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The Investigation of Human Trafficking in North Carolina: An Analysis of Prevention Education

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PUBLIC POLICY

Abbreviations.....	3
Statement of Independence.....	4
About WomenNC.....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
Introduction.....	7
Human Trafficking Operations.....	9
Types of Human Trafficking: Sex Trafficking and Forced Labor.....	9
Behavioral Indicators of Traffickers.....	9
Trafficking Operations, Identification, and Law Enforcement Challenges.....	10
Trafficking in Agriculture and Military Sectors.....	10
Risk Factors.....	12
Effects.....	12
Physical.....	13
Mental/Trauma.....	14
Economic.....	15
Federal & State Statutes.....	17
Federal Statutes.....	17
Human Trafficking.....	17
Violence Prevention Education in Schools.....	18
North Carolina State Statutes.....	18
Human Trafficking.....	18
Violence Prevention Education in Schools.....	19
Our Recommendation: Prevention Education Model.....	20
Four-Pillars of Prevention Education.....	20
Challenges with Prevention Education.....	24
Current NC Prevention Awareness.....	28
Conclusion.....	30
Appendix A: About The Authors.....	30
Appendix B: Interview Summary.....	33
Methodology.....	33
Key Findings.....	33
Survey Questions.....	34
Interviewees.....	36
Appendix C: Quantitative Data Visualizations.....	37
Appendix D: References.....	38

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
ACE	Adverse Childhood Experience
CEDAW	Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CMHTTF	Charlotte Metro Human Trafficking Task Force
CPTSD	Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
CTDC	Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative
DOA	Department of Administration
DOE	Department of Education
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOJ	Department of Justice
FCSE	Family and Consumer Sciences Education
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
ILO	International Labor Organization
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
NC	North Carolina
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NHTH	National Human Trafficking Hotline
NHTTTAC	National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center
NCCAHT	North Carolina Coalition Against Human Trafficking
NCCASA	North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
TAY	Transition-aged Youth

Statement of Independence

The authors did not receive financial support from any firm or person for this article or from any firm or person with a financial or political interest in this article. They are currently not an officer, director, or board member of any organization with an interest in this article.

About WomenNC

Women NC is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that trains university and college students in public policy research, formulation, and advocacy. Their mission is to advance gender equality through proactive discussions with community leaders, advocates, and stakeholders. Beyond this, Women NC strives to inform and encourage cities and municipalities to take steps toward gender equality by becoming sites of gender inclusivity in Women NC's Equal Cities campaign (CEDAW) (Women NC, 2023). CEDAW engages in community education from scholars on topics such as sexual assault, human trafficking, voting access, and the Equal Rights Amendment. Additionally, this organization operates with a network of partners such as RTI International's Global Gender Center and a plethora of other organizations, departments, units, and schools in North Carolina to continue their fight toward gender equity and advocacy (Women NC, 2023).

Executive Summary

This report analyzes the major causes of human trafficking in North Carolina (NC) and investigates the effectiveness of state-mandated prevention education programs in efforts to combat human trafficking within the state.

WomenNC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to gender equality in NC. Through collaborative public policy research, formulation, and advocacy with university and college students, WomenNC advances gender equality and maintains proactive discussions with community leaders, advocates, and stakeholders. In an effort to strengthen gender equality in the state, WomenNC partnered with the University of North Carolina's Public Policy Department to engage university students in intensive research surrounding gendered issues. This year, UNC Public Policy students engaged in research regarding human trafficking in NC.

Human trafficking is said to be a form of modern-day slavery. With a reported annual profit of over \$150 billion and 25 million victims, human trafficking has become the second-largest criminal industry in the world (DHS, 2021). NC is ranked ninth in the United States for human trafficking. The prevalence of highways, military populations, and agriculture contribute to the instances of sex and labor trafficking in NC (DOA, 2023).

Students in grades K-12 are among the highest-risk populations targeted by human traffickers as victims (Ellery, 2019). To address all facets of the issue, educational communities, and educators must remain actively dedicated to making schools a haven, with proactive efforts to combat the exploitation of youth (Ellery, 2019). One way this can be done is through prevention education efforts within schools.

This report engages in the discourse surrounding prevention education policy efforts and human trafficking. Through intensive quantitative research, we identified the major risk factors and causes of human trafficking in NC. Furthermore, through a series of interviews with relevant stakeholders in human trafficking, we identified the major challenges associated with a state-mandated prevention education program and the necessary components that such a model requires.

There were several risk factors associated with human trafficking in NC. Existing literature suggests that certain populations are more vulnerable to trafficking than others. Using research, we created a Risk Index Map to display the risk status of NC counties ([Appendix C](#)).

Our stakeholder interviews informed prevention education efforts as a policy solution. Stakeholders helped us to identify “four pillars” and “four challenges” of a state-mandated

prevention education model. These findings are critical to the implementation of an effective, thorough, and inclusive prevention education state model.

In combination, the NC Risk Index Map, the “four pillars”, and the “four challenges” can and should be analyzed to produce a holistic prevention education program. Community leaders, advocates, and stakeholders are encouraged to reference the NC Risk Index Map to identify NC communities with a heightened risk of trafficking and therefore may require more attention and efforts. Furthermore, they should also consider the key findings mentioned above to formulate a policy solution that can be effectively implemented across the state.

Introduction

Human trafficking, otherwise known as modern-day slavery, is a heinous crime that violates the basic principles of human rights. According to the United States Department of Justice (DOJ), human trafficking can be defined as the subtle or overt, physical or psychological, coercion and exploitation of a person to provide labor or sexual demands (DOJ, 2023). Human trafficking is the most prevalent form of victimization in the world as a crime both against the person and the country (DHS, 2021). In 2018, human trafficking became the second-largest global criminal industry with a reported annual profit of \$150 billion and approximately 25 million victims (DHS, 2021). 80% of trafficked victims in the Americas are female, while over a third are minors (CTDC, 2022). Human trafficking poses a large public health threat to our communities, as it harms our most vulnerable populations through forced labor, sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse (CTDC, 2022).

Human trafficking has become a predominant issue in the United States and globally. North Carolina (NC) is no exception, ranking ninth within the United States in human trafficking (NHTH, 2023). The prevalence of highways, military populations, and agriculture contribute to the instances of sex and labor trafficking in NC (DOA, 2023). In 2021, 223 cases of human trafficking were identified, involving over 340 victims (NHTH, 2023). While these numbers are already large, it is likely an underestimate of the true value because it is a crime of hidden nature.

In recent years, efforts to combat human trafficking have gained momentum, shedding light on the urgent need to address the issue. While federal and state legislative policies have been implemented, additional preventative efforts at a community level are imperative. Immediate legislation is needed in order to effectively decrease the prevalence of human trafficking in NC and protect our communities.

Local governments generally rely on law enforcement, social services, and public health clinics to provide care and support for trafficking concerns. However, research has indicated that prevention education efforts effectively contribute to a decrease in trafficking numbers (Henderson, 2016). Given the reach of educational institutions, the Department of Education (DOE) should take advantage of the opportunity to inform both students and the public (Salas, 2019). NC mandates sex and prevention education for school personnel and for students beginning in 7th grade; however, the persistence of human trafficking begs for policy interventions with more extensive curriculum requirements and more age-inclusive programs.

Prevention education has emerged as a critical tool in the fight against human trafficking by raising awareness, educating communities, and empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to recognize, prevent, and report instances of trafficking. While not yet federally or state-mandated, prevention education can serve as an effective solution to defeating human

trafficking. Knowledge regarding prevention education models is limited, communicating the dire need to introduce prevention education in the political world.

