Combatting Sexual Trafficking: A Global Issue and its Root Cause

Tiffany Helfrich

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology
Combatting Sexual Trafficking: A Global Issue and its Root Cause

Although a light has been shed on the vast tragedy that is anticipated to surpass drug smuggling financially, in the next several years, the dent attributed to fighting human trafficking is currently not large enough, and the kidnapping and forced prostitution of predominately very young girls and women is increasing. For the first time in history, in 2011, the United States appeared on the Trafficking in Persons Report, which lists countries where trafficking is occurring based on severity. As Guinn (2006) quoted M. Cherif Bassiouni, President of the Human Rights Law Institute of DePaul University College of Law, “International sex trafficking in women and children is probably one of the worst human rights violations of our time.” Human trafficking is not only a hideous and tragic event occurring worldwide, but is also occurring within our own borders and in our domestic cities. Total annual profits from this “industry” equal $32 billion dollars, in addition to the porn industry, which profits from destroying lives at the amount of $12 billion dollars annually. It is estimated that anywhere from four to twenty-seven million people are modern-day slaves, according to the U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report, in 2007. Porn addictions feed the demand for human trafficking, so together the destruction of lives, mainly those of women and girls, can never be fully counted, but the people who lead such industries are making profits at a staggering amount of $44 billion dollars a year. Lehti and Aromaa (2006), estimate that the crime of human trafficking is 60-80% domestic, and occurs in rural areas, and in large cities; it occurs within financially depressed areas and in affluent geographic areas. The regulation of human trafficking often times ties to the regulation of prostitution, as traffickers use girls for prostitution purposes against their will, by using physical threat, coercion, debt bondage threat, and through psychological coercion. In fact, 70-90% of trafficking of women and children in Europe and Asia is directly related to prostitution and other such exploitation also including pornography industry exploitation, according to Lehti and Aromaa (2006). Even more staggering, is UNICEF's report that worldwide, one million children are entering the sex trade every year and that thirty million children have been trafficked and exploited over the past thirty years, according to Lederer (2010). The human trafficking Hub of Demand map, produced by Global Centurion, in Figure I, identifies the most notable
areas where trafficking occurs.

**Mapping Sex Trafficking: Hubs of Demand**

*Permission to reprint expressly given by Laura J. Lederer, J.D., President-GlobalCenturion.org

Figure I. Mapping sex trafficking globally: The largest hubs of demand

Pornography’s Links to Sexual Trafficking

One aspect that is not addressed properly or even at all, by most human trafficking organizations is that pornography addictions drive the demand for human trafficking and also that the pornography problem must be tackled simultaneously in order to see any progress made in combating human trafficking, as shown in Figure II (Demand for Pornography linked to trafficking supply):
Human trafficking cannot be fully understood until the linkage of prostitution and pornography usage are known and addressed. This is key in understanding why human trafficking has become such a huge societal issue. There has to be a root cause evaluation to assess why the prostitution of women exists, which means that there has to be a “demand” and a “buyer.” If there was no demand or a buyer, human trafficking “services” would not be purchased. Analysis to assess why a demand for trafficked girls and women exists has to occur to understand the whole picture.

Statistics tell us that 70% of men, and 50% of Christian men currently are addicted to pornography, gathered by research done by the University of Sydney’s Graduate Program in Sexual Health, and Christianity Today. This number keeps growing, as the free availability of pornography is more accessible via the Internet. A clear message of violence and degradation towards women is seen in pornography. When a viewer sees this type of message continually as an addict, they start to act upon what they are seeing, often times re-performing what they see in such media, in their own lives. One example of violence against women in a porn film can be seen in the 1975 film, Snuff. This was a highly publicized movie, and shows the actual murder and dismemberment of a young woman, in a pornographic film, in order to excite the sexual appetite of their pornography addicted audience, where death rather than just sex is an aphrodisiac. This, of course, brought curiosity to markets and commercialized “snuff” films had their start, as Lederer (1980) explains. The links of pornography usage to sex trafficking is
known by pimps or traffickers who use trafficked girls in pornography also, which Guinn (2006), stated as evidence provided by Catharine MacKinnon, a feminist. These links are not theoretical, but rather, are fact and more and more research continues to be done on this connection, with more evidence continually being discovered. A conference to address the connection between pornography, prostitution, and trafficking was organized by Captive Daughters and the International Human Rights Law Institute in 2003, to address the connection formally, with the goal of engaging those who would generally create the demand for trafficking, the pornography and sex user.

