

2020

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Recommended Citation

Litam, S. A., King-White, D., MacCluskie, K. C., & Phillips, J. C. (2021). Mental Health Workers' Perceptions of Risk Factors for Human Trafficking in Nairobi, Kenya: A Preliminary Qualitative Investigation. *Journal of Counseling Sexology & Sexual Wellness: Research, Practice, and Education*, 2 (2), 104-116.
<https://doi.org/10.34296/02021031>

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Mental Health Workers' Perceptions of Risk Factors for Human Trafficking in Nairobi, Kenya: A Preliminary Qualitative Investigation

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The researchers of this pilot study conducted three in-depth semi-structured interviews with four mental health workers in Nairobi to obtain a deeper understanding of their perceptions of human trafficking in Kenya. Four themes that increased vulnerability for entrance into the human trafficking trade were identified. Individuals were at increased risk for forced labor exploitation due to socioeconomic factors, traditional African practices, cultural beliefs, and political risk factors. This article provides implications for practice and support for community mental health workers, counselors, and educators working with survivors of human trafficking. Implications for future research and practice are discussed.

Keywords: human trafficking, sex trafficking, Kenya

Introduction

The United Nations has recognized human trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime as serious global problems that require a comprehensive response (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2003). In December 2000, the United Nations General Assembly convened in Palermo, Italy, to identify preventative strategies and combat transnational crime more effectively. These international efforts resulted in the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNODC, 2003) and the Palermo Protocols. Of the three Palermo Protocols, The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons represented the first attempt to define human trafficking.

Prior to the Palermo Protocols, the definition of human trafficking had remained vague (Laczko & Gramegna, 2003). Since then, the UNODC (2003, p. 42) clarified the definition of "trafficking in persons" to include the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons through force, fraud, or coercion, for the exploitative purpose of controlling another person. The UNODC (2003) additionally established that the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a person under eighteen years of age for the purpose of exploitation constitutes an act of human trafficking. The Palermo Protocols and the UNODC's (2003) definition of human trafficking represented important global steps toward identifying and combating the transnational crime of human trafficking.

In many cases, traffickers exploit their knowledge of local systems, behaviors, social structures, and vulnerabilities

within their communities (U.S. Department of State, 2018). As a result, human trafficking must be understood within its local context to develop a meaningful response (U.S. Department of State, 2018). In recent years, Africa has seen a significant increase in rates of human trafficking (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2017; U.S. Department of State, 2018). In 2017, approximately 24,138 sex trafficking victims and 5,902 labor trafficking victims were identified in Africa (U.S. Department of State, 2018). An extensive review outlining the deleterious effects of human trafficking on survivors' sexual wellness, mental health and overall wellbeing has been established (de Chesnay, 2013; Hossain, Zimmerman, Abas, Light, & Watts, 2010; Tsutsumi, Izutsu, Poudyal, Kato, & Marui, 2008) and is beyond the purview of this study.

Since 2008, global trafficking reports have increased by a rate of 259% per year (Gerassi, 2015). Given these estimates, counselors and other mental health professionals should have

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the social injustice of human trafficking on the forefronts of their minds. To effectively combat this social injustice, counselors and other health professionals must obtain a deeper understanding of the risk factors which influence this crime. This pilot study employs a phenomenological approach with mental health professionals in Nairobi, Kenya to answer the following research question:

What are the beliefs and experiences of human trafficking in mental health workers in Nairobi, Kenya?

The following sections outline the cultural, socioeconomic, religious, and political factors that may serve as human trafficking risk factors. Also, using the lenses of mental health workers in Nairobi, this study will detail the epistemological worldview and the theoretical frameworks used to obtain a deeper understanding of the beliefs and risk factors of human trafficking.

Human Trafficking

According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), human trafficking encompasses both labor and sex trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2013). The ILO Forced Labour Convention in 1930 defined forced labor to include any forms of work or services performed by persons under a third party, under threat of a penalty (e.g., physical harm), and in which the person performing the labor cannot leave by his or her own free will (ILO, 2017). Labor trafficking may take the form of domestic servitude, agricultural labor, sweatshop labor, and begging (U.S. Department of State, 2018). According to the ILO (2017), of the 24.9 million people in forced labor scenarios worldwide, 16 million were exploited in the private economy either by individuals or enterprises. The remaining 4.1 million people in forced labor were subjected to state-imposed forms of work such as prisons, militaries, or rebel armies. The ILO (2017) further estimated 4.8 million people across the globe were victims of sex trafficking including one million children and adolescents.

Sex trafficking involves forced labor in a variety of areas, including commercial sex, exotic dancing, pornography, and massage parlors (Logan, Walker, & Hunt, 2009; Richard, 1999). When threats, force, or coercion are used for the purpose of sexual exploitation, victim consent is impossible because people cannot consent to enslavement or forced labor (Logan, 2007; Richard, 1999). Sex trafficking can be understood as an organized crime activity and a crime of a relational nature (Verhoeven, van Gestel, de Jong, & Kleemans, 2013). Traffickers may promise women modeling jobs, nanny positions, educational opportunities, and other law-abiding careers only to forcibly sell them into the sex trade (U.S. Department of State, 2018).

