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**Female Trafficking Globally**

**Introduction**

Worldwide, around two million women and children are sold; and seventy percent of these women and children are coerced into the trafficking industry with the promise of a stable job and a better life.

President Obama addressed the subject of trafficking as follows: “The victims of modern slavery have many faces. They are men and women, adults and children. Yet, all are denied basic human dignity and freedom. . . All too often suffering from horrible physical and sexual abuse, it is hard for them to imagine that there might be a place of refuge” (McCrory 125). Escape for these victims can seem impossible when their captors threaten their lives and families’ lives, making them feel powerless as they are put to work in fields, sweatshops, and brothels. Women and children are the targeted victims in the sex trafficking industry. The U.S. State Department reports that about 1 million children are “exploited by the global commercial sex trade every year, 80% of the transnational victims are women and girls, 70% of the female victims are trafficked into the commercial sex industry, and the remaining 30% are victims of forced labor” (McCrory 127).

Some third-world countries are infamous for their high crime rate, especially in sex trafficking. Several countries and global independent agencies have turned their attention to the problem of trafficking, molding solutions derived from intuition, studies, and statistics.

To understand the socioeconomic problems arising from the illegal sex industry, one must first realize which factorspromote trafficking. In order to effectively end trafficking, these key questions must be asked: What makes a country more susceptible to high rates of sex trafficking? What problems arise as a result of trafficking? And what actions should humanity take to end this widespread underground industry?

**Causes**

Several contributors that fuel the trafficking industry are public toleration of sex and prostitution, passive attitudes towards inhumane crimes, and lack of public education (Kuzma 27). Also, a collapse of morality in modern society has permitted humanity to allow the victimization and rape of all people – men, women, and children (McCrory 131-132).

Countries encountering high unemployment rates, a changing government, or poor national health attract transnational crime groups because those countries allocate their resources towards recovery and economic prosperity instead of enforcing the law (Denisova 30). Other countries experiencing an ecological disaster, going through “political instability,” transitioning to a new economy, feeling low levels of “public morality” or a mistrust in the government’s “ability to adequately protect or prosecute criminals” promote the formation of crime groups (Denisova 32). All these factors contribute towards an indomitable trafficking empire, guaranteeing an arduous fight of humanity against evil.

**Problems Caused by Trafficking**

**Problem: High Crime**

While there has been improvement in addressing humanitarian issues worldwide, sex trafficking has actually become more prevalent over the last decade (Kristof and WuDunn 11). Human trafficking is a $32 billion per year criminal industry, making it the second largest and fastest-growing crime worldwide (Kuzma 27). According to *Half the Sky*, “trafficking is often defined as taking someone (by force or deception) across an international border. The U.S. State Department has estimated that between 600,000 and 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year, 80 percent of them young girls, mostly for sexual exploitation” (Kristof and WuDunn 10). Because of the recent rise in globalization, trafficking young girls has been made easier because many countries have not internationalized their laws. Legislation has been passed in several third world countries to fight trafficking, yet most of the countries are not compiling their resources successfully. “Internationalized standards in criminal law” should be used “to facilitate not only the investigation of trafficking cases, but also to allow the bringing of criminal proceedings against all members of criminal groups, regardless of the country in which they are located” (Denisova 36)*.*

**Problem: Weakened Economy**

Countries going through economic distress stimulate crime groups because of decreased standard of living and high unemployment, forcing women and children to become vulnerable when searching for work in the streets. For example, when the collapse of Communism in Indochina and Eastern Europe occurred, many countries associated in that area experienced a rise in sex slavery because the economic breakdown caused criminal gangs to rise and fill the “power vacuum” (Kristof and WuDunn, 11).

**Problem: Endangered Health of Victims**

Adirect and pressing problem the victim undergoes is finding the means to recover psychologically and physiologically once they have escaped. Many brothels aim to break the spirit of the girls to prevent their escape by subjecting them to rape, violence, and shame (Kristof and WuDunn 10).

A study conducted that focused on the mental health status of trafficked females included anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The group of women studied were from Nepal; the experimental group were those forced into sex work and the control group were those who made a living off of domestic work (non-sex workers). The sex workers had a higher proportion of anxiety (97.7%), depression (100%), and PTSD (80.8%) when compared to non-sex workers. Also, there was a higher rate of HIV infection among those who had endured trafficking (29.6%) than those who had domestic jobs (0%) (Tsutsumi 1). Many female sex slaves die in their late twenties from diseases, primarily AIDS (Kristof and WuDunn 9). Overall, the physical health and mental health of those trafficked are at higher risk compared to those not involved in the sex industry (Tsutsumi 1).

According to McCrory, young trafficked females are apt to “suffer from aggression, self-loathing, suicide attempts, confusion, self-abuse, depression, full-blown psychoses, hallucinations . . . and emotional instability; they are unable to trust or form relationships, to readjust to the world outside of captivity, or to learn and develop normally” (130).

An issue related to rehabilitating the victims is the time the government takes to recognize the trafficked females as victims, then sanctioning the victim services to respond appropriately (McCrory 129). The time period between the victim’s escape and the start of rehabilitating is vital to the process of recovery; withholding aid from the victims will only prolong their recovery period.

**Problem: Underutilized Human Resources**

The growing trafficking industry generates around seven to twelve billion annually, its profits only surpassed by the arms and narcotics trade. Since the industry is growing exponentially, women continue to be viewed as inferior socially and economically (Denisova 35). Many young trafficked girls are robbed of their right to life and independence. According to *Half the Sky*, young girls are usually the preferred choice for customers because they are not as likely to be currently infected with AIDS. Repeatedly taken advantage of, the young girls are at high risk of contracting AIDS in the future and dying an early death (Kristof and WuDunn 12).

