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Education for Liberation: Community Workshops to Recognize Human Trafficking

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Abstract

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is a highly profitable industry that plaques countries throughout the globe. There is no community left unscathed when it comes to who and who is not affected. The underlying issue is that many individuals do not understand that commercial sexual exploitation of children is taking place right here in their communities. The literature review will highlight three different theories, examine existing policy, and review preventative measures, to gain a deeper understanding of CSEC. The workshop implemented ways to increase overall awareness and education surrounding CSEC for local community members. More specifically, community members worked to identify some of the root causes, warning signs, effects, and recent developments about CSEC within communities.

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Education for Liberation

Over 100 years ago, the White-Slave Traffic Act, or the Mann Act (1910), was a federal law passed by the United States of America. Today in its full form, The White Slave Traffic Act (1910), prohibits the exploitation of minors in all ways, including child pornography (United States Department of Justice Archives, 2020). Despite enacting a federal law to protect minors from sexual exploitation, the number of victims within the sex trafficking system today is estimated at around 21 million globally (Polaris Project, 2014). The Department of Homeland Security defines human trafficking as "involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act" (2020, p. 1). The issue we face today with commercial sexual exploitation of children is that this new form of slavery is extremely prevalent but wildly invisible to the mainstream public (Davis, 2017).

Although the White Slave Traffic Act (1910), prohibits the exploitation of minors in all forms, the act of trafficking humans, otherwise known as modern slavery, plagues the United States. When it comes to who is affected by commercial sexual exploitation, there is no clear answer. However, research shows that women of all ages and races are disproportionately affected (International Labor Organization, 2017). Women and young girls affected by forced labor account for 99% of victims in the commercial sex industry, and 58% in labor-intensive sectors (International Labor Organization, 2017). According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, data from 2016 depicts a majority of victims reporting risk factors that acted as a gateway into human sex trafficking. The data listed substance use, runaway and homeless youth, relocation and migration, mental health instability, and unstable housing, as risk factors for victims (Polaris Project, 2016). Because human sex trafficking is one of the leading forms of exploitation (Department of State, 2017), the overall purpose of this study will focus on

commercial sexual exploitation of children and how to raise a collective awareness and educate

community members. School-based professionals and teacher awareness of CSEC are paramount

for the safety of our youth. In 2012, President Obama led an initiative that would work to help

eliminate human trafficking within the United States (Office of the Press Secretary, 2013). One

major component of this detailed plan consisted of tools and training to identify and assist

victims of trafficking (Office of the Press Secretary, 2013). Educators play an important role in

the lives of children across the country and are critical watchdogs in regard to recognizing

potential victims of human trafficking (Polaris Project, 2011).

The purpose of this project will be to conduct a workshop utilizing a curriculum that aids

in the prevention of human sex trafficking with at-risk youth. Bronfenbrenner's (1977)

Ecological Systems Theory will be used as a way to explore the relationship between youth

experiencing risk factors such as substance use, homelessness, mental health instability, and

human sex trafficking. The project will be conducted. The curriculum will help community

members spot the warning signs of sex trafficking in their community, potential dangers online,

and provide external resources for further learning.

Literature Review

In 1996, the Declaration and Agenda for Action for the First World Congress Against the

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children provided what is considered to be the first working

definition of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (Adams, Owens, & Small, 2010).

The 1996 declaration stated "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) comprises

sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or

persons. The child is treated as a sexual object and as a commercial object. The commercial

sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children and amounts to forced labor and a contemporary form of slavery" (Adams, Owens, & Small, 2010, p. 1).

It is estimated that roughly 300,000 children could potentially become victims of commercial sexual exploitation each year (Estes & Weiner, 2001). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) states that although there are limitations to data in regard to the prostitution of youth within the United States, the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) provides a way to analyze data from police documents (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2004). Research provided by NIBRS states, "In the absence of other sources of information, the data about a limited number of cases from the 76 agencies in 13 states that are represented in NIBRS suggest some patterns of possible utility for those trying to identify and respond to the prostitution of juveniles" (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2004, p.1). The analysis provided by NIBRS noted key factors such as police involvement with youth exploitation, male versus female data in regard to youth prostitution, and the role of law enforcement and prevention of youth exploitation. Data shows that "police are more likely to categorize juveniles involved in prostitution as offenders than as crime victims, but those categorized as victims are more likely to be female and young" (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2004, p. 2). The data also noted that, "Law enforcement agencies and policymakers need to engage in more analysis, planning, and coordination about how to respond to and record episodes of juvenile prostitution" (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2004, p. 2). Although this data helps researchers understand the overall environment of child exploitation in the United States, it is important to consider that NIBRS "is still far from a national system. Its implementation by the FBI began in 1988, and participation by states and local agencies is voluntary and incremental" (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2004, p. 2).