Although trafficked individuals may be moved across borders, most trafficked people are moved domestically within their country of origin by persons of the same nationality (U.S. Department of State, 2013). Despite compelling statistics, the true prevalence of human trafficking remains unclear; thus, statistics should be cautiously interpreted (ILO, 2017; Laczko & Gramegna, 2003; U.S. Department of State, 2018).

Human Trafficking in Africa

Human trafficking to, from, and within African countries occurs at alarming rates (U.S. Department of State, 2018). The International Labour Organization (2017) reported an estimated 7.6 out of 1,000 people in 2016 were exploited through forced labor. Of the 3.8 million adults involved in the human sex trafficking trade globally, an estimated 8% were exploited in Africa (ILO, 2017). Awareness about human trafficking varies by region and is largely influenced by challenges associated with victim identification (ILO, 2017; Tyldum & Brunovskis, 2005). Across the continent of Africa, the transnational crime of human trafficking is estimated at 13.1 billion U.S. dollars (USD) annually (May, 2017). Kenya has been identified as a source, transit, and destination country for children, women, and men trafficked for forced labor and sexual exploitation (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2018; Odhiambo, Kassily, Maito, Onkware, & Oboka, 2012; U.S. Department of State, 2018), generating an estimated worth of \$40 million USD on the black market (Caraway, 2005). Kenya's coastal region has been identified as a hotspot for the human trafficking trade (International Organization for Migration, 2018) and is used as part of the transit route for women and girls trafficked from Ethiopia and other East African countries to Europe and South African countries (U.S. Department of State, 2018). In Kenya and Uganda, young girls, especially orphans, are at increased risk for forced sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. Specifically, girls under the age of 16 represented the largest demographic of missing persons in Kenya (Odhiambo et al., 2012). The International Organization for Migration (2018) identified rates of poverty, loss of parent or parents, lack of education, and drug abuse as contributing factors to the human trafficking trade in Kenya. Due to these factors, children and young adults were forced to work as street beggars or work within agricultural settings (U.S. Department of State, 2018).

Influence of Socioeconomic Factors and Traditional Practices

Severe poverty, traditional African practices, and a lack of vocational, educational, and work opportunities have been identified as factors that influence rates of labor and sex trafficking in Africa (Dottridge, 2002; IOM, 2018; Onuoha, 2011; Swart, 2012). As a result of these intersecting factors,

African children commonly move from rural to urban areas (Salah, 2001). Also, parents or guardians who experience income inequality are more likely to place their children with families in larger cities to benefit from their wages (Adepoju, 2005; U.S. Department of State, 2018). The breakdown of nuclear family structures through the death of one or both parents also increases the likelihood that children may be moved into larger cities (Salah, 2001).

This movement of children takes on two forms: kin fostering and placement. Kin fostering is a more permanent type of placement where children move between and within families to increase access to better resources and care (Blackie, 2014; Rochat, Mokomane, & and, 2015). Yet, kin fostering is not focused on legal processes or protection and uses less formal fostering practices (Abebe, 2010). In these instances, children from poor families move into the homes of richer relatives or very close acquaintances to provide domestic help. In exchange for their services, these children receive opportunities to attend school or obtain an apprenticeship. Most children who are kin fostered become fully integrated members of the families, are treated with respect, and enjoy greater access to privileges (Ikeora, 2016).

Whereas kin fostering is established between and within families, placement occurs outside existing family systems. In placement scenarios, children are relocated into the homes of acquaintances or strangers and perform light housework in exchange for education and better opportunities (Iroanya, 2018; Salah, 2001). Unfortunately, placement creates opportunities for traffickers to exploit existing cultural systems. Notably, parents in rural settings who experience income inequality may be targeted and victimized by traffickers who promise to place their children in wealthier, urban homes for a better life (Ikeora, 2016). Upon arrival to their new home, trafficked children are forced to work long hours that ultimately deprive them of education and endanger their health (Salah, 2001). Importantly, not all cases of placement result in child trafficking (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2003).

Children who are forced into domestic servitude report experiences of discrimination and isolation that result in physical, psychological, and sexual violence (Ikeora, 2016; ILO, 2017). These experiences often lead to significant disparities related to the development, health, and wellbeing of these children (Boateng & West, 2017; Bellis & Zisk, 2014). According to a review of research on human trafficking, parents and guardians of trafficked children are unaware of the severe exploitation their children endure (Adepoju, 2005).

Influence of Cultural and Religious Beliefs

African countries enjoy a diverse range of cultural and religious beliefs, some of which may contribute to the prevalence and rate of human trafficking. For instance, marriage represents a valuable institution that is deeply ingrained in

African cultural values (Awoniyi, 2015). Quantitative studies have linked sexual exploitation and sex trafficking with forced marriages in African countries (McAlpine, Hossain, & Zimmerman, 2016; Msuya, 2017). In addition, some rural African communities believe engaging in sexual intercourse with a virgin can prevent or even cure human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and other sexually transmitted diseases (Salah, 2001; Swart, 2012). Thus, children and adolescents are at greater risk for forced sexual exploitation due to their vulnerability and the belief that they are healthier (Smith & Vardaman, 2010).

