Empowerment or Exploitation? Ethical Engagement of Survivor Leaders in Anti-Trafficking Organizations

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In recent years, anti-trafficking organizations have increased the use of survivor voices in fundraising, direct service, and leadership. While empowerment is the goal, tokenism can be the outcome when organizations do not engage survivors ethically. This integrative literature review article provides an overview of the research on engagement of sex trafficking survivors in organizations leading anti-trafficking efforts in the United States and summarizes findings to emphasize ethical engagement practices from an organizational culture perspective. Overall, it is recommended that organizations ethically engage survivors in a variety of roles within the organization. To do this well, organizations should create opportunities for professional capacity building, enhancement of survivor leadership roles and responsibilities, and adoption of a trauma-informed and survivor-informed organizational culture to empower survivors.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Trauma-Informed Organizations, Human Trafficking, Survivor Leadership, Anti-Trafficking Workplace

Introduction

Anti-trafficking organizations are most effective when using content experts, including human trafficking survivors, to inform organizational policy and practice. However, ethical, empowerment-based practices are necessary to ensure survivor safety in anti-trafficking work. Ethical engagement, in this context, is defined as the practices, policies, and dynamics within an organization which promote the well-being, empowerment, and self-determination of survivors (Lockyer, 2020; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2018; National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center [NHTTAC], 2018; Reamer, 2000). However, ethical engagement of survivors in anti-trafficking work is key to avoiding further exploitation and to ensure that not only are voices heard, but that survivors are offered opportunities based on their skill sets and not only survivorship.

Empowerment can be a loaded word for those who have been exploited in the sex industry whether as adults or as children. Because politicized sex work movements frequently use the term 'empowerment' to describe prostitution as a feminist act, traffickers have also adopted the term in the process of grooming and conditioning victims. This act of brainwashing then leads to a victim's worldview in which empowerment and trafficking exploitation are difficult to separate (Lockyer & Wingard, 2020; Morrison et al., 2021). While social stigma is a factor

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that keeps women in sex work, as illustrated by the common idiom "once a whore always a whore" (Simpson & Speake, 2008, p. 1613), the views about power in society as a woman may also shape the belief that sex work is a sex trafficking survivor's only option (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2015; Morrison et al., 2021; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018).

Being sex trafficked is not empowering. Survivors of trafficking are likely to question how much 'choice' they had in their exploitation, particularly with the common social question: W*hy didn't you just leave?* In fact, the notion of consent is the primary element debated among scholars seeking to disentangle trafficking from sex work in theoretical and conceptual definitions. Sex trafficking, as defined by the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons (2004), is:

> *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 (p. 42).*

Additionally, any person under the age of 18 (i.e., unable to consent in commercial sex) who engages in any commercial sex act, such as prostitution, exotic dancing, or pornography, is a victim of sex trafficking (Trafficking Victims Protection Act [TVPA], 2000).

Trafficking experiences vary widely, including trafficking by romantic partners and/or male and female pimps, family members, friends and trusted adults, or strangers. Varying settings for trafficking have been identified with their own etiologies and characteristics including escort services, massage parlors, outdoor solicitation, bars/strip clubs, pornography, personal sexual servitude, and remote sexual services (Polaris, 2017). The psychological effects of being sex trafficked are significant, not only as they relate to trauma symptoms. The impact of extreme manipulation and conditioning can have long lasting effects on the ability of a survivor to feel truly empowered in their choices, and to be able to maintain healthy emotional boundaries with close relationships (Bender, 2013; Forbes & Fikretoglu, 2018; Hossain et al., 2010; Rafferty, 2008). For organizations that engage survivors in varying levels of agency roles (i.e., policy, advocacy, fundraising, direct service, etc.), the issue of exploitation and empowerment becomes all the more critical to disentangle.

The current paper applies an integrative literature review approach to explore how anti-trafficking organizations can ethically engage survivors as lived experience experts while maintaining effective boundaries and avoiding re-exploitation. The concept of trauma-informed organizational culture in work with survivor leadership is explained. Based on the review findings, recommendations for practice are provided.

Methodology

The current study sought to address the research question: How can anti-trafficking organizations employ lived-experienced experts (i.e., trafficking survivors) in an inclusive, emotionally safe, and ethical way? Given the limited empirical knowledge base on the

Table 1. Integrative Review Search Terms

Primary Terms	Secondary Terms (in combination with primary)	Alternative Terms
Trauma Informed	Organizational Culture/Workplace/ Employment Practices	Empowerment/Ethical/Morale
Human/Sex/Anti-Trafficking	Services/Agency/Organization	Exploitation
Human Services	Workplace/Workers	Social Work/Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault
Nonprofit Management	Culture	Leadership/Supervision
Vicarious Trauma	Human Services Work	Trauma
Exiting/Re-Entry	Sex Work/Prostitution/Trafficking	Experiences
Lived Experience Experts	Survivor Experiences	Human Trafficking Experiences

Legend: Table describes the search terms used for the integrative review process including primary terms which may be combined with secondary terms and substituted with alternative terms for maximizing search results.
Note: varying combinations of the following terms were used in the indicated databases

workplace dynamics of anti-trafficking organizations and in particular, the workplace experiences of human trafficking survivors, an integrative literature review approach was utilized with the goal of identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing research findings.

