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The Perceived Needs of First Responders to Identify and Support Sex Trafficking Victims: A Case Study

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The Perceived Needs of First Responders to Identify and Support
Sex Trafficking Victims: A Case Study

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctorate of Education in Adult and Lifelong Learning

by

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Abstract

Researchers have found that sex trafficking in the 21st century is a growing human rights atrocity. This qualitative case study investigates law enforcement professionals' perceived needs as first responders to identify and support sex trafficking victims. Specifically, this study examines resources, training, and support that they perceive to be critical to their success. The primary research question that guides this study is what do first responders need to identify and support sex trafficking victims? To answer this question, the following sub-questions facilitate the inquiry: A) What resources do law enforcement professionals need to identify and support victims of sex trafficking? B) What do first responders need to navigate the emotional challenges of their jobs? This study will use purposeful sampling to select ten law enforcement officers that have at least three years of experience working with sex trafficking within the five boroughs of New York. The primary data collection method will be semi-structured interviews; interview questions were formulated in alignment with the study's purpose and research questions. After collection, the data will be coded and organized observing the research questions. Analysis and interpretation will be organized based on the conceptual framework.

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Chapter One: Introduction

A pressing global concern, sex trafficking in the 21st century is a growing human rights atrocity (Egger, 2017; Harriott, 2017; Higgs, 2017). Sex trafficking is a complex issue. The 22 U.S.C. § 7102, defined sex trafficking: “Sex trafficking is when a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such acts has not attained 18 years of age” (p. 1).

The definition clarifies that anyone could be a target of sex trafficking regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or ethnic background (Clawson et al., 2009; Higgs, 2017). Globally, sex trafficking is spreading quickly, from developing countries like India, Thailand, Japan, Sudan, and Syria to developed countries like the Netherlands, Greece, Australia, England, Germany, Canada, and the United States of America (Christian, 2014). According to the International Labor Organization (2014), sex traffickers estimate profits from commercial sexual exploitation to be approximately \$99 billion yearly. A victim earns \$150,000-200,000 annually for the trafficker, and the trafficker averages four to six victims (Parker, 2013; Radio, 2010). However, Lugo (2016) argues, “Due to resource constraints, political will, or lack of public awareness about the prevalence of these crimes, it is hard to report global revenue regarding sex trafficking” (p. 15).

Researchers have identified sex trafficking as an organized crime (Parker, 2013; Radio, 2010; Smith et al., 2013). Potts (2018) found that sex trafficking organized crime groups control between 76 to 100% of the sex trafficking industry in metro New York and San Francisco. The increase and sophistication of sex trafficking within America (Long, 2014) have generated debates about how to stem this human rights atrocity (Egger, 2017). Recently, traffickers have targeted American children for trafficking (Dyer, 2018); about 58% of victims are children

(Potts, 2018). Dyer (2018) reported approximately 300,000-400,000 American children and youth are victims of sexual exploitation annually. According to Christian (2014), American children are “commercially sexually exploited through prostitution, pornography, and erotic entertainment” (p.1). America is amid sexual abuse and exploitation of adult women and children (Bales & Soodalter, 2010; Christian, 2014; Dyer, 2018; Potts, 2018).

The purpose of this study is to examine law enforcement professionals’ perceived needs as first responders to identify and support sex trafficking victims. Specifically, this study examines resources, training, and support law enforcement professionals perceive to be critical to their success.

This qualitative case study will interview law enforcement professionals to understand their perceived needs to provide comprehensive support to sex trafficking victims.

Chapter one will thoroughly discuss the background, context of the problem, purpose, significance, and methodology. It will also include assumptions, limitations, delimitations, keywords, and a summary.

Background and Context

Nature of Sex Trafficking

By nature, predators and victims are the two actors involved in sex trafficking. Sexual predators, also known as pimps, exploit individuals for commercial sex (Lloyd, 2011; Reid, 2011). Sexual predators use various methods to coerce victims to participate in this unlawful enterprise. Individuals who are vulnerable to becoming sexually exploited include the indigent, having a corrupt and violent environment, having a history of childhood sexual abuse, having drug dependence, having mental health problems, and being part of a minority group (Clawson et al., 2009; Dabney, 2011; Dyer, 2018; Estes & Weiner, 2001).

Sexual predators are astute in locating potential targets and skilled in training their victims, controlling victims, and making a profit (Lloyd, 2011; Reid, 2011). In most cases, sexual predators move victims from their places of origin to a new location of exploitation (Kara, 2009). For instance, Wichita, Kansas is ranked among the top five cities where traffickers go to kidnap girls and move them to different states (McGraw, 2011). The reason behind that is that victims are not familiar with new environments. Sexual predators confiscate documents from victims, and victims are threatened not to report their situation to law enforcement or other authorities (McGraw, 2011).

According to Bell (1910), it is important to understand that “it is traffic in the bodies and souls of women” (p. 203). Sexual predators make victims go through a two-step process. The first step is called the grooming process. The grooming process involves psychological and physical intimidation to gain control over the victim (Lloyd, 2011; Reid, 2011). Sexual predators generally use physical and sexual force on their victims. Often, victims are denied access to bathrooms, deprived of food and sleep, locked in a small space, manipulated, and intimidated (Lloyd, 2011; Long, 2014; Muftic & Finn, 2013; Reid, 2011). The constant intimidation forms the relationship between sexual predator and victim, as master and slave. Eventually, sexual predators control victims psychologically and physically (Lloyd, 2011; Reid, 2011). The second step is called the seasoning process. After getting control over victims, sexual predators coerce victims to perform sex acts with sexual predators; gradually, sexual predators lure victims into prostitution (Lloyd, 2011; Reid, 2011; Reinhard et al., 2012).

The Avarice Behind Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is a business with high demand for supply, which motivates sexual predators to provide supply with little to no risk, low conviction rates, and guaranteed profits

(Kara, 2009; Parker, 2013; Rao, 1995). While sex trafficking is a \$99 billion per annum enterprise, victims do not share in the bounty because sexual predators “own the brothels, clubs, massage parlors, apartments, or other locations where the victim is consumed” (Kara, 2009, p. 203). However, sexual predators provide the bare necessities such as housing and toiletries for the victims (Kara, 2009). Both Rao (1995) and Kara (2009) describe the victims as reusable products that can generate profit with each sexual encounter. Therefore, it has transformed into a highly profitable and enduring business (Rao, 1995). Also, due to the low conviction rate and the high-income profit of sex trafficking crimes, sex traffickers are inclined to take more risks to increase their supply, with little fear of repercussions (Parker, 2013).

Technology and sex trafficking business

Over the decades, technology has brought tremendous change and benefits to the sex trafficking business (Radio, 2010). Modern sex trafficking has established itself beyond traditional methods of brothel prostitution; advancements in technology have brought new ways of selling adult women, youth, and children (Radio, 2010). Sexual predators use the internet as the medium for victims of commercial sexual exploitation, such as pornography, juvenile prostitution (Estes & Weiner, 2001), mail-order brides, and women for rent (Radio, 2010). The growth is alarming; Bales and Soodalter (2010) found that 50,000 predators prowl online for children at any given time, and within nine years, Humphreys et al. (2019) found that the number of predators had gone up to 750,000 at any given time.

