

Psychophysical status of human trafficking victims

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Abstract

Human trafficking causes a number of consequences. Among them especially significant are grave consequences for the physical and mental health of victims. Victims are traumatized, physically and mentally worn out, exposed to HIV infections, venereal diseases, with severe consequences resulting from long-term abuse and torture. The level of physical and mental damage is so high. In this paper we analyzed some of the most common consequences of human trafficking that harm mental and physical health of victims.

Key words: Human trafficking, victims of trafficking, HIV infections, venereal diseases, mental and physical health of human trafficking victims.

Introduction

Human trafficking is a global phenomenon that intensively affects states in economic and political transition and post-conflict stress. It is a phenomenon with deep social and economic implications. Victims of human trafficking can be everyone: women, men, girls, and boys. Data associated to this phenomenon are alarming. Even though research and estimations differ, it can be stated with certainty that on a yearly basis, hundreds of thousands of human beings are trafficked globally. The forms of exploitation used to accumulate large profits mutually differ, but they all imply violent exploitation and abuse of human beings and their rights.

There is a wide range of potential forms of exploitation, from sexual, labor exploitation, criminal involvement, arrangement of marriages, organ donation, to forced military service. Exploitation may undertake different forms, such as: prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, force labor, slavery or actions similar to slavery and removal of organs [1].

Human trafficking represents gross violation of human rights, and it should therefore be recog-

nized as the most extreme form of human rights violation [2]. Victims are denied the right to life, work, education, dignity, safety, equality, freedom of movement, right to health, etc [3].

Female victims of human trafficking during sexual exploitation are not able to perform normal health protection measures, so the prevalence of HIV/AIDS has the greatest percent, which denies the right to life and health, as well as the concept of human dignity, in contrast to international norms and set civilization standards [4,5].

In most of the cases, the level of physical and mental harm caused to victims is so serious and long-lasting that it is often not possible to medically re-balance and enable victims to reach satisfactory level of physical and mental health [6,7].

Method

From the period of March 2002. until December 2011., ASTRA SOS telephone service in Republic Serbia has identified 391 victims of trafficking [8].

When the countries of destination for trafficking victims in 2011. year, the most common destination is, as in previous years, Serbia. Final destination of trafficking victims are recruited for the purpose of labor exploitation were Germany, Russia and Chechnya. In individual cases, the destinations were Italy, Slovenia and Bosnia. Of the 40 identified victims in 2011. year, 17 were from Serbia and the Serbian territory are exploited. Serbia is a country of origin and destination for nine out of ten children who were identified in 2011. year. Internal trade was in 2011. year represented 42.5% of identified cases of trafficking (2010-51%, 2009-42%, 2008-25%).

The majority of trafficking victims in ASTRA study were vulnerable to trafficking because they suffered from maltreatment and tragic home lives. They also had problems in their family dysfunctions as the one source of creating vulnerability in children who fall under the influence of

traffickers. In this study we also noticed that the standard dysfunctional family patterns are present in this group.

We did not investigate other strong influences one can usually find in the literature, such as individual and peer factors, along with larger environmental factors often presented that play a significant role in child trafficking.

Our intention was not to advocate that those most probable to trafficking victims may be those that are poor, neglected, and abused.

We come to conclusion that family dynamics and socioeconomic status are important risk factors, but we recognize that those interviewed for the study were youth that had been arrested and incarcerated. We admit that numerous risk factors create vulnerability, not just poor children who come from substance abusing and neglectful or abusive parents.

Vulnerability can be also found and created in children who come from wealthy, two-parent, seemingly healthy familie.

Results

Among them are 299 persons had citizenship of the Republic of Serbia, while three people have dual citizenship. Of the total number of identifi-

ed victims, 144 people are children (36.83%). In 2011. year, 40 people were identified as victims of trafficking, and another 10 (25%) were children. Among the 40 newly identified victims, 13 people were male and all were of legal age when recruited and when mining began in the trafficking chain, while all the children identified in the previous year, and uposedlnje three years were female.

Sexual exploitation is the most common form of exploitation to which victims were exposed (23). Labor exploitation have been exposed to all the males identified in this period (13), while in one case were present both types of exploitation. Through the forced marriage of two people being exploited, and one person was forced to commit crimes. Victims were most often drawn to trafficking through business deals (14).

