

Research Question: To what extent have organizations in South Africa persisted with the complexity of human trafficking and how has it psychologically affected society?

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Over one hundred and fifty years ago the world agreed to abolish slavery for all with a guarantee of change and freedom, however, history has a way of repeating itself. Today, we now face one of the most complex under-researched topics in 2023 known as Human Trafficking. According to Tammy J. Toney-Butler, a nurse who treats patients with severe trauma from sexual assault and is an anti-human trafficking consultant & published author says that human trafficking transcends race, gender, and social classes as traffickers are motivated by greed, driven by quota, lack respect for human rights, prey upon the vulnerable, and damage their victims' psychological and physical well-being. The industry consists of drugs, violence, abuse, commercial sex, labor, and money and is built in a way where tracing every step of these traffickers is near impossible. Countries all over the world have faced trafficking and yet no matter how many organizations and world leaders attempt to address this global concern it still stands to be a massive problem in society. Countries such as China, South Africa, Venezuela, Thailand, and Syria have experienced major amounts of human trafficking and the governments

still have not found an efficient way to attempt to solve this crisis. Organizations such as the United Nations have published countless documents and articles on the topic of human trafficking on the basis of the resilience of victims, the psychological and mental effects, and the trauma that occurs. Which is why one can question to what extent have organizations in South Africa persisted with the complexity of human trafficking and how has it psychologically affected society?

Human trafficking is a well-known term used to educate women, young girls, and society in general. The process of human trafficking stems from a variety of complex details that commonly lead to an unsolved case. Women and young girls are targeted which is a result of vulnerability and in some cases lack of education. The majority of women who are trafficked in South Africa are from areas where opportunity is scarce and are desperate for a more sustainable life, which is why they are the easiest to manipulate. Ellie Collier, a teacher who specializes in mental health awareness says a common tactic used in the trafficking industry is manipulation through either romance, travel, or job opportunity. In the case of job opportunities, women in South Africa are told there is a better life outside of poverty waiting for them, which is commonly believed due to a lack of educational resources within their community. Essentially, this means that traffickers prey on others' weaknesses, the unfamiliarity of a country, unfortunate circumstances, and inexperience. Micah Hartmann, a journalist who has written numerous articles on the negative effects of human trafficking and how the industry works reports that traffickers are trained to identify vulnerability and use expert manipulation tactics to persuade and control their victims. They identify a void and offer to fill it. The part that these women aren't aware of is the brutality that comes with that "promise" of a more fortunate life. According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, brutality plays a massive role in human

trafficking. Brutality meaning in the terms of violence, abuse, slavery through sex trafficking, prostitution, and the use of drugs and hard labor.

Moreover, in some societies, it's widely accepted to devalue and abuse women and children. This outlook is ingrained into the minds of men and women in certain cultures, which creates a huge opportunity for traffickers. A parent may be willing to sell a daughter and send her into a world of exploitation. Some girls and women may leave home willingly if they've been raised to believe they are unequal to men, have fewer opportunities, or don't have a path to a better future. In traditional cultures where arranged marriages are common, girls are sometimes forced into child marriage, which can also be identified as a form of human trafficking (Hardmann). These women and children are brought to camps where they are placed in a tent, drugged, and raped by anyone who pays the traffickers. All these factors are what thousands of women and children have been put through, but our population doesn't seem to be aware or initiate any sort of long-term plan that could bring awareness or help minimize the number of victims going through this. Organizations and multiple other sources have come out with articles, news reports, collected data and all analyzed the severity of this issue, yet society is somehow blocked from the reality of this industry and many aren't educated enough to understand the bigger picture. The bigger picture of the suffering victims face from the psychological standpoint of trauma, abuse, mental illness, and addiction.

The odds of escaping or being found in a human trafficking situation is at a staggering 1% (Hardmann). With this in mind there is a marginal number of victims who have survived such brutality, however, those who have, don't come back as the same person they once were. An organization called Into Freedom explains how victims of human trafficking are on average raped 6,000 times and have a life expectancy of less than 7 years due to causes of overdose or