Although a majority of research and overall resources have often been targeted towards adults rather than youth, and research shows that domestic human trafficking in the United States targets vulnerable youth such as those experiencing homelessness, kidnapped children, children in foster care (Fong & Cardoso, 2009). According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, data surveyed from December 2007 to December 2016 highlighted the top 100 major cities for human sex trafficking (National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2016). Data was collected through phone calls, email, and online tips reported. Huston, Texas ranked number one with a total of 3,634, followed by New York, New York with a total of 3,074. Los Angeles, California, Washington, District of Columbia, and Chicago, Illinois followed placing in the top five (Polaris Project, 2017). Due to the increasing number of trafficking victims, in 2003, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children created what was known as the Innocence Lost National Initiative (Fong & Cardoso, 2009). Due to the nature of this program, in 2008 the Innocence Lost National Initiative initiated Operation Cross Country. Operation Cross Country is a national campaign that targeted high trafficking areas and resulted in rescuing more than 900 children and arrested roughly over 1,000 traffickers (Federal Investigation Bureau, 2019). This program is now known as Operation Independence Day due to a program reevaluation after 11 successful years of Operation Cross Country (Federal Investigation Bureau, 2019).

In Massachusetts, according to the Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, in 2011 Massachusetts became the 48th state to enact a statute targeting human trafficking (Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019). Governor Deval Patrick of Massachusetts signed House Bill 3808 in 2011, An Act Relative to the Commercial Exploitation of People (Report of the Labor Trafficking Sub-

Committee of the Massachusetts Interagency Human Trafficking Policy Task Force, 2014).

Since enacting the established law, Massachusetts has struggled to enforce it (Massachusetts

Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019). The issue lies within the

law enforcement agencies and their lack of training in regard to identifying and investigating

human trafficking in Massachusetts. Continuously, issues regarding the deportation of victims

linger due to aggressive federal regulations of undocumented citizens. Victims fear deportation,

which hinders their ability to seek asylum from trafficking. Although the Act Relative to the

Commercial Exploitation of People (2011) was considered to be "top tier legislation nationwide"

(), Massachusetts experienced a five year high of 99 reports, 74 of which involved sex trafficking

of mostly women (Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights,

2019).

   Overall, the Interagency Human Trafficking Policy Task Force provides

recommendations for the state of Massachusetts to help aid in the eradication of sex trafficking

in the Commonwealth. Recommendations consisted of victim services, demand reduction, data

collection, education and training, and public awareness. As of April 30, 2019, Massachusetts

moved to discuss the provided recommendations before the Judiciary Committee (Massachusetts

Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019). The legislation put forth

would demand such as requiring more public awareness outreach, data collection procedures,

and changes to the Victims of Human Trafficking Trust Fund. The legislation would also

incorporate Massachusetts into including sex trafficking information in truck stops, welcome

centers, and information centers. Lastly, the legislation would give residents an option to donate

a portion of their tax returns to the Victims of Human Trafficking Trust Fund. Recommendations

from the task force remain "aspirational" however the task force encourages the Commonwealth to act on them.

Vulnerable Youth and Sex Trafficking

Human sex trafficking is a public health crisis that is affecting homeless youth across the United States (Makini Chisolm-Straker, et al., 2019). Research shows that victims of sex slavery are often times those who have experienced hardships throughout their youth development. "In the United States, runaway, homeless, kidnapped children or children in or leaving foster care are at elevated risk of forced prostitution and trafficking" (Fong & Cordoso, 2009, p. 311). In a study conducted by conducted by Chisolm-Straker et al. (2018), researchers explored the factors that differentiate trafficked homeless youth from not-trafficked homeless youth. Some of those factors include, but are not limited to, youth who have been kicked out of their homes due to gender or sexual orientation, runaways from sexual or physical abuse, neglect, and overall unsafe living conditions (Chisolm-Straker et al., 2018). In a 2017 study, 29% of youth surveyed reported struggling with substance use, and 69% reported mental health issues while experiencing homelessness (Morton, Dworsky, & Samules, 2017). The study notes, "Duration of homelessness varies among youth, with 73% of those in the study reporting being homeless for more than a month" (Chisolm-Straker et al., 2018, p. 116). Moreover, homeless youth who lack a stable support system throughout their lives are often victims of sex slavery due to traffickers exploiting the vulnerability of these youth. The study highlights, "However, among this highly vulnerable population, little is understood about why some homeless youth may be more vulnerable to being trafficked than others" (Chisolm-Straker, et al., 2018, p. 116). The nature of the research was to gain a better understanding of which population of homeless youth is at a higher risk of trafficking. The study then noted that "Understanding which homeless youth are

most at risk for trafficking is integral to a public health response to trafficking, including the design of prevention interventions" (Chisolm-Straker, et al., 2018, p. 116).

Children are often targeted when it comes to sexual exploitation because they lack the physical and emotional capacity to protect themselves. (Duger, 2015). A majority of research indicates that vulnerable youth are targets of sex trafficking. Additionally, the most frequently cited risk factor is childhood sexual and emotional abuse (Duger, 2015). However, risk factors vary from socioeconomic upbringing, race, gender, and sexuality (Chisolm-Straker, et al., 2018). Risk factors are correlations and are likely to be "causally related," to events but are not certain (Duger, 2015). Moreover, because the sex trafficking legislature takes on a rights-based approach, there is a push to switch to a child-based approach to advocate for the silent and powerless population (Duger, 2015). Although child sex trafficking is most certainly a human rights issue, switching to a child-based approach would allow for people to "focus on the child as a rights-bearing individual rather than a potential victim" (Duger, 2015, p. 120).

