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Conceptions of Service Provider Preparedness

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, Doane University, 2012

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Victims of human trafficking often need a variety of services to recover from their experiences. Service providers are organizations that aim to meet the personal and environmental needs of survivors by providing resources and guidance. However, the efficacy of services offered to survivors has not been robustly studied, which could leave unsuccessful survivor outcomes unnoticed. The purpose of this case study was to learn how service provider employees prepared to meet survivors' needs. The combination of social cognitive theory and social constructionist theory served as the lens through which service provider employee conceptions of preparedness were explored. Four service provider organizations in Eastern Nebraska participated in the study, with seven employees completing the questionnaire and four completing the interview. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis and NVivo software. The research findings indicated that service provider employees described similar levels of preparedness with differences related to organizational strategies, their personal experiences and interactions with survivors, and various barriers and challenges. The results also showed that the environment may influence employees' cognition and behavior and could predict a survivor's choice to stay or leave a service provider's care. Learning more about environmental influences on employee and survivor cognition and behavior may lead to positive social change through greater employee job satisfaction and more instances of successful survivor interactions and aid.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research project to my children, Ethan and Isabelle Engstrom, who inspired me to continue my education and help those without a voice. Thank you for believing in me. You can do anything you put your mind, body, and spirit into.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my committee, especially Dr. Kitissou, for providing guidance, patience, and supportive comments throughout my research journey.

My wife, Christina, kept me grounded and looking forward. She was the rock I rested on when I wavered in this pursuit. I must also thank my family for believing I could accomplish my dream.

Thank you to the study participants, who work with human trafficking survivors every day.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The systemic problem of human trafficking affects every nation in the world (U.S. Department of State [DOS], 2017). It is estimated that 15,000 to 100,000 people are trafficked every year in the United States for the purposes of sex or labor (DOS, 2016). Survivors of human trafficking are often so traumatized that they cannot recognize their own victimization (Dovydaitis, 2010; Hoyle et al., 2011). Researchers have confirmed this phenomenon through interviews with survivors, law enforcement, and service providers (Caraboi & Fierbinteanu, 2015; Office for Victims of Crime [OVC], 2017; Verhoeven et al., 2015; World Health Organization, 2012). Consequently, service providers orient the methods used to identify, rescue, and treat victims of human trafficking toward the victims' inability to recognize their own victimization (Farrell, 2014; McDonald, 2014; Weitzer, 2014). Legislation, policy development, and training for law enforcement and some service providers also focus on a victim-centered approach, favoring the notion that victims can rarely identify their entrapment and exploitation and depend on others to rescue and support them for basic needs (Farrell, 2014; Lima de Perez, 2016; Nolan et al., 2015; Pullins & Haarr, 2016; Viergever et al., 2019).

Nonprofit service providers have initiated outreach programs to identify victims and align them with needed services, but the efficacy of methods used, and their outcomes have not been robustly studied (Shavers, 2013; Weitzer, 2014). The need for micro- and macrolevel research aimed at identifying victims of human trafficking has been well established with emphasis on the perspective that victims do not self-identify

and readily need sustained access to short- and long-term resources (Edwards & Mika,

2016; Majic, 2015; Schwarz et al., 2019; Shadaimah et al., 2014).

Service providers deal directly with human trafficking victims and, in some cases,

are the first to initiate contact with them through their outreach programs. Service

providers play an integral role in identifying victims and addressing the myriad needs

associated with their traumas. However, because many factors affect human trafficking,

service providers are not always well suited to handle a victim's needs (Schwarz et al.,

2019). Researchers and advocates alike have argued that many service providers are not

equipped or resourced enough to offer appropriate assistance to victims (Dell et al., 2019;

Farrell, 2014; Pullins & Haarr, 2016). Therefore, it is important to examine the

preparedness and capacity of service providers to offer appropriate services and resources

for victims of human trafficking. In this study, I examined service provider employees'

conceptions of preparedness from their perspective.

This research may provide greater insight into the effect of service provider

preparedness on victim survival and safety. Additionally, knowledge gained from this

study may inform public policy, societal awareness, and future service provider research.

Chapter 1 comprises the introduction, the background of the problem, a statement of the

problem, the purpose of this study, research questions, a theoretical framework, the

nature of the study, the definition of relevant terms, assumptions, delimitations,

limitations, significance, and a summary.

Background of the Problem

Human trafficking affects every nation in the world, and many efforts have been undertaken to combat it. However, these efforts often fail for a variety of reasons, such as a lack of understanding by police, judges, and juries; an incomplete legal environment; ineffective program or policy implementation and evaluation; and a lack of empirically based knowledge from which to make decisions. I discuss a synthesis of these findings and possible implications in Chapter 2.

Legislation on human trafficking in the United States has had no substantive effect on identifying or measuring the instances of human trafficking (McDonald, 2014). The justice system has played a crucial role in getting victims the restitution they need, but juries and judges often view victims as criminals because of their involvement in crime. The literature has shown that many individuals subject to human trafficking have been miscategorized as victims of domestic violence or even prosecuted as criminals. McDonald (2014) called for an overhaul of how the justice system treats victims, but his suggestions do not necessarily align with reform. He called for educating juries and judges to better understand victims' psychological states. Many researchers have also called for educating police, judges, and juries about the abuses human trafficking victims face and the psychological effects of their experiences. McDonald also argued that the justice systems' approach is not victim-centered and is geared toward prosecution. This issue may correlate to victims being treated as criminals in the eyes of the law, which prevents them from receiving needed support.

Farrell et al. (2014) supported McDonald's (2014) assertion that the justice system must change how it identifies and treats human trafficking victims and prosecutes traffickers. But Farrell et al. went further and identified three issues they found to be significantly related to the investigation process and the actual prosecution of traffickers. The authors exposed an uncertain legal environment around human trafficking, institutional barriers that present different or conflicting agendas for treating victims and traffickers, and attitudinal barriers that complicate the investigation and prosecution process. Their identification of impeding variables revealed a need for further education among community members and relevant stakeholders and that the focus of justice and law enforcement systems differs from legislative philosophy and service provider function.

Nichols and Heil (2015) indicated that a lack of social services, unsteady policing and legislation, and feeble social institutions perpetuate trafficking by failing to address the connections between interacting factors. This notion aligns with various governmental and nongovernmental reports from around the world (DOS, 2017; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service [CIS], 2018). Other researchers supported Nichols's conclusions and have identified various patterns in the variables associated with an individual's level of vulnerability to sex and labor exploitation, furthering the notion that trafficking is part of a larger social continuum (Schwarz et al., 2019).

Because of the complexity of human trafficking cases, Mace et al. (2012) recommended a victim-centered approach as described by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), but Mace et al. included another element that could

engage and empower local government. The TVPA's authors aimed to protect victims, prosecute traffickers, and prevent global human trafficking. Mace et al. suggested including national human resource development in the solution. National human resource development is a development practice geared toward individuals and communities that can unify efforts to combat human trafficking. This notion is interesting because its subscribers emphasize community-based solutions rather than seeking an all-encompassing, bureaucratic silver bullet. The main idea driving national human resource development is that a reduction of disparities could be realized by finding generalizations that are applicable toward larger issues affecting populations. Essentially, Mace et al. appear to be calling for community education with a focus on a victim-centered approach. Mace et al. (2012) provided little empirical evidence to support their assertions and did not suggest any means for studying their claim.

Interestingly, all the aforementioned researchers have called for further education of the community, police, and judges about the issues involved in human trafficking cases. Those who may associate with victims of human trafficking must be educated about the nuances involved with their exploitation. This was a common theme in the literature; however, many researchers also acknowledged that education alone is not sufficient to combat and eradicate human trafficking. Davy (2016) offered another perspective after evaluating the efficacy of 49 policies and programs offered to victims of human trafficking throughout the United States. Davy discovered that only a small percentage of programs included measures for evaluating effectiveness, and even those only measured internal items relevant for management.

Davy (2016) discovered that no program provided a means for evaluating their effectiveness or their impact on the identification, prevention, and protection of human trafficking victims beyond anecdotal means. This posed an interesting dilemma. Many researchers and victim advocates have asserted a need for victim support and services. However, if program efficacy goes unmeasured, then there is no way to know if the program actually works.

In an earlier study, Gozdziak and Bumb (2008) provided insight into this issue. They recommended that "evaluation studies should be an integral part of every assistance program, public and private" (p. 46). Testing the efficacy of policies and programs is important. Without such information, it becomes difficult to assess what does and does not work in efforts to identify and help victims of human trafficking. Unfortunately, it appeared that little had truly been accomplished in this area of human trafficking eradication and prevention, revealing a gap in the research literature.

Ioannou and Oostinga (2015) took a different direction and selected 23 control methods used by perpetrators of interpersonal violence. They found that three perpetration methods appeared consistently in previous research on human trafficking: victim as an object, victim as a vehicle, and victim as a person. The authors began to identify what methods of control human traffickers use. This information may help service providers identify potential victims and offer appropriate outreach and assistance. Ioannou and Oostinga also prescribed victim roles to each form of control by assessing the variables present in the victims. They discovered that different types of prostitution

were associated with a particular victim role. This insight may help service providers assign the proper resources for particular victims.

Those fighting human trafficking struggle to succeed on several different levels. After reviewing the research, it was clear that the information driving policy decisions and response was either anecdotal or based on overly broad representations. Researchers have acknowledged that human trafficking is a complex and hidden crime. However, without the proper data collection tools in place, new knowledge cannot be generated to develop or adjust the response. Furthermore, without data on the current response's efficacy, there is no way to know if service providers and law enforcement are actually helping victims.

Many researchers have called for microlevel studies to produce knowledge on the prevalence of human trafficking, victim identification and characteristics, the mediums used to perpetuate trafficking, and policy and program efficacy. Additionally, several themes emerged in the literature. These included: a need for educating society and officials about this crime; a disconnection among how police, service providers, and policy approaches treat human trafficking; and confusion about what role each group should play in identifying and protecting victims. Researchers have not extensively explored victims' stories of exploitation and escape or rescue. Nor have they identified recruitment methods or places, provided insight into recidivism, assessed program efficacy, addressed the increase in human trafficking despite legislation to combat it, or explored how service providers define success in helping trafficking victims.

Service providers exist to support victims with a variety of immediate and long-term services. These include housing, basic clothing and nutrition, medical attention, mental health services, legal support, and employment assistance. However, many service providers claim to be unprepared for all aspects of the crisis, and researchers have called for additional evidence about program efficacy. In this study, I explored the way service providers describe their preparedness to meet victims' needs in order to shed light on what constitutes success and effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

Human trafficking is a terrible crime involving the exploitation of men, women, and children (Polaris Project, 2017). It is estimated that approximately 20.9 million people are trafficked globally, and roughly 15,000 to 100,000 people are trafficked in the United States (International Labour Organization, 2012). The U.S. government passed the TVPA to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute traffickers. Since its inception, service providers have developed outreach methods to help victims escape their captors (Edwards & Mika, 2016). However, many service providers still lack the most basic resources needed to properly aid victims. This could negatively affect victims' treatment and protection (Davy, 2016). Therefore, service provider preparedness should be explored to help illuminate program efficacy and impact. I used a case study approach to investigate service provider conceptions of their own preparedness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine conceptions of service provider preparedness by uncovering the descriptive and environmental factors presented

in service provider employee narratives. I accomplished this by exploring service provider employee perceptions in Eastern Nebraska through electronic questionnaires and online interviews. I anticipated the definition of preparedness could differ among service providers, so I also examined what factors contributed to how service providers defined this concept. For the purpose of this study, I defined preparedness as having enough resources to satisfy a victim's needs and prevent them from returning to their exploiter or leaving the service provider's care.

Research Questions

Two central research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How do service provider employees define preparedness in meeting the needs of human trafficking victims?

RQ2: What descriptive (i.e., personal, behavioral, and environmental) factors are present in preparedness to meet the needs of human trafficking victims?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Human trafficking may involve the victimization of men, women, and children. However, much of the data available has largely pointed to the victimization of women and children (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women [CATW], 2016; Mace et al., 2012; Schauer & Wheaton, 2006). Several researchers have called for the use of feminist theory to unify an understanding of victimization and the associated responses (Edwards & Mika, 2016; Farrell, 2014). Feminist theory is applicable at the micro-, meso-, and macrolevels. However, the use of feminist theory fails to address the trichotomous interactions between the survivor, the traffickers, and those working to help victims, such

as law enforcement and service providers. Additionally, the use of feminist theory does not provide a way to bridge the perceived connection between victims' behavior and their environment. Instead, feminist theorists center the mix of biology or gender with social constructs as the root cause of women's oppression. Consequently, I determined that beyond the need for a victim-centered approach, feminist theory was not well suited for this study because service provider conceptions of preparedness encompass elements beyond gender.

I determined social cognitive theory better suited this study than feminist theory. Rosenthal and Zimmerman (1978) formulated social cognitive theory, and Bandura (1985, 1986) developed it further. Through this theory, these authors addressed individual actors' complex behaviors while also considering environmental factors demonstrated through a model of reciprocal determinism. In the model, they suggest that behavior, personal cognition, and the environment work as bidirectional influences on one another from which causal inferences can be made. Though this study was not well suited for causal inferences, social cognitive theory still fit the aim for the study to explore the concept of service provider preparedness and the associated descriptive and environmental themes better than feminist theory.

Social constructionist theory also applied to this study's aims. Social constructionist theory can be defined as the meaning or definition prescribed to a person, place, or thing by broader society. Members of society, in turn, ascribed this meaning with a social value widely accepted as a social truth. Social constructionism has received much attention since its formulation, and researchers often viewed it as a group's

cumulative understanding of a perceived reality that leads to meaning, values, norms, and traditions (Berger & Luckman, 1966). I used social constructionist theory in this study to explain individual actions and reasoning. I also used it to illuminate the perceived social values assigned to the trafficking victims and those working to help them. I found it useful when explaining the influence of social constructs beyond biology on victim oppression. Additionally, social constructionists believe that knowledge is generated through relationships, language, and political understanding (Miliann et al., 2017). Given these presumptions, the concepts of sex, gender, and physical biology would also be considered within the context of social constructionist theory.

Nature of the Study

A research design provides a blueprint for how a researcher plans to collect data and evaluate the relationships between variables (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine conceptions of service provider preparedness by uncovering the descriptive and environmental factors presented in service provider employee narratives. In this study, I collected and analyzed data from service provider employees throughout the eastern part of Nebraska. The nature of this study was qualitative.

A qualitative approach proved an acceptable choice because the research questions focused on the concepts of service provider preparedness from a service provider employee's perspective. Although an experimental design would have provided the most controlled environment and reliable results needed to determine a possible causal relationship, I chose to examine the concepts in a natural, uncontrolled

environment. Operating in a natural environment prevents the researcher from controlling many extraneous factors, precluding an inference of causation. I determined a qualitative approach would suit my exploration of service provider preparedness because the topic was not well understood in the trafficking literature.

Definition of Terms

Commercial sex act: A commercial sex act is any act of sex for which a person receives something of value (TVPA, 2000).

Human trafficking: Human trafficking is defined as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to recruit, harbor, transport, or restrain a person against their will for the purpose of labor or sex (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2017). The movement of the victim across state or country borders is not necessary for the crime to occur (United Nations [UN] Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015).

Service provider: Service provider refers to individuals working in child welfare systems, runaway and homeless shelters, immigrant and refugee programs, and sexual assault and domestic violence victims' shelters (OVC, 2017).

Victim of human sex trafficking: Any person, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or race, induced to perform a commercial act of sex through the use of force, fraud, or coercion (DHS, 2017). Any person under the age of 18 is automatically considered a victim of sex trafficking if performing a commercial sex act, even if the victim consents to such an act (Office on Trafficking in Persons, 2017).

Assumptions

In this study, I aimed to look at the concept of service provider preparedness from service provider employees' perspectives to identify any themes among environmental, behavioral, or personal factors. The conceptual frameworks I used to design this study and describe and interpret the developed themes were guided by the tenets of social constructionist and social cognitive theory. In these underpinnings, theorists respectively address how social reality and understanding take place and suggest the interactions among the environment, personal cognition, and behavior bidirectionally influence one another (Bandura, 1986; Berger & Luckman, 1966). I assumed these theories would help describe the phenomenon's complexities when used in a qualitative case study approach.

Social cognitive theory includes several key assumptions: people can learn through the observation of others; behavior can be directed through goals; behavior is self-regulated over time, and positive and negative reinforcements indirectly influence behavior and learning (Bandura, 1986). Social constructionist theory also includes several key assumptions: knowledge is socially created, language is the centerpiece of social construction, and the construction of knowledge is politically derived (Galbin, 2014).

Qualitative inquiry involves inherent assumptions associated with selected methodologies (e.g., case studies; Creswell, 2009; Field, 2013). Walters (2001) identified one assumption as the need for inductive reasoning during data examination to avoid "proving a self-fulling prophecy" (p. 60). This worked well when answering RQ1 due to the question's exploratory nature. However, I ultimately changed RQ2's method of reasoning to deductive due to the inherent assumptions associated with the model of

reciprocal determinism and because the descriptive themes were already developed. This allowed me to answer RQ2 more appropriately. Because this case study was also bound by time and place, another assumption involved studying the research object within its own context. In other words, the results are not generalizable but are specific to the population in the specified context where data was gathered (Guba & Lincoln, 1986). Therefore, it remains the reader's responsibility to determine if they can transfer this study's findings to other populations or contexts.

I also made assumptions that could have been unintentionally applied during data collection and interpretation and the discussion of results. At the time of the study, I was employed by the federal government and had experience working with the unlawful population within the United States. Consequently, it was possible I favored an interpretation consistent with my own epistemological stance. I assumed that my epistemological views were reasonably addressed and suppressed during this study. I discuss this at length in Chapter 5.

Lastly, I made assumptions about the participants in this study. Firstly, I assumed their answers to the questionnaire and interview would be similar due to organizational and policy guidance, legislative mandates, and the fact they all worked at a service provider organization. Secondly, not all service providers in Eastern Nebraska participated in this study, so I assumed that the sample of participants would represent other service providers around the area. Lastly, I assumed that the participants fully understood the questions and provided honest feedback.

Scope and Delimitations

The study's scope involved (a) service provider employee perspectives on their preparedness to meet trafficking survivors' needs; (b) recorded demographic and biographic information; and (c) identified behavioral, cognitive, and environmental themes. I aimed to address the perceived need to identify best practices for aiding human trafficking survivors. I selected the geographic area and population that could best provide data to answer the research questions. I recruited from only service provider locations in Eastern Nebraska, which are most likely to support victims of human trafficking. A study conducted by the Women's Fund of Omaha (2015) showed that Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, North Platte, and Scottsbluff have a high demand for commercial sex. Of these, Lincoln and Omaha are located in Eastern Nebraska, are the two largest cities, and are most likely to have many service providers, so I focused my efforts to find service providers in these two locations. A service provider in Norfolk, Nebraska, also participated in this study. Norfolk is also located in Eastern Nebraska. The study involved nine participants' responses to questionnaires and subsequent interviews with four of those nine participants.

Participants only came from organizations that either provided services to only trafficking survivors or a combination of trafficking and other survivors such as domestic abuse victims and runaways. The participants were at least 18 years old and had at some point worked with a trafficking survivor while working for the service provider. Any service provider employee who met these requirements could continue to volunteer to participate in the study by answering the questionnaire at their place of employment.

They were also given the opportunity to participate at their convenience in a follow-up, audio-recorded interview via the online conferencing platform Zoom. The purposive sampling of service providers in different environments and demographics may add to the transferability of the results. The results of this study highlight themes that may influence policy formation and solutions for earlier victim identification and mitigation, improved service provider employee engagement and acknowledgment, and improved partnerships between various levels of survivor identification and response.

Limitations

The study involved several limitations. In the first, the idea of preparedness may have been influenced by factors or themes other than those uncovered in this study. Service provider definitions of preparedness could change due to unforeseen circumstances such as new legislative mandates or policy decisions, changes in funding or training, or the development of new or better collaborative efforts. One such event occurred when providers took additional safety precautions with the onset of COVID-19. All of the interview participants explained that their normal processing changed because of the pandemic and noted a decrease in walk-ins and referrals to their organizations.

The results of this study may be applicable at the employee and management levels. However, applicability may be limited to just the organizations that participated in this research study. Due to the potential for differing cultural values, organizational missions, size, and geographical needs, the results of this study could be limited to this group of participants. Some concepts, however, may still be transferable to other settings, populations, and organizations depending on needs.

I communicated the questionnaire and interview questions in a clear and concise manner using English words that were easy to understand. Some participants may have preferred a language other than English or may not have understood the questions being asked. However, no participants indicated they preferred another language, so I did not provide the questionnaire and interview questions in any other language. I established the validity of the participant responses through prolonged engagement with the participants, member checking during the interviewing, and triangulation of the data. Additionally, I encouraged the participants to give their open and honest feedback and assured them their personal data would be masked and coded, thereby minimizing the chances of their identities being revealed or shared in a manner that could jeopardize their employment or well-being.

Significance

The available literature reviewed for this study revealed a lack of understanding about how a service provider's definition of preparedness may affect their services and how they determine success or failure. I aimed to learn about how service provider employees define preparedness and uncover descriptive themes from their narratives. This information may help providers improve victim identification, care, and well-being as well as prevent survivor revictimization. I begin to address this problem by identifying common themes that managers and service provider employees can use to identify best practices and improve upon existing practices to meet trafficking survivors' needs. The results also begin to illuminate possible ways to improve preparedness and program evaluation.

Other service provider organizations, such as health care workers, emergency responders, and social workers, have often fallen short of identifying and aiding trafficking survivors (Contreras et al., 2016; Viergever et al., 2019). In this study, I identified several areas where providers can improve upon existing practice. These included identification training, increased communication between service provider organizations, and being trauma-informed. There may also be chances to help members of the public to better understand trafficking victimization and trauma-informed care. There are two frames of thought that society has adopted for trafficking victims, which is predicated on whether the victim had willfully engaged in risky behavior that led to their exploitation or had not engaged in such behavior before their exploitation (Schwarz et al., 2017). The findings of this study also suggested that more can be done to inform and influence public opinion about human trafficking. These findings may lead to new public initiatives that enhance the current understanding of trafficking victimization, identification, aid, and recovery. They may also lead to a more positive social view of trafficking survivors and their struggles.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the concept of preparedness from various service provider perspectives in the eastern region of Nebraska. Together, social cognitive theory and social constructionist theory served as a theoretical and conceptual framework supporting the notion that preparedness is complex and relies on a number of environmental, cognitive, and behavioral factors. The significance of this

study is that it may provide insight into the importance of clearly defining service

provider preparedness to aid trafficking survivors.

