



HUMAN TRAFFICKING: AN EMERGING GLOBAL HEALTH ISSUE

Nursing

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking is a crime against humanity. It is also a serious threat to global health and security. Globalization has made human trafficking an easier task for the criminal organizations. **Human trafficking**, also called **trafficking in persons**, form of modern-day slavery involving the illegal transport of individuals by force or deception for the purpose of labour, sexual exploitation, or activities in which others benefit financially. Human trafficking is a global problem affecting people of all ages. It is estimated that approximately 1,000,000 people are trafficked each year globally. In this issue paper we present on meaning of human trafficking, significance, perspective, role of Nurse, barriers and resolutions of human trafficking.

KEYWORDS

human trafficking, issue, victim, anti-trafficking, illegal

INTRODUCTION:

Human trafficking is the second largest, and fastest growing, organized crime trade in the world. Human trafficking is a global problem present in all countries. It has surpassed illegal arms trade and is expected to surpass the illegal sale of drugs in the next few years. The International Labour Organization reports that financial gains of this well-organized and highly secretive business are estimated at up to \$44 billion U.S. dollars annually¹.

Last year, India has been coined 'the world's most dangerous country for women', ahead of Afghanistan, Syria and Saudi Arabia, according to a poll by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, which surveyed 548 experts on six different indices, including healthcare, discrimination, cultural traditions, sexual and non-sexual violence, and human trafficking. The country's National Commission for Women rejected it outright, pointing out that rape, harassment, human trafficking and other forms of violence against women appear to have risen in India because more cases are being reported, driven by public outrage². Comparatively sex trafficking is more common than labour trafficking; labour trafficking is more prevalent among migrants¹⁰.

Meaning of Human trafficking

Human trafficking (HT) is perceived as a form of modern-day slavery. HT is also increasingly recognized as a global public health problem³. Guidance for healthcare providers has emerged in the literature, as well as calls for development of new education and training programs for nurses. Given the scope of this problem, it is important to see HT as a global public health problem in need of focused identification and responsive interventions. A new global report on trafficking released in 2016 noted that the two most common forms of trafficking are sexual exploitation (53%) and forced labour (40%). HT takes the form of economic, physical, and sexual exploitation of persons, thus reducing its victims to mere products for commerce⁴.

Trafficked individuals are often subjected to physical, sexual, and psychological abuse during their exploitation. An estimated 28-50% of these individuals access healthcare services while being trafficked. Because of the violent nature of the business, HT victims are frequently left with life-threatening injuries⁴.

Significance of Human trafficking in nursing

Nurses have a potentially important, but currently largely unrealized role, in HT victim identification and rescue thus appropriate skills and knowledge are imperative. As frontline caregivers, nurses are often the bridge between victims and other service providers and resources⁵. In addition to identifying HT victims, healthcare providers need to be able to ask the right questions and help. Many victims do not self-identify as trafficking victims, but when asked the right questions, clearly fit the definition. Emergency department (ED) nurses are in a unique position as one of the few professionals likely to encounter trafficked victims and can be the first to interact with victims. This poses an urgent and unique opportunity for nurses to identify, support,

and refer victims to appropriate agencies. Incorporating relevant training for nurses and other healthcare providers is crucial⁶.

Perspective of the issue

The issue of human trafficking has steadily gained attention over the past decade. It is an atrocious crime and human rights violation. It is not a different or new societal problem, but part of the pandemic of violence against women, children and vulnerable people. Human traffickers use tactics of power and control to dominate people and exploit their vulnerabilities, much like perpetrators of domestic abuse and sexual violence⁷.

Traffickers are often someone known to the victim who has gained their trust and provided for their needs: shelter, food and even a sense of belonging or love. The trafficker gradually takes choices away and through force, fraud and coercion they exploit that person for the purposes of commercial sex or labour. The physical violence, emotional manipulation and oppressive control used by traffickers are also tactics used in domestic abuse⁷.

They are all based in inequality, oppression and societal traditions and beliefs that justify and normalize violence. As concerned community members, we nurse can play a role in raising awareness and bringing about positive change⁸.

Analysis of the issue

- Learn about the issues of trafficking, domestic abuse and sexual assault often have common traits and intersect
- Understand the root causes of these problems as oppression, discrimination and inequality
- Know that these problems will continue unless perpetrators are made accountable and victims and their family members are provided the support, they need
- Become an informed, conscientious consumer and refuse to support industries that are involved in human trafficking
- Be aware of what is happening around self
- Talk openly about these problems and about healthy, respectful and violence-free relationships
- Contact elected officials to encourage respectful treatment of survivors and accountability for perpetrators⁹

Nowadays, sadly, many governments first go after the NGOs who rescue vulnerable migrants, instead of going after the actual traffickers and smugglers themselves. It is unjust to penalize rescuers especially on bureaucratic grounds such as not having proper docking permits or operating without jurisdiction at sea, but it is also ineffective, and wastes the resources of both NGOs and the law enforcement agencies of these governments⁹.

Responding to these challenges will require significant investment and international cooperation. But we cannot ignore these challenges while at the same time hoping that the unsafe migration and the migrant trafficking that follows will disappear of its own accord⁹.

The role of nurse

Nurses also support and participate in safety planning for victims and are encouraged to be aware of follow-up resources. Delays or inappropriate referrals can result in harm and/or increased risk for the victim. These resources may include local organizations specializing in working with trafficked women; free health services (general practice, reproductive health, hospital, and mental health); sources of advice on housing and other social services; legal aid/immigration advice services; local churches/community support organizations; language training centres; and nongovernmental organizations in the women's home country⁶

Nurses should be aware of the need to establish boundaries as appropriate to maintain their personal safety. It is not unusual for care providers of victims of abuse (in this case human trafficking) to experience emotional distress themselves; therefore, nurses should be aware of professional resources for debriefing and counselling¹⁰. Nurses are uniquely situated as trusted professionals that provide support and empathetic care. The perception of the victim that the nurse can be trusted can facilitate honest communication and a willingness to share the situation⁶.

