

LASZLO, EVA PhD

eva.laszlo@ubbcluj.ro
Babes-Bolyai University
lecturer

ROTH, MARIA PhD

maria.roth@ubbcluj.ro
Babes-Bolyai University
professor emeritus

Seven faces of victimhood: towards a typology of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation



ABSTRACT

Trafficking in human beings is one of the phenomena of our society with serious consequences which, understandably, gives rise to urgent prevention and treatment measures. The main goal of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of the process of victimization. During the analysis of the interview with 36 victims¹ we aim to map the vulnerability factors that act as markers for recruiters using different recruitment strategies, emphasis is also placed on the dynamics and environmental characteristics of the relationship between victim and offender. The study has been conducted in Romania, a country which in the last 20 years has been one of the major suppliers to the European sex trafficking (EUROSTAT, 2015). In the analysis, carried out within the theoretical framework of victimology, vulnerability was assessed on the basis of 3 main categories of analysis (the motivated trafficker, the absence of capable guardians and the victim's attractiveness) and the dynamic interaction between them. The results outline seven

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clusters of victims: 1. victims in need; 2. nearby victims; 3. runaways from domestic violence; 4. social innovators; 5. abandoned, lost and displaced victims; 6. rebels; 7. the helpers (the risky altruists). The conclusion includes suggestions for intervention and prevention of victimisation.

KEYWORDS

human trafficking, sexual exploitation, victimology, typology, vulnerability

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INTRODUCTION

Falling in the hands of traffickers, as well as buying and selling people is not a new phenomenon, but its global proportions, methods and profits have become stunning (UNODC 2014). “Increasingly human trafficking is a business, often controlled by organized crime trying to obtain maximum profit from what they consider to be their “property”, the foremost principles governing their actions being “low risk-high profit” (ANITP 2013. 5). Trafficking for sexual exploitation is one of the worst forms of violence against women, with severe consequences. Gender-disaggregated data show that the vast majority of all identified victims are female: 70% worldwide (UNODC, 2014) and 80% at the EU level (EUROSTAT 2015); while 97% worldwide (UNODC, 2014) and 95% in the EU (EUROSTAT 2015) of the sexually exploited victims are female.

Against the backdrop of opening borders from Eastern to Western Europe, and in spite of the international cooperation and political conventions (*Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime – 2000*; Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings – 2005; Directive 2011/36 of the European Parliament and of the Council of Europe (2011) on preventing and combating trafficking in persons and protecting its victims which replaces Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA – 2011), the scope and scale of trafficking from Eastern Europe indicates the failure of social policies to support vulnerable people and populations (ANINOŞANU et. al. 2012; FLEŞNER 2010; ANITP, 2007).

Based on official data, Romania is one of major suppliers of victims of trafficking among the EU countries, recent data showing the highest rates of victims of trafficking (TALLMADGE – GITTER 2017, EUROSTAT 2015; UNODC 2014). Recently it has been identified as both a destination and a transit country (EUROSTAT, 2015; UNODC, 2014). This double role arises from the geographical position of Romania, a country situated on the Eastern borders of the EU, on the routes towards the more attractive Central and Western Europe on one hand, and as a result of the vulnerability of Romanian young people of the region, affected by the transition to the market economy, on the other. From the end of the 1990s, to the early 2000s several international organizations such as the IOM (International Organization for Migration) and UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) and other non-governmental organizations had created specialized services for human trafficking victims. Later, special anti-crime structures were established such as Ministry of Home Affairs through the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP) founded in 2006 and the Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT), founded in 2004. The National Agency against Human Trafficking has 15 regional centres and is responsible for the coordination, evaluation, and monitoring of the implementation of trafficking policies, as well as for training professional staff and for awareness raising campaigns (ANINOȘANU et al. 2012).

A significant part of research examines the vulnerability factors of victimization of sexual exploitation. The systematic reviews of these identify the following factors: young age, belonging to an ethnic or racial minority, low socioeconomic status, childhood (mainly sexual) abuse experiences, family dysfunction, homelessness (running away or being thrown away from home), drug or substance abuse, juvenile justice and child protection involvements, mental problems or disabilities, poverty, risky friendships, school relationships, school drop-outs (Mapp, 2022, Jaeckl, S., & Laughon, 2020, Franchino-Olsen, 2019). The literature also shows that individual factors tend to cluster (Twins, 2019) and their effects are accentuated by the interaction with the offender (the relationship between the offender and the victim, the recruitment strategy used by the offender, the reaction of the environment).

