

## When the Line between Victimization and Criminalization Blurs: The Victim-Offender Overlap Observed in Female Offenders in Cases of Trafficking in Persons for Sexual Exploitation in Australia

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# The victim-offender overlap in human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in Australia

## What is it about?

This paper applies the victim-offender overlap to those Australian cases of human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation involving female offenders, to highlight the transition made from victim to offender. It further analyses the relevant judges' remarks during sentencing to see if/how they acknowledge the overlap between victimisation and offending within each identified offender.

## Why is it important?

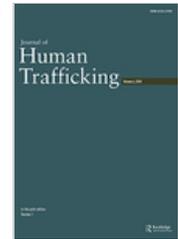
There has been moderate research on human trafficking occurrences in Australia, compared to other countries. However, there has been minimal research exploring female offenders within the Australian context, despite the United Nations highlighting the prevalence of female offenders in these crimes. Prior research in Australia has touched on this, but has not fully explored this occurrence. The identified offenders in this study suffered differing levels of victimisation, three of which were themselves trafficked into Australia prior to transitioning into the role of the offender. As a result, there is a distinct victim-offender overlap that is being observed. The victim-offender overlap is of great interest to criminologists as it highlights that offenders in many cases have a history of victimhood. Histories of victimhood in these cases, however, are being met with an expectation that these offenders should have embraced a different life pattern, away from the exploitation of others. This expectation is idealistic and does not consider the social structural constraints for a comprehensive exercise of agency by the former victim.

## Perspectives



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I hope this paper adds to the available knowledge on human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in Australia, and the involvement of females in the role of the perpetrator, to assist in understanding all aspects of these crimes. Furthermore, I hope this work challenges the idea of who a victim is, or can be, further highlighting the occurrence of the victim-offender overlap in cases involving female offenders.



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