Recently, several websites like Facebook, Craigslist, Twitter, and Snapchat gained popularity globally, and sexual predators have taken advantage of those websites to promote business and target victims (Dyer, 2018). Each day, sexual predators use those websites to sell victims, and about 75% of victims have reported they were advertised for sale online. Sexual

predators are taking every possible benefit from technological development to evolve their business (Dyer, 2018).

In addition, sexual predators targeted cell phones to reach a new level of marketing potential because it allowed them to communicate with, track the movements of, recruit, and groom victims by text and email. In 2015, 55% of victims met their traffickers by text, website, or cell phone app (Dyer, 2018).

Sexual predators continue to use similar techniques to lure victims as before technological development by gaining trust in young and malleable targets: children looking for a connection to a trustworthy adult or children that are homeless, run away, in foster care, or are otherwise displaced (Dyer, 2018). Advancements in technology have allowed sexual predators to advertise beyond local vicinities. One common technique sexual predators employ to lure victims is online job postings like jobs related to modeling and opportunities to become celebrities and influencers. As victims apply for these jobs, sexual predators contact them, promise them lucrative jobs, and move them to another area (Dyer, 2018).

Besides social media, sexual predators have targeted webpages to advertise and carry their business. There were 2,050 telephone numbers posted on one site alone to promote and get services. In addition, the anonymity of online transactions has reduced the risk of being arrested or apprehended. On April 6, 2018, federal authorities seized the website backpage for promoting sex trafficking over the web, and as a result, it has gotten more difficult for law enforcement to track or target predators (Dyer, 2018). However, the seizure caused a reaction among sexual predators; they quickly became aware of these efforts and are now using an array of sites that are harder to monitor or control and developed forums to train others about their rights (Dyer, 2018).

Public Health Crisis and Support

The increase and sophistication of sex trafficking have become a public health crisis within America due to the pervasive physical and psychological damage inflicted on victims (Egger, 2017; Harriott, 2017). Sex trafficking victims face multifaceted trauma (Egger, 2017). Multifaceted trauma includes sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse, coercion, and mental health issues (Bales & Soodalter, 2010; Cecchet & Thoburn, 2014; Egger, 2017; Eldridge, 2017; Hom & Woods, 2013; Long, 2014; McCarthy, 2017; Potts, 2018).

Christian (2014) asserts sex trafficking victims face ‘Multiple Interpersonal Trauma’ because the victim experiences many traumatic events from many abusers. The effect of ‘Multiple Interpersonal Trauma’ “leads to emotional deregulation, loss of safety, and the inability to detect or respond to danger cues” (p. 21). In addition, multiple researchers have declared that sex trafficking victims suffer from psychological traumas such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety (Bales & Soodalter, 2010; Egger, 2017; Long, 2014; McCarthy, 2017; Rocha, 2016). According to Christian (2014), about 77% of sex trafficking victims suffer from PTSD. The victims’ “level of PTSD was comparable to that of people exposed to war trauma and partner violence” (p. 16). Birzer (2013) has defined PTSD as “posttraumatic stress disorder is an emotional illness that is classified as an anxiety disorder which usually develops because of a frightening, life-threatening, or otherwise highly unsafe experience. The symptoms of PTSD: flashbacks (acting or feeling like the event is happening again), nightmares (either of events or other frightening things), intense physical reactions to reminders of the event (pounding heart, rapid breathing, nausea, muscle tension, sweating), feeling detached from others, and becoming emotionally numb, sense of a limited future (don’t

expect to live a normal life span, get married, and have a career), and difficulty concentrating” (p. 156).

Besides psychological crisis, victims also experience a variety of physical health concerns, including sexually transmitted infections (STI), infectious diseases, pelvic inflammatory disease, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), pregnancy, abortion, food deprivation, poor nutrition, headaches, head and neck traumas, dental or oral problems, respiratory illnesses, gastrointestinal problems, memory loss, broken bones, and chronic pain (Bjelajac et al., 2013; Muftic & Finn, 2013; Oram et al., 2012; Reinhard et al., 2012). STIs are a recognized healthcare crisis in America (Varghese, 2017; Wegrzyn, 2018). Not only is the treatment costly for American society (Wegrzyn, 2018), but infected parents have a high chance of having children with sexually transmitted infections (Varghese, 2017; Wegrzyn, 2018), which causes serious health issues for babies because treatment costs are expensive (Wegrzyn, 2018).

Moore et al. (2021) found that 72% of medical professionals did not have knowledge or training on how to care for sex trafficking victims. Researchers have recognized the reason behind the lack of adequate treatment programs. Egger (2017) asserts that sexually trafficked victims are “among the most concealed and inaccessible of populations” (p. 42). In addition, Dabney (2011) mentioned that victims “are a hidden population” (p. 12), and hidden populations are “a group of individuals for whom the size and boundaries are unknown, and for whom no sampling frame exists” (p. 12). As the victims are inaccessible, clinical studies are limited. Due to a lack of studies, treatment programs are limited (Egger, 2017; Eldridge, 2017; McCarthy, 2017; Rocha, 2016).

Scarce Resources

According to the Polaris Project (2012), there are only 525 beds allocated for sex trafficking victims within America. Also, Twigg (2012) asserted only fourteen rehabilitation centers exist in America. Due to the lack of rehabilitation centers and beds available for sex trafficking victims, usually, they are placed in safe houses. A safe house allows domestic violence (abuse) victims. Most sex trafficking victims do not meet the criteria of domestic violence. So, the victims are not allowed to stay in the safe house (Twigg, 2012). Bales & Soodalter (2010) found that 4,197 adult victims were denied access to safe houses from 2005-2010. The situation is more difficult for minor sex trafficking victims aged 4-16. According to Sakamoto (2018), minors need a long term trauma-informed care. Victims are placed in foster care, in safe houses with domestic abuse victims, or returned to their family homes. So, victims do not get treatment.

Rocha (2016) found every year, an estimated 100,000 Central and South American (Latinas) women are trafficked illegally to America by professional traffickers. Traffickers intentionally marginalize these victims because, without legal immigration status and language barriers, trafficked victims are unaware of their legal rights and are impeded from finding justice (Rocha, 2016). Moreover, in America, legal rights are only awarded to perfect victims. A perfect victim is a victim that has no history of engaging in criminal acts during their exploitation (Rocha, 2016). Potts (2018) argues that trafficking victims cannot be perfect victims. Usually, victims get forced to engage in prostitution, illegal immigration, and possibly other crimes while being trafficked. However, it is always the victim's burden to prove that they were victims of severe trafficking (Potts, 2018) and held in America against their will. Besides, they will have to testify against their traffickers (Potts, 2018) and assist law enforcement in prosecuting their

traffickers; even though there are many risks associated with testifying against perpetrators, law enforcement is not liable for the victim's protection. Also, they must show they will experience hardship if they get deported (Potts, 2018). Due to loopholes in the law, victims usually are without health insurance and do not receive medical treatment in America (Alvarez, 2016; Bales & Soodalter, 2010; Bjelajac et al., 2013; Espinoza, 2014; Muftic & Finn, 2013; Twigg, 2012).