Chapter 2 includes an introduction, the strategy used for beginning the literature

review, a description of human trafficking in general, human trafficking legislation,

service provider functions, a variety of perspectives on human trafficking, the application

of social cognitive theory and social constructionist theory as a conceptual framework,

and a chapter summary.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Service providers should support trafficking survivors by identifying them as such, aligning resources, and addressing their unique problems to help them heal and prevent them from being exploited again. However, efforts to help these survivors have fallen short due to inadequate training; a lack of understanding around trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches; and unclear program policies, guidance, and evaluation (Contreras et al., 2017; Davy, 2016; Dell et al., 2019; Farrell, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine conceptions of service provider preparedness by uncovering the descriptive and environmental factors presented in service provider employee narratives. In this chapter, I discuss the literature review strategy and key concepts gained from it, the justification and use of theory to provide a conceptual framework, the study's key concepts, and the problems in the trafficking literature and with human trafficking in the state of Nebraska.

Literature Review Strategy

I primarily used the Walden University Library research databases to research articles. The databases I focused on were categorized as either policy and administrative or social-work related. My search in the policy and administration databases produced articles from ProQuest Central (177 articles), Political Science Complete (311 articles), and SAGE Journals (197 articles). My search in the social work databases produced articles from SocINDEX (19 articles) and PsycInfo (22 articles). Additionally, I used nonprofit organizational and governmental websites to provide further context and

definition. Organizational and governmental websites included the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Office of Justice Programs, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Amnesty International, the Polaris Project, the Project to End Human Trafficking, the Nebraska Human Trafficking Taskforce, and the Women's Fund of Omaha.

Key words used in the search included *human trafficking, service provider, prostitution, sex trafficking, nonprofit organization, outreach, social cognitive theory, feminist theory, domestic violence and slavery,* and *victim safety*. However, due to the large number of articles in the policy and administration databases, I limited the number of applicable articles by only selecting those involving any combination of the keywords *human trafficking, service provider, victim, and victim safety.* I limited the search to articles published in the last 25 years, which is roughly when governmental and nongovernmental organizations recognized the concept of human trafficking.

Social Constructionist Theory and Social Cognitive Theory

The use of theory in case study designs has been widely debated and continues to spur divergence among many researchers. Some researchers have advocated for the absence of theory in case studies and have preferred to focus on the specific cases and the phenomenon being explored (Stake, 1995). Other researchers prefer using a theory developed during a case study to compare with existing theory (Creswell, 1994). Still others have suggested using a theoretical basis in a case study to help organize the collected data and to filter it appropriately, paying close attention to specific contexts or special circumstances (Harling, 2012; Yin, 1994).

For the purpose of this study, I determined the use of theory would help contextualize the complex processes happening among service providers, legislators, law enforcement, the judicial system, and trafficking victims. Furthermore, theory helped me filter data for analysis, as suggested by Yin (1994).

Social Constructionist Theory

Social constructionism first took hold in the mid-1960s, growing from ideas rooted in the way individuals and collective groups perceive reality. Berger and Luckman (1966) postulated that social reality is created by the meaning and relevance that societies attribute to events, objects, or phenomena and by how individuals within that society legitimize it into social reality. In other words, social constructionism refers to the idea that truth is determined by what powerful individuals within a society perceive it to be. Perceived truth, however, may not necessarily be the same from one society to another, so it inherently depends on social interpretation and institutionalization. Social stratification, therefore, is merely a social construct through which society places individuals into groups based upon a variety of variables deemed relevant and legitimate by that society.

In the United States, empirical evidence has produced two trains of thought on prostitution. Some view prostitution as a form of work that can or should be regulated (Amnesty International, 2016). Others view prostitution as always a form of exploitation or a means of leading to exploitation. Advocates of this view believe prostitution should be banned (CATW, 2017). Conflicting thoughts about perceived reality within society lead to legal uncertainty and social unrest. This has occurred in the United States

regarding medicinal marijuana, second amendment rights, and civil rights for disadvantaged groups. In the case of prostitution, individuals who work as prostitutes, lawfully or unlawfully, have been perceived as criminals who promote immoral behavior and drug use. Members of broader society often look down on those practicing prostitution and assign them less worth than individuals not engaging in prostitution (Ioannou & Oostinga, 2015).

Trafficking victims are often treated as criminals and stigmatized by broader society, law enforcement, or the media because of their involvement in prostitution and other illicit activities (DOS, 2017; Shadaimah et al., 2014). Many also assign blame to victims of human trafficking for their situation because some victims engaged in unlawful or immoral behavior before their exploitation (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Farrell, 2014). However, a lack of knowledge about what human trafficking is and how it works prevents many from drawing appropriate conclusions about victims. Judges and attorneys have argued about inconsistencies in victim testimonies (Hellferich et al., 2011; Nichols & Heil, 2015). Law enforcement officials have described victims as difficult to work with, which has led to misreporting of an incident or failure to identify a victim as being trafficked (Nichols & Heil, 2015). Residents in communities with known prostitution issues prefer the response of jail time and rehabilitative efforts over rehabilitation alone (Shadaimah et al., 2014). And service providers have even argued the different legal authorities (i.e., local, state, and federal) do not cooperate well, which has led to the deportation of some traffickers before they were ever tried in court (Nichols & Heil, 2015).

Social Cognitive Theory

For the purpose of this study, social constructionist theory helped explain how society may view victims of trafficking. However, it does not help to describe how or why a victim stays in an exploitative relationship with a trafficker or why they struggle to cooperate with those trying to help them escape. To address these questions, I used social cognitive theory to help explain the victims' own perceived self-efficacy with their trafficker and relationship with society. Miller and Dollard (1941) formulated social cognitive theory, but Bandura expanded on it in 1977 and again in 1986. Bandura (1986, 1999) set the foundation for scientific exploration into social learning and self-efficacy. In his model of reciprocal determinism, Bandura (1986) described social cognitive theory as a set of bidirectional influences based on environment, behavior, and cognition. In order to demonstrate the complexities of a victim's own perceived self-efficacy, the relationship among the environment, the victim's cognitive processes, and the victim's behavior is described in Bandura's model of reciprocal determinism. This description can shed light on a victim's decisions and behaviors. Understanding how trafficking victims think and behave in relation to their environment may help service providers respond to them more appropriately.

Figure 1

Illustration of Albert Bandura's Model of Reciprocal Determinism
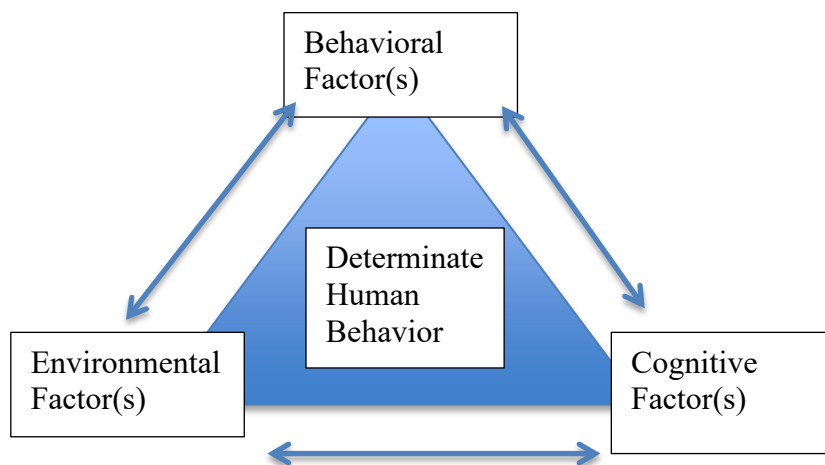
Literature Review Key Concepts

Commerce that involves buying and selling human beings is alive and thriving in every nation in the world (DOS, 2015, 2017). The trafficking of humans, also known as modern-day slavery, has become so pervasive that it is considered the second most common form of trafficking slotted between trafficking in arms and drugs (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015). Human trafficking was once thought of as a problem only associated with poverty, social or political unrest, or migration in international domains outside of the United States. However, decades of research have shown that human trafficking is a global catastrophe and can be found anywhere, including the United States (CATW, 2016; Mace et al., 2012; Schauer & Wheaton, 2006).

The definition of human trafficking is not globally agreed upon; however, a generally accepted notion comes from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2015) as set

forth in the Protocol to Prevent and Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. The protocol defines human trafficking as

> the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring 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 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 prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015, p. 2)

Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation caught the attention of the U.S. population in the early 1990s (DOS, 2015). It is estimated that the United States has a significant market for the sexual trafficking of women and children (Hodge, 2008; Jordan et al., 2013). Recent data pointed to approximately 15,000 to 100,000 individuals trafficked for sexual exploitation each year in the U.S. A disproportionate number of these victims are women and children (CATW, 2016; DOS, 2015; Mace et al., 2012). Farley (2016) approximated profits from sex trafficking at $32 billion per year, with roughly $5 billion generated through Las Vegas, Nevada alone. The United States has been, and continues to be, a country fostering sex trafficking due to a large number of factors that perpetuate the problem. These factors include but are not limited to: a demand for commercial sex, social tolerance, inefficient enforcement of existing

legislation, victim family/domestic issues, lack of available community support and resources, negligence of the issue, unlawful migration, and the hidden nature of the crime itself (Albonetti, 2014; Chibba, 2014; Muftić, 2014).

Trafficking for labor exploitation has drawn much less attention than that of sex trafficking in the United States (DOS, 2017). Many researchers have pointed to moral convictions and the social construction of trafficked persons, and overly broad legislative definitions have reduced focus on these victims (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; McDonald, 2014; Office on Trafficking in Persons, 2017; OVC, 2017). However, outcry has more recently grown due to increased attention from the media and politicians, but the problem is still largely underrepresented in research. It has been estimated that more people are trafficked for the purposes of labor than for sex, with some figuring that ratio to be 3 to 1 (Department of Justice [DOJ], 2015; DOS, 2016; Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center [HSTC], 2008).

These issues have been widely acknowledged, and many efforts have been made to identify and rescue victims, prosecute perpetrators, and educate the populace. The U.S. government passed the TVPA in 2000 and instituted the three Ps (i.e., punishment of offenders, protection of victims, and prevention efforts) to guide how the law should be implemented and understood (TVPA, 2000). Since the TVPA's inception, a noted increase has occurred in the number of trafficker prosecutions (DOS, 2016). There has also been an overall increase in the number of services offered to victims and training for law enforcement on victim identification (Nolan et al., 2015; Simich et al., 2014). There have even been numerous efforts to educate the populace about human trafficking, such

as the MTV End Exploitation and Trafficking campaign, the Blue Campaign, and various other national and local partnerships and campaigns.

However, human trafficking continues to plague the nation. Some researchers have argued that law enforcement training is still not adequate, and the justice system is faulty (Davy, 2016; Farrell, 2014; Farrell et al., 2013). Many researchers have criticized prevention efforts, citing a lack of transparency, evaluation, and effectiveness (Davy, 2016; Gozdziak & Bump, 2008). Others have argued that the support system for survivors lacks much-needed resources (Contreras et al., 2016; Dell et al., 2019; Dovydaitis, 2010; Hopper, 2016).

Regarding protection and prevention efforts, some researchers have begun surveying and analyzing general populations to assess their knowledge of human trafficking (Chibba, 2014; Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Davy, 2016). These researchers aimed to understand the underlying social construction of human trafficking and how it influences ideology, perception, and belief (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Doherty & Harris, 2015). Much of the research on protection and prevention efforts offered little insight into possible root causes of protection failure and lackluster performance for prevention efforts. Furthermore, little data had been collected on protection and prevention efforts with any relevant and viable societal impact. Many service providers and victim advocates claim that prevention and protection efforts make viable and long-lasting impressions on greater populations, which may influence how victims are viewed and treated and, ultimately, how they view themselves (CATW, 2016). However, this notion contradicts another assertion associated with victims: that they cannot identify

themselves as a victim or survivor of human sex trafficking (Contreras et al., 2017; HSTC, 2008). Therefore, it becomes important to look from the service providers' perspective to ascertain what efforts have meaningfully contributed to the successful identification, treatment, and prevention of human trafficking.

Slavery and Human Trafficking

Human trafficking has existed since human beings first began enslaving others thousands of years ago. This was often called "slavery," and its purpose frequently depended on the environment and circumstances leading up to and including the enslavement. An enslaved person was considered the legal, personal property of another person (i.e., the slaveholder). Enslavement often occurred during war and civil or political unrest, but it also existed in forms involving debt bondage and government-sponsored infrastructure building. Slavery was tied to business, economic, or societal purposes and has played an integral part in many cultures throughout the world (Chibba, 2014). The institution of slavery involves the violation of human rights, and it was frequently used as a mechanism of social stratification that justified its use. Social stratification involves the categorization of people or groups of people based on a variety of variables such as status, religion, race or ethnicity, wealth, occupation, and geographic location. Social stratification, in its most general definition, is comprised of two processes:

- social positions matched with goods and desirables, and

- members of society assigned to social positions (Grusky, 2011).

Therefore, individuals with power use social stratification to gain power by influencing discourse, knowledge, and perceived truth. Butler (1990) asserted that power, in a given political structure or social construct, may produce or limit capabilities, control, protection, and the inclusion or exclusion of people. Individuals attain power by classifying another person's conduct—or assessing them according to whatever criteria matter to those holding power—and assigning them worth within a political structure.

Over time, many people and nations have asserted individual rights to gain their independence from control and slavery. Examples include the Magna Carta in 1215; the English Bill of Rights in 1689; and the U.S. Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and Bill of Rights in 1791. Of note, these documents excluded various groups of people, further exacerbating social stratification. However, the notion of human rights did not become embedded in the global consciousness until 1948, after the UN's member states adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The purpose of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was to advise all nations that a government's abuse of its citizens is the concern of the international community and that all people are born free with equal rights and dignity (UN, 2018).

As the formal enslavement of people began to lose societal support and government sponsorship, slavery itself continued to exist in an underground domain. The economic and business demand for cheap labor, illicit entertainment, and sex provided enough incentive for people to continue to enslave human beings. Slavery, as an economic and business tool, has given rise to an underground phenomenon that we now call human trafficking. Human trafficking is often thought of as modern-day slavery

because of the generally accepted notion that both involve the physical or psychological

exploitation or abuse of another person for profit. However, trafficking involves the

violation of many other laws. These relate to kidnapping, slavery, assault and battery,

fraud, false imprisonment, extortion, debt bondage, peonage, and involuntary servitude

(TVPA, 2000). Human trafficking may even violate immigration, labor, and revenue or

taxation laws.

The news media in the U.S. often uses the term human trafficking synonymously

with human smuggling. However, the two are distinctly different. Immigration and

Customs Enforcement (ICE; 2017) defined *human smuggling* as "the importation of

people into a country via the deliberate evasion of immigration laws. This includes

bringing illegal aliens into a country, as well as the unlawful transportation and harboring

of aliens already in a country illegally" (para. 8). The International Criminal Police

Organization (2012) offered a broader interpretation of human smuggling as "the

procurement, for financial or material gain, of the illegal entry into a state of which that

person is neither a citizen nor a permanent resident." Both definitions suggest that an

individual voluntarily pays a smuggler to gain entrance into another country. Human

trafficking victims, on the other hand, are forced to move unlawfully across borders.

Additionally, human trafficking does not necessarily involve the movement of people

across borders (TVPA, 2000).

Though human smuggling and trafficking differ, they also are closely bound.

Generally, once an individual has been smuggled into the destination area, the

relationship between the individual and the smuggler ends. However, the International

Criminal Police Organization (2017) noted that increased security at many borders has forced some individuals to turn to organized crime networks for smuggling. Crime networks have been known to charge large fees to smuggle migrants. The crime networks sometimes force migrants into exploitative relationships in order to pay off these debts. When this happens, the smuggled migrant becomes a trafficking victim. Furthermore, human trafficking may be subcategorized into two groups: international trafficking and domestic trafficking. International trafficking involves a victim being forced to move unlawfully across a border. Domestic trafficking, also known as internal trafficking, involves a victim who is already located in the desired destination and does not involve the unlawful transportation of the victim across borders.

Human Trafficking Legislation in the United States

Before the Trafficking Victims Protection Act

The U.S government had created laws regarding a variety of crimes generally encompassed in human trafficking. These crimes included: peonage (18 U.S. code subsections 1581[a]), involuntary servitude (1584), forced labor (1589), trafficking in respect to peonage, involuntary servitude and forced labor (1590), sex trafficking of children with force (1591), the unlawful conduct with respect to documents in furtherance of peonage, and involuntary servitude or forced labor (1592). Also included was the attempt to commit peonage, slavery, involuntary servitude, forced labor, trafficking, or sex trafficking (1594[a]). Other notable laws prior to the TVPA included the Mann Act of 1910, which criminalized the transportation of children and coercion of adults across lands for engaging in commercial sex, and the Tariff Act of 1930, which

prohibited the import of goods made with forced labor or indentured servitude. The Tariff

Act was later amended as the Customs and Facilitations and Trade Enforcement Act of

2009, which included goods made by trafficking victims or through the use of coercion.

The Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act of 1970 was designed to fight

organized crime, including human trafficking, which gave law enforcement another tool

for prosecution.

The Trafficking Victim Protection Act

The United States formally recognized human trafficking in the late 1990s with

the enactment of the TVPA of 2000. This law has since been reauthorized as the Victims

of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. Since the TVPA's inception, it has been

reauthorized in 2003, 2005, 2008, and in 2013. The TVPA defined human trafficking as a

crime and set forth specific penalties against those who trafficked in humans or who

purchased the victim. The law supplemented existing laws by adding punishments; it also

imparted new tools to law enforcement to investigate and fight human trafficking (CIS,

2018). The TVPA allocates a sentence of 15 years to life imprisonment for human

traffickers if force, fraud, or coercion are proven to have been used against victims

performing a commercial sex act or in cases where the victim is under the age of 14

years. If a victim is 14 to 17 years old and no force, fraud, or coercion was used, the

sentence of 10 years to life imprisonment is issued (HSTC, 2008). Additionally, the law

intended to embolden victims of human trafficking by allowing the possibility of filing

private, civil lawsuits directly against their traffickers (Congressional Research Service,

2003).

The literature on human trafficking established that the TVPA encouraged a victim-centered approach. A victim-centered approach is used to minimize a victim's retraumatization by supporting and empowering them during their trafficker's judicial process (OVC, 2018). Legislators intended the TVPA to protect U.S. citizens or foreign nationals who were victims of human trafficking in the United States by providing them with support, empowerment, and restitution. The TVPA also assigned special protections for vulnerable groups such as foreign nationals, children, and mental incompetents (Farrell et al., 2013).

After the Trafficking Victim Protection Act

After the TVPA's inception, other notable acts include the Protect Act of 2003 and the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013. The former enhanced penalties for individuals engaged in sex tourism in and outside the United States, and the latter gave U.S. government agencies the ability to terminate without penalty any contract or grant to any individual or organization engaged in human trafficking (Polaris Project, 2017). To date, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have also passed legislation criminalizing human trafficking and enabling a pimp or trafficker to be prosecuted at state or local levels (Farrell et al., 2013). However, the effectiveness of state and local prosecutions remains largely unknown (Davy, 2016; Farrell et al., 2013; McDonald, 2014).

Citizen and Noncitizen Victims

Though legislators designed the TVPA and its criminal definition of human trafficking to protect both U.S. citizen and foreign national victims, they specifically created the civil provisions of the TVPA to protect foreign national victims who, because

of their lack of lawful immigration status, would not be eligible for social service programs and may even be subject to deportation proceedings (TVPA, 2000).

This is demonstrated in the TVPA with the creation of the T- and U-visas. The T-visa is a special class of nonimmigrant visas only available to foreign national victims of severe forms of human trafficking. It allows victims to stay in the United States to aid in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers (CIS, 2018). Congress has allocated up to 5,000 visas per year for victims, which does not include their derivatives (e.g., spouse or children; CIS, 2018). If a victim qualifies for a T-visa, then they receive the treatment of a refugee and may apply for permanent residence after 3 years.

The U-visa is a special class of nonimmigrant visas only available to foreign national victims of severe criminal activity. The list of qualifying crimes includes trafficking and many other activities commonly associated with trafficking. Congress has allocated up to 10,000 visas per year for victims, which does not include their derivatives. Like the T-visa, Congress assigned no cap on the number of visas available for the victims' derivatives.

The TVPA calls for other forms of benefits to foreign nationals, such as health care, legal aid, housing, work permits, financial support, English language training, and witness protection. The latter is offered through a grant program provided by the OVC, but victims can only participate after being precertified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Davy, 2016; Hodge, 2008; USDHHS, 2018).

The TVPA (2000) defined forms of trafficking in two categories: sex trafficking and labor trafficking. However, the law subdivided sex trafficking into two additional

categories: severe sex trafficking and nonsevere sex trafficking. Severe sex trafficking occurs when "a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age" (p. 1471). Nonsevere sex trafficking involves "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act" (p. 1470). Therefore, if a foreign national does not meet the definition of a severe form of trafficking according to the HHS, they may not be eligible for the additional services of the OVC.

U.S. citizen victims of trafficking are not eligible for many of the protections offered by the TVPA because they are specific to foreign nationals. However, U.S. citizen victims are eligible for a variety of other benefits and general services common to all U.S. citizens (e.g., food stamps and Medicaid). Additionally, a U.S. citizen trafficking victim is also eligible for services associated with victims of a federal crime and may be given access to emergency shelter, food, medical care, legal assistance, counseling, and other services (HSTC, 2008).

Concerns Related to the Trafficking Victim Protection Act

Researchers and service providers have identified many issues regarding the TVPA. Stakeholders have identified numerous concerns, so I focused primarily on concerns related to victim identification and benefits, service providers, and the legal environment. The first issue relates to the perceived benefits associated with someone identifying as a victim of human trafficking. According to Rieger (2006), only 228 sex trafficking victims received any form of benefit under the TVPA in 2005. Most of the victims' requests for benefits were denied without a clear justification. Since the research

of Rieger (2006), the U.S. DOJ has provided information on the number of victims who have been certified as eligible to receive benefits under the TVPA (DOJ, 2015). Table 1 presents DOJ (2015) data with information taken from the HHS Administration for Children and Families.