In this paper, we analyze the causes and prevalence of human trafficking in NC through existing academic literature and GIS mapping techniques. Furthermore, we also analyze the use of prevention education in combating human trafficking and why it is the most effective option. We then consider the input of relevant stakeholders in the implementation of state-mandated prevention education programs in order to identify the necessary components needed for an effective model and the major challenges associated with such an approach.

Human Trafficking Operations

Types of Human Trafficking: Sex Trafficking and Forced Labor

There are two primary forms of human trafficking: sex trafficking and forced labor. Sex trafficking, as delineated by Keskin et al. (2020), entails the coercion or abduction of individuals, predominantly women, and children, into the realm of commercial sexual exploitation. In the Charlotte area within NC, 61% of identified cases of human trafficking were confirmed cases of sex trafficking while an additional 38% were suspected cases of sex trafficking (CMHTTF, 2023). Forced labor takes place in a multitude of sectors, including agriculture, construction, and domestic servitude, wherein victims confront coercion, physical abuse, and deplorable working conditions (Zhang et al., 2019). Understanding the differences between these forms of human trafficking is crucial when attempting to determine appropriate preventative policy. Victims in forced labor scenarios often work long and difficult hours, receive little to no financial compensation, and are subjected to physical mistreatment (Keskin et al., 2020). Debt bondage is a common tactic used by traffickers to trap victims, especially for forced labor (Keskin et al., 2020). Other tactics, more commonly used in instances of sex trafficking than forced labor, involve the manipulation of victims through psychological coercion, physical violence, and debt servitude (Nichols and Heil, 2014).

Behavioral Indicators of Traffickers

Perpetrators of human trafficking exhibit a spectrum of traits, ranging from narcissism and manipulation to the calculated rationalization of their abhorrent actions (Keskin et al., 2020). Their ability to seamlessly assimilate into society while actively taking part in such crimes has aided in the difficulties that law enforcement faces in the identification of human traffickers. These groups also often engage in a disturbing process of rationalization, dehumanizing their victims and perceiving them as mere commodities in order to most efficiently traffick them (Keskin et al., 2020). The psychology and mindset of human traffickers is disturbing and undoubtedly emphasizes the need for targeted and sophisticated efforts to identify, apprehend, and neutralize them. Manipulation stands as a central tactic used by traffickers when obtaining the forced submission of victims (OJP, 2007). Employing a combination of psychological pressure, deceitful promises, and menacing threats, traffickers instill a great sense of fear and dependency in those they capture (Nichols & Heil, 2014). Victims may even develop a perverse psychological bond with their captors, further entrenching the trafficker's control (Keskin et al., 2020). This psychological bond can otherwise be known as Stockholm Syndrome, and can oftentimes follow victims back into their ordinary lives after trafficking occurs. In combination with manipulation, human trafficking thrives on the systematic subjugation of victims through various means, including abuse, isolation, and financial control. Financial control, frequently manifested in the form of insurmountable debt repayment, entraps victims, leaving them economically beholden to their traffickers (Keskin et al., 2020). Breaking free from this cycle necessitates a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach that addresses both the immediate rescue

and the long-term rehabilitation of survivors. Furthermore, traffickers employ a diverse array of recruitment strategies, capitalizing on the vulnerabilities of potential victims. These strategies may include but are not limited to, deceptive job offers, fraudulent marriages, and even abduction (Zhang et al., 2019). Coercive tactics, such as blackmail and threats directed at family members, serve to maintain victims' compliance ((Mayes, n.d.). Unraveling the intricacies of human trafficking operations demands comprehension of the psyche of traffickers, their tactics, and the vulnerable pathways through which they find their victims. By recognizing the traits of these perpetrators, understanding their manipulative strategies, and dismantling recruitment avenues, society can bolster its efforts to combat this grave violation of human rights and offer hope, justice, and support to survivors.

Trafficking Operations, Identification, and Law Enforcement Challenges

Traffickers often operate surreptitiously, obscuring their endeavors beneath a life of normalcy, presenting law enforcement agencies with formidable obstacles as they work toward identification and apprehension (Nichols & Heil, 2014). Proficient in evading detection, traffickers pose a significant challenge to authorities in collecting evidence against them (Keskin et al., 2020). This intricate cat-and-mouse dynamic underscores the pressing need for innovative and adaptive approaches within law enforcement. Transportation networks, particularly highways, are pivotal in facilitating human trafficking operations, enabling traffickers to transport victims across state and international borders while effectively eluding law enforcement scrutiny (Wilson, 2013). Locations such as truck stops, rest areas, and motels along these highways often serve as venues for the exploitation of victims, which further emphasizes the need to raise awareness and vigilance among transportation professionals (Wilson, 2013). Wilson's research explores the significance of harnessing commercial driver licensing authorities as a potent instrument in the identification and combating of trafficking-related crimes. By enhancing the training of law enforcement personnel and truck drivers alike, these highways can be transformed into zones of heightened vigilance (Wilson, 2013). Furthermore, truck drivers, as frequent witnesses to trafficking-related activities, have the potential to play a pivotal role in the identification and reporting of suspicious situations (Wilson, 2013).

Trafficking in Agriculture and Military Sectors

Human trafficking extends its reach beyond the shadows of society, infiltrating seemingly disparate sectors such as agriculture and the military, highlighting the need for comprehensive legislative measures and rigorous oversight (Zhang et al., 2019; Keskin et al., 2020). In agriculture, a sector integral to the global food supply chain, a hidden crisis unfolds as vulnerable individuals, often immigrants with limited legal protections, endure the grueling hardships of forced labor under exploitative conditions (Zhang et al., 2019). Victims are enticed with false promises of employment and improved prospects, only to find themselves ensnared in a web of abuse and exploitation (Keskin et al., 2020). Strengthening labor protections and implementing enhanced oversight mechanisms emerge as imperative steps in the ongoing battle against this

pervasive exploitation. Conversely, within the structured confines of the military, an institution built upon principles of discipline and order, a disconcerting prevalence of human trafficking emerges as an alarming reality (Keskin et al., 2020). Vulnerable recruits, often enticed by deceptive recruitment practices promising a brighter future, find themselves ensnared in the clutches of trafficking networks (Keskin et al., 2020). The hierarchical nature of the military can inadvertently foster an environment where abuse and coercion can persist unchecked (Keskin et al., 2020). Consequently, the implementation of stringent screening protocols for recruitment agencies and proactive measures to safeguard recruits assumes critical importance in addressing this pressing issue. Human trafficking, with its multifaceted dimensions, demands a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach. A comprehensive understanding of sex trafficking and forced labor, a deep grasp of the psychological characteristics of traffickers, deconstruction of recruitment tactics, and addressing sector-specific challenges, such as those within agriculture and the military, constitute crucial measures in combating this serious infringement on human rights. Collaboration among both local and state governments, civil society, and outside organizations is imperative in the collective effort to eliminate this problem and provide survivors with justice and support.

Risk Factors

Certain populations are more susceptible than others to human trafficking. In a 2023 report conducted in Mecklenburg County, NC, the average age of victimization was found to be 14.5 years old (CMHTTF, 2023). Additionally, 98% of those identified minors were female (CMHTTF, 2023). In Los Angeles, CA, during child human trafficking court, 91% of youth were African American or Latino (Commercially sexually exploited children, 2014). It has also been shown that children who have a background of abuse or other trauma as well as contact with the foster care system are increasingly vulnerable to human trafficking (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2023). Traffickers may intentionally target these specific children who are in foster care by promising to meet familial, emotional, or basic needs that are not satisfied in their current situations (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2023). In 2021, 19% of the children reported as missing from foster care experienced sex trafficking (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2023). Moreover, being a runaway, or being homeless are significant risk factors for trafficking (Deen, 2019). Furthermore, children within families that have five or more children are more likely to be victims of human trafficking (Nwokeoma, 2018).

