Dermatology Online Journal*, 10(1), 82.
https://doi.org/10.4103/idoj.idoj_468_18

Kenrick, D. T., Griskevicius, V., Neuberg, S. L., & Schaller, M. (2011). Renovating the Pyramid of Needs: Contemporary Extensions Built Upon Ancient Foundations. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5(3), 292–314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691610369469>

Kent State University. (2022b, April 4). *SPSS tutorials: One-way anova*. LibGuides. Retrieved April 24, 2022, from <https://libguides.library.kent.edu/SPSS/OneWayANOVA>.

Kent State University. (2022a, April 4). *SPSS tutorials: Independent samples T test*. LibGuides. Retrieved April 24, 2022, from <https://libguides.library.kent.edu/spss/independentttest>.

Kivunja, C. (2018). Distinguishing between theory, theoretical framework, and Conceptual Framework: A systematic review of lessons from the Field. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 7(6), 44. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v7n6p44>

Legal Information Institute. (2010). 15 U.S. Code § 1637 - Open End Consumer Credit Plans.

Legal Information Institute. Retrieved May 22, 2022, from

https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/15/1637#r_1.

Legal Information Institute. (2021). Drug trafficking. Legal Information Institute. Retrieved

August 12, 2022, from https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/drug_trafficking.

Lee, K. (2022, May 16). *Student shares sex trafficking story to raise awareness, help victims*.

University of South Carolina. Retrieved, from

https://sc.edu/uofsc/posts/2022/05/student_shares_story_as_sex_trafficking_survivor_to_raise_awareness.php#.Yoj-KS-B0k8.

Littlejohn, A. (2019, November 21). *Students speak out on social media sex trafficking*. The

Crimson White. <https://cw.ua.edu/56733/news/students-speak-out-on-social-media-sex-trafficking/>.

Lutz, R. M. (2018). Human trafficking education for Nurse Practitioners: Integration into standard curriculum. *Nurse Education Today*, 61, 66–69.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2017.11.015>

Mapp, S., Hornung, E., D’Almeida, M., & Juhnke, J. (2016). Local Law Enforcement Officers’ knowledge of human trafficking: Ability to define, identify, and assist. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 2(4), 329–342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2016.1143764>

Maslow, A. H. (1981). *Motivation and Personality*. *Google Books*. Harper & Row. Retrieved

August 9, 2022, from

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Motivation_And_Personality/DVmxDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0.

McCarthy, L. A. (2019). A Gendered Perspective on Human Trafficking Perpetrators: Evidence from Russia. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 6(1), 79–94.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2019.1571302>

McGrath, M., & The American Women's College Psychology Department. (2021). *Introduction to Theories of Personality. Pressbooks*. Bay Path University. Retrieved August 2, 2022, from <https://open.baypath.edu/psy321book/front-matter/introduction/>.

McKnight, S. J. (2022). *Gender Differences in Views of Vice: A Comparative Phenomenology of Prostitution and Human Sex Trafficking* (dissertation). Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA. Retrieved 2023, from <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4733&context=doctoral>.

McLeod, S. A. (2018, May 21). *Maslow's hierarchy of needs*. Canada College. Retrieved July 23, 2022, from <https://canadacollege.edu/dreamers/docs/Maslows-Hierarchy-of-Needs.pdf>.

Meshelemiah, J. C. A., & Lynch, R. E. (2019). The cause and consequence of human trafficking: Human rights violations. PB Pressbooks. The Ohio State University Pressbook.
<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/humantrafficking/>

Murray, A. (2017). Evidence-Based Human Trafficking Curriculum for Bsn Students: Use of a Multi-Model Teaching Methodology (dissertation). College of Nursing and Health

Sciences, Ashland University. Retrieved from

https://sigma.nursingrepository.org/bitstream/handle/10755/622943/1_Murray_A_p87014_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Nephrol, I. J. (2008). The Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism. *Indian Journal of Nephrology*, 135–140. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0971-4065.43686>

North Carolina Department of Administration. (2022a). NC DOA. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://ncadmin.nc.gov/advocacy/women/human-trafficking/what-human-trafficking>.

North Carolina Department of Administration. (2022b, January 12). NC DOA. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://ncadmin.nc.gov/advocacy/women/human-trafficking/what-human-trafficking>.