Most of the previous studies on this topic in Romanian context captured social vulnerability factors in terms of: poverty, unemployment, low education level, homelessness, migration, family violence and drug abuse (ANINOȘANU et al. 2016; ANINOȘANU et al. 2012; FLEȘNER 2010; ARPINTE – CREȚU 2007; GAVRIL – TĂMAȘ 2009; UNICEF 2005; EL-CHEKHEH et al. 2004; SALVAȚI COPIII 2003; LĂZĂROIU – ALEXANDRU 2003). Some studies focused on revealing the phases of the phenomenon: recruitment, transportation, exploitation, eventual escape, and recovery of the victims of trafficking (LĂZĂROIU – ALEXANDRU 2003; ANINOȘANU et al. 2012). Other studies analyzed the criminal aspects and formulated recommendations to reduce criminal access to the victims, to unravel networks of trafficking, to reduce corruption, to raise availability of support services, and to improve training of involved staff (ROSENBERG – LĂZĂROIU – TYURYUKANOVA 2004; ANITP 2011; ANGHEL 2012).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

In order to differentiate between and describe categories of victims and their vulnerability factors, this research builds on victimology theories and victim-typology studies and is rooted in the understanding of the social and psychological complexity of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Defined as the study of the relationship between an injured person and an offender, victimology has to take into consideration the characteristics of both individuals involved including their environments and their relationships. Therefore, typology research on victimisation in human trafficking for sexual exploitation has to take an integrative approach.

Typologies help in the identification of victims' needs and the design of specific treatment. If oversimplified, they may harm the victims' needs (BRUNOVSKIS – SURTEES 2007). The field of victimology parallels that of criminology, accordingly, typologies in victimisation can help build up criminology typologies, and altogether can contribute to the development of preventive policies and services, better tailored to the needs of the victims.

One theory looking for individual differences that could lead to increased risks for trafficking is the lifestyle exposure theory launched back in the 1970s (HINDELANG – GOFFREDSON – GAROFALO 1978). It states that an individual's lifestyle is the critical factor that determines demographic differences in the likelihood of criminal victimization. Lifestyle is defined by the authors as routine daily activities, both vocational (work, school, housekeeping etc.) and leisure activities (HINDELANG – GOTTFREDSON – GAROFALO 1978). According to this point of view, persons with certain lifestyle and social expectations confronted with obstacles, are easier than others to be channelled in the traps built for them by predators/ traffickers (MIETHE – MEIER 1994). Lifestyles arise from routine activities that increase the probability of people belonging to specific social groups, located in specific locations to interact with others in particular ways and to be driven towards victimisation of traffickers. This theory points to the circumstantially patterned nature of victimology. The philosophy of free will as well as individual examples contradict this perspective, but erroneously imply that victimization can be limited to "accidental encounters", which, in turn, is disproved by research in victimisation situations (GABOR – MATA 2004).

The theory of routine activity developed by COHEN and FELSON (1979) added three conditions for a crime to take place: the motivated offender, the congruent target (vulnerable, attractive and accessible to the perpetrator) and the absence of capable guardians. In order to commit the crime, the motivated offender must come into contact with the target or the victim in a temporal-spatial context where there is no protection. The co-existence – simultaneously in time and space – of a motivated criminal, an attractive (adequate for the criminal purposes) target, and the lack of supervision or security represent the opportunity for a trafficking crime. From the perspective of the prevention of human trafficking, a major importance must be given to profiling the target's attractiveness and her lack of supervision and protection, as their combination, in the presence of a trafficker, increase the crime rate in trafficking women for sexual exploitation (DUGAN – APEL 2005).

As mentioned by DUGAN & APEL (2005), the routine activity and lifestyle patterns create a "criminal opportunity structure", which facilitates the contact between the potential criminal and the victim – such as proximity and exposure. According to this combined conceptualization, there are four basic factors that contribute to victimization: target's attractiveness, proximity

between targets and criminals, risk exposure and lack of surveillance. Based on this perspective, trafficking phenomena may be depicted using the concepts below:

1. *Target Attractiveness* is defined by COHEN, KUEGEL and LAND (1981) as a symbolic or material desire for the person or property identified by the potential criminals.
2. *Proximity to Crime* refers to the physical distance or closeness between the victim's home and the area with a high crime rate, where there is a relatively large number of criminals ('hot spots'), or other 'dangerous' areas, such as highways (criminals can easily and rapidly disappear from the crime scene).
3. *Exposure to crime* refers to the visibility and accessibility of the victims in a certain place and time. An increase in the victim's visibility increases the risk of victimisation. Many research studies showed that the risk of victimization increases when the environment is marked by delinquent lifestyle and the situational context overlaps (SCHRECK et al., 2002; SCHECK et al., 2006). According to routine and lifestyle theory, the most accessible, visible and convenient targets for criminals are those with whom they spend a lot of time (SCHRECK – STEWART – FISHER 2006).
4. *Capable Guardianship* is expressed through the efficiency or capability to protect or prevent victimization in the case of persons or belongings (the existence of an alarm, locks, grates, etc.). Security can also be social (ensured by other people) or physical (geographic location, ensured by special equipment, architectural characteristics, or positioning). According to Cohen and Felson, competent/poor surveillance can be described by two aspects: surveillance duty, which refers to accessibility, monitoring and the existence of someone who observes and can detect problematic behaviours. and intervenes when a possible criminals about to commit a crime (HOLLIS-PEEL et al. 2011).