One study that focused on low-income African American girls found that a majority of young girls lack support to protect themselves (Kruger et al., 2013). The study noted that "The typical victim in 1 city in the southeastern United States is an African American girl 12-14 years old. There has been little research investigating the characteristics of girls placed at risk for CSEC and even less research on the personal perspectives of these girls" (Kruger, et al., 2013, p. 370). The study emphasizes that the sexualization of young girls in America is a threat to healthy development. This study also highlights the disparities of African American girls who are overlooked as victims of violent crimes. (Kruger et al., 2013).

The Kruger et al. (2013) study brings to the table a curriculum responsive to the community needs. This research study looked closely at neighborhoods and spoke to teachers

and educators about the overall environment of young girls who are placed at greater risk. Additionally, this study created a "curriculum responsive to the community needs" (Kruger et al., 2013). Additionally, this study created a "curriculum responsive to the community needs" (Kruger. et al., 2013, p. 372). The curriculum included both in school and after school sessions that focused on actions such as building trust, relationships, decision making, and coping with negative stereotypes and emotions. Through coding, both open and selective, researchers were able to identify four "risk-related themes". Difficulty forming trusting relationships, physical aggression in peer relationships, familiarity with adult prostitution, and lastly, girls' sexuality as a commodity. This study highlighted how girls, specifically youth living in low-income communities, value their relationships with themselves and others.

Furthermore, while considering who is at risk of human sex trafficking, transgender and nonconforming youth are on the list. Transgender and nonconforming youth are more likely to face discrimination, which leads them into a realm of disparities. Employment and housing discrimination, child welfare system involvement, and discrimination at school are factors that drive youth towards unstable environments (Tomasiewicz, 2018). Transgender and nonconforming youth are more likely to use sex for survival due to the lack of support they face within the system (Tomasiewicz, 2018). "Research shows transgender females are significantly less likely to work with a pimp or "manager" 98% reported rarely or never working with a pimp than cisgender females and cisgender males" (Swaner et al., 2016, p. 86). The sexual exploitation of vulnerable youth is prevalent throughout the United States, and there is a strong call to action among agencies (Morton, Dworsky, & Samules, 2017). To summarize, although there is not one specific human trafficking victim, victims are usually subjecting of vulnerable lifestyles such as homelessness, immigrant status, runaway youth, gender, sexuality and lack of education (Lutrell,

2020). Massachusetts has a high percentage of youth experiencing homelessness (United States

Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2019). Data shows that there are roughly 23,601

homeless youth in Massachusetts as of 2019. However, according to Massachusetts Advisory

Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (2019), Massachusetts has struggled

adhering to recommendations provided by the Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on

Civil Rights (Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019)

which results in less accessible information surrounding human sex trafficking within the

Commonwealth.

Psychological Effects of Human Trafficking

It is clear to researchers that there is a direct correlation between youth sex trafficking

victims and mental health issues. Some possible psychological effects of human trafficking range

from depression and anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse issues, alienation,

and isolation from social supports, and suicide or thoughts of suicide (Little, 2020). Moreover,

victims also suffer from Stockholm Syndrome (Lutrell, 2020). Stockholm Syndrome is defined

as, "A psychological response. It occurs when hostages or abuse victims' bond with their captors

or abusers" (Healthline, 2020, p. 1). Stockholm syndrome leaves victims with a sense of fear

instilled within them because they often think if they escape, they will be found and physically

hurt or killed. Due to the wide range of psychological effects human sex trafficking has on

victims, traffickers will often use these symptoms to manipulate their victims (Little, 2020).

The long-term effects of human sex trafficking are not only mental but also physical.

Victims rely on their perpetrators for almost everything and become less independent which

leads to a life of instability, once free. According to Tai-Lin Hampton (2017), alongside the

mental effects, are several physical effects such as malnutrition and untreated physical abuse. All

of these incidents often go unreported due to the lack of care perpetrators have for their victims within the trafficking world. Food deprivation is often used to take full control of victims (Hampton, 2017). It is common that victims find themselves with untreated abuse such as broken bones, and even disease because perpetrators deny victims access to outsiders that are not considered clientele, such as doctors. Overall, torture is used to gain full control over victims which leads to these grueling, long-lasting effects (Hampton, 2017).

Ecological Systems Theory and Youth Exploitation

Urie Bronfenbrenner's concept of *Ecological Systems Theory* was published in 1977 through his work "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The theory states that a child is influenced by everything in their overall environment which affects youths' development. The theory consists of five different levels: microsystem (immediate environment), mesosystem (connections), exosystem (indirect environment), macrosystem (social and cultural values), and chronosystem (changes over time). The first layer or microsystem is whatever is in the child's immediate setting. "A microsystem is the complex of relations between the developing person and environment in an immediate setting containing that person (e.g., home, school, workplace, etc.). A setting is defined as a place with particular physical features in which the participants engage in particular activities in particular roles (e.g., daughter, parent, teacher, employee, etc.) for particular periods" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 514). Additionally, this means that a child's immediate environment plays an important role in their overall development. The mesosystem is the next layer in the Ecological Systems Theory. The mesosystem is based on interconnections that a child has within their environment. For example, Bronfenbrenner (1977) uses a young adolescent child to explain that one's interconnections would be with parents, teachers, and peers of the same age. Bronfenbrenner (1977) explains, "It

