



COMMERCIAL CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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ABSTRACT

The issue of child sex trafficking has drawn attention and debate from throughout the globe in recent years. Pornography, child sex tourism, prostitution, and other commercial sexual exploitation are examples of the many kinds of child sex trafficking. Given their vulnerability and the lasting effects these experiences have on their development, children who become victims of various types of sexual exploitation are especially concerning. This article offers a thorough analysis of the state of knowledge regarding child sex trafficking by looking at definitions, problem estimates, child risk factors and outcomes, as well as strategies for protection, prosecution, recovery and reintegration promotion, and collaboration and cooperation-fostering partnerships.

KEYWORDS

Commercial sexual exploitation, child sex trafficking, prostitution, and child exploitation

The term "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children" (CSEC) covers a wide range of offences and behaviours that involve sexually abusing or exploiting a child for financial gain or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits) offered or received by any individual. Due to a number of problems, including as widespread underreporting of the crime and challenges in identifying and quantifying offenders and victims, there are no federal or national estimates on the scope and prevalence of CSEC in the United States. According to estimations from academic sources (IOM and NRC 2013; Bryan 2014; The Polaris Project 2012), the problem's magnitude might be anything from a few thousand to millions. Regarding estimates, there are often a lot of exclusions and qualifications included (IOM and NRC 2013).

Commercial sexual exploitation may take many different forms, including the trafficking of sex, prostitution, sex tourism, pornography, child marriage, performance in adult establishments, and the electronic or online dissemination of images of minors having sex (OJJDP, n.d.). According to the President's Interagency Taskforce to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (2014), sex trafficking is a kind of human trafficking as well. Other kinds of human trafficking include the recruitment of minors as child soldiers, forced labour, bonded labour, involuntary domestic slavery, and debt bondage among migrant labourers (U.S. Department of State, 2011). According to recent estimates from international organisations, there are now over 27 million victims of human trafficking globally (Williamson 2012). The Americas, Central Asia, and Europe are the regions where sex trafficking is most prevalent (Greenbaum 2014).

Human trafficking is defined by governmental and nonprofit organisations as the exploitation of another individual by deception, compulsion, or force. "Any commercial sex act if the individual is under 18 years of age, regardless of whether any kind of coercion is involved, is considered as human trafficking," according to the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) (U.S. Department of State 2011, 8). Because of this, it is not necessary to prove force, deception, or coercion if the victim is a child; the sex act is immediately constituted sex trafficking.

Recently, in the U.S. According to a Department of Justice study, sex trafficking accounted for 82% of alleged U.S. trafficking instances between 2008 and 2010. According to Banks and Kyckkelhahn (2011), there were more than 1,000 documented claims of adult sex trafficking and more than 1,000 instances of child sex trafficking. According to van der Laan et al. (2011), further research has shown that up to 79% of cases of human trafficking are determined to be cases of sexual exploitation. Human trafficking has a global influence and reach, as shown by a 2012 study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which indicated that victims from 136 nations were trafficked in 118 countries (Greenbaum 2014).

Anti trafficking Legislation

The purpose of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) is to put an end to human trafficking. It offers a mechanism for evaluating countries based on how well they are able to stop human trafficking. via the United States. According to Goodey (2008), the Department of State assigns a "tier" to every nation in order to gauge their level of compliance with US anti-trafficking laws. Countries that adhere to US anti-trafficking laws are ranked Tier 1, while those with the lowest degree of compliance are ranked Tier 3, which is the lowest rating. A country's designation as a Tier 3 country may have severe repercussions, including the imposition of trade-related and non-humanitarian assistance penalties by the US government (Goodey 2008).

Furthermore, by employing the "3 Ps" paradigm—prevention of human trafficking, victim protection, and prosecution of traffickers—the TVPA establishes a minimal standard that nations must adhere to when attempting to actively combat trafficking (U.S. Department of State 2011; President's Interagency Taskforce to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2014). The victim-response paradigm to human trafficking serves as the foundation for the prevention and prosecution components of the "3 Ps" strategy. Meeting the needs of victims of human trafficking is often less difficult than attempting to address the underlying reasons of the practice, which frequently include unfair economic systems, violent conflicts, and war (Goodey 2008).

