

SEX TRAFFICKING: WHERE IS THE RESEARCH?

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Sex trafficking (ST) is a subtype of human trafficking

In 2017, the International Labour Organization estimated 4.8 million victims of ST worldwide.

In 2018, 67.3% of the United States and U.S. territories charged at least one human trafficking case, of which 85% involved sex trafficking (Human Trafficking Institute, 2018).

Sex trafficking includes a wide variety of traditionally accepted forms of labor, including commercial sex, exotic dancing and pornography (Logan, Walker, & Hunt, 2009).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Ethical strategies and risk management processes are critical when working with this population (Lundy, 2007). It is important to identify risks and create strategies to minimize risk. More research is required to address ethical considerations when working with sex trafficked clients in mental health settings.

It is important to evaluate scope of practice. Counselors should seek continued education or specific trainings as it can be prevalent in your working community.

Limits to confidentiality and privacy when working with minors can be different for each state. Counselors should seek out consultation or supervision while building clinical experience with this population.

Counselors should also be informed of community resources for individuals potentially impacted by sex trafficking.

Described by the Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (V-TVPA) of 2000 (Pub. L. No.106-386) as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.”

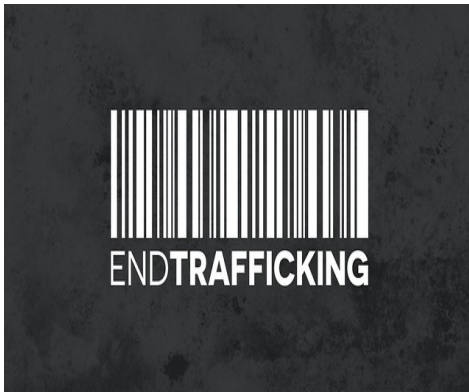
CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Culture can inform clients’ assessment of whether or not they are victims of sexual trafficking. It may also inform how they report their symptoms (Chico, Laura Shipler, 2009). More research is required focusing on how sex trafficking is assessed and treated among different cultural groups in mental health settings.

It is important to assess for risk factors such as gang affiliation, exposure to violence, financial risk factors, unstable living conditions, and risky behaviors (e.g., lying, risky sexual behavior, online sexual behavior or relationships)

Interventions should also address structural conditions (e.g., homelessness, domestic abuse, child abuse, parental neglect, immigration) that increase risk of engaging in sex trafficking. Research examining advocacy and social justice interventions with this group are required.

Sex trafficking is not only an international crisis. Its prevalence in the U.S. requires scholarly attention from the counseling field.



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POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

What other ethical considerations exist when working with this population? For research?

What other cultural considerations exist when working with this population? For research?

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Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, Pub. L. No. 106-386, § 103, 114 Stat. 1470.

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