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COLLEGE STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF TRAFFICKING AND PORNOGRAPHY

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COLLEGE STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF TRAFFICKING AND PORNOGRAPHY

by

Mariah Christine Doyle

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in partial fulfillment

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Abstract

Sex trafficking is an epidemic plaguing the world and is being fueled by the increasing demand for pornographic material. Awareness of trafficking is rising in America, however there is still a lack of information on the topic. This quantitative study seeks to gauge an understanding of college students' knowledge of trafficking, pornography, and their interconnectedness. The research was conducted via an online survey sent out to students at Southeastern University. With 113 respondents, the findings of the study reveal that students feel a level of uncertainty surrounding the topic of trafficking and pornography. The students have not so much been misinformed, but rather they have been *uninformed*. Analysis of this study reveals a basis for the reformation of educational curriculum on both trafficking and pornography. Results of this study allude to a need for educational resources on what trafficking truly looks like, as well as how pornography holds an imperative role in the prevalence of trafficking.

KEY WORDS: Human Trafficking, Sex Trafficking, Anti-Pornography, Prevention, Education, Awareness

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Review of Literature.....	5
Pornography Introduction: The Demand.....	5
Human Trafficking Introduction.....	6
Sex Trafficking.....	7
Sexual Grooming.....	9
Pornography.....	11
Effect of Pornography Consumption.....	13
Social and Sexual Scripts Theory.....	15
Link between Pornography and Trafficking.....	16
Legality of Pornography and Trafficking.....	18
Methodology.....	23
Participants.....	23
Procedures.....	23
Analysis of Data.....	25
Demographic Questions.....	25
Questions Regarding Knowledge of Trafficking.....	26
Questions Regarding Knowledge of Pornography and Connection to Trafficking.....	29
Conclusion.....	31
Strengths.....	35
Limitations.....	35
Future Studies.....	36

Implications for Practice.....36

References.....39

Appendix A.....44

Appendix B.....45

Appendix C.....48

Introduction

It wouldn't be *that* much of an exaggeration to say that I came out of the womb knowing what social work is. Both my mother and my aunt have been school social workers in my school district since I climbed onto the yellow school bus for the first time. My life revolved around social work. I was constantly in the guidance office after school hanging out with my mother or aunt amidst the hustle and bustle of the staff. At the age of 13, I was introduced to my mom's social work intern who was the head coach for the Northwest CT Special Olympic Swim Team and I began volunteering with the team, eventually gaining the title of assistant coach. My mother's close social work friend that I had known for years had helped me and a group of students in my high school create the Care Closet, a resource for students in unstable housing. I was *always* around social workers. To me, these people were social work experts. I felt that I had inherited their social work genius-ness. So when I had sparked a conversation with my mother about human trafficking my sophomore year of college, and she did not understand the concept of trafficking, the world of social work expertise I had built in my head shattered around me. If social workers who had decades of experience under their belts did not know what human trafficking was, how little did the general public know? As I initiated more conversations with my peers around me, the answer to that question became apparent. The general public knows only the misconceptions they have been fed by pop culture and the media. As human trafficking and sex trafficking became a "hot topic" across social media, *TikTok* and other social media platforms blew up with videos of misinformed people warning others about going to Target or Walmart due to the so-called "sex traffickers" looming in the bush by their car. As a future social worker, I am very concerned at the amount of false information being passed off as factual. Thus, I created this study. A study in which we can gauge what people think they know about

trafficking, and move forward in patching the canyon-sized holes in trafficking education.

The Target Problem

Human trafficking is becoming increasingly prevalent across the world. Sex trafficking is a form of trafficking, and is more common in America than most people think. Inevitably, there is an obvious connection between sex trafficking and pornography. The two topics often overlap with each other, making it difficult to persecute. Understanding the difference and similarities held between trafficking and pornography can help to curb misconceptions, and encourage the protection of trafficking victims and survivors.

In a study looking into the root causes of pornography consumption, Bóthe et al. (2021) narrowed the list down to seven: emotional avoidance (pornography being used to eliminate or distract from negative feelings), sexual curiosity, excitement seeking (the act of escaping to a fantasy world), sexual pleasure, boredom avoidance, stress reduction, lack of sexual satisfaction, and self-exploration. With these seven factors and the push to normalize pornographic material, the demand for sex trafficking is on the rise.

Proper education on trafficking is essential to preventing trafficking situations. Many people fall victim to trafficking without even knowing what trafficking is, or what does or does not constitute as trafficking. Like in most other instances, prevention is a more ideal option than intervention. When looking into the statistics related to the “rescuing” of victims, 99% of them do not get rescued, and most victims are used within the sex industry (Humphreys et al., 2019). A sex trafficking survivor’s probability of returning to the life of pimping and trafficking is fairly high when looking into the reliance they tend to have on their pimp. Herrington & McEachern (2018) explain that pimps tend to withhold basic necessities such as food or water from a victim. Some pimps provide or promise money or jobs to their victims in a means to maintain control

reliance (Winters et al., 2022). The best way to combat trafficking is through prevention, which can only be done if proper education is being provided and misconceptions are squashed. Further introduction of these topics can be found in the literature review section of this study.

Research Question

While there is an abundance of research into trafficking, pornography and the implications of both, there seems to be a lack of research into what exactly people know, or what they *think* they know about trafficking. Often it is stated that there are misconceptions about each that have become a commonality. However, there does not appear to be research indicating what those misconceptions are. In order to effectively fill the gaps in education of pornography and sex trafficking, this study was created to answer the following question: what do college students think they know about sex trafficking, pornography, and their interconnectedness? It is essential to understand what exactly people do and do not know in order to expose the common misconceptions. This information will help to guide future educational curriculum and informational resources regarding trafficking.

Significance

Proper education of sex trafficking and the implications pornography has on the industry are essential in the prevention process. The educational tools and resources provided to individuals in an effort to inform them of the two topics may not bring proper clarification towards the thoughts individuals possess about them. It is obvious that there are glaring misconceptions about both pornography and sex trafficking, but this study prompts college-age students to identify what exactly the misinformation is in an effort to reform education on the topics. If the findings of this study are utilized in the formation of future curriculum, individuals will receive answers to the questions they have, as well as receive a clear indication of what sex

trafficking and its connection to pornography is and is not.

Summary

Sex trafficking is gaining awareness rapidly, but there is still a lack of information and the information that is being relayed is becoming increasingly misconstrued. With the dire need to provide service to survivors of trafficking, there must be clarity and proper education on the topics. This can only be done if the misconceptions are brought to light and put to an end. There is a general consensus of what these misconceptions are, but this study is intended to gather an understanding of what college students think they know about trafficking and pornography, and the connection between the two. The findings from this study can be helpful in the creation of educational curricula and resources targeted towards the college-age population.

Review of Literature

Pornography Introduction: The Demand

As the use of technology quickly increased and improved during the Industrial Revolution, travel became increasingly accessible for the general public. Women began to migrate across the country, and prostitution spread with them. Many of America's state officials perceived prostitution as both a "necessity and a potential danger for nation and empire" (Siller, 2017, p. 410). Prostitution was deemed a "sexual outlet" (Siller, 2017, p. 410) for the men working in the military and labor force (Siller, 2017).

With the rise of the prevalence of television shows, many shows have opted to supply the sex demand. Many of these depictions give the impression that sex is recreational and no longer cultivates love or commitment (Carpentier & Stevens, 2018). A study into the effect of television sex scenes on the mind found that there is a relationship between exposure to sexual content in the shows and their self-reported sexual permissiveness (Carpentier & Stevens, 2018). This finding could be attributed to the concept that the creation of thoughts are a reflection of the "mental associations that link a given object with specific attributes [and] consequences... [which] are forged through early direct, indirect, [and] even vicarious experiences with the object" (Carpentier & Stevens, 2018, p. 23). The more prevalence and exposure to a concept (pornography, prostitution, and trafficking), the more accepting people are to become of it.

