

Imperialist Consequences and Contemporary Crisis: A Comparative Analysis of Human Trafficking in Ukraine and Canada

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Abstract

Human trafficking is a highly intersectional problem as the victim pool, perpetration, and assumptions regarding these dynamics are largely intertwined with positions of power, race, gender, and other social factors. This paper will focus on power in the form of imperialism as a critical extenuating factor for trafficking. Imperialism is the aggressive enforcement of one nation onto another, which can include colonialism, systemic oppression of minorities, and increased victimization of those not part of an imperialistic force. This paper compares Canadian and Ukrainian students' perceptions of the hypothesized relationship between imperialism and human trafficking, specifically within these countries. By elucidating how power disparities aid in recruiting, transporting, and transferring individuals for exploitation translates to a better assessment of how to educate and prevent future trafficking cases. Interviews with research participants supplemented the literature, creating a consensus linking colonial/imperialistic forces and the heightened risk Indigenous populations face within Canada. Similarly, research underscored how the current war in Ukraine, a contemporary example of imperialistic invasion, has translated into an increase in human trafficking cases. These findings substantiate the correlation between imperialism and human trafficking. This connection should be further exhausted with a larger sample size to further illuminate human trafficking crime trends and the bias that denies justice to specific populations.

Introduction

In today's world, globalization translates to exploitation on a global scale. As the world becomes more connected, government policies, power relations, and economic affairs grow more complex. However, the ability or urgency to introspect about domestic strains is dissipating. Thus, extortion of individuals within and between nations is increasing. The regularity of marginalized groups having limited access to resources, opportunities, and privileges serves as a cruel reminder of how history continues to contaminate an advancing global community. The relationship between

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disparities and power discourses is especially relevant when analyzing target populations regarding justice violations, the roots of which lay in an imperialist legacy.

Imperialism refers to one nation's expansion of power over another through conquering territory, political systems, culture, or knowledge. A specific subtype of this domination is colonialism, where a penetrative and productive form of power seeks to segregate non-colonial populations and impose new political, social, religious, and cultural structures and values, usually by occupying a conquered area (Arneil, 2024). Hence, the cultural erasure that comes with colonial practices is considered a subtype of imperialism.

The impact of imperialism and its later form can be traced through the similarities between Ukraine's ongoing fight against Russian invasion and domestic conflicts between Indigenous peoples and assimilative institutions in Canada. The impacts of these forces emphasize how imperial narratives underscore many social injustices. Moreover, contemporary trends in human trafficking showcase how the ramifications of these imperial-based injustices manifest in economic, social, and judicial contexts.

This project used the United Nations' definition of human trafficking. Article 3 of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking (2000) defines human trafficking as follows:

(a) "*Trafficking in persons*" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, using the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (p. 2).

The enormity of this form of contemporary slavery pervades borders, as described in the *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery* (International Labour Organization 2022). The report estimated that in 2021, 49.6 million people worldwide were denied autonomy in this capacity. Of these people, 28 million were forced labourers, and 22 million were trapped in forced marriage (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Further research found that poverty, marginalization, financial exclusion, irregular migration status, low educational background, disability, and dysfunctional family environments put some individuals at high risk (Komenda, 2023).

Thus, it is imperative to acknowledge the existence of this crime and the prejudicial roots that reproduce these vulnerabilities within specific groups. By doing so, communities and countries can collectively work towards eradicating this egregious violation of human dignity and freedom, especially in today's tumultuous political climate.

The compounding legacy of imperialism in Canada and Ukraine accentuates how elite discourses influence perceptions of human trafficking and shape victimization. Thus, it provides a comparative

framework to clarify and contextualize the historical implications of contemporary justice. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to a suspected upsurge in human trafficking through the forced abduction of children and by placing Ukrainian civilians in vulnerable positions as displaced refugees (Batrymenko et al., 2023). Similarly, Canada has seen a growing threat of domestic trafficking despite advancing legislation (Hodgins et al., 2023). Canada has failed to effectively safeguard women and children, particularly those of Indigenous descent (Hodgins et al., 2023). Hence, it is imperative to examine the influence of imperialism in shaping the understanding and perpetration of human trafficking within the Ukrainian and Canadian context.