Influence of Political Factors

Political instability, corruption, societal crisis, and a lack of legislation aimed at protecting victims and prosecuting traffickers contribute to maintaining the status quo (Onuoha, 2011; Swart, 2012). Kenya currently lacks the political policies necessary to develop anti-trafficking laws, prosecuting traffickers, and protecting victims (Adepoju, 2005; Fitzgibbon, 2003). As a result, traffickers benefit from a high-profit, low-risk means of exploitation (Bales, 2007). Also, Kenya does not have up-to-date legislation to support families with children who have been abducted, placed, or taken from rural to urban areas. According to Kenyan law, a missing person is presumed to be dead if they have been missing for more than 7 years (Odhiambo et al., 2012). Thus, law enforcement ceases to search for missing Kenyan children who are trafficked after placement and presumed dead after 7 years.

A paucity of qualitative research exists within the current body of literature examining the scope of trafficking of persons in Africa (Fitzgibbon, 2003). Additionally, much of the research on trafficking has been funded, commissioned, or facilitated by international organizations or by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support specific programs (Pharoah, 2006). Other studies on human trafficking in Africa have focused on the survivors' experiences rather than the mental health workers with whom they help (Urama & Nwachukwu, 2017; Walker & Hüncke, 2016). During the therapeutic process, counselors' attitudes typically inform the amount of empathy and rape myth acceptance, thus, understanding these mental health professionals' perspectives is of utmost importance (Litam, 2019).

The researchers of this study have identified several socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and political factors that influence human trafficking in Nairobi, Kenya. The current study sought to contribute to the existing body of research on human trafficking by examining the beliefs and perspectives of mental health workers who provide services to trafficked survivors. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with mental health workers in Nairobi, Kenya to obtain a deeper understanding of their beliefs and experiences related to human trafficking. The methodology of this study as well as

these semi-structured interviews are detailed in the following section.

Method

Study Design

According to Rubel and Okech (2017), qualitative research has the potential to address issues of social justice and culture and is necessary for researchers to understand a social phenomenon (Wiersma, 2009). Moreover, qualitative research is helpful when researchers seek to develop a complex or detailed understanding of experiences (Creswell, 2013). Within the fields of counseling and counselor education, qualitative inquiries continue to gain credibility and acceptance (D. G. Hays, Wood, Dahl, & Kirk-Jenkins, 2016). Prior to conducting qualitative research, the researchers' theoretical lens and epistemological beliefs must be established. Specifically, the researchers of this study adhered to a post-positivist theoretical lens with constructivist and critical realist epistemological influences. A post-positivist worldview is evidenced through the use of logically-related steps of data analysis and rigorous methods of qualitative data collection (Creswell, 2018; D. Hays, 2012). Consistent with a post-positivist worldview, this study's researchers recognized how participants may hold multiple perspectives rather than a single reality, and they understood the aspirational nature of maintaining complete objectivity (Moustakas, 1994). Throughout the analysis process, the researchers sought to interpret the data so to recognize how meanings are socially and historically negotiated (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, the researchers considered how researchers and participants are conscious beings who interpret and act on the world around them within networks of cultural meaning (Giorgi, 1995). These epistemological beliefs align with the constructivist stance, a belief system that asserts meanings are constructed from conversations between researchers and participants (Morrow, 2005). Finally, this study's results, discussion, and conclusion sections are offered as part of a larger discourse rather than presented as infallible truths. According to Trochim (2020), critical realists recognize that theories are revisable and constructed meanings are imperfect due to the infallible nature of perception and observation. Thus, critical influences are also evidenced through the researchers' assumption that the study methods embody societal imbalances and hierarchies (Rubel & Okech, 2017).

This study uses phenomenological inquiry to describe the meaning of lived experiences related to mental health workers' understanding of human sex trafficking in Kenya. Specifically, transcendental phenomenology is used to demonstrate the dynamic intersection of research activities and lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Also, the researchers of this study adhered to the systematic steps of data analysis procedures and guidelines established by Moustakas

(1994). The research context included both urban and rural sites. Data was also collected through semi-structured interviews with four mental health professionals — two counselors, a psychologist, and a psychiatrist — who resided and worked in Nairobi. Participants were recruited through telephone and email with the help of knowledgeable Kenyan colleagues who worked at a private university in Kenya. These colleagues selectively chose participants who exemplified a strong grasp of the English language to limit the possibility of a language barrier between Kiswahili, the official language of Kenya, and English. One Kenyan colleague was present during each semi-structured interview to facilitate translation between English and Kiswahili if needed. Participants were purposely chosen to represent a range of mental health specializations.