Theoretical Foundation

Most US courts see children who are the victims of sex trafficking as criminals (Epstein and Edelman 2013). Girls are often abducted for prostitution and then accused of selling sex or committing other related crimes. While in custody, they often have little or no access to resources for therapy or a support network (Epstein and Edelman 2013). The negative perception of prostitution in many cultures is the reason for the harsh treatment of CSEC and victims of human trafficking. According to a survey of the literature, there are two main perspectives on prostitution: those who think it should be decriminalised and those who think it is intrinsically harmful (Cohen, Edberg, and Gies 2011).

People who see prostitution as unethical often subscribe to a "oppression" worldview that views sex work and prostitution as dehumanising and a great example of patriarchal dominance and aggressiveness (Cohen, Edberg, and Gies 2011). The labelling of women and young people involved in prostitution as "victims," "survivors," and "prostituted persons" serves as additional evidence of this perception. The "prostitution as oppression" paradigm categorically rejects prostitution as a legitimate occupation, implying that engaging in prostitution cannot be a wise decision.

On the other hand, proponents of legalising prostitution approach it from a "empowerment viewpoint," which sees prostitution as just another product that can be bought and views it as equal to all other forms of economic transactions (Cohen, Edberg, and Gies 2011). Advocates of this method use distinct vocabulary compared to those who support the oppressive paradigm. For instance, those who work in the sex business are called "providers" or "sex workers" (Cohen, Edberg, and Gies 2011). The empowerment paradigm acknowledges that these people may encounter risky circumstances, abuse, exploitation, and/or coercion, but it also acknowledges that for those who want to sell sex as a commodity, doing so may be a reasonable and lawful decision.

The legal system often gives the impression that it adheres to the empowerment paradigm, seeing these young girls as making a logical decision to sell their bodies for sex. Many females who are trafficked may not even see themselves as victims at first, as Epstein and Edelman (2013) point out. They may not have the traditional appearance of a "victim." The system places CSEC victims in the juvenile court system on accusations of prostitution or other similar offences under the empowerment concept. They get punitive

punishment rather than therapy for their abuse, which increases the likelihood of revictimization (Epstein and Edelman 2013). The term "sexually exploited children," "trafficked children," or "sex trafficked children" (Greenbaum 2014) is indicative of a recent shift in the academic and clinical communities to acknowledge children and teens who are victims of economic exploitation.

Pathways to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

Children who are sexually abused for profit foster a culture in which children are seen as goods that may be bought and sold with no thought given to their welfare. Victims of child sex trafficking and contemporary sexual exploitation sometimes fall prey to several forms of abuse. As per Walker (n.d.), predators have the ability to either promote sexual services to their victims or sell pornographic photographs of children to other child sex abusers.

Research points to a number of typical entrance points for victims of CSEC. Apart from the risk factors already highlighted (Epstein and Edelman 2013; IOM and NRC 2013), family members trading or selling a kid for drugs and/or money is another way that CSEC cases start. Furthermore, peer recruiting is becoming a more common method of CSEC and juvenile sex trafficking episodes (Greenbaum 2014; Adams, Owens, and Smalls 2010).

A collaborative research on CSEC conducted in Mexico, the US, and Canada discovered that a number of fundamental elements often drive this phenomenon:

1. dependence of abandoned and runaway children on prostitution to meet their basic necessities;
2. established marketplaces for adult prostitution in areas where there is a significant population of street children;
3. previous record of child sexual assault and abuse;
4. destitution;
5. a significant proportion of single and vagrant men in the community, such as truck drivers, sex tourists, military personnel, and conference attendees;
6. involvement in gangs for some females;
7. encouragement of adolescent prostitution by parents, elder siblings, and romantic partners;
8. recruiting young people for prostitution via organised criminal groups; and more and more,
9. child trafficking from impoverished nations in Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and Central and Eastern Europe to the United States for sex reasons is unlawful. [Wiener and Estes 2001,2]

Another way to get into commercial sexual exploitation is via "survival sex," in which sex is traded for needs like food or shelter. Another typical pathway for females to become victims of sexual exploitation is engagement in gangs. According to IOM and NRC (2013), girls are seen as having little to no worth beyond how they may be utilised, as for the sex pleasure of male gang members.