might also include church, camp, or workplace, although the last would be less common in the United States than in some other societies. In sum, stated succinctly, a mesosystem is a system of microsystems" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p 514). Next in the Ecological Systems Theory is the exosystem. The exosystem is identified as the indirect environment. Bronfenbrenner (1977) states "They encompass, among other structures, the world of work, the neighborhood, the mass media, agencies of government (local, state, and national), the distribution of goods and services, communication and transportation facilities, and informal social networks" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). Also, the exosystem does not directly affect the child's development, however, it indirectly influences their overall development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Next in the Ecological Systems Theory is the macrosystem. "The macrosystem refers to the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture, such as the economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems, of which micro-, meso-, and exo- systems are the concrete manifestations" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). This definition explains how cultural influences in one's environment have an impact on the other layers of Ecological Systems Theory because of the indirect influence it has on a child. Lastly, Bronfenbrenner (1977) added the chronosystem to Ecological Systems Theory in 1979. Chronosystem is used in this model to highlight the importance of events that children go through (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Events that shape youth development such as a divorce, death, or birth of a sibling. Overall, the Ecological Systems theory is used to explain what influences one's personal development.

  Ecological Systems Theory is a framework that can be applied to the concept of youth sex trafficking because it is a model that explains environmental influences on development within one's life. "According to work with victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and researchers who have investigated this problem, CSEC primarily involves runaway,

homeless and transient or unemployed youth who may trade sex as a means of survival or who are vulnerable to adults who manipulate them for profit" (Williams, et al., 2009, p. 7). Several factors lead youth into sex trafficking. Whether it be homelessness, lack of support, education, gender, and sexuality, or runaways (Fong & Cordoso, 2009). A youth is influenced by their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), which affects different layers of their Ecological System. "Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory can be seen when evaluating risk factors for human trafficking and human rights violations. Poverty, a history of abuse and neglect, substance use issues, political instability, homelessness, and marginalized identities have been highlighted in other chapters as risk factors for an individual to become a human trafficking victim" (Meshelemiah et al., 2019, p. 81). Moreover, by implementing Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems Theory in conjunction with youth sex trafficking, individuals are likely to identify specific impacts that pose possible risk factors in one's environment. The Ecological Systems Theory framework can suggest ways to identify and analyze the human sex trafficking of youth and help individuals understand the phenomenon (Escandon Villalobos, 2014).

In a study, one researcher mapped out how the Ecological Systems Theory framework impacted youth in Chile (Escandon Villalobos, 2014). The researcher identified the child as the center and then moved to the microsystem. Bronfenbrenner (1977) explains that the microsystem is an area where children are immediately affected by their environment. In the study, researchers placed gender, age, history of sexual abuse, neglect, and drug use (Escandon Villalobos, 2014). Next, inside of the mesosystem were actions such as unhealthy attachment behavior, running away from home, and past family trauma (Escandon Villalobos, 2014). Inside of the exosystem, the researcher listed family structure, dysfunctional dynamics, school, health system, neighborhood, police enforcement, peer involvement, family income, and parents'

education (Escandon Villalobos, 2014). Lastly, the researcher included actions such as lack of

community awareness, urban/rural poverty, lack of opportunities, and Latin-American culture

into the macrosystem (Escandon Villalobos, 2014). This research example provides an overview

of potential ideas and theories that contribute to human sex trafficking and youth development.

Overall, Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems Theory is one way for individuals to

understand and identify the phenomenon of youth sex trafficking.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

To better understand commercial sexual exploitation of children, Maslow's

Hierarchy of Needs depicts a theory as to why this phenomenon may happen in communities

across the globe. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a motivational theory first introduced by

Abraham Maslow in 1943. The theory states that there are five basic needs every human must

satisfy in order to thrive in ones life (Maslow, 1943). The five basic needs are physiological

which includes food and water, next is safety needs such as security, then there is belongingness

and love, followed by esteem needs or feeling of accomplishment, and lastly there is self-

actualization which includes achieving ones full potential (Maslow, 1943). Looking at

commercial sexual exploitation through this lens means that individuals who struggle to attain

the most basic needs Maslow (1943), mentions, will face issues when trying to move up the

hierarchy. When an individual is living in or experiencing poverty, and is exposed to commercial

sexual exploitation, traffickers will oftentimes manipulate victims by fulfilling their basic needs,

essentially trapping them (Braun, 2015). When a perpetrator or a person in possession of another

person expresses that they are fulfilling another person's needs in order for them to stay within

the confines of their personal boundaries. "Many sex traffickers lure victims by providing basic

survival needs. They systematically provide distorted versions of higher needs to manipulate

victims. Using threats, force and coercion, traffickers exploit the fact that, for many victims, "the life" may be their first experience of 'family' and belonging" (Braun, 2015, p. 1). Additionally, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), is used as a way to view how commercial sexual exploitation of children may foster within a community.