In a study to find the root reason why people view pornography, Bóthe et al. (2021) looked at seven root causes: emotional avoidance (pornography being used to eliminate or distract from negative feelings), sexual curiosity, excitement seeking (the act of escaping to a fantasy world), sexual pleasure, boredom avoidance, stress reduction, lack of sexual satisfaction, and self-exploration. They found that sexual pleasure was the most frequently reported reason,

followed by sexual curiosity. After those two were emotional distraction, stress reduction, and boredom (Bóthe et al. 2021). As long as there is a “need” and furthermore, a demand for pornography and prostitution, trafficking will continue to prevail across our nation. It is imperative to acknowledge that the seeming insignificant societal norms like television sex scenes are in fact contributing to the demand for trafficking.

Human Trafficking Introduction

Human trafficking is a worldwide epidemic that occurs both through labor trafficking and sex trafficking. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 prohibits forced labor and trafficking in regards to peonage, slavery, or involuntary servitude, and sex trafficking by means of force, fraud, or coercion (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, 2000). Human trafficking is second on the list of the most significant criminal industries globally after drug dealing and tied with illegal arms (Perkins & Ruiz, 2017), which shows the prevalence of trafficking. The average age an individual becomes trafficked is twelve to thirteen years old (Leary, 2017). The average age of entry into the life of prostitution in the United States is between the ages of twelve and fourteen years old, although it is worth noting these studies have methodological limitations (Herrington & McEachern, 2018). It is also important to point out that as a child cannot legally consent, they cannot consent to prostitution, so “child prostitute” is not an accurate statement. Children do not have the liberty to make choices when they are trafficked (Herrington & McEachern, 2018), and legally they cannot consent. Therefore, individuals under the age of 18 who are getting paid (or not getting paid) for sexual acts are victims of trafficking. After being trafficked, the child’s life expectancy is about ten years (Leary, 2017). Statistically, 99% of victims do not get rescued, and most victims are utilized within the sex industry (Humphreys et al., 2019). Perkins and Ruiz (2017) highlight potential risk factors

and common themes found in their study on human trafficking. Perkins and Ruiz (2017) found that since many of the youth were raised in often dysfunctional and abusive households, they yearned to feel loved. This desire often acts as a precursor to the individuals engaging in sexual acts they may not have otherwise had an inclination to act in.

Sex Trafficking

While there are various forms of trafficking, only sex trafficking will be discussed for the purpose of this paper. The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 defines sex trafficking as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, 2000). It is estimated that over one million children across the world are forced into sexual labor every day. This number can never be truly confirmed as researchers can only utilize the numbers from identified victims (Winters et al., 2022). Victims of sex trafficking suffer from more than just sexual abuse from their trafficker. Victims suffer from STIs, PTSD, pregnancy, and trauma (Leary, 2017). In looking at instances of trafficking, one in three runaway youth are picked up and lured into the sex industry within 48 hours of them leaving (Humphreys et al., 2019). Adding to the problem is the Internet, which enables traffickers to post the victims as advertisements (Humphreys et al., 2019). The issue with the line between prostitution and trafficking is thin, in that once money is exchanged, many states no longer consider the act to be abuse (Leary, 2017). Sex trafficking is often mistaken for prostitution; however, the individuals involved tend to be victimized by being forced into prostitution (Leary, 2017). The act of the individual being *forced* into prostitution is what changes the situation from one of prostitution to one of trafficking. In addition to this, 70% of adult prostitutes were coerced into the industry before they turned 18 (Humphreys et al., 2019). Herrington and McEachern (2018) state that it is “estimated that 98%

of sex trafficking are disproportionately female, and more than 20% are children” (Herrington & McEachern, 2018, p. 599).

Walsh (2016) researches the connection between domestic violence and sex trafficking. He examines the role of the pimp in the relationship, and points out that pimps can be the survivor’s boyfriend, manager, or friend. Pimps can be categorized into three categories: the Gorilla Pimp who relies on coercion and violence, the Romeo Pimp who utilizes affection and charm, and the Business/CEO Pimp who promises money and careers to victims. It is estimated that 15% of reported domestic child sex trafficking cases are enacted by a parent or guardian (Winters et al., 2022). The goal of pimps is to make sure the victim is compliant, submissive and dependent on their abuser (Herrington & McEachern, 2018). The more that a victim relies on their trafficker, the more difficult it will become to escape the life. Traffickers are known to brand their victims, rename, or even tattoo their victims in an attempt to claim them (Herrington & McEachern, 2018). As a manipulation tactic, pimps will often withhold food or water, so that when they finally provide the necessities, the victim may become increasingly grateful. Often, pimps will switch between being affectionate and violent (Herrington & McEachern, 2018). Since vulnerable children and teens desire love, acceptance, recognition, and money, they become easy targets for traffickers (Humphreys et al., 2019). Pimps are often relied upon for protection from the police as prostituted individuals tend to be treated as criminals (Walsh, 2016).

Pimps typically set financial standards for their victims to meet every day. It is reported that adult victims of sex trafficking are forced to participate in six to twenty separate sex acts per day in order to meet financial quotas set by their pimps (Leary, 2017). The average victim who is a minor experiences statutory rape over ten times a day (Leary, 2017). Trauma after trauma the

sex trafficking victim endures, adding up to hundreds– or thousands– of traumas throughout the time in which they are trafficked.

Sexual Grooming

Child sexual grooming is defined as “the deceptive process used by sexual abusers to facilitate sexual contact with a minor while simultaneously avoiding detection” (Winters et al., 2022, p. 62). The act of grooming stands as a precursor to trafficking and is a tactic used to gain access to the victims. Up to 30-45% of child sexual assault cases involve grooming (Winters, 2022). Winters and Jeglic (2017) put together a Sexual Grooming Model through a reviewing of literature regarding grooming, and found that grooming involves selecting, gaining access, isolating, developing trust, and desensitizing the victim. The grooming process is as follows.

A trafficker seeks out victims that are vulnerable and have low self-esteem, intellectual deficits, mental health disorders, and drug addictions. They also look for specific environmental factors such as an unsafe home environment, unmet basic needs, and poor influences. Traffickers look for sexually active girls and instruct them to demand pay for activities they were already previously engaging in (Winters et al., 2022). These factors enable a trafficker to identify easy victims and begin the grooming process. Countryman-Roswurm and Bolin (2014) conducted a study in which they hoped to reduce the risk of domestic minor sex trafficking. In the study, the participants are identified as youth who are at risk for trafficking. Out of the participants, 87% of their parents were unmarried, 61% had been in state custody, 70% had stayed in a shelter or group home, 83% experienced being slapped in the face or head by a caregiver, 74% used alcohol, and 70% had used drugs (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014). These are all factors that make an individual at risk for trafficking, and if a trafficker can identify any of these factors, they may begin to groom the vulnerable individual.

Once a trafficker selects a victim, the next step in the grooming process is to gain access to the child. This may take the form of involvement in youth-service organizations, manipulation of the caregivers, or isolating the child from family and peers. In most cases of trafficking, the trafficker is an individual with a previously established relationship with the victim. However, traffickers sometimes stake out locations where vulnerable populations are located which includes homeless shelters, juvenile detention centers, foster care facilities, etc. (Winters et al., 2022).