Literature Review

Human Trafficking and Imperialism in Ukraine

Russia's war in Ukraine and the resulting human trafficking crisis are not isolated events and are deeply rooted in Russia's long history of imperialism and its ongoing attempts to control and erase Ukrainian identity. Two hundred years of Russian colonialism over Ukraine exemplifies this. Under the guise of "friendly nations," Russia has been trying to eradicate Ukraine for years through actions such as the prohibition of the Ukrainian language, repression against cultural figures, imposition of serfdom, perpetration of the Holodomor, execution of the cultural elite, repeated attempts to distort history and geography, and cultural degradation (State et al., 2021; Ukraïner, 2022).

In the case of Russian imperialism, the colonies were adjacent to ethnically Russian territories. The transformation of the Russian Empire into the Soviet Union further obscured the colonial nature of the state, where Russians predominated (Thompson, 2008). The proximity of Russian colonies to ethnically Russian lands distorted the perception of the true nature of relations between the metropolis and the periphery in the minds of foreigners (Thompson, 2008).

Russia continues to employ assimilative tactics to this day. It captures Ukrainian borders, destroys historical and cultural monuments and museums, and forcibly deports thousands of Ukrainians, including children, to Russia, where they are forced to take Russian passports (The Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, 2024; U.S. Department of State, 2023). These are examples of how imperial powers seek to erase and reshape the cultures of subjugated peoples.

The impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine extends beyond territorial turmoil. Since the early 1990s, Ukraine has been a hotspot for human trafficking (IOM, 2011). Men, women, and children of all ages are forced into labour, begging, sexual abuse, and other forms of exploitation within the country's borders and abroad. However, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has exacerbated these rates (USAID, 2022). The invasion forced over 5.5 million Ukrainian people to leave the country by October 2022 (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2022). According to expert assessments, 90 percent of those who fled the country are women and children, with over half of Ukraine's children being internally displaced persons (UN Migration, 2023).

War and crisis exaggerate pre-existing risk factors for human trafficking, such as separation from other family members and socioeconomic vulnerability (UN Migration, 2023). Due to these factors, Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking. Across Europe, Ukrainian refugees were at risk of forced labour, including domestic work, childcare, and seasonal agriculture (UN Migration, 2023). The forced relocation of thousands of women and children meant an upsurge of potential targets for human traffickers. Since Russia's complete invasion in 2022, Russian forces forcibly transferred 19 546 children to the Russian Federation and other occupied territories (Office of the President of Ukraine, 2024). This includes orphans, children with disabilities, children who have been moved either with or without their parents, and children whose parents have agreed to let the occupying authorities transport them to "holiday" camps from which they did not return. This forced removal of children falls well within the parameters of the United Nations' definition of human trafficking.

Moreover, it is an explicit example of imperial power exploiting vulnerable populations. Additionally, Russia-led forces forcibly relocated thousands of Ukrainians to Russia through "filtration camps" in occupied Ukraine, where they were deprived of their documents and forced to take Russian passports. Reports also indicated forced labour in these camps, with detainees working on local projects, joining police forces, and repairing barracks (U.S. Department of State, 2023).

However, breaking down an accurate figure fully and accurately is difficult as little public access to such data exists. Thus, the sensationalizing of Ukrainian abductions replaces the reality of how official statistics are not available. Moreover, it undermines factors that put individuals, especially women and children, at high risk of being trafficked, such as widespread displacement, family separation, socio-economic vulnerability, and social upheaval (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022).

