

What Can Organizations Do to Combat Human Trafficking?

5

Laura Dryjanska

Biola University, USA

INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking has become a relatively common term used by the media, policy makers, and scholars. In particular, criminologists and sociologists have been interested in this social issue for decades, but numerous other disciplines such as psychology (especially in the area of dealing with the complex trauma that victims undergo), economics, political science and others have been tackling the issue. However, it appears as a still relatively new topic for industrial-organizational psychologists.

The objectives of this chapter consist of discussing the most influential definitions of human trafficking and presenting the latest statistics that articulate diverse forms of this crime, in order to delineate specific ways in which the organization managers can actively participate in efforts to combat it.

This chapter discusses human trafficking in the context of organization management and corporate social responsibility. On the one hand, workplaces may directly or indirectly benefit from slave labor; on the other hand, there is a potential for some less obvious links with sex trafficking, especially when it comes to individual workers and some unspoken rules of organizational culture. This creates a number of possibilities for a workplace to actively engage in fighting human trafficking, especially in the areas of prevention and partnership. Annually updated Trafficking in Persons Report consistently pays more attention to the role of organizations. The latest edition draws the readers' attention to using financial transactions to uncover human trafficking and features a number of tools developed by inter-governmental organizations.

Efforts to combat human trafficking should start with corporate leadership taking a stand. Sensitive leaders encourage employee training programs that empower workers to report suspicious activities to management and law enforcement. Once there is a level of basic knowledge in the company, some entities can be open to hosting corporate volunteer days or launching an initiative that personally engages employees in the fight against human trafficking, in cooperation with local anti-trafficking organizations in the community to cater to the greatest local needs. Simple acts such as delivering meals, hosting a clothing drive, or creating amenity kits for survivors can make a difference, while at the same time integrating employees. In some cases, employee volunteers may be able to provide a skillset that helps further the work of a local anti-trafficking organization. Such efforts should be promoted and recognized by the leaders. Aside from educating employees, many organizations can further spread awareness on the issue of human trafficking by educating their customers. For example, the travel and tourism industry can distribute resources for customers to spot and report trafficking incidents on travel itineraries. Regardless of the type of organization, each and every one should be committed to slavery-free supply chains. A good start is to have a requirement for every supplier and vendor to sign a contract saying that they will not knowingly engage in labor and/or sex trafficking. Moreover, multiple organizations have financial resources that permit them to engage in anti-trafficking philanthropy. Companies can create

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employee campaign funds specifically dedicated to this cause; service organizations, corporate and family foundations also provide much-needed funding for anti-trafficking organizations.

While the above actions resonate with many corporate managers, this chapter intends to provide a systemic, theoretical lenses to present and assess the ways in which organizations can wisely engage in the global and local fight against human trafficking.

BACKGROUND

The year 2000 appears as a pivotal moment for defining human trafficking – it is in this year when the U.S. Congress and a few months later the United Nations have issued official descriptions of this crime. The specific U.S. law is the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000), which singles out two “severe forms of trafficking in persons”: (1) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; and (2) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (Section 103, 8). The United Nations’ definitions are known as the Palermo Protocol and specifically state that “(a) “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs; (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used; (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article; (d) “Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

The Palermo Protocol definitions, although commonly quoted, have been criticized by scholars for the tautological use of the term “exploitation” (Weitzer, 2014) and the difficulty to apply it in empirical studies (Skilbrei & Tveit, 2008). In a similar fashion to the U.S. Congress, it defines human trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation” (U.N. General Assembly, 2000: 2). Nevertheless, the Palermo Protocol may appear useful as it singles out some specific purposes of exploitation, namely: prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. The type of exploitation not explicitly enlisted in Palermo Protocol is for example child marriage, considered by many researchers as a practice similar to slavery (Raj, Jackson, & Dunham, 2018). In fact, the International Labor Organization has decided to include victims of this phenomenon in the latest statistics concerning the worldwide number of victims of human trafficking.

This brings up the burning question: how many people in the world are victims of this crime? There is no easy and precise reply, as already evident from the blurriness and plurality of definitions. The most

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