The third step in the grooming process is developing trust. Trust is established through societal status, emotional manipulation, and materialistic manipulation. Accompanying trust is the act of dependency. Traffickers want to ensure that their victims feel the need to rely on them, and that without their trafficker, they cannot survive, or at least survive in a comfortable manner (Winters et al., 2022). As stated previously, Walsh (2016) writes that “pimps may be known by many names, including *boyfriends*, *managers*, and *friends*” (p. 225). By assuming these roles, the trafficker is able to manipulate the victim with ease. Winters et al. (2022) claim that one of the most referenced manipulation tactics is false romantic involvement and affection. Traffickers often utilize overt manipulation strategies like explicitly glorifying sex work. Winters et al. (2022) found through research that traffickers promote the prospect of a better and wealthier lifestyle through sex work to their victims. They also found that traffickers attempt to associate paid sex work as a means of establishing self-worth and intelligence (Winters et al., 2022). Traffickers will provide victims with verbal promises and/or “open displays of wealth (e.g., jewelry, cars)” (Winters et al., 2022, p. 69). Encouraging victims to recruit their friends is a means of traffickers to fabricate a sense of normalcy (Winters et al., 2022).

When the trafficker feels as though they have established trust with their victim, they

begin to desensitize the individual to sexual content and physical contact. This prepares the individual for their first sexual encounter for commercial purposes (Winters et al., 2022). To desensitize their victims, they utilize a “breaking-in” phase where they “used sexual language, made jokes about prostitution, and began asking explicit questions about their sexual experiences” (Winters et al., 2022, p. 69). Survivors have reported that they had sexually explicit photographs taken of them and were exposed to pornographic material (Winters et al., 2022). Pimps often impose a gradual progression of requests beginning with a nonsexual nature, and slowly becoming increasingly sexual. With new recruits, traffickers may directly engage in sexual relationships and encourage their friends to do the same as a means of testing their performance (Winters et al., 2022).

The final stage of the grooming process is post-abuse maintenance, which is the act of continuing manipulation to enable future abuse and as a means to prevent the individual from reporting the abuse. Traffickers will continue using previously established tactics in order to maintain the power and control over their victims. In addition to direct force like coercion and manipulation, pimps will utilize indirect force such as verbal threats, physical abuse, neglect, sexual violence, and blackmail. Traffickers often make a competition out of the victims, making them compete for attention (Winters et al., 2022).

Pornography

The word pornography derives from the greek term “pornographos”, meaning “writing about prostitutes” (D’Orlando, 2009). Humphreys et al. (2019) describe pornography as “the driving force behind the international sex trafficking industry” (p. 19). The industry is rapidly growing, beginning at \$3.9 billion and growing to almost \$13 billion from 2001-2007 in just the United States alone (Foubert et al., 2011). Pornography is becoming larger and larger every day,

and is evolving to satisfy the demands of the public. The Internet has made pornographic material more easily accessible, and has led to consumption being a norm for young men (Miller et al., 2019). On Pornhub, a popular pornography website, about 25 billion searches were performed in 2017, an average of 81 million people visited the site daily, and four million videos were uploaded (Skorska et al., 2018).

Studies show that pornography consumption is most prevalent among men who are between 18-25 years old; 76-87% of college-age men viewing pornography every year, and 48% on a weekly basis (Foubert et al., 2011). Women tend to consume pornographic material less than men, with only one third viewing it annually and one out of every six women describing a level of consumption close to addiction (2011). Wolak et al. (2014) found that during the year of the study, “244,920 U.S. computers shared files that had been identified in previous law enforcement investigations as containing child pornography” (p. 354) and if each computer identified was in a separate household, it would be about 0.3% of U.S. households containing computers (Wolak et al., 2014).

D’Orlando (2009) states that images that were considered pornographic 10 years ago are no longer considered pornographic today. Content is becoming increasingly more violent and “edgy” (Foubert et al., 2011, p. 213) and often contains scenes with underage individuals being dehumanized (Foubert et al., 2011). When analyzing scenes of some of the most popular pornographic materials, researchers found that 88% of the scenes include physical aggression toward women (2011). Pornography plays a large role in American society, and is continuing to have an impact on those who consume it.

Effect of Pornography Consumption

Much like with food and alcohol, an unhealthy consumption of pornographic material can

lead to an addiction. D'Orlando (2009) deems sexual addiction as “a phenomenon which includes tolerance, withdrawal, the unsuccessful desire to cut down the sexual behavior, [and] a negative impact on other activities” (p. 59). Studies report that 100% of men who classify as sex addicts state that it began with pornography (Foubert et al., 2011). Pornography can also have an impact on marriage and relationships. Statistics show that married couples who have viewed pornographic material in the year of the study are more likely to divorce, have an affair, or be less satisfied with their marriage and life in general (Eberstatdt & Layden, as cited in Foubert et al., 2011). The most notable impact of pornography consumption is the effect consumption has on men's perceptions of women. Studies in the mid-twentieth century show that pornography is not linked to “sexual deviance” (Silbert & Pines, 1984, p. 858). Other studies like Schultz's interviews with violent sex offenders oppose this view, finding that half the men claimed that consumption played a definite role in their crimes (Schultz, as cited in Silbert & Pines, 1984). Silbert and Pines (1984) found in their study that 24% of the 193 rape cases they looked at discussed allusions to pornographic material. Out of 200 responses, 10% of the individuals stated they were used in pornographic films or magazines as children (Silbert & Pines, 1984). These studies stand as the foundation of the impact of pornography consumption.

Foubert et al. (2011) conducted a study to evaluate the likelihood of men who are involved in a fraternity to commit sexual assault and rape, willingness to help a sexual assault victim as a bystander, and acceptance of rape myths. They received 489 usable surveys from fraternity members at a public university in the Midwest. In the 12 months leading up to the survey, 83% of participants reported viewing mainstream pornographic material. The researchers found that men who viewed this material scored significantly higher on their scale of self-reported likelihood of committing rape and sexual assault than those who did not view the

material. 19% of participants had reported viewing rape pornography, and also scored higher in the likelihood of raping, committing sexual assault, accepting rape myths, and scored lower in the area of intervening as a bystander.

A study conducted by Miller et al. (2019) investigates the question of whether exposure to pornography impacts men's perception of women's willingness to participate in and enjoyment of porn-like sex. The 418 male participants ranged from 18 to 72 years old, and the study was performed online. The participants were either exposed to the experimental or control condition, and 22 minutes of a taxi-themed pornographic video (experimental) or 22 minutes of a nonpornographic video (control) followed. Miller et al. found that there was no significant effect of the pornography on the men's judgment of women. Miller et al. (2019) states that while those who consumed the taxi-themed pornography judged average women as well as the woman in the video to be more likely to engage and enjoy porn-like sex with a taxi driver, but "this finding was no longer significant once group differences in age and overall level of pornography use were controlled for" (Miller et. al., 2019, p. 373). This study was flawed as past exposure to this type of pornographic material impacted the differentiation between control and exposure groups. The study is important to note, but due to the flawed nature of it, the findings cannot be deemed conclusive.

In a 2018 study conducted by Skorska et al. (2018) the effects of various types of pornography on men's perceptions of women were analyzed. Skorska et al. (2018) separated the men participating in the study into three categories for the pornography viewing: degrading porn, erotica porn, and a control group that viewed news clips. The researchers found that hostile sexist attitudes were the highest from those who viewed degrading pornography. However, benevolent sexism was found to hold no difference between the three groups. Those who viewed

the erotica pornography were found to be the most likely to discriminate against unrelated women. On a wider scale, pornography exposure as a whole was found to lead to an increase in objectification, more hostile sexist attitudes, and discrimination.

A study conducted by Miller et al. (2019) investigates the question of whether exposure sexual abuse. Viewing child pornography may help some offenders control their “deviant sexual interests in children” (Miller et al., 2014, p. 467) and prevent them from committing hands-on sexual offenses. On the other hand, it may stimulate pre-existing fantasies and lower their inhibitions to act on these desires. Offenders tend to be primarily white, 25-50 years old and more likely to be employed than child sexual abusers. Before the Internet became prevalent, between one-fifth and one-third of offenders arrested for child pornography possession were also involved in sexual abuse. Both offenders tend to hold antisocial characteristics and low inhibitory control.