The data analysis process employed the use of bracketing, horizontalization, organization of themes, and the construction of a textural description (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Moustakas, 1994). To promote bracketing, a peer auditor examined the depth of descriptions and associated themes to ensure researchers maintained distance from their own subjectivity. Horizontalization was conducted to provide a deeper understanding of participant experiences. Throughout the process of horizontalization, researchers met frequently to create in-depth descriptions while continuing to review and discuss meanings as they emerged from the data. These clusters of meanings were reduced into themes that influenced the textural description of participant experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, researchers provided a composite description that outlined the essence of the phenomena, or the essential invariant structure (Moustakas, 1994). Researchers employed phenomenological techniques to reduce individual experiences into a description of the universal essence or phenomena (Creswell, 2013).

Researcher Subjectivity

Alongside coding data, the researchers increased the trustworthiness of the study's results by identifying salient social locations, identities, lenses, and biases (Saldaña, 2015). The researchers' self-disclosure provides a deeper context of how various intersecting identities may have influenced the development of worldviews. The lead researcher self-identifies as a foreign born Filipina and Chinese American woman. She is a counselor educator, assistant professor, and clinical counselor who advocates for and conducts research on topics related to human trafficking and human sexuality. This research manuscript is her first study based on human trafficking data collected outside the United States. The lead researcher identified her existing biases and expectations of results to include the influences of poverty, lack of education, and sociocultural influences as factors that influence entry into sex trade. The second researcher identifies as an African American woman, and she has previously worked

in administrative roles within the K–12 school system. She is a counselor educator and assistant professor with a desire to understand ways to prevent domestic child servitude in vulnerable populations. The second researcher identified her existing biases and expectations to include a lack of family support and awareness as risk factors for forced labor and sex trafficking. The third researcher is an American woman and a counseling psychologist. She is a professor who has brief experience with forced labor and sex trafficking in Africa, and she joined the research team to prevent the forced labor exploitation of African children. The third researcher identified her expectations of results to include a lack of education and low rates of self-efficacy due to negative messages from parents and teachers. The final researcher is a professional American woman who is a psychologist and associate professor. She has minimal experience with forced labor trafficking in Africa but possesses doctoral-level knowledge of qualitative methods. Her expectations of forced labor trafficking included the disproportion of girls and women vulnerable due to poverty. The subsequent section Strategies for Trustworthiness of Interpretation will discuss the efforts to sustain bracketing of subjectivity.

Strategies for Trustworthiness of Interpretation

Qualitative research requires standards of quality such as dependability, credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). To promote trustworthiness, researchers completed member checks in a continuous process throughout the interviews and data analysis. By using member checks specifically as a continuous process, the researchers developed the study in a trustworthy manner (Guba, 1981). The researchers also employed peer scrutiny by inviting colleagues to offer feedback and fresh perspectives. As the project developed, researchers employed reflexive commentary by utilizing ongoing evaluation. Finally, the researchers compiled descriptions of co-researchers and participants' review of themes and conclusions. To confirm understanding of every informant's statements, the lead researcher restated the major points after each question throughout the interviews. In response, participants checked the researcher's notes at the end of the interview to confirm the data. The researcher also explained that the pilot study was designed to learn about acts of forced labor that occurred in Nairobi. Specifically, the researcher defined forced labor as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtainment of a person for labor or services through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of involuntary servitude (U.S. Department of State, 2018). To help analyze the data, the lead researcher used follow-up questions and analytic memo writing. These memos were shared with each informant at the end of the interview to confirm the accuracy of responses.

When justifying smaller sample sizes in qualitative stud-

ies, researchers engage in transparency when pragmatic considerations arise (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe, & Young, 2018). In this study, researchers faced several issues related to patient care and time constraints. The severe shortage of mental health workers in Nairobi created limitations to the sample size. Although additional interviews were desired, the researchers considered how an hour spent with key informants resulted in an hour that left many ailing community members without care. In the counseling clinic and the private practice, both key informants were the only staff members working in their respective clinic locations. Additionally, researchers noted the ethical issue of time constraints for the mental health workers in the psychiatric hospital. A dilemma arose between the tension of maintaining research methods, research ethics, and the researchers' commitment to social justice. The researchers recognized that interviewing two participants in one interview would not result in participant confidentiality. However, the mental health professionals had to uphold the broader ethical standard to do no harm to the community being served. Ultimately, the researchers decided to prioritize research ethics rather than methodology. Thus, both participants were jointly interviewed by the first author to avoid separating them from their clinical work and compromising ongoing patient care.

Procedure

Selection of sites and participants. The study consisted of interviews with four mental health professionals residing and working in Nairobi. To protect confidentiality, researchers gave pseudonyms to all informants. At the time of the study, the first informant, Mary, was a 35-year-old Kenyan woman with 13 years of counseling experience. In Kayole, Mary had established a small counseling clinic and had worked over the past 4 years to provide mental health services to marginalized populations. Specifically, Mary provides mental health counseling services to approximately 10 to 15 trafficked individuals per month. The second informant, Kioko, was a 31-year-old psychologist who had worked in a private practice for 8 years. Notably, Kioko identified himself as a member of the Kikuyu tribe, and he moved to the Westlands area of Nairobi to attend a university. Kioko had worked with trafficked individuals and provided detailed information regarding the sociocultural and governmental influences pertaining to human trafficking. The third informant, Samuel, was a 52-year-old psychiatrist who had worked in a psychiatric hospital for 30 years. He was a member of the Kenyan community where he had lived for most of his life. Lastly, Akina was a 28-year-old counselor who had worked in a psychiatric hospital for 3 years. She was born and raised in Nairobi. Both Samuel and Akina had worked with survivors of human trafficking, although they were unable to detail an approximate number of cases due to challenges with victim identification. The basic demographic

information for each key informant is listed in Table 1.