Additional conditions that increase the risk of becoming a victim of trafficking include immigration status, living in poverty, and being LGBTI (Deen, 2019). While data on refugees and immigrants being trafficked is limited in the United States, it was shown in 2016 that 76% of refugees surveyed in the Mediterranean indicated they had been trafficked or otherwise exploited (*Mediterranean human trafficking*, 2016). It is true that traffickers in the United States will often coerce immigrants through the use of their legal status (Deen, 2019). For instance, migrant farm workers are susceptible to trafficking due to their legal status in the US being tied to their employment status (Pasley, 2019). In addition, 61% of victims identified that their trafficker withheld legal documents to keep the victims under their control (Stöckl et al., 2021). Minority status also impacts the likelihood of being a victim of trafficking. For instance, 40% of sex trafficking victims in Phoenix, AZ in 2015 were Native American (Pasley, 2019).

Education, socioeconomic status, and gender play an additional role in victimization. Those with only a secondary/high school education are more susceptible to being a victim of trafficking, with a global study identifying that only 40% of those who were trafficked had a secondary education (Stöckl et al., 2021). Additionally, this study shows that those who identified as poor represented 76.5% of those who were victims of trafficking (Stöckl et al., 2021). Furthermore females are more likely than males to be victims of human trafficking (Nwokeoma, 2018). Research has attributed this to the global sex industry, as there is a demand for women to be exploited by men (Nwokeoma, 2018).

Effects

The effects of human trafficking are widespread and complex, often varying depending on the type and circumstances of trafficking. Nonetheless, victims experience a breadth of issues. Furthermore, human trafficking has impacts beyond the individual, and on society at large. Existing academic literature outlines the various impacts of human trafficking, including the physical, mental, social, and economic impacts. Identifying the various effects of human trafficking emphasizes the importance of the issue and further encourages policymaker action.

Physical

Existing as a pervasive worldwide issue, human trafficking inflicts profound harm on its victims. Physical violence is often a hallmark of human trafficking, leaving long-lasting health effects on victims. The following studies, in addition to several others, have analyzed the prevalence of physical complications among trafficked people, revealing the harrowing truths of the real-life impacts of modern-day slavery.

A systematic study conducted in 2016 analyzed several different academic reports on the prevalence and risk of violence for trafficking victims (Ottisova et al., 2016). The analysis found that violence among women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation was high (Ottisova et al., 2016). This violence is commonly seen in the form of rape (Polaris, 2022). The effects of this violence are widespread and visible in the significantly high levels of physical health symptoms reported by victims. The most prevalent symptoms include headaches, stomach pain, and back pain (Ottisova et al., 2016). The systematic study also noted that self-reported symptoms suggestive of sexually transmitted infections were of high prevalence among trafficked women. Due to the lack of serological data, however, a definitive relationship between human trafficking and HIV infections could not be concluded (Ottisova et al., 2016).

A study conducted in Southeast Asia also identified common physical health effects experienced by trafficked men, women, and adolescents through face-to-face interviews (Kiss et al., 2015). Participants were asked about their living and working conditions, experience of violence, and health outcomes. The Southeast Asian study found that dizziness, headaches, back pain, and exhaustion were the most commonly reported physical effects, with 18% to 22% of victims reporting each of these conditions (Kiss et al., 2015). Victims also reported symptoms of memory loss, weight loss, and stomach issues. The study also referenced the physical consequences of labor trafficking in particular. Nearly one-quarter of trafficking survivors interviewed for the study reported at least one injury from the work they performed while being trafficked. These injuries often lead to related pain in the future for the victims, demonstrating the long-term effects of human trafficking (Kiss et al., 2015).

Physical health problems define the experiences of most trafficked individuals. In fact, studies conducted in the United Kingdom reported that over 80% of surveyed victims, both men and women, reported at least one physical health issue, while almost a third of participants reported five or more health problems (Turner-Moss et al., 2013).

Researchers have also identified the detrimental effects trafficking has on adolescent victims, specifically. A study conducted by Dr. Yvonne Rafferty investigated this impact (Rafferty, 2008). In this study, Dr. Rafferty states that “victims of child trafficking experience inhumane living conditions, inadequate diet and hygiene, beatings, and abuse, neglect, and denial of their basic human rights to health care and protection, resulting in lasting health problems” (Rafferty, 2008). Due to this, adolescent victims are placed at a heightened risk of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, pregnancy complications, and sexually transmitted diseases. In fact, HIV/AIDS is prevalent among trafficked children (Rafferty, 2008).

Mental/Trauma

Human trafficking impacts the mental health of its victims. The mental health effects of human trafficking often come as a result of coercive control and feelings of shame, and guilt that victims experience both before and after being trafficked (Altun et al., 2017). Literature acknowledges that certain individuals are at a higher risk of becoming victims of trafficking, further perpetuating existing mental health issues such as depression or anxiety (Altun et al., 2017). Nonetheless, mental trauma is prevalent and has a lasting impact among many victims of trafficking (Altun et al., 2017).

A systematic study conducted in 2016 analyzed several different academic reports investigating the health problems of trafficked victims. The most commonly reported mental health problems among trafficked victims were depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Ottisova et al., 2016). A pilot study conducted in 2017 focused on the mental health effects of human trafficking between transition-aged youth (TAY) and older adults (Ghafoori & Taylor, 2017). The TAY group consisted of individuals between 16 and 25 years of age. This group overall reported to have experienced more traumatic events than the older adult group. The most common traumas experienced by all participants in the study were physical assault, sexual assault, transportation accidents, and other unwanted sexual experiences. Common mental health difficulties seen among participants were post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, somatization, and global severity distress (Ghafoori & Taylor, 2017).

A survey conducted in 2016 among male and female trafficking survivors in England, revealed common mental health experiences among survivors in a high-income country such as the United States (Oram et al., 2016). The study suggested that 78% of women and 40% of men reported high levels of depression, anxiety, or PTSD. Another study conducted in South London suggested that severe psychiatric disorders are also apparent in trafficked victims (Oram et al.,

2015). Trafficked adults were also more likely to be compulsorily admitted as psychiatric in-patients compared to non-trafficked adults. The study concluded that severe mental illness in trafficked victims is associated with longer admissions and high levels of abuse both before and after trafficking takes place (Oram et al., 2015).

While many studies approach the mental health effects of human trafficking by identifying individual disorders and symptoms, Sandra Bloom and Susan Brotherton take a different approach in the Routledge International Handbook of Human Trafficking. Bloom and Brotherton define the mental diagnosis of trafficking victims as “complex PTSD” (Bloom & Brotherton, 2019). This refers to a type of trauma that occurs repeatedly and cumulatively. This further emphasizes the complex nature of human trafficking and how the mental effects of such a crime can be incredibly pervasive and complicated.

The effects of human trafficking on children are just as bad as the effects on adult victims, if not worse. Studies indicate that PTSD (22%) and affective or mood disorders (22%) were the most prevalent among trafficked children. Furthermore, trafficked children were seen to spend a significantly longer duration of time with mental health services compared to non-trafficked individuals (Ottisova et al., 2018). There is a high prevalence of emotional effects among trafficked children including depression, hopelessness, anxiety, guilt, and shame.