Training and Support of First Responders

Law enforcement officers (LEOs) act as a first response to identify and rescue victims (Potts, 2018). They are known as first responders. Even though there are eight hundred thousand LEOs in the United States (Aiesi, 2010), there is no data available about how many officers have received training on sex trafficking. Due to the lack of training or dearth of training, law enforcement may not know how to accurately identify and intervene when experiencing first response with sex trafficking victims (Potts, 2018). To avoid this misconception, LEOs gravitate toward the notion that the victims willingly engage in sex trafficking (Potts, 2018). Research is needed to examine all aspects of sex trafficking training programs provided to LEOs and other first responders (Potts, 2018).

Law Enforcement Training Needs

1. How to identify sex trafficked victims
2. How to approach sex trafficked victims
3. Anticipate how sex trafficked victims may respond to authority figures
4. How to find identify agencies that offer support for sex trafficking victims.
5. How to find support for themselves (first responders)

First responders play a crucial role in interacting with victims in a more professional capacity where efficiency is crucial, and many victims are seen every day. Body language is an

important element for the first responder because body language can be observed as threatening, intimidating, or posturing (Varghese, 2017). Christian (2014) asserted it is essential for first responders (Law enforcement officers) to get specialized training so that additional trauma does not occur during the rescue and follow-up. Victims suffer from hopelessness, family dishonor, negative stereotyping, rejection, and abandonment (Christian, 2014); the first responder needs to know if any of those complex symptoms are reoccurring (Christian, 2014). Due to the complexities of trauma, victims are fragile, and a simple wrong approach or even a wrong conversation could ignite resistance and distrust between the victim and first responder (Christian, 2014). Therefore, the first responders need to receive trauma training for rescuing and dealing with victims. This way, the potential for further trauma may be reduced.

On the other side of the equation, the lack of victim cooperation with authorities is a barrier to identification and assistance. There is a huge gap between victims and law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and civil authorities (Aiesi, 2010). Because of loopholes in American criminal law, lack of training among law enforcement officers, and weak policy, in some states, law enforcement officers identify sex trafficking victims as prostitutes, and they are locked up and punished (Alvarez, 2016). Fear of arrest and punishment by authorities causes victims to resist cooperation; another serious reason that makes victims resistant is that no guarantee that ensures victims' safety (Potts, 2018). Additionally, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) do not want to cooperate with federal law enforcement because NGOs are concerned about victims' immediate needs. NGOs have experienced how the federal government is not organized enough to keep records of the victims (Aiesi, 2010).

Aiesi (2010) found an interesting fact: even though a few federal authorities have received training, due to inner conflict among agencies and lack or no communication between

them, their mission and purposes are not available to every agency to support the trafficking victims. It is worse for the local law enforcement; due to the nature of sex trafficking, the federal government keeps only the databases of trafficking victims that were prosecuted. Local law enforcement does not have access to federal databases in a way that should be both appropriate and useful (Aiesi, 2010). If a local authority wants to access the database, they have to get authorization from their supervisors, and then supervisors have to get permission or an access code to access the database (Aiesi, 2010). However, no organized or categorized data exists on the federal level that would help authorities or scholars analyze trafficking movements (Aiesi, 2010).

Problem Statement

Not only is there no standard protocol among law enforcement professionals to identify and provide support for sex trafficking victims, but there is also a lack of understanding regarding the resources that are needed to develop a protocol. This deficit not only hampers the ability to respond to this growing social crisis, but it hinders the development of best practices that could be replicated and evaluated to deal with this population. Understanding what resources are needed to respond to sex-trafficked victims is the first step in developing interventions that are comprehensive and realistic.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine law enforcement professionals' perceived needs as first responders to identify and support sex trafficking victims. Specifically, this study examines resources, training, and support law enforcement professionals perceive to be critical to their success.

Research Questions

The primary research question that guides this study is what do first responders need to identify and support sex trafficking victims? To answer this question, the following sub-questions facilitate the inquiry:

- What resources do law enforcement professionals need to identify and support victims of sex trafficking?
- What do law enforcement professionals need to navigate the emotional challenges of their jobs?

Research Approach

This qualitative research used the case study methodology to examine ten LEOs' perceived needs as first responders to identify and support sex trafficking victims. Specifically, this study examines resources, training, and support law enforcement professionals perceive as critical to their success. This study is going to focus on a single instrumental case study. The single instrumental case study helps researchers focus on an issue or concern and allows them to illustrate it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is selected for this study because it involves finding common perceptions and aspects of the experiences in order to develop a deeper understanding of what resources are needed by first responders to identify and assist sex trafficking victims.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the primary tool to collect data. The researcher will begin the interview process by conducting a pilot interview. The pilot interviewee will not participate in the study. The researcher will develop interview questions under the direct supervision of the committee chair. Each participant will participate in a 45-50 minute interview session, but depending on the experiences, the interview time might vary. If necessary, the

researcher and participant will arrange another meeting with mutual agreement. The researcher will label each interviewee and organization's name under pseudonyms, and the interview will be audio recorded to preserve the originality of the discussions. The researcher will code the data for themes to analyze it. As the final step, the researcher will write a summary.

Interpretive Framework

This study will use the social constructivism interpretive framework to conduct the study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), social constructivism, also known as interpretivism, allows researchers to understand the participants' views "of the world in which they live and work" (p. 24); in other words, individuals develop a subjective view of their experiences in their lived world. In addition, it forces researchers not to "narrow the meaning into a few categories or ideas" (p. 24), but rather leads researchers to depend on the participants' views of the issue. In addition, it allows researchers to develop constructive communication with well-organized, open-ended questions to understand the participants' historical and cultural background (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the conceptual framework that grounds this study. In 1977, Albert Bandura introduced the concept of self-efficacy. Gradually, he developed the self-efficacy theory (Gallagher, 2012). Self-efficacy theory asserts that anyone is able to achieve their goal if they believe in what they are doing. The more they believe in it, the better they get at performing a job or learning something, and the more they will commit to it. In addition, self-efficacy does not discriminate against unsuccessful individuals; the theory advocates that the reason behind the success could be a lack of opportunities or support available to the individuals to succeed

(Gallagher, 2012). According to Gallagher (2012), “Self-efficacy theory therefore suggests that it is the responsibility of the government and society to provide everyone with sufficient opportunities to engage in mastery experiences, receive positive social persuasion, and witness positively reinforcing models that will engender a strong sense of self-efficacy” (p. 318).

Self-efficacy grounds this study because, specifically, this study examines resources, training, and support that first responders perceive to be critical to their success. So, if first responders do not feel they have the tools to be successful, this could impact their motivation.

Rationale and Significance

The data collected from this study can inform decision making about issues associated with providing first responders with adequate training and support to be successful in their jobs. This data can be considered when making funding decisions and policy implementation.

Role of the Researcher

While conducting the study, the researcher is not involved with any organization or professional works affiliated with eliminating sex trafficking within America. However, my experiences in Non-Governmental Organizations and Corrections made me familiar with this social blight. While this experience provides insights into this topic, I will manage my biases by listening closely to the participants' voices and not inserting my opinions.

Researcher's Assumptions

In conducting the study, the researcher maintains various assumptions about the process. The first assumption is that the views of all participants have value, even if they differ from the researcher's. The researcher also assumes that he will manage his own biases during the data collection and analysis process. He will do this by using the appropriate techniques that ensure trustworthiness of the data.

Definition of Key Terms

Coercion: “Coercion is the threat of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person. Any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process” (Higgs, 2017, p.7).

