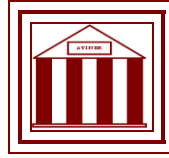


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**Needs of the Victims of Trafficking for
Sexual Exploitation**

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Needs of the Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation¹

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the needs of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, to indicate more accurately the path from rescue until recovery. The responses were collected by 52 questionnaires open to NGOs working with victims of trafficking in Spain. We are situated in the human rights and gender approach to analyze the collected needs. The results showed that: 1) women were not unaware of being victims of a crime, except in cases of conditions of abuse (continuous maltreatment and rape); it is necessary that the victims were aware of the situation; 2) the rescue must do so with caution to not put your life in danger, asking her how she sees the situation to go through it; 3) women requires refuge, protection, safety and legal advice, in addition to meeting basic needs. 4) they need to recover their physical, mental, and sexual health, as it has been subjected to all kinds of abuse; 5) they must to know the language and culture of the host country to integrate and to communicate better with other; 6) when the rescue have been achieved, women have to decide whether to return home or benefit from a program of social integration in host country. 7) The key elements of social intervention are empowerment, resilience, and trauma-focused intervention. Finally you all the interventions must be adapted socioculturally, since the women come from different cultures, with different needs and life prospects.

Keywords: trafficking for sexual exploitation, human right, gender, prostitution, victims

¹This study is part of the National R+D+I Project, “Making visible VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING: acting against Trafficking in women for sexual exploitation” subsidized by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, Reference: CSO2014-55209, This study aims to determine the needs of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, describing the whole process from the moment of their captivity in order to more appropriately mark out the path of their rescue and recovery.

Introduction

The latest data provided by EUROSTAT on trafficking indicated that 69% of registered victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation, that 95% of these victims were female and that 65% were EU citizens (Eurostat, 2014:13). However, most of the traffickers were males. Trafficking is a consequence of prostitution and it is a crime that entails a serious violation of human rights, especially for women. Women and girls are lured, tricked and forced into prostitution against their will, and made to give any money generated by this activity to their traffickers. However, prostitution is a broader activity than Human Trafficking. Within the sex industry, we can find women who practice prostitution voluntarily or who are coerced. A common factor in both these scenarios is sexual exploitation. While we can find numerous studies on prostitution and sexual exploitation, the same is not true for Trafficking, mainly because it is a recent social phenomenon, despite having its origins in the nineteenth century, in the so-called white slave trade (Gozdziak and Collet, 2005).

Addressing trafficking for sexual exploitation leads us to consider the gender aspect, how sexuality is regarded in a socio-cultural context in today's societies, the migration policies, the withdrawal and granting of human rights by the EU States and how certain social groups exercise power and control over others, either legally or illegally. Studies have mainly focused on matters of legislation, and to a lesser extent on the impact these violations of rights and needs have had on the victims and the most appropriate ways to rescue them and help them recover; and all this despite the fact that the UN Protocol on trafficking in persons¹ pays particular attention to the supply of resources for victims.

People who have been trafficked are seen as victims of a crime and as victims of a violation of human rights, but they also have the same social image as prostitutes and illegal immigrants (Schofield et al, 2011). These very disparate perceptions lead the States to often prioritize the immigration control approach over the human rights approach. Prostitution is a very lucrative business that in many EU countries can generate millions of euros per month (Petrunov, 2011), and the women who are captured and forced into prostitution come from other countries. That is to say, they are not native to the country in which they are trafficked and exploited. The impact of these two circumstances is that the creation of social and health resources may be restricted or not be a priority for the States (Meneses and Uroz, 2014), especially in times of economic crisis.

These women tend to be young women, even minors, who are deceived, recruited, transported and forced to practice prostitution against their will. To

¹Palermo Protocol 2000. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

this end, the traffickers employ violence and rape, isolation and reprisals against the women's families, as well as death threats or blackmail, deprivation of freedom or of food and sleep, the use of drugs and the removal of their documentation, among many other actions. The women may be sold and resold among the traffickers themselves to serve as prostitutes in the street, clubs or in apartments. The victims' lack of training or skills (since the traffickers usually capture the more vulnerable girls), along with their ignorance of the language and their deception regarding their rights in the host country, prevents them from asking for help to escape their captivity (Ombudsman, 2012; Meneses, 2014).

Trafficked women exhibit many problems of physical and mental health as a result of continued sexual and psychological abuse. Being an extremely vulnerable population, they may suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse problems, anxiety, depression, panic attacks, post-traumatic stress disorder, eating disorders and malnutrition (Kliner and Stroud, 2012). Compared to other crime victims, trafficked women are less stable and have more severe traumas and greater health needs, given that they have been subjected to extreme physical circumstances, including clandestine abortions (Gajic-Veljanoski and Steward, 2007).