President's Interagency Taskforce to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

President Obama established an interagency task team in 2012 to keep an eye on and prevent human trafficking. Representatives from 17 departments, including Attorney General Eric Holder, former HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, and Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson, were on the task group. A victim-centered approach to therapy, public awareness, and outreach initiatives for those impacted by human trafficking were the goals of their 2013–2017 action plan. The task group listed four main objectives:

Align efforts: Encourage the federal, regional, state, territorial, tribal, and local levels to provide assistance for victims of human trafficking in a planned, coordinated manner.

Enhance comprehension: To promote evidence-based methods in victim assistance, expand and coordinate research, data, and evaluation relating to human trafficking.

Boost victim identification and boost service availability by offering and promoting outreach, education, and technical support.

Enhance results: Encourage efficient, culturally sensitive, trauma-informed services that enhance victims' safety, well-being, and short- and long-term health (President's Interagency Taskforce to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2014).

In an ideal world, the establishment of long-lasting victim assistance for people who are now victims of sexual trafficking would result from the collaboration of government authorities to strive towards and accomplish these aims. At now, nevertheless, the taskforce's suggested efforts remain untested.

Safe Harbor Laws

The TVPA's 2000 provisions for victims of CSEC and sex trafficking served as the model for Safe Harbour (SH) rules. Their primary focus is on providing specialised therapy and assistance, diverting them from the juvenile criminal system, and rescuing and safeguarding adolescents who are exploited via prostitution (Wayman 2013). SH laws may include many different things, but they usually have two main components: services for young people who are being exploited by prostitutes and the decriminalisation of prostitution for minors. Rather than tackling both aspects at once, the majority of governments choose to concentrate on either decriminalisation or service delivery. For example, Tennessee and Connecticut do not prosecute juveniles, but they do not provide much further protection or specialised assistance. While Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Vermont, and Washington do not decriminalise young people involved in prostitution, they do support diversionary programmes that aim to provide these individuals access to necessary resources (Wayman 2013; Geist 2012). According to Geist (2012), Minnesota and Illinois provide the most complete legal reform by combining decriminalisation with diversion. Some states that have enacted SH laws have also added other provisions, such as tougher punishments for pimps and johns, law enforcement training, and victim access to secure homes or shelters (Wayman 2013).

Since they are seen as victims of trafficking, decriminalisation under SH legislation permits adolescents who are abused via prostitution to evade arrest and punishment (Wayman 2013). Under SH legislation, the focus of specialised therapy and services is on the psychological, physical, and emotional damage related to child sex trafficking and cyberstalking (Geist 2012). Shelter/housing, childcare, health care, treatment for mental

illness and drug misuse, job training, and ongoing education are among the services offered (Cohen 1987; Cohen, Edberg, & Gies 2011). Because the juvenile court system may not be able to adequately address the special requirements of CSE and trafficking victims, several jurisdictions provide assistance to juveniles via state organisations like child welfare (Geist 2012).

In order to consider all young people as victims and provide them with the necessary resources to address their victimisation, SH laws aim to alter how juvenile prostitutes are responded to and treated. In the United States, there are now 18 states that have implemented SH laws.

Screening Tools

The Vera Institute has released a study outlining its research on a novel Human Trafficking Identification Tool in an attempt to aid in the identification of victims of human trafficking (Simich 2014). The Vera Institute's research to provide trustworthy methods for identifying victims of human trafficking served as the foundation for this tool. The 30-item survey is intended to gather data on victims of human trafficking and is statistically verified. 180 prospective victims of human trafficking who were found via service victim organisations in five states participated in a research to evaluate the screening tool. According to the research, the instrument could tell victims of human trafficking apart from those of other crimes and could also tell victims of trafficking from those of sex trafficking. Among the 180 participants, 53 percent were found to be victims of human trafficking; 40 percent were said to have been trafficked for sex, and 60 percent for labour (Simich 2014). The majority of victims were foreign-born, and the majority of respondents were adults, among other limitations in the research. Subsequent assessments using this instrument may result in enhanced methods for identifying juvenile victims of child sexual exploitation and sex trafficking and delivering appropriate care to them.