Barriers of Human trafficking

There are many barriers to and challenges in responding to the needs of victims of human trafficking. Some of these barriers result from an overall lack of knowledge about human trafficking and lack of public awareness of the issue, and differing definitions and perceptions regarding who is a victim. To compound the problem, research has suggested that trafficking victims are often reluctant to identify themselves as victims; therefore, self-referrals are less common than with other types of crime. Victims of human trafficking are also a hard-to-find, hard-to-reach population. Many victims have been taught to fear law enforcement authorities and NGOs, often because of their experiences with corrupt law enforcement personnel or authorities in their countries of origin. Additionally, victims are often reluctant to come forward because they fear retribution from their traffickers and fear arrest and deportation.

For victims	For providers
Unable to self-identify	Difficult to identify/reach victims (hidden crime)
Lack of knowledge of services	Lack of awareness/training
Fear of retaliation	Lack of adequate resources/services
Fear of law enforcement/arrest/deportation	Cultural/language barriers
Lack of trust	Ineffective coordination of services
Shame/stigma	Safety concerns
Learned helplessness/PTSD	
Cultural/language barriers	

Resolutions to consider human trafficking in year 2021

- Learn the indicators of human trafficking by taking training. Human trafficking awareness training is available for individuals, businesses, first responders, law enforcement, educators, and federal employees, among others.
- Contact National Human Trafficking Hot line of respective country.
- Be a conscientious and informed consumer. Encourage companies to take steps to prevent human trafficking in their supply chains and publish the information, including supplier or factory lists, for consumer awareness.
- Volunteer and support anti-trafficking efforts in your community.
- Meet with and/or write to your local, state, and federal elected officials to let them know you care about combating human trafficking and ask what they are doing to address it.
- Be well-informed. Set up a web alert to receive current human trafficking news.
- Host an awareness-raising event to watch and discuss films about human trafficking. Alternatively, contact your local library and ask for assistance identifying an appropriate book and ask them to host the event.
- Organize a fund raiser and donate the proceeds to an anti-trafficking organization.
- Encourage your local schools or school district to include human trafficking in their curricula and to develop protocols for identifying and reporting a suspected case of human trafficking or responding to a potential victim.
- Use your social media platforms to raise awareness about human

trafficking.

- Think about whether your workplace is trauma-informed and reach out to management or the Human Resources team to urge implementation of trauma-informed business practices.
- Become a mentor to a young person or someone in need. Traffickers often target people who are going through a difficult time or who lack strong support systems. As a mentor, you can be involved in new and positive experiences in that person's life during a formative time.
- Parents and Caregivers: Learn how human traffickers often target and recruit youth and who to turn to for help in potentially dangerous situations. Host community conversations with parent teacher associations, law enforcement, schools, and community members regarding safeguarding children in your community.
- Youth: Learn how to recognize traffickers' recruitment tactics, how to safely navigate out of suspicious or uncomfortable situations, and how to reach out for help at any time.
- Faith-Based Communities: Host awareness events and community forums with anti-trafficking leaders or collectively support a local victim service provider.
- Businesses: Provide jobs, internships, skills training, and other opportunities to trafficking survivors. Take steps to investigate and prevent trafficking in your supply chains by consulting the Responsible Sourcing Tool and Comply Chain to develop effective management systems to detect, prevent, and combat human trafficking.
- College Students: Take action on your campus. Join or establish a university club to raise awareness about human trafficking and initiate action throughout your local community. Consider doing one of your research papers on a topic concerning human trafficking. Request that human trafficking be included in university curricula.
- Health Care Providers: Learn how to identify the indicators of human trafficking and assist victims. With assistance from local anti-trafficking organizations, extend low-cost or free services to human trafficking victims. Resources from the Department of Health and Human Services can be found on their website.
- Journalists: The media plays an enormous role in shaping perceptions and guiding the public conversation about human trafficking. Seek out some media best practices on how to effectively and responsibly report stories on human trafficking.
- Attorneys: Offer human trafficking victims legal services, including support for those seeking benefits or special immigration status¹¹.

Recommendations for further study includes:

Development of a validated, brief, screening tool to better identify victims of human trafficking in clinical settings. Mechanisms to support continuity of care, especially when warning signs of human trafficking are present. Advancement of research focused on the long-term health implications for victims of human trafficking. Development of educational opportunities in relation to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary interviews and ongoing care. Development of validated lists for legal, health care, mental health, safe housing, and culturally appropriate resources. Enhancement of multi-sector collaboration and coordination in order to support information sharing. Support for legislative efforts that seek to penalize traffickers and fund support services for victims. Nurses should take leadership roles in these initiatives. Improvements in screening, identification, and treatment will ultimately lead to safer, healthier women¹².

CONCLUSION

As part of the educational process, nurses should examine their own perceptions of human trafficking, so they do not inadvertently impose those perceptions and leave the individual feeling more victimized and/or criticized. Respect and non-judgmental are key components of the interview and care encounter Nurses must also be aware of the range of risks involved for the victim, including immigration violations, labour laws, and other legal implications. Victims may also experience physical harm or death for revealing the situation, and their families may punish or banish them as well. Nurses should be specifically trained about the safety needs of this vulnerable population, including how to phrase conversations, the availability of appropriate resources for immediate and follow-up care, and the various cultural aspects and norms of care. Education should also extend to the implications for anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent as appropriate, such as in the case of specific traumas.

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