

1962

Supporting Adolescent Women Survivors of Sex Trafficking: An Occupational Justice Perspective

Lydia Bryce

Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania, United States

Introduction:

Sex trafficking is a human rights violation of epidemic proportion taking place in developing and developed nations alike. A multidisciplinary approach is needed to combat this injustice and support survivors. Occupational therapists can bring a voice to this global dialogue through our understanding of psychosocial well-being, advocacy, and occupational justice across differing contexts and cultures.

Objectives & Contribution to Practice:

This project furthers understanding of the complexities surrounding sex trafficking. Our perspective focuses on occupation, cultural relevancy, and both individual and population-based interventions. The aim of the session is to contribute to the scope of the profession by providing knowledge of ways that occupational therapists can directly support adolescent women survivors in recovery and indirectly support them by advocating for occupational justice and promoting change in public policy.

Description:

The scope and significance of sex trafficking are reviewed in the literature and filtered through the lens of occupation and occupational justice. Specific topics include the effects of sex trafficking on victims, legislative response of governments worldwide, humanitarian response to victims' needs, and overall lack of effective support for survivors. The development of culturally-relevant occupational therapy interventions are considered through the use of case examples and a two-fold approach to occupational restoration, rebuilding routines and rebuilding relationships. Guided participant discussion will provide opportunity for practitioners to share their experience.

Discussion:

Sex trafficking negatively impacts all areas of occupation. Current aftercare initiatives to support adolescent women survivors are insufficient. We can contribute through our core value of occupational justice for all human beings, understanding of the psychosocial implications of trauma and abuse, and passion to enable and empower those experiencing dysfunction. Practice that is informed, sensitive, and reflective enables us to step outside of our own clinical worldview to consider culturally-relevant ways of supporting the occupational healing of sex trafficking survivors.

Conclusions:

Occupational therapists offer a unique perspective on human rights abuses and sex trafficking. Practitioners have the knowledge and expertise to support adolescent women survivors both directly and indirectly. Future research is needed to achieve cultural relevancy and develop more effective interventions for this population.