

EXPLORING THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROSTITUTION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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ABSTRACT

The research critically assesses the intricate and multifaceted relationship between prostitution and human trafficking. The research delves into the entwined nature of these phenomena, aiming to shed light on the complex dynamics that shape this connection. The essay begins by providing a comprehensive definition of human trafficking, considering various factors that extend beyond the traditional use of force and coercion. It explores how gender dynamics play a significant role in shaping the discourse around sexual victimisation and analyses the societal perception of female and male involvement in prostitution and sex tourism. The analysis reveals the profound impact of economic theory on the relationship between prostitution and human trafficking. It examines the contrasting effects of legalising prostitution, highlighting the critical role that demand plays in fuelling human trafficking. Case studies from various countries further emphasises this correlation, underscoring the real-world implications of prostitution laws on trafficking. Ethnicity's influence on the demand for prostitution and its link to human trafficking is also explored. The study delves into how socio-economic factors and discrimination against marginalised groups contribute to vulnerability and exploitation, particularly in the context of the sex industry. Additionally, the essay investigates whether victims of prostitution and the sex trade exclusively comprise women and children. It challenges the prevailing narrative by examining the experiences of adult men and transgender individuals who are forced into sex work. The essay addresses the critical distinction between prostitution and human trafficking and the blurred lines that often exist between the two. It emphasises the importance of recognising these differences to formulate more effective responses and policies in combating human trafficking. In conclusion, this essay underscores

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the interconnectedness of prostitution and human trafficking while advocating for a comprehensive approach to address these complex issues. It calls for an understanding of the role played by demand, economics, and societal dynamics, ultimately seeking to contribute to the informed discussions and effective strategies required to address this pressing concern.

INTRODUCTION

The essay puts forward the evidence as to how prostitution and human trafficking are linked and critically analyses the robustness of the link. The essay tries to achieve this by raising questions about whether prostitution can create demands for human trafficking, if the victims of prostitution and the sex trade comprise only women and children, and does ethnicity play a role in the demand for prostitution and therefore trafficked more than others. The essay starts with defining trafficking by using the definition mentioned by Hughes in her noteworthy essay *Natasha Trade*, where it is defined as the act of transporting people across national and local borders with the intention of sexual exploitationⁱ. She has argued that trafficking can be achieved not only through means of manipulation, force, duress, and misuse of authority or power, as specified in the United Nation's definition, but also due to being pressurised by family, prior or present violence in the family or community, poverty, or other instances of gender inequality affecting women and childrenⁱⁱ. The definition by Hughes has a dual effect of restraining and expanding the idea of trafficking, where it restricts the definition to only trafficking for sexual exploitation, which excludes trafficking for other reasons, but it additionally combines trafficking with prostitution, thereby blurring the lines between the two conceptsⁱⁱⁱ.

The academic literature concerning sexual victimisation commonly identifies females as victims, while conversely, men and boys are seen as offenders^{iv}. In a study on the analysis of sex tourism, it was emphasised that the way scholars and experts talk about sex tourism differs depending on the gender dynamic between those who exploit and those who are exploited, as female tourists who buy services of local men or pubescent boys are often described as engaging in harmless romantic relationships, whereas male sex tourism is often criticised as exploitive and parasitic^v. Human sex trafficking is a form of slavery yet forms a big industry

which is the fastest-expanding business among organised criminal activities and is the third-largest criminal business worldwide^{vi}.

Illegal immigration, which is assisted, can lead to manipulation and exploitation, as many undocumented immigrants who choose to travel to other countries may later end up becoming victims of trafficking^{vii}. They are subjected to harsh working conditions and forced into bondage, and the sexual exploitation of females in the sex industry is one of the most well-known forms of trafficking^{viii}. Presently, human sex trafficking is highly barbarous and structured. Traffickers purchase women and young girls, confine them to brothels or rooms for extended periods, subject them to drugs, and repeatedly assault them^{ix}. Human trafficking has frequently been linked to prostitution, as it is defined as the act of transporting women or individuals with the intention of sexual exploitation^x. Consequently, in discussions concerning the permissibility of prostitution, a critical issue arises: does the occurrence of human trafficking serve as an unavoidable outcome of prostitution?