Table 1

Trafficking Victims Protection Act Certification and Eligibility

Fiscal year	Number of eligibility letters issued to children	Number of certification letters issued to adults	Total letters issued
2001	4	194	198
2002	18	81	99
2003	6	145	151
2004	16	147	163
2005	34	197	231
2006	20	214	234
2007	33	270	303
2008	31	286	317
2009	50	330	380
2010	92	449	541
2011	101	463	564
2012	103	366	469
2013	114	406	520
2014	219	530	749
2015	240	623	863
	1081	**4701**	**5782**

Note. From *Attorney general's annual report to congress and assessment of U.S. government activities to combat trafficking in persons*, by U.S. Department of Justice, 2015. https://www.justice.gov/archives/page/file/870826/download

Interestingly, according to the DOJ (2015), in fiscal year (FY) 2015, the majority of victims were female (67%), and the rest were male (33%). Of the victims certified to receive benefits in FY 2015, the vast majority related to labor trafficking (76%), and only a small percentage related to sex trafficking (15%) or labor and sex trafficking (9%). Additionally, information provided by the OVC (2017) indicated that 3,889 cases were opened and resulted in services from at least one of the 55 service providers who received OVC grants. This grant money was allocated in accordance with the TVPA to help service providers support victims. From July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2015, roughly 51% of trafficking victims were U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States, and the rest were foreign nationals. Sex trafficking victims comprised 56% of the population; 36% were labor trafficking victims; 5% were both sex and labor trafficking victims, and the last 3% were categorized as unknown (DOJ, 2015). It is important to note that the discrepancies among the above statistics reflect victims who the HHS certified to receive services in accordance with the TVPA and those who the OVC reported had received support from a service provider who was an OVC grant recipient.

The CIS has the authority to adjudicate T- and U-visas. From the FYs 2011 to 2015, the CIS approved thousands of T- and U-visas. Tables 2 and 3 show specific information related to approved applicants and derivatives in addition to denials.

Table 2

Applications for T Nonimmigrant Status in Fiscal Years 2011–2015

Fiscal year	Victims			Family of victims (derivative)			Totals		
	Applied	Approved	Denied	Applied	Approved	Denied	Applied	Approved	Denied
2011	967	557	223	795	722	137	1,762	1,279	360
2012	885	674	194	795	758	117	1,680	1,432	311
2013	799	848	104	1021	975	91	1,820	1,823	195
2014	944	913	153	925	788	105	1,869	1,401	258
2015	1,062	610	294	1,162	694	192	2,224	1,304	486

Table 3

Applications of U Nonimmigrant Status in Fiscal Years 2011–2015

Fiscal Year	Victims			Family of victims			Totals		
	Applied	Approved	Denied	Applied	Approved	Denied	Applied	Approved	Denied
2011	16,768	10,088	2,929	10,033	7,602	1,645	26,801	17,690	4,574
2012	24,768	10,122	2,866	15,126	7,421	1,465	39,894	17,543	4,331
2013	25,432	10,030	1,829	18,263	8,198	1,440	43,695	18,228	3,269
2014	26,039	10,020	4,056	1,929	8,500	3,017	45,268	18,520	7,073
2015	30,106	10,026	2,715	22,560	7,662	1,965	52,666	17,694	4,680

Note. From *Attorney general's annual report to congress and assessment of U.S. government activities to combat trafficking in persons*, by U.S. Department of Justice, 2015. https://www.justice.gov/archives/page/file/870826/download

Denials of T- and U-visas related to the victim being unable to establish eligibility (DOJ, 2015). As cited by many researchers, including Rieger (2006),

the strict interpretation of the TVPA's definition of trafficking has prevented some victims from establishing themselves as trafficking victims. Therefore, individuals who cannot establish their victimization do not become certified by HHS or do not receive services and aid set aside for trafficking victims. This becomes a double-edged sword for foreign national victims who could become criminalized by the government and treated as an unlawful alien subject to removal proceedings. In some instances, this may also prevent the victim from working with law enforcement to prosecute their traffickers or from wanting to pursue other avenues of escape. Unfortunately, The TVPA's strict definitions of trafficking may result in victims returning to their trafficker for their basic needs rather than seeking assistance from the government or service providers.

Further concerns stem from the legal environment. According to Farrell et al. (2013), new laws have created confusion and uncertainty about how lower levels of government should prosecute traffickers. The authors determined that many state prosecutors prefer long-standing statutes over newer laws to prosecute traffickers because many of the illegal activities already fall under well-established means of securing a conviction. However, many of the well-established legal frameworks some prosecutors use lead to lesser punishments for the trafficker. The result is a criminal conviction but not a trafficker conviction in accordance with the TVPA.

According to data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in FYs 2011 and 2015, 1,437 and 1,492 respective investigations and arrests occurred in conjunction

with human trafficking, but these involved very few indictments and convictions (578

and 425, respectively) by the FBI's Civil Rights Unit (DOJ, 2015). The FBI's Civil

Rights Unit oversees all human trafficking investigations related to foreign or domestic

adults or foreign minors.

According to data from the FBI's Violent Crimes Against Children Section unit,

which is responsible for investigating commercial sex exploitation of domestic minors,

the organization conducted many investigations and arrests during FYs 2011–2015, but

very few ended in indictments or convictions. Table 4 shows numbers of investigations,

arrests, indictments, and convictions (DOJ, 2015).

Table 4

FBI Innocence Lost National Initiative Cases in Fiscal Years 2011–2015

Fiscal Year	Investigations	Arrests	Indictments	Convictions
2011	371	1,332	172	224
2012	363	1,769	224	302
2013	515	2,380	254	310
2014	573	2,918	361	387
2015	538	2,253	316	363

Note. From *Attorney general's annual report to congress and assessment of U.S.*

government activities to combat trafficking in persons, by U.S. Department of Justice,

2015. https://www.justice.gov/archives/page/file/870826/download

It must be noted that all of the aforementioned FBI data included federal, state,

and local trafficking cases in the United States for each year. The data indicated that law

enforcement and the judicial system have become more comfortable with the TVPA;

however, it also demonstrated the difficulty in navigating an uncertain legal environment and obtaining prosecutions under new or enhanced laws (Albonetti, 2014). According to Albonetti (2014), roughly 95% of the human trafficking convictions for the years 2001 through 2010 occurred under laws predating the TVPA, even though the TVPA existed during that time. The author found that many in the judicial system, including prosecuting attorneys and judges, preferred a conviction with a lesser sentence than moving forward in untested or unfamiliar legal territory. Additionally, Albonetti discovered that judges utilized their own discretion more often when using the TVPA's enhanced sentencing guidelines for human sex trafficking cases and frequently gave traffickers lesser sentences.

The failure to charge or prosecute traffickers for what they are could impact the victim and their ability to receive assistance from service providers or federal, state, or local governments. The TVPA requires noncitizens to meet the strict definition of a trafficking victim. If their victimizer is not considered a trafficker before the law, then the victim cannot be considered a victim of trafficking. This may be a reason why the vast majority of T-visas are not issued each year (see Table 2 for details on the number of T-visa applications filed between FYs 2011 and 2015). The failure to issue T-visas may also be attributed to a lack of training in victim identification for law enforcement and others in the legal system. I discuss this issue further later in the literature review. If many victims cannot be considered trafficking victims, then they might be considered victims of a violent crime under the U-visa. See Table 3 for the number of U-visa applications submitted between the FYs 2011 and 2015. Currently, the CIS is

approximately 4 years behind in adjudicating U-visas because the law limits them to 10,000 per year, and the number of applications far exceeds that limit (CIS, 2018).

Perspectives on Human Trafficking

Many researchers and government organizations have noted that victims of human sex trafficking may be men, women, or children, and they may come from a variety of backgrounds and social levels (Twigg, 2016; Wirsing, 2012). Researchers have also acknowledged that certain groups of people may be more susceptible to human sex trafficking than others (e.g., women and children, migrants, and those affected by conflict or political unrest; Contreras et al., 2017; Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Twigg, 2016; Weitzer, 2014). However, portrayals of human sex trafficking victims have widely cast them as individuals who participate in risky behaviors associated with prostitution, drugs, and other illicit and illegal behaviors (Farrell, 2014; Hellferich et al., 2011). The news media, movies, and the music industry have sensationalized victims as prostitutes. This has led some in the broader society to believe that human sex trafficking victims come from lower on the social scale. Some researchers have even asserted that this notion leads individuals in some communities or societies to believe that sex trafficking victims are actually criminals rather than victims (Ioannou & Oostinga, 2015; Shadaimah et al., 2014). In other instances, this misrepresentation has also led to the legal criminalization of the victim rather than the trafficker or purchaser (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Farrell, 2014; Schwarz et al., 2017).

Farrell (2014) explored the influence of institutional and environmental factors on law enforcement agency responses to human trafficking. The author found that legislation

rarely dictates the required actions to be taken by enforcement agencies. Therefore, agencies were left to determine their response. Farrell concluded that the transformation from symbolic law (i.e., legislative intent) to instrumental law (i.e., law enforcement) depended upon an agency's experience with change rather than their openness to change or their organizational response to human trafficking. Those having greater experience with change were 140% more likely to adopt a relevant response to human trafficking than those with less change experience. They were also 630% more likely to identify a human trafficking case if employing a relevant response to human trafficking. Farrell confirmed that the factors presented by Jenness and Grattet (2005), which included exposing the influence of community demands on police organizations and the alignment of legal changes with a police organization's existing practices, significantly related to a police agency's susceptibility to change.

Muftić (2013) found that training officers on sex trafficking significantly predicted their success in identifying a sex trafficking victim, and officers trained on human trafficking held a more positive view of sex trafficking victims than untrained officers. Though Muftić did not discuss the quality, content, and length of the human trafficking training in his study, he showed that training influences police perspectives of trafficking victims. This information is important to note because, according to the CIS (2018), the TVPA requires foreign national victims to cooperate with law enforcement to qualify for a T- or U-visa. However, if training barriers prevent law enforcement from being able to identify a foreign national as a trafficking victim, the T- or U-visa may not become available to that victim.

In addition to conflicting ideas on identifying and defining victims, responses to human trafficking have also varied widely. Shadaimah et al. (2014) found that many communities believe that prostitution is a problem and that hybrid responses such as jail time and rehabilitation are necessary. Additionally, the authors discovered that most communities feel police intervention is more necessary than service provider response, but they also feel service providers represent an important part of the solution. The practice of prostitution has been linked to human sex trafficking in some cases (Women's Fund of Omaha, 2017). According to Contreras et al. (2017), police still commonly arrest trafficking victims as prostitutes, which can perpetuate victims' mistrust of law enforcement and lead to their revictimization by the trafficker.

Today, governments and organizations such as the UN, Amnesty International, the CATW, the Salvation Army, and many others are divided between two conflicting beliefs about the sex industry and human rights. In one perspective, advocates believe that sex represents a form of work and should be legal and regulated. In the other perspective, advocates argue sex is a form of intimacy, and any form of sex work ultimately results in the victimization of the person performing the sex work. From this perspective, sex work should be illegal. Interestingly, both sides claim to consider what is best for those performing the sexual act, but each draws from a distinct interpretation of morality and human rights. Schwarz et al. (2017) showed that those on both sides of the argument have many common perceptions related to pleasure, agency, and danger. The authors further noted that current deliberation largely ignores the experiences of trafficking survivors and service providers. I must mention a disclaimer at this point. I do

not treat sex work as either moral or immoral in this study. Rather, I treat it as a means to understand how the various perspectives may influence policy decisions, preparedness, and response by service providers or other responders. Though many governments support human rights, champion them has often fallen to private citizens or nongovernmental organizations (Shiman, 1993).

Service Provider Function

In many instances, law enforcement officials first identify a victim of human trafficking. However, service providers also play an integral role in identifying victims through intake programs and community relationships. Service providers are defined by The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 as

> a nonprofit, nongovernmental or tribal organization or rape crisis center, including a state or tribal coalition, that assists or advocates for domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking victims, including domestic violence shelters, faith-based organizations, and other organizations with a documented history of effective work concerning domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking. (p.294)

Though the definition does not specifically include human trafficking, the eligible applicants' portion of the act identifies assistance for sex trafficking victims. Additionally, the law clarifies the benefits and protections that may be offered to domestic and minor victims of trafficking. The act excludes foreign national victims because they are covered by the authority delegated to HHS by the TVPA. On that note, on June 10, 2015, the Administration for Children and Families, a leading HHS agency,

established the Office on Trafficking in Persons, which is now responsible for much of the foreign national victim certification processes.

Victims of trafficking have many immediate and long-term needs involving case management and advocacy, housing, food, health care, psychological care, substance abuse treatment, translation and immigration assistance, legal aid, employment or training services, and support groups (OVC, 2018). No agency or organization can adequately respond to a victim's every need, so response requires a coordinated effort. Service providers perform a variety of functions such as identifying and referring victims to specific services (e.g., health care, housing and shelter, legal assistance, substance abuse, mental health care, and job skills building and placement), providing training and technical assistance to local organizations, building coalitions with communities to leverage resources, and promoting public awareness of human trafficking (Office on Trafficking in Persons, 2018). Many service providers also offer services sensitive to age, sex, race, ethnicity, religious preference, sexual orientation, immigration status, and disability. However, service providers range in their available services, so many collaborate with local partners to broaden the services available to each victim.

McDonald (2014) asserted the justice system should work to discover victims and direct them to the appropriate resources. The justice system promotes a "trauma-informed" and "victim-centered" approach to empower victims through advocacy (DHS, 2017). Advocacy and support, from a service provider's standpoint, begins with understanding the trauma-informed approach that encourages the victim to recognize their worth as a human being (Hopper, 2016). Hopper (2016) further stated that the

assessment of trafficking survivors may represent a primary step in the path to recovery. In his hierarchy of needs, Maslow (1943) suggested that when a person is at risk or perceives a risk of harm, progress on complex emotional issues cannot occur. Therefore, by assessing a victim, service providers can identify and attend to immediate and long-term needs, which may lead to trust, healing, and empowerment for the victim. Prochaska and DiClemente (1984) demonstrated that change is not linear, and it requires an understanding of individual survivor needs and goals. Once a service provider has identified a victim's needs and goals, they can transform them into recommendations aimed at continuing the healing process.

Service providers aim to meet the needs of trafficking victims, but many fall short due to lack of training, resources, or coordination (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2013; Viergever et al., 2019). The UN (2006) stated that the efficacy of counter-trafficking efforts has not been evaluated. Davy (2016) discovered that limited research has been conducted on inhuman trafficking activities, including interventions, preventions, and protections. According to a 2007 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report of 23 U.S.-funded antitrafficking projects, most did not evaluate their programs. The GAO (2007) recommended that more scientific evaluation is needed to ensure the success of the interventions and activities being developed.

When service providers cannot offer the services victims need, the victim's safety becomes jeopardized. Often, this can result in the victim returning to the trafficker to meet their basic needs (Bouffard et al., 2016). In order to understand the complexities of the response, it is important to first understand the basic social construction of the

problem. Providers who adopt a trauma-informed approach account for the notion that a victim's psychological, biological, and behavioral responses represent coping mechanisms in response to traumatic incidents or stresses (Herman, 1997). In addition, a recognition of environmental constraints coupled with the victims' cognitive and behavioral responses reveals the complexities service providers must address to keep the victim safe.

Human Trafficking in Nebraska

Human trafficking exists in almost every corner of the world, including the United States (DOS, 2015). In Nebraska, it is estimated that 900 people are sold each month for sexual purposes (Women's Fund of Omaha, 2017). Of those 900, it has been estimated that 25–30% are adults working independently in the commercial sex industry. The term "independently" refers to working without a trafficker or signs of being trafficked. However, the vast majority of those who appear on the Internet website Backpage have shown some sign of trafficking, and approximately 15% show a high risk of being trafficked (Price & Clark, 2016). This indicates approximately 135 people per month may actually be sex trafficked in Nebraska alone. According to Hampton and Ball (2015), at least 47 underage girls are trafficked annually in Nebraska. Therefore, almost four individuals of the estimated 135 trafficked per month are under the age of 18. This represents a minimum number of minors trafficked each month who would automatically qualify as victims of severe trafficking per the TVPA.

A study conducted by Reichert and Sylwestrzak (2013) provided insight into the number of residential programs and services offered specifically for victims of sex

trafficking. However, the authors did not show that any service providers existed in

Nebraska at the time of their study. The only study I found involving service providers in

Nebraska was conducted by the Women's Fund of Omaha in 2015, with help from the

Nebraska Attorney General's Human Trafficking Services Workgroup. The authors

discovered a disparity between the needs and provisions of service providers throughout

all of Nebraska. They found that one in three respondents (i.e., service providers) had

encountered at least one human trafficking victim in the last year and that almost one-

third were minors. Furthermore, they found that approximately 75% of service providers

did not provide services for trafficking victims, and almost half of those providing

services indicated a lack of training, funding, and resources. Previous researchers have

explored the impact of law enforcement training in addressing human trafficking, but

service provider preparedness has yet to be explored in-depth. The Women's Fund of

Omaha (2015) did not address other, more specific needs such as the following:

- the need to assist service providers working with foreign national victims or
  Native American/tribal victims,

- the needs of victims themselves,

- the need to distinguish between labor and sex trafficking victims and other
  variables,

- the need to identify how the service providers prepare and review their
  programs' efficacy, or

- how the quality or lack of services may affect the conception of safety or a
  victim's feeling of safety.

The authors also did not explore the lived experiences of trafficking survivors or the work lives and perspectives of service provider personnel.

Since the Women's Fund of Omaha (2015) conducted their study, the Nebraska Attorney General's Office of Human Trafficking, the Salvation Army of Omaha, and the Heartland Alliance have received grant funding from the Nebraska Victim Assistance Formula Grant Program in the amounts of $900,000, $600,000, and $750,000 respectively (OVC, 2017). The grant was "premised on the recognition of the need to integrate services and enforcement in order to best address human trafficking with a jurisdiction" (Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force [NHTTF], 2015, p. 12). According to the OVC FY 2016 annual report, the state of Nebraska awarded $7,105,807 to victim service funds throughout the state, and 15% of those funds were reserved for underserved victims such as "victims of federal crimes, human trafficking, robbery, assault, burglary, arson, homicide, elder abuse, stalking, motor vehicle theft, identity theft, kidnapping and intoxicated drivers" (OVC, 2017, p. 11). However, the state did not elaborate on how funding should be spent on each. According to the annual report, the OVC did not have any outcome measures in place to report to the governor, legislature, or other state entity during the reporting period (OVC, 2017).

In light of this information, I determined it was important to understand how service providers define preparedness when treating trafficking survivors. Though many Nebraska service providers were not adequately or fully prepared to help victims of trafficking in 2015, new possibilities and avenues may have emerged to help services providers meet more trafficking victims' needs since receiving grant funding.

Additionally, the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force Coordinator, Stephen

O'Meara (2016), called for additional empirical research in a variety of areas, including

service providers. Of the available literature reviewed for this study, no study emerged

ascertaining how service providers understand the concept of preparedness in Nebraska.

It was unclear if the fight against human trafficking is succeeding in Nebraska because

the Nebraska Attorney General's Office on Human Trafficking has not clearly defined

the concept of preparedness. Without understanding how service providers understand

preparedness, it is difficult to assess if additional funding makes a meaningful difference,

especially when no outcome measures exist. Therefore, I used this study to explore

conceptions of preparedness through the perceptions of service provider employees in

Eastern Nebraska.

Summary

Researchers, policymakers, law enforcement, and service providers have sought

ways to solve an incredibly complex problem on little more than anecdotal data derived

from interest group assertions and other unreliable data sources (Amnesty International,

2016; CATW, 2015; De Vries & Dettmeijer-Vermeulen, 2015; Steinfatt, 2015). The issue

of human trafficking, with its many dimensions, cannot be addressed through a

multifaceted effort if program designs are based on limited empirical data. Many

governments and researchers have pointed out that human trafficking is a hidden crime

and that collecting relevant and reliable empirical data is often difficult (DOS, 2016;

Hopper, 2016). This sentiment appeared widely in the available literature. The influence

of social tolerance on sex trafficking has not been extensively studied, nor has outreach

efforts on victim self-identification or service provider preparedness. Due to the nature of relevant stakeholder and advocate assertions, I sought to understand the impact of preparedness on victim safety and how service providers envision what it means to be prepared to aid such victims.

Chapter 3 presents an introduction to the research design and an overview of the qualitative rationale for case study design. I discuss my role as the researcher and the methodology in depth so the study can be replicated. I address issues of trustworthiness and present ethical procedures to establish the ethical treatment of human participants and the protection of study data.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine conceptions of service provider preparedness by uncovering the descriptive and environmental factors presented in service provider employee narratives. This chapter presents the research questions and the methods used to answer the research questions. It includes a description of the research questions, the rationale for using a qualitative case study approach, my role as the researcher, the methodology, issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures, and a chapter summary.

Research Design and Rationale

This section identifies the research questions and offers the rationale for a qualitative methods research design. Two central research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How do service providers define preparedness in meeting the needs of human trafficking victims?

RQ2: What descriptive (i.e., personal, behavioral, and environmental) factors are present in preparedness to meet the needs of human trafficking victims?

In this study, I aimed to explore the concept of preparedness from the perspectives of service provider employees. Using their biographic and demographic data in combination with their narratives, I uncovered descriptive concepts from environmental, behavioral, and cognitive factors. The qualitative case study research design involves methods to explore a bounded system or systems through comprehensive data gathering from numerous sources (Creswell, 2009). Researchers conducting qualitative inquiry

describe experiences to uncover and explain a phenomenon, and case studies have been

defined as an in-depth empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in a real-

world context (Almutairi et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). I selected this design because a

quantitative approach would have been insufficient to answer the research questions, and

a mixed methods approach was not necessary to answer the research questions.

Quantitative inquiry relies on statistical analysis to uncover significance and correlations,

and this study was not well suited to make correlational inferences or determine statistical

significance (Madill, 2015). A mixed methods approach relies on many of the same

techniques, so it was also not well suited to answer this study's research questions.