Conflict Theory

Conflict Theory was introduced by Karl Marx in 1848. In its entirety, the definition of Conflict Theory states that, "A theory that emphasizes the role of coercion, conflict, and power in society and that social inequality will inevitably occur because of differing interests and values between groups, particularly the competition for scarce resources" (Bell, 2020, p. 1). Looking at Conflict Theory through the lens of CSEC, poverty, or classism, is a pivotal key point to understanding how it plays a role in commercial exploitation of children. Additionally, "The general thoughts behind social Conflict Theory are the general premise that is surrounding human trafficking. The traffickers, who are the more powerful group, use their power to exploit groups with less power than themselves" (Usman, 2013, p. 289). When you have an individual who is experiencing poverty, options are limited, and similar to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) concept, Conflict Theory (1848) depicts that an individual will follow a person who is in a position of power in order to find their means of survival (Usman, 2013).

Education for Prevention

To combat this major issue, there need to be laws that have a victim-first mentality. Additionally, the United States must implement more preventive protocols into the existing literature that surrounds youth exploitation. Research highlights that perpetrator rarely get caught. The current systems in place make it difficult to pinpoint one single perpetrator. Moreover, the issue becomes a slippery slope when perpetrators make it almost impossible for

police to track down victims. According to Kaylor (2015) "When victims seek help, they may encounter many challenges. Their traffickers typically exert tight physical and emotional control by doing the following: Confiscating their identification, cell phones, and money. Forbidding communication with family or friends. Monitoring and restricting movement" (p. 4). Multiple sex trafficking victims are afraid to come forward or break the cycle because they fear the consequences of their perpetrator. Victims who are consumed by human sex trafficking will often blame themselves (Kaylor, 2015). To move forward and create lasting change, risk prevention must be at the top of the agenda.

According to Frundt (2005), "There are organizations all over the world that work with young women and girls helping them escape from trafficking situations" (Frundt, 2005, p. 1). There are organizations out there that help victims recover from the trauma of human sex trafficking such as the Polaris Project, Global Alliance Against Trafficking Women, and The Urban Justice Center's Sex Workers Project. Kaylor (2015), adds "Survivors of sex trafficking can and do heal physically and psychologically, if able to access appropriate and culturally sensitive services and resources. Former sex slaves are often the best resources in the fight against human trafficking because they have invaluable information regarding how to combat human trafficking as well as the most effective ways to help victims" (Kaylor, 2015, p. 6). Seminars, and community outreach programs are resources that victims have possession of to help them gain access to a life free from sex slavery. Survivors of human sex trafficking can use their experiences to promote knowledge about sex trafficking, which include how to spot the ongoing problem, and where to report it within a community.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services has brought forth strategic plans to help tackle this ongoing issue (Department of Health and Human Services, 2019). Part

of the strategic plan involves aligning efforts, improving understanding, and outcomes, and expanding access to services. On top of victim assistance programs, the Department of Health and Human Services also offers Victim Assistance Grants. These grants cover programs such as "short- and long-term housing, substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling, educational opportunities, job training and skills, and legal and financial advocacy" (Department of Health and Human Services, 2019, p. 1). Additionally, because human sex trafficking is so complex, it requires a "multidisciplinary approach by individuals, organizations, communities, and national governments" (Greenbaum, 2014).

Recommendations for Prevention Education

The purpose of this project is to conduct a community-based workshop that educates local residents on the signs of child sex trafficking in their communities, how the Ecological Systems Theory, Conflict Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can help us understand the complexities of child sex trafficking, and ways to report and prevent it from happening in their communities.

Project Plan

Situation Statement

Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) defines trafficking as (A) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or (B) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (US State Department, 2000). Human sex trafficking manifests itself

across communities worldwide. Research shows that victims of sex slavery are often times those who have experienced hardships throughout their youth development (Fong & Cardoso, 2009). Additionally, youth who experience risk factors such as poverty, unemployment, a history of sexual abuse, and a history of mental health issues are often times more susceptible to commercial sexual exploitation (Murphy, 2016). Due to the depth of the issue, the need for overall education and awareness around commercial sexual exploitation of youth is essential for communities across the nation in order to work towards prevention.

Define Your Goals

- GOAL: Participants will be able to define what sex trafficking is and how it manifests within communities

- GOAL: Participants will be able to identify and connect the patterns of high-risk youth and sex trafficking dangers

- GOAL: Participants will be able to assess the signs of a potential or current youth sex trafficking victims

- GOAL: Participants will be able to collaborate / advocate to find ways to educate school-based professionals and educators on how to identify potential or current sex trafficking victims

- GOAL: Participants will be able to identify community resources for potential or current sex trafficking victims

Target Audience and Stakeholders

The target audience of this workshop will consist of school-based professionals, educators, community members including health care workers, as well as the general public. Stakeholders will include potential victims, teachers, nonprofits, guidance counselors, health care professionals, anyone working with children grades K-12, and local community members.

Crafting a Clear Message

Human sex trafficking has grown to become a major issue right here in neighborhoods across the United States. It is no secret that our history books show that commercial sexual exploitation of youth has been around for countless years, and many individuals do not realize that it is taking place right here and right now, in the United States of America. Youth trafficking is prevalent in high-risk areas where neighborhoods are experiencing high volumes of homeless youth (Murphy, 2016). Homeless youth are oftentimes targeting of sex trafficking because they experience risk factors such as poverty, unemployment, a history of sexual abuse, and a history of mental health issues (Murphy, 2016). Sex trafficking impacts our youth, our families, neighborhoods and communities across the country. It is paramount that community members living in neighborhoods that may experience high volumes of trafficking are able to identify CSEC and understand the warning signs in order to take action against this heinous act.