Economic

Estimating the magnitude of human trafficking has proven difficult. Researchers have taken a new approach by investigating the financial revenue generated in the global trafficking industry. In 2005, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that forced labor trafficking creates profits of \$3.8 billion, while profits from commercial sexual trafficking are nearly \$27.8 billion (Suchland, 2015). Furthermore, the 2009 ILO report suggests that nearly \$19.6 billion of lost earnings have been generated due to trafficking (Suchland, 2015). Worldwide, trafficking is suggested to be a \$150 billion business (Abudu, 2018). Specific impacts of human trafficking on the U.S. economy are limited due to the nature of the transnational scheme (Suchland, 2015). This points to the shocking reality of the human trafficking industry and communicates the urgency for policy solutions. Human trafficking unequivocally harms national and economic security.

While it is apparent that human trafficking is a massive industry with a large role in the U.S. economy, it should be recognized that victims experience economic effects as well. After experiencing trafficking, survivors often require financial support to rebuild their lives. However, securing a consistent income, opening a bank account, and rebuilding credit can be incredibly inaccessible and unrealistic for survivors (Gardner, 2023). As a result, finding safe and dependable housing, obtaining healthcare, purchasing food, paying bills, pursuing education, and much more, become difficult for survivors to do. Additionally, studies show that trafficked

victims have high levels of fear and anxiety, trauma, and substance abuse (Novotney, 2023). Survivors also tend to isolate themselves more compared to non-trafficked individuals. These factors contribute to the survivor's ability to obtain and maintain a job (Novotney, 2023).

According to the National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (NHTTTAC), victims experience barriers to employment such as a lack of education or work history, criminal records, and long periods of employment leave (NHTTTAC, 2021). Experts also recognize that trauma responses are likely to occur in work settings and that rural populations experience more barriers than normal to employment (NHTTTAC, 2021) .

While cultural and social effects of human trafficking do exist, they are multifaceted and more difficult to identify than the physical, mental, and economic effects of trafficking. Nonetheless, it is important to note that gender inequality, a large social determinant of human trafficking, is further exacerbated as an effect of rising trafficking levels among women and children (Gacinya, 2020).

Federal & State Statutes

Federal Statutes

Human Trafficking

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, the first comprehensive federal law addressing the safety and protection of survivors, was amended for the 9th time at the conclusion of the 115th Congress, on January 3rd, 2019 (DOJ, 2023). The notable amendments extend across four separate bills passed in December 2018 and early January 2019:

- H.R. 2200, the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2018
- S. 1311, the Abolish Human Trafficking Act of 2017
- S. 1312, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017
- S. 1862, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2017

The four bills create and update the mandates of several federal agencies, including but not limited to, the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Health and Human Services (DOJ, 2023).

In 2015, Congress launched a new approach to abolish Human Trafficking directed at decreasing the demand for commercial sex (DOJ, 2023). Provisions were implemented to ensure U.S. government workers, military, and federal law enforcement could not use federal funds or equipment to frequent adult entertainment establishments. Additionally, to ensure the Department of Justice promotes action against the demand for sex trafficking, Congress requires strategy task force reports. Finally, the requirement of enhanced training and officer reports holds federal personnel accountable for enforcing change.

The Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2018 increased government focus on forced labor (DOJ, 2023). The amendment of this bill includes the prevention and prohibition of labor trafficking in diplomatic households and increases reporting obligations of items produced by forced labor. Additionally, it mandated the Senior Policy Operating Group to institute a working group primarily focused on demand reduction.

The Abolish Human Trafficking Act of 2017 and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017 provide funding and instruction to support victims of trafficking, as well as increase the transparency of governmental work (DOJ, 2023). First, this mandates the Attorney General to institute a human trafficking victim screening protocol to identify practices and tools of trafficking. Second, the Department of Justice must submit reports to Congress detailing the methodology to assess the prevalence of human trafficking. Third, and finally, the U.S. Advisory Council is required to review policies, programs, and findings for an annual report (DOJ, 2023).

The reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2017 added provisions for international compliance and collaboration globally, nationally, and in private industries.

Violence Prevention Education in Schools

The U.S. Department of Education recognizes the threat of human trafficking and offers support to schools in prevention, response, and recovery; however, they state “it is fitting that schools take on this challenge” (DOJ, 2023). They provide resources through funding the technical assistance center at the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. Administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, caregivers, and students can access this webpage to research prevalence, awareness, and partnerships to address trafficking. There are no mandated federal violence prevention education requirements.

North Carolina State Statutes

Human Trafficking

North Carolina has specified additional statutes related to human trafficking regarding involuntary servitude, sexual servitude, and sale of minors in GS 14-43.11, GS 14-43.12, GS 14-43.13, and GS 14-43.14. Each of these statutes defines what it means to commit the crime, the felony and consequences of the crime, as well as unacceptable defenses against the crime (UNC SOG, 2023). Additionally, the following laws are in place for the prevention of human trafficking in NC (NHTH, 2023):

- GS 14.430.03 or the Safe Harbor/Victims of Human Trafficking provides protections and avenues of aid for victims of human trafficking under the age of 18. Additionally, it regulates prostitution-related crimes for minors and ensures the child welfare system retains jurisdiction over victims.
- GS 115C-81(el)(4a) mandates sex education for 7th graders and sexual violence and risk reduction awareness. Furthermore, the board of education must address human trafficking awareness in schools.
- SL 2019-245 mandates child sexual violence education for school personnel and expands rights/protections for all victims, including children, of sexual violence.
- SL 2019-158 further criminalizes “buyer conduct” to reduce instances of human trafficking and decrease the number of criminal offenses for survivors.

Most recently, on June 21, 2023, Senate Bill 626: Modifying Human Trafficking and Rioting Laws, was passed (626, 2023). First, this bill provides the opportunity and issuance of a permanent civil no-contact order under Chapter 50D for human trafficking victims (626, 2023). Second, it allows for monetary collection under the Crime Victims Compensation Act if the victim committed wrongful conduct under threat and coercion (626, 2023). Third, it reiterates that it is a violation of the law to patronize and solicit another person (626, 2023). Finally, it removes provisions from G.S. 14-288.2 so that a victim who might urge another to engage in a riot against human trafficking is not a crime (626, 2023).

Violence Prevention Education in Schools

North Carolina passed Senate Bill 199 in 2019, which required public and charter schools in the state to adopt training programs for child sexual abuse and human trafficking by January 2020 (199, 2019). This bill mandates all school personnel directly involved with K-12 students to receive two hours of training every even-numbered year beginning in 2020 (199, 2019). School personnel required under the law to participate include teachers, instructional support (assistants), and principals (199, 2019). This law does not require or encourage student education (199, 2019). Additionally, it does not include other employees directly or indirectly involved with students or staff of non-public, private, or parochial schools (199, 2019). State violence prevention education requirements are limited to minimal training of certain school personnel, without regard to the potential benefits of student implementation.

Our Recommendation: Prevention Education Model

****** In collaboration with critical stakeholders in human trafficking and prevention education, the following recommendation outlines the characteristics of an effective prevention education model. Four major pillars to consider and four primary obstacles to implementation are identified. The methodology summary, interview questions, and interviewees can be found in [Appendix B](#).