Recruitment was conducted by Macro (4), by the very people close - close and extended family, Jack (6) or a person the victim knew a relatively shallow (8). In two cases the trade were foreign nationals (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Russia), while other victims, 38 of them (95%) were from Serbia. Human trafficking is sanctioned by the Criminal Code Articles 184, 388 and 389, on the basis of which is described territorial extent of the problem.

Table 1. Territorial distribution of criminal charges in relation to criminal offenses and perpetrators in Serbia (PD- Police Department, CCRS- The Criminal Code of Republic Serbia, *- Directorate of Immigration, ** - Directorate for Public Order) [8]

Number of criminal charges in relation to criminal offenses				Number of perpetrators		
Department of the Interior RS	Article No. 388. CCRS	Article No. 389. CCRS	Article No. 184. CCRS	Article No. 388. CCRS	Article No. 389. CCRS	Article No. 184. CCRS
PD Belgrade*	7	1	5	20	5	7
PD Belgrade**	1	0	12	1	0	14
PD Pirot	/	/	/	/	/	/
PD Kragujevac	1	0	2	1	/	3
PD Nis	/	/	1	/	/	2
PD Novi Pazar	1	/	/	2	/	/
PD Novi Sad	15	0	3	32	/	3
PD Uzice	/	/	/	/	/	/
PD Smederevo	/	/	/	/	/	/
PD Leskovac	/	/	/	/	/	/
PD Vranje	4	/	/	8	/	/
PD Pancevo	1	/	/	3	/	/
PD Zrenjanin	2	/	/	6	/	/

Table 2. Territorial distribution of persons injured by these offenses and damaged by crime in Serbia (M-Male, F-Female, Sr-Serbian citizen, Fr- Foreign citizens, nd- no data) [8]

Department of the Interior RS	Number of persons injured by these offenses						Citizenship damaged by crime					
	Article No. 388. CCRS		Article No. 389. CCRS		Article No. 184. CCRS		Article No. 388. CCRS		Article No. 389. CCRS		Article No. 184. CCRS	
Sex/Nationality	M	F	M	F	M	F	Sr	Fr	Sr	Fr	Sr	Fr
PD Belgrade,* Directorate of Immigration	1	14	1	/	/	6	13	2	1	/	6	/
PD Belgrade,** Directorate for Public Order	1	/	/	/	/	14	1	/	/	/	14	/
PD Pirot	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
PD Kragujevac	/	1	/	/	/	2	1	/	/	/	2	/
PD Nis	/	/	/	/	/	1	/	/	/	/	/	1
PD Novi Pazar	/	1	/	/	/	/	1	/	/	/	/	/
PD Novi Sad	3	30	/	/	nd	nd	33	/	/	/	nd	nd
PD Uzice	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
PD Smederevo	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
PD Leskovac	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
PD Vranje	/	3	/	/	/	/	3	/	/	/	/	/
PD Pancevo	/	1	/	/	/	/	1	/	/	/	/	/
PD Zrenjanin	/	2	/	/	/	/	2	/	/	/	/	/

Discussion

Some of the Physical Consequences of Human Trafficking Victims

Human trafficking victims in all phases and processes of this crime suffer physical and sexual abuse, and are forced to live in the conditions of physical and mental imprisonment. It is not rare that victims are also murdered as a message and warning to other victims in order to prevent testifying or seeking help, as well as ensuring constant control and surveillance for prolonged abuse and exploitation of the victims. Human traffickers constantly use violence and threats of violence. Victims are often beaten, raped, closed or limited in movement, denied food or water, tortured by knives and cigarettes, drugged and stoned, in order to provide absolute obedience. The sum of these abuses the victim experiences as the following: she is alone in a foreign country, isolated from the contact with countrymen, unable to communicate in her maternal language, confiscated personal and travel documents, unable to contact family, disoriented due to constant transfer and movement, subjected to constant physical and sexual abuse, unable to contact police for help due to fear of consequences; demanded to engage in physically

dangerous and unprotected sexual activities on a daily basis with maximum number of hours, with male clients with whom she can't communicate; live under the regime of threats and repression towards her and her family [5].

