

What Happens After I'm Freed From Modern-Day Slavery? A Case Study Examining Educational Policies and Human Trafficking

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From 2010-2013, 30,146 people were registered victims of human trafficking across 28 member European Union (EU) states (BBC 2016). Of those 30,000 plus victims, there are estimated to be more than 1,000 children trafficked for sexual exploitation. Called “the slave trade of our time”, many governments are now producing policies to help register victims and integrate them back into society (BBC 2016). Even though there are governmental policies, what happens to the college-aged victims who have lived most of their recent lives as victims of human trafficking? How do they integrate into the most elite part of society—higher education? The lack of research on this topic and the intrigue to the answers of those questions has sparked my ongoing research.

Currently I am conducting research in order to answer the following research question: What policies are in place supra-nationally (the EU), nationally, and institutionally to help victims of human trafficking integrate into the higher education system in their respective countries? My research questions represent an area of higher international education that is largely unstudied. The data proves there are numerous victims of human trafficking, but seldom do higher education institutions have resources available to help the registered victims.

In order to answer the research questions, I developed a unique methodology. First, I completed a literature review that examined the European Union’s policy on human trafficking. That gave me a basis of what the EU is currently doing to prevent and to provide resources to the survivors of human trafficking. I am focusing my research on two universities in Sweden and two universities in Romania as case studies. I chose to study Sweden and Romania due to their membership in the EU, and the ability to compare their policies to each other. My research does not guarantee there are victims of human trafficking studying at universities within those countries. It simply evaluates resources available for students if they were victims. Using a point system, I will evaluate the specific universities’ policies geared towards helping victims of human trafficking. I am largely focusing on

professor research, academic programs, and campus resources available aimed at helping victims of human trafficking.

My hypothesis is that even though human trafficking is a huge human rights issue, universities and the education system are doing little to help the victims return to a “normal” life. The article will end with a discussion of the results and concluding thoughts. International and comparative education scholars research a variety of topics, many of which include studying underrepresented groups within higher education. This research examines yet another underrepresented group and draws attention to the issue of human trafficking. I believe this study is one of potentially many that can further expand the research within international and comparative higher education. International and comparative higher education is filled with innovation, unique research questions, and real-world implications; this research presents all three and has potential to influence the field.

References

- British Broadcasting Company (BBC). 2016. *Trafficking Harms 30,000 in EU - Most in Sex Trade*. Accessed: 27 October 2016. Available online at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29660126>