The Department of Education asserts, “Education has long been the great equalizer in America” (DOE, 2011). Equal education implies not only equal treatment regardless of demographic characteristics, but attention to the psychological and physical safety of students within the institutions. Title IX policy requires educational institutions to address any gender or sexual-based harassment and discrimination in any form including physical, psychological, or digital. Effectiveness of academic programs begins with the acknowledgement that education is both prevention and intervention. It provides individuals with the proper knowledge, confidence, and language to disclose. By definition, prevention education “emphasizes safety; trustworthiness and transparency; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; and addresses cultural, historical, and gender issues” (Champline 2022). Educators are inherently in a position of influential leadership and first response, being held accountable for the formation of children beyond academic rigor. Children, ages 4 to 22, are primarily in educational institutions and under direct influence from adults. This is the access point for teaching a culture of safety rather than violence. Prevention education, as a comprehensive model, delves into the root causes of violence and oppression. It is designed to address the individual, the community, and external societal factors that both influence and are influenced by all forms of violence. The model rests on four pillars: trauma-informed support, evidence-based practices, inclusivity, and alignment with public health priorities. This holistic approach ensures a thorough and multifaceted strategy to create safe and empowering educational environments that foster not only academic growth but also the overall well-being of students.

Four-Pillars of Prevention Education

Trauma-informed

Youth and young adults at all levels of education, from early-start preschool programs through secondary education, are exposed and susceptible to emotional, verbal, and physical abuse. This violence may manifest in a tangible form, or the lack thereof, known as neglect. Both the home and school environment can perpetuate violence from parents, adults, and peers.

Trauma is a wound to the brain after an emotionally or physically abusive experience (National Institute of Health, 2014). Symptoms present in numerous ways including, but not limited to, unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, and strained relationships. More importantly, an individual's response varies, thus presenting as actions or emotions out of the ordinary. For example, this could be the inability to be alone or, in comparison, complete isolation. Approximately 50% of

adults report experiencing a traumatic event in their lives and upwards of 70% report an adverse childhood experience (ACE) before the age of 16 (Champine 2021). Trauma-informed practices are rooted in the assumption that any and every child or adult could have a history of trauma. They are individual and organization-wide services grounded in understanding the consequences of trauma, with an emphasis on strength, healing, and resilience. The conversation begins with an approach of “what happened to you,” rather than “what is wrong with you” (Champine 2021). This requires a shift in the educator’s style and intrinsic value of teaching to a child that is stereotyped as the ‘disruptive student’.

Students and children already struggle with emotional regulation in response to new experiences in a complex and convoluted world. They are learning to process internal thoughts and external behaviors which fosters additional obstacles, regardless of preexisting trauma. More importantly, communities can witness the effects of trauma solely in educational statistics, ranging from grade point averages to dropout and graduation rates. Individuals spend the majority of their adolescence in school environments, providing educators the opportunity to recognize, regulate, and respond to triggers in a trauma-informed way. This requires instilling values of safety, connection, and emotional and behavioral regulation. The principle of this approach is acknowledging the experience of trauma as something done to the individual. This lens catalyzes healthy healing strategies, rather than an approach to fixing an abnormality in the brain (Dombo 2019).

Evidence-Based Practices

Evidence-based practices (EBP) are defined as “the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individuals” (Hannes 2019). These strategies were originally implemented in the healthcare field, but have since been applied to a variety of other trades including criminology, social sciences, and academics. Now, EBP establishes improved practices “in the best interest of humanity” (Hannes 2019). Professionals must ground their judgment in evidence and adapt their practices to the needs of the individuals they work with. The development of EBP across disciplines prompted Philip Davies to propose evidence-based education and the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Evidence-Based Practice to add “context” as a primary layer in decision-making processes (Hannes 2019). This requires educators to consider students’ social and biological culture and experiences in the implementation of their lessons and programs.

Examining the application of evidence-based practices in education, particularly in teacher selection and lesson implementation, reveals profound implications for students' personal well-being, educational health, and future prosperity (Klassen, 2021). Despite the significant impact teachers have on students' attitudes toward self-confidence, safety, and learning, teacher selection in education receives less scrutiny compared to sectors like healthcare, financial services, and large corporations. Moreover, the varying training and demands placed on teachers

raise concerns about the quality of instruction. While experience in the field contributes to teacher quality, the effectiveness of prevention education programs can be linked back to the initial selection of teachers.

In light of this, educational institutions must acknowledge the influential role teachers play in shaping students' lives and give careful consideration to the selection of teachers, especially for programs focused on prevention education. This involves aligning teacher selection processes with the principles of evidence-based education and recognizing the long-term impact of teacher quality on students' overall development.

Inclusivity

The symbiotic relationship between quality education and inclusivity forms the cornerstone of effective preventative education programs in NC schools. In this paradigm, inclusivity demands a meticulous consideration of the diverse student populations within the state, acknowledging the rich tapestry of cultures, traditions, and customs that define NC.

To achieve a truly inclusive educational framework, sensitivity becomes paramount, particularly when addressing issues closely aligned with the vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups. Equitable access, tailored content, and pertinent modifications must extend across demographics, encompassing age groups, genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, religious beliefs, and sexual orientations. The concept of equitable access must transcend beyond conventional boundaries, explicitly encompassing individuals with disabilities and those requiring resources in non-English languages (Ferguson 2018). Collaboration with stakeholders, active parental involvement, and guidance from community leaders emerge as invaluable components in the development of an inclusive program tailored to the unique characteristics of the region.

Drawing inspiration from successful models, such as educators in Ontario aligning their curriculum with the Gay-Straight Alliance, reveals the potential benefits of seeking endorsements from respected entities within the community, as indicated by the relevant citations. Such alliances are particularly critical in the creation of education programs sensitive to the needs of LGBTQ+ youth (Martino 2018). Recognizing that a prevention education program designed to combat violence can only be maximally effective when fully inclusive, this thesis advocates for a comprehensive understanding and application of inclusivity principles. Consequently, a nuanced comprehension of the community that the program is intended to serve becomes fundamental in ensuring its efficacy and relevance.

In essence, this synthesis of quality education and inclusivity transcends conventional boundaries, ushering in a paradigm where preventative education programs become not just informative but transformative agents, fostering an environment where every student is not just educated but empowered, thus reinforcing the program's efficacy in combating violence.

Public Health Model

In formulating a prevention education program for NC schools to combat violence, a crucial feature is the incorporation of a public health model. This entails aligning strategies with public health initiatives to effectively tackle pervasive issues (Butts, 2015). Human trafficking, likened to a communicable disease, underscores the need for a public health model centered on education. It stresses the importance of raising awareness, providing information, and promoting proactive measures to mitigate risks. To be comprehensive, this model must adapt to changing population dynamics, economic development, and lifestyle trends through community-based strategies. Active engagement with communities, schools, parents, and local organizations collectively addresses the issue, strategically targeting prevention efforts by analyzing risk factors like socio-economic vulnerabilities and community challenges (Butts, 2015).

Moreover, within the framework of a public health model, the program should accentuate primary factors, emphasizing education and direct preventative strategies. This includes imparting specific skills and empowering individuals to recognize and avoid potential trafficking situations. Secondary factors encompass engaging communities and identifying indirect causes, such as socio-economic challenges within communities. Tertiary factors, considered more peripheral, involve providing support services and advocating for policies addressing systemic issues contributing to human trafficking (Rothstein, 2002). In conclusion, a prevention education program, mirroring a public health approach, adopts a holistic, community-centered strategy. It focuses on education, community engagement, risk identification, support provision, and policy advocacy, aiming to comprehensively combat violence.

