

Maria Prymak

Dr. Manuel

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Literature Review: What are the factors that contribute to the extent of sex trafficking of women  
in the United States?

Sex trafficking is a form of slavery that, according to Merriam-Webster, is defined as “the illegal business of recruiting, harboring, transporting, obtaining, or providing a person and especially a minor for the purpose of sex”. As of today, the measure against the sex trafficking system across the United States focus especially on harsher criminal legislation or punishments related to when traffickers are caught as well as improving international police cooperation.

There are various factors that contribute to the extent of human sex trafficking. While the issue is recognized as a public concern, there is much progress that must take place in order to decrease the rapid rate at which it is occurring all over the world and at which sex trafficking of women in the United States is growing exponentially. Especially in the United States, women are targeted and exploited as sex workers or unwilling and forced members of the sex industry. Force, fraud, and coercion are methods used to introduce women to the dangerous world of sex trafficking.

Analyzing the root elements that contribute to the sex trafficking of women, as well as understanding the statistics, will lead to creating more effective solutions to eliminate the sex trafficking industry, preventing the catastrophic amount of sex trafficking related deaths, increasing exposure to help women stay safe and dismantling the systematic trafficking.

Before examining the consequences of sex trafficking of women in the United States, first it is important to understand the perpetuation of this issue in our country and why the cycle has yet to be controlled or dismantled. Annette Latrice Alagbala, of The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, explains in her article, “Power, law, and culture: Service providers' perspectives of the contributing factors to the perpetuation of the human sex trafficking industry within the united states”, how this vicious cycle is able to continue. This research is built on exploring the factors that perpetuate the sex trafficking industry in the United States. Despite the focus being on the United States, the global concern stretches beyond borders where the oppression of women preserves. As seen in Alagbala’s thesis, sex trafficking remains inadequately defined and built upon sexist ideologies that lead to the prevalence of it. These sexist ideologies perpetuate the concepts or ideas of victim blaming, rape culture, hostile sexism and emphasizing women’s behaviour to avoid sexual assault rather than holding offenders accountable and stopping harassment against women from the offenders themselves. She discusses the legal, political, and social conventions that can be analyzed in order to combat sex trafficking. As Alagbala suggests, “Increasing the attention on the often-overlooked contributing factors to sex trafficking is a necessity for understanding its functioning and continuance, as well as to eliminate the covertness of a crime of which perpetrators are often protected and victims are largely ignored and, or criminalized” (Alagbala). Due to sex trafficking being perpetuated by a systemic platform, Alagbala notes that “social and political systems and systems of oppression conceptualize sex slavery” (Alagbala 8). The article “Sex Trafficking and the Sex Industry: The Need for Evidence-Based Theory and Legislation”, written by Ronald Weitzer, a sociologist specializing in criminology and a professor at George Washington University who is known for

his publications on police-minority relations and on the sex industry, also points out a similar position on sex trafficking. His article advocates for the prohibition of all sexual commerce, including the adult entertainment industry. He believes that the institutionalized factors of the treatment of women highly contribute to sexual exploitation. "In order to further discredit the practice of prostitution and delegitimize systems where prostitution is legal and regulated by the government, oppression writers have fused prostitution with sex trafficking" (Weitzer). In his article, Weitzer acknowledges the active pandemic of human trafficking, and how victims are essentially slaves, abused psychologically, emotionally, mentally, and physically. Essentially he claims that in order to better establish solutions to decrease sex trafficking, the need for more proactive legislation is necessary.

Aside from the complications on a foundational level, there are outside forces that lead to women becoming involved with sex trafficking in the United States. "Social Issues in Debating over Human Trafficking and Factors that Facilitate its Growth", written by Diana Gabriela Reianu, a teaching assistant at the Department of European Studies and Governance at Babeş-Bolyai University in Romania, describes the factors that push women into sex trafficking. According to her report at the international level, the method by which women are recruited is through direct contact. Women are often offered well-paid jobs and favorable conditions in which they may travel in hopes of "bettering" their lives. Reianu investigates the exogenous factors, as well as the endogenous ones where "where we find its own life history of that human involved in traffic", a category in which will intersects "the causes that, at the individual level, will constitute predispositions for such occupational orientation" (Reianu). Other instances such as economic difficulties, social violence, domestic violence, crime, political conflict, armed

conflict, natural disasters also lead to desperate situations and make people vulnerable to various forms of exploitation (Reianu). Overall she concludes that poverty and unemployment are the leading contributors for women to become exposed to trafficking. “The general opinion is that, in the most cases, people find themselves as a victim due to their poor economic situation and as a result of their search for a better lifestyle and decent living conditions. Faced with disadvantaged situations, these people are often attracted by criminal groups who are taking advantage of their situation” (Reianu). In summary, push factors, or circumstances that force women to leave their environments are due to socio-economic disparities such as low-level education, gender discrimination, violence, and of course poverty.

An essential element in exploring the factors that contribute to the extent of sex trafficking of women in the United States is the framing by which newspapers use oppositional framing techniques to achieve their agendas. A dissertation written by Billy James Ulibarri, professor of sociology at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in 2015, explores the ways by which the framing techniques used by anti-trafficking campaigns to tell the sex trafficking stories in newspapers can be misrepresentative and furthermore that the narrative of the dangerous sex trafficking sex industry go beyond sexual acts. Ulibarri brings forward an essential point related to how human trafficking and sex trafficking are treated as separate issues when they are, in fact, very intertwined and co-dependant. He claims that sex trafficking has become a “stand in” (Ulibarri) for human trafficking and that not enough is said by large anti-sex trafficking campaign in recognition of the significantly larger group of victims of trafficking that is not sex related. This source is essential to exploring the scope and extent of sex trafficking in the United

States as it explores the issue from a different lens that is necessary through the continued attempt to understand the causations, correlations and contributing factors to the problem.

The evidence and explored sources in this literary review serve as testaments and tactical evidence for the exploration of the scope and extent of sex trafficking of women as an issue in the United States. Through the analyzing of the room elements that contribute to sex trafficking and the statistical causes and correlations to the issue in a more macro perspective, deeper and more significant insight on the issues that perpetuate the evil cycle of sex trafficking were unveiled. To create more effective solutions to dismantling the sex trafficking industry and preventing the nature of the industries growth, questions related to rape culture, victim blaming, and the sexist ideologies that continue to put women in danger, our institutions must provide more effective coverage of sex-trafficking related stories and reduce the factors that make it possible.

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- Celebrities, prisons (women out of prison) → common way promising them