Table 1
Basic Demographic Information About Key Informants

Key Informant	Gender	Age	Profession	Years of Experience
Mary	Female	35	Counselor	13
Kioko	Male	31	Psychologist	8
Samuel	Male	52	Psychiatrist	30
Akina	Female	28	Counselor	3

Because individuals from any socioeconomic status may become trafficked (McClain & Garrity, 2011), researchers selected a diverse sample of participants who worked in low, middle, and high socioeconomic areas to obtain rich, descriptive data about trafficking beliefs from various perspectives. Each of the participants had reported direct experiences working with human trafficking survivors. One participant, Mary, worked in Kayole, a low socioeconomic area. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Danish Refugee Council (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Danish Refugee Council (UNHCR), 2012), the majority of Kayole residents earn less than \$1300 USD annually. Another participant, Kioko, worked in the Westlands, a high socioeconomic area. Individuals who reside in the Westlands earn approximately \$1450–3400 USD annually (Cyrom Real Estate, 2017). Two participants, Samuel and Akina, worked in a mental health facility located in Mathare, a middle to low socioeconomic area. The average income per year for Mathare is approximately \$1200 USD (Corburn, Ngau, Karanja, & Makau, 2011). In total, researchers interviewed four participants for this qualitative study. To obtain objective information, the researchers did not interview mental health professionals with whom they had built previous relationships.

Interview protocol and questions. Researchers obtained Internal Review Board approval prior to beginning this study. The researchers conducted three 90-minute, semi-structured interviews in English to obtain rich, descriptive data on the beliefs about and risk factors for trafficked individuals in Nairobi. The interviews were conducted in February 2018, and each interview was audio recorded. Participants gave researchers consent to be recorded, and participants were informed that they could end the recording and/or interview at any time. The semi-structured interviews included the following questions:

1. Are you aware of incidents of forced labor that occur within Nairobi?
2. How are people subjected to acts of forced labor?
3. To the best of your knowledge, how do people enter these scenarios of forced labor?

4. What are the contributing factors that influence people to enter scenarios of forced labor?

Data analysis and coding. A total of three researchers (the first and third authors and a recent counseling graduate student) analyzed the data and independently identified themes. The researchers used attribute coding for demographics, initial coding, and theming (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2015). For passages of significant length, the researchers used lump coding rather than line-by-line coding (Saldaña, 2015). These approaches align with the practice of epistemological research questioning (Saldaña, 2015).

Researchers identified, named, and categorized consistent themes. Researchers additionally read and reevaluated data to identify emerging themes through constant comparison. Researchers evaluated inter-rater reliability by determining the percent agreement between each of the three raters on themes. Themes that met the minimal agreement percentage of 75% are presented in the results. When the mental health professionals found consistent information pertaining to factors of forced labor exploitation in Kenya, saturation was reached.

Results

Regarding the results of the grounded theory analysis, researchers found that Kenyan mental health workers perceived the intersection of socioeconomic factors, traditional African practices, cultural beliefs, and political factors as risk factors to human trafficking in Nairobi. These findings, presented below, contribute to the established literature on human trafficking.

Influence of Socioeconomic Factors and Traditional Practices

All participants identified poverty as playing a significant role in influencing human trafficking in Kenya. Each of the informants described how impoverished families relied on the traditional practice of placement, particularly, when kin fostering was not available, rural children are relocated to urban homes and perform light housework in exchange for education and better opportunities (Iroanya, 2018; Salah, 2001). In many cases, families were approached by traffickers who offered to connect their children to more affluent homes in the city. Informants detailed that young girls were in greater demand than young boys for placement as full-time house help. Mary described how children are forced to work full-time as house help despite the promise of receiving an education:

Due to low income of their parents, girls, maybe 14 years old, are forced to go and work instead of being in the education system. These young girls must clean houses, take care of other young children, and complete domestic chores.

Kioko described that, for young girls in many cases, full-time work was the only viable option. He explained that young girls who seek placement as domestic help are often exploited by people who want cheap labor:

The majority of what we know about is house help. Underage girls who are employed to work as domestic servants tend to be employed to do that work because they [the employers] want cheap labor. Cheap labor means there is no max [to what] that this child can do. Sometimes the girls are from rural areas, so they have come to Nairobi from the village and they don't know a lot.

Participants discussed that child placement from rural areas into the city is driven by families' need to earn additional income. Additionally, many children have intentions of sending money back to their families. Akina described this practice as a common plight of many impoverished African families: "People know around this place, most of us end up being house help. If you want to make money, that is the easiest way, and it also helps us to send money back to home." Samuel echoed similar sentiments when he described how many African families have instilled the value of hard work to support their families in poverty:

We look at our parents. They grew up in hardship and they work hard to put us in a good lifestyle. They are telling us from an early age to work hard, in our minds, this is what they say. They want to give us something that they never had. Now for us when we are growing up, this is when we realize, we have to work hard, we have to do something to help and it is not easy.