Incentives for Engagement

Stakeholder: School based professionals

Incentive: Learn about warning signs/ connect potential victims to resources

Stakeholder: Educators (Teachers, guidance counselors)

Incentive: Create a safe learning environment/ understanding warning sign

Stakeholder: Community members

Incentive: Bring and create awareness to the severity of the issue in the affected

community

Identify Outreach Methods

Email, flyer, Eventbrite, Merrimack College professors, LinkedIn, Instagram, Word of

Mouth, Panelists

Responsibilities Chart

NAME	ORGANIZATION OR AFFILIATION	RESPONSIBILITIES	CONTACT INFORMATION
Stephanie Cazeau-Bandoo	Lowell Ending Trafficking of Youth program at the Center for Hope & Healing.	Stephanie will serve as a panelist for the workshop. She will answer questions from both moderator and participants.	Stephanie@chhinc.org
Kayla Smith	CSEC Coordinator at Children's Advocacy Center of Hampshire County	Kayla will serve as a panelist for the workshop. She will answer questions from both moderator and participants.	ksmith@cachampshire.org
Jon Tiru	Case worker at the Department of Children and Families	Jon will serve as a panelist for the workshop. He will answer questions from both moderator and participants.	JonathanTire@gmail.com

Tools/Measure to Assess Progress

PowerPoint with theories presented during workshop. 1 list of panelist questions; 3

panelists boked; 12 post evaluations collected.

Implementation Timeline

January 2021	Finalize ideas, start outreach, flyers
February 2021	Secure date, secure guest speaker, create materials, advertise, create Eventbrite
March 2021	Implement project
April 2021	4/6: Full capstone draft due 4/30: Submit final capstone paper for publication

Logical Framework

Creating an informative conversation around CSEC to increase overall awareness and education, and to promote preventive protective measures for potential victims within communities.

- **SO THAT:** Local community members are aware of how CSEC manifests within neighborhoods

- **SO THAT:** Community workers such as educators and health care providers are able to understand warning signs of potential victims of youth trafficking

- **SO THAT:** Community members are able to identify warning signs of youth trafficking within their neighborhoods

- **SO THAT:** Community members are more likely to provide resources to potential victims

- **SO THAT:** Organizations can work closely with potential victims of youth trafficking

- **SO THAT:** Victims are provided with proper support and treated as survivors and not criminals

Methodology

Education for Prevention: Understanding Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, was a workshop available to the general public with the intention to highlight existing education and increase overall awareness of CSEC within communities. This workshop was designed to inform community members on different aspects of CSEC including basic definition, how it manifests within different communities and theories to help support those claims, how to identify warning signs and provide resources to potential victims.

Participants

This workshop was aimed at residents in the general Worcester, MA area. It was open to all adults and minor could attend with an adult present. Additionally, participants of the workshop consisted of three panelists who work in the CSEC industry as program coordinator, project director of programs and case worker in child welfare services. Participants of the workshop included 17 attendees (details of profession following the post workshop evaluation).

Materials

Materials used for the workshop included an informational flyer as a method of outreach. An agenda was used to manage time during the workshop. A flyer that consisted of the panelists was used to help inform attendees. Social media played a role in distributing information regarding the workshop. Websites such as LinkedIn, Instagram, and Eventbrite were used as a vehicle for marketing. Google Jamboard was used to collect attendees' questions and also to survey participants common themes and struggles. Google Slides was used to present the chain of events throughout the workshop. The workshop was held virtually on Zoom. Additionally, there was an online evaluation survey distributed at the end of the workshop.

Procedure

Education for Prevention: Understanding Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was a virtual workshop hosted on Zoom. Welcome and introductions started off the event and the panelists were introduced to those in attendance. Slides were presented that highlighted the learning objectives of the evening and also displayed information including a basic definition of CSEC, Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Conflict Theory, and how they aid in the understanding of CSEC and how it manifests itself within different communities.

Next was the panel discussion, where three expert panelists were able to answer questions and help educate attendees in regard to CSEC. After the panel discussion, there was ten minutes set aside for breakout sessions, where attendees were asked to join breakout rooms and debrief with guided questions to unpack the session using Google Jamboard. The Google Jamboard was used to document their overall common themes or struggles throughout the workshop. On a different page, the Google Jamboard was also serving as a place where participants were able to document their questions for the panelists.

Lastly, there was closing remarks and then the post evaluation survey was distributed to all in attendance.

Results

Ages of participants who answered the post evaluation survey ranged from twenty to fifty years of age. Another demographic within the survey showed that participants mainly identified themselves as female. Moreover, 7 out of 13 respondents reported that they work with children, while three respondents reported that they have children of their own, and two identified with

neither. A majority of the respondents reported that they found out about the workshop through word of mouth. One participant found the workshop through Eventbrite, one participant found it through the Center for Hope and Healing, two found out through panelists, two others through Facebook and two from LinkedIn.