The multifaceted nature of a prevention education program necessitates a thorough exploration of risk factors, aligning with the dynamic landscape of societal changes. Emphasizing primary, secondary, and tertiary factors ensures a well-rounded approach that not only educates but also engages communities at various levels. By recognizing the systemic issues contributing to human trafficking, the program adopts a proactive stance, advocating for policies that address these root causes (Rothstein, 2002). The community-centered strategy positions education as a catalyst for change, empowering individuals and fostering collective resilience against human trafficking. This comprehensive model is essential for creating sustained impact and fostering a resilient, informed society.

In conclusion, the prevention education program is a testament to the power of a holistic, community-driven public health model. Inspired by the insights of Butts and Rothstein, the program's multifaceted approach, encompassing education, community engagement, risk analysis, support provision, and policy advocacy, establishes a robust framework for combating violence. By acknowledging the interconnectedness of societal elements, from education to socio-economic factors, the program charts a course toward lasting change. In the pursuit of a safer, more informed society, it becomes imperative to embrace and implement such

comprehensive strategies, ensuring a collective effort to eradicate the scourge of human trafficking.

Challenges with Prevention Education

Political Climate

Historically leaning toward the conservative end of the political spectrum, NC has often faced challenges in addressing the rights of marginalized communities. This tendency poses a significant obstacle to the effective implementation of prevention education, as the voices of typical victims are frequently marginalized. However, a noteworthy shift occurred in 2020 when the NC Senate, controlled by Republicans, ratified Senate Bill 199, marking a significant improvement in women's rights. Acknowledging the voices of the people, the Senate closed a legal loophole that previously hindered the recognition of a woman's right to refuse consent during sex (Lawson, 2020). This legislative development raises the possibility that, in the future, the state may become more receptive to the implementation of prevention education if the voices of marginalized communities gain prominence.

Beyond the influence of North Carolina's political climate, the broader politicization of the issue of human trafficking remains prevalent. While various forms of slavery and forced labor have persisted throughout history, human trafficking has emerged as a relatively recent global concern, with specific laws addressing it dating back to 2000 (Blanton, 2020). Despite the considerable scholarly attention dedicated to the topic, the research remains underdeveloped, characterized by a lack of empirical literature that comprehensively reflects the complex nature of human trafficking (Kessler, 2022).

Existing literature on human trafficking, comprising thousands of articles and books, tends to be non-empirical, focusing on generalized analyses of trafficking and relevant laws and statutes. Interviews with experts, combined with our research, reveal that the absence of empirical literature stems from a lack of comprehensive data capturing the complexity of human trafficking. The current body of work often overlooks the multifaceted aspects of trafficking, concentrating instead on economic, political, and demographic variables that generally may contribute to its occurrence (Kessler, 2022).

Understanding and acknowledging the political correlates of trafficking is paramount, encompassing factors such as armed conflict, the presence of peacekeepers, and the strength and capacity of domestic political institutions (Blanton, 2020). Notably, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a significant role in state responses to human trafficking through grassroots efforts. However, the absence of prioritization at the state level is evident in the lack of corresponding legislation. Interviews conducted for this research underscored that the multifaceted nature of human trafficking deters politicians and policymakers from engaging with the issue. The absence of a global or domestic collective understanding of trafficking further

compounds the challenge, leading to deficiencies in research, scholarship, and political representation.

Parents/Guardians

In August 2023, NC enacted Senate Bill 49, commonly known as the 'Parent's Bill of Rights,' which outlines parental rights in directing the upbringing, education, healthcare, and mental health of minor children. Aligned with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the bill acknowledges parental jurisdiction. However, it also introduces parental discretion specifically concerning student participation in health and safety courses. Under FERPA and HIPAA regulations, academic institutions must obtain formal consent for treatment, inform parents about student physical and mental health, and communicate academic achievements. Yet, the recent addition to S.B. 49, granting parental authority over reproductive and safety education, results in the removal of prevention education from kindergarten through fourth grade and imposes limitations on exposure in secondary education.

Despite the importance of violence and safety as public health concerns, this parental discretion places these critical subjects within the realm of individual opinions rather than a collective societal responsibility. The American Public Health Association emphasizes the interconnectedness of health and violence, highlighting the state's responsibility to ensure a nonviolent and healthy society (APHA, 2018). This barrier to prevention education is further compounded by increasing political polarization. Republican State Senator Amy Galey articulates the sentiment that the government should not be a partner in raising children, asserting the duty of parents to raise their children in accordance with their cultural, social, and religious beliefs (Galey, 2023). This stance depicts broader shifts in parental perceptions, which in turn is influencing government responses and creating challenges for federal stakeholders. The parental barrier, rooted in the belief that health and safety lack significant importance in education, contributes to a global endemic. As parents assert control over the physical and psychological safety of their children, government responses become subject to varying beliefs and values. This dynamic leads to intermediate policy change rather than comprehensive reform, as federal stakeholders navigate fiscal constraints and political polarization.

In essence, the intertwining of parental discretion, political ideologies, and societal perceptions creates a complex landscape where health and safety education faces significant barriers, hindering comprehensive and exhaustive reforms in favor of piecemeal policy adjustments.

Reflectiveness of Demographics

The call for an authentic reflection of a geographic region's demographics introduces a critical yet constantly evolving challenge. Moving beyond the surface alignment of curricula with regional diversity, a deeper complexity emerges—the need for educators to possess a nuanced

understanding of the intricacies inherent within diverse populations. This imperative becomes particularly resonant when scrutinizing Family and Consumer Sciences Education (FCSE), a prominent example that underscores the demand for programs genuinely attuned to the evolving needs of the U.S. population.

Further delving into the layers of teacher understanding reveals a fundamental challenge—many educators grapple with an insufficient comprehension of their own "ethnic self." This self-awareness deficit then extends into a deeper misunderstanding of "ethnic others," encompassing both students and peers. Teachers often exhibit simplistic perceptions of their students' cultural backgrounds, exposing a significant gap in cultural literacy and awareness (Santoro).

This examination of FCSE, coupled with broader insights into the educational landscape, underscores the multifaceted challenges inherent in creating preventative education programs authentically reflective of the geographic regions they serve. Achieving this reflection surpasses mere curriculum alignment; it demands a transformative approach to teacher education. Instructors must engage in continual critical reflection on their "ethnic self" in relation to the "ethnic other." This nuanced self-awareness and cultural competency foster an enriched educational experience resonating with the diverse tapestry of students.

In essence, the imperatives gleaned from the FCSE context resoundingly underscore the complex, multifaceted challenges in creating preventative education programs reflective of geographic regions. This endeavor requires a holistic approach, encompassing not only curriculum design but also a transformative paradigm in teacher education — one that fosters a profound understanding of cultural intricacies and cultivates educators capable of navigating the rich tapestry of diversity inherent in our educational landscapes.

Funding

The challenges surrounding the acquisition of funding pose a significant threat to the implementation of a state-mandated and funded prevention education program. This threat is particularly pronounced in the context of the limited focus and funding allocated to human trafficking efforts at the state level. The burden of addressing this critical issue falls on non-governmental institutions, which, by their very nature, encounter inherent barriers in obtaining sufficient funding (Blanton, 2020).

Government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operate with markedly distinct agendas and priorities, leading to a misalignment of objectives that creates formidable barriers to securing funding. Presently, human trafficking is not accorded priority status at either the state or federal level, resulting in an acute scarcity of funding. This scarcity is exacerbated by a lack of collective concern and understanding regarding the complexities of trafficking.

Compounding the issue is the intricate and bureaucratic nature of governmental processes, which poses a considerable burden for organizations already grappling with limited funding and resources (*Common Funding Challenges for NGOs* | Allianz Care, n.d.). When one considers the influence of continually changing state and federal political agendas and administrations, coupled with the inherently high-risk and highly politicized nature of trafficking, the challenges to obtaining funding become glaringly evident.

