

Similarities and Differences in Perceptions of Thai and US College Students Regarding

Human Trafficking

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Abstract

Human trafficking (HT) is an international crime known for violence against women and children in the form of sexual violence, however it encompasses the broader definition of transportation and coercion by physical and psychological force for financial gain (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012). More recently human services professionals, including social workers, are looking to collaborate with law enforcement and policy makers to impact the various sectors HT affects including labor, health and trade (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012).

This project, a collaborative effort between the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville, FL and Chulalongkorn University (CU) in Bangkok, Thailand, utilizes the Theory of Diffusion of Innovations to understand student awareness concerning human trafficking (HT). We hypothesized that Thai students would be more aware of HT than US students and exhibit more overall knowledge. The author (SD) contacted 7 Graduate or Undergraduate departments at UF requesting the distribution of an IRB approved email requesting student participation in an online survey. The author (SD) spent 4 weeks in Bangkok to conduct research at CU. CU approved consent was obtained via a paper and pencil format, and the survey was self-administered at the student's convenience in various places across CU. The sample consisted of 146 students from CU and 149 UF students. Findings from both the US and Thai students suggest that there is an overall lack of general HT knowledge. Many respondents exhibited a common misconception that HT is attributed exclusively to sexual exploitation. Next steps include collaborating with local organizations to further awareness.