Commercial sex act: A commercial sex act is any form of sexual act on account of which anything of value is rewarded to or received by any person (Higgs, 2017).

Complex trauma: When a person suffers with a stress that is tedious, lengthy, and aggregate (Christian, 2014).

First Responder: A professional such as a police officer, medical professional, or social worker who protects and preserves the environment, life, and property after accidents and disasters (Greinacher et al., 2019).

Sexual predators (Pimps): Perpetrators are known as sexual predators or pimps (Lloyd 2011; Reid, 2011). Sexual predators recruit, entice, or obtain a person (victim) to engage in commercial sex acts, or to benefit from such activities (Rosal, 2014).

Rape: Without the consent of the victims any kind of penetration of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by sex organ or another person (Higgs, 2017).

Rehabilitation: The process the victims go through for restoration especially by therapeutic means to an improved condition of physical function (Espinoza, 2014)

Reintegration: The method of assimilating someone back into society (Espinoza, 2014)

Sex Trafficking: “Sex trafficking is when a commercial sex act is made by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person made to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age or the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or

services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, debt bondage, or slavery” 22 U.S.C. § 7102 (2000).

Stockholm Syndrome: Stockholm syndrome refers to a group of psychological symptoms that occur in some persons in captive or hostage situations. It is described as an emotional bond with the captor (Christian, 2014).

Victim: “Those who suffer oppression and are perceived as blameless. Unfortunately, they are often deprived of resources and still need assistance due to their vulnerability, and economic, physical, and psychological donations” (Rocha, 2016, p. 14).

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter one provides a detailed explanation of the background and context of the problem. It also provides the purpose and research questions explicitly. The second chapter will be a focused literature review discussion based on the research questions and support the research topics.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

As stated in chapter one under problem statement, not only is there no standard protocol among LEOs to provide support for sex trafficking victims, but there is also a lack of understanding regarding the resources that are needed to develop a protocol. This deficit not only hampers the ability to respond to this growing social crisis, but it also hinders the development of best practices that could be replicated and evaluated to deal with this population. Understanding what resources are needed to respond to sex trafficking victims is the first step in developing comprehensive and realistic interventions.

To carry out this qualitative case study, chapter two will investigate a critical review of the current available scholarly literature to analyze and synthesize the historical and contemporary evidence on sex trafficking to find the resources that align with the purpose.

Chapter two starts with a literature review which contains six major sections, a framework, and a summary. The literature review is compact with informative knowledge collected from various research. The first section explores historical evidence on how sex trafficking took place in society and how time has recognized the issue in different frames. The second section serves the inquisitiveness about possible reasons of how and why sex trafficking arose within the country. Then, the third section investigates available training and knowledge among LEOs about the issue. The fourth section explores public awareness regarding sex trafficking. Then, the fifth section investigates what legal actions or laws were implemented recently regarding the issue. Then, the sixth section discusses perceived reasons behind lack of professionals training. Then, the study discusses framework, this study focuses on self-efficacy

theory. Finally, chapter two ends with informative information aligned with the purpose of this qualitative case study.

Literature Search Strategy

Besides several published books, the majority of the literature was found through online databases including the University of Arkansas Online Database, Moulins Library; Pittsburg State University Online Database, Axe Library; Legal Information Institute (LII); Cornell Law School; ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Thesis Global; ERIC; JSTOR; Lexus Nexis; New York: Routledge; Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology.

Search terms were *sex trafficking within the U.S.; available training for law enforcement officers regarding sex trafficking; TVPA amendments; FOSTA implementation; Domestic minor sex trafficking; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Backpage; Psychophysical and mental health issues with sex trafficking victims; Identification and interventions for victims of sex trafficking; available Shelters in the United States; Women’s Rights; Human Rights: survivor’s voice; revenue earned from sex trafficking; immigration law; International Migration; sexually transmitted diseases; The health issues with trafficking victims; Sexual assault and human sex trafficking.*

Review of Literature

The Evolution of Sex Trafficking

Informal reports note the history of sex trafficking in ancient Rome and India. Dabney (2011) found that England implemented sexual laws against minors in 1275. The law prohibited people from engaging in sex acts with a child “under the age of 12” (p.1), and it was considered rape and a misdemeanor. Dabney (2011) asserts, since 1880, thirty-seven states in America set the age of consent at “10 years old” (p.1). According to Higgs (2017), in America, “During 1828

to 1906, the start of movements against sex trafficking involved the repealing of the Contagious Diseases Acts (CDA), which required prostitutes to register and commit to exams for sexually transmitted diseases. Women were labeled as prostitutes and were examined and forced to register by law enforcement officials, which ultimately removed their social identity and respect among the local populace” (p. 12). However, in the 1960s to 1980s, feminism movements strongly protested against sexual exploitation. According to Higgs (2017), “protestors argued the exploitation of women and girls in the pornography industry and prostitution” (p.13). Since 1990, human trafficking has taken different forms; as Farrell and Fahy (2009) found, from 1990 to 1999, trafficking was framed as a human rights issue, then from 2000 to 2002, trafficking was considered a criminal issue, and from 2003 to 2006 trafficking was recognized as a National Security Issue.

Human Rights issue (1990-1999)

According to Hua (2011), “Human rights are defined as universal, moral, ethical, natural rights—rights that extend beyond the state or the contracts of civil society” (p. 19). From 1990-1999, sex trafficking was considered a violation of human rights (Farrell & Fahy, 2009). Farrell and Fahy (2009) state that due to the involvement of political leaders, sex trafficking was considered a human rights issue. They state, “As political elites concerned with women’s issues gained power and legitimacy in the 1990s, they increasingly brought public attention to the human rights abuses associated with commercial sexual exploitation of women and children” (p. 619). Also, in the late 1990s, “Human trafficking gained institutional legitimacy as prominent political figures such as First Lady Hillary Clinton and Secretary of State Madeline Albright took active roles in the international campaign for women’s human rights- a group vocally opposed to sex trafficking of women and children” (p. 621).

According to Slider (2012), human trafficking was on the rise in the 1990s; two infamous cases drew attention to policymakers and the general population regarding human trafficking. In 1997, the New York Police Department uncovered two human trafficking rings. 62 Mexican nationals and 75 Thailand nationals were trafficked illegally to New York with the promise of a better life, but when they got to America, they were abused both physically and sexually to ensure their cooperation. In addition, they were forced to work in a garment factory for eighteen hours a day and to sell jewelry in New York train stations for twelve to eighteen hours per day, seven days a week. After these incidents in 1998, the government proposed a human trafficking policy to support the victims (Slider, 2012).

Criminal Issue (2000-2002)

According to Farrell and Fahy (2009), derived from the first step, from 2000 to 2002, the human rights issue was taken to the next level, and it was considered as a “problem response face” (p. 621). Furthermore, anti-sex trafficking groups such as feminist advocacy, fundamental Christian organizations, and reminiscent of the turn century white slavery abolitionists united with a demand to the criminal justice system to consider sex trafficking as a criminal act. As a result, “The unifying notion that trafficking should be understood as a criminal problem gained popularity among politicians and other powerful stakeholders in the U.S.” (p. 621).

According to the Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking (2017), President Clinton, under public law 106-386, signed and enacted the Human Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) on October 28th, 2000. This act includes the commercial sex industry, modern slavery, and forced labor. The laws were implemented to “ensure just and effective punishment of traffickers, and to protect their victims” (p. 1).