**Brain Science of Pornography**

In brain scan studies, it has been discovered, that a pornography addiction is harder to break than a cocaine addiction. As Guinn (2006) states in relation to previous studies, research shows that extended exposure to violent pornography has a direct correlation to sexually aggressive behavior and attitudes in males. Also seen through brain chemistry studies on users who view pornography, is the amount of dopamine and adrenaline releases in those users brains, which are neurotransmitters, and the excessive release of such transmitters that act as internal drugs, can lead to a “resetting” of the internal thermostat, producing a new acceptable normality. This is when acting out occurs by the addict as they must get a new “high” in order to receive increased dopamine levels just to feel normal. Therefore, more violent, and aggressive material or actions must occur for the addict to combat the desensitization of what used to provide an internal chemical high. Progressively, the user moves to more violent, more aggressive, and sadistic images, and images of pornography, and ultimately acts out often times re-creating in real life, what they have viewed. Such arousing images and video actually alters brain chemistry, which was reported to Congress in 2004. In fact, Congress was asked to fund studies on pornography addiction, due to the research results that were discovered within such brain chemistry studies. Named one of the Best Doctors in America, Dr. Donald J. Hilton, a neurosurgeon, has covered many such brain chemistry findings based on pornography addictions with his years of research. In fact, he stated that, “It is imperative that we treat pornography and sexual addiction with the respect accorded any drug addiction, for, as we shall see that is precisely what it is.”
**Pornography As Sex Trafficking**

There are other clear links which tie pornography to human trafficking, in that many types of pornography are actually sexual trafficking, by matching the formal definition of trafficking, where force, fraud, and coercion are used to ensure that a subject performs pornographic acts, as stated by Lederer (2010). If such victims try to leave this type of situation, their lives or the lives of family members are often threatened, so as to keep the subject performing pornographic acts. It has also been discovered that pornographers and pornography addicts travel to other countries, for the sole reason to illicit sexual conduct with minors. They then will perhaps record the interactions with minors and then use the material for pornographic distribution. According to Lederer (2010), in her remarks at the United States Capitol briefing, sponsored by Porn Harms, in January 2010, a fifty-one year old American teacher was accused of sexually abusing a twelve year old Cambodian girl. Police found drugs, sex toys, and numerous pornographic videos of minors in his possession when he was arrested. This is an example which provides evidence that those with pornography addictions, are then becoming desensitized by their pornography usage, and traveling abroad to then act out what they have been viewing on minors aligning with what Dr. Donald J. Hilton describes in the progression of neurotransmitters, and how such dopamine highs lead to a desensitization in just viewing, which then leads to acting out in order to obtain an even higher increase in adrenaline. According to Finkelhor and Mitchell (2005), in an analysis of undercover police investigations of online sex predators, who were arrested for crimes, they found that 41% of the offenders possessed child pornography, and would often arrange to meet underage youth for sexual encounters, while bringing sex related items. They not only victimized children but pornography also played a role in their acting out and addiction. Pornography is continuously used by traffickers themselves, and they also use pornography as a grooming tool, for trafficked individuals to watch, as a training mechanism for minors and women to know what is to be done with customers who are forced upon them. This grooming prepares the woman or child for what to expect when with a customer. The European Online Grooming Project, is one such research project that studies sexual offenders who have used pornography to groom their victims in this manner. When we look at the violent and aggressive nature of pornography, there is a societal
desensitization that exists about these materials, especially in the United States, and often the argument exists that banning this type of material would be considered censorship, or would be a violation of First Amendment rights, which is a false argument due to the Supreme Court officially stating that obscene materials are not protected by the First Amendment in Miller v. California in 1973, but it still allows for a growing, false belief that the sexualization of women and pornography is acceptable in Western society. Therefore, this growing societal belief can be seen in such traffickers who also view pornography as a tool to assist them with their trafficking crimes. Dr. Mary Anne Layden (2010) refers to this growing societal norm as “permission giving beliefs.” More research is needed in the direct links between pornography and sexual trafficking, and it is imperative that further more, in-depth research is conducted, so that those who have paid the ultimate price of their freedom, purity, and dignity, may share their stories so they can be used to provide such overwhelming evidence and data that will confirm what is already known, but that will also produce even further overwhelming and indisputable evidence that pornography is at the root of sexual trafficking. In order to combat human trafficking, the connections must be understood and equal effort put into combating the pornography industry also, which would ultimately decrease the demand for trafficking.