Integrative Review Process

A search of empirical databases (i.e., EBSCO, ProQuest Central, Google Scholar, and Academic Search Complete) was conducted to identify relevant literature related to the search terms. Search terms and combinations used are included in Table 1. Studies were initially included based on title and abstract meeting search terms and then further analyzed using the methods outlined below.

While a majority of searches were discovered through academic databases, additional search was needed in order to ensure specificity of the findings relative to anti-trafficking organizational dynamics and sex trafficking survivor experiences in the workplace. Nonprofit organization and government agency reports including tip sheets and reports as well as two survivor leader blog articles to ensure adequate lived-experience expert inclusion were included in the final review of articles. At the completion of this first phase, a total of 89 articles and reports were screened in for further analysis.

Due to the specificity of the issue addressed in the research question, date ranges were selected to include articles or reports written after the passage of the TVPA (Trafficking Victims Protection Act) in 2000 to present. No articles were excluded based on discipline and multiple disciplines including public health, psychology, social work, law, criminal justice, nonprofit management, business, and government were included. Sampling was concluded at saturation which occurred when the search began to produce duplicate articles and references of articles included had been exhausted.

Table 2. Included Articles by Topic Area

Theme	Articles
Survivor Employment Considerations *Subtheme: Exit from trafficking and/or re-entry stigma* (n=7)	Aliotta, 2020; Bruijn, 2017; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2015; Mayhew & Mossman, 2007; Morrison et al., 2021; Polaris, 2017; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018
Survivor Employment Considerations *Subtheme: Trauma in the workforce* (n=18)	Bender, 2013; Countryman-Rosswurm, 2015; Dang, 2018; Hart et al., 2018; Helpingstine et al., 2021; Human Trafficking Leadership Academy, 2017; Landerholm, 2018; Lloyd, 2011; Lockyer, 2020; Lockyer & Wingard, 2020; My Life My Choice, 2018; National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center, 2018; National Survivor Network, 2019; Powers & Paul, 2018; Safe House Project, 2022; Smith, 2014; Smith, 2018; Von Wiegand, 2020
Workplace Culture (n=7)	Bowman, 2020; Bryce et al., 2021; Butts et al., 2009; Elliot et al., 2005; Glisson et al., 2008; Kanter & Sherman, 2017; Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009

Legend: Articles (by author name) organized by themes and subthemes, which were included in the final integrative review once all inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied.
Note: Total=32

Inclusion Criteria

In the second phase, the initial 89 articles were screened to determine if they met the criteria for inclusion in the review. Articles which included participants that were sex trafficking survivors were automatically included if they met the additional content requirements. Articles which included participants with other trauma histories (i.e., domestic violence or sexual assault) but which specifically focused on workplace dynamics were also included.

Context was ultimately the primary area of focus for inclusion. Articles met the criteria for context if they included anti-trafficking organizations and/or workers who are survivors of exploitation. Because of the small nature of this population (i.e., survivors of exploitation and workplace experiences and/or anti-trafficking organizations and workplace culture/dynamics), articles or reports which addressed these areas with specificity were included in the final review. Articles were eliminated for context (n=39) if the article only addressed: interventions for working with trafficked populations (n=24), terminology used in anti-trafficking work (n=5), and/or description of symptoms or characteristics of survivors (n=10).

Content eligibility was determined based on the article: addressing the research question, methodological soundness, and thoroughness of theoretical foundations and discussion. Criterion one (research question) was met if the article or report specifically spoke to anti-trafficking organizational procedures or policies in working with survivors of sex trafficking and/or explored issues related to human service organizational culture from a trauma-informed, empowerment, or otherwise inclusive lens. Criterion two (methodology) was met for qualitative studies if adequate credibility and dependability were shown in the methods section including triangulation of data and inter-rater reliability; and was met for quantitative studies if appropriate measures were used relative to the research question and population, adequate sample size was used for the analytical methodology applied, and results were

Table 3. Included Articles by Type

Publication Type	Number
Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles	15
Dissertation	3
Book	2
Agency Report (Government or Nonprofit)	10
Nonprofit Blog Article	2

Legend: This table shows included articles which are organized by type of publication.

interpreted within the scope of the presented findings. Criterion three (theory and discussion) was met if adequate attention was given to the theoretical framework relevant to our research question including empowerment, trauma-informed, organizational culture, and/or specifically addressed the lived experiences of survivors in the anti-trafficking movement, with an emphasis on inclusion of survivor voices in the data. A total of 8 additional articles or reports were eliminated on the basis of content.

Ultimately a total of 32 articles were included and grouped by the following themes: workplace culture (n=7) and survivor employment considerations (n=25). The second of these was broken down into two subthemes: trauma in the workforce (n=18) and trafficking exit, community re-integration and/or stigma (n=7). A majority of the articles included in the review focused on workplace factors, which was the purpose of the study; however, when working with survivors trauma symptoms as well as exit from trafficking and community re-integration impact workplace dynamics. These articles were compared and synthesized to create the narrative summary and draft recommendations for practice.