Social and Sexual Scripts Theory

Commonly associated with pornography consumption is the social scripts theory which suggests that human sexual behavior is guided by scripts. Scripts are cognitive devices that process behavior and guide actions (Jones & Hostler, 2002). Pornography plays a role in creating new scripts, priming existing scripts and encouraging the utilization of scripts to inform behaviors. Therefore, pornographic material can influence what is perceived to be normal, further impacting sexuality, sexual situations, behaviors, and evaluations (Miller et al., 2019).

Partnered with social scripts is sexual scripts, which Jones and Hostler (2002) describe as the “understanding of each person about [their] sexuality... substantively determine that person’s choice of sexual actions and the subsequent qualitative experiencing of those sexual acts” (Jones & Hostler, 2002, p. 120). The sexual script maintains what is accepted by the individual

regarding behavior, status, roles, and expression of their sexual self (Jones & Hostler, 2002). The scripts also dictate emotional responses and the meaning associated with sexual experiences (Ganon et al., as cited in Jones & Hostler, 2002). If this is the case, individuals that are being sex trafficked have both a negative emotional response and negative meaning attached to their sexual experiences. The traumas experienced in the trafficking are warping their sexual scripts, enabling them to be more accepting of the abuse they are experiencing, and making it less likely of them to deem it an issue.

Link between Pornography and Trafficking

Pornography and trafficking are interconnected, with pornography often fueling the demand for sex trafficking in America. The connection transcends beyond the demand; however, individuals are “rented” for pornographic material (Humphreys et al., 2019), and the laws tend to overlap. Luzwick (2017) even goes as far to say that the lines have become blurred between pornography and prostitution because of the availability of interactive pornography and virtual prostitution, therefore contributing to trafficking.

Various types of pornographic material found online may also be deemed sex trafficking. Webcam sex trafficking takes place when people perform acts of sex while filming on a webcam, and when purchasing this act, there is no way to know whether the individual is being forced to perform. For instance, Humphreys et al. (2019) highlight a child cybersex operator in the Philippines who was arrested for his webcam business. Buyers located across the world paid for him to film the sexual abuse of children. The FBI believes that there are about 750,000 online child predators on the Internet at a time (U.S. Department of State, as cited in Humphreys et al., 2019).

Sextortion is similar to revenge pornography in which a predator threatens to release

personal information or utilize alternative types of blackmail to receive and distribute pornographic photographs on the Internet (Humphreys et al., 2019). The material the predator obtains often becomes used on pornographic websites (Humphreys et al., 2019). Humphreys et al. (2019) highlight a case in 2015 where a pharmaceutical student victimized more than 300 teenagers. He was in an online chatroom with a group of 15-year-old girls at a sleepover. He had taken the persona of a 15-year-old boy and the girls exposed themselves to him on video. The predator then took photos of them and posted them online.

Massage parlors are notorious for being brothels in disguise. These businesses often exploit victims of trafficking and sometimes workers are coerced into recording pornographic videos (Humphreys et al., 2019). In the United States, it is estimated that almost 5,000 brothels are being disguised as massage sites (Humphreys et al., 2019). While some workers willingly choose to work in these establishments, others do not choose to do so.

As Herrington and McEachern (2018) analyze the applicability of Carol Adams' model of violence against women to the exploitation of women in trafficking in pornography, they draw links between the two. In the final stage of the model, consumption, they reference Gail Dines who studied the recent changes in the pornography industry. He states that the Internet is responsible for the objectified images of women that consumers expect as "standard fare" (Herrington & McEachern 2018, p. 606) for pornographic materials and therefore the same demands are placed on prostituted women and children. Herrington and McEachern (2018) go on to state that there are three indisputable facts in regards to the connection between pornography and trafficking: men are watching increasingly brutal pornography and the demand is being supplied, the increase of child pornography on the Internet is causing consumers to demand prostituted children at younger ages, and johns (clients of prostitutes) are forcing their prostitutes

to perform what has been shown in pornography. Herrington and McEachern (2018) state that “prostitution is inseparable from pornography given that at least half of prostituted girls have had pornography made of them” (p. 607). Leary (2017) states that with the overconsumption of violent pornography by men, there is a correlation between the acts of viewing the pornography, purchasing prostitutes, and acting in a violent manner towards them. Accompanying this normalization is the acceptance of the notion that men are entitled to sexual release, and women are readily available for it (Leary, 2017).

Legality of Pornography and Trafficking

In an attempt to curb pornography and protect trafficking and rape victims, there are laws in place in regards to pornography. The United States criminalizes prostitution across the country, with the exception of Nevada, which contains some counties that have legalized prostitution (Leary, 2017). The legalization and illegalization of prostitution across America makes the protection of trafficking victims and survivors especially difficult. The TVPA requires survivors to prove the situation as being forced or a means of fraud or coercion in order for it to not be considered prostitution, and this process can be very difficult and tedious. In an observational study, Najdowski (2017) found that 27% of state statutes in America deem nonconsensual pornography as a problem in regards to the “improper recordation or dissemination of sensitive images or messages” (p. 157). 23% of the statutes found it to be an invasion of privacy, 20% as an act of voyeurism, and 11% as surveillance, eavesdropping, or peeping (Najdowski, 2017). When looking at the level of offense that states consider this type of pornography to be, 33% treat it as a misdemeanor, 23% as a felony, and 41% as one of the two depending on the specific situation. Najdowski (2017) reports that 25% of statutes explicitly state that the offense must occur in a private space to be considered. Only 19% of laws protect the

victim in cases where the images were consensually taken but unknowingly distributed (Najdowski, 2017).

Twenty-six states have legislation that is targeted toward revenge pornography. Many cases of pornography and trafficking deal with Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. This act provides legal immunity to online services that publish information that other people post. These sites take the form of news websites, social media, blogs, and forums. This also includes auctioning sites such as eBay and Craigslist. Infringing on copyright is an exception for the protection of Section 230, and to own the copyright, a victim of revenge pornography– or pornography posted as an act of revenge on the victim– needs to have taken the photo themselves. Victims of revenge pornography can legally combat their case through defamation, invasion of privacy, public disclosure of private facts, and intentional infliction of emotional distress. Revenge pornography can also fall under cyberstalking, but this claim is more difficult to prove as cyberstalking must be a recurring act, and often the photos only become posted once. The First Amendment right of free speech stands as an obstacle to tackling pornographic materials from being posted; however, the material can be argued as defamation and obscenity to move around the right (Kamal & Newman, 2016).

The legal fight against trafficking is not clean cut, but rather complex and continuous. Leary (2017) explains that sexual exploitation was seen as a “quality of life crime in which people selling sex were the perpetrators and the victims were the neighborhoods negatively affected by prostitution” (p. 420) prior to the late twentieth century. The idea of coercion was hardly considered and the victims were seen as criminals. It was not until more information became available that the harsh reality of trafficking became clear. In 2000 Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act [TVPA] in which the aim was to prevent, suppress and punish

trafficking (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, 2000). Congress also deemed trafficking to be “modern day slavery” (Leary, 2017, p. 423). The TVPA requires a minimum of ten year sentences for sex trafficking if the survivor is between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. If the victim is under fourteen, the minimum sentence becomes fifteen years (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, 2000). Trafficking is also fought through stings and reverse stings, where false advertisements are posted for those involved (Leary, 2017). These stings help to identify and free survivors. In 2015, the TVPA was amended to state that all purchasers are human traffickers (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, 2000). The laws surrounding trafficking also overlap with laws regarding prostitution and child pornography. The legality behind pornography will be discussed later in this paper.