High rates of victimization are not the only way the war is aggravating human trafficking within Ukraine. The ongoing war on its territory makes it challenging to track cases accurately. The U.S. Department of State and the European Commission both report that there were 222 reports of human trafficking in 2021, 133 in 2022, and 76 in the first five months of 2023. The significant decrease from 2021 to 2023 is noteworthy, considering the presence of 8 million Ukrainian displaced persons. This raises the assumption that there might be issues within police intelligence regarding human trafficking prevention and supervision at state borders. One of the explanations could be that Ukrainian law enforcement agencies only operate in territories under Ukrainian government control, not in areas occupied by Russian forces. Therefore, this could limit access to accurate data. Additionally, the UNODC cites self-identification as a potential explanation for the massive underreporting of human trafficking cases, as it is often the primary source of victim identification (Komenda, 2023). This method is vulnerable to underreporting because it relies on the assumption that victims fully understand their victimization and that they can access resources to report their experience.

Human Trafficking and Imperialism in Canada

According to Statistics Canada (2023), Canadian law enforcement agencies received 3,996 reports of human trafficking incidents from 2012 to 2022. These cases represented 0.02% of overall crimes reported during the decade. In terms of prevalence and population, these numbers translate to an average annual rate of approximately 1.0 incidents per 10,000 individuals. However, it is essential to note that the majority of human trafficking is not reported to the police and is thus not included in police-reported statistics (Jacobson et al., 2023). Therefore, it is difficult to estimate precisely how many people are trafficked in Canada per year. Hence, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the number of unreported trafficking cases in Canada, as little research ventures into estimating this dark figure.

Despite the limitations of underreporting in police-reported statistics, specific populations are overrepresented within the victim pool. The vast majority of human trafficking victims are women and girls. Of these victims, about 50% are Indigenous, despite making up less than 5% of Canada's population (Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, 2020). This disproportionate targeting of Indigenous women is often overlooked in discussions about human trafficking.

A predominant reason that human trafficking discourses tend not to include Indigenous women is that they do not fit the stereotypical "victim" profile. Due to systemic bias, Indigenous women are often deviantized by justice institutions as they are assumed to be perpetrators and not victims. This harmful stereotype significantly impacts their ability to connect with authorities and the public's willingness to acknowledge how Indigenous populations are at heightened risk of violent crime (Government of Canada, 2021). According to Sikka (2010, p. 206), this implicit bias causes people to internalize narrow parameters to which victims of human trafficking are measured. Moreover, this misconception about legitimate victimhood tends to attribute the sex trafficking of Indigenous women to voluntary sex work or general promiscuity (Sethi, 2010; Sikka, 2010). This profile of an acceptable victim carries over to other forms of violence as well, as Indigenous women are overrepresented in nearly every violent crime in Canada (Olson-Pitawanakwat & Baskin, 2021). Since the recognition of human trafficking victims is based on the sensationalized "true victim," it is far less likely for Indigenous human trafficking victims to be recognized and assisted.

Other groups that are statistically more at risk for human trafficking are women and girls under the age of 24, those living in urban areas, racial, gender, and sexual minorities, and those who have been in the child welfare system. These are also all demographics where Indigenous children are overrepresented (Government of Canada, 2024; Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, 2020; Biard et al., 2020). Additionally, the socioeconomic disparities that disproportionately affect Indigenous communities result in higher rates of transience to lower-income areas, which further increases risk. Sexual abuse in residential schools, maltreatment common in the foster care system, and other forms of maltreatment create social pressures that perpetuate generational trauma within these communities (Olson-Pitawanakwat & Baskin, 2021). These disparities and traumas also illuminate the embedded nature of colonial history within Canada.

The chronic dehumanization and marginalization of Indigenous communities in Canada have made it easier for human traffickers to target Indigenous women without being detected by law enforcement agencies and the general public (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2014; Biard et al., 2020). Because the existing literature has identified that Indigenous people are more at risk due to factors that have been directly caused by disenfranchisement and institutionalized racism, there is an undeniable link between imperialism and the groups that are most at risk of being victimized by human trafficking.

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research design was used to assess perception regarding the relationship between imperialism and human trafficking in Ukraine and Canada. The research consisted of six semi-structured and recorded interviews. All participants were asked the same questions, which blended general inquiries about human trafficking and imperialism, nation-specific (to Ukraine and Canada) questions, and definition-based questions. This qualitative interview approach allowed researchers to evaluate what individuals understand about human trafficking, imperialism, and the relationship between them.