Women comprise half the world; when a country refuses to acknowledge their individualism, half of their country’s human resources disappear. In poorer countries, many families will only educate their sons, keeping their girls at home or sometimes selling them into the trafficking industry. “The consequence of failing to educate girls is a capacity gap not only in billions of dollars of GNP but also in billions of IQ points” (Kristof and WuDunn 239). Many economic analysts have noted that in third world countries, the most underutilized resource is women. When the majority of human beings sold as objects in the trafficking industry are women, the countries’ views of women diminish as does their value and contributions to society (Kristof and WuDunn 238). Empowering women into the “economy will yield economic dividends and help address global poverty” while bringing justice to those enslaved.

**Solutions**

By understanding the inhumanity and evils arising from trafficking, one can start to implement solutions to hinder the trafficking industry. When reading the following solutions, the key words to remember are “human,” “trafficking,” “humanity,” and “restoration” (McCrory 125). By putting these words together, one can easily see the inhumane and deprived world that affects all those bound by slavery and sex trafficking. By recognizing the problems of trafficking women worldwide, one can find solutions to prevent the dehumanization of half the world.

**Solution: Educating and Empowering Females Globally**

Trafficking seems most prevalent in countries where women are deemed worthless or a burden to society (Denisova 34). “The improvement of the social and economic situation of women and children . . . should be a priority task for both government agencies and social organizations” (Denisova 35). Education, especially of girls, is critical for the development and empowerment of women. It raises economic productivity, reduces poverty, lowers infant and maternal mortality, and helps improve nutritional status and health (Corron 47). For over a decade, education for girls has been identified as one of the best solutions to reversing the relentless trend of poverty and disease devastating large portions of sub-Saharan Africa (Corron 48). Girls in rural communities are the most likely to be overlooked in the education system because of poverty and their perceived socioeconomic status. Making education a priority among females in rural communities will ensure that they are prepared mentally and economically, reducing their chances of being trafficked or forced into an early marriage (Corron 47). It is important for people to realize that women “hold up half the sky”; hindering women from their natural rights as human beings also hinders the world from fully developing and reaching its full potential. Educating girls is the key to fighting the trafficking empire while unlocking development globally (Corron 49).

**Solution: Rehabilitating Victims**

According to *Half the Sky*, rescuing females is the easiest part (Kristof and WuDunn 39).

Once the women and girls have escaped the trafficking industry, they are faced with a myriad of problems, including a need for psychological, physiological, social, and economic stability. Several anti-trafficking organizations have been formed recently to locate, rescue, and aid trafficked females. Yet many do not receive the proper support from the government to fully assist them. “There are very few centers for rehabilitation, virtually no psychological counseling and the cost of medical treatment is exorbitant for the diseases . . . contracted” (McCrory 130). Increased government funds and support of the public will increase effectiveness of the rehabilitation services as they help the women back on their feet. “While there is an increased awareness of trafficking among state legislators many have been slow to create effective legislation” (McCrory 129). To decrease the time taken to aid the victim and to speed the victim’s rehabilitation, legal services that give trafficked victims priority should be created.

Many of the victims require certain psychological care and medical support, sanction to remain in the country, education to attain self-sustaining work, and protection of their gender and human rights (McCrory 131). With proper care and provision, these victims will be able to gain what they once lost – human rights **(**Kristof and WuDunn 41).

**Solution: Public Awareness**

The general public plays an important role in the sex trafficking industry. Remaining ignorant or passive towards the trafficking epidemic is an active choice that supports traffickers and the decay of society. By creating awareness throughout the general population, grassroots to treetops organizations will be formed to eliminate trafficking and rehabilitate the victims. (McCrory 131)

To “foster more successful investigations and prosecutions of traffickers,. . . prevention programs should be developed to conduct strategic public awareness campaigns in the media and among social organizations to assist in the struggle with trafficking in women and children” (Denisova 35). Local and federal law enforcement also play a huge role in public education. Adopting strict laws, increasing discipline of traffickers, and training officers to respond appropriately when encountering trafficked victims will greatly contribute in the battle against the sex slavery.

To avoid the promotion of trafficking, the public should also be aware of the misconception that sex trafficking would be eliminated if commercial sex were legalized. Studies of countries where prostitution has been legalized have documented the reverse. A study published in “volume 41 of World Development, concluded that on average, countries where prostitution is legal experience larger reported human trafficking inflows” (Kuzma 7). Legalizing prostitution increases the demand for prostitution, expanding the trafficking market and encouraging buyers to no longer be cautious. Increased demand means increase in supply; traffickers will continue to search for targets until the supply of sex workers meets the increasing demand (Kuzma 7). Providing the public with facts and potential solutions willnot only encourage the victims through recovery, but also invoke appropriate changes to the law and meaningful actions of people.

**Conclusion**

While fighting against the horrors of female global sex trafficking, it is important to note that it should not be labeled a “women’s issue.” The sad reality is that “women’s issues are marginalized, and in any case sex trafficking and mass rape should no more be seen as women’s issues than slavery was a black issue or the Holocaust was a Jewish issue. These are all humanitarian concerns, transcending any one race, gender, or creed” (Kristof and WuDunn 233-234). By fighting against the sexual slavery of females and supporting their recovery, society is contributing towards empowering women worldwide while eliminating the problems caused by trafficking.

Human trafficking is a “malignancy that is slowly gaining recognition as one of the paramount human rights problems of this century” (Kristof and WuDunn, *xiii*). Yet by implementing the solutions above, a stronger community network will develop to create a powerful voice for the victims who are currently powerless to speak against the abuse and inhumane actions done to them. Fighting against female sex trafficking globally will transform oppression into opportunity and empower females worldwide.

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