The Investigation of Human Trafficking in North Carolina: An Analysis of Prevention Education

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WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

“The subtle or overt, physical or psychological, coercion and exploitation of a person to provide labor or sexual demands” (DOJ, 2023)

- The most prevalent form of victimization in the world
  - As both a crime against the person and the country (DHS, 2021).

- Second-largest global criminal industry
  - A reported annual profit of over $150 billion and over 25 million victims (DHS, 2021).

- Targets our most vulnerable populations
  - 80% of trafficked victims in the Americans are female while over ⅓ are minors (CTDC, 2022)
HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina is ranked ninth in the United States for human trafficking. The prevalence of major highways/interstates, military populations, and agricultural land contribute to the high rates of trafficking (Polaris Project, 2022).
WHAT CAN WE DO?

Research suggests that students in grades K-12 are among the highest-risk populations targeted by traffickers as victims (Ellery, 2019).

Prevention education efforts effectively contribute to a decrease in trafficking numbers (Henderson, 2016).

Educational institutions should take advantage of the opportunity to inform both students and the public
SO WHAT EXACTLY IS PREVENTION EDUCATION?

A comprehensive model addressing the root causes of interpersonal violence, sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking. Prevention strategies are intended to target the individual, the community, and external societal factors that influence, and are influenced by, human trafficking.
OUR RESEARCH

IDENTIFY CAUSES/RISK FACTORS
Using existing academic literature, identify the major causes and indicators of human trafficking in NC

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS
Through a series of qualitative interviews, gauge what is needed for an effective prevention education program in NC

RISK INDEX MAP
Develop a risk index map to estimate the true prevalence of trafficking in NC

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
Develop policy recommendations for an effective state-mandated prevention education program in NC
TRAFFICKING OPERATIONS
TYPES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

1. Sex Trafficking

The coercion or abduction of individuals, predominantly women and children, into the realm of commercial sex exploitation (Keskin et al., 2020).

61% of identified cases of human trafficking in Charlotte were sex trafficking (CMHTTF, 2023).

Often involves the manipulation of victims through psychological coercion, physical violence, and debt servitude (Nichols and Heil, 2014).

2. Forced Labor

Encompasses a multitude of sectors wherein victims are subject to coercion, physical abuse, and deplorable working conditions (Zhang et al., 2019).

Often work long and difficult hours and receive little to no financial compensation.

Debt bondage is a common tactic of traffickers (Keskin et al., 2020).
BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS OF TRAFFICKERS

1. **Traits**
   - Narcissism
   - Rationalization of actions

2. **Manipulation**
   - Psychological pressure
   - Deceitful promises
   - Threats

3. **Recruitment**
   - Deceptive job offers
   - Fraudulent marriages
   - Abduction
   - Blackmail
   - Threats

4. **Subjugation**
   - Abuse
   - Isolation
   - Financial control

(Zhang et al., 2019)
IDENTIFICATION CHALLENGES

Due to the hidden nature of the crime, law enforcement agencies struggle to identify cases of human trafficking.

- Transportation networks facilitate trafficking
- Commercial drivers used to identify trafficking
- Research suggests collaboration and training is necessary between law enforcement agencies and the trucking industry

(Wilson, 2013)
Trafficking reaches beyond the shadows of society, infiltrating disparate sectors such as agriculture and the military.

**Military**
- Victims often recruited through deceptive techniques
- The hierarchical nature of the military fosters environments of abuse and coercion

**Agriculture**
- Agricultural operations are a large indicator of undocumented populations
- Victims are often promised employment and improved prospects

(Keskin et al., 2020)
RISK FACTORS
There are several risk factors/indicators of human trafficking.

Women and children are among our most vulnerable populations.

But there are also other indicators of high-risk populations:

- Minorities
- Undocumented immigrants
- LGBTQ+ individuals
- Individuals with limited education
- Children in foster care
- Violent crime/abuse
- Rape
- Poverty
- Proximity to major highways
- Proximity to agricultural land
- Proximity to military bases
04 EFFECTS
Commonly identified physical effects of trafficking include:

- Headaches
- Stomach pain
- Back pain
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
  - HIV
- Dizziness
- Weight loss
- Memory loss
- Work-related injuries

Commonly identified physical effects on adolescent victims include:

- Inadequate diet
- Insufficient hygiene
- Beatings/abuse
- Neglect
- Unwanted pregnancies
- Unsafe abortions
- Pregnancy complications
- STIs
  - HIV/AIDS
MENTAL EFFECTS

Commonly reported mental health problems among trafficked individuals include:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- PTSD
- Somatization
- Global severity distress
- Other severe psychiatric disorders

(Oram et al., 2016) (Altun et al., 2017)

