Title page

Human trafficking in Los Angeles

Introduction

Human trafficking remains one of crucial issues in Los Angeles, California. LA is recognized as a major hub for commercial sexual exploitation of teenage girls and children. The victims of trafficking include both local and foreigners. Irrespective of the policies and law enforcement the city has been unable to control such crimes. This crime has adverse impacts on the victims including children. Psychological and physical abuse involves long-term consequences including trauma, psychological distress, fears, and mental instability. The victims of human trafficking experience negative impacts throughout their lives. It is thus crucial to minimize the risks of such crime by adopting strict policies and law enforcement strategies. The present topic is of extreme importance for raising awareness about human trafficking and adoption of prevention strategies.

Problem statement

Common types of human trafficking include; forced labor, sexual servitude, commercial sex, prostitution, and sex tourism. In all forms, the victims are exploited by enforcing sex that is illegal and socially abhorrent. Hundreds of children are exploited for commercial sex in Los Angeles in the international commercial sex trade. Although child sex trade is prohibited by U.S law and UN TIP protocol it is still prevalent in many countries of the world. Trafficking Victims Protection Act TVPA (2000) defines sex trafficking as forcing a person for commercial sex, forced labor and servitude. Duress or coercion is used for engaging a child or girl in sex. It also states that a child sex causes physical and psychological harm. The victims are children and girls who have not reached their eighteenth year of age.

Statistics on human trafficking

Human trafficking has become a serious problem because the cases continue to increase each year. In California, sex trafficking increased by 842 percent in 2018. In the state, 8,524 cases were reported in 2018 with 26,557 calls per year. The statistics depict that the number reached to 8.759 in 2017 compared to previous year's 7,737. The facts further reveal that the victims of sex trafficking include 3,126 minor and 1,956 adults. The remaining 5,533 cases are unidentified. Highest cases of human trafficking are reported in California (1,304) compared to other states of America (Bedard, 2018). California is identified as the worst state for human trafficking. Several factors encourage trafficking in its cities including Los Angeles. The evidence suggests that LA contain large immigrant population because the economy of the country is booming. California is ranked as the tenth largest in the world for prevalence of high human trafficking. Facts indicate that average sex trafficker makes $49,000 per victim throughout the course of imprisonment. LA is not only facing the problem of child sex trafficking but also face forced labor and involuntary servitude. One of the central factors that provide increased opportunities for trafficking is the California-Mexico border. It is thus convenient for the traffickers to bring victims from Mexico for commercial sex and trade (Romero, 2018).

The report from the LA police department states that minors and young women are forced for the sex trade. Duress, fear, and coercion are common tactics used by the traffickers for forcing sex. This is totally against the rights of victims because they are exploited. Facts reveal that the total cases of sex trafficking that faced federal charges were 631 in 2017. In total 55 human trafficking cases were presented in court. Among these cases 15 percent involved forced labor, and 85 percent involved sex trafficking. This indicates that these are two common human trafficking crimes faced by Los Angeles, California.

The findings reveal that the actions taken by the California state to control human trafficking are inadequate because the number has been increasing each year. The task force was established in 2014 with the aim of eliminating human trafficking. The cases filed against defendants in 2017 were only 11 that were related to sex trafficking. Other findings indicate that 60 were the victims of sex traffic and seven were victims of labor trafficking. The police accept that fewer cases of human trafficking are prosecuted than reported. This exhibits the flaws of law enforcement procedures and policy measures.

Some of the measures taken by California State for targeting human trafficking include; awareness programs, campaigns, protecting the people who face high risks of trafficking. The policies must emphasize on addressing the issues of combating against human trafficking. Awareness programs include interactive lessons and protector guidance for the people of the community (Bedard, 2018).

Providing training to the transit employees and security staff can be an effective tool for controlling trafficking. The awareness videos of 20 minutes provide information on the precautionary measures that the staff requires to take. The limitations of law enforcement in identifying and intervening the cases of sex trafficking depict the need for adopting efficient methods. Transit and hotel staff is in the positions of identifying cases of trafficking and inform the respective agencies. Providing adequate knowledge and training would allow them to take immediate action by detecting trafficking. Awareness program can include interactive sessions that provide training to the security and transit staff (Romero, 2018).

Trafficking awareness program

 The strategies for minimizing the risks of human trafficking also emphasize on awareness campaigns that educate the students about sex trafficking. The campaigns will focus on protecting them from becoming the victims of this crime. Video-based lessons will familiarize them regarding trafficking and how adolescents or children might become victims. Young children will be encouraged to share their concerns with parents, teachers, and friends. Teenage girls will be educated on taking steps essential for eliminating the risks of their victimization such as by observing suspicious activity and reporting to the school administration immediately. Small and large group presentations are also effective tools for raising awareness on the issue. Participant worksheet and videos are also useful for determining the risks and taking appropriate measures (Shrestha, Karki, Suwal, & Copenhaver, 2015).

The awareness program will cover three main areas including; past events and incidents of trafficking, its demand and supply and action for prevention. The cases on trafficking will be shared through videos and projectors that will provide information on the seriousness of the crime. Lessons on supply and demand will explain how the networks are working in LA and how students or children are becoming victims of it. The final section will provide guidance on the actions that a child or adolescent can take for receiving help. They will be educated to make an emergency call when they witness the risks. Making a call to National Human Trafficking resource will increase the chances of help. Even in the case of witnessing someone else in danger, the student can inform the police. The videos will encourage children and young girls to support others in situations that are challenging (Bedard, 2018).

The program will involve police, educators and school administration. The awareness campaigns will invite parents of children so they could also learn the strategies of preventing trafficking. The program will be funded by NGO's and the community. The people of the LA will make financial contributions to supporting the trafficking awareness program. The educators will take the role of instructors in the awareness programs for encouraging students to fight against trafficking.

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