Data was collected by recording face-to-face semi-structured interviews in a private setting. All participants received core questions during their interview, but follow-up questions varied based on responses. The recorded data was transcribed manually or through the program Turboscribe, which was then double-checked to ensure accurate transcription. Transcriptions were then used for thematic analysis to find recurring themes and trends among interviewees regarding trafficking, imperialism, and their intersections.

Participants

The participant pool for this study consisted of 20 university students. Ten of these students pursued their degrees at Ukrainian Catholic University, while the other ten studied at MacEwan University in Canada. From this pool, 6 participants volunteered to interview for the project. Ultimately, the sample consisted of three Canadian and three Ukrainian citizens from this class.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and confirmed before the commencement of any interview. Participants were reminded of their right to refuse any question and that they could rescind their participation at any point without consequence. This right was highlighted in the consent form that every interviewee read before their interview. The form also explained how there was no direct benefit in partaking in the study but that their cooperation would help raise awareness and exposure to the violation of human rights and dignity, which is human trafficking. The form also addressed the potential risk, i.e. emotional, psychological, or spiritual risk, that partaking in a study on such a subject may pose. Hence, participants were given contact information for

psychological services at their respective universities if any concerns arose post-involvement of the study. Confidentiality was also protected by anonymizing all research results. All data was protected on a password-protected drive accessible only to the research team. Upon completion of the project, all data will be erased.

Results

Interviews found several prominent themes regarding the perception of human trafficking when considering this crime within the context of imperialism. These included the rates of where and in which trafficking occurs, who is most victimized, imperialist legacy on trafficking trends, motivations for perpetrators, and responses to human trafficking upsurges. Regardless of the participants' home country, questions regarding these elicited the strongest responses. They also yielded similar answers across all interviews, highlighting how human trafficking is understood as a categorical crime—one situated within imperial discourses.

Frequency

Findings showed that Canadian and Ukrainian participants agreed that human trafficking was likely common in Ukraine. Although none could address the frequency, they felt it did occur. One Ukrainian participant explained, “I do not have specific cases on my mind. I feel like that is common in Ukraine.” A Canadian student also explained why they thought that human trafficking was common in Ukraine. “Yeah, but I think there are Ukrainians being trafficked for sure. That is an issue in most countries. But I think Ukraine probably sees a lot more just due to its location as well.”

Opinions on the commonality of human trafficking in Canada were less consistent, with two participants expressing that they thought human trafficking was uncommon in Canada. A Ukrainian participant explained, “Within Canada, I don't think it is very popular because of the political system of Canada, which allows everything to be tracked, not everything, but a lot. It is not an early democracy where it is hard to track crimes or the processes that are going on”, while a Canadian participant stated that “...it's a lot more common in foreign countries. Like European countries. Because that's what I've heard.” All other participants agreed that it was either “more common than people would assume” or that it was “equally as common” as human trafficking in Ukraine.

Victimization

The participants from both groups unanimously cited women and girls as being likely victims of human traffickers in both Ukraine and Canada, specifically “young” women. Other groups identified across all participants were Indigenous, Asian, and Romani populations, orphans, immigrants, the economically disadvantaged, sexual and gender minorities, those with less education, and soldiers. When asked about Ukraine specifically, the most common answers were women and girls, children more broadly, and the economically disadvantaged. A Ukrainian participant explained that they thought those of lower socioeconomic status were more at risk and

that “..most Ukrainians have some factors. Low income, low resources in education or money.” Another participant explained how a difficult financial position could contribute to victimization. “First of all, it's financial issues because I think when you're financially deprived, you are more prone to a lot of stuff. To find money, because you need money for everything, this is a very important resource for travelling and settling down, so I think financial issues.” Notably, people who were attempting to leave Ukraine due to the war were stated to be at greater risk than Ukrainian participants. A Ukrainian student said, “I think it's probably people looking to maybe leave the country.” Reasons for increased risk faced by displaced persons included social isolation, financial vulnerability, and mental instability due to the trauma of the war. Research participants were highly cognizant of the impact of these factors on Ukrainian citizens' susceptibility, especially regarding women and children. One participant articulated this opportunism regarding women in the quote:

“Even in Poland... a lot of people were just standing on the train station and asking Ukrainian women if they wanted to work. And, of course, Ukrainian women want to work because they need to earn money.”