Allison Luzwick (2017) proposes the idea of utilizing the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 as a means to prosecute trafficking through online pornography. Luzwick (2017) states that pornography “fuel[s] the human trafficking industry by both contributing to the demand for more traditional forms of sex trafficking” (p. 356-7) and allocates a second avenue of profit for those who traffic individuals “for the production of pornographic media” (p. 356-7). Often times consumers of pornography write themselves off as innocent, believing that as they are not engaging in the sexual acts shown, but instead viewing an image of the act. However, by merely viewing the content, they are increasing the demand for the product and indirectly contributing to the problem of trafficking. In 2003 the Bush administration expanded the TVPA to include pornography, but President Obama did not address the new definition established by the previous president.

The TVPA states that to fall under the requirements of the act, there must be a commercial sexual act. In the case of pornography, while the consumers may have purchased the

recorded videos, pornography also can be deemed a commercial sex act for the manner in which it is produced. The porn “actors” or the managers of the “actors” are being paid to participate in the video. This exchange of money constitutes pornography as a commercial sex act, and therefore allows it to fall under the ruling of the TVPA (Luzwick, 2017).

The Palermo Protocol was introduced to the United Nations on November 15, 2000. The Palermo Protocol is also known as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. This protocol is a means for different countries to criminalize trafficking. Article 2 of the Palermo Protocol states the purpose intended with the protocol to prevent and combat trafficking, specifically in women and children, to protect and assist victims of trafficking and to promote cooperation in the UN to meet the objectives (Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 2000). The Palermo Protocol also suggests implementing different measures for victims such as housing, counseling, medical and psychological assistance, and employment and educational opportunities (Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 2000).

As of March 31, 2021, over 155 countries across the world have criminalized trafficking with the Palermo Protocol (Silver, 2021). While it is a step in the right direction, Silver (2021) points out that since the protocol is flexible in each nation’s implementation, there is room for inconsistencies between each country. The flaws Silver (2021) reports include: “omission of the “means” within the definition of [trafficking]” (p. 346), “the inclusion of the “means” element within the definition of a trafficking offense involving a child victim” (p. 346), and “the requirement of movement within the definition of trafficking” (p. 346). These flaws indicate that there is much more work that needs to be done in order to protect and support trafficking

survivors.

Luzwick (2017) states that in many jurisdictions, there must be evidence to demonstrate the trafficking had an impact on interstate commerce. Pornography tends to meet this requirement, as Luzwick (2017) points out that statistics show that in the time span between July 2009 to July 2010, about 13% of Internet searches in the US were regarding pornographic material. In the pay-per-view Internet content market, pornography makes up 69% of the market (Luzwick, 2017). These findings indicate that almost every pornographic image or video that is posted on the Internet can have an effect on the interstate commerce.

In a 2020 court case in which an 11 year old girl was placed in a chat room on Omegle with an older man and was intimidated into undressing on camera while he recorded it, the plaintiff argued a number of factors, including that there was a violation of the TVPA (Brown, 2022). This incident can be deemed a form of sex trafficking, and therefore should fall under the umbrella of the TVPA, but the court motioned to dismiss all the plaintiff's claims, including the TVPA violation. The court argued that Omegle exercises immunity provided by Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. In *Doe V. Reddit, Inc.*, and *Roca Labs, Inc. v. Consumer Op. Corp.*, the court ruled and created new legal precedent stating the three requirements a defendant must meet in order to be protected by Section 230. The requirements are as follows: they must be a "service provider/user of an interactive computer service" (Bown, 2022), based on the causes of action, they are "a publisher or speaker of information" (Brown, 2022), and that a different source provided the information (Brown, 2022). Section 230 allows Omegle to remain innocent in the courts perspective, enabling them to state that they had no knowledge of the trafficking that was taking place. Section 230 has allowed numerous websites harboring trafficking to be let off, and is a significant issue within the world of anti-trafficking.

Methodology

This section provides an overview of the methodology in the study of college students' knowledge of pornography and trafficking, as well as the connection between the two concepts. The goal of this study, as stated prior, is to gain an overall understanding of college students' knowledge of these topics in order to pinpoint gaps in the education of said subjects, and to bridge these gaps. This information called for a quantitative study, as the target was an overall understanding of their knowledge. The research study utilized a survey; the components of the study are as follows:

Participants

Participants of the study were students attending Southeastern University, a private, Christian university. This population was selected in order to gather data from individuals who are around the age of those who are commonly victims of trafficking. They are also next in line to raise a generation in a world that is lacking true information about trafficking, and a world becoming more accepting of pornography.

Participants were recruited via email sent by SEU's Honors program, as well as SEU's Social Work program. The email used to recruit participants is included in the appendices. A consent page was included in the survey, ensuring that participants were at least 18 years of age and informing them that completion of the survey was entirely voluntary. It also states that their answers will be kept confidential. This information was also stated in the email that was sent out. The consent form can be found within the appendices.

Procedures

The survey that was sent out consisted of 25 questions. The first seven questions of the survey were asking for demographic/background information. They were asked their age,

gender, race/ethnic origins, level of education, the college that their major is listed under, if they attended public or private high school, and whether or not they do/did attend church and/or youth group regularly. The following 18 questions were all close-ended questions asking about the participants knowledge of pornography and trafficking, with the exception of one open-ended question asking if they have seen a Hollywood movie about trafficking that they find to be a fairly good depiction of trafficking.

There was no time limit for people to complete the survey, and it was not mandatory to complete all questions. It was administered online, and they accessed the survey via the email they received. The survey was open for them to take for approximately seven weeks, and they had until the end of those seven weeks to complete it. The survey received 113 responses throughout those seven weeks. The following section will provide an overview of the results of that study.

Analysis of Data

As stated previously, the first section of the survey administered includes demographic questions in order to gain an understanding of those being surveyed. There were 113 responses to the survey. All questions asked were oriented in a manner in which to gauge what college students know, or think they know about pornography and trafficking. These questions are the first section of this chapter. The second section of this chapter includes the results from the questions regarding their knowledge of trafficking. The final section will include the questions on the knowledge of pornography and its connection to trafficking. This study will pinpoint gaps in the education of these topics in order to encourage the bridging of these gaps in formats such as educational seminars.

Survey Results

Demographic Questions

The first of the demographic questions asked participants their age. 99 people (87.6%) were between the ages of 18 and 20, 13 people (11.5%) were between 21 and 25, and 1 (0.9%) was between 26 and 35. The second question asked for the gender of the participants. 89 (78.8%) respondents were female, and 24 (21.2%) were male. The third question asked about racial and ethnic origins. 78 (70.3%) of the participants were white, 14 (12.6%) black or African American, 17 (15.3%) Hispanic/Latino(a), 1 (0.9%) American Indian or Alaska Native, and 1 (0.9%) Asian. Next they were asked their level of education completed or currently pursuing. 107 (95.5%) stated college, 4 (3.6%) high school, and 1 (0.9%) post graduate. They were then asked to select the college in which their current major is located. 33 (29.2%) selected the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, 31 (27.4%) selected the College of Natural and Health Sciences, 22 (19.5%) chose the option for Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership,

13 (11.5%) selected the College of Education, 8 (7.1%) for Barnett College of Ministry and Theology, 5 (4.4%) were undecided, and 1 (0.9%) the School of Music. The next question asked the participants about the type of high school they attended. 59 (52.2%) indicated they attended private school, 41 (36.3%) indicated they went to a public school, 5 (4.4%) indicated they went to both public and private school, 5 (4.4%) indicated two or all options, and 3 (2.7%) were homeschooled. The final demographic question asked about their church/youth group attendance. The question asks “do you attend church/youth group regularly?”. Of the participants, 69 (61.1%) responded yes to both church and youth group, 27 (23.9%) responded yes just to church, 14 (12.4%) said they did not attend either church or youth group regularly and 3 (2.7%) responded that they attended only youth group regularly.