According to participants, although some children who are placed enjoy access to better education and living environments, not all children benefit from these new privileges. Children who work as house helpers are at risk for physical abuse, sexual abuse, and other forms of child endangerment and exploitation. Mary described how children who leave their homes and work as house help may not receive basic needs, are forced to provide hard physical labor, and are subjected to poor living conditions:

I provided [counseling] for a girl who was taken, for two months, to Saudi Arabia and then was promised to be paid. But then for two weeks she was beaten and forced to lay a foundation for a house. They [the children] are beaten, they [the children] are not given enough food. The sleeping houses are not very well made, there were four cots in a hall.

Kioko described that children are more vulnerable to exploitation because of their age and ease of controllability:

We find that there are younger people, younger and younger people being employed, because it's easier to pay them. You can beat them up if they misbehave, you can detain them if they misbehave, it is much easier to get some work done. Children as young as 14-year-old are being trafficked.

Samuel explains that placed children are vulnerable and oftentimes experience abuse and neglect in their new house; consequently, this abuse negatively affects their mental and emotional health. He noted that placed children may resort to physical violence against infants whom they are expected to protect and raise:

Either they are locked up in the houses with no chance of escape or even if they escape, they do not know the town very well, so they wind up getting lost and [this] increases their chances of harm. Now, sadly though, in some cases, we have tended to see that when a child is abused as an employee and the family leaves, the baby that has been left in the care of the child gets the hit. Some babies have also died under their care because they have turned their aggression onto this kid, and then they disappear. Most cases are not documented. These kids are scared of the police.

A gendered pattern of labor also emerged from the data. Whereas girls were more likely to work as forced house help, boys were more likely to provide forced labor on farms. Mary described an instance when boys were taken from their shamba, or rural area, to work on a farm:

Three boys, ages 18, 19, and 22, were taken and forced to work on a farm. Their parents released them to go and work somewhere in another country to make money. Someone took their passports, and for a month, they were kept in a hall, taken to different farms to work, given one meal a day, dinner. A lady would coordinate 10 workers; if she gives you the worker, you don't pay the worker, you pay her.

Kioko explained how impoverished families from rural areas placed boys as young as 14 on coffee or tea farms. Upon arrival at these locations, traffickers forced many boys to work long hours with little or no pay, and they deprived many boys from receiving education. He noted:

It is easier to get these boys to go pick tea or coffee or work in the factories where the demand for cheaper labor is higher. It is like a norm. You have to go help your parents and I think one of the disadvantages of this is that in most cases,

families do this because they themselves need the money.

When children from impoverished families are unable to obtain employment, they are oftentimes forced to engage in criminal activities. Samuel described how many rural children struggle with a detrimental thought process:

You have a dream, we all have dreams, but you are not able to achieve this dream, so you start getting ideas of how else you can take it. You steal from your neighbor, you steal from your friends. We do not have a plan. You have pushed yourself, you get depressed, but you still do not have the dream you are chasing after.

Participants also linked sexual exploitation to poverty. According to Kioko, the recipient of the placed child may exploit impoverished families' lack of financial resources:

Now of course they [the family] are unaware of the risks because it is within these roles that the sexual predators are going, "I know your family, you can't do anything about it, they can't take me to court, they don't have any money. So, you are my house help but I am going to do with you what I please."

Samuel mirrored the challenging effects of poverty; he explained: "I think it is something of a cycle that has no beginning cause and no ending cause. Our resources are limited." Even if they become aware of their child's exploitation, impoverished families lack the financial resources to advocate on their behalf. Kioko described this process of coercion from the perspective of the placed child:

It becomes a very difficult case working with such [trafficked] people because both parties [parents and trafficker] are willing [to participate in placement]. The child believes, "I'm going to come and just send the money back home." So for those that now, in our society, are maybe forced, who are kidnapped, who are tricked into believing for example, "I am going to take you from your home, I am going to bring you to Nairobi, I am going to make you my secretary," and then when you come to Nairobi you end up discovering that no, you are brought in as a sex slave, there is nowhere you can go. You are duped. You are promised something, but in reality, you get something different.

Family disintegration also played a significant role in the sexual exploitation of young girls; Akina states: "When parents abuse [the children], this affects the children. By the time they [the children] are 5, they [the children] have been

traumatized to such the extent that they learn to expect the abuse." Mary supported Akina's claims, and she explained that children were at greater risk for entry into the sex trafficking trade when a breakdown in the nuclear family occurred. Furthermore, Mary noted that the relationship between poverty and the rural African belief that younger sex partners are healthier and do not have AIDS or HIV represented a vulnerability factor for entry into the human sex trafficking trade:

I had a case last week, a 14-year-old [girl], who had anxiety. I wanted to know where is this anxiety from? I called the mother and found out it is a commercial [sex] job for the mother. She tells the girl it [commercial sex] is an easy way for income. They can make as much as 20 [shillings], and some don't get paid at all. Some girls get pregnant. They are only 9 years, as early as 9 years or 10 years [old].