Integrated Literature Review

Sex Trafficking Survivors and Trauma

Sex trafficking survivors are individuals who have experienced this form of exploitation, but typically the term survivor is used to describe those who are no longer being victimized. Meaning, survivor refers to those who have experienced trafficking in the past tense while victim is used to identify those in need of support or intervention due to current exploitation (Countryman-Rosswurm, 2015; NHTTAC, 2018). The current paper will use the term survivor to describe anyone who has experienced sex trafficking using the basis that all trafficked individuals are surviving whether currently or formerly exploited and the concept of exit is often complex and nonlinear (Matthews et al., 2014; Mayhew & Mossman, 2007; Polaris, 2017).

Survivors of sex trafficking have varying backgrounds and experiences, but some social vulnerability factors have been described as homogenous. These include social structural factors such as poverty, limited education opportunities, limited social support, child maltreatment, parental substance abuse or involvement in commercial sexual activities, and homelessness (Matthews et al., 2014; Moukaddam et al., 2021; Reid, 2012). In the face of some of these conditions, not all youth will experience commercial sexual exploitation, however, more social vulnerabilities with a lack of corresponding supportive factors (i.e., poverty is present, but family support is in place), may lead to higher risk (Moukaddam et al., 2021; Reid, 2012). It is important to understand the factors which contribute to individual and community

vulnerability when providing support to survivors, as these factors may also contribute to re-exploitation risk and affect resilience in healing (Bruijn, 2017; Forbes & Fikretoglu, 2018; Hossain et al., 2010).

While survivors' length of time out of trafficking may reduce acute anxiety and depressive symptoms, it has been found that PTSD may be more chronic, particularly for those who have experienced multiple forms and lengthy time periods of abuse (Hossain et al., 2010). There is significant value added by employing survivors of trafficking, specific to lived experience which can add to inclusive, evidence-based practices of organizations (Smith, 2018). Professional consultation which takes into account personal experiences within the evidence base can bring unique expertise to inform direct practice, training, and other anti-trafficking efforts. Because of the vulnerability created by a history of exploitation, it is critical that anti-trafficking organizations seeking to employ former trafficking victims consider the population's biopsychosocial needs and intersectional identities.

Workplace Culture: Anti-Trafficking Organizations

Anti-trafficking organizations in the United States range from nonprofits of varying size, state and federal government programs, task forces, faith-based programs, and research and policy centers. These organizations provide different types of services, but all seek to address the issue of sex trafficking whether through outreach and awareness, program evaluation and funding, direct services for survivors (i.e., housing, mental health, education, etc.), or advocacy and policy work (Smith, 2018).

Organizations which serve vulnerable populations often employ individuals with trauma histories (Bryce et al., 2021), and anti-trafficking organizations have more recently emphasized survivor informed care and survivor leadership (Bender, 2013; Countryman-Rosswurm, 2015; Hart et al., 2018; Lloyd, 2011; Lockyer, 2020; National Survivor Network [NSN], 2019). Survivors have been shown to be effective in supporting anti-trafficking organizations in varying workplace roles, however, consideration should be given to individual skill sets, skill building, and readiness to participate in anti-trafficking work as a survivor.

Organizations, like any social group, have their own workplace norms, expectations, and employee behaviors, which may include agency practices such as supervision, training, and consultation, communication styles, and prioritization of tasks (Glisson et al., 2008; Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). In anti-trafficking work, it is important for organizations to analyze internal cultural dynamics to ensure practices are trauma-informed for both staff and participants and to emphasize the empowerment of survivors. Organizational practices which enhance survivor voices are critical in the fight against human trafficking. Agency culture can empower survivors in this challenging work or serve as another form of exploitation (Countryman-Rosswurm, 2015; Elliot et al., 2005; Lloyd, 2011; Lockyer, 2020; NSN, 2019).

Workplace Culture: Trauma-Informed and Empowerment-Based Practices

There are parallels between the trauma-informed and empowerment frameworks in practice. Organizations which are trauma-informed seek to build genuine relationships among leadership, staff, and participants, promote a sense of trust and transparency with their staff and participants, and consider the individual staff experiences and backgrounds including culture and trauma histories (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2015; Kanter & Sherman, 2017; NHTTAC, 2018). Through these practices, empowerment is fostered by allowing the individual a safe space in which to grow professionally while feeling heard and supported.

Elliot et al. (2005) describes the concept of trauma-informed organizational culture and how to best implement it for maximizing effectiveness in the following quote:

> *Trauma-informed services are those in which service delivery is influenced by an understanding of the impact of interpersonal violence and victimization on an individual's life and development. To provide trauma-informed services, all staff of an organization, from the receptionist to the direct care workers to the board of directors, must understand how violence impacts the lives of the people being served, so that every interaction is consistent with the recovery process and reduces the possibility of retraumatization (p. 462).*

This model of trauma-informed care emphasizes the importance of empowerment in the form of enhancing choice, control, and collaborations in any interventions. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of input in designing services, respect and acceptance in the workplace, and highlighting strengths and resilience over pathology. Both the participant and the service providers in this model are seen as bringing expertise and value to the recovery process and interventions are done collaboratively as a partnership. This highlights the second most important feature of a trauma-informed model of care, which is the emphasis on human value, relational support, and, ultimately, individual empowerment.