**Failure to Enforce Obscenity Laws Leads to Increased Trafficking**

The reason why federal law enforcement agencies fail to prosecute adult pornography related cases, is that they state they don't have the time or resources, nor is there a sense of urgency to pursue such cases. Along with this complacency in prosecuting, the argument exists that to attack pornography companies is an attack on the First Amendment, but this is an invalid argument as previously noted, and one that the anti-pornography constituency has been educating the public more aggressively on, due to the fact that the Miller v. California case (1973), stated that obscene materials are not protected by the First Amendment. This argument is in essence, invalid. According to Krause (2008), who interviewed Pat Trueman, former Chief of the Child Exploitation Division of the Department of Justice, and who is also a friend of mine, back in the 1980's and 1990's Department of Justice leadership was committed to making obscenity prosecutions a priority, especially when they heard complaints that enough resources
were not being allocated to tackle the problem. Trueman stated, “We deputized local law enforcement and split the forfeiture with them. There are ways to motivate people.” After the 1990's and during the Clinton Administration, obscenity prosecutions came to a dead halt, even though state and federal obscenity laws existed that prohibited the distribution of obscene materials. A question one may ask would be what laws currently exist that prohibit the distribution of obscene materials like pornography on the Internet? The late United States Representative, Henry Hyde, had Title 18 of the U.S. Code, section 1465, amended to make it clear that “interactive computer services” were included in the prohibited list of obscene materials in which a person could be prosecuted, fined, and imprisoned for under the federal law, so as to make sure that the Internet was covered in the federal obscenity laws. When obscenity prosecutions came to a halt in the 1990's during the Clinton Administration, years later, efforts were made to re-energize prosecutions in 2005, when Senator Sam Brownback pushed Attorney General Gonzales to take a hard stand against Internet obscenity, but even after 2005, there have been less than ten prosecutions related to obscenity and the distribution of obscene materials. So, it can be seen that the pornography industry has been allowed to grow and increase in size for years, and has had a free ride in order to do so. Currently, according to Ropelato (2011) of the Internet Filter Review (IFR), its profits exceed that of Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo, Apple and Netflix combined.