I deemed a qualitative case study approach the best method for answering the

research questions because it would allow for the capture of complex perspectives related

to human trafficking services in Eastern Nebraska. The purpose of this study was to

uncover the perceptions of preparedness from service provider employees in the real

world, so I determined a qualitative case study approach would enable me to address the

issue's complexity to adequately answer the research questions. This study was

exploratory in nature and implemented a qualitative case study design.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I served as a facilitator to gain access to the service providers

and their employees through a gatekeeper employed by the organization. I also served as

the interviewer and the analyzer of response data. For the purpose of this study, I

considered a gatekeeper a person employed by an organization who could make

cooperative agreements on the organization's behalf, serve as a point of contact for me,

and fulfill the service provider's responsibilities in the study. I had no known personal or professional connections to any service providers, gatekeepers, or participants in this study. Being born and raised in Lincoln, Nebraska, I had knowledge of the area, its political climate, and crime rates.

Due to my federal government work with unlawful populations, I also understood the sensitive nature of people involved in hidden crimes. I believe this enabled me to identify and suspend preconceived notions associated with those engaged in illicit behaviors that could be deemed unlawful or immoral. However, the possibility also existed that I applied unconscious bias at some point during the data collection, analysis, or interpretation of the results. I believe these were reasonably identified and suspended as I focused on the thoughts, experiences, and feelings of the participants and the generated data. Additionally, I remained in a neutral position during the interviews and only asked clarifying questions when needed. I took field notes to ensure I could capture my thoughts at the moment and was then able to review and reflect upon my initial thoughts to ensure bias could be identified and controlled when warranted.

Methodology

I designed this qualitative study to fulfill several research questions using a case study approach. The case study approach aligned well with the study purpose because the research questions related to the concepts service provider employees apply to preparedness. I answered the questions by obtaining information about the experiences and conceptions of preparedness of employees working for at least one human trafficking service provider in Eastern Nebraska. I aimed to uncover the nature of preparedness from

service provider employees by using a questionnaire designed to measure biographical and demographical data and an interview designed to collect more detailed information. In this section, I describe the methodology, how participants were selected, the data collection instrumentation and justification, the plan for data analysis, the issues associated with trustworthiness, the ethical procedures used to address the participants' rights, and data collection and handling. I also provide a chapter summary.

Participant Selection Logic

In this study, I explored perceptions of preparedness through the experiences of service provider employees in Eastern Nebraska, so it was important to identify several service provider organizations within the area. I established that participants must either work for the service provider in a paid or unpaid (i.e., volunteer) position and be at least 18 years old. I considered each participant's response to the questionnaire for this study unless they did not meet the minimum age requirement or they were unable to complete the entire questionnaire. This study relied on a heterogeneous population of those working for a service provider in Eastern Nebraska. I did not conduct a random selection of subjects when administering the questionnaire because everyone had the opportunity to complete it if they chose. I asked respondents who had worked with a victim or suspected victim of trafficking and who were also at least 18 years of age to participate in a recorded interview via an online medium (e.g., Zoom) at their convenience. This created a purposive sample.

Sample Population

Samples came from four service providers in Eastern Nebraska who provided the data for this study. However, I endeavored to have more than four service provider organizations in Eastern Nebraska participate. Initially, I contacted seven organizations, but only four responded to the research invitation. Seven participants from four service provider organizations completed the questionnaire. Although all seven participants elected to participate in the interview, only four of the seven participants could be reached to set up an appointment.

Recruitment Procedure Overview

I used a purposive snowball sampling strategy to find organizations that would be willing to participate in this study. I contacted a gatekeeper at each organization by email and requested their cooperation before seeking institutional review board (IRB) approval. The email informed the gatekeeper about the study. If the gatekeeper expressed interest in learning more, I provided an information packet via email containing the invitation email, the consent form, and the participant questionnaire (see Appendix C). I also notified the gatekeeper of their responsibility if the IRB approved the research proposal. The gatekeeper, or other authorized representative, was not required to complete a letter of cooperation because their only responsibility was to forward the research invitation email to their employees. I allowed each gatekeeper a maximum of 3 weeks to decide if they wanted to participate. If the gatekeeper did not wish to take part in the study, they were asked to recommend another service provider. I did not contact the participants until after

the IRB approved the study, and I had gained all required approvals in accordance with

Walden University policy.

Assuring Adequate Purposeful Sample

I used saturation to ensure I gathered enough quality data to support the study

conclusions (Creswell, 2009). *Saturation* refers to the sample size at which the collected

data becomes redundant and sufficiently represents the population under study. In case

study research, there is no required minimum sample size by which saturation can or will

be determined, but some researchers have offered explicit suggestions (Rijnsoever,

2017). However, in case study research, sample size is less relevant than the rich,

context-specific perspectives and narratives needed to understand the phenomenon at

hand (Yin, 2014). Additionally, saturation poses less of a concern in case study research

because it can be difficult to determine when it has been reached. Therefore, a common

method for determining when saturation has been reached involves noting when codes or

themes begin to repeat and no longer produce new data (Yin, 2014). In this case, four

participants completed the interview and satisfied the need for saturation because the

developed themes came from similarities in response patterns.

Instrumentation

In this case study design, I aimed to uncover the lived experiences and detailed

narratives of service provider employees who worked with trafficking victims in Eastern

Nebraska. I believed this data would provide insight into what service providers in this

area experience in terms of preparedness. The procedures for collecting this data evolved

from the need to answer two overarching research questions:

RQ1: How do service providers define preparedness in meeting the needs of human trafficking victims?

RQ2: What descriptive (i.e., personal, behavioral, and environmental) factors are present in preparedness to meet the needs of human trafficking victims?

I developed the questionnaire and the interview questions. I designed the questionnaire to collect biographic, demographic, and basic information from participants. I crafted the interview questions to probe into the participants' personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings about their lived experiences. I gathered information from the questionnaire, the personal interviews, organizational website data, an environmental scan (i.e., observations from the researcher while in the environment when possible), researcher notes, and any other publicly available information (e.g., pamphlets or books). This combination of data collection methods established triangulation. This data was analyzed using the NVivo data analysis software program to frame the participants' answers into several broad categories or clusters of meanings. I intended the essence of the meanings to illuminate the experience of serving human trafficking victims in Eastern Nebraska and show how service provider employees understand and define preparedness.

I developed the questionnaire to help answer Research Questions 1 and 2 and offer a glimpse of the participants' personal experiences and thoughts on various matters of preparation. I also formulated the interview questions to help answer Research Questions 1 and 2 by probing further into the participants' experiences and perspectives. The director of the Salvation Army's SAFE-T program, Jane Thorson, reviewed the

questionnaire and the interview questions to establish content validity. Thorson

confirmed that all of the questions were relevant, valid, and would potentially illuminate

evidence needed to answer the research questions. However, she suggested I expand the

questions to include not only known victims of trafficking, but suspected victims of

trafficking. She made this suggestion because many victims are miscategorized during

their intake as a victim of violent crime, domestic abuse, drug addiction, or other criminal

activity before their trafficking victimization is revealed. The literature review also

revealed this complication, so I added it to the questions (Farrell, 2014; Nichols & Heil,

2015; Schwarz et al., 2017; Shadaimah et al., 2014). The executive director of the

Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers, Lyn Ayers, then reviewed the questions,

providing a second expert's opinion to establish content validity. Ayers asked for no

further changes, agreeing that the questions should indeed answer the research questions

and provide sufficient data for analysis.

Questionnaire Process

When at least one service provider gatekeeper had agreed to participate and IRB

approval was achieved, I began the study. Beginning the study involved contacting the

gatekeeper at each participating organization and determining a date and time to begin

administering the questionnaire. Questionnaire administration consisted of two parts:

1. I obtained permission to have the gatekeeper email all service provider
   employees the questionnaire link, or I received permission to email service
   provider employees the online questionnaire link.

2. Participants read the consent form online with information about the study. If the participant elected to participate, they implied their consent by clicking on the "yes" button, indicating they understood the voluntary nature of participation. After the participant clicked "yes," the form took the participant directly to the questionnaire. If the participant elected not to participate, they were directed to click the "no" button or simply exit the browser. In this case, nothing else was required.

I designed the questionnaires to take approximately 5–15 min to complete, and I administered them via the online platform SurveyMonkey. After the participant completed the questionnaire, I was able to access it via SurveyMonkey, so no other third party, including the gatekeeper or other employee at their organization, could retrieve the results. To maintain confidentiality, the participants did not email their responses or print the questionnaire and deliver it to the gatekeeper or any third party.

Questionnaire Protocols

The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions. The first 13 questions asked the participants about their biographic and demographic information. Questions 1 and 2 (Q1 and Q2) were screening questions that determined if the participant was at least 18 years of age and if they had ever worked with a known or suspected trafficking victim at their organization. If the participant answered either question negatively, they were thanked for their participation and exited from the questionnaire. In Q14 through Q20, I asked about various components of the participants' personal experience, education, training, and perspectives. The purpose of these questions was twofold. First, I intended to develop

a quick reference chart that I could refer to during the interview. Second, I aimed to

identify patterns in the responses to Q14 through Q20 that could be attributed to

biographic or demographic information. In the final two questions, I asked the

participants if they could be contacted to participate in an interview. If yes, they were

asked to provide their name, email address, and phone number.

Interview Process

After the participants completed the questionnaires, I reviewed each questionnaire

and determined which participants had indicated experience working directly with

victims known or suspected of being trafficked and had also volunteered to be contacted

for an interview. I asked these participants to participate in a semistructured interview.

The interview consisted of the questions in Appendix B and any other questions that

arose during the discussion to clarify purposes. If a participant elected not to be contacted

for an interview, I did not contact them. All seven participants answered "yes" to be

contacted for an interview; however, only four of the seven responded to my request to

set up a time and date that worked best for their schedule. I designed the interviews to

take approximately 30–60 min to complete, and I audio recorded them with the

participants' consent. I also informed the participants they would receive an email with a

link to a summary copy of the study results upon its completion.

Interview Protocols

I began each interview with an introduction, a reminder that the interview was

audio recorded, and an assurance that the participant could stop the interview at any

point. The interviews consisted of seven semistructured, open-ended questions through

which I sought in-depth answers from the participants regarding their environment, experiences, and feelings or opinions. I asked follow-up, probing, or clarifying questions when a participant's answer was unclear or needed additional context. Doing so allowed the participants to provide a narrative that described their lived experiences in detail. I asked the semistructured questions in the same order during each interview. As the participant spoke, I took notes to ensure I captured interesting points or questions that came to mind. Before moving to the next question, I provided a brief synopsis of what I understood the participant's answer to be. This ensured I captured their intent and meaning. I concluded the interview by thanking them for their time, offering a chance to add any last details or ask questions, and reminding them they would receive a copy of the study's summary results.

Qualitative Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis process included only qualitative case study examination. I purchased a 1-year license key and used the NVivo software program developed through QSR International. Researchers use the NVivo software tool to organize qualitative data from narratives, documents, and observations and to enhance the efficiency of coding and cleaning (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). However, the analysis portion of case study research still relies heavily upon the researcher to interpret the data, so the use of referential adequacy provides an added layer of credibility to the collected and analyzed data. *Referential adequacy* refers to the use of instruments to record data and refer to it during analysis. In this case, I used the questionnaires to collect biographic and demographic data, and I recorded and transcribed the interviews via Zoom meeting

rooms. I then uploaded the transcribed Microsoft Word into NVivo for data analysis

reference. Ultimately, the purpose was to identify themes and cluster the themes into

patterns through thematic analysis.

      I used thematic analysis to uncover how service provider employees in Eastern

Nebraska conceived of the notion of preparedness. Thematic analysis involves more than

a simple summarization of collected data. During thematic analysis, researchers interpret

data in order to make sense of it, generally through the development of themes and

patterns within the qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Thematic analysis consists of

six phases. When moving through these phases, a researcher may need to move between

phases numerous times. The six phases include the following activities:

1. familiarization with the data,

2. coding,

3. searching for themes,

4. reviewing the themes,

5. defining and naming themes, and

6. writing up the findings.

      The first phase involves getting familiar with the data generated from the data

extracts (e.g., questionnaires, audio recordings, and other items such as webpages and

pamphlets). The second phase requires the researcher to generate basic, preliminary

labels (i.e., codes) from every data item or extract. These are then collected and

combined. The third phase involves using the collated data to develop meaningful themes

related to the research questions. The fourth phase involves checking the extracted, coded

data and the full data set to ensure the themes are appropriate. At this point, the researcher begins to uncover the nature of each theme and determine whether themes have relationships or not. This may require consolidation or creation of additional themes. In the fifth phase, the researcher must analyze the themes, create a name for the themes, and describe each theme's essence in detail. The sixth phase involves synthesizing the themes into a persuasive story about the data and providing a context through which to fit the story into the current literature (Clark & Braun, 2013). I determined thematic analysis was well suited for this study because it works with a wide array of research questions, can be used to analyze a variety of data sets and types of data, and may be applied toward theoretical or data-driven analyses (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

I approached the coding procedures inductively to prevent preconceived notions of the data. However, because the model of reciprocal determinism provided the central lens, the broadest categories (i.e., themes) encompassed notions from environmental, personal, and behavioral cognitive factors. Though this may appear to be more consistent with a deductive approach, an inductive stance was still appropriate because the concept of preparedness had not been explicitly explored in the trafficking literature. This made it important to allow the research findings to emerge from the data itself. Furthermore, I did not know if the research data would fall outside the boundaries of the model's interpretation, so I determined an inductive approach would be most appropriate.

Before, during, and after the study, it is also important for the researcher to suspend all initial judgments and premature conclusions that could arise through

observation. Many researchers have indicated ways to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, but in the overall consensus, researchers have called for high levels of robustness and rigor (Barbour, 2001; Carcary, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Meyrick, 2006; Yin, 2014). In order to address my epistemological and ontological views, Chapter 4 includes a brief history of my views to help address potential bias and allow the reader to make an independent judgment of the study's veracity.

Integration of Data

The data was collected from the participants and categorized. I stored each participant's data separately but analyzed it together because the study was bound by the individual participant rather than by organization or location. It was important to do so because each participant had unique experiences, feelings, and stories that defined how they prepared to meet the needs of trafficking victims. I used the collective narratives to develop themes or concepts of preparedness in order to understand what it meant to be prepared to help victims of human trafficking in Eastern Nebraska.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility is one measure of trustworthiness that helps researchers determine the internal validity or truth of the collected data. I endeavored to ensure this study's credibility using several strategies such as prolonged engagement with the participants, triangulation, referential adequacy, and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of prolonged engagement required me to remain in the field until saturation occurred (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The diversity of the participants and their organizations

facilitated saturation because their responses yielded many similarities in data. By using

multiple sources of data collection (i.e., the questionnaires, interviews, researcher notes,

and publicly available information), I was able to use triangulation to develop various

realities within the construct of service provider preparedness.

During the data collection process, I also employed referential adequacy by using

multiple sources to collect and document the study findings. These sources included the

questionnaire, Zoom meeting recordings and transcripts, and researcher interview notes.

The narratives from the questionnaires (i.e., Q14–Q20) served as archived data that I then

compared to the analyzed narratives from the interviews to ensure I understood the data

and coded it properly. However, referential adequacy can be further improved upon

through member checking. I used member checks during the interview process to

summarize their responses and ensure I understood what the participant said and that it

was accurately recorded. Doing so eliminated errors and misunderstandings, enabled

information to be expanded upon, and provided an initial assessment of the adequacy of

the data.

Transferability

Transferability differs from generalizability in that I did not attempt to generalize

the findings to a greater population. Rather, consistent with naturalistic inquiry, I simply

described the phenomenon in detail to allow the reader to determine if they could transfer

these findings to other populations or contexts. It's important for the reader to

independently determine the transferability of these findings because they may or may

not extend beyond the scope of this study due to the time, place, and context of when I

collected and analyzed the data. I also used "thick description" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 42) of the data and the specific contexts to present a story that a reader may use to interpret and transfer based upon their own epistemological views and experiences (Nowell et al., 2017).

Additionally, I used purposive sampling to obtain a representative picture in the participants' natural contexts. I accomplished this by gathering data from participants from several service providers in different locations throughout Eastern Nebraska. Each of these involved varying environments and demographics that increased the range of information obtained for analysis (Barnes et al., 2021).

Dependability

Dependability refers to whether a study can be replicated and provide similar findings in a context that resembles the population originally examined (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One way to demonstrate dependability is to provide enough detail that the study can be replicated. I accomplished this through member checks, triangulation, and the creation of an audit trail. Member checks provided a way to ensure I understood what the participant wanted to convey and that it was accurately recorded. Triangulation produced information from a variety of document sources and allowed me to check the accuracy and consistency of participant narratives and reported data. It also enabled me to check the accuracy of my own data analysis. In addition, I completed an audit trail to capture notes and initial thoughts during the interview process. I used this as a reference and for reflection as I performed the data analysis. This helped me establish a codebook that helped me remain consistent with data coding and data coding consolidation. The

codebook also assisted in intra-coding reliability. Furthermore, I clearly described the research method earlier in this chapter to allow the reader to replicate this study. I provided in-depth accounts to demonstrate the study design, the researcher's role, the identification of potential biases, the logic for selecting participants, and the methods used to collect and analyze data. All of these factors contributed to the study's dependability and trustworthiness.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the ability to support the study findings using the phenomenon under investigation and not the researcher's bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data in this study supported my conclusions and interpretations. Triangulation can be used to minimize researcher bias because data can be drawn from multiple sources; hence the use of multiple data sources in this study (e.g., questionnaires, interviews, researcher notes, and publicly available information) helped to confirm the data was used to arrive at appropriate interpretations rather than support potential researcher bias.

I also found it advantageous to use my researcher notes to help identify potential bias as I began reviewing interview data. It enabled me to reflect upon my initial thoughts and questions from the interview text and identify my own personal beliefs about a particular subject or topic. Doing so helped to control for researcher bias and use only the information from the participant to develop meaningful codes and themes that related to the topic of investigation.

I further controlled researcher bias by using the raw data provided by the participants and consulting the transcripts or questionnaire responses for referential

adequacy and accuracy. In addition to providing thick, rich descriptions derived from the participants' own words, I coded and analyzed the data to ensure the research topic and questions could be addressed while minimizing the potential of bias. I discuss my personal bias further in the limitations section of Chapter 5.

Ethical Procedures

Before conducting this study, I called a variety of service providers throughout Eastern Nebraska to solicit their interest. Once I had identified interested organizations, I either met personally with their gatekeeper, or I corresponded with them via email or phone. A letter of cooperation was not needed for this study because the only responsibility of the participating organization or gatekeeper was to forward the research invitation letter to all their employees. However, before conducting the study or collecting any data, I first completed the National Institute of Health's Human Research Protection certification and then gained permission from Walden University's IRB. Therefore, the study was performed in accordance with Walden University's policies and the IRB's permission with IRB approval number 07-15-20-0151559. Once I received the IRB approval letter, I began the study. I instructed the gatekeeper at each organization to forward the research invitation letter to their employees via email. Once they had done so, the gatekeeper's responsibility ended.

The service provider employees all received the same invitation letter and, if interested, clicked on the link to the SurveyMonkey where they were directed to the consent form. The consent form informed the participant of the study's background, the actions they would be asked to take, the voluntary nature of the study, the associated risks

and benefits of participating, the lack of payment or other incentives, the steps take to protect their privacy, my personal contact information, the IRB approval information, and how to either exit or continue to the questionnaire. The questionnaire included individual participant names and phone numbers, but only I had access to this information, and I disclosed it to no other person or organization other than my committee. I stored the data on a password-protected flash drive that I secured in a locked box within a locked filing cabinet in my office at my place of residence. There were no paper copies of the questionnaires. The data will be kept for a period of 5 years in accordance with Walden University policy. After 5 years, it will be destroyed.

At no time were the participants required to take part in the study, nor were they required to finish the questionnaire or volunteer to participate in the interview. I informed all participants of their ability to stop the study at any time without reason. All participants' names and organizations were converted to pseudonyms. This enabled me to maintain confidentiality and promoted confidence in each participant. I also informed the participants in writing about the dissemination of information and the publishing of results. I reminded them of this before the interview took place.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine conceptions of service provider preparedness by uncovering the descriptive and environmental factors presented in service provider employee narratives. Through this approach, I gained insight into the real-life experiences and perspectives of service provider employees, which helped me to understand how they perceived their preparedness to help human trafficking victims. I

utilized a snowball purposive sampling strategy to find and select relevant participants. I used a questionnaire to collect biographic and demographic data from participants, and I conducted interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of how service provider employees perceive preparedness. I described my role as the researcher and identified potential biases that could have affected the findings and interpretations. I also addressed the steps I took to control for those biases if needed. Additionally, I discussed issues of trustworthiness through the detailed discussion of the methodology used to collect and analyze study findings. I identified potential ethical concerns and addressed them with the participants in the letter of consent and in the IRB application approval. Data handling, storage, and destruction were also discussed.

Chapter 4 includes an introduction and a discussion of my epistemological and ontological views regarding human trafficking. I also provide a description of the setting and present the demographic data, the data collection process, the analysis and results, and a discussion of the overall trustworthiness of the evidence. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine conceptions of service provider preparedness by uncovering the descriptive and environmental factors presented in service provider employee narratives. The study area was limited to Eastern Nebraska because it encompassed the two largest cities in the state and had the greatest likelihood of having organizations serving human trafficking survivors (Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force, 2021). Additionally, the geographic area of Eastern Nebraska was convenient for me to conduct face-to-face, audio-recorded interviews when this study was first developed. However, due to the COVID-19 safety protocols set forth by the state of Nebraska health measures, I decided that audio-recorded interviews conducted via Skype, Zoom, or another electronic medium would best suit this study (State of Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). The selected area also provided an opportunity to interview a wide array of service providers in a relatively small area to obtain adequate data to answer the two overarching research questions.

RQ1: How do service providers define preparedness in meeting the needs of human trafficking victims?

RQ2: What descriptive (i.e., personal, behavioral, and environmental) factors are present in preparedness to meet the needs of human trafficking victims?