North Carolina Department of Administration. (2023). *Site page hero image*. Human Trafficking | NC DOA. <https://ncadmin.nc.gov/divisions/council-women-youth/human-trafficking>

Office for Victims of Crime. (2020, October 8). Understanding Labor Trafficking.

Office of Victims and Crime. (2021, March 30). Collecting Data to Better Understand Human Trafficking.

Orchard, T. (2019). Sex work and prostitution. *Encyclopedia of Sexuality and Gender*, 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-59531-3_15-1

- Oram, S., Abas, M., Bick, D., Boyle, A., French, R., Jakobowitz, S., Khondoker, M., Stanley, N., Trevillion, K., Howard, L., & Zimmerman, C. (2016). Human trafficking and health: A survey of male and female survivors in England. *American Journal of Public Health, 106*(6), 1073–1078. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2016.303095>
- Oregon State University. (2017, May 17). What is the Institutional Review Board (IRB)? Research Office. Retrieved October 9, 2022, from <https://research.oregonstate.edu/irb/frequently-asked-questions/what-institutional-review-board-irb>.
- Overholt, M. S. (2013, November). Human Trafficking Awareness (dissertation). East Carolina University. Retrieved from https://thescholarship.ecu.edu/bitstream/handle/10342/4338/Overholt_ecu_0600M_11081.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
- Outman, N. (2014). *Human sex trafficking in the United States*. Ferris State University. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://www.ferris.edu/moso/objectification/UStrafficking/index.htm>.
- Paladino, A., & Hill, M. (2017). Non-Experimental Design Webinar. Phoenix; University of Phoenix.
- Panigabutra-Roberts, A. (2012). (rep.). *Human Trafficking in the United States. Part I. State of the Knowledge*. University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1304&context=libraryscience>.

Parker, T. S. (2017). Human trafficking and study abroad. *Laws*, 6(3), 14.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/laws6030014>

Parker, T. (2020, September 22). Likert Scale Response Options. Gardner; Mount Wachusett Community College.

Patton, B. (2014). (thesis). College Students' Perceptions on Human Trafficking. Wichita State

University. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from

https://soar.wichita.edu/bitstream/handle/10057/10972/t14026_PATTON_Bailey_SP14.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Perkins, A. (2015). *Nursing Made Incredibly Easy!* Wolters Kluwer Health Inc.

Pierce, S. G. (2021, June 16). *A case for state-mandated human trafficking education in Schools.*

Human Trafficking Institute. <https://traffickinginstitute.org/a-case-for-state-mandated-human-trafficking-education-in-schools/>

Polaris, & The National Human Trafficking Hotline. (2020a). *Hotline statistics.* National Human Trafficking Hotline. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from

<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/states>.

Polaris, & The National Human Trafficking Hotline. (2020b, December 31). *North Carolina.*

National Human Trafficking Hotline. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/state/north-carolina>.

- Polaris. (2021, November 16). Human trafficking. Polaris. Retrieved April 10, 2022, from <https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/>.
- Polaris. (2018). 2018 Statistics from the National Human Trafficking Hotline.
- Rapp-McCall, L., Work, R., Lucio, R., & Work, F. (2021, July). (dissertation). *Public Awareness and Knowledge of Human Trafficking: Results from a National Poll*. Saint Leo University. Retrieved April 3, 2022, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353389329_Public_Awareness_and_Knowledge_of_Human_Trafficking_Results_from_a_National_Poll.
- Rosenblatt, K. (2014). Determining the vulnerability factors, lures and recruitment methods used to entrap American children into sex trafficking. *Sociology and Criminology-Open Access*, 02(01), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2375-4435.1000108>
- Sabella, D., & de Chesnay, M. (2018). Human trafficking and global health issues. *Case Studies in Global Health Policy Nursing*, 1–380. <https://doi.org/10.1891/9780826172112.0011>
- Salkind, N. J. (2010). Demographics. *Encyclopedia of Research Design*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412961288.n108>
- Sanchez, S. (2022). The World's Oldest Profession Gets a Makeover: Sex Work, OnlyFans, and Celebrity Participation. *Newcomb Scholars: Case Studies on Women, Gender, and Feminism*, 6(1). Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://journals.tulane.edu/ncs/article/view/3661>.