DOES PROSTITUTION CREATE DEMAND FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is a serious issue in the sex industry, with a large number of victims, which have been estimated to be around 12 million globally, as reported by the US Department of State in 2010, and the annual profits generated from sex trafficking are approximately 28 million US dollars^{xi}. The sex industry worldwide is the cause of the trafficking of millions of women and children, and according to the International Organisation of Migration, around 500,000 women and children in a year are traded in Europe^{xii}. Being founded on the available data, the discovery of the research is that nations with legitimised prostitution have a higher number of reported cases of trafficking inflows, nevertheless, it should be further researched^{xiii}.

Based on Economic Theory, legalising prostitution can have two effects^{xiv}. The first is the scale effect, where the prostitution market grows and ultimately leads to a growth in human trafficking, and the second has the substitution effect, where the demand for trafficked prostitutes decreases as prostitutes with legal residence in the country become more favoured. Countries with legal prostitution tend to have larger prostitution markets where the majority of

human trafficking victims are exploited. For example, Denmark, where self-employed prostitution is legal, has an estimated number of 7800 prostitutes, while Sweden, which is almost twice the population of Denmark, has between 500 and 1000 prostitutes^{xv}. Another example where prostitution is legal is Germany, which is recognised for having significant human trafficking rates which are 60 times greater than those in Sweden, a country where prostitution is considered a criminal offence, despite Germany having a population only ten times larger than Sweden^{xvi}. No less than 8000 Nigerian females have been transported by human traffickers to Italy to work as prostitutes on the street, additionally, around 5000 females from Albania, Moldova, and Ukraine have been trafficked into Italy, where they are compelled to engage in prostitution in various settings, including small hotels, massage parlours, apartments, rented rooms, and even high-end clubs^{xvii}. In South Asia, 500 women are illicitly trafficked to Pakistan every month, furthermore, approximately 150,000 females from the Philippines are trafficked to Japan yearly, and 7000 Nepalese females are sold into Indian brothels each year^{xviii}.

The sex trade is controlled by criminal organisations running human trafficking, such as the Japanese Yakuza, Russian Mafia, Italian Camorra, and Chinese Triads^{xix}. Numerous activists and scholars believe that the primary reason for the growth of the sex industry is the demand for prostitutes by men, where traffickers, pimps and recruiters would not be keen to supply women if there was no male demand. While some may criticise this perspective for being lacking nuance and overly simplistic, it is a fact that a prostitution market without male consumers would not be profitable and would eventually collapse^{xx}. Research suggests that legalising prostitution is linked to a rise in trafficking, as when prostitution is legal, pimps and traffickers can operate without fear of prosecution, consequently, in whichever country prostitution is legalised, the flow of trafficking into the sex industry in that area tends to increase^{xxi}. Therefore, we can deduce that prostitution and human trafficking are linked, where prostitution does lead to an increase in demand, hence, leading to human trafficking.

DOES ETHNICITY PLAY A ROLE IN THE DEMAND FOR PROSTITUTION AND THEREFORE TRAFFICKED MORE?

At the beginning of the 1970s, there was significant growth in the sex industry, and it became apparent that women from developing nations were being brought to wealthy Western countries to provide sexual services for men^{xxii}. As a result, there has been a heated and extensive discussion about the character of prostitution and its connexion to trafficking, which involves coercing or using violence, threats, abuse of power, and other forms of coercion to recruit and transport women across borders for work or services^{xxiii}. The patterns of trafficking and victimisation differ in various regions, making it challenging to establish consistent causal links, and while the studies have primarily focused on poverty as a key factor in trafficking, as many victims originate from less developed countries, it's difficult to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issue^{xxiv}. Poverty is seen as a contributing factor as it often leads potential victims to seek better economic opportunities and fall prey to traffickers. However, for trafficking to persist, it requires a supportive social-legal environment that enables the trade and related vices to continue^{xxv}. Individuals who are smuggled or trafficked are employed in various industries of the economy, and as per a United Nations study conducted in 2012, the majority of victims in euro in Central Asia, estimated to be 62%, are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation^{xxvi}.