LIMITATIONS, CRITIQUES AND ADDITIONS TO LIFESTYLE THEORIES

The routine activity theory according to which a target is chosen based on observable opportunities combined with a focus on the victim's characteristics support the idea of a rational choice as the premise both for committing the crime, as well as for preventing the victimization by the victims themselves. However, according to DUGAN and APEL (2005), these approaches have a tendency to make the potential victims responsible for taking proactive preventing measures in order to reduce the degree of exposure including messages such as: each person must make sure that they are not 'in the wrong place, at the wrong time'. Such actions suggest avoiding public places and behaving and looking as unattractive as possible to criminals. JENSEN and BROWNFIELD (1986) define the model of criminal victimization opportunities as a passive theory, because the variations of victimization are explained exclusively through the factors that make them vulnerable. Therefore, one of the major weaknesses of the routine activity theory is identified as the model with the tendency to blame and make the victims responsible for what happens to them. We have chosen the routine activity theory according to which a target is chosen based on observable opportunities combined with a focus on the victim's characteristics because

it supports the idea of a rational choice as the premise both for committing the crime, as well as for preventing the victimization by the victims themselves.

The theory of opportunity that includes both lifestyle and routine activity offers consistent explanation for committing infractions that do not imply a personal relationship between criminals and victims, and does not provide explanations for the violent acts that occur among acquaintances, family members (violence between partners) or crimes against young people and children (FINKELHOR – ASIDIAN 1996; DUGAN – APEL 2005; FINKELHOR 2007; 2008). According to DUGAN and APEL (2005) in cases of crimes committed by acquaintances or family members, attempts to change victims' routine activities for their protection can have an unwanted effect, as it can lead to retaliatory violence by family members. After the completion of a research study on violence between partners, DUGAN, ROSENFELD and NAGIN (2003) emphasize that criminological policies must take into consideration strategy variations and risks of victimization through retaliatory violence.

Studying the victimization of adolescents and children, FINKELHOR (2008) argues that the approaches in regards to lifestyle concepts and routine activities are not sufficient in explaining cases when the offenders are acquaintances or family members. Consequently, they try to combine the results from studies of child abuse with the lifestyle theory realizing the need to revise the concepts and elaborate the comprehensive dynamic model of victimization. In the cases of abuse committed by acquaintances, concepts of surveillance, exposure and proximity must not be seen as aspects of routine activity, but as environmental factors that expose or protect the persons from victimization. Thus, a child that is in a situation that poses a risk of sexual abuse due to violent and negligent parents cannot be considered a consequence of the child's lifestyle or routine activity. Certain personal characteristics become risks without being linked to lifestyle or routine activity (for example, being female, the state of emotional deprivation in one's own family, etc.), only because these are characteristics congruent with the needs or psychological vulnerabilities of the potential criminal (FINKELHOR 2008). Therefore, FINKELHOR (2007, 2008) talks about a "congruent target", which means the aforementioned congruence between the needs, motivations of the criminal and the characteristics of the victim, who can also be described through three subcategories:

1. *Target vulnerability*: some characteristics of the victims enhance the risks of victimization because they may compromise the victims' ability to resist victimization and/or enhance the probability of becoming an easy target for criminals (for example in the cases of victimization of people with all sorts of disabilities).
2. *Target gratification*: certain characteristics of the potential victims become risks because their qualities, abilities, belongings are wanted by the potential criminal, and he/she therefore tries to obtain or use them. For example, for heterosexual male sex-offenders target gratification is represented by females or, in case of paedophiles, the targets are children.
3. *Target antagonism*: this refers to situations with an induced state of anger, jealousy, or destructive impulses of the criminal against the target. This is often the case of aggressions against targets belonging to certain ethnic or sexual minorities, or abuse inflicted by parents on children (for example, a crying baby), cases of bullying etc. (FINKELHOR 2008).
4. The concept of "congruence" can be used as complementary to the lifestyle and the routine activities perspective, but in varying importance from one type of infraction

to another. In relatively impersonal situations (street or school attacks) or when the criminal acts are committed by a family member with violent behaviour, the victim is chosen based on proximity. An alcoholic stepfather may involve his stepdaughter in prostitution as she is 'close at hand', or a trafficker may randomly choose a victim in a club. There are different types of acts and violent attacks in which the model of the congruent target offers a satisfying explanation (FINKELHOR 2008).

