

Should the Sale of Human Organs Be Legal?

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The illegal organ trade is estimated to generate \$840 million to \$1.7 billion annually (Organ Trafficking: The Unseen Form of Human Trafficking, 2018). The reason for this illegal trade is that there simply are not enough donor organs. Due to that, 17 People die each day waiting for an organ transplant (Organ Donation Statistics, 2020). Not only that, but every 9 minutes a new person is added to the transplant waiting list in the United States alone. This shows that there is a clear and urgent need for more organs. Organ scarcity has been a major problem that we need to find a solution for. A controversial solution to this problem is to legalize the sale of human organs by the government. However, this paper argues that it should remain illegal, As legalizing the sale would bring about exploiting the poor and result in health risks on both the donor and the donee.

First of all, proponents argue that legalizing the sale of human organs would be exploiting the poor. The poor are the most targeted demographic of such legalization. “Most donors are poor, and because they are in low-paid jobs living in very bad conditions, the reason for their donation is simply paying off their debt, it is not altruism” (Adair & Wigmore, 2011). For example, according to a study conducted on the Iranian organ selling system, 70% of people who donate kidneys are impoverished (Krishnan, 2018). These donors are not selling their kidneys because they want to help other people, they are forced by poverty to sell their body parts. This is clearly proven by a case study done in Chennai on more than 300 participants who sold their kidneys on the black market, the participants noted that they actually suffered more after the transplant, and reported that they failed to see the consequences of such surgeries because they were blinded by poverty. The study carries on to show that more than 95% of the participants sold their kidneys to pay off their debt (Saradamoyee, n.d.). In other words, legalizing the sale of human organs puts the poor at risk of exploitation.

Furthermore, legalizing the sale of human organs would pose major health risks to both the donor and the donee. This is due to the inherent nature of such transactions. “Many kidney sellers would agree that they have suffered negative effects from the transactions, even years after the operation. the effects do not only impact their bodies, but their minds and lives” (Scheper-Hughes, 2016). To illustrate, a 2017 study shows that approximately one-third of Solid-organ transplantation (SOT) patients will experience a neurological complication after surgery (Di Matteo, 2018). In addition, according to another study in India, about 86% of participants reported a deterioration in their health status after nephrectomy. Also, 79% would not recommend that others sell a kidney. In the end, the study concluded that selling a kidney does not lead to long-term economic benefits and it is associated with a decline in general health (Goyal, 2002). Aside from that, the consequences are not only physical. Other studies have suggested an increase in depression, anxiety, physiological and cognitive distress (Di Matteo, 2018). Put differently, the kidney is not just a “spare” organ, there are damaging physical and psychological effects pre and post-transplant.

Nevertheless, some critics may argue that legalizing the sale of human organs may save more lives by increasing organ donations. At first glance, it may seem logical that this statement is correct. However, upon closer examination, it is clear that it is much more complicated than that. To begin with, The people selling their organs are doing so for financial reasons because they are in poor circumstances, meaning they probably live in unhealthy and unhygienic conditions where they might bring about STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) like AIDS or HIV and other conditions which affect the quality of the organs. This can have major consequences because the donor is selling their organ which was in a bad condition in the first place, now they are left worse off. And the donee who is in need of healthy, strong organs, is now receiving organs which might transmit diseases and ruin

their health even more. To confirm this, one study shows that the rate of mortality as a consequence of disease transmission in organ transplants was 22% (Rawlinson, 2018). In other words, while it may seem that the trade may increase organs, the new organs are more likely to transmit diseases and cause more harm.

As can be seen, while legalizing the sale of human organs may seem like a solution for organ scarcity, it actually would result in even bigger problems. Because of how hard organs are to find, a lot of poor people would be exploited in such a system and they will suffer severely. Furthermore, It would have greater health risks and cause more harm than good. While an increase in organs is vital due to the huge waiting lists in many hospitals, it is obvious that legalizing the sale of organs is not the way to go. To conclude, even though 17 people die waiting for organs each day, I hope it became obvious that the trade of human organs is not the best solution for this difficult problem.

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