National Security Issue (2003-2006)

On September 11, 2001, the terrorist attack in New York drew extensive attention to law enforcement, national security agencies, and policy makers. Since 9/11, border security has become a critical priority, and the security authorities have reconsidered and revised immigration policy within America (Gresham, 2015). In the year 2001, “government officials seized upon the opportunity to define human trafficking not just a crime, but specifically as a national security threat-rooting trafficking efforts in the anti-immigration and terrorism dialogue of post-September 11 government” (Farrell & Fahy, 2009, p. 622). Right after the attack, in November 2001, President Bush allocated \$40 billion to fight against terrorism; the administration drew a connection between “crimes with transnational characteristics such as human trafficking and efforts to fight terrorism and protect national security. This in turn elevated the importance of anti-trafficking efforts as a national crusade” (Farrell & Fahy, 2009, p. 622).

Terrorism and Trafficking

Higgs (2017) found that terrorist organizations are operating sex trafficking networks globally to support their operations. Higgs (2017) conducted a study on terrorism and sex trafficking. She asserts, “Sexual servitude of women through sex trafficking is one of the sources of funding for many terrorist organizations. Terrorist organizations use sexually trafficked women to raise funds to sustain their operations” (p. 17). She found that the Islamic extremist organization is one of the largest organizations known to raised funds through sex trafficking. She also found, “The illicit money gained from sex trafficking is often untraceable, making repeated transactions easier for many terrorist groups to make. One example in which sex trafficking was used as a source of funding a terrorist organization is when the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) sold 400 Christian and Yazidi women in Sinjar as sex slaves” (p. 17).

Amendment of TVPA (2003-2013)

Periodically, in 2003, 2005, and 2008 congress re-authorized the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), public law 108-193, with added provisions to expand its reach, which included but were not limited to alerting travelers coming into America that sex tourism is illegal, and under new civil action allowed victims to sue their traffickers in federal district court (Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking, 2017). In 2013, congress reauthorized the TVPA act under public law 113-4. This reauthorization is an amendment to the violence against women act; a focus of this amendment was collaborating state and local law enforcement to make it easier to implement charges against and prosecute traffickers (Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking, 2017).

Business Shift from Global to Local Community

The reauthorized TVPA act increased border security, and changes in immigration laws have made it harder for sexual predators to import sex workers into America; as a result, sexual predators have shifted their supplies from the global to the domestic market (Jacobi, 2018). That means that sexual predators had targeted American women and children to keep up with the demand. Due to the exclusive demand, the growth was rapid, and the problem became an epidemic within the country (Jacobi, 2018). Another problem was that the revised border security and immigration law policy makers were unaware that sex trafficking victims were not victims of labor trafficking or undocumented immigrants. Therefore, there were no protocols developed regarding domestic sex trafficking (Jacobi, 2018).

While sexual predators dedicate themselves to expanding their business, first responders do not have adequate training and are having trouble identifying victims, initiating prevention, applying for protection, and fostering policy efforts (Jacobi, 2018).

How Equipped LEOs are to Fight the Epidemic in America

Available Training Programs for LEOs about Sex Trafficking

Jacobi (2018) conducted a thorough analysis of research to assess the training available to LEOs regarding sex trafficking offenses. She stated, “No published research was found that warned against learning the elements of human trafficking” (p. 38). She found that sex trafficking has gained the attention of researchers due to the noticeable mental and physical health crisis visible among victims, lack of training among professionals, and loopholes in the law, which accelerated the issue into an epidemic in America. Also, the lack of research limits adequate funding for professional training. She also found that the available data indicated a lack of training among LEOs. This lack of training resulted in faulty evidence collection that did not support the conviction of perpetrators. However, Jacobi (2018) found that the Department of Homeland Security developed a program named Blue Campaign and set up a webpage with several videos accessible to law enforcement and the general population to promote human trafficking. Also, “the program has set up a special hotline for police to call about policy and legal questions” (p. 24). However, according to Aiesi (2010), there are approximately 800,000 LEOs in America, and Jacobi (2018) found that Blue Campaign has trained over 2,100 LEOs. Nevertheless, Jacobi (2018) did not mention whether they were federal, state, or local LEOs. Besides, she also stated that there is no empirical data available on how many LEOs have utilized their training, and one of the shortcomings of the Blue Campaign program is that many local agencies are unaware of the Blue Campaign’s existence. In her study, Jacobi (2018) suggested that appropriate training, skill development, and knowledge acquisition are essential for LEOs to fight against the atrocity of sex trafficking.

Knowledge Level of LEOs about Sex Trafficking

Slider (2012) did an in-depth study on knowledge among law enforcement agencies on human trafficking. She found that there are 17,784 full-time law enforcement agencies in America, which include city, suburban, county, rural as well as state police agencies, but 96% of those agencies did not have a policy that specially addressed the needs of human trafficking victims. Not only did they not have a policy, but she also argues that it is essential that law enforcement recognize that human trafficking is a problem in America, and there is a need to develop a department that solely deals with human trafficking. She stated, “many agencies left the responsibility to divisions such as Vice, Organized Crime, Crimes Against Persons, Child Exploitation and Detective Bureaus” (p. 26). Additionally, she found that local law enforcement agencies believe human trafficking is a federal concern, and 72% believed they handled it better. Due to the lack of training, LEOs collect inappropriate evidence to convict perpetrators (Slider, 2012).

Perceptions of LEOs about Sex Trafficking

Potts (2018) found that many LEOs are ignorant of their insufficient training, so they misunderstand the sex trafficking cycle; they use their preconceived notion that victims willingly participate in prostitution. There are approximately 1,300,000 prostitutes in America (Potts, 2018), and 57,345 arrests for committing the crime per year (Potts, 2018). According to Miller (2014), “prostitution had previously been seen as a problem involving women of questionable morality rather than victims in need of services. This view, one in which promiscuous women ‘choose’ to sell sex to men” (p. 11). Due to the lack of knowledge about sex trafficking victims, it is difficult for LEOs to properly differentiate between victims and a person willingly participating in prostitution (Prince, 2016). Some LEOs acknowledge that adequate training

could eliminate biases. The best way to do this is to assist officers in effectively identifying victims of sex trafficking (Prince, 2016). Also, Prince (2016) found a blanket conviction used against sex trafficking victims called the quality-of-life and information convictions. Prince (2016) explains, “Quality-of-life convictions relate to the sex trafficking and the prostitutes that gather in neighbors and bring the quality of the neighborhood down. Eventually, the neighbors complain, and law enforcement arrives to make arrests” (p. 42).

LEOs walk a tightrope between enforcement and rescue; lack of training and inadequate knowledge regarding sex trafficking causes ambiguity that disqualifies them from differentiating victimized prostitution and criminal prostitution. Therefore, it is difficult for them to determine who needs help and who does not.

Public Awareness

From another angle, Litam and Lam (2021) have conducted an interesting study investigating if the core beliefs of professional counselors, clinical counselors, and counselor educators influence the judgment about sex trafficking crimes or victims. They found that a few counselors have training regarding sex trafficking, and their opinions differ from untrained counselors. Additionally, female counselors were more compassionate and were more willing to help the victims holding the attitude that “sex trafficking occurred as a result of victimization” (p. 12), and on the contrary, “males were less likely to believe the portrayal of sex trafficking, were more likely to blame the victim for the situation” (p. 12). The researchers suggested that school administrators might consider implementing sex trafficking courses into the curriculum and adding plausible workshops to promote awareness and knowledge about sex trafficking (Litam & Lam, 2021).