I used a qualitative case study approach to gain the necessary information to answer the research questions. I thought that by answering the first research question, I would uncover insight into what service provider organizations and their employees

consider to be preparedness to meet trafficking survivors' needs. By answering the

second research question, I aimed to learn about any number of descriptive factors

influencing the concept of preparation. In this study, I intended to find themes in the

ways service provider employees described preparedness, and I hoped to discover best

practices for preparing to help trafficking survivors. Several themes emerged from the

data and showed that service providers carry out their duties in different manners but

ultimately prepare in a similar fashion. I also learned that several factors influence a

provider's ability to adequately prepare to meet the needs of trafficking survivors. This

study's results indicated there is more work to be done.

This chapter provides a discussion of the steps I took when conducting the study.

It includes a description of the setting, the participants, and the demographics. I discuss in

detail the data collection procedure, the thematic analysis, and the codes developed and

used in the analysis. I compare the results of this study with evidence of trustworthiness

(i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability). I include the

questionnaire and interview results and how the developed codes contributed to

answering the research questions. Finally, a summary of the answers to the research

questions provides insight into the literature gap surrounding the question of how service

provider employees prepare to meet the needs of trafficking victims.

Setting

Before I emailed the questionnaires and conducted the interviews, I called seven

service provider organizations in Eastern Nebraska. These were organizations that I

thought aided survivors of human trafficking according to their mission statements, or

they were identified by nonparticipating service provider organizations from the snowball sampling strategy. The service provider organizations are not listed here; however, they are coded in the data, which I will discuss later in this chapter. I inquired with each organization if they were willing to participate in the study and later provided them an invitation letter via email to determine their interest. I sent the email invitation to the service provider organizations only after receiving IRB approval to conduct this research. I did not know if there would be more than one organization interested in this study at the time of the study's proposal. I planned that interested organizations' gatekeepers would forward the email to their employees. Interested employees would then click the link to SurveyMonkey, which would take them to the letter of consent. If the respondent did not wish to continue, they were instructed to exit the browser. If they wished to continue, then a link within SurveyMonkey would send the participant to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions (see Appendix A) and was completed at each participant's place of work. Seven respondents from four organizations spanning the cities of Lincoln, Omaha, and Norfolk, Nebraska, completed the questionnaire. Each participant also elected to participate in the recorded interview per their response to the questionnaire; however, only four of the seven participants committed to the recorded interview. I attempted to follow up via email with the other interested participants but did not receive a response. I scheduled each interview in advance and conducted them all over the online medium Zoom. All participants completed the recorded interviews on their own time at their personal residence.

I conducted the interviews individually, and each consisted of six semistructured overarching questions. They also involved several clarifying or probing questions that I based on the participants' responses (see Appendix B). I took notes during the interviews and included them in the data analysis portion of this chapter. All interviews were recorded and fully transcribed using the transcription service Otter a.i. I reviewed the transcripts for accuracy then deleted the recorded interviews from Zoom in accordance with the protocols agreed to by Walden's IRB and myself.

Before her interview began, one participant disclosed that it was her last day at work because she was resigning from her job due to organizational issues. She shared that several top leadership personnel resigned to protest the removal of the organization's chief executive officer. I asked her if she would like to continue with the interview or terminate it, and she elected to continue with the interview because she felt that her resignation would not influence her opinion about the trafficking services.

Another participant indicated she only worked overnight by herself and that no other staff members were available when she worked except by phone. This experience sharply contrasted those of the other participants who indicated they typically worked in the daytime during normal business hours.

One participant worked mainly with Native American coworkers and trafficking survivors. Native Americans' unique experiences with trafficking have received little attention in the research literature, and this unique circumstance produced some views that competed with those of the other participants.

One of the participants was a survivor of trafficking herself and now worked as a case manager to help other trafficking victims. She freely indicated on the questionnaire and in the interview that she was a trafficking survivor. Her perspective appeared somewhat different than the other participants.

One organization was unable to participate in the study due to their grant funding coming to an end. This organization's program had been funded through a grant sponsored by the Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force and the Nebraska Attorney General's office. Due to the important work, many other organizations had stepped in to continue funding portions of the program, but due to the budgetary limitations, five positions for individuals who directly handled trafficking survivor cases were terminated. The office manager at this organization elected not to participate because the employees with experience helping trafficking victims had a significantly higher workload due to the five positions being terminated.

No participant mentioned any other work-related or personal trauma, changes in personnel, budget cuts, or financial issues. All participants confirmed that their responses represented their true feelings related to their experiences and thoughts. Additionally, all participants noted that the daily operations aiding trafficking survivors were running normally, including the participant who resigned the day of her interview.

Demographics

The organizations were located throughout Eastern Nebraska, covering the two largest cities of Omaha (population 478,192) and Lincoln (population 289,102) and the eighth-largest city, Norfolk (population 24,449; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Each

organization that participated in this study was classified as a nonprofit organization. I attained this information by viewing the organization's website or through a participant statement on the questionnaire or in their interview. All of the organizations were funded primarily through grants, but free-will cash donations from individuals and businesses also composed a considerable portion of their budgets. All of the organizations offered trafficking survivor services of advocacy, case management, counseling and therapy, substance abuse counseling, career services, prevention and education, safety planning, and peer support. Some organizations were more comprehensive than others and included services such as financial help, rental assistance, transportation, legal aid or support, medical attention, food assistance, temporary housing and housing assistance, religious services, cultural healing services, interpreters, and immigration-related support.

Participant Demographics

The participant demographics and biographics were collected from the questionnaire. Table 5 presents the demographics for the participants in this study.

Table 5

Table of Participant Demographics

Category/ status	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
Time at work	5 years, 1 month	1 year, 10 mos.	6 mos.	7 mos.	1 year	1 year, 6 mos.	1 year, 9 mos.
Race	White	White	White	White	White	Black	White
Ethnicity	Not His [b] or Latino	Not His [b] or Latino	Not His [b] or Latino	Not His [b] or Latino	Not His [b] or Latino	Not His [b] or Latino	Not His [b] or Latino
Trafficked	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Formal training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Case load per month [a]	8	15	2	10–12	10	Unknown	4
Work only with traffic victims	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No

Note. [a] The caseload per month involves trafficking victims only.

[b] Hispanic is shortened as His in the category of ethnicity.

All of the seven questionnaire participants were over the age of 18, female, employed full time as a paid employee, and had worked in their current job for at least 6 months. Most had been in their position for less than 2 years. One participant had many years of experience working at their employer in various capacities. Others had experience working outside of their current organization in domestic violence shelters or in other advocacy capacities. Their jobs included caseworker, trafficking advocate, and grants and compliance officer; however, all the participants reported to have worked directly with a trafficking survivor at some point in their career at their organization. Additionally, all participants, if not currently working directly with a trafficking survivor, had worked with a trafficking survivor within the last 5 years.

Every participant but one learned about human trafficking either through their college courses and experience or through their working at an organization that helped victims of crime such as domestic violence or sexual assault. One participant noted that she learned about human trafficking through research. However, the context of what led to the interest in that research was unclear and left undefined. I noted that this was the same participant who stated she had been previously trafficked herself (Participant [P] 5).

Data Collection

I received IRB approval to begin data collection on July 15, 2020. I began by contacting seven organizations, four of which participated in this study. My initial contact with the organizations involved an email invitation to the gatekeepers. The email provided basic details about the purpose of the research and asked for their commitment to distribute my questionnaire to the organization's employees via email. Once I had secured IRB approval, I asked the gatekeepers who had agreed to participate to forward the email invitation to their employees. I collected my initial data through this process. The forwarded email contained a link to a consent form and an online questionnaire. After reading the research invitation email, if the participant did not want to continue to the questionnaire, they simply exited the browser. If the employee chose to participate in the study, they clicked the link that routed them to Survey Monkey, where they were prompted to read the consent form. If the participant wanted to continue to the questionnaire after reading the consent form, then they clicked the continue button that routed them to the questionnaire.

I received a total of seven responses to the questionnaire, spanning four total organizations. All of the participants completed the questionnaire at their place of employment during their workday. The typical time the participant spent completing the questionnaire was 9 min and 40 s. All participants completed 100% of the questions, and all participants opted to be contacted for a future recorded interview.

I contacted all the questionnaire participants via email to set up an appointment for a recorded interview at their convenience. I received responses from P1, P5, P6, and P7. I attempted to contact P2, P3, and P4 by emailing them again, but I received no response. I sent the four participants who responded to my email about the interview a Zoom meeting appointment that included the date and time of their choice and a specific link to access the meeting. I audio recorded each interview with the participants' consent. The interviews took place between August 24 and September 11, 2020, and they lasted from 26 min and 20 s. to 39 min and 58 s. I took notes during the interviews to capture the participants' sentiments, mood, and other factors not easily identified through audio-recorded data. I also noted my thoughts and ideas as the interviews progressed. All of the participants were asked six overarching questions and other clarifying or probing questions as needed. I used the automated service Otter a.i. to transcribe the interviews. Once the transcriptions were completed, I reviewed them twice in conjunction with the audio recordings to ensure the accuracy of the information. I also uploaded my notes into NVivo and coded them separately from the transcription data.

Data collection involved some variations from the initial research plan. The first was that I did not need a letter of cooperation and subsequent written response from the

gatekeeper or authorized organizational representative to work with them. Walden University's IRB recommended this change because the gatekeeper's involvement in the study was limited to merely forwarding an email to their employees. The second variation occurred in the interview process. Initially, I intended to conduct face-to-face interviews with the participants. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the state of Nebraska safety-directed health measures, I planned to change the face-to-face interviews to an online medium such as Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, or another source. Ultimately, I used Zoom for all of the interviews because it could provide a unique invitation to the participants; all of the participants were familiar with that medium, the interviews could be recorded and downloaded for transcription, and the recordings could be permanently deleted when needed. The last variation involved adding a question about the participant's race to the questionnaire. The Walden IRB approved the change and did not alter the approval number or date because the change did not involve the consent form or present any new ethical issues in the data collection or handling processes.

Data Analysis

I used thematic analysis to analyze the data. Thematic analysis includes six steps researchers should take to unravel information and make sense of it. The steps involve: familiarizing yourself with the data, coding the data, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining theme names, and writing up the data. I became familiar with the data by reviewing the questionnaires and interviews. I did this many times to extract biographic data, demographic data, and other information that appeared consistent with or divergent from other questionnaire answers. However, without additional context, the

questionnaire data merely described one participant's personal demographics and personal experiences at a time. This served as a foundational data set for the interview responses and for developing a better understanding of the participant through their subsequent explanations. I then archived the questionnaire narratives to be used for referential adequacy after I coded the interview narratives.

After familiarizing myself with the questionnaire data, I began the transcription process for the interviews. Though the audio recordings were transcribed by the automated service Otter a.i., I reviewed the transcriptions and compared them to the audio recording line-by-line. I corrected any word or sentence that the software transcribed improperly per the information in the audio recording to ensure accuracy. Once I completed the transcription reviews, I deleted the audio recordings and emailed the individual transcriptions to each participant. I did this so the participant had an opportunity to review their statements and revise or elaborate on what they had said. However, no participant replied to the email to provide additional feedback.

To begin the coding process, I used the NVivo software program designed by QSR International. NVivo assisted me in organizing the data in a meaningful manner before I began the coding. I uploaded the data into the NVivo program and saved the data in the file category. I maintained different files for the participant questionnaires, participant interview transcripts, and my notes taken during the interview process. I coded each separately. Additionally, I marked each participant as their own case and attributed their files accordingly. I uploaded the questionnaires and the researcher notes

as PDF files and loaded the transcripts as Microsoft Word documents. I used this data during the coding process to establish preliminary codes.

Although I intended to use only an inductive approach for the coding process, I realized that process would be insufficient to answer the research questions. The first research question was exploratory in nature and fit an inductive approach. However, the second research question focused heavily on the assumptions within the model of reciprocal determinism. Because the second research question began with the descriptive themes already developed, it became more appropriate to use a deductive approach to answer this research question. Unfortunately, I did not realize this until I had finished data collection and began reviewing the questionnaires and narratives from the interviews. I decided to make a change and follow an inductive process for the first research question and a deductive approach for the second research question. I believed doing would strengthen the data analysis and more appropriately addresses the research questions.

I began the data analysis with an inductive approach using an open coding method. The purpose of this process was to answer the first research question: How do service provider employees define preparedness in meeting the needs of human trafficking victims? I coded the preliminary codes line-by-line or phrase-by-phrase and linked them to specific information in the text or dialogue of the questionnaire, interview, or research notes. In order to ensure I applied the codes consistently throughout the data, I established a codebook (see Appendix C). Initially, I developed 11 top-level codes. After establishing preliminary codes and assigning them to a large quantity of data, I

conducted a second round of coding by matching similar codes to one another and

consolidating them into one top-level code. Ultimately, I developed four top-level codes

for the first research question, encompassing 22 categories throughout the data. Table 6

shows the top-level codes developed, their categories, the frequency of each reference in

the top-level codes, and the percentage of time covered in each top-level code for

Research Questions 1 and 2.

Table 6

Codes for Research Questions 1 and 2

Research question	Top-level code	Category	Frequency of reference in code	Percentage of reference in code
1	Barriers and challenges	Covid effect	6	13
		Credibility of survivor	8	17
		Does not identify as a human trafficking victim	10	21
		Not discussed enough	13	28
		Survivor has trust issues	10	21
1	Organizational strategies	Organizational philosophy	34	19
		Networking	14	8
		Funding	2	1
		Services and resources	71	41
		Training and education	54	31
1	Survivor-employee interactions	Communication	11	5
		Control	31	13
		Not passing judgment	9	4
		Relationship building and trust	34	15
		Victim identification	12	5
		Prepared	137	58
1	Employee experiences	Feelings and thoughts	75	35
		Learned about trafficking	7	3
		Social environment	20	9
		Stress and workload	80	37
		Typical working day	21	10
		Why trafficking is a problem in the area	11	5
2	Behavior	Employee behavior	74	59
		Survivor behavior	42	34
		Third-party behavior	9	7
2	Cognitive	Employee cognition	101	72
		Survivor cognition	29	21
		Third-party cognition	10	7

Research question	Top-level code	Category	Frequency of reference in code	Percentage of reference in code
2	Environment	Employee work location(s)	98	64
		Survivor current living arrangement	45	29
		Survivor former living arrangement	11	7

The top-level codes were: barriers and challenges, organizational strategies, survivor–employee interactions, and employee experiences. I then examined the data, sorted them into categories, and assigned them to each of the codes. The categories associated with the code barriers and challenges were: covid effect, credibility of survivor, does not identify as human trafficking victim, not discussed enough, and survivor has trust issues. The categories associated with the code organizational strategies were: organizational philosophy, networking, funding, services and resources, and training and education.

I found that the code survivor–employee interactions did not have as many categories as I expected, but they included: communication, control, experience, not passing judgment, relationship building and trust, and victim identification. The model of reciprocal determinism emphasizes the bidirectional influences among the environment, behavior, and cognition, so I expected more categories to have emerged. However, after realizing that the influences only came from the perspective of the participant and not the perspective of the trafficking survivor, I determined that the categories made more sense. The last top-level code was employee experiences, and the categories that emerged were: feelings and thoughts, independent work, learned about trafficking, social environment, stress and workload, typical working day, and why trafficking is a problem in the area.

Data collected through the interviews provided the most information to develop useful codes; however, the questionnaires and researcher notes provided additional context or orientation for understanding the data and creating meaningful codes and categories. The questionnaire data served as a foundational data set that I built upon with the interview narratives. This further supported the reasoning to approach Research Question 1 inductively and Research Question 2 deductively.

I began with a deductive approach for the second research question because the top-level codes were behavior, cognitive, and environment, which were already developed from the model of reciprocal determinism. The purpose and advantage of identifying these top-level codes early were multifaceted. First, it helped me align the code development and my own orientation with the specific research questions in mind. Additionally, although somewhat unconventional for case study, the use of an overarching theory to explain the definition of preparedness helped me compartmentalize and explain the data in a more understandable and grounded fashion. Lastly, the data's complexities and unique underpinnings in social cognitive theory and social constructionist theory allowed me to explain how the different top-level codes worked together and influenced one another bidirectionally. As a result, I was able to develop meaningful themes. However, I inductively approached each unit of examination to develop unique categories that ultimately fit into the broadest top-level codes. This breadth and depth allowed for the representation of all forms of raw data.

I coded the codes behavior, cognitive, and environment as top-level codes and linked them to specific information in the questionnaire responses, interview transcripts,

or research notes in the largest format possible, usually by paragraph. After assigning these codes to a large data context, I conducted a second round of coding by matching and sorting the codes into separate categories and subcategories within each paragraph. I then consolidated the categories as needed and matched them with specific pieces of data within each paragraph. The second research question was: What descriptive (i.e., personal, behavioral, and environmental) factors are present? To answer it, I assigned the following categories to the code behavior: employee behavior, survivor behavior, and third-party behavior. The categories that developed for the code cognitive were: employee cognition, survivor cognition, and third party cognition. Last, the categories I assigned to the code environment were: employee work area, survivor current living arrangement, survivor former living arrangement.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Researchers have continued to debate the specific criteria for validating qualitative data and research (Barnes et al., 2021). Guba and Lincoln (1981) put forth a seminal notion by outlining several factors that researchers should address to establish the trustworthiness of their data and analysis. The concept of trustworthiness consists of four aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Yin, 2014). I established trustworthiness in this study through a variety of means in each of the four noted aspects. Specifically, I used the validation strategies of prolonged engagement with the participants, referential adequacy, member checking during interviewing, sampling, triangulation, interview techniques, establishing the authority of a researcher, and structural coherence.

I established and controlled credibility through my sampling of and engagement with the participants. I completed the sampling through a combination of questionnaires and recorded interviews and utilized the two methods to collect data. I used the questionnaires to screen the participants to ensure they met the qualifications to participate (i.e., being at least 18 years of age and having worked with a trafficking victim or survivor at their organization). The questionnaires also enabled me to collect biographic and demographic data in addition to some preliminary participant thoughts, experiences, and feelings. The questionnaires also allowed the participants to expand as much or as little as they desired on questions that sought a narrative answer. I conducted and recorded the interviews via the online conferencing platform, Zoom. I chose a semistructured format to elicit additional or clarifying information if needed. When I found an answer unclear or confusing, I asked a clarifying question so the participant could answer with an example or story. This technique is analogous to member checking during the interview.

The diversity of the participants and their respective organizations and missions combined with my prolonged engagement with the participants led to questionnaire and interview responses that indicated similar rationales. This indicated that saturation was likely met. Having two methods of data collection allowed for persistent observation and triangulation of the data, especially when analyzed alongside the researcher notes and open-source information on the organization's website. Additionally, the participants' varied experiences added to the study's credibility and enabled me to check for referential adequacy. Referential adequacy refers to taking a small portion of data and

archiving it so it can be referred to after the rest of the data has been analyzed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For instance, some participants only worked with trafficking survivors, and others worked with trafficking survivors and other types of survivors (e.g., domestic abuse and substance abuse survivors). The varied experiences, in conjunction with the multiple sources of data, led to credibility of the results through triangulation and referential adequacy.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the research findings may be useful or practicable to other contexts or demographics (Barnes et al., 2021). It can further be described as the reader's own application of the results to make appropriate connections to the elements of a study or context (Nowell et al., 2017). Generalizability is sometimes used synonymously with transferability, but the two concepts differ. In case studies, achieving generalization is difficult, if not impossible, because it requires data from large populations to make broad claims. In contrast, transferability relies on the reader to apply their personal experience to the various points in a study. In this study, I provided rich, thick descriptions of the data and their contexts to ensure the results could be adequately interpreted and transferred by the reader.

My use of purposive sampling added to the data's transferability. I obtained a representative picture in a natural context by purposively sampling those working with known or suspected human trafficking victims in several environments and demographic sections. This enabled me to gather specific data that could be aggregated and analyzed to create a representative picture of a service provider employee's daily experiences. For example, participants represented several different cities, positions, and organizations.

They also worked with different demographics of victims, though all worked with trafficking victims as well. Consequently, the research findings are not limited to service provider employees, but may also extend to any organization, industry, or entity aiming to serve individuals who have experienced extreme abuse.

I established dependability through member checks, triangulation, and an audit trail. Dependability relies on the researcher's ability to ensure they followed a logical and reviewable process throughout the study. The researcher should provide enough evidence to demonstrate that their findings can be replicated with a similar population, in a similar context, and with repeated results (Barnes et al., 2021). When readers can review and closely examine the processes that produced research findings, they can make judgments about the quality of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I utilized member checks during the interview process to ensure I understood what the participant intended to convey, thereby allowing me to interpret and analyze the information in a meaningful manner. In this process, I asked the participant clarifying or probing questions and provided them with my understanding of what they were saying. I used triangulation to document data from a variety of sources and to check the accuracy and consistency of the information presented by the participants. I also collected data from the questionnaires, interviews, researcher notes, and organizational website and demonstrated the data were credible and therefore dependable. The audit trail consisted of the research notes I took during the interviews. I later used the same notes to jot down my ideas and thoughts about the data as they were being analyzed. For example, I discovered during data analysis that a purely inductive approach would not be sufficient

to answer the research questions, so I adjusted my coding method. Consequently, I approached the first research question inductively and the second research question deductively, allowing a more appropriate analysis of the data so the research questions could be answered.

Confirmability represents the last of the trustworthiness measures in a qualitative case study. Confirmability refers to the degree that the findings accurately reflect the data and not the researcher's own bias or interest (Kyngas et al., 2020). In other words, a reader should be able to distinguish that the data support the researcher's interpretations. Researchers use many of the techniques described in this chapter to establish confirmability. In this study, I used triangulation and audit trails to ensure confirmability was met. I also described how I established triangulation of the data and an audit trail. Last, I provide a brief section on my own epistemological views in Chapter 5.

Results

The participants responded to the questionnaire and interview questions by providing their perspectives on what it meant to be prepared to meet the needs of trafficking victims. In doing so, they helped to answer Research Questions 1 and 2. Several themes became apparent from the data and are described in the participant narratives provided in this chapter. The descriptions include the various categories that complemented the top-level codes. Additionally, descriptive factors became apparent within the categories for each of the top-level codes. The results are presented for Research Questions 1 and 2 from the questionnaire and interview responses.