Commonly reported mental health problems among trafficked adolescent victims include:

- Affective or mood disorders
- Depression
- Hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Shame
- Increased need for mental health services

(Ottisova et al., 2018)
ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Impacts on the Economy

- $150 billion business (Abudu, 2018)
  - Labor trafficking profits about $3.8 billion (Suchland, 2015)
  - Sex trafficking profits over $27.8 billion (Suchland, 2015)
- Nearly $19.6 billion lost earnings have resulted (Suchland, 2015)
- Specific impacts on the economy are limited in knowledge (Suchland, 2015)

Individual Impacts

- Trafficked victims have difficulty:
  - Securing a consistent income (Novotney, 2023)
    - Lack of education
    - Lack of work history
    - Criminal records
  - Finding safe housing (Gardner, 2023)
  - Obtaining healthcare (Gardner, 2023)
  - Purchasing food (Gardner, 2023)
  - Paying bills (Gardner, 2023)
FEDERAL AND STATE STATUTES
FEDERAL STATUTES

Human Trafficking

- The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000
- The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017
- The Abolish Human Trafficking Act of 2017
- The Frederick Douglas Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2018

Prevention Education

There are no federally mandated violence prevention education requirements in the U.S.
North Carolina passed Senate Bill 199 in 2019, which requires public and charter schools in the state to adopt training programs for child sexual abuse and human trafficking.
06 PREVENTION EDUCATION
QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

A combination of qualitative data gathered from stakeholder interviews and existing academic literature was used to identify effective policy recommendations for a state-mandated prevention education program in North Carolina.

Interview conducted with 6 key stakeholders on human trafficking in North Carolina and related prevention education efforts.
Using the information gained from our stakeholder interviews, we gathered the following key findings:

- Four pillars of prevention education
- Four challenges of prevention education
FOUR PILLARS OF PREVENTION EDUCATION

Four key components that should be included in an effective state-mandated prevention education program in North Carolina.

- Trauma Informed
- Evidence-Based Practices
- Inclusivity
- Public Health Model
01 TRAUMA INFORMED

- 70% of adults who report trauma experience it before 16 yrs old (Champine, 2021)
- Academic impacts
- In practice:
  - Acknowledge history and consequences
  - Emphasis on strength, healing, and resistance
EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

- “The conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individuals” (Hannes 2019)
- “Context” as primary layer (Hannes 2019)
- Teacher selection, lesson implementation, and student wellbeing (Klassen, 2021).
03 INCLUSIVITY

- Diversity of student populations
- Cultural recognition and vulnerabilities (Martino 2018)
- Equitable access and modifications (Ferguson 2018)
PUBLIC HEALTH MODEL

**MUST...**

- Align strategies with **public health initiatives**
- Stress the importance of:
  - Raising awareness
  - Providing information
  - Promoting proactive measures to **mitigate risks**
- Adapt to changing population dynamics, economic development, and lifestyle trends through **community-based strategies**
FOUR CHALLENGES OF PREVENTION EDUCATION

Four major obstacles to implementing a state-mandated prevention education program that should be considered by policymakers:

- Political Climate
- Parents/Guardians
- Reflectiveness
- Funding
01 POLITICAL CLIMATE

- Polarized political environment
- Underdeveloped political awareness and correlates
  - Deters politicians and policy makers
02 PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- Senate Bill 49 Ratification ("Parent’s Bill of Rights")
- FERPA & HIPAA Regulations
  - Gives parents the authority to approve prevention education
  - Removes instruction in K-4 grade
- State responsibility to maintain nonviolent and healthy society
Reflectiveness

- Authentic reflection of a geographic region's demographics
- Educators must have an understanding of the intricacies of diverse populations including cultural differences and gives them the tools to respond to these
FUNDING

1. NGOs and Government misalignment
2. Human trafficking lacks priority status
   (Blanton, 2020)
3. Competition for finite resources
4. Continuous unequal & minimal resources
to educational institutions (Think Again: Is Education Funding in America Still Unequal?, n.d.)
Prevention education has emerged as a critical tool in the fight against human trafficking by raising awareness, educating communities, and empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to recognize, prevent, and report instances of trafficking. While not yet federally or state-mandated, prevention education serves as a feasible and effective solution to defeating human trafficking.
THANK YOU!

ANY QUESTIONS?
HELPFUL RESOURCES

1. National Human Trafficking Hotline
2. NC Stop Human Trafficking
4. Human Trafficking | NC DOA
5. Human Trafficking | NC Coalition Against Sexual Assault
6. Project No Rest
7. The Polaris Project
8. Human Trafficking Resources | UNC Hospital's Beacon Program


RESOURCES cont.


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