Other participants alluded to how Ukrainian culture and ethics are also being taken advantage of in this context. Ethics is another trend that underscored responses, especially regarding Ukrainian women ascribed as the sole protector, responsible for their and their children's safety.

“They face a lot of challenges and fear around their personal safety and safety for their children, as well as not having a place to live or not knowing who to trust or where to go when they're in need. general challenges about not knowing, and being in a new place, and being unfamiliar, and not having social supports that are there to help you.”

One participant referred to the intersectionality, or double jeopardized position of women without an income. They regarded how a woman is at particular risk of predators because of her income, but also because of her gender.

“I think the whole financial situation would affect your safety as well because you can't afford to stay in a nice safe apartment or you can't find a nice safe hotel...I think that would also impact women going into human trafficking. You're not protected. And sometimes you'd have to make decisions, and, you know, you don't have the grace to be certain who you're trusting, and that's where you can get lost, I think, and fall victim.

When asked about vulnerable groups in Canada, participants very frequently cited Indigenous Canadians as being more at risk for human trafficking. While some Ukrainian interviewees cited Canadian indigenous people as being an at-risk group, it was a unanimous consensus among Canadian interviewees. A Canadian participant explained how they believed that Indigenous women and children specifically are more at risk. “Indigenous people. Women, but I think Indigenous children are probably the most vulnerable of all.” Another Canadian interviewee said, “Definitely Indigenous people, like, in Canada. I just think that they're human trafficked probably in a different way.” This finding is consistent with the previously mentioned conclusion that in

terms of general familiarity, interviewees were more likely to perceive themselves as being more knowledgeable about these issues in their home countries.

Imperialistic Themes

A prevalent theme among participants, when asked about the influx of human trafficking, was imperialism and the exercise of power over a person. One participant stated, “I think that the feeling of power over a certain group of people can really influence the percentage of such a minority in trafficking.” Another explanation of how imperialism and oppression are linked is given in the quote, “Imperialism is logically tied up with oppression. It is not imperialism without oppression. It is about power or something, and that's why you have imperialism. You use power to get the culture over there.”

All interviewees reported that members of a minority population are at higher risk of being trafficked compared to those not a part of a minority group. One participant went on to say, “Right now, it is easier to traffic a minority who is oppressed than somebody who is on the same page and same level as [the trafficker].” Multiple participants specifically linked colonial and imperial powers to human trafficking. This recognition of the conditions imposed on a group by an imperialist power shows that those participants had a strong understanding of the specific mechanisms by which imperialism can contribute to human trafficking. One person stated, “Due to a lot of their circumstances, they are more vulnerable because of colonialism and imperialism; they don't have support systems, or they get involved with substance abuse more often. That puts them at risk for obviously meeting people who will take advantage of that.”

Ultimately, there was little variation between Canadian students and Ukrainian students on whether or not imperialism was a factor in human trafficking. While Ukrainians tended to apply the current war as an example of this, and Canadians cited the colonization and imperialistic policy towards Indigenous Canadians, there was a consensus on the general themes of imperialism.

Motivations for Human Trafficking

Financial gain, sexual gratification, and an opportunity to exercise power are the motivations that participants cited as motivators for human trafficking. Monetary gain was by far the most cited, followed by sexual gratification and exercises of power. A common theme that underscored interview answers was the assumption that financial gain was the lead motivator for human trafficking perpetrators.

“I would assume that money is probably the biggest one.”

“But I would say to gain from this financially, first of all, because that's the first one that comes to mind.”

Second to monetary gain, power was also listed as a strong motivator:

“I think there's that underlying sense of they want power over other people, and they want to feel important and that type of stuff.”

“To feel powerful in some deranged way, maybe it's about power and dynamics of that. When you have a group that you look down to, maybe you want to oppress them in a way.”