Human trafficking victims are often ill due to difficult unsanitary conditions of life where they are forced to engage in prostitution and provision of sexual services. In addition, female victims of trafficking, working in various brothels often get pregnant, so their oppressors force them to abortions, while others are solely trafficked for the purpose of baby delivering that are later also subject of trafficking. Consequences of modern slavery refer to numerous psycho-physical and sexual traumas. Concurrently, as a consequence of forced sexual exploitation, a variety of sexually transmitted diseases appear, the most difficult one being the AIDS, as well as a variety of psychological consequences, such as different forms of depression, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, neuroticism.

Additionally, there are other diseases caused by unsanitary living conditions such as TBC, plague and other contagious diseases. Victims of modern slavery are daily exposed to large number of unprotected sexual relations with clients of diverse pro-

files and health status. Evaluations of the magnitude of the problem of AIDS presence in girls and women victims of human trafficking and estimations of their access to effective treatment, protection and support, during rescue or imprisonment, could improve the programs focused on victims' aid [6].

Alarming data indicate that there is a trend of significant decrease of the average age of the victims, based on new perceptions and requests of the clients who believe that sexual relation with children minimizes the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. It is commonly known that any form of prostitution represents a source of spreading various, even deadly diseases. It should be emphasized that prostitutes transmit diseases even when they are tested for them. Tests for HIV infection and other infections cannot detect the disease once it is captured, even though causes of the disease exist, live, and multiply in that person, and easily pass to another person during sexual contact, which subsequently transmits them to others, who may also transmit to others, and so on. Each minute inside the mouth, a million new lymphocytes appear, while in case of the presence of an infection, this number reaches ten million. In case individual is infected, lymphocytes contain multiple AIDS viruses. Often dentist are the first ones to suspect that a person suffers from AIDS once they see fertilization and mouth bleeding, white material and similar changes. Even a healthy individual almost always has small wounds in mouth after tooth brushing, rotten teeth, gingivitis, or sharp food, through which viruses easily enter. Today we know that an individual in blood and secretion has diverse amount of viruses in different phases of disease. There is certainly a difference in types of kisses. However, from the abovementioned, it is clear that the possibility of getting infected by certain kisses cannot be disregarded [5].

Condyloma (genital warts) are a disease caused by the HPV virus i.e. *Humani Papilloma Virus*. HPV virus causes cervical cancer in women and treatment must be initiated straight after detection. The HPV virus has around 100 variations and not all of them cause condyloma, but the most prevalent types do. Only 4 types of virus cause cervical cancer, while over 30 cause condyloma. The most prevalent types of virus cause condyloma as a consequence, or the danger of cervical cancer. A

number of documents confirm that the use of barrier contraception methods like condoms does not prevent spreading the HPV (*Consensus Statement on Cervical Cancer* of the US national institute for health in 1996). This institute, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the Department of Health and Human Services of the US government, in the document *Workshop Summary* in 2000 indicate that there are no clinical evidence that condom would be a safe means of protection from diseases of Chlamydia (*Chlamydia Trachomatis*), herpes, or syphilis. Chlamydia causes uterus infections, which ultimately results in infertility, and in case infected woman is pregnant, child often dies even before birth.

„Human trafficking victim, an Ukrainian Olena Popik, died from AIDS in a hospital in Mostar. She was illegally in Serbia in the beginning of the 2004. The doctor, who performed autopsy, concluded that she was infected by AIDS and a number of other dangerous diseases including hepatitis C, miliary tuberculosis, syphilis and others. Throughout the last year, the Ukrainian represented an extreme epidemiological risk for everyone with whom she had any contact, and particularly those with whom she had sexual contact” [5].

Some of the Psychological Consequences of Human Trafficking Victims

Human trafficking victims enter the circle of terror and cruelty, due to extremely brutal psychophysical treatment performed by the human traffickers. As a result of such exposure, the victims suffer from chronic trauma that tends to be long-term. Physical exhaustion, confusion, phobias, obsessive-compulsive ideation, disorientation, amnesia, strong emotions, grief and inability to communicate represent determining psychophysical traits of an individual who has been liberated from the 'claws' of human traffickers during the first contact.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is the one of the common consequences of trauma [9]. Common symptoms of the post-traumatic stress disorder involve: episodes of repeated experience of trauma in imposed memories (flashbacks—Sudden revival of memories of past events), dreams or nightmares that appear on a persisting base of 'numbness' (Reduced emotional response associated with exposure to trauma), disregard of environment, emotio-

nal flatness (Persistent depressive mood of minor extent or in case the degree of emotional response is significantly reduced but is not lacking.), isolation from others, anhedonia (Inability to enjoy, loss of interest for pleasurable activities), avoidance of activities and situation that remind trauma. Rarely, dramatic attacks of fear, panic, or aggression may occur as stimulus causing rapid memory and/or revival of trauma and primary reactions to it [10].

