

Re-Victimization of Sex Trafficking Victims in Canada: Literature Review

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Abstract : This paper examines the factors that contribute to the re-traumatization of victims of sex trafficking within the Canadian context. Sex trafficking occurring domestically in Canada is severely under-researched, stigmatized, and under-prosecuted, leading to the re-traumatization of victims by various levels of government. This is in part due to the Canadian criminal justice system unethically utilizing prostitution laws in cases of sex trafficking and partially due to the unaddressed stigmatization victims face within the justice system itself. Utilizing evidence from a current literature review, personal correspondence, and personal life experiences, this paper will demonstrate the need for victim involvement in policy reform. The current literature review was done through an academic database search using the terms: "Sex Trafficking, Exploitation, Canada", with the limitation of articles written within the last five years and written within the Canadian context. Overall, from the results, only eight articles precisely matched the criteria. The current literature argues strongly and unanimously for more research and education of professionals who have close contact with high-risk populations (doctors, police officers, social workers, etc.) to protect both minors and adults from being sexually trafficked. Additionally, for women and girls who do not have Canadian citizenship, the fear of deportation becomes a barrier to disclosing exploitation experiences to professionals. There is a desperate need for more research done in tandem with survivors and victims to inform policymaking in a meaningful way. The researcher is a survivor of sex trafficking both as a youth and as an adult, giving the researcher a unique insight into the realities of the criminal justice system for victims of sex trafficking. Congruent to the current research, the author calls for standardized professional training for people in healthcare, police officers, court officials, and victim services, with the additional layer of victim involvement. Justice for victims/survivors can only be obtained if they have been consulted and believed. Without meaningful consultation with survivors, victims who are both minors and adults will continue to fall through the cracks in policy.

Keywords : Canadian policy, re-traumatization, sex-trafficking, stigmatization

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