There is no doubt that such violence is a traumatic experience that is difficult to recover from, as it involves prolonged exposure to a terrifying situation. Their identity has been profoundly damaged and altered, and their recovery entails rediscovering the meaning of life, in a safe context, and building new human relations (Meneses, 2014).

Three types of needs have been identified in Trafficking victims (May and Johns, 2011): a) short-term needs: in other words, recently freed, these people require shelter, safety and protection from their exploiters; they need their basic needs covered (clothing, toiletries, etc.); to overcome language barriers; basic medical care (physical and gynecological examination); they may require legal advice and assistance; (b) medium-term needs, aimed at their recovery, overcoming the trauma they experienced, stabilizing their lives, creating a comfortable situation and building confidence; c) long-term needs, aimed at establishing their independence and autonomy through: skills for coping with everyday life (as they do not know the routines of the country they are in), linguistic competence, education and preparation for employment, permanent housing, family reunification or repatriation. Ultimately, their recovery requires the restitution of their human and basic rights.

The victims come from societies and countries that are culturally very different and so their recovery requires a double cultural effort. On the one hand, the victims will pass through a process of adaptation to the culture of the country in which they have been exploited, if they do not wish to return to their countries of origin upon being rescued. On the other hand, the resources and professionals at their service must adapt to the sociocultural systems of reference in order to better understand their responses and needs. Therefore, the cultural dimension is involved in the whole rescue and recovery process of

these women, and is essential to the success and social integration of the victims (McDonald and Timoshkina, 2004).

The purpose of this study is to determine the needs of the victims of Trafficking for sexual exploitation in Spain, in order to more adequately establish the course of their rescue and recovery. More specifically, it is necessary to know what kind of interventions and services are needed to restore the dignity and human rights stolen from these people.

Methods

Investigating a social phenomenon that is an illegal activity and in which the victims have been raped, assaulted and traumatized is not easy. Therefore, it is difficult to apply traditional data collection techniques, especially when the information is obtained directly from the victims. Two types of investigative techniques have been used for two different types of recipients.

Firstly, a questionnaire was sent to all Spanish agencies that work with Trafficking victims throughout the country (approximately 60 agencies), that are present in one or more Spanish provinces. They were all sent a questionnaire with open questions about the needs they had identified in the victims during their work with them (detection, identification, assessment of needs, intervention, difficulties and obstacles, evaluation and proposals for action). 52 questionnaires were obtained and were introduced in the Nvivo v.10 software programme for a qualitative analysis, given that the answers were fully open, and not predetermined.

Secondly, information was collected from 22 women who were victims of Trafficking, aged between 17 and 35 years, and who came from Latin American countries, Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan countries. Two types of investigative techniques were used to compile their needs: individual interviews and group interviews. As they are victims who have lived in a situation of slavery and have therefore experienced trauma in their lives, the considerations described by the WHO for these circumstances have been applied (Zimmerman and Watts, 2003) and, following the ethical recommendations, the welfare of the victims has been prioritized over the investigation. Willingness to participate, the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality, together with the information offered about the objectives of study, were the basic instruments used for inviting them to participate in the study. Contact with the women was made through NGOs working with victims of Human Trafficking for sexual exploitation in four areas of the country (Andalusia, Catalonia, Asturias and Balearic Islands). Subsequently, an interpretative categorical analysis was made from the conversations obtained, guided by the study objectives and the emerging issues, again using the Nvivo computer programme software.

Results

Using the analysis of the questionnaires sent by the NGOs, the needs detected by the members of these organizations were identified and we can divide them into three stages of intervention: the first phase was detecting and identifying those women who served as prostitutes through coercion, or not voluntarily, as a result of a Trafficking situation. The second was the rescue phase, providing safety and refuge to the Trafficked women. And finally, the third stage was their inclusion in the social and health services in order to recover from the situation they had experienced, and/or be repatriated to their country of origin, if they so requested.

Detection and Identification of Trafficked Women

A large number of Spanish NGOs provide information and advisory services to women working as prostitutes in the street, in apartments and hostess bars or clubs. Most of the women they addressed were foreign and the presence of Spanish was practically nil. The main service that these agencies offered was health care, supplying condoms, information and leaflets about various social and legal resources. The degree of access to the places of prostitution that the NGOs travelled to in order to provide their services varied greatly. In those places where there was coercion and a lot of control over the women who worked as prostitutes by the owners or managers of the premises or apartments, the NGOs could only perform a very brief and one-off intervention, and sometimes access was even made impossible. The involvement of the owners of the premises or apartments in the trafficking was also highly variable. Those that allowed the NGO members access to the premises did not appear to be involved, while those that prevented or obstructed their access had something to hide.