Scaramucci, J., & The Avery Center. (2022). OnlyFans: A Case Study of Exploitation in the Digital Age. The Avery Center.

Scott, Taylor, Alexandra M. Ingram, Shannon L. Nemer, and D. Max Crowley. 2019. "Evidence-Based Human Trafficking Policy: Opportunities to Invest in Trauma-Informed Strategies." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 64 (3-4): 348–58.
doi:10.1002/ajcp.12394.

Sinha, Risha, Elahe Tashakor, and Casey Pinto. 2018. "Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking in Central Pennsylvania: A Survey of Health-Care Professionals and Students." *Journal of Human Trafficking* 5 (2): 165–75.
doi:10.1080/23322705.2018.1448956.

Stoklosa, H., Grace, A. M., & Wittenberg, N. (2015). Medical Education on Human Trafficking. *AMA Journal of Ethics*.
<https://doi.org/10.1001/journalofethics.2015.17.10.medu1-1510>.

SurveyMonkey. (2022). Adding a Consent Statement or Privacy Notice. SurveyMonkey. Retrieved October 9, 2022, from <https://help.surveymonkey.com/en/create/consent-statements-privacy-notices/>.

Sutton, H. (2019). Identify potential victims of human trafficking on your campus. *Campus Security Report*, 15(11), 4–5. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casr.30485>

Szblewska, N. (2022). Modern Slavery and Migrant Smuggling: A Sustainable Development Conundrum. Jean Monnet Network on EU Law Enforcement.

- Terwilliger, A. M. (2021). *The Role of social media in Human Trafficking Victimization* (dissertation). *The Role of Social Media in Human. Trafficking Victimization*. Nova Southeastern University. Retrieved August 10, 2022, from <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2563500431?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>.
- Todres, J., & Diaz, A. (2020). Covid-19 and human trafficking—the amplified impact on vulnerable populations. *JAMA Pediatrics*, *175*(2), 123. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.3610>
- Toney-Butler, T. J., Ladd, M., & Mittel, O. (2020). Human Trafficking. U.S. National Library of Medicine. StatPearls. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28613660/>.
- Tourangeau, R. (2017). *The Palgrave Handbook of Survey Research*, 43–50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-54395-6>
- Troshynski, E. I. (2019). Interviews with Human Traffickers: Perceptions of Sex and Violence. In J. K. Blank (Ed.), *Broadening the Scope of Human Trafficking Research* (2nd). essay, Carolina Academic Press. Retrieved August 10, 2022, from <https://cap-press.com/pdf/HeilNichols2eOnlineOnlyChapters/heil%20nichols%20online%20chapter%2001%20Troshynski.pdf>.
- Troshynski, E. I., & Blank, J. K. (2007). Sex trafficking: An exploratory study interviewing traffickers. *Trends in Organized Crime*, *11*(1), 30–41. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-007-9015-8>

U.S. Department of Education. (2021). *Human trafficking*. Human Trafficking | U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.ed.gov/human-trafficking>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2012). IDENTIFYING VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING FACT SHEET.

U.S. Department of State. (2023, January 19). National Human Trafficking Prevention month 2023 - United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/national-human-trafficking-prevention-month-2023/>

U.S. Department of State. (2021b, September 14). *2021 trafficking in persons report - united states department of state*. U.S. Department of State. Retrieved March 26, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

U.S. Department of State. (2021c, January 10). Public Awareness & Training - United States Department of State. U.S. Department of State. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/humantrafficking-public-awareness-training/>.

U.S. Department of State. (2021d, January 10). *Identify and assist a trafficking victim - united states department of state*. U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/identify-and-assist-a-trafficking-victim/>

U.S. Department of State. (2021a, January 9). International and domestic law - united states department of state. U.S. Department of State. Retrieved June 26, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/international-and-domestic-law/>.

U.S. Department of State. (2022a, January 19). *About human trafficking - united states department of state*. U.S. Department of State. Retrieved March 26, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/humantrafficking-about-human-trafficking/>.

U.S. Department of State. (2022b, January 10). *National Human Trafficking Prevention Month - United States Department of State*. U.S. Department of State. Retrieved August 02, 2022, from <https://www.state.gov/national-human-trafficking-prevention-month/>.