Sakamoto (2018) conducted a study where she surveyed forty-eight emergency department doctors and nurses in American institutions to investigate if they had received any training regarding sex trafficking. She found that only New Jersey has adopted a statute requiring healthcare workers to complete a sex trafficking training course, and only 3% have received training on victim recognition. She asserted that although from 2014 through 2018, approximately 28% to 87% of sex-trafficked victims came in contact with medical professionals within fifty states, the professionals were unable to identify victims or ask them appropriate questions that could lead them to identify the victims (Sakamoto, 2018).

Chester (2017) conducted a study focusing on the social workers' training program to identify and support sex trafficking victims. Her key findings specify a lack of proper identification tools, specialized services, and specialized resources needed to identify, rehabilitate, and reintegrate sex trafficking victims (Chester, 2017).

Christian (2014) found that minor victims should be delicately cared for while rescued. The first ten minutes are crucial in helping a minor victim; the victim must feel safe, secure, and cared for. Although the first responders are not therapists, they must take precautions, so they don't re-traumatize minor victims (Christian, 2014).

Humphreys et al. (2019) asserted that Generation Z (people born between 1997-2012) tends to be inclined toward sexual activity at a far younger age and participating in "watching pornography beginning in late elementary or early middle school" (p. 24). It is horrifying that "the average age of entry into pornography and prostitution in the United States is 12, and some are as young as 5" (p. 24). As children are on the Internet, predators are constantly prowling to victimize children.

Legal Actions Against the Epidemic

For more than a decade, from 2004 to 2018, Backpage.com was the leading sex trafficking online advertisement source. Over 90% of its income was from commercial sex ads, and it earned \$500 million or more in prostitution (Khodarkovsky et al., 2021). Finally, in January 2017, a U.S. Senate investigation found that Backpage was promoting sex trafficking, and the website got shut down. Right after the Backpage shutdown, in April 2018, a law was signed by President Trump and implemented, the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA). FOSTA prohibits anyone “to own, manage, or operate an interactive computer service, including websites, with the intent to promote or facilitate the prostitution of another person” (Khodarkovsky et al., 2021, p.105). Also, the act allows the state and local authorities to prosecute companies that facilitate advertising prostitution in their communities. In addition, the act declares that the violators will be punished with a maximum of 10 years imprisonment (Khodarkovsky et al., 2021).

Perceived Reasons Behind Lack of Training among Professionals

A few researchers have unfolded possible reasons behind the lack of training and knowledge regarding sex trafficking among first responders. First, after the 9/11 attack in America, policymakers ensured that no illegal immigrants or labor trafficking happened in America. Consequently, the demand for supply in the sex trafficking market forced traffickers to change their business strategy and recruit women and children for sex trafficking domestically, resulting in rapid domestic growth (Jacobi, 2018). The ignorance of policymakers regarding sex trafficking could not foresee the business shift domestically, and therefore, they did not take any precautions or develop a protocol to train LEOs (Jacobi, 2018). Second, the growth was rapid, and research was not available; due to a lack of research, there is unavailable and unreliable data

on both a local and global level which causes difficulty in getting funding for professional training (Jacobi, 2018). Besides those two reasons, researchers recognized another reason: Core beliefs among LEOs that sex trafficking is an urban community issue and rural communities do not have the sex trafficking problem (Jacobi, 2018; Prince, 2016). As a result, there are no fundings or training programs available for rural communities to fight against the atrocity (Jacobi, 2018; Prince, 2016). In addition, LEOs also believe sex trafficking is a federal issue, so state or local agencies do not have to deal with it (Jacobi, 2018; Prince, 2016). Last but not least, due to lack of training, a majority of LEOs believe victims are willingly participating in prostitution (Potts, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the theoretical framework that grounds this study. In 1977, Albert Bandura introduced the concept of self-efficacy. Gradually, he developed the self-efficacy theory (Gallagher, 2012). Self-efficacy theory asserts that anyone is able to achieve their goal if they believe in what they are doing. The more they believe in it, the better they get at performing a job or learning something, and the more they will commit to it. In addition, self-efficacy does not discriminate against unsuccessful individuals; the theory advocates that the reason behind the unsuccess could be a lack of opportunities or support available to the individuals to succeed (Gallagher, 2012). According to Gallagher (2012), “Self-efficacy theory therefore suggests that it is the responsibility of the government and society to provide everyone with sufficient opportunities to engage in mastery experiences, receive positive social persuasion, and witness positively reinforcing models that will engender a strong sense of self-efficacy” (p. 318).

Self-efficacy grounds this study because, specifically, this study examines resources, training, and support that first responders perceive to be critical to their success. So, if first responders do not feel they have the tools to be successful, this could impact their motivation.

Summary

This case study focuses on unfolding the complexity of the rising crisis in America by investigating the perceived needs among LEOs to develop the right model programs to address the issue. The literature review contemplates that preconceived notions among LEOs and inadequate knowledge and skills about the issue cause difficulties in identifying and assessing victims (Dyer, 2018; Jacobi, 2018; Potts, 2018; Slider, 2012).

There is a critical need for a planned training program that educates LEOs as first responders in identifying, assessing, and placing victims in the right avenue (Dyer, 2018; Gresham, 2015; Jacobi, 2018; Potts, 2018; Snyder, 2015). In addition, there is a lack of adequate evidence-based research that can accurately measure the emotional and psychological needs of the LEOs and the rehabilitation of management staff and care providers that work with victims. (Bales & Soodalter, 2010; Egger, 2017; Harriott, 2017; Long, 2014; Rocha, 2016; Snyder, 2015). Finally, Gresham (2015) strongly suggested there is a need for an appropriate approach concentrating on prevention, protection, and prosecution.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Design

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine law enforcement professionals' perceived needs as first responders to identify and support sex trafficking victims. Specifically, this study examines resources, training, and support law enforcement professionals perceive to be critical to their success.

Research Questions

The primary research question that guides this study is what do first responders need to identify and support sex trafficking victims? To answer this question, the following sub-questions facilitate the inquiry:

- What resources do law enforcement professionals need to identify and support victims of sex trafficking?
- What do law enforcement professionals need to navigate the emotional challenges of their jobs?

The third chapter serves the purpose of the first and second chapters by developing an appropriate methodology and design for the study. This chapter contains an overview of the chapter, research design, and rationale, which includes the research questions, rationale for tradition, participant selection, and sampling method; an overview of the information needed and data collection methods, which contains data sources, the interview protocol, the confidentiality protocol, confidentiality of data, risks, and interview; data analysis strategies and interpretation, methods for data analysis and synthesis, coding; ethical considerations, verification procedures,

issues of trustworthiness, which contains credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability; limitations, delimitations, and concludes with a chapter summary.

Research Methodology and Rationale

Qualitative research is an effective method used when a researcher seeks to represent the voice of participants. This endeavor is a complex description that calls for interpreting the problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also, it involves the process of articulating and filtering questions to answer what, how, and why (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), being a qualitative researcher is “becoming immersed in the world of others in an attempt to achieve a holistic understanding of a phenomenon or experience” (p. 42).