The inclusion of power dynamics was notable because this intersects with imperialism. The exercise of power over an oppressed individual is one of the key themes repeated in imperialistic processes.

Responses to Human Trafficking

Another theme that emerged is how participants believe human trafficking should be addressed to prevent it. This theme can be broken into subtypes like education and exposure. Regarding education, participants focused on education to reduce risk to the person by teaching individuals to look for threats. Or more broad community-level education so people are more likely to notice when others are or are at risk for trafficking.

In the case of broader community education, one participant stated the importance of education in reforming social services. “Education is big, and services need to reform themselves around more social services.” Another said, “I think more discourse talking about it...So I think that could be one way to ensure people are more aware. More aware of the signs.” Another participant elaborated on the importance of community-level recognition of human trafficking,

“There's a very large myth about human trafficking, that it's this scary person that comes and steals you off the street and throws you into the back of the van, and that's not usually what happens. More awareness especially in spaces like hospitals or airports and stuff like that, where they would see these victims and recognize signs about what it looks like.”

In the case of educating children and other potential victims, the answers focused on both prevention and help for people who had already been trafficked. One participant explained the importance of teaching children about human trafficking to reduce risk. “As future parents, just show or talk about the cases of that to our children, so everyone is aware of what's happening.” The importance of education on multiple levels was further explained by one participant who said:

“I think first and foremost is education...I truly believe the more you talk about that, the less cases there will be. Of course, there still will be, but you need to teach people on every level, maybe from the general public, not to trust strangers and maybe take everything with a grain of doubt, so I would say education is very important.”

Another participant elaborated on the importance of exposure as a preventative and combative mechanism:

“I think advertising...And people don't know about programs, even if they're a refugee in Canada...So if you're somebody on your own in a new country, it might be easier to get human trafficked, and you don't know about any support. So I think that obviously advertisement and then funding is a big problem in, I think, every sector of the government.”

Generally, all participants, regardless of their country, cited increased levels of education as a potential way for human trafficking problems to be addressed.

Discussion

The impact of this project on the individual scale is to inspire people to familiarize themselves with the impact of imperialism regarding human trafficking targeting. In other words, the project was a call to educate, increasing education being another critical theme among participants. Ideally, showcasing the current lack of knowledge regarding trafficking and its implications will inform and encourage policymakers to invest in prevention measures. By putting anti-trafficking ads on television, as one participant recommended, media platforms, billboards, and other channels will emphasize the issue's magnitude, how to stay safe, and how to identify victims. Further institutional impacts would include a better understanding of culturally sensitive interventions and supports. Judicial inclusion, social programming, and Indigenous sovereignty would be critical factors in informing and creating these changes, strengthening the community, and lowering the risks these populations face due to social disparities.

Furthermore, the literature and participants were highly cognizant of how women are the most targeted sex and that women of specific demographics, such as racial minorities, are at even higher risk. Hence, organizations in charge need to be more forthright in defining trafficking, as many participants were mostly or only familiar with the sex trade and what makes a victim. These measures will help combat this crime's global growth as policymakers and advocates can work towards addressing the root causes of trafficking and implementing targeted interventions to protect those most at risk. Thus, research such as this may help counter the unconventional rate at which select populations are denied justice due to the prevalence of dominant discourses. Therefore, further pursuing this topic has another global impact, challenging the current imperialistic social order that reinforces exclusionary attitudes and predisposes marginalized communities to civic dangers.

The systemic targeting of populations due to historically embedded vulnerabilities is exemplified by the predatory actions of Russia towards Ukraine and Canada towards Indigenous populations. However, to inform is to protect. Thus, shedding light on the relationship between imperialism and human trafficking is to combat trafficking rates and acknowledge and resist oppression.

Human rights are fundamental guidelines illustrating the basic protections all people are entitled to within private, local, and global institutions. Thus, the contravention of human rights through

human trafficking is a despicable example of inhumanity and obstructions of fundamental justice. Yet devastatingly, it is erupting as one of the most prolific and poignant examples of imperialist-based phenomena in contemporary times. Thus, research like this is important in garnering awareness and exposure. Both factors that research participants listed as highly important yet critically lacking regarding human trafficking in both Ukraine and Canada.