A total of 17 attendees engaged in the workshop, with a total of 13 participants completing a post-event evaluation. 84.6% of participants identifying as female while only 7.7% identified as male and 7.7% would prefer not to say. Additionally, the most common age of participants who attended the workshop was 24, followed by 25 and 27 years of age.

When asked how they would rate the workshop overall, 84.6% of respondents gave it an average score of 4 out of 4, with 11 participants stating it excellent. A total of 15.4% of participants rated the workshop as a 3.

Survey data showed that 8 out of the total 13 who responded were more likely to identify what sex trafficking is and how it manifests itself in communities. Moreover, on average, 7 out of the 13 participants displayed that they were more likely to provide resources to potential victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children within their community. Survey results also show that 8 out of 13 workshop participants who responded are more likely to speak out when they suspect someone in the community has become a victim of CSEC. 7 out of 13 respondents answered that they are more likely to use their voice to continue the conversation around CSEC within their community.

Another question in the survey asked if participants would be willing to attend another CSEC workshop, 12 respondents answered yes to the question. Moreover, survey answers showed that of the 13 participants who responded to the post survey evaluation, a 13 participants in attendance were able to reach the goals set forth for this workshop. When asked about

improvements, respondents voiced their concerns about adding multicultural needs to the literature. Another participant noted that the panel discussion and PowerPoint were given the appropriate amount of time. A total of 3 participants showed excitement towards an in-person workshop in the future.

When surveyed on whether respondents would be interested in getting involved with a community organization that addresses CSEC, 12 of the participants said yes, while 1 said no. Participants were asked what they enjoyed most about the workshop and responses varied from the providers knowledge to the panel discussion. The panel discussion was noted multiple times in the survey under most enjoyable part of the workshop. The panel discussion took place from 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM. During the panel discussion, participants of the workshop had the opportunity to ask questions by using Google Jamboard. A total of 3 questions were anonymously asked by participants.

When asked to describe the workshop, respondents of the post evaluation reported that the event was eye opening. five participants stated that they enjoyed the breakout sessions because they were able to connect with panelists. On a scale of one to four, one being poor and four being excellent, participants were asked to rate the overall experience of the workshop. Additionally, 9 out of 13 respondents agreed that the presenter was engaging, and prepared. 8 out of 13 participants strongly agreed that the workshop information was useful. 8 out of 13 participants reported that they strongly agree with that the workshop provided insight that will help them better identify warning signs of CSEC within the community. 7 participants strongly agreed that they were able to learn something new from the workshop while 5 participants noted that they agreed with that statement.

Discussion

The goal of this workshop was to cultivate an informative conversation around commercial sexual exploitation of youth to promote overall awareness and education, and to highlight preventive protective measures for potential victims within our communities.

Survey data indicated that out of the participants who attended the workshop, seven were very likely to identify warning signs of CSEC, three participants stated that they already do this, and two participants recorded that they were likely to do this. Additionally, a majority of participants who responded to the post evaluation survey, several indicated that they learned something new, and that the information provided was useful. With respondents reporting that they strongly agree that the workshop gave them insight that will help them better identify warning signs of CSEC, it is important to note that those answers include panelists who are experts in commercial sexual exploitation of children. Moreover, the data shows that the information provided in the workshop highlighted the goal of defining what commercial sexual exploitation is and how it manifests within communities.

Data from the post evaluation survey highlighted that individual in attendance are more likely to identify warning signs and connect patters of CSEC to those who may be considered at risk. Survey data also noted that participants strongly agreed with the workshop giving insight that will help better understand warning signs of commercial sexual exploitation of youth. With a majority of respondents noting their ability to identify and connect to patters of CSEC, it can be said that participants of the workshop increased their awareness and overall knowledge of CSEC. A majority of respondents of the post evaluation survey indicated that they are more likely to provide resources to potential or current victims of CSEC, educators and community members. Moreover, a notable about of respondents reported that they are more likely to speak up in a

situation where education around CSEC is needed. Additionally, with many participants

highlighting that they are willing to use their voice to continue the conversation around

commercial sexual exploitation of children, a line can be drawn to bridge the gap between public

awareness and the need for advocacy.

Through this workshop, participants were able to learn how to advocate and educate

themselves and community members in order to promote preventive protocols in relation to

CSEC. Data showed that participants who attended the workshop left able to define CSEC and

identify ways it can manifest itself within a community. Survey data also highlighted that

participant who attended are able to identify and connect patters of CSEC in order to help

eradicate the issue. Lastly, workshop participants noted that they are now able to identify

community resources for current or potential victims of CSEC.

Limitations of the Study

One of the main limitations of this project was the survey response size. With 17

participants, only 13 individuals responded (76%) to the post evaluation questionnaire which has

an impact on the overall findings. Additionally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the workshop

took place on Zoom which limited participants involvement. Moreover, due to a virtual setting,

time was also considered to be limited.