Spreitzer (1995) determined workplace empowerment requires that one feels motivation to engage in the work and has a sense of self-efficacy or competence, meaning or purpose in the work, self-determination or sense of choice and autonomy, and impact. Through feeling empowered in the workplace, the individual feels power over their work role and tasks. Empowerment is not a personality trait, but rather a state that exists in the workplace as a result of organizational characteristics and workplace factors (Spreitzer, 1995). Aftercare, including long term support, for survivors of sex trafficking emphasizes relational connection as a primary factor for supporting success (Bruijn, 2017; Brunovskis & Surtees, 2015; Cecchet & Thoburn, 2014) and, as authentic relationships help to create trust, survivors feel empowered to voice their individualized needs, advocate for themselves and others, and pursue opportunities for growth.

Using this definition of empowerment, it is challenging to apply the term to any sort of sex work, but it is not applicable to sex trafficking in which individuals have lack of choice and authentic relational support. Therefore, survivors of sex trafficking, who have been disempowered by their experiences, are at particular risk of re-exploitation and disempowerment when employed by organizations, which do not take into account the need for safeguards and trauma-informed, empowerment-based organizational culture. Specific factors should be considered in engaging survivors in anti-trafficking work, including varying roles and skill sets, readiness, tokenism, and organizational support.

Because of the history of exploitative relationships with pimps, family, and/or other traffickers, survivors may have experienced a reduced sense of agency over their lives (Aliotta, 2020; Lockyer & Wingard, 2020; Mayhew & Mossman, 2007; Ottisova et al., 2018; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018; Wilson & Butler, 2014), which makes an organizational culture of empowerment all the more vital in this area of practice (Aliotta, 2020; Bruijn, 2017; Kanter & Sherman, 2017). Individuals are more likely to believe they can succeed in their goals when they have relational and instrumental support and clear pathways to achieve them (Aliotta, 2020). Anti-trafficking organizations should build an environment in which survivors are empowered by ensuring that relationships are collaborative and non-transactional (i.e., no expectation of reciprocation), providing opportunities for skill development, and fostering open and honest communication.

In practice, examples may be: supervisory training to enhance relational capacity of leaders, supervision with survivor leaders to discern their professional goals, career development beyond speaker training to help survivors build professional skills, internal promotion practices, and external networking with allied professions to promote growth opportunities (Lockyer, 2020; My Life My Choice, 2018; NHTTAC, 2018; NSN, 2019).

Ethical survivor engagement requires inclusion and intentional practices by anti-trafficking and other human services organizations which employ survivors of exploitation. Organizations should therefore seek to integrate a trauma-informed, empowerment-based framework in practice in terms of internal organizational policies, supervision, and evaluation, hiring and readiness, training, skill building and professional development, and supportive services.

Workplace Culture: Policies, Supervision, and Evaluation

Organizations that serve sex trafficking survivors should consider formal and informal internal structures that may influence the ethics of practice. Formal structures, such as hiring practices and internal promotions, should be evaluated using a trauma-informed approach, wherein the needs of the organization, service population, and staff members are all taken into consideration. Informal structures, more related to the cultural norms of the organization, such as communication and supervision styles, should also be taken into account when being evaluated by trauma-informed standards of care. Survivor expertise can help with this evaluation as survivors are likely to be able to identify gaps in supervisory support, authenticity of communication, trust, and more subtle dynamics in the workplace, as well as inform agency hiring and staff development practices (Lockyer, 2020; Smith, 2014).

Policies should be structured in such a way that trauma-informed, and empowerment-based practices are natural in both formal and informal elements of the organizational environment. Survivor leaders should be treated as professional peers and the confidentiality of all members of the organization respected as a matter of policy (Dang, 2018; Hart et al., 2018; NHTTAC, 2018). Discrimination should be overtly addressed as it relates to trauma histories and personal characteristics, and staff training should address appropriate communication with survivors (Dang, 2018; NHTTAC, 2018). Additional factors to consider are tensions that may arise as a result of working with staff who have experienced significant trauma and who are now working in a potentially triggering environment, power dynamics among leadership who may not be survivors and those who are, with an eye toward oppression and disempowerment histories, and policies that directly address dual relationships such as survivors who may have been prior service recipients (Lockyer, 2020; Powers & Paul, 2018; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Communication among staff and leadership that creates space for survivor input is critical to creating a healthy and trauma-informed culture.

Survivors' input can come from survivor leaders as staff or consultants, and from surveys or focus groups of participants served. In either case, compensation for this expertise is necessary to avoid exploitation (Dang, 2018). Some examples of this might be survivor leaders conducting agency needs assessments of direct services such as programming, outreach, training, and media campaigns, and evaluation of internal policies and/or organizational culture (Dang, 2018; Smith, 2014).

Survivor leadership within organizations should be used to improve organizational practices by identifying challenges and opportunities within current structures. By creating opportunities for survivors to voice concerns and be a part of building solutions, organizations empower survivors and leverage the unique expertise survivors share from lived experience (Helpingstine et al., 2021; NHTTAC, 2018; NSN, 2019; Polaris, 2017). As members of the organization and subject matter experts, survivor leaders are uniquely positioned to help

establish hiring and orientation policies for other survivors, creating pathways for growth and leadership for both the survivor leader and new hires. In order to ensure consideration of diversity and intersectional identities of survivors, similar to any other staff member, survivors with varying racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, and other backgrounds should be included in decision-making which will inform organizational practices and policies (Human Trafficking Leadership Academy [HTLA], 2017; Lockyer, 2020; Polaris, 2017).