U.S. Government Publishing Office. (2019, April 30). Protection act of 2003. govinfo.gov. Retrieved June 26, 2022, from <https://www.govinfo.gov/features/PROTECT-act>.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2013, January 16). *Human trafficking and smuggling*. ICE. <https://www.ice.gov/factsheets/human-trafficking>

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2010). Human Trafficking vs. Human Smuggling

United States Government Accountability Office. (2021, June). Sex Trafficking: Online Platforms and Federal Prosecutions.

United States Agency for International Development. (2023, March 27). *Countering trafficking in persons: Democracy, human rights, and governance*. U.S. Agency for International Development. <https://www.usaid.gov/trafficking>

United States Department of Justice. (2023, May 12). *Special programs and initiatives*. Human Trafficking. <https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/special-initiatives>

United States Sentencing Commission. (2021). *Drug trafficking offenses - United States sentencing commission*. United States Sentencing Commission. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/quick-facts/Drug_Trafficking_FY21.pdf.

The United States Department of Justice. (2017, January 6). *What is human trafficking?* <https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/what-is-human-trafficking>.

The United States Department of Justice. (2020, October 13). *What is human trafficking?* The United States Department of Justice. Retrieved March 27, 2022, from <https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/what-is-human-trafficking>.

Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, Pub. L No. 106-386, 114 Stat. 1466, 22 U.S.C. § 7101 (2000). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-106publ386/pdf/PLAW-106publ386.pdf>

Types of human trafficking. (2020). <https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Human-trafficking/Types-of-human-trafficking>

Weissbrodt, D. S., & La, V. C. de. (2007). *International human rights law: An introduction*. Google Books. Univ. of Pennsylvania Press. Retrieved June 26, 2022, from https://www.google.com/books/edition/International_Human_Rights_Law/RaU1U-4gBCkC?hl=en&gbpv=0.

The White House. (2021). *The National Action Plan to combat human trafficking - white house.*

The White House. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/National-Action-Plan-to-Combat-Human-Trafficking.pdf>.

Wagner, L. (2014). Organ Trafficking: More Than Just a Myth. *The University of Utah S.J.*

Quinney School of Law. August 18, 2023, <https://law.utah.edu/organ-trafficking-more-than-just-a-myth/>

Williams, T. (2021). Why is quantitative research important? GCU. Retrieved October 9, 2022,

from <https://www.gcu.edu/blog/doctoral-journey/why-quantitative-research-important>.

Wong, J. C., Hong, J., Leung, P., Yin, P., & Stewart, D. E. (2011). *Human trafficking: An*

evaluation of Canadian medical ... Education for Health. Retrieved April 2, 2022, from <https://www.educationforhealth.net/text.asp?2011/24/1/501/101457>.

Youth.gov. (2013). Sexual Exploitation & Sex Trafficking of Minors. Sexual Exploitation & Sex

Trafficking of Minors | Youth.gov. <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/trafficking-of-youth/sexual-exploitation-and-sex-trafficking>.

Zimmerman, C., & Kiss, L. (2017). Human trafficking and exploitation: A global health

concern. *PLOS Medicine*, 14(11). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002437>

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Student Recruitment Letter

Dear Students:

As a graduate student for the Helms School of Government at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Criminal Justice and Homeland Security. The purpose of my research is to measure the knowledge and awareness levels of students on the topics of human and sex trafficking, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 to 24 years of age and be enrolled as a full-time student (twelve credit hours) at Catawba College. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a two-part survey. Part I will ask for a participant's demographic information and will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Part II will ask participants various questions on the topics of human and sex trafficking and will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. It should take approximately 15 minutes total to participate in this survey. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please click here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/humantraffickingquestionnaire> to complete the attached survey.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey after clicking the link. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the button to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and you agree to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

Margaret Caroline Weiker
Doctoral Student at Liberty University

Appendix B: Permission Request Letter

Dear Mr. President,

As a graduate student in the Helms School of Government at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Homeland Security. The title of my research project is Human and Sex Trafficking: A Quantitative Examination of the Knowledge and Awareness of the College-Aged Population. The purpose of my research is first to measure the knowledge and awareness levels of the college-aged population on various human trafficking topics. Additionally, the purpose of my research is to analyze the relationship between knowledge of human and sex trafficking and students' demographic factors.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at Catawba College, as well as utilize the student population between the ages of 18-24 for participants in this study.