5. In our present study, we adapted the opportunity theories, as described in COHEN and FELSON's theory of routine activities (1979), and the lifestyle exposure theory of HINDELANG, GOFFREDSON and GAROFALO (1978) with the dynamic theory of comprehensive vulnerability by Finkelhor and his collaborators (FINKELHOR – ASIDIAN 1996; FINKELHOR 2007; 2008) to situations of criminal victimization for sex trafficking (interpersonal, sexual, organized crime). Thus, we build our model of typology on the concepts of the motivated offender, the congruent target and the lack of competent guardianship (see figure 1).

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

The general objective of this paper is to contribute to the conceptualization of the phenomenon of human trafficking for sexual exploitation by capturing the heterogeneity of characteristics and risk factors and by providing a typology of victims. In practice we seek to contribute to the improvement of prevention of victimization, as well as identification and assistance of the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

The interviews were conducted with 36 interviewees in a total of 44 interview sessions. All the participants in this research were beneficiaries of psycho-social and legal assistance programmes offered by the organizations forming the partnership; were monitored as victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation and cooperated with the justice system.

In order to capture the large variety of thoughts and feelings of the victims, but also to allow for the smooth comparison of data transcripts among interview operators, the researchers have opted for a semi-structured in-depth interview guide, conducted face to face. All the interviews were carried out after a first conversation between researcher or a counsellor and victims in order to make sure that the victim was in a stable emotional state, capable of discussing her feelings and the facts of victimization, willing to cooperate with the interviewer and able to sign the consent sheet. The interview guide was centred on the following topics: the victim's personal history before trafficking (narrative part); characterization of themselves and their situation at the moment of recruitment; the way they came to be trafficked; the escape; and future plans.

Interviews were conducted in 10 cities (Cluj, Turda, Bucharest, Timisoara, Medias, Alba Iulia, Târgu-Mures, Satu-Mare, Giurgiu and Galati) throughout the country. The locations of the interviews were the counselling rooms or the offices of NGOs or of state institutions.

Demographic data of the interviewed persons are presented in Table 1 and 2. As data show 2/3 of them were ethnic Romanians, 27% Roma and less than 1% Hungarians. Regarding their age at the time of recruitment half of them were recruited as minors (under 18 years old) with 6 of them younger than 15 years of age. Two minors and two adults reported that they experienced a second recruitment. At the time of the interview 86% were adults.

Figure 1.
Research model: Dimensions of Victim Typology

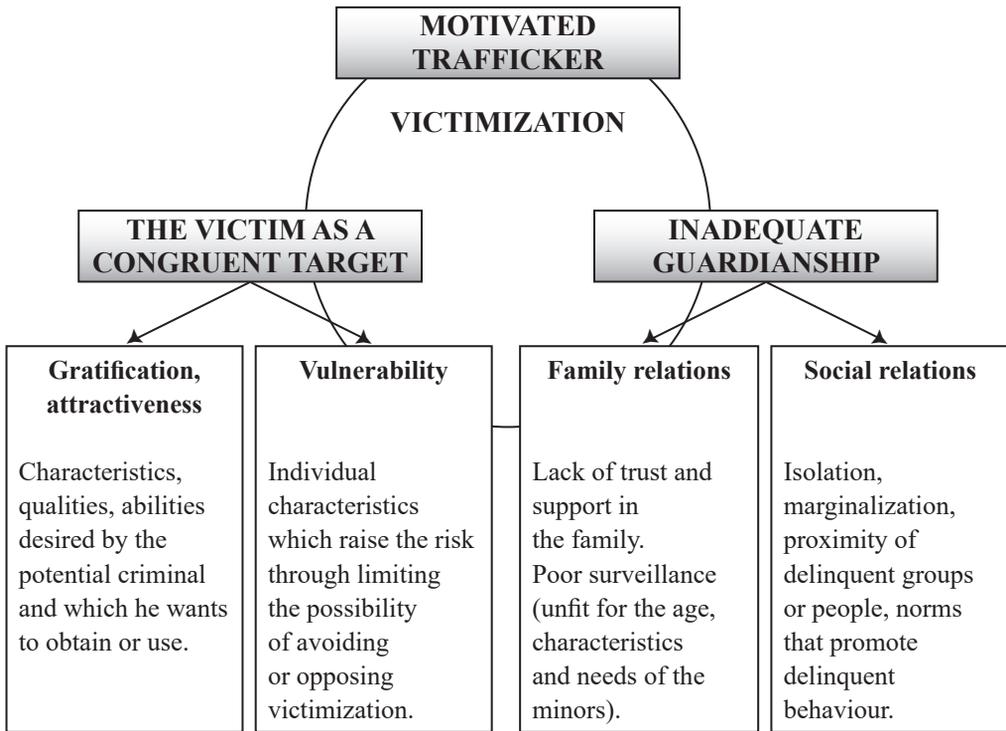


Table 1.
Ethnicity, age, number of interviews and educational level
of the interviewed victims