Survivors should be hired for all levels of management and advisory board capacities, where skillsets align, to increase survivor voice and presence within organizations and ensure representation in policy development, procedure, and day-to-day administration (Lloyd, 2011; NSN, 2019). The National Survivor Network (2019) notes that this practice is important as "at the organizational level, working with survivors changes assumptions and attitudes, in addition to providing the value of lived experience and knowledge" (p.3).

Not all survivors find their purpose in sharing their trauma narrative or working directly with other sex trafficking victims, as this is a highly charged and potentially triggering environment. In some cases, survivors find higher purpose and/or personal healing from helping and supporting other victims (Lloyd, 2011; NHTTAC, 2018; Smith, 2018). However, many survivors may choose other paths to restoration and personal success; therefore, anti-trafficking organizations should not assume that all survivors have the professional goal of working in this arena and provide professional development opportunities which meet the goals of the individual survivor (Dang, 2018; NSN, 2019; Smith, 2014).

In the *Toolkit for Building Survivor-Informed Organizations,* the National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Committee (2018) describes the value of survivors' input in developing and evaluating human trafficking programs. Compensation is a key element of reducing the exploitation risk of survivor leaders. Specifically, survivors should be compensated for any speaking engagements, fundraising, staff positions, etc. and should not be offered volunteer positions as an alternative to paid opportunities (Hart et al., 2018; NSN, 2019; Smith, 2014). Additionally, survivors should not be commissioned to engage in work that they are not ready to participate in. Work may include sharing their story, but opportunities should not be limited to those related to the personal trauma narrative (Dang, 2018; Helpingstine et al., 2021; NSN, 2019).

Survivor Employment Considerations

Survivors and Trauma: Hiring and Readiness

Readiness is an important factor in hiring survivors of sex trafficking to anti-trafficking work. The most important consideration in hiring and contracting with survivors for anti-trafficking work is to ensure empowerment and emotional safety. Meaning, if survivors have recent trauma experiences or high levels of trauma-related symptoms, this should be taken into account in terms of readiness for direct practice or sharing of a trauma narrative for funding or awareness raising purposes (Dang, 2018; NHTTAC, 2018; Smith, 2014). To reduce risk of re-traumatization or trauma triggering, other survivor leaders who are subject matter experts in the space are critical in the interviewing and assessment process (Dang, 2018; NHTTAC, 2018; Powers & Paul, 2018).

Survivors are resilient individuals who bring significant value to anti-trafficking work and without their voices, important elements of the experience can be overlooked, leading to dire consequences in practice. Resilience is defined in terms of a range of responses to adversity, including maintaining normal development and continued functioning during traumatic experiences to improvement and excelling beyond normal limits following adverse

experiences. Resilience is not a trait, but rather is the adaptive capacity one may have as a result of supportive social and personal structures, and exists only in the face of stress or traumatic experiences (Forbes & Fikretoglu, 2018).

Dual relationships, an ethical issue in which more than one type of relationship exists between prospective staff and/or the organization, should also be taken into account with hiring, particularly those who may be former participants or closely affiliated with current individuals receiving services of the organization. Specific agency policies should be in place with regard to length of time out of trafficking and/or emotional readiness to participate in staff positions, prior to interview. These may include a 2-year minimum out of exploitation or letters of recommendation (Human Trafficking Leadership Academy, 2017; Parker, 2013). Organizational practices also must be in place such as trauma-informed care and training, as well as new and ongoing staff training regarding management of trauma triggers and how to seek support within the organization (Helpingstine et al., 2021; HTLA, 2017; Powers & Paul, 2018; Von Wiegand, 2020). Further, prospective new hires who are survivors bring various types of skills and expertise beyond their lived experience that should be taken into account.

Training, Skill Building, and Professional Development

All staff require training and in organizations where survivors of sex trafficking are employed additional training should be provided for everyone as it relates to trauma-informed practices. These may include staff training about identification of personal trauma triggers, self-care, coping skills, and vicarious trauma, when and how to seek help when triggered, and opportunities for staff inclusion in decision making to promote relational collaboration and empowerment (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2015; Elliot et al., 2005; Von Wiegand, 2020). Empowerment frameworks emphasize the value and strengths of each individual. Therefore, anti-trafficking organizations working with survivors must take into account these individual strengths in supervision and opportunities for promotion or growth.

Individual goals of staff members should be a regular part of supervision meetings to ensure agency leadership are aware of the growth and advancement goals of staff and to encourage organizational commitment (Aliotta, 2020; Bowman, 2020; Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009; NHTTAC, 2018). If goals are related to anti-trafficking work, professional development may focus on education about direct service work, fundraising and grant writing, or other internal job opportunities. Speech writing and support with sharing one's trauma story can be effective for organizational fundraising and survivor professional development, when those goals align (Lloyd, 2011; Smith, 2018). Skill development should not be limited to jobs the organization can provide or those which require sharing of trauma narratives. However, survivors should be provided opportunities to develop alternative skills related to their professional goals, even when this is not within the trafficking field. This may require referrals or funding support for education as appropriate to continue to enhance the professional development of survivor leaders.