The NGOs were guided by a series of indications that allowed them to identify those women who had been coerced. The following are the most significant of these indications: if the women were monitored at all times, if they had money, if they could freely enter and leave the establishment where the prostitution occurred, if they had their documentation, if they could choose their customers or use protection in the sexual practices, if they could talk and no one spoke for them, if they had a permanent attitude of mistrust or gave learned responses. An additional problem was the ignorance of the language, which prevented them striking up a direct communication with members of the NGO without intermediaries. If there was a suspicion that a woman might be a victim of trafficking, she was approached more closely, without raising the suspicions of the prostitution establishment owner, in order to identify her and confirm the circumstances of her coercion.

When the women were informed that forced prostitution and trafficking was a crime in Spain and in Europe, they did not acknowledge themselves as victims of these crimes, due to:

- their fear of the traffickers as a result of the threats or attacks received from them, or what they might do to their relatives in their countries of origin, or their children.
- the excessive movements and transfers to different places where prostitution was practised, which prevented them from creating bonds or reporting to the authorities,
- the lack of a safe environment of trust in which they could communicate their situation,
- the misleading information that the traffickers had given them about the country in which they found themselves, and
- the relationship they had with the traffickers, many of them from the same country, to whom the women were grateful for bringing them to Europe, especially those women who came from outside the European Union.

However, despite their captivity, most of the victims did not report or disclose the situation in which they lived. They would only do so in cases where the assaults and rapes were continuous and they feared for their life, having reached an extreme situation.

Ultimately, the NGO professionals involved needed to have a good knowledge of the indicators for identifying the victims and had to establish a relationship of trust with them, which would allow them to discuss the coercion and captivity they suffered and help them report it if they wanted to. The victims could only be rescued and protected if they were in a position of closeness and trust.

Rescue, Protection and Security

When the closeness and trust had been obtained, and the evidence of coercion was clear, the NGOs could proceed, together with the victims, to plan the moment of rescue. The women had to assess which was the best moment so that their lives would not be endangered, and the NGOs had to take all possible precautions to avoid any harm to the victim. If not properly planned, the contact and communication established with the women might be discovered, and they would be attacked and moved to another place, and all trace of them would be lost. This assessment of risks had to be carried out with the women and the rescue launched when they felt secure and capable of carrying it out.

Some women revealed to us that the rescue should take place within a few weeks of being in the country, in other words, no later than a month, so that the consequences would have the least possible impact on their lives. The more time they were forced to practice prostitution, the more they adapted to this situation as a way of survival and therefore it would become more complex in the future for them to abandon prostitution and recover from the consequences of the Trafficking.

When the rescue took place, it was necessary to assess whether or not police intervention was required, and whether the woman should be moved to another place where the traffickers could not find her. However, moving to

another town or city of the country was not always easy or possible, unless the NGO had branches in various areas of Spain and the public social resources were transferable. The administrative demarcation of public resources in Spain makes it difficult for someone to receive assistance in a place other than that in which they reside. Finally, the members of the NGO should not make promises or generate expectations that could not be met. Whilst it is true that in Spain it is easier for Trafficking victims to obtain residence and work permits, this process requires going through the police and courts, and most victims did not dare to do it.

Once rescued, the women first needed their basic needs covered and, secondly, to feel safe and protected. This was the first step to their recovery, comprising various interventions and resources.

Resources and Health and Social Services

From the information given to us by the Spanish NGOs, we could identify two types of needs and resources for Trafficking victims. On the one hand, those they all required, as a result of having been a victim and rescued from the traffickers; and, on the other hand, the specific resources or actions required to treat specific circumstances. In other words, individual needs related to the cultural origin or specific characteristics of the victims.

Needs common to all victims.- As we already mentioned, following their rescue from the places of prostitution where these women had been held captive, they need:

- a) material resources such as lodging, food, toiletries and clothing;
- b) medical attention, especially gynaecological, to assess their condition of health and restore it. In some cases, they may be suffering from an alcohol or cocaine dependency, because these are the two psychoactive substances most used in contexts of prostitution. Many difficulties existed, depending on the Spanish province the women were in. In recent years, the Spanish Government has restricted Spain's illegal immigrant population's access to health resources.
- c) legal advice in order to report the crime to the authorities if they wished, and assistance with applications for the documentation that would allow them to legally reside in Spain, by obtaining their residence and work permit. This need turned out very complicated to meet, as the NGOs revealed, because Spanish immigration policy greatly restricts the award of this documentation. Close collaboration with the police was required in order to speed up the acquisition of these documents, if they were awarded.
- d) guarantee of safety, protection and the confidentiality of their identity so they could not be located by the traffickers. Difficulties also existed in this aspect. To maintain their safety, the women could not contact any work colleagues or compatriots

who were related to the traffickers, because this could allow them to be located. Furthermore, they had to abandon prostitution, thus eliminating the only source of income that allowed them to send money to their families or children. They felt captive in freedom, as they had the freedom to enter or exit the refuge, but had to take precautions, including being accompanied in order to avoid discovery and recapture. This was a very distressing situation for them as it represented an extension of their captivity.

- e) psychological support to overcome states of stress, anxiety or depression that erupted in some of them once they were freed. They also needed to re-establish new social relations of trust. Amidst all this, a gender focus and empowerment approach were necessary, in which the women took their own decisions and the members of the NGOs did not do it for them.
- f) except for those who came from Latin America, who already had a command of the Spanish language, the women had to learn the local language so they could better communicate and subsequently obtain a job and independence from the NGO.

Specific requirements.- There are few resources in Spain for women with special needs: e.g. who have a disability, suffer significant psychological or psychiatric problems; have small children, or are minors. Special shelters were required in these cases, because the system for the protection of Spanish minors is not prepared to take on girls and adolescents who are victims of Trafficking, which requires very different protective and safety measures.

The care services for these women require that a series of characteristics be built into the philosophy and mode of intervention: an understanding of the women's cultural codes and meanings; an emphasis on the victims' skills and abilities for coping (resilience) and a heightened awareness of the consequences of the traumatic situation they had experienced.

Finally, for those women that decided to return to their countries of origin, both the NGOs and the Spanish authorities had to coordinate with the authorities of their country of origin to ensure that their return was safe and that once they arrived in their country they would receive the support they needed, and that the protection and safety of her and her family in her country was arranged so that she would not be Trafficked again. The NGOs told of some cases in which the repatriation had taken place without adequate safety measures being put in place for the women, who were recaptured and coerced by the traffickers. This means that, if the member countries of the European Union truly want to stop trafficking in Europe and worldwide, they must demand greater protection and safety for the victims in their countries of origin when they are repatriated, as well as programmes and measures for the prevention of trafficking.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our results have confirmed many of the needs described in the international studies, and as well as those in the few studies carried out concerning human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Spain (Gajic-Veljanoski and Steward, 2007; Zimmerman et al, 2008; Oram et al, 2012; Klinier and Stroud, 2012; Ombudsman, 2012; Meneses and Uroz, 2014). It has been verified that the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation displayed significant needs concerning their physical, psychological and social health. Given that the trafficking networks operate internationally, the mode of action is similar and the consequences for the women who have lived under these circumstances also tend to be similar. We should also point out that the cultural factors and previous experiences in their countries of origin offer a greater or lesser strategy for coping in the trafficking situation and for recovering from the consequences.

The most beneficial model of intervention when working with trafficking victims would be one that focuses on the trauma or slavery experienced, from a gender perspective, the principle of citizenship, interculturality and the restoration of the human rights that have been stolen (Fallot and Harris, 2004; May and Johns, 2011). More specifically, a Trauma-based intervention involves a) giving priority to the physical and emotional safety of the victim; b) addressing the problems they present; c) using the philosophy of victim empowerment to guide the work; d) maximizing the choices of the survivors and the control of the services that attend to them; e) emphasizing the resilience of the victims; f) minimizing and counteracting the experience of the trauma; g) adapting all interventions to their sociocultural backgrounds.

The starting point for designing the interventions should be the people who are the victims, without prejudices or preconceived notions, and normalizing their relationship with other people and the community where they reside. Rebuilding their life involves learning to trust again and creating new social relations. Consequently, the actions start with and from the victims, allowing them a voice and vote in all the decisions that concern them. Aid programmes should encourage the setting up of self-help and support groups among these people, which will facilitate support among peers, sharing their progress and difficulties.

Any social intervention programme must be coordinated with other institutions, professionals and resources that the victims may need, and a network of collaboration must be developed and maintained, because only in this way will the intervention be most effective. In these cases, special care must be taken with confidentiality. On the other hand, the interventions, services, resources and programmes must be updated in line with any changes in the Trafficking phenomenon, to suitably adjust these to the needs and reality of the victims.

Finally, the need to raise awareness in society calls for the creation of programmes to raise awareness, especially aimed at persons that may have

direct or indirect contact with victims of trafficking, such as the customers of prostitution.

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