Ethnicity	N	Age	1st recruitment/N	2ndrecruitment/N	Educational level	N
Romanian	24	12-15	6	1	No schooling at all	2
Roma	10	16-17	12	1	1- 4 grades	3
Hungarian	2	18-20	8	1	5-8 grades	12
		21-33	8	1	9-12 grades	16
					Vocational post-high-school	1
					College	2
Total	36		34	4		36

Table 2.
Destination country, location and period of operation of the interviewed victims

Destination country	1st trafficking experience /N	2nd trafficking experiences (retrafficking)/N	Place of exploitation	N	Period of exploitation	N
Romania	14	4	On the street	12	Less than 1 month	7
Italy	7	2	In clubs	7	1-3 months	4
Spain	4	1	Apartment	6	4-6 months	6
France	2		Customers' houses	2	8-12 months	9
England	1		Street and apartment	2	13-42 months	8
Austria	1		Street and hotel	2	Not clear	2
Switzerland	1		Bar	1		
Greece	1		Hotel	1		
Ireland	1		Shop windows	1		
The Netherlands	1		Not clear	2		
Sweden	1					
Germany	0	1				
Turkey	0	1				
Attempt	2					
Total	36	9		36		36

Regarding their level of education 5 victims had graduated from primary school, and another 12 victims graduated from secondary school. Several victims reported dropping out of school (mostly high schools) because they have been trafficked. Countries where victims were exploited reflect the variety shown in the official reports (ANITP 2011; 2012; 2013; EUROSTAT 2015) with the most frequent destination of trafficking being Italy and Spain. More than one third - 39% - of the victims had been exploited within Romania. Looking at the duration of the trafficking experience of victims seven people were exploited for less than one month, four of them up to 3 months, six between 4 and 6 months, and most of them for a period longer than half a year, of whom nine at least 8 months and up to one year, while eight people from 1 to 3.5 years. According to the number of trafficking experiences, interviewees revealed 2 trafficking attempts, 3 cases of re-victimization (victims escaped the trafficking situation and were re-captured by traffickers) and 5 cases of multiple sales, with victims who never managed to escape between two sales.

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF CATEGORIZATION

The transcripts of the interviews were subjected to a thematic analysis. Data were analysed using the software programme called Qualitative Data Miner Analysis 3 (QDA Miner 3). The advantage of using this software consists in the possibility of analyzing large amounts of data and in the rigor and transparency of the analysis.²

Following the recommendations of CHENAIL (2008), data analysis involved categorization, summarization and data reconstruction with the aim to highlight key issues and convert them into representative models. Segmentation and categorization of data were carried out through thematic coding. This consisted in identifying potentially interesting events, features, phrases, behaviours, or stages of a process and differentiating them by using labels (BENAQUISTO 2008). The process of analysis focused on relevant issues related to the research topics as well as on the relationship and the intensity of relations between certain categories. Regarding the codes used in the analysis, these were generated based on the aforementioned literature and were supplemented and amended by generating new codes as they emerged from the texts in a continuous process.

Narratives of victims grounded the interpretation of data according to the comprehensive dynamic theory of vulnerability, as developed by Finkelhor and his collaborators (FINKELHOR – ASIDIAN 1996; FINKELHOR 2007, 2008). The cluster analysis we performed revealed seven victim types whose characteristics were described using the concepts of opportunity theory (described above): the victim's relation to the trafficker as motivated offender, attractiveness, and vulnerabilities of the victims, as well as family and institutional/social relations that define guardianship and protection.

I. Victims who need the social, material and emotional support offered by the trafficker can be described as the group of homeless victims, with mental health issues or other illnesses, without the experience of positive attachment relationships during their lifetime, whose interpersonal networks are characterized by abusive and neglectful relationships. Persons from this group did not benefit from institutional support and have low level education. They lack life-skills and report high degrees of exposure to crime, substance abuse, and risky sexual behaviour. Their attractiveness is their vulnerability. Nobody watches over them, they have a lifestyle paved with risks, which creates large opportunities for the influence traffickers.

“I was raised by my aunt. But she beat me and harassed me in every way. After that, I wanted to leave, I gathered my papers and came to the streets. I slept outside during winter and so on. Then I came to Alba, I was still sleeping on the streets and in the train station. (...) Once, a woman came (...). She said ‘I’ll dress you, I’ll feed you, you’ll wash up, take a bath, I’ll give you clothes’. After that, she took me home. (...) After that, she forced me ‘Go, or I’ll beat you’ and out of fear, I went with that man” (victim, 21 years old, recruited at age 18)

In this case the motivated trafficker's actions were usually connected to offering food, shelter and the opportunity for personal hygiene.

² The main issues identified were based on the research topics and on the theoretical concepts used. 7 sub-themes were identified, 11 operational categories by using 117 codes.