sexually transmitted disease. The trauma and mental illness these survivors face are not of a normal level, and therefore, are hard to help or treat in ways used for a “normal” individual. Themes of depression, shame, guilt, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, isolation from others, and addiction have caused interference with these survivors going back to a normal life. Amy Canfield a licensed professional counselor, and mental health service provider, with a Master’s degree in community counseling, says that many survivors have struggled with addiction from being induced with injections of heroin or other strong drugs to make victims easy to rape and transport, which is the main reason to why survivors have a reliance on drugs to not feel pain (Canfield). Issues of trust and gatherings of people are part of the trauma survivors also commonly face which is a major part of the lack of rebuilding relationships with individuals. The suicidal ideation as a result of these mental illnesses stems from the feeling of hopelessness. The SHERO Foundation collected data on a study about human trafficking survivors have an alarming higher-than-average rate of suicidal thoughts with a percentage of 23% of survivors having attempted suicide, compared with 3% of the population with no prior domestic violence exposure. Resilience is what survivors need in order to bounce back to their original lives. However, that is in terms of how reliable society is to provide the options to be reunited with modern society. Studies have shown that those with trauma protect themselves from psychological harm, which results in aggressive coping mechanisms when dealing with stress or pressure that can inflate one's ego. This links back to survivors of human trafficking as it's hard to find a balance between dealing with the past trauma and persisting with the resilience needed to get back into the realm of society. Having the research found on these specific statistics and sources brings one to question what organizations and countries with high human trafficking rates are doing to minimize the crisis of this industry.

The Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants is a four-year initiative with the European Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime who came together with 11 million Euros to start a campaign against trafficking. “The project aims to provide assistance to governmental authorities and civil society organizations across thirteen strategically selected countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Pakistan, South Africa, and Ukraine to help with their issues of human trafficking.” With this initiative in mind, the South African government came out and spoke about their efforts with their crisis management saying that the government recognizes how the inequality of the country has played a massive role in the results of this industry and has said in response that a culture shift is needed to prevent the human trafficking industry to ensure more safety within the country.

Furthermore, organizations in South Africa such as the South African Police Service have data featuring the number of cases of human trafficking. Over a 15-year period (2000 – 2015), 3,957 children and 23,803 adults were recorded as unaccounted for and missing, however, no further data has been published for the public eye. These figures are most likely a conservative reflection of the extent of South Africa’s human trafficking problem as available robust data sources are difficult to come by. The official site of the American government says the issue is that most of these cases are discredited to seem like the government is in more control than it really is. The Government of South Africa does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but claims to be making efforts to do so. These efforts include continuing to prosecute and convict traffickers, sentencing convicted traffickers to substantial terms of imprisonment, and continuing a few investigations into officials allegedly complicit in trafficking. In addition, the government passed and began implementing training officials on standard operating procedures. Although this sounds like the beginning of a plan, it still is the

bare minimum and most of these so-called “efforts” have not moved forward since the government had spoken about these terms before the Covid-19 Pandemic. Since Covid- 19, the government has made little to no attempt in obtaining the efforts said to have already been made and therefore has caused more of an issue with trafficking in the country than ever before. As a result of this, many traffickers have purchased houses in Johannesburg and Cape Town to essentially have bases within the country as it is now an easier country to do business in than other countries with stricter laws and regulations (U.S. Gov).

Although it seems as if South Africa is the only country guilty of saying one thing and doing another, they are truly one of many. An example of this is the Resilience of the Haitians. In 2010, there was an earthquake that caused an incredible amount of damage and trauma for the population and as a result of this, the mental health and trauma Haitians faced led to a great amount of resilience. In this scenario, there was an election that took place to replace the Haitian president, and therefore elements of change occurred. There was recognition of the inequality between races in society, which goes all the way back to times of the Haitian Revolution in 1791, where the slaves revolted against the white landowners in an effort to enroll into society as equals which links back to the period of Apartheid in 1948 where the separation of race and class played a massive role in how society is built today. In both scenarios, an act of change, reliance, and persistence was needed to further roles and create unity in society. This persistence and resilience was used in the Resilience of the Haitians as after the earthquake society woke up and realized that there was a need for unity to help fix their country. People came together, volunteered, and donated whatever they could to causes that would help rebuild houses, churches, roads, and buildings. Organizations supported these efforts and as a result, everyone came together sharing the same concern as everyone else, and with that came a strong unification

of people no matter the race or class of an individual. This same unification is needed in South Africa, as the country is divided between race, class, and cultural background which completely backtracks society from any future progression of minimizing the topic of human trafficking. Organizations and the government need to come together as the Haitians did to make the country safer and less divided as said by the South African government before Covid- 19.

In conclusion, the South African government needs to improve on its persistence in preventing high levels of trafficking in order to provide a safer community. With this being said it is never going to be perfect. There will always be dangers within a community or country, however, improvements in education, organizations on topics of mental health or bringing awareness to human trafficking, and rebuilding society in a way where everyone is given an equal opportunity no matter the race or economic status of an individual can go a long way in preventing high levels of trafficking. In South Africa especially, having a divide between race and economic status since the times of Apartheid has caused a major gap in how people are perceived. Jobs of higher status are given to the white and educated part of the population, while those who live in townships such as Langebaan or Khayelitsha have less opportunity which creates this tactic of manipulation in the trafficking industry much easier in these areas. Within this basis, organizations in South Africa and globally need to find a sustainable way to prevent and educate society in means of how trafficking works, the results of it, and what to be aware of to ensure more safety in our world.

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