When organizations hire former service recipients into consultant or staff positions, leadership programming (either external or internal) is needed to provide sufficient development of workplace skills (Matthews et al., 2014; My Life My Choice, 2018; NHTTAC, 2018; Smith, 2018). Leadership training institutes frequently provide education around life skills such as financial literacy, soft job skills (i.e., professional attire, interviewing, punctuality) and more specific job skills based on personal interest, psychoeducation including self-esteem and confidence building, public speaking, etc., and often engage with former direct service recipients to build their professional capacity (Bender, 2013; Lloyd, 2011; My Life My Choice, 2018; Smith, 2018).

To avoid dual role issues, organizations may choose not to hire former participants, which would be in line with most ethical guidelines for direct practice services (NASW, 2008).

However, participants who have built trust in an organization may feel more comfortable engaging as peer mentors or other job roles within the context of an already established safe environment and with staff whom they trust (NHTTAC, 2018; Rajaram & Tidball, 2018). Leadership would therefore need to ensure that both the dual role issue and inclusion from an empowerment framework are addressed to ethically hire former participants. That is to say, there is no one way to ensure ethical conduct in working with former participants, but organizations can reduce risk of ethical breaches by screening, training, and considering potential ethical dilemmas.

Survivors and Stigma: Tokenism and Survivor Stories

Survivor leaders are those who have experienced human trafficking and decided to engage in anti-trafficking workplaces, while utilizing their individual skills and lived experience (Hart et al., 2018; NHTTAC, 2018; Smith, 2018). Survivors are not ever required to share their trauma narratives (i.e., stories of what they went through while being trafficked) for the benefit of their employers, service recipients, or the field. As sharing these stories can be retraumatizing, the decision to do so is inherently personal and should be made only by the survivor him/herself.

While the sensationalism of a sex trafficking story may garner public attention, thereby creating funding or awareness opportunities, survivors are at risk of being exploited if they are asked to engage in anti-trafficking work only to share their trauma publicly (Powers & Paul, 2018; Smith, 2014). Tokenism, or the "superficial practice to create the impression or appearance of social inclusivity and diversity, includes members of minority or underrepresented groups, including survivor leaders and individuals who have been trafficked, as a symbolic gesture to avoid criticism" (NHTTAC, 2018, p. 37). To avoid this practice, organizations should take into account several factors.

First, survivors are in control of how, when, where, and under what circumstances they share their stories. They should never be coerced or pressured into doing so. This is exploitation, as is asking a survivor to share their story for agency gain, without compensation to the survivor for doing so (Dang, 2018; Helpingstine et al., 2021; Lockyer, 2020; NHTTAC, 2018; Powers & Paul, 2018; Smith, 2014). Secondly, to avoid tokenism, survivors from various backgrounds including ethnic, cultural, gender, and sexual orientations should be represented in advisory boards, research studies, and focus groups (HTLA, 2017; Lockyer, 2020; Polaris, 2017). Finally, when stories are shared, survivors should be provided with support for speech development, public speaking, and post-speech debriefing (Hart et al., 2018; Landerholm, 2018; NSN, 2019). This is particularly important as sharing a trauma narrative publicly can not only be triggering, but can lead to rejection or discrimination among a survivor's family, friends, and/or external workplace (Landerholm, 2018; NSN, 2019).

Psychosocial support for survivors in organizations can include: supervision before and after any triggering work (i.e., direct practice with victims, media campaigns, public speaking, etc.), opportunities for mental health care both internally and by referral such as employee assistance programs and local partner agencies, informed decision making regarding work tasks, particularly as they relate to trauma narrative sharing, confidentiality and privacy policies that are strictly enforced, support groups for survivor leaders, and healthy organizational environments (Aliotta, 2020; Countryman-Roswurm, 2015; Hart et al., 2018; Landerholm, 2018; NHTTAC, 2018; Von Wiegand, 2020).

Organizations working with vulnerable populations must consider the need for workload and working hour accommodations to support staff well-being (Kanter & Sherman, 2017). Flexible working environments are a recommended accommodation for survivors working in the anti-trafficking area of practice, particularly for those experiencing long term or chronic conditions due to the trauma associated with sex trafficking. These conditions may include mental health disorders, chronic pain or fatigue, and other health conditions associated with severe physical

and psychological trauma (Hopper, 2017; Hossain et al., 2010; Ottisova et al., 2018). It is beneficial to provide a list of tasks to be achieved over a period of time to provide flexibility for when the task can be completed (Powers & Paul, 2018; Safe House Project, 2022). For instance, additional break time or deadline flexibility might be needed if a survivor staff member is overwhelmed or dysregulated to allow time for application of supportive interventions and coping skills. Working with the survivor to establish a trauma-informed timeline for projects or tasks and a daily schedule allows them to excel in their position and minimize negative mental health impact.

The presence of evidence-based, holistic approaches to organizational support in human services, including anti-trafficking work, can improve staff performance and organizational commitment and reduce risk of job strain and vicarious traumatization (Bowman, 2020; Butts et al., 2009; Glisson et al., 2008; Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). Establishing a trauma-informed, empowerment-based work environment, not only has the potential to increase the productivity, commitment, and performance of the individual staff member, but also may improve the impact of the organization and produce an inclusive organizational culture where individuals with varying lived experiences can feel accepted and thrive (Butts et al., 2009; Glisson et al., 2008; Kanter & Sherman, 2017; Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009).