Implications for Future Studies

This project was conducted to increase awareness and education of commercial sexual

exploitation of youth. By utilizing three main theories such as Ecological Systems Theory

(Bronfenbrenner, 1977), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), and Conflict Theory

(Marx, 1848), individuals who attended the workshop were able to view commercial sexual

exploitation of youth through the different lenses. In order to fully understand CSEC and the

influences it in communities, one may include a variety of theories in order to understand it through different perspectives. Due to the complexity of CSEC, it is important to understand that the theories highlighted are constantly changing and evolving. It is important to understand that commercial sexual exploitation of children is not a single conversation to be held. This field requires time, patience, and understanding. Moving forward, creating spaces for conversations to flourish is key. In order to continue the conversation to promote overall awareness and education of CSEC, individuals must move forward with an open mind and strive to engage in collaboration and advocacy within one's community.

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Appendix A: Panelist Questionnaire

Education for Prevention: Understanding CSEC

Panelist Questions

Group Questions: Each panelist will have around 2 minutes to answer each question.

(30 mins)

1. Based on your experience, how do you think we can start to normalize the conversation around CSEC in order for it to gain more public awareness?
2. Based on your time in the CSEC field, what would you consider to be the most challenging avenue in terms of trends such as social media, sugar baby websites, etc.
3. In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge in the CSEC field at the moment?
4. What are the most critical changes that we must make to face the future effectively?
5. What are common misconceptions people have? How can we combat these misconceptions and communicate more effectively?

Individual Questions for Stehpanie, Kayla and Jon (30+ mins)

1. **Stephanie, ,Kayla and Jon,** what is something you want the audience to understand about CSEC that they might not know? (all answer individually)
2. **Kayla,** a lot of your work revolves around trainings for local schools and communities on providing education on how to recognize and respond to victims of CSEC abuse, what is a "red flag" you feel gets overlooked the most?
3. **Stephanie,** research shows that traffickers will oftentimes target low income / high poverty communities for several reasons. Some reasons being lack of community resources and job oppourtunities, as well as high volumes of at-risk populations such as undocumented migrants, runaways, at-risk youth, and oppressed or marginalized groups. How important is it to rewrite this narrative within these communities that are seeing these high volumes of trafficking?
4. **Jon,** What is one piece of advice you would give to someone starting out in terms of community advocacy?

5. **Kayla,** can you walk us through what you may touch upon when training law enforcement, health care workers? What are some of the points you consider to be the most important?

6. **Stephanie,** sexual exploitation and trafficking comes in all different forms and is oftentimes hard to identify. How can community members be more aware of these red flags within the community. (What do we look for in schools versus in the neighborhoods?)

7. **Jon,** What are common misconceptions people have about CSEC in your opinion based on your line of work? How can we combat these misconceptions and communicate more effectively?

8. **Kayla,** what influence has social media had on CSEC?

9. **Stephanie,** due to COVID-19, what are we seeing more/less of in regards to CSEC and how it is effecting our communities?

10. **Jon,** What are some of the ways people from your field are making a difference in the community in regards to CSEC?

   Stephanie, Kayla, Jon - Any other thoughts you would like to share at this moment?

Jambord will be available throughout the session for audience to write down questions for panelists

Appendix B: Post-Event Survey

Education for Prevention: Understanding CSEC

Thank you so much for attending my workshop, Education for Prevention: Understanding CSEC. I am conducting this workshop for my Capstone Project as part of my Master's in Community Engagement at Merrimack College. Please take a moment to fill out these questions to help me in the research portion of my project. All answers will be confidential and will only be used for data collection purposes. I appreciate you taking the time to support my learning by helping me to gain insights on my workshop.

* Required

Email *

Your email

Overall, how would you rate this workshop? Use scale: 1 Poor, 2 Fair, 3 Good, 4 Excellent *

	1	2	3	4	
Poor	○	○	○	○	Excellent

Select one answer per row *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The presenter was engaging	○	○	○	○
The presenter was prepared	○	○	○	○
The information provided was useful	○	○	○	○
This workshop gave me insight that will help me better identify warning signs of CSEC within my community	○	○	○	○
I was able to learn something new from this workshop	○	○	○	○
The panel was helpful in exploring the topic further	○	○	○	○
The discussions were helpful to understanding the content	○	○	○	○

Because of this workshop, I am able to... *

	Unlikely	Likely	Very Likely	I already do this	Not Sure
Identify warning signs of CSEC	○	○	○	○	○
Provide resources to potential victims of CSEC	○	○	○	○	○
Speak out when I suspect someone in my community has become a victim of CSEC	○	○	○	○	○
Use my voice to continue the conversation around CSEC	○	○	○	○	○

What did you enjoy most about this workshop? *

Your answer

What is one element of the workshop you would like to see improved? *

Your answer

Would you be interested in attending future workshops on this topic? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

Would you be interested in getting involved with a community organization that is addressing this issue? *

○ Yes, I would like to be involved

○ Maybe / Not sure

○ No, I am not interested

Age *

Your answer

How would you identify your gender? *

○ Male

○ Female

○ Transgender Male

○ Transgender Female

○ Gender Varient/Non conforming

○ Prefer not to say

Do you work with children or have children of your own? *

☐ I work with children

☐ I have children of my own

☐ Neither

How did you find out about this workshop? *

○ Facebook

○ LinkedIn

○ Instagram

○ Word of Mouth

○ Eventbrite

○ Other: _____

Any other comments or thoughts you would like to share? *

Your answer

Thank you for your participation!
Your honest feedback is valued.

Submit