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Gender and Trauma: Psychological Differences in the Experience of Female Vs. Male Trafficking Victims

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Abstract

This study investigates gender-based psychological differences in the experience and aftermath of human trafficking, focusing on how trauma manifests, is internalized, and expressed among female versus male victims. The aim of the research is to identify distinct trauma patterns and coping mechanisms shaped by gendered forms of victimization, aiming to inform gender-sensitive approaches in psychological assessment, rehabilitation, and legal protection. Drawing on trauma theory, gender psychology, and victimology, the paper integrates empirical findings from clinical case studies, international reports, and forensic evaluations of trafficking survivors. Results indicate that female victims tend to display higher levels of post-traumatic stress, shame, dissociation, and relational anxiety, often linked to sexual exploitation and repeated coercion. In contrast, male victims exhibit more externalized symptoms such as aggression, emotional numbing, and avoidance, typically associated with forced labor and identity deconstruction. The study further emphasizes that societal stigma and cultural masculinity norms hinder the recognition of male victimization, leading to underreporting and inadequate psychological care. By employing a comparative analytical framework, the research highlights the necessity of differentiated trauma-informed interventions, where psychological recovery, social reintegration, and legal redress are tailored to gender-specific vulnerabilities and resilience factors. Ultimately, the paper advocates for a holistic understanding of trauma in trafficking survivors—one that bridges gender studies, clinical psychology, and criminology—to enhance both therapeutic efficacy and human rights protection.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, Gender Differences, Trauma Psychology, Ptsd, Sexual Exploitation, Forced Labor, Coping Mechanisms, Victimology, Psychological Recovery, Gender-Sensitive Intervention