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Social Determinants of Health with Sex Trafficking Survivors in the United States

John J. S. Harrichand, PhD; Claudia G. Interiano-Shiverdecker, PhD; Devon E. Romero, PhD, Priscilla R. Prasath, PhD, & Kendra Smith, MS



UTSA

The University of Texas at San Antonio
Department of Counseling
College of Education and Human Development

Social Determinants of Health & Sex Trafficking

Sex Trafficking in the United States

- Sex Trafficking (ST) is “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” or “in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age.”
(Pub. L. No. 106-386, § 103)
- ST continues to be a significant challenge globally, and although statistics exist on prevalence, they are usually unreliable due to fear of personal harm and/or legal consequences.
(Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021)

Social Determinants of Health

- Social determinants of Health (SDOH) are “non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness. These circumstances include:
 - Economic Stability and Socioeconomic Status
 - Education
 - Neighborhood and Physical Environment
 - Social and Community Context
 - Health and Health Care

(WHO, 2024)

Social Determinants of Health & Sex Trafficking

- SDOH play a crucial role in both the mitigation and facilitation of ST.
 - Social determinants such as poverty, lack of education, gender inequality, unstable housing, and insufficient legal protections increase vulnerability.
 - Improving social determinants (e.g., providing better economic stability, education, supportive community network) has the potential to reduce risk.

(Perry & McEwing, 2013)

Current Study

- Our research team sought to better understand and meet the mental health needs of sex trafficked survivors by examining the impact of SDOH using Charmaz’s (2014) grounded theory methodology.
- This research poster presents our findings on the impact of SDOH on sex-trafficked survivors and provides recommendations for counselors who serve this marginalized community.

Methods and Participants

- Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014)
- 10 Survivors of Sex Trafficking and 10 Counselors

Survivors
• Women from 30 – 42 years of age
• Mostly white ($n = 8$), with 1 American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 1 Black woman.

Counselors
• Mostly female ($n = 9$) ranging in ages from 27 to 61 years.
• Mostly identified as White ($n = 7$), with 2 Hispanic, and 1 Asian counselor.

Social Determinants of Health Model for Survivors of Sex Trafficking



Implications for the Counseling Profession

- Develop awareness, knowledge, and interventions to address Individual Factors that impact vulnerability to and thriving after sex trafficking.
- A significant component of the SDOH model is that it highlights social and community factors that impact vulnerability to and thriving after sex trafficking.
- Findings bring attention to the need for advocacy, the value of counselors serving as a resource, and helping survivors access the SDOH.
- Ensure counselors and researchers working with survivors approach training from a systemic lens that includes SDOH.

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For information on
Themes and Verbatims

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