Prevention Programs

The Stewards of Children initiative aims to teach carers and professionals how to identify and support children who have experienced sexual abuse. Teachers, carers, and other adults who deal with children in a professional capacity are the target audience for this preventative training programme. The programme aims to raise public knowledge of child sexual abuse's frequency, effects, and surrounding situations. In addition to offering follow-up training to determine if and when child sexual abuse happened and how to properly address the kid's needs, Stewards of Children employs targeted tactics to stop it from happening. The program's objective is to protect kids against abuse in the future while also averting any issues that might arise from that abuse.

Rheingold et al. (2011) found that adults who participated in the Stewards of Children programme had positive, statistically significant differences in their self-reported preventive behaviours and knowledge of child sexual abuse when compared to adults in the wait-list control condition. At the three-month follow-up, these beneficial differences between the groups persisted. According to Epstein and Edelman's (2013) research, a significant number of professionals who often interact with child populations—including social workers, educators, and state welfare advocates—have come into contact with trafficked children without realising they were victims of trafficking. Stewards of Children and other similar programmes teach workers

who interact directly with children to detect and recognise children who may be at danger of sexual abuse or victimisation.

Treatment Programs for Victims

Because of their harrowing experiences, victims of CSEC and human trafficking often have severe and complex mental health requirements. Psychological problems including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are common among victims. Some of the "most common presentations for victims of child sexual exploitation are substance-related disorders, dissociative disorders, impulse control, conduct disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, antisocial personality traits, and most or all of the Axis IV psychological and environment problems," according to a Department of Health and Human Services report on evidence-based mental health treatment for victims of human trafficking (Williamson, Dutch, and Clawson 2010, 8).

Unfortunately, little is known about efficient ways to treat young people since, in contrast to adults, children's PTSD has just recently been identified (Williamson, Dutch, and Clawson 2010). Research has shown that children who have had adverse traumatic experiences may benefit from the Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT) programme. The goal of the TF-CBT therapeutic intervention is to assist parents and children aged 3 to 18 in overcoming the damaging impacts of physical and/or sexual abuse. It teaches kids new techniques to process the feelings and ideas that come from the traumatic experiences, which helps them deal with major emotional issues including PTSD, stress, worry, fear, and despair. TF-CBT combines conventional child abuse therapy with behavioural and cognitive techniques. Its main goal is to provide a safe space for kids to openly discuss their painful experiences.

Children receiving TF-CBT treatment scored significantly lower than children in the control group on measures of PTSD, depression, problem behaviours, sexualized behaviours, and externalising behaviours, according to studies by Deblinger, Lippman, and Steer (1996), Cohen and Mannarino (1996), and Cohen and colleagues (2004). The Deblinger team (1996) discovered that children's gains in externalising behaviour, depression, and PTSD had persisted at the 2-year follow-up point.

Programmers that cater to victims of cyber talking often have many drawbacks. Regarding the programmers and their execution, for example, the majority of studies on treating victims of CSEC is deficient or insufficient. The majority of the research had very tiny sample sizes, partly because it is difficult to find and serve the community. Furthermore, a lot of programmers are only supported temporarily and are often forced to cease due to a lack of funding for continuation or expansion (citation).

Conclusions

Many efforts remain in this area, despite the efforts of national and international agencies to track down and prosecute those who attempt to exploit vulnerable populations through child sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation; the President's Interagency Taskforce to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2014). There aren't many evidence-based initiatives that help victims of CSEC or educate the public, sex purchasers, and traffickers. Studies indicate that more focus should be placed on prosecuting sex traffickers and abusers (Farrell et al. 2012), as well as providing victims with more options to be redirected into suitable

treatment programmers rather than facing charges for selling sex (Cohen, Edberg, and Gies 2011). Further investigation could provide the knowledge required to successfully stop and ultimately eradicate the recurrence of these crimes.

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