Rationale for Case Study Methodology

The case study methods appropriately align with this study, and it is within the framework of the qualitative research. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a case study "explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded system (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes" (p. 96). This study focuses on a single instrumental case study. The single instrumental case study helps researchers focus on an issue or concern and allows them to illustrate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is selected for this study because it involves gathering perceptions from LEOs that have all experienced working with sex trafficking victims within America. The aim is to find common perceptions and aspects of the experiences to develop the right model program to support LEOs.

Sampling Method

Settings, Population & Sampling Method

This study employs purposeful sampling to guide in the selection of participants who have experienced the central phenomenon of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study will select ten LEOs who work with sex trafficking victims as first responders in a large urban area New York in America, as they generally have more privileges and leeway to interact physically and mentally with victims (Jacobi, 2018; Potts, 2018; Prince, 2016; Slider, 2012). Prerequisites to be selected as a first responder requires a minimum of three years of working with sex trafficking victims (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study will gather a sample size of ten LEOs through homogenous sampling. Homogenous sampling incorporates selecting individuals who are alike and belong to a particular subgroup with specific traits (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

For the professionals, the researcher will contact the directors or executive officers in charge of the organizations in large urban areas in New York face to face to get approval requesting facility and staff access. Upon the director's or executive officer's approval, the researcher will keep it as evidence. Upon approval, the researcher will request the director or executive officer to recruit the participants within the respected agency. The researcher will give a written agenda explaining the study's purpose in detail, mentioning that participation is voluntary and confidential.

Overview of Information Needed

This case study will investigate ten LEOs that have experienced working with sex trafficking victims for at least three years within the five boroughs of New York. In seeking to understand the resources, training, and support that LEOs perceive to be critical to their success, the research questions will be explored to gather information from participants. The information

required to answer the research questions will be determined by the conceptual framework that falls into three categories: perceptual information, demographic information, and theoretical information (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The perceptual information allows the researcher to understand how the participants make decisions based on the real issues they face in day-to-day work situations. In addition, the participant's perceptions are not the facts but rather what they perceive as facts. The demographic information pertains to participants, including years of working experience, location of workplace, and employing agency (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Also, the authors have provided a matrix that is presented below which will be used in this research.

Template for Participant Demographic Matrix

Participant Code	Pseudonym	Years Working	Position	Gender	Age

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 188)

Finally, the theoretical information aligns the research questions, methodology, and literature review (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Also, the authors have provided a matrix that will be used in this research.

Research Questions	Information Needed/What the Researcher Wants to Know	Method
What resources do law enforcement professionals need to identify and support victims of sex trafficking?		Interview
What do first responders need to navigate the emotional challenges of their jobs?		Interview

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019)

Overview of Research Design

This study will use interviews as the primary data collection tool to obtain a deep knowledge of LEOs experiences through semi-structured interview questions aligned with the

research questions. After completing the interviews, the researcher intends to use the recommended steps by Creswell and Poth (2018) to analyze the data. The first step is transcribing the data collected from interviews by writing audio recordings as printed notes (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which helps the researcher understand the participants' overall experiences with the phenomenon. The next step is the coding process; coding is a classification system to identify interesting or significant data, categorize different sections of the data, and label them to organize important information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Then, the researcher will find and locate reoccurring patterns, also known as themes. Themes involve analogous codes condensed to create a major concept or idea found in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The final step is the development of a description. The description will explain the themes that arose following individuals' experiences relating to the central phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Collection Methods

Data Sources & Interview Protocol

The primary source of collecting data in this study will be audio recorded interviews. Every interview will start with a review of the informed consent in both oral and written forms. Then, after reviewing the consent form, the researcher will start the interview. Although the researcher designed the interviews to last 45-50 minutes, their length may vary depending on the participant's experiences. In addition, the researcher will inform the participant about additional follow-up interviews if needed.

This study will use the four-phased protocol refinement method. The four-phase process includes: ensuring interview questions align with research questions and the purpose of the study. The alignment increases the effectiveness and strengthens the research process (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). In addition, the researcher will develop semi-structured interview questions

through the interview protocol under the direct supervision of the committee chair. In the next step, the researcher will ascertain that the questions support an inquiry-based conversation rather than a general conversation (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The third step is receiving feedback on the interview protocol. The researcher will request the chair of the committee and committee members to give feedback on the interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

Piloting the Protocol

The final stage is piloting the protocol. In this phase, the researcher will request one LEO who is not involved in the main study to complete a mock interview session. The interview is designed to be audio recorded and a 45-50 minute session using the organization's premises where the main interviews will take place. Piloting the protocol allows the researcher to be prepared prior to the actual interviews to evaluate rapport, process, consent, space, recording, and timing (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

Confidentiality protocol

In accordance with the interview protocol, the researcher will develop a confidentiality protocol that explains the study's purpose (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants will receive a copy of the confidentiality protocol, and the researcher will collect a signed copy for the records. After collecting the consent form, the researcher will conduct the interviews, which will be audio recorded under state law, and make sure every participant gives consent.

Confidentiality of data

For the publication purposes, all collected data will be labeled and recorded under pseudonyms. Physical data formats- consent forms and audio-recorded files will be stored in a password-protected flash drive and placed in a secure locker. Only the researcher will have access to the participants' information.

Risks

There are no known risks associated with this study. While interviewing, if the participant feels discomfort, the participants may immediately exit the study without any restriction or consequences.

Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis

As the first step of the data analysis process, the researcher will organize the data for analysis. Then, the researcher will reduce large data sets into themes through a process of coding and summarizing. In the last step, the researcher will put the data in figures, tables, and a discussion. In order to reach the best conclusions, the researcher will examine the data as a whole (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interpretation

In this process, the researcher will use direct interpretation which allows researchers to pull the data apart and reorganize the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The first step is transcribing the data collected from interviews by writing audio recordings as printed notes (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which helps the researcher understand the participants' overall experiences with the phenomenon. The next step is the coding process; coding breaks down the interview into separate categories and forces the researcher to focus on each detail (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Then, the researcher will find and locate reoccurring patterns, also known as themes. Themes involve analogous codes condensed to create a major concept or idea found in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The final step is the development of a description. The description will explain the themes that arose following individuals' experiences relating to the central phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

To maintain ethical considerations, the researcher will follow every guideline instructed by the institutional review board (IRB). Prior to this study, the researcher will provide an informed consent form to all participants and collect a signed copy.

Verification Procedures

In order to verify the study, the researcher intends on taking certain measures. The committee members will review the methods of the study and approaches that will be utilized to analyze the data. In addition, the researcher will allow a few colleagues to peer review the methods of the study and the approaches that will be utilized to analyze the data. Finally, the researcher will write a description of the study and have the participants read it to verify that the information was presented accurately.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a passage to avoid biases if any exist in the overall study's design. To eliminate the biases and ensure the trustworthiness, this study will be measured by credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Credibility

Credibility is an essential element to ensure trustworthiness; it allows to put a checkmark for whether the researcher accurately articulates the perceptions of the participants. The researcher will apply a few strategies to establish credibility.

A) Peer debriefing- the researcher will ask a few colleagues to review the field notes and data to ensure credibility.