Questions Regarding Knowledge of Trafficking

This second section of the survey asked participants if they have ever been taught or held discussions in the following settings on the dangers of trafficking: school, church, youth group, family members, community, and other. 61 (57.5%) of participants responded with school, 68 (64.2%) family members, 36 (34%) community, 31 (29.2%) with church, and 22 (20.8%) youth group. For the “other” fill-in option, 2 (1.8%) responded with “online”, 1 (0.9%) said job, 1 (0.9%) book, 1 (0.9%) said they worked in trafficking in missions, and 2 (1.8%) said they have not had these discussions or teachings.

The next question asked them to rate their understanding of trafficking on a scale from 1-5. This scale is indicative of the following answers: 1- no understanding, 2- minimal understanding, 3- moderate understanding, 4- good understanding, 5- excellent understanding. 51 participants (45.1%) stated that they have a moderate understanding of trafficking. 38 (33.6%) indicated a good understanding, 18 (15.9%) said minimal understand, and 6 (5.3%) reported

an excellent level of understanding. These findings can be seen below, at Figure 1.1.

Please rate your level of understanding of trafficking
113 responses

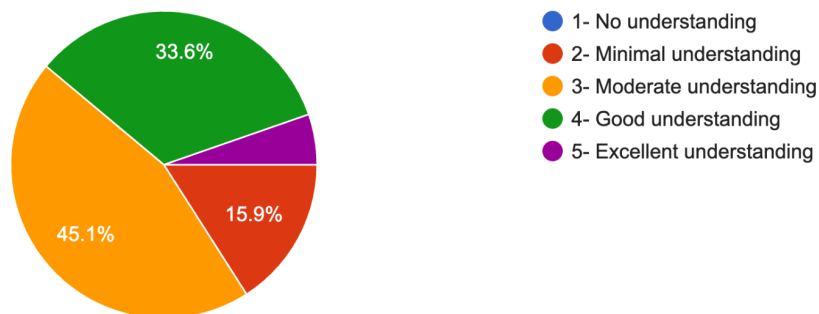


Figure 1.1

The third question asked participants if they have ever seen one or more Hollywood movies that portray trafficking. The majority— 78 (69%) of the participants responded “yes” and 35 (31%) answered “no”.

Figure 1.2 displays the following findings from the next question which asked participants to indicate how accurate they believe the portrayals to be. The following scale was used: 1- not accurate, 2- minimally accurate, 3- somewhat accurate, 4- mostly accurate, 5- extremely accurate, 6- unsure. Of the participants, 42 (38.2%) responded with “somewhat accurate”, 28 (25.5%) said “minimally accuracy”, 25 (22.7%) said they were “unsure”, 12 (10.9%) said they believed the movie was “mostly accurate”, 2 people (1.8%) said “not accurate” and 1 (0.9%) said it was “extremely accurate”.

How accurate do you think these portrayals are?

110 responses

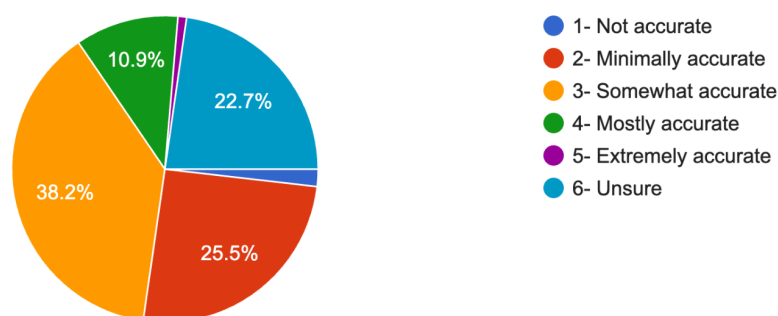


Figure 1.2

The following question asked whether the participants feel as though Hollywood has made trafficking and kidnapping out to be one in the same. The responses were split, with 53 (47.3%) responding “yes”, 49 (43.8%) saying “possibly/unsure” and 10 (8.9%) saying “no”.

Next, participants were asked the first non-multiple choice question in which they were asked: “is there a Hollywood film or documentary that you have seen that you believe to be a fairly good depiction of trafficking?” Answers to this question varied, although there were some repeated answers. One person said the film they saw is *Abducted in Plain Sight*, while 6 people (5%) indicated they have seen *Priceless the For King and Country* movie. One person said *Law and Order* and another reported *Criminal Minds*. One person said *Redeeming Love*, one said *Trafficked*, and one said *The Call*, and one said they have seen a fine arts film in an Assemblies of God church. The *Taken* movie series had the most number of people indicating they have seen it, with 8 (7%) responses for the series. 38 (33.6%) people responded saying they have not seen a movie regarding trafficking.

The next question asked whether the participants believe that human trafficking only

involves sex. 96 (85%) of the participants responded “no”, 13 (11.5%) indicated “possibly/unsure” and 4 (3.5%) said “yes”.

Next, participants were asked if they think that traffickers know the individual that they are trafficking. 51 (45.1%) said they were unsure, 35 (31%) said “yes” and 27 (23.9%) said “no”.

Participants were then asked whether or not they have heard the term “child prostitute” before. 101 (89.4%) said “yes”, while 12 (10.6%) said “no”.

Following that question, they were asked if they would say that “child prostitute” is an accurate term. 59 (52.2%) said “no”, 43 (38.1%) said “yes” and 11 (9.7%) said they have never heard the term before.

The next question, participants were asked if they think most victims of trafficking are aware that they are being trafficked. 57 (50.4%) of the respondents reported “no” they do not think most victims are aware they are being trafficked. 36 (31.9%) said “possibly/unsure” and 20 (17.7%) said that “yes” they think that most victims of trafficking are aware that they are being trafficked.

Questions Regarding Knowledge of Pornography and Connection to Trafficking

Participants were asked to rate their level of understanding to the personal and societal impact of pornography. They were given a scale ranging from 1-5: 1- no understanding, 2- minimal understanding, 3- moderate understanding, 4- good understanding, and 5- excellent understanding. Figure 1.3 shows the results of the question. 50 (44.2%) said they have good understanding, 36 (31.9%) report moderate understanding, 19 (16.8%) reported excellent understanding, and 8 (7.1%) reported minimal understanding.

Please rate your level of understanding to the personal and societal impact of pornography

113 responses

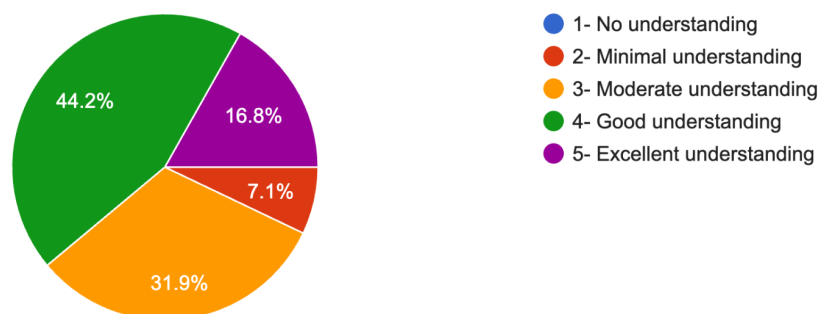


Figure 1.3

The next question is: do you think pornography is harmful to an individual's psyche? 104 (92%) said "yes", 7 (6.2%) said "possibly/unsure" and 2 (1.8%) said "no".

Participants were asked whether they think all participants in pornography consent to the actions taken, including being filmed and posted. 87 (77%) of people said "no" they do not think all participants of pornography consent to everything. 22 (19.5%) said "possibly/unsure" and 4 (3.5%) said "yes".

Participants were then asked if they think sex trafficking and pornography are connected. Of the respondents, 86 (76.1%) said "yes". 23 (20.4%) said "possibly/unsure" and 4 (3.5%) said "no".

The next question asked is: do you feel that viewing pornography can change an individual's perspective on women? 111 (98.2%) people said "yes" and 2 (1.8%) said "possibly/unsure".