Practice Recommendations

Trauma-Informed, Empowerment-Based Organizational Culture

Creating an effective and inclusive organizational culture is more than just annual training, it requires engagement of all levels of staff and management in a daily practice of trauma-informed and survivor-led practices. These may include policies which promote trust and transparency among staff and leadership, training related to trauma triggers and appropriate responses to mental health crises, enhancing of survivor voice in agency practices and procedures, opportunities for professional growth, and open communication and feedback (Bruijn, 2017; Glisson et al., 2008; Hart et al., 2018; Kanter & Sherman, 2017; Lockyer, 2020; Morrison et al., 2021).

Leadership should be trained to effectively supervise staff with trauma histories and provide supportive and effective supervision. Supervisors should regularly meet with staff members to provide support and feedback, provide opportunities for skill development, and engage in a continual dialogue about strategies to create a healthy, safe, flexible, and productive work environment (Hart et al., 2018; Kanter & Sherman, 2017; Lockyer, 2020; My Life My Choice, 2018; NSN, 2019).

Readiness for Work in Anti-Trafficking and Screening Pre-Hire

Trafficking is a form of interpersonal complex trauma that requires a survivor to take steps to heal. A survivor's readiness to begin anti-trafficking work will vary based on the type, length, and severity of the trafficking situation. The length of time out of a trafficking situation should be considered in readiness for anti-trafficking work (HTLA, 2017; Safe House Project [SHP], 2022), and many survivor leaders recommend that ideally, an individual should be one to two years out of their trafficking situation before beginning this work (SHP, 2022).

To help ensure readiness, a portion of the interview process will include a survivor-to-survivor interview. The survivor-to-survivor interview allows for the survivor applicant to elevate any special considerations that would inform trauma-informed practices on their behalf and gives them an opportunity to ask questions of a current survivor employee. If an organization is hiring its first survivor, this could be achieved by having a survivor leader consultant perform this part of the interview (Dang, 2018; Hart et al., 2018).

Survivor Leadership in Various Organizational Roles

Job positions require certain hard and soft skills, as well as expertise. Survivor leaders have the unique perspective of lived experience, which allows them to provide a critical perspective to an anti-trafficking organization. For instance, survivor leadership is critical for training and education positions, marketing, legislative initiatives, case management, and advocacy (Dang, 2018; Lockyer, 2020; Smith, 2014).

Employing survivors into various organizational roles and with diverse personal backgrounds decreases dependency on one survivor's lived experience as the only metric for evaluation and promotes a culture where a variety of survivor experiences help inform all aspects of the organization's efforts (HTLA, 2017; Lockyer, 2020; Smith, 2014).

Professional Development

Providing survivors with opportunities to expand their skill set, both hard and soft skills, is critical to their long-term success, productivity, and career satisfaction. Organizational leaders should have individual growth plans for each employee that identify personal goals, opportunities for development, and training programs, funding, and resources that are available to help achieve the next milestone. Organizations can also partner with educational institutions to provide continuing education or courses to the survivors to address skill gaps (Bruijn, 2017; Kanter & Sherman, 2017; NHTTAC, 2018; Smith, 2014).

Staff training, both at hiring and ongoing, should include identifying personal triggers, coping skills, and where/how to seek help for mental health needs and support. This should also include a unit on how staff who are not survivors can engage from a trauma-informed and affirming collegial perspective with staff who have experienced trauma (HTLA, 2017; NHTTAC, 2018; NSN, 2019; Von Wiegand, 2020).

Compensation For All Work Done by Survivors

Survivors should receive compensation for all work done on behalf of the organization. This includes survivors serving in full-time, part-time, board, and consultancy positions. Survivors should always be compensated for sharing their story on behalf of the organization at events, training, or conferences, as well.

Compensation will differ based on location, job position, work experience, education, etc. and is negotiated between the organization and the survivor. The United States Government Pay Scale can be used for guidance when paying survivors for consultancy work (Dang, 2018; Lockyer, 2020; NHTTAC, 2018; Smith, 2014).

Confidentiality and Choice

Reasonable confidentiality in the workplace is a common expectation among colleagues, but this is especially important in anti-trafficking organizations which employ survivors. The choice to disclose a trauma history should be at the discretion of the survivor and not the employer, particularly the sharing of a trauma story for the purpose of fundraising or other work-related tasks (Dang, 2018; Helpingstine et al., 2021; Landerholm, 2018; NSN, 2019). By providing a safe, confidential, and empowerment-based work environment organizations are not only protecting trafficking survivors, but promoting an organizational culture that respects the boundaries and choice of every employee (Aliotta, 2020; Bruijn, 2017; Dang, 2018; Hart et al., 2018; Mayhew & Mossman, 2007; Morrison et al., 2021; Reamer, 2000).