Participants will be asked to complete a two-part survey. Part one of this study will gather demographic data including socioeconomic status, sex, gender identity, race, religion, age, and geographical location. Part two of this survey will ask students to answer questions on the topics of human and sex trafficking. Specifically, questions will ask students to identify trafficking forms, willingness to intervene in a trafficking situation, and awareness of trafficking's prevalence. The data obtained from this study will not only be used to improve legislative efforts and implement anti-trafficking educational programs, but also seeks contribute to the prevention and termination of human trafficking practices.

Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval or respond by email. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,
Margaret Caroline Weiker
Doctoral Student, Liberty University

Appendix C: Letter of Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you **MUST** be between the ages of 18-24, and you **MUST** be enrolled as a full-time student (12 credit hours) at Catawba College. Taking part in this research project is both voluntary and anonymous. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

The purpose of the study is to measure student's knowledge and awareness of both human trafficking and sex trafficking related topics.

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete Part One or the demographic section of this survey. This will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.
2. Complete Part Two, or the knowledge and awareness section of this survey. This section will ask you various questions about human and sex trafficking and will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Participants may gain knowledge from participating in this study. Benefits to society include advancement of knowledge levels of vulnerable populations. Second, the data obtained in this study may advance anti-human trafficking efforts, including educational programs and improved anti-trafficking legislation. Last, this study seeks to positively contribute to the end of human trafficking.

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. The records of this study will be kept private. Participant responses will be anonymous (i.e., no data can be linked back to you) and will only be viewed by the researcher. All data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Catawba College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the survey at any time prior to submitting the survey. If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

The researcher conducting this study is Margaret Caroline Weiker. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her or. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University. Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You may print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you may contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I consent to participate in the study.

[OK]

Appendix D: Survey Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other
2. What is your age?
 - a. 18-20
 - b. 21-22
 - c. 23-24
3. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one)
 - a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - b. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - c. Black/African American
 - d. Hispanic/Latino
 - e. White/Caucasian
 - f. Other
4. What is your academic year?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Graduate student
5. My total estimated family income last year was:
 - a. Under \$15,000
 - b. Between \$15,000 and \$29,999
 - c. Between \$30,000 and \$49,999
 - d. Between \$50,000 and \$74,999
 - e. Between \$75,000 and \$99,999
 - f. Between \$100,000 and \$150,000
 - g. Over \$150,000
6. Where are you from?
 - a. United States
 - b. Outside the United States

Part II: Please choose the answer which best reflects your knowledge of human and sex trafficking.

7. I understand what human trafficking is or I have had prior education on human trafficking topics
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
8. Human trafficking and sex trafficking are two different forms of trafficking
 - a. Strongly agree

- b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
9. Prostitution and sex trafficking are two different crimes
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
10. Human trafficking is a global health crisis
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
11. All human traffickers are male
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
12. Females make up the majority of sex trafficking victims
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
13. People of low socioeconomic status are more likely to be trafficked compared to people of higher socioeconomic status
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
14. People of racial or ethnic minorities are more vulnerable to being trafficked
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
15. Children (persons under 18) are rarely victims of human or sex trafficking
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree

- e. Strongly Disagree
16. As a student, I feel vulnerable to being trafficked
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
17. I consider myself apart of a vulnerable population
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
18. I feel that the United States has done their part to stop human trafficking (ex. law enforcement, anti-trafficking campaigns, educational programs)
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
19. Anti-trafficking social media campaigns or educational programs would be beneficial to eliminating human trafficking
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
20. I believe that the United States should implement more anti-trafficking polices or legislation
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
21. I would be willing to intervene in a potential trafficking situation
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
22. I would like to learn more about human trafficking or anti-trafficking efforts (ex. educational course)
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree

e. Strongly Disagree

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. Please press DONE at the bottom of this page and close your browser.

[OK]

Appendix E: IRB Approval

February 28, 2023

Margaret Graham
Isaiah Stansbery

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-321 HUMAN AND SEX TRAFFICKING: A
QUANTITATIVE EXAMINATION OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF THE
COLLEGE-AGED POPULATION

Dear Margaret Graham, Isaiah Stansbery,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office