However, interestingly, the results of the interviews differed from the consensus of the literature review in that almost all interviewees mentioned minorities as being more at risk instead of focusing on mainstream definitions of what an “ideal victim” would be (Sikka, 2010). The recognition that racialized minorities are more likely to be targeted shows that these participants have a greater level of awareness regarding groups that are more at risk and the imperialistic factors that contribute to it.

Importance of Education in the Prevention of Human Trafficking

The existing literature also stresses the importance of education in the issue of preventing and treating human trafficking. The quiet nature of the crime necessitates government initiatives, civil society engagement, media coverage, and private sector involvement to teach and raise awareness about human trafficking (UNODC, 2011). Educating individuals, especially vulnerable groups, about the risks and signs of human trafficking can significantly help them avoid dangerous situations.

Studies have highlighted the power of preventative education in that many irregular migrants decide to journey to Europe with limited or biased information. Misinformation and a lack of awareness can hamper safe migration decisions and increase the risk of migrants encountering vulnerable situations (IOM, 2019). Seventy-three percent of Canadians are concerned that human trafficking is a significant issue in Canada, but about three-in-four Canadians (77%) do not feel they can recognize the signs of human trafficking. More than half (57%) of respondents either do not believe or are unaware that human trafficking is happening in their community (The Canadian Centre To End Human Trafficking, 2021). Conversely, the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians (92%) said they were aware of trafficking for sexual exploitation, and 82% were conscious of the fact that Ukrainians are being trapped in forced labour (IOM, 2011). However, almost 80% of this group would agree to illegal employment, and 13% of the poll reported they were ready to work for any employer offering an attractive wage (IOM, 2011). Further, 11% would accept withholding of their salaries, a method regularly used by traffickers to coerce migrants into exploitation (IOM, 2011). The complexity of Ukrainian responses to this poll showcases how awareness does not overrule necessity. Thus, measures must be taken to protect citizens' physical autonomy and financial freedom to inhibit this predatory trade.

Moreover, during research interviews, respondents consistently mentioned that low resources in education are one of the contributing factors to the widespread occurrence of human trafficking. They also showed an eagerness to learn about such tragedy and how trafficking manifests within oppressed communities. This discrepancy underscores the importance of further research and calls attention to the educational dimension of anti-trafficking efforts. Education not only

empowers individuals to recognize and resist trafficking but also equips communities with the knowledge and resources needed to address this complex issue effectively.

Limitations

Limitations of Current Literature

Relevant research shows a notable gap regarding education as a crucial tool in combating human trafficking. While existing research highlighted various aspects of human trafficking, such as its prevalence, causes, and consequences, there was insufficient focus on the role of education in prevention and intervention strategies.

Limitations of Study

Firstly, the sample size was small (n=6) and thus cannot be assumed to be representative of a large population. Second, all interviewed people had some course experience in sociology and were, therefore, more likely to be aware of social inequality and related issues. Third, the interviews were done close to the end of a cultural learning course where students interacted with and exchanged ideas with students from Ukraine or Canada. Some people cited this class as improving their knowledge of issues not in their home countries. The results of the interviews must be contextualized as being from a small sample size of a group with different educational backgrounds, so broad generalizations based on these results should not be made. However, they do suggest that being educated on social issues such as human trafficking may make a person more likely to understand how imperialism and other power imbalances contribute to social issues. However, a larger study with larger sample sizes from multiple populations would be required to draw a more representative conclusion.

Conclusion

The findings emphasized how the relationship between disparities in victimization and power discourses can be attributed to the severe legacies of imperialism. This is palpable when analyzing and comparing the stronghold that past imperialist politics have on the present day, particularly regarding Canada's suppressed history of Indigenous relations and Ukraine's fight against Russia's active imperialist imposition. The research also emphasized how ignorance of these atrocities committed within and across nations is a dangerous privilege. It is one that must be combatted on the individual, societal, and global scale, as it is a crime that implicates individuals and communities worldwide.

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