Questionnaires

Seven participants completed the questionnaire. The first 13 questions provided biographic and demographic data, and Q14–Q20 provided details about the participants' personal experiences, education, training, and perspectives on human trafficking. The questions appear in Table 7. Table 8 shows participant answers to Q1–Q13. Rather than list the participant organizations by name, I referred to them as Service Provider 1–4 for Question 3. Table 7 may be used to refer to the applicable questions (Q1–Q13) in Table 8.

Table 7

Questionnaire Questions 1–13

Question number	Question
1	Do you or have you ever worked with a known or suspected trafficking victim(s) at your organization?
2	How old are you?
3	What organization do you work for?
4	How long have you worked for the organization? (years and/or months)
5	What is your position or title? (please type your answer)
6	Are you full-time or part-time?
7	Are you a paid employee or volunteer?
8	What is your gender?
9	What is your ethnicity?
10	What is your race?
11	Have you ever been trafficked or prostituted?
12	Do you only work with trafficking victims or do you work with other clients too (e.g., domestic abuse, runaway youth)?
13	What is your typical case load for known or suspected trafficking victims? (enter "unknown" if not known

Table 8

Participant Questionnaire Responses

Question	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	18 or over	18 or over	18 or over	18 or over	18 or over	18 or over	18 or over
3	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP2	SP4	SP3
4	5 years, 1 month	1 year, 10 mos.	6 mos.	7 mos.	1 year	1 year, 6 mos.	1 year, 9 mos.
5	Grants & compliance officer	Trafficking advocate	Trafficking case manager	Trafficking advocate	Case manager	Overnight case manager	Trafficking case manager
6	Full time	Full time	Full time	Full time	Full time	Full time	Full time
7	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid	Paid
8	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
9	Not Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino
10	White or Caucasian	White or Caucasian	White or Caucasian	White or Caucasian	White or Caucasian	Black or African American	White or Caucasian
11	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
12	No, trafficking and other clients	Yes, trafficking only	No, trafficking and other clients	Yes, trafficking only	No, trafficking and other clients	No, trafficking and other clients	No, trafficking and other clients
13 [a]	8	15	2	10–12	10	Unknown	4

Note. P = participant; SP = service provider.

[a] The caseload per month involves trafficking victims or suspected trafficking victims only.

Q14: How Did You First Learn About Trafficking Victims?

Q14 was: How did you first learn about trafficking victims? The most common response to this question was: through college courses or their employing organization. Three participants indicated they first learned about trafficking in college courses (P3, P4, and P6), and one said both college and her organization (P2). P5 indicated learning about trafficking through research, but they did not define the context of the research. P7 noted that she learned about human trafficking while working at a crisis center. She said: "It was a [human trafficking] victimization that came up and sparked my interest as something that was not talked about as often at the time." P7 explained that she learned about trafficking while working at her organization but not through a formal training course. P1 said she learned about human trafficking from formal training within her current organization (i.e., Service Provider 1).

Q15: Have You Attended a Formal Workshop(s) or Course(s) on Trafficking in Person?

Q15 was: Have you attended a formal workshop(s) or course(s) on trafficking in person? All but one participant (P6) answered affirmatively. Among these, attending "local conferences" or "national conferences" represented the most common response (P1, P2, P3, and P7). Other participants indicated they attended workshops at a university (P4) or at their organization (P6). However, P5 responded that she had not attended any formal workshops or courses on human trafficking. Interestingly, this was the only participant who indicated they had previously been trafficked. Three participants (P2, P3, and P7) stated they had attended many conferences or workshops within the last several

years, and P7 even indicated training that was specific to both human trafficking and her typical client demographic. She said: "I have attended a number of trainings in relation and specific to trafficking and sexual exploitation." She listed workshops or seminars that covered her specific victim demographic. P3 said: "I have taken many formal workshops on human trafficking over the years…I have also trained organizations and medical personnel on signs of human trafficking."

Q16: Have You Received Formal Training on How to Service Trafficking Victims? If So, What Was the Training and Where Did You Take It?

Q16 was: Have you received formal training on how to service trafficking victims? If so, what was the training and where did you take it? All of the participants answered that they had received formal training from their organization. Some indicated they received formal training from other organizations as well, but they did not indicate if the training took place in an educational, personal, or work-related environment (P2, P3, P5, and P7). Interestingly, many of the answers were analogous to the answers from Q15 except for P4 and P5 who noted their organizations. Participant 3 specifically noted trainings she received such as "crime victims' compensation, recovery and restoration; addiction and mental health; and inter-generational trauma." P6 received training such as "being trauma-informed; victims of human trafficking; and safety concerns."

Q17: How Would You Describe the Seriousness of the Trafficking Problem in the Area You Cover?

Q17 was: How would you describe the seriousness of the trafficking problem in the area you cover? All of the participants noted that the problem ranged from serious to

very serious. Several participants said they believed "it's not discussed enough" (P2, P4, P7) or "it needs more attention," (P3) referring to the general knowledge and prevalence of human trafficking in their area. P1 attributed much of the trafficking to the interstates running through the area, and P5 stated: "our area is the biggest hot spot for trafficking." This notion appears consistent with the data generated by the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics, showing Lincoln and Omaha as hot spots (see Figure 2; Polaris Project, 2020).

Figure 2

Illustration of Human Trafficking Hot Spots
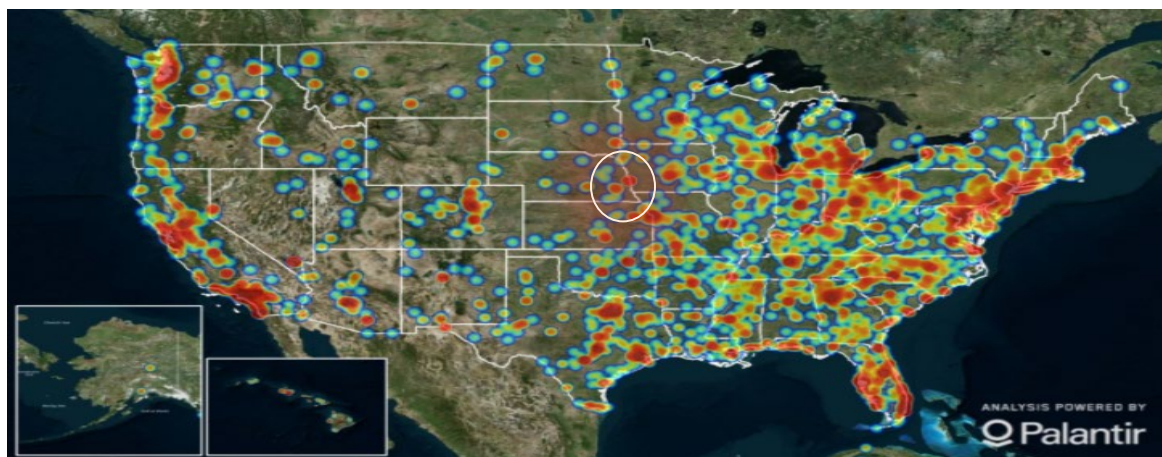
P3 and P7 noted that they received referrals from health care workers due to evidence of abuse, but the health care workers were not aware that human trafficking was happening. P7 stated that many service providers worked hard to assist and inform those willing to help trafficking victims, but she felt "many victims are not reached yet." P6 referred to the problem in relation to the needs of survivors: "At the top of the list is mental health, alcohol and drug abuse. . . . The clients have been traumatized. . . . [They] tend to not be properly medicated and given the proper health care follow up."

Q18: In General, What Services Has Your Work Organization Been Able To

Offer/Provide to Known or Suspected Trafficking Victims?

Q18 was: In general, what services has your work organization been able to offer/provide to known or suspected trafficking victims? The most common responses were safety planning, financial assistance, shelter, housing assistance, basic needs assistance, therapy, and advocacy. The advocacy service appeared to encompass several items such as "medical advocacy" (P1–P2, P5–P7), "legal advocacy" (P2–P3, P6–P7), and education or school advocacy (P2 and P6). Participants also noted some unique services such as "lethality assessment" (P1), "individual counseling" (P3), "therapy" (P5–P6), "mental health assistance" (P7), "therapy groups" (P5), "house group meetings" (P6), "cultural healing services" (P7), "transportation" (P3 and P6), and "document assistance" (P6). P6 described document assistance as helping the victims "get items such as ID's, [Social Security] cards, birth certificates, driver's licenses."

Q19: In General, What Services Have Known or Suspected Trafficking Victims Needed

(Even if Your Organization Doesn't Offer It)?

Q19 was: In general, what services have known or suspected trafficking victims needed (even if your organization doesn't offer it)? A few responses to this question echoed one another. These included: "housing" (P1, P4, and P7), "transportation" (P1, P6, and P7), and "mental health" (P3 and P7). Surprisingly, however, many responses varied. P1 noted that victims needed childcare services, and P3 pointed out that substance abuse assistance was important. P2 said helping victims of labor trafficking and minor victims of trafficking was a service they lacked and needed. P4 pointed to the need for

housing, basic needs, food, shelter, clothing, medical care, and assistance with getting

documents and social security disability income benefits. P5 cited the need for

"donations" of goods and services and "volunteers to do smaller shelter tasks." P6 stated:

"We are not equipped to handle handicapped or wounded victims that need additional

medical care or victims with deep psychological problems that are combative and are a

risk factor to themselves, staff, and others." P7 noted the need for transportation, housing,

and mental health support and elaborated that "financial assistance without barriers and

limitations" also represented a need.

***Q20: In a few sentences, how would you describe being prepared to meet the needs of a
known or suspected trafficking victim?***

Q20 was: In a few sentences, how would you describe being prepared to meet the

needs of a known or suspected trafficking victim? The most common sentiment in

response to this question revolved around building trust and a relationship with the

survivor. Other participants referred to the ways they built their relationship with the

survivor. P1 described it as follows: "You must be willing to build a relationship with the

victim so they will trust you and allow you to serve them." P3 added: "The absolute first

thing that anyone must do to meet the needs of a suspected trafficking victim is to do

your best not to judge them." P3 continued: "Some of the stories they tell you may seem

off-the-wall and hard to believe, but this is because many of us come from a life where

we never had to endure that." P6 stated:

> Allow them to talk and tell their story and listen without interruptions. Be forever
>
> mindful of their needs and understand that their defenses may be up because of

their prior treatments. Never lie to them or make promises that you can't keep. Remain calm and talk softly and allow them to vent whenever they get triggered. Keep in mind what may trigger them; be available or make time to be a listening ear. There may be times to redirect any bad behaviors and lead them to think that they are making the decisions when you feed them ideas of positivity and encouragement. Great decision-making gets praises. Allow them to progress at their own pace and just nudge them daily for progress. These people usually are manipulators, and that's okay; understand it is a survival technique they used. . .. Gain their trust and be truthful with them upfront and don't judge them.

P7 reported that "without the training and peer support from my community of agencies, I would feel very lost." She also said she relied heavily on her ability to build relationships with the survivors she served, and she did so by looking at each situation individually and meeting them where they were in their healing process. P2 said that if she was unable to meet a survivor's needs, "I have plenty of referrals and resources I can give to a client." P4 stated she was "non-judgmental and allows [trafficking survivors] to control the meeting."

Interviews

Four participants completed the audio-recorded interview portion of this study. I arranged each interview in advance, picking a time at the participants' convenience. I conducted and audio recorded the interviews via Zoom between August 24 and September 11. Each lasted between 26 min and 20 s. and 39 min and 58 s. P1, P5, P6, and P7 participated in the interview portion of this study.

When I asked the participants to describe their environment and their typical day working with a trafficking victim, they described it in terms of their feelings, their typical working day, the social environment, and the stress and workload. P5 described her typical working day as "someone who works in a dorm . . . making sure everyone has towels and bedding." P6 described her experience similarly: "We make them feel like they're at home, like a family and everything." P7 spoke about how COVID-19 had slowed things down, so she spent time "trying to do outreach or maybe work on other projects," but she added that "if you're reaching out, you will get referrals from people." P1 stated that it "can be like just a crazy environment." All of the participants described their environment as "overwhelming" or "crazy" at times, typically when dealing with emergency situations or when their clients had issues dealing with drugs or their emotions. P6 stated: "[Employees] really deal with [trafficking survivors] in the different personalities, the explosions and everything. . . . It can be very explosive. . . . It's not for the meek and the mild." P5 said:

> You always have to be on your toes and alert. . . . Sometimes [trafficking survivors] are actively using drugs or trying to recruit people in the shelter to be trafficked. . . . You got to be on at all times. You gotta be ready for anything.

Some participants felt that the nature of the job was "just so heavy a lot of the times and you're constantly hearing about people's serious problems, and on top of that you're having to figure out what to do" (P1). P7 described an experience she had as follows:

I had one client where there was some substance abuse, and she was pregnant.

She came to the door [of the shelter] and wasn't wearing pants. She was like, "I

can't go to court for my protection order, my water just broke!" And so I had to

take her to the hospital . . . and as we got to the hospital, we saw her trafficker, the

father of her baby was actually waiting outside, and I knew what he looked like

because I've seen his mugshot, and I've seen him in person. He wasn't a very

good guy. And so I had to take her to a different hospital, and it was just

completely insane. I think that week I put in like 10 extra hours because of the

baby emergency, getting her to a safe shelter, and then DHHS removal of the

baby because she tested positive for amphetamines. I had absolutely no time for

any of my other clients that week because it was literally 100% crisis for her.

P5 expressed how difficult it was to see people in that situation, especially those

around her age: "People your own age or younger come in here needing shelter, and they

tell you what happened to them, and they're so close and are so young, and it can be

really hard to see that sometimes." But P5 also felt that her work to help the survivors

"even[s] out" her feelings and emotions on the matter.

I asked the participants to describe what it meant to be prepared to meet the needs

of trafficking victims. Their responses included organizational strategies and their

interactions with survivors. It was described in terms of services and resources,

networking, communication, not passing judgment, relationship building and trust, and

victim identification. All of the participants felt that most survivors were aware of their

abuse but did not identify as human trafficking victims. P1 said: "The majority of cases

are where it's like a boyfriend who's been pimping out his girlfriend. But we do have some cases where someone was abducted and taken out of the state." P7 said: "I have never had somebody just walk in and be like I'm a victim of human trafficking. But I've had one client identify herself as a trafficking survivor." P7 elaborated that the "client saw a poster in a bathroom, and it talked about the same issues she was experiencing, and it had a local number, so she identified with it for the most part."

To identify possible trafficking victims, the participants had one common technique, which simply involved building rapport and trust with the victim. They managed this in several ways. The most common was to get the survivors the basic items they needed. All of the participants noted that the victims generally had very little or nothing in the way of possessions when they arrived at their organization. P7 said:

> If you want to help survivors leave their trafficker, you as an organization have to be able to provide everything that their trafficker does. So housing, food, clothing, you name it. And if you can't do that, they will go back.

P1 added: they "usually don't even talk about trafficking for quite a while after they [survivors] have entered the program."

The second most mentioned way of identifying victims was simply speaking with the survivor about their situation and offering additional items or services. P6 said: "A lot of them are not aware of the services." P7 explained that some of the survivors who arrive are homeless and are looking for basic needs "like toiletries, some shampoo, toothpaste." P5 shared a similar sentiment, explaining she built rapport by "figuring out what their needs are, and meeting those needs if you can, or getting them connected with

other people that can help them." P5 also discussed the role of staff: "We all pitch in whenever we can, so communication is super important."

I asked the participants to describe the quality of the services their organization offered. All of them responded with information about organizational strategies or their experiences, referring to the services and resources their organization provided, their training or education, and their thoughts and feelings. P1 stated: "I think we have the most comprehensive tracking program in the state." She elaborated: "We also contract with a medical clinic in Omaha and have medical care provided at our office for the individuals so that we can UBER them in here, and they can feel safe." All of the participants noted services that they offered directly or networked with other organizations to provide (e.g., case management, financial services, transportation, substance abuse services, mental health services, medical services, legal advocacy, and housing). P1 continued: "We never really discharge anyone from the programs, especially the human trafficking ones. . . . We are a good support system because we are covered by so many laws that restrict us from being able to release any information."

P6 described the quality of services at their organization as "grand." She said: "We provide them with bedding, clothing, and things of that nature. We provide them food and options for therapy. We have in-house therapy." She also noted that networking helped expand the number and quality of their services: "We get flyers and connections from other services and things." P6 brought up an aspect of their service that no other participant mentioned: "We take feedback from the clients." She stated that their program was 90 days long and could be extended "dependent upon whether [the trafficking

survivors] are reaching their goals. . . . Sometimes they drop out, come back, drop out, come back, but we never close the door." However, she also expressed frustration in preparing to meet the survivors: "We're running all different directions. It's not just a straight written street map; there is no telling what we may do. . . . There's just so many things that we do."

P7 explained her organization offered many forms of organizational assistance: "We offer financial services, counseling, rent assistance, transportation to and from court, filling out protection orders, legal advocacy." P5 stated: "I would 1,000% say our agency as a whole does an amazing job of getting clients where they need to be." She said their organization is

> all about client choice. . . . We try to help give them options . . . and try to break
> down any barriers that they're facing to get where they need, whether it's
> housing, transitional housing, treatment, job training.

I then asked the participants about the procedures and protocols at their organization and how they felt about them. All of them agreed the rules were there for a reason; however, they held differing opinions about them. Two participants felt their policies or protocols could be improved. P1 pointed to the large caseloads they worked with and said: "Case managers have large [case]loads, and it would be nice if [they] were lower." She continued: "A 2-year limit should be for case managers because it's just so heavy, and you're constantly hearing about people's serious problems and having to figure out what to do." P1 concluded: "It's just a lot to handle, and I just think people don't get it. [Employees] do get burnt out really easily and quickly here."

P7 observed a lack of accountability because her organization failed to follow through on implementing new or updated rules. She said: "We started a forms committee" to track data for grants and such and "had a 2-day training on how to do all this stuff." She noted that some coworkers still didn't understand how to enter the data and had heard them say: "I don't know what I'm doing, so I'm just not entering." She said: "There's not a ton of accountability so far on getting those things done . . . and that's a little frustrating. But I think there's a lot of work on the supervisor to have to push for that accountability." It is worth noting that all of the participants referred to the intensity of their work. Comments in this vein included: "very independent" (P7), "stressful" (P1), "overnight there is me, there's only me" (P6), "one of the things that people don't know is that people working with victims have a very, very high burnout rate" (P5).

P5 and P6 made positive comments about their policies and protocols, with P5 indicating her organization was "very considerate of what staff needs because they have a hard job." She said: "I just had my 1-year anniversary of working with the agency, and I got a handwritten note from the [chief executive officer] saying I touch lives every day and thank you for your service." She added: "It's just the little things that show that they really value the work that we're doing." P6 stated: "Our policies are based on keeping [trafficking survivors] healthy and safe. . . . We're pretty lax. . . . We pretty much have everything down to a fine art." She added:

> Sometimes policies and procedures have to bend and change to meet the needs,
>
> but not to the point where there's a safety issue. . . . We just come to the needs. . .

> We're very sensitive so when we see a need for something else that needs to be incorporated into what we're doing . . . we change with whatever it is that we need to do.

All of the participants noted that their policies or protocols were flexible, and they understood the rules must be bent at times to address specific situations and scenarios. Although the participants generally agreed about policies and protocols, they differed in their perception of their workload, stress level, organizational support, and recognition from organizational leadership.

I asked the participants to describe the most critical barriers or challenges they faced in providing services to trafficking victims. Participants responded by referencing barriers and challenges they experienced when interacting with survivors, third parties (e.g., hospital workers or police), and the environment. The terms or references were categorized and referred to through the following categories: effect of COVID-19, the credibility of the survivor, the survivor not identifying as a victim, the survivor having trust issues, the opinion that trafficking isn't discussed enough, relationship building, and victim identification. Some of these categories may appear to be synonymous; however, they differed in their origins. For instance, the survivor not identifying as a victim specifically related to the survivor not identifying themselves as a victim of trafficking, and victim identification referred to others such as caseworkers, health care workers, police, and judges who must be able to recognize the signs of trafficking in a survivor. Likewise, the survivor having trust issues differed from relationship building. The former refers to a survivor's cognitive and behavioral experiences and attitudes relating to trust,

and the second refers to the participant's ability to create and foster a relationship with the survivor. These sentiments became apparent in the participants' narratives, so their categorical distinction is therefore necessary.

All but one of the participants briefly mentioned the effect that COVID-19 had on their ability to render services to survivors. P7 said: "We don't take walk-ins unless there's an appointment or if it's an emergency." P6 said: "It's kind of hard . . . but we try to monitor their whereabouts. . . . We have to be vigilant about what they've been exposed to, to keep us all safe." P5 also spoke about her COVID-19-related experience:

> When everything with COVID happened, I wasn't getting hazard pay, and I was still working 40 plus hours a week, and I'm like, this is not working for me, even though I'm scared and worried about all this other stuff going on and we're uncertain.

The survivor's credibility also came up as a barrier, especially in contexts involving third parties such as nurses, police, or prosecutors. The participants characterized these individuals as questioning the survivors' character or simply not understanding the nature of the victimization they had experienced. For example, P7 shared a conversation she had with a social worker who had never worked with a trafficking victim. The two discussed a survivor that P7 took to the hospital; the social worker said to her: I don't know why she doesn't just report this?" P7 said she responded:

> You have to look at her as an individual. She has paranoid schizophrenia; she just got off meth; she's having a baby removed as we speak; she has already had five kids removed, and she was living in a drug house. Do you think any of the police

are gonna believe her, and if one does believe her, do you think a prosecutor is

going to believe her?

P7 expressed concern that the people she collaborated with did not understand the

nature of trafficking. She explained: "Victims are typically very vulnerable and difficult

to believe for the general public because they just don't understand why someone can be

put into that situation and, I guess, not be the perfect victim."

P5 said that communicating with her client was important because

You have to be able to pick up on their body language. . . . You might be able to

tell they're lying, they're just trying to manipulate . . . because that's how they get

their needs met. They do what they need to do to get their needs met.

P6 expressed a similar sentiment: "We have to pay attention to body language and

how to approach them. . . . They're paranoid, a lot of them have outstanding warrants. . . .

They have legal problems, home problems, and addictions." She continued in more

detail: "They are very manipulative because that's how they survived. . . . Sometimes

they don't remember exactly what they say, and many of them duplicate each other." P1

described survivors who do not identify as a victim: "Some think that they've been

committing crimes like prostitution. They don't want to stay in that situation but are

afraid to get in trouble potentially by the police if they ask for help."