Mary also described cases of single mothers selling commercial sex as well as selling their daughters for profit: "The mother tells them [the buyers], 'I also have daughters. They are healthy.' Maybe they are 5 years [old]. They are raped, and the mother is paid."

Influence of Cultural Beliefs and Political Factors

Researchers and informants identified the conflicting nature between Kenyan law and traditional African cultural values and beliefs as an issue that left trafficked children without proper legal protection. For example, Kioko described a case where a 14-year-old girl was raped after being placed in an affluent home. Although the resident, a 50-year-old man, was taken to court, the judge was willing to overlook the act of sexual assault as long as the girl was willing to marry her assailant. Kioko explained:

They took this child to court and took the perpetrator to court. A 50-year-old raped a 14-year-old, and she is now pregnant. The judge asked, "So, what are your plans?" Now the judge is asking the girl, "So do you want to have a family? Do you want to start a family with this man?" The judge completely forgets that the point of these laws is to jail this guy. If the child is willing to become a wife to him, at 50-something or 60 years old, that is okay. And this is a challenge of our legal system. You get a lot of work done, long hours put in, and then you finally bring it to the people who are supposed to effect it and they go back to traditions.

As evidenced by this informant's story, the Kenyan law did not protect the 14-year-old girl. In this case, the Kenyan justice system determined that the traditional African belief that

identifies marriage as a valuable institution (Awoniyi, 2015) was more important than convicting a man for the sexual exploitation of a child. This child remained in her perpetrator's home instead of being reunited with her family. According to the informant, the child's family was never informed of this crime, and they lacked the resources needed to find and protect her.

Similar to this child's neglect, participants asserted that children are negatively affected by the authoritative childrearing style that is consistent with the traditional African culture. These African values, as Akina noted, seemed to affect children's ability to advocate for themselves:

I think maybe another challenge we are having in Kenya is that most of the parenting style is authoritarian. In African culture, you are not allowed to question your parents. It is in very rare cases that a child will ask their mother or father [a question], and this affects mainly the self-esteem of the child. The child does not have the confidence to speak or to ask for help.

Similarly, Samuel shares Akina's observation:

Most of them [the parents] are very cold. This affects the children. By the time they are 5, they have been traumatized, to such [an extent] that they learn to not speak their mind. The parents are actually failing the children because they are not able to help.

Mary also confirmed Akina's and Samuel's perspectives:

You will see some people who really have no parents, 10 years old. Some, I ask, "Where are the parents?" They [the parents] are there physically, but they are not really concerned. So, this young one can easily be picked up, can easily be in drugs, easily sourced for money, any kind of abuse. The parents will protect and nurture [the child] for maybe 10 years, then it is the belief the child can be independent.

Kioko adds to the previous informants' observations by discussing teachers' authoritarian attitude towards children:

Especially in rural schools, the attitude of the teachers toward the students has been problematic. The way they speak to these kids, "You will never amount to anything, you must stand up like your parents, you cannot even read or write, who do you think would employ you?" So all these negative statements these kids turn to and believe, so even when they have the same opportunity as another child, they do not believe they can do it. It is self-defeatist thinking that

is reinforced by the teachers. Students perform poorly, they come home, their parents reinforce the self-defeatist thinking.

This type of treatment may cause the child to become disenfranchised from their family. According to all four informants, disenfranchised children may become rebellious, act out, and be forced onto the streets, where they are vulnerable to opportunistic traffickers. Akina comments on the intergenerational effects of such trauma and the need for a multisystemic change:

We have a lot of people hurting in our society from their childhood, and now they're starting families, and they are hurting them, and these kids will also hurt their families, so the law needs to do what it needs to do, the leaders in all the sectors, the church leaders, the chiefs, the corporate entities, the other agencies, they need, as part of their daily life, to think "What can I do to support this cause?"

Discussion

Intersections between socioeconomic factors, traditional practices, cultural beliefs, and political factors were identified as risk factors for entry into the human trafficking trade in Nairobi, Kenya. The findings of the present study are consistent with, and add depth to, existing research. As confirmed by participants, young girls in Kenya are at increased risk for forced sexual exploitation and domestic servitude as house help (U.S. Department of State, 2013). One informant described scenarios in which young girls were sold for sex due to perceptions from buyers that they do not have HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases. This finding aligns with literature that identified younger victims at greater risk for forced exploitation (Salah, 2001; Swart, 2012) due to traffickers' beliefs that they are healthier and more vulnerable (Smith & Vardaman, 2010). Participants described girls who were forced into domestic servitude as being, on average, between the ages of 9 and 14. This finding is consistent with data that identified girls between the ages of 5 and 14 years as disproportionately representative of the majority of individuals forced into domestic servitude (ILO, 2017; Swart, 2012; U.S. Department of State, 2018).