Basic PTSD symptoms become chronic in case recovery does not provide favorable outcome. The most common symptoms refer to: intrusion, avoidance and hyper-sensitivity. Intrusion implies symptoms as flashbacks. Avoidance in case of victims of violence often causes disengagement from certain forms of social contacts avoiding situations that remind traumatic event. Hyper-sensitivity is the third key element of psycho-trauma or PTSD, and involves strong feelings of fear, isolation, rage, anger, excitement, insomnia and lack of concentration. Children as victims of human trafficking are often submitted to sexual abuse in family, and subsequently in the community, and traffic for the purpose of sexual exploitation represents the third step in the circle of violence that these children are exposed to. Likewise, they are often substance and alcohol dependent. Additionally, they exhibit significant behavioral disorders, while due to the long-term repetitive sexual trauma, they are unable to develop mature defense mechanisms, but commonly exhibit serious psychological disturbances associated with mental disorders. Due to the long-term exposure to psychological, physical, sexual and economic abuse and variety of manipulations by adults, these children, compared to other victims of sexual trauma, mainly demonstrate loss of trust in others, further complicating the process of the establishment of trust and safety with professional and assistants.

Intensity and range of sexual, physical and psychological violence that children victims of human trafficking suffer satisfy two basic criteria for diagnosing psychological trauma and its consequences. That involves exposure to threat to life and repeated sexual abuse during youth. Exposure to psychological trauma in these cases causes serious consequences in terms of physiological functioning of the organism, cognitive (thoughts and comprehension) and emotional behavior [11].

Conclusions

Human trafficking victims are exposed to numerous risks that may directly or indirectly impact their health. The risks may result from physical, psychological abuse (exploitation), enforced alcohol and drug abuse, social boundaries and manipulation, economic exploitation, legal insecurity related to victims' labor exploitation and inadequate working conditions and marginalization. Each of these risks involves heavy consequences to human trafficking victims' health [12]. It should be noted that the victims are almost never exposed to only one of the mentioned risks; rather they are often interrelated and multiplied. Impact of the aforementioned risks on health depends on their duration and intensity, as well as personal ability to tackle these problems. For instance, risk of physical abuse may result in violent taking of life (murder), self-harm (acute and chronic physical injuries) in the form of bruises, scratches, abrasions, head injuries, damages in muscles, nerves, senses, and all these consequences may result in minor or severe forms of disability.

Sexual abuse may result in damages of reproductive and sexual health, urinary infections, inability of birth, amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, acute and chronic pain during sexual contact, occurrence of the cancer of uterus, incontinence, unwanted pregnancy, impact of insecure abortions (septic shock), etc. Psycho-physical risks and consequences of the victims, among other things demand interventions of medical institutions, doctors of different specializations and other medical staff, whose main goal is to evaluate health state, health support, and subsequently planning and realization of the program of therapy for chronic diseases and injuries. Data on victims' psycho-physical status are confidential and cannot be publicly exposed. Medical staff is only authorized to share information on victims' psycho-physical status, based on informed consent, to other professionals who provide direct assistance to human trafficking victims [13].

Exceptions are provided in Article 20. Codex of Professional Ethics. That is, doctor is acquitted of professional confidentiality or dismissed from the obligation of professional silence in case of client's informed consent or for his/her benefit, his family or society, or this has been decided in

accordance with law. In case of clients consent, doctor will evaluate which data should be kept confidential if their release could harm the client. In case of court order, the doctor needs to inform the client, except if otherwise provided by the court decision. In most cases, victims require medical assistance, to resolve acute health issues, such as injuries, diseases and abortions resulting from human trafficking, treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and substance addiction. Concurrently, the need for psychological support and assistance is considered crucial. Mental state examination and psychological treatment are performed on the basis of needs' hierarchy. Primary, organic health is addressed, then physical safety and daily routine, stabilization of physiological functions of sleep and alimentation, establishment of a trusting relationship between the victim of human trafficking, professionals and assistants, and finally in-depth psychological evaluation. Each victim and children in particular, has specific health and psychological status, which requires individualized treatment.

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