Moreover, the finite nature of governmental budgets adds another layer of complexity (Banton, 2020). With numerous policy sectors vying for a share of the available resources, the limited pool may also be distributed among different governmental priorities, including but not limited to public health and education (*Common Funding Challenges for NGOs* | Allianz Care, n.d.). The competition for these finite resources further diminishes the available funding for efforts aimed at combating human trafficking, perpetuating the cycle of challenges faced by organizations seeking to address this critical societal issue.

Proposing a state funded prevention education within K-12 public schools in NC brings up a slew of roadblocks to obtaining funding. Scholarship and research widely suggests that school funding continues to remain equal across low and high income schools, and that equal funding is synonymous to access to equitable resources (*Think Again: Is Education Funding in America Still Unequal?*, n.d.). Funding allocated toward educational initiatives must increase for the feasibility of a mandated prevention program. However, challenges arise as the effectiveness of increased funding catalyzes diminishing returns, particularly in light of competing legislative concerns and priorities (*Think Again: Is Education Funding in America Still Unequal?*, n.d.). The allocation of funds towards educational initiatives, including prevention programs, becomes a balancing act in the broader context of resource distribution. In navigating these challenges, it becomes essential to recognize the subjectivity of "adequate resources" when it comes to a prevention education program. Rather than focusing solely on the absolute quantity of resources, the emphasis should shift towards equalizing classroom resources. This includes prioritizing access to high-quality teachers, a crucial component in delivering effective prevention education.

Current NC Prevention Awareness

Human trafficking, as discussed, is a prominent problem within the state of North Carolina. As a result, numerous initiatives within NC have been taken to both increase awareness of human trafficking for at-risk groups and provide resources for past victims of human trafficking. January has been identified as Human Trafficking Awareness Month to raise awareness of this salient issue (“Human Trafficking on the Increase in North Carolina...”, 2011). Additionally, various organizations exist to increase awareness, support victims, and provide education on the issue of human trafficking. The North Carolina Coalition Against Human Trafficking (NCCAHT), once known as RIPPLE (recognition, identification, protection, prosecution, liberation, empowerment), exists primarily to reach marginalized communities that are at risk for human trafficking (“Human Trafficking”, n.d.). NCCAHT works with the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA) to support victims and intervene with an intersectional, social justice approach (“Human Trafficking”, n.d.). Teach2reach is another program associated with NCCASA that focuses on the enhancement of students by developing content and protocols to teach students about sex trafficking and provide resources to at-risk students (“Teach2Reach”, n.d.). Their current work, completed by a research team from UNC-Chapel Hill, focuses on adapting curriculum to meet the needs of public schools in NC as well as refining training for various school staff (“Teach2Reach”, n.d.).

Project No Rest, formally known as North Carolina Organizing and Responding to the Exploitation and Sexual Trafficking of Children, is another program attempting to increase awareness of human trafficking in NC. They partner with state and local government agencies as well as stakeholders and various organizations with goals of expanding awareness, fostering cooperation at state and local levels, developing policies designed to prevent youth from becoming victims, and much more (“Project No Rest...”, n.d.). An additional way that the state is attempting to increase awareness is through the dissemination of signs outlining information relevant to human trafficking. These signs are displayed at various transportation centers, rest areas, welcome centers, job centers, ABC-licensed locations, and emergency rooms to teach citizens to better identify signs of human trafficking (AG Stein, 2018). These signs also provide vital information, such as the National Human Trafficking Hotline, to victims who may come into contact with these key locations (AG Stein, 2018).

However, efforts that currently exist in NC schools are not adequate to properly address the breadth of human trafficking. As outlined by Senate Bill 279, school boards are required to address sex trafficking prevention and awareness as part of their health classes (Jackson, 2020). According to a study conducted by Jackson, very few students sampled had received sex trafficking awareness through their school systems or outside of it (Jackson, 2020). Additionally, no health/physical education teacher surveyed had been provided sex trafficking awareness training nor had incorporated sex trafficking curriculum for a single semester (Jackson, 2020).

So, this education is not actionable as it currently exists. According to this senate bill, 100% of respondents should have had sex education training, yet only about 11% of respondents did (Jackson, 2020).

Conclusion

Recognizing the pervasive threat of human trafficking requires both federal and state entities to play a crucial role in addressing this issue. In North Carolina, this threat is particularly salient, with the state ranking ninth in the United States for the prevalence of human trafficking. The insidious nature of human traffickers integrating into our communities underscores the necessity of establishing a safety framework within schools.

Highlighting the severity of the issue, the Department of Education emphasizes that "few crimes are more abhorrent than child trafficking, and few crimes are more challenging for communities to recognize and address" ("Human Trafficking in AMERICA'S SCHOOLS...", 2015). The U.S. government endorses a comprehensive, victim-centered approach that involves various federal agencies. This approach covers enforcement of criminal and labor laws, victim identification and protection, education and public awareness, international trade and development, enhanced partnerships, and research opportunities, as well as international engagement and diplomacy.

However, despite the federal emphasis on combating human trafficking, there is currently no federally mandated human trafficking prevention education program at the state level. This inconsistency among states underscores the urgent need for state legislatures to prioritize and take action. Providing educators and school systems with adequate resources is paramount to understanding how human trafficking affects schools, recognizing its indicators, and developing policies, frameworks, and partnerships to address human exploitation and trafficking.

The implementation of state-mandated human trafficking prevention education emerges as a viable and effective multi-sector policy solution. The literature review demonstrates its success across various entities, organizations, and states. By adopting such programs, educators and communities can contribute significantly to the collective effort against human trafficking.

Appendix A: About The Authors

Jordanne Arace

Jordanne Arace is a current senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill majoring in public policy with minors in philosophy, politics, and economics and conflict management. She plans to teach English abroad after graduation before pursuing a career in education policy, specifically in regards to gender and socioeconomic inequality within the American education system. She aims to use her passion for public policy and past research surrounding the MeToo movement along with its subsequent alterations to female behavior and reproductive laws as they pertain to minors and the lack of support offered to vulnerable groups in North Carolina.

Grace Berry

Grace Berry is a current senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she is pursuing a degree in public policy with minors in history and social and economic justice. Her academic focus revolves around the nuanced intersection of public policy and social justice, specifically within the realms of the beauty and fashion industry. Grace aspires to champion economic inclusiveness, sustainability, and the adoption of cruelty-free practices in these sectors. Her commitment extends beyond theoretical interest, as evidenced by her active involvement with TABLE NC, a local non-profit dedicated to addressing food security issues in Orange County. Looking ahead, she plans to further her academic pursuits at UNC, intending to pursue a master's degree in public policy with a concentration in nonprofit management. This trajectory underscores her unwavering commitment to effecting positive change and making a lasting impact on the intersection of public policy and social justice.

Michelle Breit

Michelle Breit is a current senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she is pursuing a double major in public policy and political science and a minor in data science. Following graduation in December, Michelle hopes to complete her Masters in Health Administration and, subsequently, attend law school. She has a deep passion for violence prevention and survivor advocacy gaining experience both on and off campus. She has served as a Peer Educator with the office of Violence Prevention and Advocacy Services at the university for the past 18 months, as well as proposed and led the Denim Day campaign in April 2023. Additionally, Michelle volunteers with the Orange County Rape Crisis Center as a helpline and hospital companion. This past summer, she also gained clinical and administrative experience at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, and has continued remotely as an intern with the Clinical Trials Department. Michelle's knowledge of prevention education, policy, and politics has driven her commitment to the capstone project.