Researchers have identified severe poverty and lack of vocational, educational, and work opportunities as factors that influenced rates of forced sex and labor trafficking in Africa (Dottridge, 2002; Onuoha, 2011; Swart, 2012; UNICEF, 2003), and participants echoed these factors. One informant described how traffickers exploit parents' dreams of providing a better life for their children. His account was consistent with the literature on human trafficking (Salah, 2001; U.S. Department of State, 2018).

Researchers have identified disintegration of families and lack of parental presence as factors that would increase the risk of becoming trafficked (Salah, 2001; UNICEF, 2003). Participants in this study noted that family disenchantment, the African authoritarian style, the practice of placement, and the breakdown of nuclear family structures represent significant risk factors that put children at risk for forced labor and sexual exploitation.

Implications for Practice

Regardless of geographic location, community mental health professionals and counselors must obtain a deeper understanding of human trafficking. Participants in this study identified the need for additional training, awareness, and education related to serving children and families affected by human trafficking. Researchers have indicated that the completion of training significantly influences the effectiveness of counselors who work with sex trafficking survivors (Litan, 2019). Therefore, it would behoove counselors and mental health professionals in the United States and abroad to receive training on topics related to human trafficking. The following strategies may be used by community mental health workers and counselors while working with trafficking survivors:

- Facilitate trauma-informed screenings to determine whether an individual may have been trafficked or whether he or she has experienced traumatic events.
- Discuss the impact of trauma and communicate this information to community members and other stakeholders to advocate for laws that support the safety and wellbeing of trafficked persons and the prosecution of traffickers.
- Provide individualized mental health support that addresses unique needs of survivors.
- Establish a strong therapeutic rapport characterized by trust, empathy, and openness.
- Honor the language used by the survivors of forced labor exploitation. and recall that many individuals may not identify as having been trafficked.

Forced labor exploitation threatens children's social, emotional, mental, and physical development and wellness. Unfortunately, school-aged children constitute a high percentage of forced laborers in Africa. As such, K-12 educators and administrators must learn strategies to support students in situations of forced labor. Three out of the four informants identified the need for teachers to recognize the signs of forced labor in their students and advocate on their students' behalf. The following strategies may be used by educators and administrators to support survivors of forced labor:

- Be aware of and report physical abuse symptoms.
- Provide professional development training to teachers concerning ways to identify students who may be in forced labor situations.
- Create procedures in the school setting detailing how to report abuse and identify community resources to protect children and adolescents.
- Build rapport with students so they have a trusted adult outside of the home environment.
- Be mindful of students with patterns of absent attendance.

Recommendations for Future Research and Limitations

The researchers adhered to a post-positivist worldview with constructivist and critical realist epistemological influences. Given these influences, readers must consider several implications regarding ways of knowing and the socially-constructed nature of meaning-making. First, the findings proposed in this study occurred as a result of constructed conversations between researchers and participants (Morrow, 2005). Although the researchers sought to bracket their previously held notions, expectations, and lived experiences, this notion represents an aspirational goal (Moustakas, 1994). When considering that the proposed, invariant structures may be appropriate for other scenarios, readers must reflect on the similarities and differences that may exist within their own sociocultural contexts. Finally, readers must recognize how these results, discussions, and conclusions are presented with the intention of contributing to the existing body of discourse and should not be accepted as infallible. Consistent with critical influences, the researchers assert that the study methods, results, and conclusions are inherently characterized by societal imbalances and social hierarchies (Rubel & Okech, 2017). Furthermore, this qualitative pilot study was limited to a specific group of mental health professionals in Nairobi. One specific study limitation included poor acoustics in some settings, which impeded the clarity of transcriptions. Additionally, researchers noted that a language barrier between the Kiswahili and English language was a possibility.

Finally, the small sample size of four participants may serve as a limitation. Although extant qualitative studies have justified small sample sizes due to pragmatic considerations such as time shortages (Vasileiou et al., 2018), a larger dilemma between research methodology, the researchers' commitment to upholding social justice standards, and challenges related to patient accessibility to healthcare existed. Although additional interviews were preferred, mental health workers would have been forced to serve as key informants at the expense of providing patient care. According to Vasileiou

and colleagues (2018), researchers are called to critically consider how parameters that affect sample size pertain to the specifics of the particular project (p. 16). To avoid doing harm to the community, this study only used four participants as key informants in the study. Readers are cautioned to consider how the presence of the small sample size may limit transferability across diverse scenarios.

Future areas of research may seek to understand the cause of familial disintegration that exists within some Kenyan families. Furthermore, research related to training on human trafficking in rural areas may be helpful for families to better understand the possible risks of placement and how to differentiate trafficking from the traditional African practice of kin fostering. Also, researchers have identified further research regarding education and legislative advocacy that may support individuals to maintain cultural traditions without compromising legal issues as important. Implications for trauma-informed practice provided by mental health professionals and educators in school settings must also be considered.

Conclusion

Millions of individuals are impacted by forced labor (ILO, 2012). In this study, researchers identified four intersecting themes that served as risk factors for human trafficking in Nairobi, Kenya—socioeconomic factors, traditional African practices, cultural beliefs, and political factors. Based on these findings, suggestions for mental health professionals, counselors, and teachers were provided.

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