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Changing Awareness of Human Trafficking

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Changing Awareness of Human Trafficking
Roma Patel, Krystal Letourneau & M. Alexis Kennedy

The issue of human trafficking has received increased attention since the Trafficking Victims Protection Act was enacted in 2000. We assume that awareness is growing in the United States but this has not been tested. The current study measures increases in awareness about the issue of trafficking. Nearly 400 students were polled about their awareness in the spring of 2007. Attitudes towards government responses, awareness of the issue and support for victims were surveyed. The study was replicated 5 years later with over 500 new participants. This paper will analyze changes in awareness over time. Gender differences will also be presented. Attitudes towards trafficking will be considered in light of the assumptions underlying the TVPA and its reauthorizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.92</td>
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</tbody>
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There was more agreement than disagreement between the genders. Women were more likely to be aware of domestic minor sex trafficking, the fact that children in detention for prostitution are really trafficking victims. Students supported the idea that the United States should support this issue and could do more to combat trafficking.

Methodology: Awareness about the issue of human trafficking and estimations of the magnitude of the problem was polled. Participants were introductory criminal justice student volunteers. Subjects completed a self-administered questionnaire consisting of nominal and ordinal level measures of variables regarding perceptions and attitudes towards human trafficking. Responses to questions were in the form of a 5 point Likert Scale, in which 1 reflected disagreement and 5 reflected agreement.

Future research should focus on using a community sample or obtaining a general population. Limitations: Items that measured awareness of human trafficking revealed that students were not very aware of trafficking in the US. It is very difficult to assess the true extent of this underground problem so this may contribute to the mixed estimates about the extent of the problem. It could be argued that criminal justice students have more knowledge about the nature of crime than the general population. It knowledge about human trafficking is low for criminal justice students, it may be even lower for the general population. Also, due to the attraction of Las Vegas as a top destination for human trafficking, the students in this city may be more informed than the students in other cities. Assuming that knowledge of the topic is positively correlated to support of the victim, more knowledge and awareness may result in more public support and thus a higher likelihood that more laws will be put into place to aid victims, enforce current laws, and capture perpetrators.

Immigration Relief

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. After completing testifying against offenders, the child victims of trafficking should be reported to their country of origin.

Future research should focus on using a community sample or obtaining a random sample in an effort to increase the ability to generalize these findings.