II. Nearby victims, exploited in their own home. In this group there are minors exploited by their own parents/tutors and adolescents or young women exploited by husbands or life partners. In the literature on child trafficking, situations where the trafficker, or at least one of them, is a family member of the child victim are referred to as family-controlled trafficking (MAPP 2022). In the case of the two minors, the mothers had abandoned the girls and left them in the care of the men who turned out to be traffickers (one of them was legally appointed as the minor's guardian). In the case of the women exploited by their romantic partners, the relationships began when they were teenagers (16-17 years of age) and which was perceived as a love relationship by the interviewees. Before the exploitation they had lived together for a period of 1.5 to 6 years, while their partners were becoming more and more physically and emotionally violent. These dynamics in the relationship between victims and perpetrators is well-known from the literature of domestic violence and child sexual abuse (DANK 2011; REID 2010). The victims' vulnerabilities are multiplied by the burdens of ambivalence towards their exploiter, their basic mistrust of other persons, and their inability to believe in change for a better future.

"I was 16 at the time (...) He was loving, gentle and so on. Well, alright, I fell in love with him, I loved him and maybe that's how he persuaded me. (...) We moved in together. After a while, he began to change completely, he no longer let me visit my mother, only once in a blue moon (...), he was taking away my keys. He was coming home and simply got angry for no reason (...). He beat me, but not just couple of slaps (...) he enjoyed making me suffer (...). It was pure terror. In December, his alleged cousin from Spain came (...) and we were to leave with her, so that I would work there." (victim, 18 years old, recruited at age 16)

The trafficker here is the familial aggressor involved in exploiting other women or girls or in committing other crimes: stealing, robbing, and aggression towards others. Here, the victim is an easily accessible target for the trafficker. Based on the information gathered from the interviews, we could not establish whether the intention of exploiting the partner existed from the beginning, or it appeared along the way. Some of the victims came from underworld families, where one part of the family members were exploiters (men and older women) and the rest were being exploited (children and younger women).

"(...) after that I understood that all women, aunts, nieces there... were prostitutes... the grandmother and the mother were the organizers." (victim, 20 years old, recruited at age 17)

III. The group of runaways from domestic violence is formed by underage and adult victims similar to the girls and women presented above, with the most important difference being that the victims are no longer in contact with their family members, who have no connections with the trafficker's network. The lives of such victims were also marked by family violence, but they struggled and somehow managed to escape these circumstances. During their risky journey they ended up being recruited for trafficking. For this category of runaways it is guardianship that is totally lacking. Generally speaking, these victims' violent family relationships remain invisible for the social care and protection system, so they try to find a solution themselves.

"Well, I did not grow up surrounded by love. Those two were the type of couple always arguing, and arguing... that is how I grew up. I was always hiding (...), crying, so I never had a positive view on things... I never received love (...). My father was a very bad man... because he also harassed

me... harassed, so to speak... and when I told my mother, she said that my father was only playing (...). I felt, that I had to run away, no matter where (...).” (victim, 21 years old, recruited at age 16)

In this situation, the interviewed young women dream of somebody they can have a positive experience with and change their lives for the better. In the absence of any other support means, their aspirations to escape and gain freedom on their own increased the likelihood of the presence of an interested trafficker. The interested trafficker is successful in acting as a ‘trusted friend’, who approaches the victim by offering a convenient ‘job’ and emotional support.

IV. The social innovators, who are dreamers, aspiring for a better life. LĂZĂROIU and ALEXANDRU (2003) use the term “social innovator” to reflect the activism of some of the potential victims, who despite their precarious situation wish to improve their lives and take action on their own, as opposed to those who choose to accept the status quo. Here we can find the potential victims characterized by the aspiration to a find better life by migration, without knowing much about foreign countries or any foreign languages (Lăzăroi & Alexandru, 2003; Yea, 2005). In this category there are two subgroups: those who have a relatively good financial situation, but they wish for more and those who live in very difficult social situations, in deep poverty, sometimes at the limits of subsistence. Regarding the characteristics of the guardianship, in this group we find far better family relationships and positive attachments than in the previous groups, but the family relations have not been strong enough so as to convince the victims to abandon their migration plan in hopes of a better life.

“I was alright; I had a home, a job and a child. It was hard for us, because it was not our own home and it was expensive. We did not have any realistic ways of buying our own apartment. So one day, this family friend stopped by, a man who I considered a friend (...) and he offered us the opportunity to work abroad (...), I do not know how we finally agreed that I would leave first and my husband would come with the child later.” (victim, 28 years old, recruited at age 23).

Testimonies that the members of this group consulted the family members who, did not themselves notice the signs of deceit, makes us think about the vulnerability of the family itself regarding its capacity to analyze the job offer, and their decision-making ability based on costs and benefits, as well as risks and opportunities.

The interested traffickers may come from various fields, either as “family friends” or as “job mediators” representing imagined companies and making fake job offers.

