Surviving the Unthinkable:

Reintegrating Modern-Day Slaves

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Abstract

Trafficking in persons (TIP), also known as human trafficking, or modern-day slavery, is a global concern that affects every nation. Reintegrating victims back into society is crucial to victim recovery and the overall reduction of trafficked persons. Unfortunately, a significant number of victims return to trafficking rings after they have been rescued due to a myriad of reasons, such as lack of resources and public support, addiction, and psychological trauma. In my research, I seek to identify how the implementation of psychological treatment correlates with a victim's successful reintegration into society, and what type(s) of treatment results in successful reintegration. During the conference presentation, I intend to utilize media and resourceful handouts to outline the current state of the debate surrounding the psychological approach to supporting and successfully reintegrating trafficked victims into society, and identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the literature.

Rationale for the project

Aside from the human rights abuses evident throughout the trafficking/slavery realm for an estimated 28 million people worldwide, this illegal, and atrocious act elicits approximately $150 billion annually (International Labour Office, Geneva 2014). In 2021, the U.S. Justice Department invested more than $85 million to combat human trafficking and support survivors (Garland 2022). There is a lack of mental health care available to trafficking victims, compounded by a myriad of other traumatic effects of trafficking, which often times, leads to those same victims returning to their captors. This can result from a lack of financial stability, drug addiction, dependence on the captor, or lack of other options to survive.

Human trafficking is the fastest-growing, and second-largest criminal industry in the world, human trafficking has become a national-level concern prioritized by the U.S. government, and international governments alike (IATA 2023; OAG 2022; Roney and Villano 2020). There is a significant gap in academic research surrounding the benefits of psychological treatment for victims (Marburger and Pickover 2020; Palozzi 2023). Research shows that more than 30% of survivors have stated that they were not provided substantial mental health treatment and other medical healthcare after being rescued, but it is unclear how many survivors have become re-victimized as a result of not obtaining necessary psychological treatment (Palozzi 2023). I hypothesize that effective psychological treatment of survivors will prevent victims from returning to their captors, and reduce worldwide spending substantially by preventing organizations from expending resources more than one time for each victims.

In my research, I will seek to explore qualitative and quantitative methods to identify the need for and capabilities of psychological treatment for trafficking victims, and how these services may prevent victims from returning to their captors, and therefore successfully reintegrating into society. Generally, statistical, or quantitative data surrounding the topic of human trafficking is pulled from government organizations or government-funded organizations. A much smaller pool of academic literature exists regarding these topics, and even less expounding upon the specific need for psychological treatment for victims. In my research, I will seek to identify how the implementation of psychological treatment correlates with a victim's

successful reintegration into society, and what type(s) of treatment results in successful reintegration.

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