This statement also appeared to relate to the participants' opinions that trafficking

wasn't talked about enough. P1 briefly mentioned this directly:

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Almost all of the survivors have charges, so we see what we can do about those

because it creates so many barriers to finding a job and getting into housing. . . .

Housing is definitely the number one barrier, usually in emergency housing.

P1 also mentioned that her organization had a team that participated in "meetings

with community leaders and the Omaha Police Department, Sherriff's department, and

probation department" to bring the survivor cases and to try and "reduce charges" if

possible. But I noted the meetings appeared to be transactional in nature, in that the

reduced charges are linked to information or testaments about pimps or "Johns". *Johns*

refers to people who solicit prostitutes and others selling sexual services in the

community. This issue did not appear in the reviewed literature on human trafficking and

would be worthy of future exploration.

P7 discussed several barriers that resembled observations by other participants:

Some don't identify as victims of trafficking and won't reach out for services, or

if they do, it might be the wrong services for them. . . . [Police and health care

workers] aren't labeling it correctly. . . . They might love their trafficker. . . .

Substance abuse is a huge barrier.

However, P7 noted one additional barrier not mentioned by the other participants. P7

worked mainly with a Native American population, and she said: "First thing with the

tribal community specifically is the trust because I'm a white person." When asked if the

trust issue stemmed from her race or the fact she looked like an outsider, she said,

"probably a little bit of both," and she provided an example of what she meant:

So, I have dark hair and kind of a darker complexion. And then my coworker in the same office is pretty fair-skinned and has blond hair and blue eyes. And I can definitely tell that some of the people who come in are a little more comfortable around me and much more standoffish around her at first. And I've actually had people make comments; like, I think assuming that I might be Native but definitely knowing she isn't. . . . I didn't realize how big of a barrier that would be.

The effects race or ethnicity may have on an individual's ability to help a trafficking survivor has not been robustly studied in the human trafficking literature. Therefore, this represented another worthy topic for future research. However, all participants reported using similar tactics when attempting to identify a trafficking victim and establish a relationship with them.

P6 described how some survivors came to their shelter via referrals, and others walked in for donations or seeking shelter: "We collaborate with other trafficking facilities. . . . Everyone knows about everyone. Sometimes the [female survivors] are signed up into two or three programs, so we collaborate together." P6 continued: "We get permission to release information, and that helps with the person, to know what their needs are and when goals are met. . . . We make them feel like they're at home, like family and everything." Similarly, P1 said:

an advocate or case manager spends so much time working with the victim, they take them out to lunch, then to Walmart and get them some hygiene items, and

they just spend time with them, kind of like a friend basically and build a

relationship with them.

P7 described a typical scene when a potential victim comes into her organization

seeking donations:

I think once they see we're just chit-chatting, they're like, okay, you know, she

gets it; she's not judging me for being homeless. And you can just see their walls

come down. . . . Sometimes it's their second, third, or fourth time they come in,

but they finally start to open up

P7 also recounted how she could identify some victims: "A lot of the people we

work with are homeless, so they'll get some toiletries, and then we'll start talking.

Sometimes they have a black eye." P7 noted this occurs often in domestic violence

shelters then continued:

I had one client who came in for donations, and she had a giant bruise along her

jaw. I asked her what happened, and she said she fell off a bike. So, I just believed

her even though I kind of knew that wasn't the case. We talked for a while, and

she really started opening up about the abuse that was happening with her

husband, and then I started to identify some sex trafficking. I don't think she's

accepted what is happening, but myself, as a professional, can identify that and

help educate her.

I asked the participants to share reasons why they believe some trafficking victims

do not seek out services or why they leave a service provider's help. The participants had

many feelings about this, but the most common responses connected to the conversations

about barriers and challenges, organizational strategies, and their interactions with the survivor. The most common categories mentioned were: the survivor not identifying as a victim, the survivor having trust issues, services and resources, control, and preparedness. A common theme that developed throughout this study related to the survivor not identifying as a victim of trafficking, and this to be attributable to their personal connection to the trafficker. P7 said:

> That can be hard sometimes because they might love their trafficker; it's a very complex feeling. Even if you think it's best for them to leave, you can't tell them that. They have to be the ones to make that decision.

In a similar vein, P1 added: "A lot of time, they don't want to talk about it at all and get angry if you ask too many questions." According to P5, "it's like a cycle of domestic violence and abuse: 'he did something bad to me, but he's gonna be better this time.' And so we see clients go through this cycle too."

Additionally, the participants repeatedly raised the issue control. They weren't necessarily referring to physical control; rather, they meant the control the trafficker had over the victim with drugs. Interestingly, all of the participants noted the common occurrence of drug use among the survivors. They pointed out that services to treat drug use were instrumental in helping survivors escape their traffickers. P6 explained: "The drugs have them, and then they still run back and forth to their trafficker." P7 agreed: "Substance abuse is a huge barrier. If they're using, you can only deal with so much at one time." P7 noted that dealing with too many issues at once also presented a barrier to successful aid:

I've never seen someone successfully get sober and heal all at once. For example, 'I've been clean for 30 days, and now I'm ready to deal with the trauma of what just happened to me,' and with that being said, there's no number of days before someone's ready to do that.

P5 explained: "The traffickers get them very addicted to drugs, so they go back to them because they know they're going to get a drug." However, P5 also emphasized her organization's focus on client choice, so a survivor "is able to use alcohol or drugs if this is their wish, but we absolutely don't allow it in the facility." P6 added: "A lot of times, I feel like we may be enablers, but we have to know when to step back and allow them to help themselves and let us help them." She elaborated: "They've been hurt, and they've been victimized and traumatized, and it may have started from childhood and things of that nature." P5 characterized challenges with control as a factor that deterred survivors from staying with the service provider. She explained that the shelters have rules that must be followed, and "some people never like the new lifestyle."

The problem of control brings to light the potential trust issues participants faced when interacting with survivors. P1 indicated:

They don't understand or don't know our strict reporting requirements. Like we're not going to call the police if someone inquires. To most [members of the public], they've been prostituting, but a lot of people don't know what they've been through.

She continued on the subject of confidentiality and reporting requirements: "I would be skeptical as well if I was one of them not knowing. . . . They just don't believe we could help them. . . . Or maybe the relationships weren't strong enough" (P1).

P6 also noted:

Sometimes they drop out and then come back and drop out and come back, but we never close the door. . . . They face a lot of hardship when they walk away because it's hard for them to disassociate the life that they're used to.

P5 reported similar experiences: "We've had clients that have come in and out maybe 10 to 20 times at our shelter." P7 added:

You have to consider these people are uprooting their lives from something that was abusive, toxic, and had absolutely no structure, to all of the sudden having to get out of bed at 8 am, maybe go to prayer, go with their caseworker to apply for jobs. . . . It's such a stark transition that it can be very defeating for them.

In addition to the challenge of keeping victims engaged, the participants also noted that many victims may not be aware of their organization's services. P6 explained: "A lot of [survivors] are not aware of the services. . . . We get referrals from other agencies, shelters, and everyone that know about our program." P7 agreed: "Often they are afraid, and that fear is just immense, or they may not even know that a service exists." P1 and P5, however, did not refer to a lack of awareness about their organizations; rather, P5 suggested: "some of the survivors are not ready to give up that lifestyle, of fast cash, always doing something, always have been involved in some sort of drama. . . . Some clients will go back to doing sex work or sometimes back to their abusers." P1 also

suggested the survivor may not "have a good relationship with the provider . . . or didn't feel emotionally supported."

The sentiments about service provider employee relations with survivors were interesting in that the participants provided differing responses about why a trafficking victim would leave a service provider's care. A wide array of anecdotal evidence existed in the literature to support their assertions. Therefore, a solid foundation may exist for empirical research to begin exploring the validity of such assertions.

Summary

Chapter 4 introduced the research setting, participant demographics, data collection and data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and a discussion of the results that answered Research Questions 1 and 2. The answer to Research Question 1 emerged from the participants' descriptions of being prepared to meet the needs of trafficking victims. I identified several overarching themes in relation to the participants' personal experiences, interactions with survivors, organizational strategies, and barriers and challenges. To answer Research Question 2, I looked at the descriptive factors associated with the Research Question 1 themes. The behavioral, cognitive, and environmental factors of the service provider employee, the trafficking survivor, and relevant third parties were matched with answers from the questionnaires and interviews when applicable. I discuss these results in detail in the Interpretation of Findings section of Chapter 5. Chapter 5 also includes an introduction, the interpretation of the findings, the limitations of this study, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine conceptions of service provider preparedness by uncovering the descriptive and environmental factors presented in service provider employee narratives. I aimed to uncover themes and descriptive factors to illuminate the various rationales used by service provide employees preparing to meet trafficking survivor needs. I believed that by learning more about this topic, I could identify best practices for such preparation. I learned more about this phenomenon by examining the participants' questionnaire and interview responses. In doing so, I found themes, descriptive factors, and divergent sentiments that service provider employees used to describe their preparedness to meet the needs of trafficking survivors.

I used a qualitative case study approach to answer two overarching research questions. Seven participants completed the questionnaire, and four participants completed the audio-recorded interview. The participants' geography spanned four organizations located among three cities in Eastern Nebraska. By using the case study approach, I was able to examine employee perspectives from organizations in different settings—and in their natural environment—within roughly the same time frame. Their unique perspectives provided a foundational understanding of what it means to be prepared to serve trafficking victims. Although I anticipated the participants would express similar sentiments, the results indicate some factors may adversely affect an employee's perspective of preparedness more than others.

This research showed that service provider employees define preparedness from three perspectives (i.e., theirs, the survivors', and third parties) and in behavioral, cognitive, and environmental contexts. The descriptive factors and subsequent themes appeared similar across participant responses except in three codes where I noted divergent sentiments (survivor has trust issues, feelings and thoughts, and stress and workload). Although this study was not suited to make causal or correlational inferences, evidence emerged to suggest the environment may impact an employee's definition of preparedness based on the developed categories. This may unevenly influence behavioral and cognitive factors. Additional research could shed light on the uneven influence and its potential significance. However, it can be reasonably assumed that other factors not uncovered in this research also played a role in conceptions of preparedness. This chapter includes an interpretation and discussion of the findings; study limitations; recommendations for future research; positive social change implications for individuals, organizations, and communities; theoretical implications; and a conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

I conducted a comprehensive literature review at the study outset. The review revealed that little was known about how service provider employees prepare to meet the needs of trafficking survivors. The findings in this study confirmed and extended the existing knowledge in this research area. The results suggest service provider employees prepare in several ways that overlapped and resembled one another regardless of organization, position, age, length or status of employment (i.e., full or part-time), pay status (i.e., paid or volunteer), race, having been trafficked themselves, work with other

types of victims (e.g., adult or child, domestic violence), education and experience, and services offered or needed. However, the participants expressed some divergent sentiments involving personal thoughts and feelings, stress and workload, and the survivor's trust issues. I focus on these divergent issues in the discussion and interpretation of these findings.

The participants described being prepared to meet trafficking survivor needs in the context of organizational strategies, their personal experiences, their interactions with survivors, and various barriers and challenges. I examine each of these codes. Seven participants answered questionnaires, and four of the seven participated in audio-recorded interviews. All of them alluded to various organizational strategies to help trafficking survivors, including direct provision of physical necessities and monetary resources to survivors, substance abuse therapy, counseling and mental health services, medical care, advocacy, networking, and working groups. Some organizations did not offer overnight short- or long-term housing, but they collaborated with organizations providing these resources. The goal of each organization was the same: to protect the survivor and offer any advocacy or assistance they needed to remain safe. The participant responses complemented best practices identified by numerous nonprofit and governmental organizations (CATW, 2016; DOS, 2017).

The participant narratives indicated that the survivors came from violent, chaotic, and unpredictable environments that likely influenced the way they thought and behaved. This suggests that environmental influences may be a key factor in survivors' healing process, complementing the assertion that if an organization cannot provide everything

the trafficker did, then the survivor will likely leave the aid and safety of a service provider organization and return to the trafficker (Bouffard et al., 2016).

Interestingly, every participant asserted their organization supported trafficking survivors and believed they provided high-quality services. However, a competing notion emerged when I asked about their organizations' policies and procedures. Two participants (P1 and P7) said the rules exist for a reason but felt that some rules did not necessarily help the survivor. One example stemmed from a requirement that survivors provide proof of their victimization. Though this policy was eventually challenged and subsequently changed according to the participant, it demonstrates that not all service provider organizations operate in the same manner. This example may also be viewed as a barrier or challenge to offering survivors appropriate services.

Two different participants (P5 and P6) reported that the rules mattered but represented more of a guideline they could bend or break if needed to address a specific situation. However, one participant (P6) stated that their organization's policy of upholding client choice made them feel like an enabler when clients chose to use drugs or alcohol. Both of these participants were happy with their organization and felt the organization cared about them and their well-being.

Another factor that participants cited as helpful involved the support they received from their organization. In their interviews, two participants (P5 and P6) felt their organization was "very responsive" to their needs and the needs of the survivors. They appeared to be happy with their organization and provided examples of how their organization had formally recognized their efforts. Conversely, the two participants (P1

and P7) who noted the strict interpretation of their organizations' policies and procedures appeared to be less satisfied with their organization and expressed feelings of not being appreciated and being overwhelmed. The demographic data gathered in Q1–Q13 of the questionnaire indicated that these participants spent the least amount of time in their positions dealing directly with survivors. The amount of support received potentially affected the individual employee and their choice to continue directly helping survivors. Therefore, it appears the ability to prepare to meet the needs of trafficking survivors may be influenced by the support the employees receive from their organization. Additional empirical research is needed to see what kind of effect the organizational environment and organizational support may have on service provider employees and survivor behavior and cognition.

Surprisingly, the participants rarely mentioned funding. They described funding sources for their organizations, but none of them spoke about their personal pay or benefits, and none of them expressed any concern about their organization's fiscal well-being. This may be attributable to a question regarding pay and benefits and a failure to directly ask about the organization's fiscal well-being. It could also be due to the participants' lack of knowledge in this area or how their pay compared to the pay of others in similar positions within or outside their organization. In either case, it was surprising to find that funding did not present a larger issue in preparedness discussions, especially given that a nearby organization had dissolved due to grant funding issues. This also represents an area for further research.

All the participants described their experiences working at a service provider and with survivors of trafficking. Every participant described their daily experiences working with survivors as stressful, and they often felt overworked. Many cited workload and the constant urgency to immediately help the survivors as the primary causes of their angst. Two participants (P1 and P5) even asserted that case manager or advocate positions should be limited to 2 years or less. P1 explained that the work was "just so heavy a lot of the times. . . . And on top of that you're having to figure out what to do." Another participant noted that the work was very individualistic and said she would have been lost if it wasn't for her coworker when she first started (P7). A third participant said they helped coordinate their clients' legal and immigration issues and supported needs related to housing, job hunting, mental health counseling, health care, family issues, personal issues, and substance abuse counseling (P6). This raised the question of service provider employee training. Although the questionnaire touched briefly on this topic, I did not include follow-up questions regarding this subject. Consequently, this topic also represents an area of needed future research.

In order to deal with the stress they experienced, three participants (P5-P7) spoke about the support they received from coworkers, and two (P5 and P7) spoke about the support from their organization. Peer and organizational support appeared to positively influence the participants' individual cognition and behavior. However, P5 mentioned that meaningful support helped her through difficult and stressful times at the job. This suggests that support, whatever that may look like to an individual employee, must be meaningful. Therefore, it can be reasonably deduced that meaningful support would be

specific to an individual or issue and would positively influence their personal cognition and behavior by aiding in the preparation process.

The code for barriers and challenges included divergent narratives. Specifically, the survivor having trust issues was a category that involved several varying points of view. Participants used their own assessments of what they observed in survivors' behavior to describe issues belonging in the category of survivors having trust. As previously noted, the environment appeared to play a significant role in how participants described a survivor's behavior (e.g., being able to provide sufficient resources and aid to prevent the survivor from returning to their trafficker). All of the participants shared this idea. What appeared most interesting, however, were the participants' own feelings on why the survivors struggled with trust. One participant said they believed the survivors were not "ready to give up the life of fast cash" and "always have to be involved in some sort of drama." (P1). Another participant observed some victims just wanted "to get free stuff" and did not necessarily want to leave their situation because it was familiar, which can feel safer than the unknown (P5).

Two points can be taken from these insights. The first stems from the sentiment that the survivors were not ready to leave their traffickers because they were enticed by the drama and money. This view does not align with the victim-centered intention of the TVPA or the service providers' missions. This conflicting view, offered by P1, plays into the other problems noted in a victim-centered approach. These problems involve the perceptions of other parties such as the public, law enforcement, the judicial system, and interested third parties (e.g., health care providers; Majic, 2015; Viergever et al., 2019).

Though a victim of trafficking may have chosen to participate in unlawful activities, the threat of force, fraud, or coercion perpetuates their continued participation. These threats are real and are often understated or ignored when personal opinions, beliefs, or strict interpretations of the law interfere with the efforts of those working to help (Lima de Perez, 2016; Nichols & Heil, 2015).

The presence of the idea that the victim is responsible for their situation indicates a need for more work within the service provider community and society in general to deepen understanding of human trafficking. Likewise, the second point stems from comments made by P7, who implicitly described the survivor as being in control of their situation and having an ability to make a choice to stay or leave their trafficker. This, too, points toward a non-victim-centered approach through which the participant blamed victims for their choices, perpetuating the problems they face (Albonetti, 2014; Contreras et al., 2016; Doherty & Harris, 2019; Schwarz et al., 2017).

Other participants (P5-P7) held views that were consistent with a victim-centered approach. These participants praised survivor healing-related accomplishments and achievements and reported coaching them on things to improve upon when they fell short of goals. All of the participants noted that the process of helping the survivor heal involved focusing on one problem or issue at a time because "no one can heal all at once" (P7). But, given the workload reported by these participants, it was clear their efforts could become diluted, diminishing the impact of their services. An inverse relationship exists between production and quality, a point that has been demonstrated in the fields of economics, psychology, business, and sociology (Nicholson & Snyder, 2012). As an

employee's production increases, quality declines and vice versa. The same can be applied to the amount of work a service provider employee performs versus the quality of the services they provide to trafficking survivors. When a service provider employee is overworked and stressed due to the number of survivors they serve, it can be reasonably assumed that the quality of the services they offer diminishes, especially when they must devote more time to one of the survivors over another when more pressing problems or emergencies occur.

Decreased quality of services becomes apparent from the participant narratives when they describe barriers, such as the survivor having trust issues. The participants noted that survivors may leave a service provider's help for other reasons besides factors such as trafficker brainwashing or coercion or the need for drugs or controlled substances. Most notably, the participants said: "they may not feel they are getting the attention they need" (P6) or "a good connection wasn't made between the advocate and survivor" (P1). When I asked what constituted a good connection, P5 said: "We get so busy that we can't just drop and take care of everything they need sometimes." P7 also said that survivors get "frustrated when you're not able to help them or you forget to call them back." This study revealed that the typical workday for a service provider employee was often chaotic, and all the participants carried heavy workloads that constantly demanded their attention, especially when emergencies arose.

As documented in the literature review, competing points of view existed on how to identify trafficking victims and how to support trafficking survivors (Pullins & Haarr, 2016; Schwarz et al., 2019; Wirsing, 2012). This study confirms that competing thoughts

also exist among service providers and not just among interested third parties or members of law enforcement, the judicial system, or the public.

Limitations of the Study

At the study onset, I identified the assumptions I made. These included the assumptions that the questionnaire was distributed to all service provider employees who volunteered to complete it, the participants would fully understand the questions and provide honest feedback, and the sample would represent other service providers around the area. Unfortunately, there is no way to be certain that all participants responded truthfully or that their answers represented the views and experiences of other service provider organizations in the area. The reason that some participants may not be truthful in some responses could be attributed to fear of retribution from their organization or fear of disclosing an unlawful or unethical practice. Though the participants' identities and organizations remained confidential, the small-scale scope and limited number of service provider organizations could have been enough to deter participants from providing honest answers.

On the questionnaire, participants appeared to freely answer each question, and the 100% positive response rate for their willingness to be contacted for an audio-recorded interview may attest to their confidence in the study's confidentiality. In addition, during the interview, participants provided in-depth accounts of their feelings and further elaborated when I asked follow-up or clarifying questions. All of the participants sounded calm when answering the questions, so I detected no indication that they answered untruthfully.

I also identified the possibility that the definition of preparedness could change due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., new legislative mandates or policies, changes in funding or training, or the adoption of new techniques or collaborative efforts). By the time Walden's IRB approved this study, the COVID-19 pandemic had begun, shifting how I ultimately conducted this study. Rather than holding face-to-face interviews, I determined web-based audio-recorded interviews would be more appropriate. I discovered during the interview process that all participant organizations experienced new challenges addressing survivor needs during the pandemic, and they prepared by taking precautions that resembled those of most public-facing organizations (e.g., social-distancing and wearing masks).

Participants also noted a decrease in walk-ins and referrals compared to previous years. The pandemic appeared to have changed the number of new referrals to the organizations as well, but the participants' workloads remained largely unchanged because their existing workloads were already in place. There is a high likelihood that the pandemic influenced several factors such as employee experiences, survivor–employee interactions, organizational strategies, and barriers and challenges. Consequently, the results of this study may have been different if the pandemic had not happened. Therefore, the results are limited by scope and time.

I adhered to the data collection process described in Chapter 3, with the exception of the variations noted in Chapter 4. I presented the questionnaire and interview questions to each participant and did not deviate from them. I did, however, ask clarifying or expanding questions during the interviews to ensure I captured the participants' meaning

and intent. Limiting the data to only those who worked or had worked with human trafficking survivors ensured the research questions could be answered with relevant information. I informed the participants of how their answers would be used to further this area of research.

The purposive sample came from geographic locations in Eastern Nebraska, including organizations from Lincoln, Omaha, and Norfolk. All of the organizations served human trafficking victims, but some of them also served domestic violence victims and runaway youth. One organization worked primarily with the Native American population. At the beginning of this study, I did not know what factors would be uncovered or if the participant answers would represent the geographic area.