The final question asked was if participants feel as though viewing pornography contributes to the trafficking problem? 88 (77.9%) of participants responded with "yes" while 23 (20.4%) reported "possibly/unsure". The remaining 2 (1.8%) of respondents said "no".

Conclusion

This study into college students' knowledge of trafficking, pornography, and their interconnectedness was originally created due to the initial realization of the lack of accurate information being pushed through social media. The purpose of the study was to gain a general consensus of college students' knowledge of the topics in order to bring reform to the educational curriculum by pinpointing what exactly the misconceptions are. This section is intended to provide an overview of the study as well as identify limitations, implications for policy or practice, and provide recommendations for future research.

As stated in Chapter 2, the format of this study was an online-distributed survey to students at Southeastern University. The survey asked participants different questions regarding their knowledge of sex trafficking and pornography. Almost the entirety of the survey was a close-ended quantitative study, with the exception of one question in which they were asked to identify a Hollywood movie they have seen that portrays trafficking. There were 113 responses to the survey.

College Students Knowledge About Sex Trafficking, Pornography and Their Interconnectedness

The research question that was used as a guide in conducting this research was “what do college students think they know about sex trafficking, pornography and their interconnectedness?” The survey results reveal an abundance of information into what exactly college students believe about trafficking. The demographic questions were carefully chosen in order to gain an understanding of the group of participants in the study. For instance, the majority of participants are between the ages of 18 and 20, while only 14 are between the ages of 21 and 35. This is important to note because individuals in the 18-20 age group may be more likely to be

involved on social media, and may have been exposed to some of these misconceptions. Level of education and type of education are important as these individuals may have different learning experiences in terms of the dangers of trafficking and pornography. This demographic group as well as the college of major and church attendance groups were all fairly diverse, which ensures a diverse pool of respondents and a more accurate representation of college students as a whole. When asked if the participants have been taught or held a discussion on the dangers of trafficking, only 2 respondents reported “no”, indicating that almost all college students have been exposed to trafficking in some type of format.

This survey gives insight into where college students are being fed information on trafficking with the question of where they have been taught or held discussion on the dangers of trafficking. They are asked in the beginning to rate their level of understanding of trafficking, and then the following questions in the survey go into further depth of their knowledge. The questions pertaining to the viewing of Hollywood movies that portray trafficking points to a potential source of their information. This is especially so with the question asking them to indicate a film that they have seen to depict trafficking. With there being 8 (7.%) reporting the *Taken* film series and 6 (5%) indicating the movie *Priceless*, these movies can be deemed a large component to college students’ knowledge on trafficking. By viewing and gauging the validity of all the reported movies, the accuracy of their perceptions can then be gauged to an extent. The same can be said about the question asking if they feel as though Hollywood has made trafficking and kidnapping out to be one in the same. When asked how accurate they believe the portrayals of trafficking in Hollywood movies to be, 38.2% reported that it was somewhat accurate and 25.5% said minimally accurate, which makes up the majority of the respondents. This indicates that despite the popularity of some of the movies, the majority of the college

students did not find the movies to be reliable sources of information.

By comparing the results of each question to one another, conclusions can be made about the knowledge the college students possess on sex trafficking and pornography. For instance, participants were asked to rate their level of understanding of trafficking on a scale 1 through 5, 1 being no understanding and 5 being the highest level of understanding. The majority of participants rated their understanding as 3- moderate (45.1%) and 4- good understanding (33.6%). However, there was a large portion of the responses on each question in which they stated they were “unsure” of the answer. These questions include: if Hollywood has made trafficking and kidnapping to be one in the same, if traffickers know the individual they are trafficking, if most victims of trafficking are aware that they are being trafficked, if participants in pornography consent to the actions taken, if sex trafficking and pornography and trafficking are connected, and if they feel as though viewing pornography contributes to the trafficking problem. This data suggests that college students may have been confident in the information they knew prior to taking the survey, but when prompted, they were unsure or were not informed on the specific information.

The majority of responses on the question asking if traffickers know the individual that they are trafficking was 45.1% “possibly/unsure”, which shows an area that may need to be addressed in educational curriculum. When asked: “do you feel that Hollywood has made trafficking and kidnapping out to be one in the same?” 43.8% of participants were unsure of the answer. Therefore, college students should be educated on the difference between how the media depicts trafficking and how trafficking typically occurs in real life. 52.2% of participants said that the term “child prostitute” is not an accurate term, but 38.1% reported that they believe it is an accurate term. Educational programs should clarify the term and inform individuals that a

child cannot be deemed a prostitute if they cannot legally consent to doing so. The same should be done with whether victims are aware that they are being trafficked or not. A large portion of respondents were unsure of the answer.

When looking at the pornography aspect, clarification should also be given on the topic of pornography and consent, as 19.5% of individuals who took the survey were unsure of whether all participants in pornography consent to the actions taken. 20.4% were unsure if sex trafficking and pornography are connected, as well as if they believe that pornography contributes to the problem of trafficking.

This study demonstrates the overall uncertainty of college students on their knowledge of trafficking. The study did not necessarily pinpoint misconceptions, per say, but rather exposed the areas that individuals are not thoroughly educated on. By being provided a “possibly/unsure” option on almost all questions, the participants were able to surrender their certainty and admit that they have not been informed enough to make a definitive decision. This finding stresses the need for more open discussions and educational resources that allows individuals to ask questions and seek clarification on the topics they do not know in a safe, non-judgmental format.

Strengths

This study is the first of which examines college students' knowledge of both trafficking and pornography and how they are connected in a means to identify misconceptions of the topics. Students who have participated in the research survey have been made aware of the connection between the two topics, and have been prompted to think in depth about the implications of the two. This may have resulted in a better understanding of the topics for those who have participated in the survey. The findings of the research point towards gaps in the education of both trafficking and pornography, which then provide a guideline for educators to follow. The findings are also applicable to more than just educational curriculum, but can also be applied to resources, trafficking mentor programs, college campus counseling centers, church groups, and many other settings in which sex trafficking and pornography may be relevant. The survey focused on college-age students, but the information gathered can also be applied to other age groups, as a means to properly inform both those younger and older who may not have received proper and accurate information.

Limitations

There were multiple limitations regarding the survey population that could have an impact on the results of the study. The first limitation is the sample population. Not only was the population limited to college-age individuals, but it was also limited to students attending Southeastern University. SEU is a private, Christian university which means that the results are not conducive to a diverse population. While the sample population was fairly diverse for the population of students at SEU, the school is primarily made up of caucasian individuals with a Christian background. The school is also private, so many of the students may share a similar socioeconomic background. Therefore the results of this survey cannot be generalized to the

knowledge of *all* college students, but rather a reflection of college students at SEU. Also, the SEU Honors Program sent out the survey via email to inform members of the research opportunity. This would impact the sample and possibly skew the accuracy.

The relatively small sample size is another limitation to the study. There were only 113 responses to the survey, which would have an impact on the results of the data. This could be due to the lack of a physical incentive to take the survey or due to the nature of the topic of the survey. Another possibility is that the survey topics were uncomfortable for people to want to answer questions on.

Future Studies

The expansion of this study can be done easily by expanding the sample size to all college students, or opening it up to other age groups such as middle and high school students. Different questions with more depth into the topics could be asked to obtain an even greater understanding into the knowledge people possess of trafficking and pornography.

It may be beneficial to expand on the study in the future by implementing more education into the topics that the students indicated a lack of knowledge on, and providing the students with the educational material. Students could then be surveyed to see how their knowledge has expanded and their perspectives have changed. An interesting and potentially powerful study to expand on the current research would be to study the direct impact social media has on college students' knowledge of trafficking and pornography.