Human Trafficking – A Global and Domestic Issue

Human trafficking is a global societal issue, as the statistics show. In South Africa, street children are forced into exploitation in Africa's major cities, with the issue being survival sex. Sex in return for food, water, clothing, and the necessities that a child may need. Children are often times prostituted by family members or gangs. There is a term that is used in Cape Town, South Africa, for the sexual exploitation of young school girls by taxi drivers, as they are referred to as “taxi queens.” These taxi drivers sexual exploit these young girls according to Snell (2003). According to the U.S. Department of State, every year, one million children are exploited by the global sex trade. Eighty percent of trafficking victims are women and girls. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reports that 161 countries have been affected by
human trafficking, contributing to the $32 billion dollars that is generated annually. The breakdown of this massive number shows us that $15.5 billion dollars is generated in industrialized countries, $9.7 billion dollars in Asia, and an average forced laborer can make anywhere from $13,000-$67,200 dollars from forced sex trafficking annually, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO). It is estimated that anywhere from 14,500-17,500 people are trafficked into the United States annually by the government's TIP (Trafficking In Persons) reports. In 2010, The United States appeared on the Trafficking in Persons report for the very first time in history, providing domestic statistics that exist to show that this is not just happening outside of U.S. borders, but it is also a domestic issue now. According to Estes and Weiner (2001), 244,000 American children are estimated to be at risk of being involved in sexual exploitation. Prostitution and human trafficking are often connected to organized crime and gangs, and even local law enforcement especially in Asian countries are often bribed by organized crime leaders and are paid off to stay quiet and protect brothels as Aaron Cohen experienced in his years traveling to Asia to free young teenage girls who were being held captive in brothels. Many times local law enforcement, who were supposed to be law abiding, knew about the brothels and yet they allowed them to operate. According to Johnson (2007), Japan's Parliament has criminalized conduct including child prostitution, and child pornography, sexual slavery, loitering with intent to solicit sex, and the distribution of materials that are classified as “adult entertainment,” due to Japan's largest crime syndicate, the Yamaguchi-gumi, which consists of over 43,000 gangsters, that often engages in such crimes connected to trafficking. Often times, human trafficking victims are controlled by drug habits that a pimp may use to control the victim, and once hooked on drugs, the victim forms an addiction, which is used as a mechanism by human traffickers to keep the women in brothels and working because of a drug dependency, which can also be seen as a tactic that is used within the pornography industry as described by Lubben (2010).

What must also be addressed is the change in a cultural norms that has occurred in the past thirty years, since the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography report was released, changes in attitudes based on what is acceptable in society today has shifted substantially. In fact, according to Sharp and Joslyn (2001), more favorable views on pornography are associated with youth, those with higher levels of education and income, those with less religiosity, and
those who lean more toward political liberalism. As males are generally the offender involving pornography addictions and “customers” of trafficked victims, any negative attitudes towards pornography tends to be reduced, in what could be due to self-protective motives social psychologists believe. Women are generally more likely to perceive pornography in a negative light according to Sharp and Joslyn (2001). These themes have been recognized by those who are working to fight pornography also.

Groups that can do the most rescuing of human trafficking victims are often times independent agents, that have military backgrounds and surveillance skills and relationships with government officials internationally, who could plan tactical missions to retrieve girls who cannot escape brothels, but often times they must rely on self-funding mechanisms such as donations, or personal funding, which is very difficult. Le Roux (2010) suggested, that there are four different ways that faith based organizations can get involved in combating pornography, one being, that they can practically empower individuals and parents. This is key in mobilizing any group, through grassroots efforts. There are some who are of the opinion that such groups act as the “morality police” and wish to enforce their beliefs and morals onto the greater population, but even if the moral police argument was removed, we are still left with the facts that pornography is harmful to individuals, families, and contributes to human trafficking, and has become a mental health and safety issue.

Law enforcement does not have the resources to tackle such a massive problem using the proper level of efficiency that needs to be instituted, and with limited funding of non-profits and NGOs, this prevents them from fully tackling human trafficking to the extent needed. In order to effectively start grassroots efforts to tackle trafficking, efforts must also be focused on attacking the root of the problem which would address the role that pornography plays in the demand for trafficking. Until more resources are focused on the demand side of trafficking, women and girls will continue to live in chains who live lives of great despair, in a situation they rarely can be freed from, without external intervention. Susan B. Anthony best described the future these young girls and women have if human trafficking is not fought when she stated, “The fact is, women are in chains, and their servitude is all the more debasing because they do not realize it.
O to compel them to see and feel and to give them courage and the conscience to speak and act for their own freedom, though they face the scorn and contempt of all the world for doing it.”
References


As in-text citation (Hub of Demand)


As in-text citation (Estes and Weiner, 2001)


As in-text citation: (Guinn, 2006).


As in-text citation: (Lubben, 2010)


U.S. Department of Justice, Health and Human Services, Department of Labor, Department of State, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and USAID. *Assessment of U.S.*
Government Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Retrieved from

http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46606.htm

http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/82902.pdf