V. The abandoned, lost and displaced victims can be described through low quality family protection or supervision, with a history of several, repeated transitions from one caregiver to another, usually different relatives (the mother, the grandparents, an aunt, an older sibling) but also close and not so close friends. Often enough they tell stories about fathers who abandoned their children and mothers in new relationships where children from the previous relationship are already seen as a burden.

“My life was harder because my mother lived with someone else and my father lived with someone else and I did not like living with my mother because I had a stepfather and there was also a stepmother at my father’s, so I lived with my sisters. I lived for a few months with one sister, another few months with another sister, then I lived with some neighbours and so on, until my oldest sister allowed me to move in with her. (...) But she moved to Germany (...). I lived

alone for about a month until one night when I went to a club and someone introduced me to two people, a man and a woman. They asked me if I wanted to have a discussion and I said yes. They told me that my life was going to become easier.” (victim, 17, recruited at 16)

These victims were captured in the apartments of acquaintances, they ran away, or were kicked out from their homes. The vulnerability of the young women from this group is increased by the fact that the girls dropped-out of school (mostly before 8th grade, the end of the first education cycle in Romania), they lose interest in education and have no future goals towards personal or professional development. They have lots of unstructured time that they try to fill in by “walks to town”, with unreal expectations about romantic relationships and no expectations of building their own family relationships. Another risk factor is the vicinity of people or groups of people with a criminal profile that increases the exposure level of these young women. The trafficker usually responds to the girl’s aspiration of a ‘movie-like’ love relationship or to her desire of having loving/caring parents. These traffickers offer them care, protection, and companionship. The relationship between the recruiter and the victim is like what is known in the literature as friend-type relationships (MARCUS et al. 2014). In these situations, the traffickers may act alone or as a couple.

VI. The rebels’ victims. The young women in this group originate from ‘good families’, usually with both parents present (in case of divorce, the parents have remarried), without major problems connected to the living or working environment. Regarding the level of education, the parents have a professional education (up to higher education), are employed, and valued in the community. As for guardianship, parents in this category do not give time and attention to their daughters, because of their working schedule. The rules existing in the family are either too strict or too permissive and powerless. In both situations the girls declare emotional neglect. Often in these families there is discrimination between female and male children (boys usually getting more attention, being favoured, and having more freedom). The conflicts in the family are denied or treated superficially. The individual vulnerability of the young girls comes from their desire to become ‘someone’ early in their lives, without the necessary financial, human or informational capital in order to fulfill their aspiration of visibility, well-being and independence. On a personal level, one could notice sensation seeking behaviour, subjective poverty reports, lack of a real support from an adult, tendency in crossing norms, drug abuse and the mirage of the ‘scene’.

“(…) if my mother and father hassled me, I would leave and not return home for 2-3 days (...) I started drinking alcohol, smoking and I met that certain boy and that was when this trafficking thing started.” (17 years old, recruited at age 13 and at age 15)

“(…) I was supposed to go to this teacher’s house and my mother (...) gave me the money to go to the teacher’s house. Meanwhile, together with my cousin, we said ‘Let’s go have a soda’ ... and we spent the money. (...) I bought either a blouse, a pair of jeans, there was no more money and I did not dare ask my mother for money for both jeans and tutoring (...), so, together with my cousin we decided ‘Let’s find jobs’ (...) and we somehow came across an ad for a massage parlour (...). When they said we had to do erotic massages... wow, we did not even know what that was (...), but the girls there explained it, they showed us all kinds of things (...), so we said: we are not going to see anything we had not seen before” (victim, 23 years old, recruited from an erotic massage parlour at age 18)

The interested traffickers seem to have been experienced and manipulative, who can convincingly present attractive offers to lure the young, inexperienced, somewhat educated women to be exploited in the luxury sex industry.

VII. The last group described according to the interview analysis is that of **the helpers**, or the risky altruists as described by Homant (2010). The representatives of this group come from families were helping and sacrificing oneself for the other is highly praised. In almost all these cases there was a sick family member, whose care was the responsibility of the victim. Testimonies revealed the tendency of the victims to be exploited also by the circle of close friends. Individual vulnerability comes from wanting to help the others, of being useful, and of fear to be disliked by contradicting others. The traffickers are exploiting these ‘savior’-like tendencies by telling stories about, for example, a friend or someone close, who needs ‘saving’ from a desperate situation and thus the victim is lured to the criminal’s vicinity and interests.

“I had a very good relationship with my mother, but she was always in the hospital (...). She has 87 surgeries and epilepsy (...). In the hospital, I felt like home. (...) I was always so ... considerate in taking care of others, you had to protect them, to cast yourself aside in order to please others. (...) Before everything happened, I considered her (she is referring to the girl who recruited her and sent her to the trafficker – a. n.) to be my best friend (...). We were exactly like two sisters. (...) I almost felt sorry for her because she had three younger brothers and problems (...). I used to invite her to my place for dinner or to do homework. (...) I did not know then what kind of entourage she had. I wanted to help her.” (victim, 20 years old, recruited at age 14)

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Further details of the victims’ personal stories and data on recruitment, transportation, sexual exploitation, efforts to escape, and other details based on the victims’ and some stakeholders’ interviews are to be found on the project’s website³.