Figure 1. Trauma-Informed Organizational Culture Practice Elements in Implementation
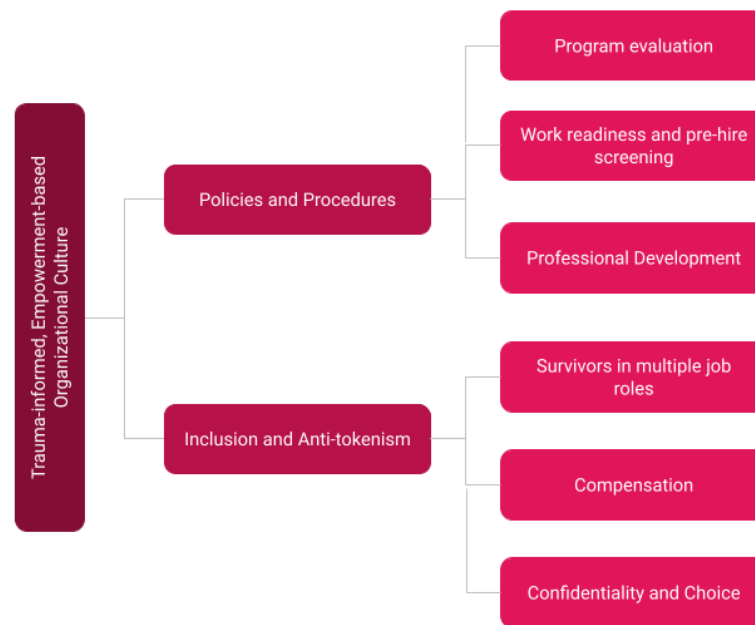
Legend: Graphic outlines specific elements of trauma-informed and empowerment-based organizational culture for application in anti-trafficking organizations.

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By providing a safe, confidential, and empowerment-based work environment organizations are not only protecting trafficking survivors, but promoting an organizational culture that respects the boundaries and choice of every employee (Aliotta, 2020; Bruijn, 2017; Dang, 2018; Hart et al., 2018; Mayhew & Mossman, 2007; Morrison et al., 2021; Reamer, 2000).

Conclusion

This integrative review highlights the importance of research needed in the area of survivor engagement in anti-trafficking organizations. While there were a few peer reviewed articles which addressed dynamics in anti-trafficking organizations, a majority of the reports included were penned by government agencies or survivors via nonprofit blogs. These were included in the review for specificity and inclusion; however, additional studies should seek to validate the findings of this review by measuring the effects (i.e., survivor staff well-being, vicarious trauma in the workplace, staff retention, and morale) of applying trauma-informed organizational practices in anti-trafficking work. Further, researchers should seek to engage survivors in this process as it is important to include survivor voices in the topic of survivor inclusion.

This integrative review has shown that survivor engagement in anti-trafficking work is important and complex. Themes in the literature reveal that there are unique approaches needed to address workplace culture as a whole and how to best engage survivors in the workforce given trauma histories and social stigmas. Anti-trafficking organizations often

employ survivors in various workplace capacities, including direct practice work, fundraising and story sharing, awareness and media campaigns, and leadership. In order to employ ethical practices with survivor staff members, organizations must avoid tokenism and apply principles of trauma-informed practice while empowering survivor voices at the organizational level.

Organizational culture and various internal practices can affect how ethically survivors are engaged as leaders in the field. By carefully applying trauma-informed, empowerment-based approaches to survivor hiring, professional development, compensation, psychosocial support, program evaluation, and organizational policies and culture, anti-trafficking organizations can seek to reduce exploitation and promote authentic survivor leadership.

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Brittany Dunn is the Chief Operations Officer and co-founder of the Safe House Project. Prior to Safe House Project, Brittany Dunn spent 10 years in International Business Development at CareerBuilder.com. Brittany Dunn has a BA in Economics and English from Wellesley College. She graduated top of her class with an MBA from Thunderbird School of Global Management. She is a member of Beta Gamma Sigma, Pi Sigma Alpha, Wellesley Alumnae Association, the Naval Officers' Spouses Club, and is an active member in her church. Brittany received the CEO Circle Award from Thunderbird School of Global Management. She is a military spouse, mother of two, lifelong learner, world traveler, and protector of the vulnerable.

Appendix A. Resources for Training and Survivor Leadership Development

Safe House Project, national organization training, https://www.safehouseproject.org/training

Ending the Game, national organization and survivor leader training, https://endingthegame.com/

GEMS-Girls, New York, survivor leader development, https://www.gems-girls.org/get-trained

ELEVATE Academy, Oregon, https://elevate-academy.org/the-academy

Shared Hope, D.C., https://sharedhope.org/what-we-do/restore/services/domestic-win-program/

My Life My Choice, Massachusetts, https://www.mylifemychoice.org/survivor-empowerment

Survivor Alliance, LEAD, London, https://www.survivoralliance.org/survivors-lead

Empower Her, Connecticut, https://www.empowerhernetwork.org/

Survivor Ventures, Virginia, https://www.survivorventures.org/

REST Academy, Washington, https://iwantrest.com/programs/rest-academy

Wellspring Women's Academy, Georgia, https://wellspringliving.org/academy/

Thistle Farms, Tennessee, https://thistlefarms.org

Selah Freedom, Florida, https://www.selahfreedom.com/

Shyne, California, https://www.shynesd.org/

Annie Cannons, California, https://anniecannons.org/

Restore NYC, New York, https://restorenyc.org/