Women who are trafficked into Ireland report being sold and resold by traffickers numerous times as they are transported through various countries^{xxvii}. Moreover, they have recounted being confined in buildings, constantly monitored by the traffickers, and experiencing physical abuse, hunger and sexual assault and if they refuse to cooperate, the families back home may be threatened, or they may be handed over to even more hazardous individuals^{xxviii}. Around 70 million women in Latin America have a background of being Afro or native indigenous, where both their race and ethnicity contribute to their poverty, lack of education, and social isolation and due to the absence of opportunities provided by the government's social welfare programmes and policies, these women have historically been involved in low-paying jobs and the informal economy^{xxix}. This type of economic structure creates an environment that is conducive to exploitation, whether through trafficking or sexual abuse, where women are at a disadvantage due to symbolic violence and structural poverty, and there is ethnicity contributes

to these structural barriers^{xxx}. Consequently, women of black and indigenous background faced extreme discrimination, racism, and sexism^{xxxii}. Discrimination against women leads to further exploitation by organised crime in the form of trafficking and prostitution, where these criminal organisations prey on women who are unable to defend themselves, making them vulnerable and being controlled and victimised^{xxxiii}.

According to reports from both international and American women, those who recruited or trafficked them had connections to pimps in the sex industry and the individuals involved in recruiting and pimping are also associated with other criminal activities like human trafficking, fraud, extortion and smuggling of migrants^{xxxiii}. Prostitution has particularly been associated with Human trafficking from Russia, and Russian women who are illegal migrants have become a source of providing this illegal service, where prostitution may have become one of the main criminal exports from Russia to other countries. Prostitution from Russia is connected to the issue of human trafficking in various ways, for instance, in 1995, Greek authorities detained several Greek police officers who were orchestrating rings of foreign call girls trafficking, and usually, numerous Russian and Eastern European women are lured decrease with promises of wealth and a better life, but once they arrived, their passports are impounded, and the women are turned into virtual prisoners and forced to engage in prostitution^{xxxiv}. Hence, a connection between human trafficking, prostitution and ethnicity can be seen in such scenarios, common in most other countries, as seen through the examples of various countries mentioned above.

Do the victims of prostitution and the sex trade comprise only women and children?

According to a United Nations report centred on the issue of sex trafficking, the majority of individuals who are victimised by this crime are adult women^{xxxv}. Although it is less common, male individuals can also fall victim to sex trafficking^{xxxvi}. The findings from a study on the trafficking of men from Ukraine and Belarus indicate that they are susceptible to being trafficked for both sexual exploitation and forced labour^{xxxvii}. A study conducted in Germany has revealed that certain men from Bulgaria and Romania, who are frequently of Roma descent, are forced by human traffickers to engage in street-level prostitution in various cities in Germany^{xxxviii}. Transgender individuals who engage in sex work are typically compelled to

do so as a result of financial need, given that day often experience discrimination based on gender identity and expression in traditional workplace^{xxxix}. Moreover, their gender, gender identity, or gender expression may not be accurately reflected in their identification documents, further hindering the effort to help them and save from human traffickers^{xl}.

IS THERE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN PROSTITUTION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

There is still a prevalent tendency to blur the lines between human trafficking and sex trafficking and to equate both with all forms of sex work and prostitution. This confusion is particularly noticeable among the religious right and certain feminist groups in the US who are referred to as abolitionist feminists and it is claimed that they have appropriated the issue of human trafficking as part of a moral crusade against prostitution^{xli}. In a study to improve comprehension of sex trafficking and prostitution and draw a clear line between the two, it was asserted that the root cause of sex trafficking is not prostitution itself but rather the exploitation of individuals engaged in prostitution^{xlii}.