The proposed model - based on the concepts of motivated trafficker, attractive victim and lack of adequate supervision and protection of the victim, as adapted after the lifestyle exposure theory (HINDELANG – GOFFREDSON – GAROFALO 1978) – allowed us to distinguish several of the characteristics of the victims involved in trafficking and their accounts of victimization. Incorporating the “before trafficking life stories” dimension, as suggested by FINKELHOR (2007; 2008), gave a perspective on the family history that helped us understand the complexity of the cases of trafficking and the succession of events that lead to victimization. Understanding the differences in personal history, education, experience with violent and/or delinquent lifestyles, in guardianship and the failure to provide protection, can increase the capacity of professional communities to recognize victimization and intervene earlier. The analysis of the interviews shows that blaming the victims for being trafficked is neither justified and nor does it qualify as a solution. We are hoping to inspire the professional community to advance efforts for effective and proper intervention.

³ ANIMANOVA PROJECT, <http://www.cpe.ro/resurse/cercetari/14-resurse/cercetari/19-sperante-la-vanzare-cercetare-calitativa-privind-traficul-in-vederea-exploatarii-sexuale-in-romania-si-italia-2012>

One of the limitations of this research refers to the selection of the researched group. The study includes only those sexually exploited people who were included in different assistance or monitoring programmes. We did not have access to explore the histories and characteristics of those who had not benefited from such post-escape assistance programmes. Another limitation is connected to the critical underrepresentation of the male victims in the research group. Even though worldwide statistics show that their number is lower than that of the female victims (UNODC 2020; EUROSTAT 2013), interviewing only one male victim in this research is not enough to draw any conclusions about males trafficked for sexual exploitation. Similarly, the study does not include sexual exploitation of migrants, a category that is well represented in the materials elaborated by the Western destination countries. Everyone we interviewed as had been trafficked for sexual exploitation abroad had been recruited in Romania, their country of origin. Another limitation is the absence of the trafficker's perspective. To enrich the description of the victim's attractiveness and motivated traffickers we need more information about the traffickers' rationale and social circumstances on how he perceives the risks and benefits of sexually exploiting human beings.

CONCLUSIONS

The acknowledgment and clarification of the heterogeneous character of the population of victims of sexual exploitation should lead professionals to a more proactive identification (and not wait for the case to be identified by police). The seven described profiles of the victim categories also emphasize the need for specific prevention and intervention activities, centred on the vulnerability factors corresponding to the respective category.

Our analysis shows that weak social cohesion and support systems are a powerful risk factor for sexual exploitation. Improving social and family connections, even in the presence of different risk factors in the families and community of young people could have strong protective effects. This provides a path for assistance and reintegration programmes needed to rebuild the social cohesion networks around the victims of trafficking. We do not have enough psychological treatment services to deal with personal therapy, counselling, and family therapy, but professionals could rely more on social networks and approach vulnerabilities from the social networking and community building perspective. On the other hand, the profound traumatic experiences, and complex vulnerabilities of the victims of trafficking require intensive and often long-term counselling and therapeutic work.

In order to weaken the vulnerability factors, we need efficient strategies aimed at reducing poverty (both subjective and objective poverty) but also to reduce school abandonment. In this respect we would like to insist upon the importance of the school programmes like "The Second Chance Programme", both in education and social development. Regarding the latter we need a legal, fiscal system that would increase the interest and motivation to finance such programmes.

The need of prevention programmes for adolescents and young people has also become evident: improving life skills, sexual education, and the promotion of safe relationships have been missing in the upbringing of the young victims.

To efficiently elaborate further psycho-social interventions, research should continue to look into the developmental history of the victims, as well as their evolution in the different

phases of victimization, escape and post-escape period in order to deduce the information both about the limits and the benefits of the assistance they received as well as the services these victims never got.

A future point of interest would also be the verification of the results (the dimensions used to build the typology, the types detected and the theoretical model) on the other categories of victims: male victims of sexual trafficking, those who suffered a different type of exploitation (begging, work exploitation, organ trafficking), those who stayed in the destination countries after escaping exploitation. The model is applicable in Romania, but it would be interesting to see how differences as the countries' social-economic level, education system, social protection system and availability of services influences attractiveness of victims, guardianship deficiencies and the interest of the traffickers, but until proven differently, we presume there are many similarities.

Another aspect that would deserve testing is the applicability of the model towards the study of the perpetrator (the interested trafficker) and perhaps towards the sexual services industry itself.

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