B) Member checks- the researcher will send the transcribed data summary to the participants to ensure the summary replicates their statements.

C) Thick description- the researcher will ensure the reports are detailed enough for the readers to understand easily (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Dependability

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), dependability confirms that the study must be “clearly documented, logical, and traceable” (p. 204) and reflects the stability and consistency of the data. Also, it forces the researchers to provide a precise and accurate description of data collection, analysis, and transcription so that it is available for further research to replicate (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Confirmability

Confirmability ensures that findings and interpretations are from the data and research instead of the researcher’s bias or opinions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Additionally, it forces the researcher to describe the process used throughout the research design in detail (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Transferability

Transferability is an avenue that allows the researcher not to generalize the findings but makes them as plain as possible for every reader. The goal of this qualitative study is to develop “descriptive context-relevant findings” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 205), which can be “applicable to broader contexts while still maintaining their content-specific richness” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 205).

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is that the sample size is small. Although the study will accurately represent the perceptions of only a small number of the LEOs that are regionally involved with sex trafficking within the five boroughs of New York, it might not cover the full

measure of insight to contemplate the overall perceived needs of the LEOs to identify and support victims.

Delimitations

Ten LEOs, two from each of the five boroughs of New York, that are considered first responders will be selected through purposeful sampling and will be requested for their voluntary participation in order for them to express their perceptions in a 45-50 minute semi-structured interview session relating to the purpose of the study and provide insight that aligns with the research questions.

Summary

Chapter three provides a step-by-step process of this study's research methodology. The study carefully chose the qualitative case study methodology to illustrate the phenomenon of the needs of the first responders to identify and support sex trafficking victims.

The participant sample was made up of ten purposefully selected individuals. Interviews are the main tool to collect data through audio recordings in this study. To collect the data, the researcher will develop semi-structured interview questions through the interview protocol under the direct supervision of the committee chair. Then, the researcher will go through the approval process from each organization and upon approval the researcher will collect informed consent from all participants before conducting the interviews.

The researcher will have the chair of the expert panel and the members of the panel verify the study and review the methods of the study and approaches that will be utilized to analyze the data. In addition, the researcher will allow a few colleagues to peer review the methods of the study and the approaches that will be utilized to analyze the data, and finally, the researcher will write a description of the study and have the participants read it to verify that the information is

properly presented. To further ensure the study's trustworthiness, the researcher will use credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to avoid personal bias.

In the next process, the collected data will be coded into themes for analysis. Conceptual framework designed the analysis of the study, and the analysis allows to find the key themes from the findings.

The goal of this study is to explore and understand the needs of professionals to develop an evidence-based program to support sex trafficking victims. The researcher anticipates that the study will be an addition to the further investigation to provide appropriate support for sex trafficking victims.

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Appendix A
The Perceived Needs of First Responders to Identify and Support Sex Trafficking Victims:
A Case Study

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Principal Researcher: Raja Kumar

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Kit Kacirek

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a research study about The Perceived Needs of First Responders to Identify and Support Sex Trafficking Victims. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a Law Enforcement Officer that has experienced working with sex trafficking minimum of three years.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Who is the Principal Researcher?

Raja Kumar, E-mail:Phone:

Who is the Faculty Advisor?

Dr. Kit Kacirek, Email:.....Phone:

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this research study is to examine law enforcement professionals' perceived needs as first responders to identify and support sex trafficking victims. Specifically, this study examines resources, training, and support law enforcement professionals perceive to be critical to their success.

Who will participate in this study?

The expected participants are nine law enforcement officers that have at least three years of experience working with sex trafficking victims.

What am I being asked to do?

Your participation will require the following:

An interview to discuss your experiences and perceived needs as a first responder to identify and support sex trafficking victims. Specifically, this study examines resources, training, and support law enforcement professionals perceive to be critical to their success.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There are no known risks associated with the study. However, if at any point you are uncomfortable, you may withdraw from the study without any consequences.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

Since this is an unpaid voluntary participation, you will not receive any financial benefit or compensation for your participation.



How long will the study last?

The plan is to conduct only one interview with each participant for approximately 45-50 minutes, if in any case an additional interview is needed, it could be arranged.

Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in this study?

No

Will I have to pay for anything?

No

What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?

Participation is unpaid and voluntary. Participants' decisions are highly valued.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal laws. All collected data will be labeled and recorded under pseudonyms for study and publication purposes and will be stored in a secure locker.

Will I know the results of the study?

At the conclusion of the study, you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Kit Kacirek, or Principal Researcher, Raja Kumar. You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

What do I do if I have questions about the research study?

You have the right to contact the Principal Researcher or Faculty Advisor as listed below for any concerns that you may have.

Principal Researcher: Raja Kumar, Email:..... Phone:

Faculty Advisor: Kit Kacirek, Email:..... Phone:

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Integrity and Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Integrity and Compliance
University of Arkansas
105 MLKG Building
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu



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I have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I understand that no rights have been waived by signing the consent form. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Demographic Questions:

1. How many years of experience do you have working with sex trafficking?
2. How many sex trafficking cases have you been directly involved with?
3. Have you had any training regarding sex trafficking?
4. What type of training have you received?
5. In what type of persevering training and continuing professional's development have you participated? Are there any other programs which are readily available to you, but you have not participated?
6. What approach do you use to assist in distinguishing victims of sex trafficking?
7. How does your agency collaborate with federal, state, and local government on sex trafficking crimes?

Research Questions:

1. Is there an existing protocol to follow during the initial stage of interacting with victims in response to sex trafficking?
2. What approach do you use to assist in distinguishing between sex trafficking victims and prostitutes?
3. Are there any initial identifiers to collect evidence? What potential evidence could exist in a sex trafficking case?
4. What resources are available for the sex trafficking victims' immediate needs?
5. What are the available tools you have to rehabilitate and reintegrate victims?
6. Are there sufficient resources available for victims' rehabilitation and reintegration?



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7. Have you ever experienced trauma while helping victims, which led to stress or depression?
8. Are there resources available for you to get psychological treatment?
9. In your opinion based on your experiences, what type of resources or skills do law enforcement officers need to identify, rehabilitate, and reintegrate victims?



Appendix C: Site Permission Letter

Dear Ma'am/Sir,

My name is Raja Kumar, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Arkansas pursuing my Doctorate of Education in Adult and Lifelong Learning (Ed. D.) degree. I am required to conduct a research as the partial fulfillment for the degree. The study will be supervised directly by Dr. Kit Kacirek, dissertation chair. The purpose of this research is to examine the perceived needs of Law Enforcement Officers working as first responders to identify and support sex trafficking victims, specifically, the resources, training, and support law enforcement professionals perceive to be critical to their success. To fulfil the study's purpose, I am writing this application to you as you are the director or executive officer in charge of the organization to get access to your premises and the officers that have at least three years of working experience with sex trafficking victims. There are no monetary benefits for the participants, and the study intends to interview ten Law Enforcement Officers through one 45-50 minute interview session. Under no circumstances will the identity of participants be revealed. By all means, the data will be stored securely, and the participants and organizations' names will be labeled under pseudonyms for publication purposes.

I humbly request, if you would please grant me approval to collect data from your department that will award me the opportunity to move forward with my dissertation process and achieve my doctorate degree. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my dissertation chair.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Raja Kumar