

Vulnerable and
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human traf...



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Modern Teen Slaves

Vulnerable & Traumatized: Contributing Risk Factor to Rise in Child Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is considered to be a form of ' modern-day slavery', which affects millions of people across the world, specifically adolescents (<18 yrs. old) tend to be victims of this crime (DeStefano, 2007). Human trafficking is a crime implicating the exploitation of an individual, for the purposes of obligated labor or a commercial sex acts, using force, fraud, or coercion (Polaris, 2019). Human trafficking can take many different forms or considered subsections, which are sex and labor trafficking. When dealing with cases of human/ sex trafficking of children under the age of 18 years, they are considered cases of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Child (CSEC) cases (Polaris, 2019). Labor trafficking is the same thing, just making an individual work for little or no compensation.

As these numbers in child human trafficking have unnoticeably increased in the U. S., it is essential to research more upon why this continues to occur and grow and how professionals and others could prevent and possibly treat the traumatic lifestyles many of these adolescents have had to live. Looking at the risk factors that adolescents have commonly depicted, definitely contributes to their vulnerability and how these factors have made them more susceptible to fall at risk for human trafficking. The main research will explore main contributing factors of adolescent vulnerability and trauma correlating them to the high rising numbers for child human trafficking and how professionals working with these adolescents could help prevent and

treat them. Can high vulnerability and trauma in adolescents lead them to become easier targets for child human trafficking? The significance of this research within the field of psychology, is to help mental health professionals, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, forensic therapists, interviewers, evaluators, police, case managers, attorneys and social workers to help them flag, indicate, understand, prevent and treat such a sensitive population, especially as it continues to increase.

Vulnerability in the context of human trafficking victims, can be defined as a communicating process between the social contexts in which a young person lives and a set of underlying factors that, when present, place the young person “ at risk” for negative outcomes, such as unexpected pregnancy, drug addiction, injuries or failing school (Blum et al., 2001). The factors disposing to vulnerability can be biological/ genetic, in which this vulnerability may naturally be carried within because a parent or relative having a similar vulnerable characteristic, or could be a learned behavior or instinct learned, or better said, not learned, because of reasons such as having overprotective parents or neglected parental supervision.

Vulnerabilities may result from being raised in rough environments such as violent or abusive environments, substance-abusing families or families suffering with mental illness, and can even result from individual characteristics, such as aggressive and violent (Blum et al., 2001). Ultimately if there’s a way to help reduce or eliminate forms of child trafficking, this research would also be very beneficial in implementing certain methods, especially as many of these adolescent victims and survivors have had links with criminal activity, it may also help in treating delinquency traits.

Trauma is any type of incidents in life that causes a threat to our safety and even our own life or the lives of others, that may put us at risk or in danger.

As a result of any kind of trauma, the levels of emotional, psychological, and physical distress may become very high and may even affect the ability to function normally in their everyday routine (BetterHealthChannel, 2018).

Trauma has been shown in many studies over the years, that it may have minimal to life altering effects, such as becoming vulnerable and susceptible to drug and alcohol abuse, violent and aggressive behaviors, and mental disorders such as PTSD. Trauma in adults is difficult as it is, when children and youth go through it, it may impact them a little differently, as their brains are still growing and will take in the trauma in different ways.

When youth and children have experienced any type of trauma, it will normally leave them with some sort of vulnerability, whether it is emotional, mental or psychological (Vander Kolk, 2016). Having an adolescent experience any type of distress within any of these, will create a susceptibility of vulnerability, creating a higher chance to fall into the sites of a trafficker.

The method style being used for this study will be qualitative, grounded theory case study. Qualitative research and its researchers study things in their natural settings, in order to make sense of and interpret certain factors to help understand different occurrences (McLeod, 2017). The goal of qualitative research is to attempt to understand the reality of different groups or individuals, as close as possible, in the way they live and feel it. Thus, people and groups, are studied in their natural setting (McLeod, 2017). Qualitative approach seeks to explain 'how' and 'why' a particular behavior, occurs under those specific circumstances of that case. In this case, we aim

to research how youth are becoming 'vulnerable' and why these factors cause them to fall at risk for human trafficking. Case studies are efforts to bring awareness on a phenomena by studying one specific case in depth, regarding an institution, group or individual (University of Wisconsin, 2018). As this research will consist of a case study, grounded theory research will also be included; which will help understand the social and psychological processes that distinguish a situation (University of Wisconsin, 2018), in this case, human trafficking.

Qualitative researchers use a variety of methods to cultivate deeper and meaningful understandings of different perspectives, depending on the specific situation (McLeod, 2017). A good example of a qualitative research method that would be useful to my current research would be unstructured interviews, which uses open questions, allowing the individual to speak in depth about their response, choosing their own words (McLeod, 2017). Using open-ended questionnaires, documents, diaries, interviews, direct observation, analysis of evidence and records, are all beneficial methods used to obtain qualitative data (Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 14). This helps the researcher develop a better sense and understanding of an individual's perception of a situation, in this case, the trauma experiences of human trafficking, in which photographs, videos and sound recordings can also be considered qualitative data (McLeod, 2017).