Sophia Desai

Sophia Desai is a current senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill studying public policy with minors in data science and medical anthropology. Sophia is on the pre-law track with professional experience in immigration law serving underprivileged communities. Sophia currently works as a research assistant at the UNC Center on Technology Policy where she researches state data privacy legislation. Sophia is also a small business owner, as she works as a traveling henna artist across the Carolinas. Sophia's adequate knowledge of public policy, including her political analysis and research design skills, has allowed her to be a large contributor to the capstone project.

Elizabeth Norris

Elizabeth Norris is a current senior with a double major in psychology and public policy, minoring in history. Born in Boston, MA, she and her family moved to Clemmons, NC in 2007 where she resided until attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is on the pre-law track with hopes of attending law school in the northeast to become an international human rights lawyer. In the past, she has completed internships at law firms in both North Carolina and Dublin, Ireland. She has completed multiple courses throughout her time at UNC affording her the opportunity to complete research projects and policy analysis, focusing mainly on mental health care of prisoners and general prison reform. She has enjoyed working on the capstone project this semester and is grateful for the knowledge she has gained through it. Outside of school, she enjoys reading and spending time outdoors with her friends.

Appendix B: Interview Summary

Methodology

We obtained qualitative data on issues surrounding human trafficking legislation in NC, through the administration of six interviews (n = 6) with relevant stakeholders in the state. Our stakeholder sample consisted of women above the age of 35 and under the age of 83, with at least 10 years of experience in the human trafficking field or at least 5 years in prevention education. These stakeholders have demonstrated extensive experience in anti-human trafficking efforts in NC, ranging from direct victim/survivor work to political legislative efforts. Over 50 stakeholders were contacted to obtain a more diverse and holistic collection of qualitative data, however, the six stakeholders interviewed were the only participants who responded and were available.

Interviewees were primed on the state of human trafficking in NC and were then asked a series of questions regarding human trafficking efforts in NC. Next, interviewees were primed on the concept of prevention education. They were then asked a series of questions regarding prevention education efforts in NC as it pertains to human trafficking. With this qualitative data, we were then able to identify key findings that addressed the main concerns of a state-mandated human trafficking education prevention program in NC. These findings will be used to inform policymakers and other interested third parties on how to best develop legislative efforts to reduce human trafficking in NC.

Key Findings

Challenges

- Little time is spent on preventive efforts because the effects are not visible, including training for state officials and officers, as well as civilians.
- Funding for preventive measures is difficult to defend when “real-life crises” necessitate a response.
 - (*"The mandates don't matter unless there is funding to back it up, and right now, there are mandates related to it, but there is no funding behind it so it won't get done."*)
- Parents pose a significant challenge because of differing beliefs in the relevance of the topic at certain ages.
- The state is undeniably responsible but is impugned by political barriers.
- Legislation needs to first focus on survivor representation, immigration services, safe harbor housing, and adequate education on the mental and physical effects of trafficking.
- Each aspect of state government needs to recognize its role in trafficking prevention and recovery, including the Department of Public Instruction, Department of Public Safety, Department of Labor, Department of Social Services, the foster care system, etc.; The free-riding of departments needs to be addressed.

- Understanding that the extent of sexual violence addresses racial, class, and gendered oppression. This understanding is not an intrinsic value to our government, which is evidently where the issue lies.

Education Model

- Different districts and areas require various specializations. This calls for NC to be aware of the necessary differences between locations and alter education according to relevance.
- A state-mandated model could lead to inadequate and unequal education across the state concerning qualified teachers and dedicated staff, as well as the demographics and culture of the area.
- The curriculum must be survivor-informed, evidence-based, inclusive, and grounded in public health.
- Children are a marginalized community that are seen peripherally and as dependent. As they respond to their trauma, they receive backlash and punishment. Additionally, this reveals racial disparities in adults' response to child trauma, as there are apparent disparities in reprimanding minority children.
- Education is both prevention and intervention, as abuse is an escalation process
- Providing education is giving confidence and language to disclose.

Survey Questions

Brief description of human-trafficking prevalence in North Carolina:

North Carolina is ranked 9th in the United States for human trafficking with Charlotte as the most prominent contributor. The National Human Trafficking hotline reported 50,123 signals in 2021 from across the United States with 922 from North Carolina, which included 223 cases and 340 victims. The NC Department of Administration identifies the prevalence of highways, military populations, and agriculture in North Carolina as significant contributing factors to the instances of sex and labor trafficking. Finally, the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC) identified over 80% of trafficked victims in the Americas are female, and over a third are minors.

Human Trafficking Survey Questions

1. Please share your background and experience regarding the topic of human trafficking.
2. What is the responsibility, if any, of the state in addressing human trafficking?
3. What solutions, if any, to human trafficking would you recommend or do you have experience with?
4. To your knowledge, are there any notable programs in NC schools or communities that address the prevention of human trafficking?

Brief description of prevention education:

Prevention education is a comprehensive model addressing the root causes of interpersonal violence, sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking. Prevention strategies are intended to target the individual, the community, and external societal factors that influence and are influenced by human trafficking. Prevention education must be viewed and treated as a comprehensive public health approach. All entities within the educational system have the potential to advocate for victims of human trafficking but educational measures are imminent for informing crime indicators and warning signs.

Prevention Education Survey Questions:

5. How **effective** do you think prevention education regarding human trafficking would be in NC?
6. What are your thoughts about having prevention education for human trafficking **mandated** by the state for K-12 schools?
7. What would facilitate implementing prevention education in the state?
8. What challenges do you think the state would face in implementing prevention education?
9. What thoughts do you have about funding an implementation program?
10. Is there something else that you would like to share about this topic that we haven't asked?

Interviewees

Hannah Arrowood

In 2009, she founded the Present Age Ministries and is currently the executive director as well as the president of the Charlotte Metro Human Trafficking Task Force.

Robin Colbert

She began her career in survivor advocacy in 2006 as a program coordinator at the North Carolina Department of Justice, Attorney General's office. Subsequently, she was an assistant director for the NC Council of Women, Treasurer of the Board of Directors at WomenNC, President of the NC Victims Assistance Network, Associate Director and Treasurer of the Board of Directors at the NC Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and presently, works as Commissioner of the NC Innocence Inquiry Commission and as an Educational Consultant for the National Human Trafficking Training & Technical Assistance Center.

Courtney Dunkerton

Her career in survivor advocacy began in 2013 as the executive director of Alamance for Freedom, an anti-human trafficking coalition. Since then, she has worked as a forensic interviewer at CrossRoads: Sexual Assault Response and Resource Center and as a contractor at the North Carolina Human Trafficking Commission. She currently resides as the human trafficking program coordinator at the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

Margaret Henderson

She began her work in survivor advocacy in 1992 as the executive director of the Orange County Rape Crisis Center and has continued her work as Director of the Public Intersection Project.

Alex Mavrogenis

She has worked in prevention education for almost five years and is currently the youth education program coordinator at the Orange County Rape Crisis Center (OCRCC).

Pam Strickland

In 2010, She founded NC Stop Human Trafficking and has continued there for almost 14 years.

Appendix C: Quantitative Data Visualizations

ArcGIS is a platform used to transform quantitative data into an interactive and engaging web page. Our [StoryMap](#) provides an overview of the research project as well as guides the reader through the individual risk maps, the complete risk index map, a transportation map, and a relationship map between spending per pupil in the school system and the deficit in funding.

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