I described the evidence of data and analysis trustworthiness in Chapter 4. Through the use of prolonged engagement, referential adequacy, member checking during the interviews, sampling, triangulation, researcher authority, and structural coherence, I was able to provide such evidence. However, personal bias could have influenced the interpretation and analysis of results. Although I have not personally worked with survivors of human trafficking or worked with service provider organizations, conducting the literature review brought to light a dichotomy between sex work and my own thoughts on it. The question of whether a person was kidnapped and forcibly trafficked or voluntarily entered a situation where they became a trafficking victim represents the crux of how many view trafficking victimization.

This study did not provide the opportunity to measure or define the legitimacy of victimization or the morality of individual choices. Rather, I aimed to address the

question of how service providers prepare to meet the needs of trafficking survivors, regardless of how they became victimized. I was able to control personal bias in this area by focusing on the personal thoughts and feelings of service provider employees. I also interpreted their meanings based on their accounts in relation to the theoretical underpinnings.

A significant number of human trafficking victims in the United States were not lawfully admitted into the country (DOS, 2017; ICE, 2017). Due to my personal employment with the federal government and my exposure to a large number of unlawful populations, it is possible I felt an unconscious bias toward this vulnerable population. Consequently, I could have asked clarifying questions that led the participants to answer in a manner not consistent with their personal experiences or beliefs. It is also possible that I analyzed the collected data through a lens aligned with my own epistemological perception of the world rather than from the perspective of the participant. I believe that my personal epistemological views were reasonably suppressed in my data analysis and interpretation because I noted inconsistencies in some of the participants' responses. The participants were unaware of my personal employment, so their comfort level should have been determined by their view of me as a doctoral student interested in learning more about how they prepared to meet trafficking survivor needs.

In addition, I always asked the interview questions in the same order, and I focused clarifying questions on the participants' answers. I made every effort not to interject my own opinions or thoughts during the process. The collected questionnaires

and recorded interviews allowed me to review the data numerous times to ensure I captured the essence of the participants' experiences and underlying meanings.

Recommendations

The literature review revealed few studies on the effectiveness of policies and programs designed to help human trafficking victims, and researchers had recommended microlevel studies to learn more about it (Reichert & Sylwestrzak, 2013; Simich et al., 2014). Additionally, little was known about the success of service provider programs and how service providers measured outcomes (Davy, 2016; Schwarz et al., 2019). I identified themes in the literature related to issues with societal perceptions of human trafficking and the disconnect between how law enforcement, service providers, and policy viewed or treated victims of human trafficking and the reality of their experiences (Doherty & Harris, 2019; Edwards & Mika, 2016; Twigg, 2016). I also identified areas of confusion about the roles that the various components (e.g. law enforcement, healthcare workers) follow to help identify and aid human trafficking survivors (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016; Dell et al., 2019). This study provided insight into how service provider employees prepare to meet the needs of trafficking survivors. It also shed light on conceptions of preparedness. Efforts to define and build a successful program serving trafficking victims rely, in part, on an understanding of how service providers conceive of preparedness.

I noted additional areas of future research throughout this study. One such area involved the transactional nature of building a relationship with the survivor and gaining their trust. Participants made clear that to be prepared to meet the needs of human

trafficking survivors, service provider employees must first build a relationship with the survivor. They accomplished this in several ways, including withholding judgment, listening to their stories, advocating for their well-being, and providing requested necessities. However, the participants in this study also revealed that survivors leave the service provider's care for reasons such as having trust issues and feeling a lack of support. Most survivors are not required to stay with a given service provider and can decide when and if to leave a program. Therefore, service providers must work to minimize the instances where a survivor may choose to leave their care.

Another area of future research emerged during a participant interview. The participant indicated that they lacked services to assist handicapped or wounded victims. A review of the literature did not reveal any studies focused on this demographic. Service providers should adhere to the same standards that all public and private businesses must follow for individuals with disabilities, but this topic has yet to be investigated further. It may be that individuals with disabilities are not typically trafficked, and therefore, services aimed at these kinds of survivors are very limited or unnecessary. It is also unclear if police, hospitals, judicial authorities, and service provider data reports account for this characteristic. Additional evidence is needed to determine if other service providers can help disabled or wounded survivors, what the prevalence of disabled or wounded survivors is, and what specific services they would need beyond those typically associated with survivors who are not disabled or wounded.

Several participants indicated that most human trafficking survivors are not kidnapped and sold to buyers in an underground criminal network but, rather, are in a

relationship with the person who sells them. The participants explained that boyfriends typically perpetuate victimization but that friends sometimes do as well. The literature identified several types of people known to have close ties with survivors who might engage in their abuse. These included boyfriends, husbands, female friends, and even family members such as parents or siblings (Contreras et al., 2016; Farrell et al., 2013; Ioannou & Oostinga, 2015). Contrary to what news and entertainment media promote, the human trafficking literature indicated human sex trafficking is more prevalent in close personal relationships than in relationships between kidnappers and their victims. However, there appears to be no consistent evidence to support this assertion because factors such as an individual's immigration status is not always considered when looking at close, personal relationships. Often those seeking unlawful entry into a country are not engaged in a close personal relationship with their smuggler (ICE, 2017). Additionally, those who are unlawfully present in the country tend to have additional compounding vulnerabilities that lawful residents do not experience. This makes them more susceptible to human trafficking (CIS, 2018).

Some researchers have investigated the differences between lawful and unlawful residents' vulnerabilities and have identified specific factors that warrant additional protections for unlawful residents. Thus, the TVPA appears to support the assertion that trafficking is largely perpetuated by close personal relationships for lawful residents and perpetuated by kidnappers, smugglers, or criminal networks for unlawful residents. A closer look at existing data may shed light on this subject.

In this study, I discovered that, in the context of service provider preparedness in Eastern Nebraska, the environment may have a greater impact on behavior and cognitive factors than behavior and cognitive factors have on the environment. However, more research is needed to determine if these results are transferable to other similar areas and service providers. It is still unknown what level of significance, if any, can be attributed to the environment's influence on behavior and cognitive factors. Nor is it clear to what extent bidirectional influences may affect the environment in scenarios involving factors not identified or considered in this study. Importantly, four factors appear to greatly influence the concept of preparedness, three of which are generally controlled by the organization. Workload, organizational support, and recognition from organizational leadership may directly influence the stress level of service provider employees and affect their ability to prepare to meet the needs of trafficking survivors. Learning more about the effect of positive and negative environmental influences on service provider employee preparedness may reveal solutions and best practices that could alleviate other factors such as employee stress and survivor barriers, challenges, and trust issues.

Implications

Positive Social Change

Service provider programs should be monitored and evaluated (GAO, 2007). Doing so would highlight areas that effectively combat human trafficking and help survivors. Monitoring and evaluation would also reveal areas needing improvement or changing. Little is known about the monitoring and evaluation of service provider programs, which leaves the value of their outcomes unknown (DOS, 2017; Schwarz et

al., 2019). For this reason, service provider organizations should monitor and evaluate the support they offer to their employees.

The results of this study contribute to the literature on human trafficking by providing insight into how service provider employees prepare to meet the needs of trafficking survivors. Service provider employees defined preparedness through their experiences, their interactions with survivors, organizational strategies, and the barriers and challenges they face. Environmental factors appear to have a greater role in defining preparedness than behavioral and cognitive factors. In addition, environment may even have an unequal influence over behavior and cognition regarding service provider employee perspectives. This research study is important for service provider organizational leadership and service provider employees because it identifies areas that can be improved upon to better prepare service providers to meet the needs of trafficking survivors.

This study provided results that may help service provider organizational leadership find ways to retain highly qualified employees by easing their workload and stress. Likewise, the results may aid service provider employees by identifying ways to prepare better to meet the needs of trafficking survivors. I hope that the results of this study will enable employees to adopt best practices, expand their knowledge of what it means to be prepared, and continue to develop unique ways to increase the quality of their services to a vulnerable population.

Individual Change

At the individual level, employees of service providers may concentrate on strategies for building relationships with each other and their clients. In this study, I considered the participants' responses about how to prepare to meet the needs of trafficking victims. I discovered that service provider employees rely on each other for information regarding the trafficking survivor, but they also rely on each other for support and guidance. Strong bonds among service provider employees can enable them to support one another and present a unified front, which may benefit survivors. Participants raised the factor of trust several times in their responses. Trust appears to be a culmination of an individual's confidence in themself, their coworkers, and the organization's willingness or ability to support its mission and their decisions. Policies and procedures proved a divergent theme in this study, but one factor that appeared to produce greater employee satisfaction was an individual's ability to lead upward. This means that when an employee identified a problem, found a viable solution, and presented it in a manner that was meaningful to organizational leaders, they reduced their stress, increased their satisfaction, and felt better prepared to meet survivor needs.

Organizational Change

All participants in this study said they had been trained to complete their job. However, their training did not always appear adequate given the numerous situations they faced. All employees felt their organization did an excellent job of offering services to survivors, but employees also felt unappreciated, overworked, and stressed. Service provider organizations should recognize that their employees engage in stressful and

chaotic situations every day. The results in this study showed that meaningful support may be a key factor in reducing employee stress. Service provider organizations should train their employees on ways to reduce stress and handle difficult and chaotic situations. They should also seek unique and meaningful ways to show appreciation for their employees. The results of this study pointed to a need for greater service provider employee support. This change may lead to less employee turnover, greater work satisfaction, and employees being better prepared to handle their job duties.

Societal Change

Societal institutions play a critical role in recognizing and referring to instances of human trafficking. Some of the greatest trafficking risk factors identified in the literature included economic security, housing insecurity, education, and migration (Schwarz et al., 2019). In this study, I identified shortcomings in the roles of societal service provider organizations such as law enforcement, the judicial system, and the health care system. The role of service provider organizations is to keep the survivor safe and give them the services and products they need to remain safe. However, I noted that inadequate training leads to misunderstood and miscategorized victimization, which ultimately leads to the possibility that providers offer incorrect services or, worse, fail to make appropriate referrals. Therefore, identification and referral to appropriate services represent critical factors that continue to be problematic.

Service provider organizations with leaders who understand the need for accurate identification and referral play a crucial role in educating one another to promote a more appropriate societal response. Likewise, service provider organizations, alone, are not

well-equipped enough to handle the multitude of issues associated with aiding trafficking survivors. All of the participants asserted they could only address one issue at a time with survivors, but all of a survivor's challenges must ultimately be addressed. This suggests there are multiple points when intervention is needed, so better coordination may be needed among service providers. If armed with knowledge of the risk factors involved in trafficking, service provider organizations can begin to identify the warning signs before a person becomes a victim, thereby mitigating a portion of the trafficking problem (Cunningham & Cromer, 2016). Additionally, trauma-informed care involves the understanding that survivors face some directly related problems, so addressing both at once can promote their recovery and reduce the chance of retraumatization or exploitation (DOS, 2020). Therefore, this study may help inform policies aimed at promoting early identification and mitigation. In other words, early efforts to identify and reduce an individual's risk of becoming a trafficking victim may lead to reduced instances of trafficking and greater preparedness to help trafficking survivors.

Methodological Implications

In this study, I chose a qualitative case study approach using purposive sampling. A case study is a research design in which researchers collect and analyze data about an uncontrolled phenomenon in its natural context to answer "how" and "why" questions (Yazan, 2015). I determined this approach was appropriate for answering the research questions because I wanted to learn more about how service provider employees defined preparedness when meeting the needs of trafficking survivors. I collected information from participants using questionnaires and interviews. Doing so allowed me to collect

raw data without controlling any of the variables or factors. Ultimately, the data revealed the definition that service provider employees used to describe preparedness in addition to specific factors that complemented their definition.

Case studies could be used in other service provider venues to refine the definition of preparedness in different contexts (e.g., law enforcement agencies, judicial or legislative agencies, hospitals or medical facilities, schools, and the public). Researchers can also use case study to explicitly study different forms of trafficking such as labor, sex, or organ trafficking. The information the participants provided through questionnaires and interviews enabled me to analyze data that was descriptive and rich. It offered a detailed understanding of the participants' personal experiences working with trafficking survivors. Although case study research does not have a specific design catalog for use by social scientists, advocates do prescribe certain components that permeate the literature. Therefore, it follows for other researchers to use a case study approach when applicable (Yin, 2014). Using a case study design to explore other service provider venues or geographic locations would give other researchers the ability to conduct similar studies to support or challenge this study's results.

Theoretical Implications

Two theories helped orient this study's lens. The first was social constructionist theory. I used this theory to further demonstrate that society places trafficking survivors into two different categories: those who did not engage in risky behavior and were forced into trafficking, and those who willingly engaged in risky behavior, which subsequently led to their exploitation and trafficking. Members of society appear to hold different

views about how to treat survivors. These derive from the individual's perception of how the victim entered into trafficking. Perceptions of victim culpability tend to align with perceptions of social stratification levels. This study showed that service providers have struggled to identify and properly aid survivors of trafficking, largely because these misconceptions have been applied to them by society.

The second theory I used in this study was social cognitive theory and the model of reciprocal determinism. I relied on this framework to explain the bidirectional influences that environment, behavior, and cognition have on one another. Although I initially intended to describe the trafficking survivor's actions and attitudes from the participant's perspective, it became apparent that the participants' own actions and attitudes were just as relevant as the survivor's. This study confirmed that environment, behavior, and cognition bidirectionally influence one another. However, this study also showed that the environment may have a greater influence on behavior and cognition as they relate to the well-being of service provider employees and their view of preparedness. I also noted that environment may have a greater influence on the trafficking survivor's perception of self-worth and safety, ultimately affecting their cognition and behavior related to the decision to leave a service provider's care. Using these theories in future human trafficking research will provide a roadmap for aligning resources in micro-, meso-, and macroplanning and intervention responses.

Recommendations for Practice

In this study, I showed how service provider employees described being prepared to meet the needs of trafficking survivors. From the findings, some recommendations can

be suggested for researchers, service provider employees, and service provider organizations. The proper identification of victims remains a problem. Many are mislabeled as drug addicts, runaways, prostitutes, thieves, or domestic abuse victims. Service providers must properly identify individuals who are trafficked in order to effectively help them exit the exploitative relationship with their trafficker. Proper identification also represents a critical aspect of the referral process because a person identified as a trafficking victim will have access to a multitude of resources designed to support their recovery. Future researchers should explore how trafficking victims can be most easily identified when they engage with various entities during their daily lives or during emergency situations (i.e., when the chance of discovering their abuse is most critical and likely). Such research may lead to new ways of identifying victims of trafficking. Additionally, early identification will likely have a positive effect on referrals for needed services.

Service provider employees have a demanding job that requires a combination of skills ranging from scheduling and coordinating to advocating and critical listening. When preparing to meet the needs of trafficking survivors, they should be aware of the resources available in the community, be victim-centered and trauma-informed, and know basic provisions of law to help orient a survivor's path forward. However, due to large workloads and stressful emergency situations, many service provider employees find themselves scrambling for resources, losing sight of victim-centered or trauma-informed decisions, or becoming complacent or misinformed. These distractions can divert them from the best path for a survivor's well-being, thereby defeating their

mission. This study showed that service provider employees can reduce their stress by relying on one another when additional assistance is needed. It also demonstrated that satisfaction with their job increased when service provider employees identified a problem and recommended a solution that was subsequently adopted. As such, service provider employees should focus on their personal experiences and interactions with survivors to find individual and customized ways to minimize challenges and eliminate barriers for survivors.

Lastly, service provider organizations should take an active role in identifying and minimizing their employees' workload and stress. Doing so may increase employee satisfaction, decrease turnover, and enable employees to be better prepared to complete their duties. This study showed that organizational support and meaningful employee recognition were important factors in employee satisfaction and preparedness. Employees who felt supported by their organization were more decisive and more confident in their job. Those who didn't feel supported reported feelings of burnout and additional stresses not apparent in the narratives of the other participants.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this research study, I aimed to learn about how service provider employees conceptualized their preparedness to meet the needs of human trafficking survivors. I also hoped to identify descriptive factors that supported the participants' notions of preparedness. This qualitative case study provided insight into this by showing how service provider employees defined preparedness to meet the needs of trafficking survivors. The case study method enabled me to consider a variety of

perspectives by collecting data from several participants via questionnaires and interviews. The participants in this study worked for service provider organizations in three different cities in Eastern Nebraska. I selected this setting because it encompassed the two largest cities in Nebraska, both of which had been shown to be human trafficking hot spots (Polaris Project, 2020).

Questionnaires provided demographic data, biographic data, and some information on each participant's background and personal experiences. The interviews served as the main source of information regarding how service provider employees describe preparedness. Descriptive factors emerged from both the questionnaires and interviews. Before conducting this study, I was unsure of how service provider employees would describe preparedness to meet trafficking survivor needs, but I had anticipated that there would be minimal differences. Once I collected and analyzed the data, it appeared that many service provider employees defined preparedness in a similar fashion. However, the data also revealed distinct differences in opinion that appeared to revolve around one factor in the model of reciprocal determinism.

This study indicated that service provider employees defined preparedness through their personal experiences, their interactions with survivors, organizational strategies, and various barriers and challenges. Each of the participants shared similar sentiments about preparedness with the exception of factors related to their stress and workload and survivor trust issues. Stress and workload appeared to affect the participants' ability to adequately prepare to meet the needs of trafficking survivors. The narratives suggested that stress and workload issues could be mitigated with peer and

organizational support. Interestingly, service provider employees with access to peer and organizational support were more satisfied with their jobs. Additionally, their stress and workload, although still significant, appeared to be tolerable and didn't appear to affect their cognitive or behavioral attitudes toward their work or clients. On the other hand, the service provider employees who reported less peer and organizational support were less satisfied with their jobs, felt higher levels of stress despite similar workloads as those with supportive peers and organizations. A lack of peer and organizational support appeared to affect their ability to adequately prepare to meet survivor needs and influenced their cognitive and behavioral attitudes toward their work and clients. These findings suggest that the environment plays an important role in a provider's ability to prepare to meet the needs of trafficking survivors.

The participants reported that trust issues among survivors also represented a barrier to the provision of effective services. The environment appears to influence service provider employee cognition and behavior. The findings showed that those employees not adequately supported by their peers and organization may have more issues developing a trusting relationship with their clients as opposed to those who had adequate peer and organizational support. This difficulty in developing trust was demonstrated by the participants' personal feelings about why trafficking survivors may leave a service provider's care. It also manifested in the participants' tendency to judge trafficking survivors based upon their experiences working with them. More exploration is needed to determine the prevalence and effects that peer and organizational support have on a service provider employee's conception of preparedness to meet the needs of

trafficking survivors. Future researchers should focus on how the environment influences cognitive and behavioral factors of both the service provider employee and the trafficking survivor. Learning more about the role of environment may help service providers better prepare their employees to deal with the day-to-day stresses associated with their workloads. It could also help organizations identify ways their employees can avoid passing judgment, facilitating their efforts to build trusting relationships with trafficking survivors and preventing survivors from leaving the care they so desperately need to heal.

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Appendix A: Participant Questionnaire

Date: _____

Participant Questionnaire

Demographic/Biographic Information:

1. What organization do you work for?

2. How long have you worked for the organization? (years and/or months)

3. What is your position?

4. Are you fulltime or part-time?

5. Are you a paid employee or volunteer?

6. What is your gender?

7. What is your age?

8. What is your ethnicity?

9. What is your race?

10. Have you ever been trafficked or prostituted?
    - ☐ Yes, stop here.
    - ☐ No, please continue.

Experience:

11. Do you or have you ever worked with a known or suspected trafficking victim(s) at your organization?
    - ☐ Yes, please continue.
    - ☐ No, stop here.

12. Do you only work with trafficking victims or do you work with other clients too (e.g. domestic abuse, runaway youth)?
    - ☐ Yes, trafficking victims only
    - ☐ No, trafficking victims and other clients

13. What is your typical case load for known or suspected trafficking victims?
    - ☐ Per month: _____
    - ☐ Per year: _____

14. How did you first learn about trafficking victims?

Education/Training:

15. Have you attended a formal workshop(s) or course(s) on trafficking in persons? If so, what was it and where did you take it?

16. Have you received formal training on how to service trafficking victims? If so, what was the training and where did you take it?

Organizational Resources:

17. How would you describe the seriousness of the trafficking in persons problem in your area?

18. What services has your work organization been able to offer/provide to known or suspected trafficking victims?

19. In general, what services have known or suspected trafficking victims needed (even if your organization doesn't offer it)?

20. What services has your organization referred out to other service providers, if known?
    a.   What is the name(s) of the referred service provider organizations(s) if known?

21. In a few sentences, how would you describe being prepared to meet the needs of a known or suspected trafficking victim?

Appendix B: Personal Interview Questions

Personal (Audio recorded semi-structured interview questions)

22. Please describe your environment and your typical day (or experience) working with a person known or suspected to have been trafficked.

23. How do you describe being prepared in terms of meeting the needs of a known or suspected trafficking victim?

24. Describe the quality of the services you feel your organization (as a whole) offers to known or suspected trafficking victims.

25. How do you feel about the procedures/protocols at your organization that are in place for how to serve/treat trafficking victims?

26. What are the most critical barriers/challenges you face in providing service to trafficking victims?

27. Based on what you know about trafficking victims, what are the reasons why some known or suspected trafficking victims DO NOT seek out services?

28. Would you like to share any additional information or share anything else?

Appendix C: Codebook

Code	Definition/Explanation
Barriers/Challenges	Challenges that service providers face to get services to trafficking survivors
Organizational Strategies	Ways an organization plans and acts to accomplish their mission and goals. May be at any level of the organization
Survivor-Participant Interactions	Stories and interactions between the trafficking survivor and the service provider employee
Employee Experiences	Personal stories, ideas, and descriptions about the employee's feelings, emotions, activities, and experiences
Behavior	How the employee, survivor, or an interested third-party act toward another
Cognitive	Mental process/thoughts of the employee, survivor, or an interested third-party
Environment	Service provider employee or survivor perspective of an environment (work, hospital, school, living arrangement etc.)

Appendix D: Abbreviations

CATW – Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

CIS – Citizenship and Immigration Service

DHS – U.S. Department of Homeland Security

DOJ – U.S. Department of Justice

DOS – U.S. Department of State

FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation

FY – Fiscal Year

GAO – U.S. Government Accountability Office

HHS – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

HSTC – Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center

ICE – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

IRB – Institutional Review Board

OVC- Office for Victims of Crime

TVPA – Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000

UN – United Nations