Because there are many different variables to consider when looking at how adolescents become or get to their vulnerable state of mind and why that puts them at risk for human trafficking. Some of these factors could be stress, drug/ alcohol use, mental illnesses, knowledge of environment and <https://assignbuster.com/vulnerable-traumatized-contributing-risk-factor-to-rise-in-child-human-trafficking/>

cultural background, but regardless, the qualitative method would be the most appropriate to use, in order to figure out if any correlations and effects of vulnerability in adolescents and their risk for human trafficking. Because of close research involvement, this method helps researcher gain an individual's perspective. Qualitative descriptions play the essential role of recommending potential causes, effects and relationships that one subject may have with another, as human trafficking is looked at as a possible result to youth vulnerability and trauma (Denscombe, 2010). Limitations to using this method could be showing adequate validity or reliability, time and context, as the subjective nature of qualitative data can make it problematic to apply to conventional standards, in order to assure reliability and validity of that particular case (McLeod, 2017). It may also be very difficult to copy and replicate events, conditions, and interactions every individual has with another, which is close to impossible, as there will never be the same factors even in similar situations.

With the qualitative method of research, comes the designs used to obtain such information, such as interviews and observations. With this particular study, using interviews, direct observation and surveys will be the most efficient and appropriate designs to best obtain data and information. Since I am focusing my research on being a grounded theory case study, it is important to see which designs will best fit the research. The purpose of this case study is to help describe in-depth the experience of one particular population, child human trafficking survivors, which direct observation and interviews with survivors would be the best way to obtain specific data upon their vulnerability and risk of falling into human trafficking. Grounded theory

is a theory development that allows exploration and determining what problems exist in a particular scenario and how individuals handle them (McLeod, 2017). This also involves formulating, testing, & developing proposals, until a theory is developed. Data collection methods that work best with this particular type of study would be interview, observation, record review, or a combination of them, in order to form a concept formation and continuing development, to help lead and guide outcomes in which the theory is supported by examples from data.

The data collecting instruments to best collect and obtain data on vulnerability and falling at risk for human trafficking would include, but is not limited to any of the following: RISE Risk Inventory and Strengths Evaluation, JIFF Juvenile Inventory For Functioning, Traumatic Events Screening Inventory (TESI), Child Reaction to Traumatic Events Scale (CRTES), Clinician Administered PTSD Scale for Children and Adolescents (CAPS-CA), The Rapid Assessment for Adolescent Preventive Services (RAAPS), Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) and Comprehensive Screenings such as NYS Safe Harbour (CSEC) Risk Assessment. These tools will assist me in collecting the data needed, to gather adequate information to correlate adolescent vulnerability to falling at risk for human trafficking. These tools are able to measure and screen for different types of risk possibilities and trauma, that may indicate levels of vulnerability and with this, can have a solid foundation to continue analyzing and comparing to indicators for at risk youth for trafficking. Using a conjunction of data collecting instruments can not only assure reliability and validity for each case, but can also reassure the professional conducting the study, as having

more than one tool or instrument can collect more, in depth information and provide a better insight to the case and the individual, whether it is a victim or offender. These specific tools were chosen specifically for this research as each will help collect different kinds and sections of information, needed in order to analyze, compare, and come out with conclusions, diagnosis and treatment options, available for each individual.

The RISE Risk Inventory and Strengths Evaluation measures high-risk behaviors and psychological strengths. It may be administered to individuals 9 to 25 years of age (Baird et al., 2013). It is a Paper-and-pencil interview/survey, usually lasting 15 to 20 minute, and scores/ interpretation are the following: Norm-referenced T-scores measure overall levels of risky behavior and psychological assets as well as specific strengths and risks. Response validity scores provide a check on inconsistent responding and positive or negative response style (Baird et al., 2013). This tool can help gain a clearer vision as the level of being ' at risk' or having high risks behaviors to begin with, or if something throughout their lives had triggered such behaviors. The Rapid Assessment for Adolescent Preventive Services (RAAPS), is another great screening tool, used to identify adolescent high-risk behaviors and its impact on sensitive risk behaviors (Fisher et al., 2014). Quantitative and qualitative analyses directed that the RAAPS provided a better relationship of risk behaviors and risk discussions, which will assist me in validating high risky behaviors, to then proceed to correlate to falling at risk for human trafficking.

The Clinician Administered PTSD Scale for Children and Adolescents (CAPS-CA), clinician-administered PTSD scale based upon DSM-5 criteria for children

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and adolescents ages 7 and older. The CAPS-CA-5 assesses the 20 DSM-5 PTSD symptoms, in that each symptom, standardized questions that focus on the duration of symptoms of distress, impact of symptoms on social functioning, impairment in development, response validity and PTSD severity (Pynoos et al., 2015). This tool is helpful in determining vulnerabilities that may be impacting them and certain behaviors, that may lead them to being at risk for human trafficking. The Comprehensive Screenings such as NYS Safe Harbour (CSEC) Risk Assessment comes out of The Safe Harbour Act that was created in NY. This program funds counties in developing their competence to identify and determine if a specific youth has been trafficked, sexually exploited, or falls at risk of victimization and to meet identified service needs of this youth. With this tool, professionals conduct a thorough review of existing screening tools and protocols already designed, to assist them in identifying victims of human trafficking (Baskin et al., 2014). This tool shows different levels in which adolescents may fall under, such as low risk, medium risk and high risk. This is one of the most important tools to identifying and determining if children are at risk, or are already victims of human trafficking.

There are most definitely some limitations to some of these tools and assessments, for example, some may not be available in every state, some may not be available in every language, some may be too general or some may be too short, not getting enough information or too long, making the participant not want to continue as it may be too lengthy. Regardless of these limitations, many of these have still been extremely useful within different court cases. Working with youth as it is, may be difficult, especially

when interviewing and interacting with them, as many times they will shut down, manipulate or lie about the incident or situation they are in.

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