Implications for Practice

The growing demand for pornographic material and sex trafficking has made the urgency for prevention of trafficking to skyrocket. This demand has also caused the spreading of misinformation to skyrocket. As more and more incorrect information is being passed along via

social media and pop culture, the need for accurate educational curriculum increases. This cannot be achieved, however, if there is a lack of awareness of the general thoughts on the topics of the desired audience. This study provides the foundational information on the knowledge college students possess, which allows practitioners and educators to build up their curriculum from there. This study not only recognizes that trafficking needs to be stopped, but rather that prevention is a multifaceted approach to ending the trafficking epidemic in America and across the globe. This foundational research is essential to reforming the way and the information people that are receiving before it is too late to reverse the damage that is already occurring. Educators and prevention workers often emphasize the impact of misconceptions of trafficking, but the findings of the research support that it is less about the misconceptions, and more about the level of uncertainty individuals feel towards their knowledge on the topics.

Trafficking prevention workers should focus on the unknown answers to the questions college students are internally asking: how does sex trafficking actually occur and how does pornography relate to it? There needs to be leaders in sex trafficking prevention work who educate individuals on the basic premises of sex trafficking such as how it actually works and what should be looked out for. If the general population comes to gain an overall understanding of these principles, then a switch on the perception of the misconceptions will follow. Educating on the dangers of pornography consumption and its link to sex trafficking is just as important as creating a level of understanding on how trafficking is played out. College students are unaware of the implications that watching pornography has on the sex trafficking industry. Trafficking prevention workers should strive to make it known that every piece of pornographic content consumed is simply another match thrown into the fire that is the sex trafficking epidemic.

Summary

This research study was conducted to gain an understanding of college students' knowledge of trafficking, pornography, and their interconnectedness. The aim of the study was to pinpoint gaps in the education in the topics in order to patch the holes in the information being passed along. While misconceptions were not necessarily revealed, the findings demonstrated the areas in which the students lacked knowledge or certainty. Educators and trafficking prevention workers can use these findings in order to improve and reform their curriculum in an effort to create more efficient and accurate education surrounding the topics. Trafficking prevention workers should aim to include the dangers and implications of pornography consumption on the sex trafficking industry. This would result in not only a more knowledgeable society surrounding trafficking and pornography, but also aid in the prevention efforts.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Email

Good afternoon,

My name is Mariah Doyle and I am an Honors undergraduate student at SEU. I am conducting research on the knowledge that SEU students have on trafficking and pornography. This information will be used to gather a consensus of the knowledge that college age students have on trafficking and pornography. This information will help to bridge the gaps in education of the dangers of trafficking and pornography. All questions are optional to answer and information you chose to share will remain confidential. Participants must be 18 or older to complete the questionnaire. There will be resources provided at the end of the survey if help is needed.

Completion of the questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete, and will allow me to create an informational video to be used to educate students about the threat of trafficking and pornography in America.

Thank you, and I look forward to receiving your responses.

Mariah Doyle

Appendix B

Voluntary Participation Consent Form

Trafficking and Pornography Knowledge of College Students

Investigator(s): Erika Cuffy, MSW, Southeastern University; Scott Gaffney, MSW LCSW, Southeastern University; Mariah Doyle

Purpose: This research study is intended to gather a general consensus of the knowledge college students have regarding trafficking and pornography, and the connection between the two.

What to Expect: This research study is administered via an online questionnaire. The questionnaire is approximately 25 questions long, asking demographic questions as well as questions regarding one's knowledge on the topics. It should approximately take 10 minutes to complete.

Risks: While stress and subjecting the participants to risks is not the intention of the questionnaire, individuals who may have a history involving abuse, trafficking, or pornography may be reminded and/or triggered by some of the questions. The questions are only asking about general knowledge on the topics, not their involvement. Resources will be provided at the end of the survey for all those who participate in the survey.

Benefits: Participants may better understand human trafficking in America, and they may be more aware of the actuality of trafficking. Resources regarding trafficking and pornography will be provided to all participants.

Compensation: You will not receive direct compensation for your participation. Participants may, however, benefit from societal and educational gains through learning about the connection between pornography and trafficking.

Your Rights: This questionnaire is entirely voluntary and your participation is not mandatory. You are free to choose to not participate at any time, and withdrawing from the questionnaire is allowed.

Confidentiality: This questionnaire is entirely anonymous and records of completed questionnaires will be kept confidential. Data and records will be destroyed 1 year after the start of data collection. Only the researchers of the study will have access to results.

Contacts: You may reach out to contact any of the researchers at the following email addresses, should you have any questions or requests for information on the questionnaire or participation:

Erika Cuffy: emcuffy@seu.edu Scott Gaffney: swgaffney@seu.edu

Mariah Doyle: mduoye@seu.edu

For questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Office:

IRB@seu.edu

By clicking NEXT, you are indicating that you are at least 18 years of age and that you freely agree to participate in this research study.

It is recommended that you print or save a copy of this consent page for your own records prior

to beginning the questionnaire.

Appendix C

Survey Questionnaire

1. What is your age?

18-20

21-25

26-35

35+

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

3. What is your race/ethnic origins?

White

Black or African American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Hispanic/Latino

4. What is your level of education (completed OR currently pursuing_?)

High School

College

Post Graduate

5. Select the college under which your current major is located

Barnett College of Ministry and Theology

Jannetides College of Business, Communication, and Leadership

College of Social Sciences and Humanities

College of Education

College of Natural and Health Sciences

School of Music

Undecided

6. Did you attend public or private high school?

Public

Private

Two or all options

Homeschooled

7. Do you or did you attend church/youth group regularly

Yes, church

Yes, youth group

Yes, both

Neither

8. Have you ever been taught or held discussion in the following settings on the dangers of trafficking? (Check all that apply)

School

Church

Youth Group

Family members

Community

Other _____

9. Please rate your level of understanding of trafficking

1- No understanding

2- Minimal understanding

3- Moderate understanding

4- Good understanding

5- Excellent understanding

10. Have you ever seen (a) Hollywood movie(s) that portray(s) trafficking?

Yes

No

11. How accurate do you think these portrayals are?

1- Not accurate

2- Minimally accurate

- 3- Somewhat accurate
- 4- Mostly accurate
- 5- Extremely accurate
- 6- Unsure

12. Do you feel that Hollywood has made trafficking and kidnapping out to be one in the same?

- Yes
- No
- Possibly/Unsure

13. Is there a Hollywood film or documentary that you have seen that you believe to be a fairly good depiction of trafficking?

_____ Short answer text _____

14. Do you believe that human trafficking only involves sex?

- Yes
- No
- Possibly/Unsure

15. Do you think traffickers know the individual that they are trafficking?

- Yes
- No

Possibly/Unsure

16. Do you think trafficking only occurs after a kidnapping?

Yes

No

Possibly/Unsure

17. Have you heard the term “child prostitute” before?

Yes

No

18. Would you say “child prostitute” is an accurate term?

Yes

No

I have never heard it before

19. Do you think most victims of trafficking are aware that they are being trafficked?

Yes

No

Possibly/Unsure

20. Please rate your level of understanding to the personal and societal impact of
pornography

- 1- No understanding
- 2- Minimal understanding
- 3- Moderate understanding
- 4- Good understanding
- 5- Excellent understanding

21. Do you think pornography is harmful to an individual's psyche?

- Yes
- No
- Possibly/Unsure

22. Do you think all participants in pornography consent to the actions taken, including being filmed and posted?

- Yes
- No
- Possibly/Unsure

23. Do you think sex trafficking and pornography are connected?

- Yes
- No
- Possibly/Unsure

24. Do you feel that viewing pornography can change an individual's perspective on women?

Yes

No

Possibly/Unsure

25. Do you feel that viewing pornography contributes to the trafficking problem?

Yes

No

Possibly/Unsure

National Human Trafficking Hotline

1 (888) 373-7888

SAMHSA Hotline (Pornography/other addiction)

1-800-662-4357