Distinguishing between trafficking and prostitution is significant because it revolves around personal autonomy, where trafficking has different interpretations and involves slavery, coercion and forced labour^{xliii}. On the other hand, prostitution refers to the exchange of sexual services, which may or may not involve consent or coercion, and with traffic on the rise and international efforts to combat it increasing, it is crucial to establish clear distinctions between the two issues^{xliv}. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2014, in the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, brought attention to the shifting trends in identified cases of human trafficking from 2004 to 2014. Notably, there was an increase in the percentage of male and child victims during this period, with the figures rising from 13% to 21% and 13% to 28%, respectively. Additionally, there was a decrease in the number of sex trafficking victims, with the percentage falling from 59% to 54%, and these changes, among others, are believed to reflect a change in the understanding of human trafficking and a shift away from the previous

emphasis on women traffic from other countries into a wealthy nation for sexual exploitation as a primary focus.

This scenario is intricate as it involves a wide range spanning from trafficking to prostitution, where at one end of this range are girls who have been forced into prostitution, while at the other end are women who have opted to work in the sex industry^{xlv}. Although there is a possibility for some women who were trafficked to eventually identify themselves as sex workers and do not identify as a person who was trafficked, this is more likely to happen the longer a woman stays involved in the sex industry^{xlvi}. The emphasis on sex trafficking and prostitution has been shaped by strongly politicised ideological discussions about how to define human trafficking. Interestingly, over 50% of the adults who were trafficked in the UK during the period from April 2009 to June 2011 were coerced into working in occupations other than prostitution and the sex industry^{xlvii}. Yet, with all the differences between human trafficking and prostitution, and the fact that there is a wide range of experiences within the realm of human trafficking, the focus of the field has been disproportionately centred on sexual exploitation and mostly relates to women and girls^{xlviii}.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the essay backs the notion that prostitution and human trafficking are linked. Through the answers to the questions that the essay had put forward, it is seen that prostitution happens to create trafficking, where the legalisation of prostitution results in a rise in human trafficking^{xlix}. However, neither the legislation nor the criminalisation of prostitution eliminates it entirely^l. The correlation between prostitution and human trafficking can also be deduced from the increase in human trafficking of a particular ethnicity when the demand for that ethnicity rises in prostitution. Through the essay, it could also be concluded that most organisations which run human trafficking also run the sex industry, suggesting a strong link between the two phenomena. Pimps exert control over women and girls, where they are trafficked for forced labour and prostitution within their nation, and usually involves manipulation, coercion, and abuse^{li}. Therefore, it is suggested that what matters is the

exploitative nature of the activity rather than whether the individuals are moved across borders or remain within their own country^{lii}.

Moreover, a few of the workers in the high-end sector of the sex industry, such as call girls and escorts, have no desire to leave the profession, as for them, the primary concern is the risk of getting caught by law enforcement^{liii}. To effectively combat sex trafficking, it is essential to have robust legislation, efficient legal proceedings, and thorough support systems for victims. However, any approach that overlooks the importance of reducing the demand for such activities is bound to be ineffective. It is crucial for society to acknowledge and educate people about the health hazards, violence, human rights abuses, and overall degradation of the sex industry^{liv}. While there has been a decrease in prostitution-related arrests in the United States, it is uncertain whether this indicates a link in the relationship between prostitution and trafficking or progress in the fight against human trafficking within the local communities^{lv}. According to a study, there is a significant lack of understanding about sex trafficking in communities, as the interviews and literature indicate that some prostitutes may not realise that they are being exploited in sex trafficking situations and in some cases, pimps too may unknowingly become sex traffickers^{lvi}. The trafficking of women into prostitution is an extreme form of violence against females and a serious infringement of human rights. While the causes of sex trafficking have been extensively studied, there has been less research on the culture and psychosocial factors that contribute to women being trafficked for sexual purposes. Compared to other victims of violence, women who have been trafficked often experienced more severe sexual and mental health impact. Consequently, mental health services such as those that deal with sexual assault, prostitution, detoxification, and addiction recovery need to be sensitive to cultural differences and cater to the unique needs of sex trafficking victims^{lvii}.

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