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FACULTY OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**VULNERABILITY TO  
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS FOR  
THE PURPOSE OF SEXUAL  
EXPLOITATION**

**DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY**

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## SUMMARY

This paper intends to provide a perspective of victimology analysis on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

The obvious importance of the topic lies in finding appropriate responses to the needs of trafficking victims in Romania or abroad. Based on official data, in addition to sexual exploitation's widespread phenomenon in the country, Romania is one of the countries with most victims identified in destination countries (EUROSTAT, 2014 UNODC, 2013), and continues to be on the top list of European countries of origin for more than 20 years.

In Romania the beginnings of human trafficking can be placed in the early 90s. Among the significant factors of trafficking the following can be mentioned: geographical position, Romania being a country between Asia and Western Europe close to traffic routes, the social costs of transition to a market economy involving a large number of social risk groups, failure of social policies to support vulnerable populations along with opening borders and migration to western countries (Anino anu, 2012 ANITP 2007 Fle ner, 2010, etc.).

From the end of the 1990s, and the early 2000s several structures began to react to human trafficking in a systematic and targeted manner. With the support of international organizations such as the IOM (International Organization for Migration) and UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) non-governmental organizations had created specialized services for human trafficking victims. Later, special anti-crime structures were established such as The Directorate of Combating Human Trafficking, Anti-Drug Organization and Crime Investigation Directorate of Organized Crime (founded in 2004). In 2006 The National Agency against Human Trafficking with 15 regional centers was founded which is responsible for coordinating, evaluating and monitoring the implementation of trafficking policies. In the beginning the emphasis was on staff professional training and on raising awareness campaigns. (Anino anu, 2012).

Buying and selling people is not a new phenomenon, nowadays this being a global business line. The number of countries involved is increasing, new routes appear and already existing routes

develop (UNODC, 2014). "Increasingly human trafficking is considered to be a business, often controlled by organised 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, p. 5).

In a general approach, the concept of trafficking includes all the facts or actions - from recruitment to transfer to another country – using force, threats, abuse of power, blackmail, deceit or any other form of coercion and exploitation and whose purpose is victim's exploitation. In most cases, the purpose of trafficking teenage girls and women is sexual exploitation, and forcing prostitution and trafficking can also lead to enforced marriage, labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or organ trafficking (Fehér, 1999, Luca 2006, etc.).

Human trafficking does not necessarily include border crossing and the amplitude of internal trafficking becomes increasingly serious and this topic appears in the field studies when analysing the relationships between national and international trafficking (Kelly, 2002, 2005). The basis of trafficking, whether internal or external, is transferring people in a foreign environment (taking them away from their family, their homes, and their community and thus increasing vulnerability and victims' enslavement) for their exploitation. "[...] New approaches began to regard the phenomenon as a business, although illegal, and as such, abiding the rules of economic supply and demand." (Kokko, 2008, p. 46) Trafficking for sexual exploitation is likely to remain the most stable form of trafficking in women and teenage girls, simply because it is an important source of profit for traffickers. (Stef noi et al., 2005).

The extent and the prevalence of the phenomenon can be only "guesstimated"<sup>1</sup> although many countries, organizations and researchers joined their efforts in obtaining accurate data. The results are frightening despite unreliable validity. Estimates show that between 2002 and 2011 a total of 20.9 million people had been reported to be trafficked worldwide by The International Labour Office (ILO, 2012), among whom 700,000 to 2 million are women and children (IOM, 2001). Based on the monitored data of The US Department of State, the estimated number of trafficked people is 800-900 thousand (Laczko, 2005). The number of victims in Europe is

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<sup>1</sup> The term was used by Laczko when describing the methods of assessing and reporting trafficking cases

estimated at 170000-300 0000 people (Soderling, 2002). Based on the estimations presented by Bales (2007), approximately 27 million people work in slavery.

In Europe, most victims come from post-communist countries (e.g. Romania and Bulgaria and former Soviet countries). Destination points aimed by the victims are economically developed western countries, directly reached, when victims are transported there, or just aimed for, when victims are promised to get to Western countries (UNODC, 2014 Eurostat, 2013).

Although most studies conducted on this topic were based on the testimonies of victims or professionals in contact with these victims, researchers focused on capturing the generally valid vulnerability factors for trafficking victimization, on the description of the phenomenon phases (recruitment, transportation, exploitation, and rarely escape), on evaluating the needs of victims and on the analysis of services' responses, on trying to assess the extent of the phenomenon using as informational methods the interpretation of migration and prostitution. The results obtained are more descriptive, usually oriented on "how to solve" the problem. Socio-political pressure on the management of this criminal phenomenon often involving citizens of different countries with varied roles (victims, traffickers, accomplices of traffickers, corrupt employees, beneficiaries of victims' services, providers of services, specialists who develop budgets and intervention strategies often addressing to people from other countries) creates a tense atmosphere and the reaction to speed up the process of finding solutions to stop or at least to diminish the possible damages. This pressure is also felt in social work literature the analysis offering a rapid "radiography" of the situation.

The novelty of this doctoral thesis is to analyse the factors of vulnerability in terms of complexity and their interference with social and contextual factors within the ecological theory. Factors that interfere to generate victimization are acting at four levels: individual, relationshipl, community and societal (Dahlberg & Krug 2002). This model effectively captures the most common risk factors found in different types of violence, and can portray the specificity of certain situations. In order to ensure the analysis of both the general factors acting on different levels as in the ecological theory, and the nuanced characteristics of victimization theory, this research combined the opportunity of victimology theories, as described in Cohen's and Felson's theory of routine activities (1979), and the lifestyle exposure theory of Hindelang,

Goffredson and Garofalo (1978). The theories were supplemented with the dynamic theory of comprehensive vulnerability by Filkerhor and his collaborators (Finkelhor and Asdigian, 1996; Finkelhor, 2007, 2008). This approach assumes the existence of three basic criteria of a crime: the motivated offender, the congruent target (vulnerable, attractive and accessible for the perpetrator) and the poor supervision.

With this combination of theoretical analysis and interpretation of data we can prevent most obvious criticism of victimology theories according to which these approaches would indicate the victims as responsible for their victimization (e.g. through their risky behaviour) (Franklin, Franklin, Nobles, Krecher, 2012).

Therefore, the general purpose of this thesis is to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of human trafficking for sexual exploitation on several levels: by capturing the modifications of the phenomenon in a changed political-economic context after Romania joined the European Union; by analysing the vulnerability factors both in society, community and on individual level and by identifying the specific relational interactions of the factors that lead to different types of vulnerabilities.

The professional interest and the motivation of the author of this thesis is based on her counseling activity within the Association of Women Against Violence - ARTEMIS, Cluj-Napoca and as a researcher and consultant at the Partnership for The Equality Center in Bucharest. Since 1999 she has been working for AFIV-ARTEMIS assisting victims of various forms of violence and the families of these victims. Being involved in assisting more than 150 cases of human trafficking and participating to many multidisciplinary meetings both in Romania and abroad has emerged the need for constant study of victimology phenomenon in order to offer real assistance to those who wish to support victims as well as to provide a programme of (re) integration and prevention based on the needs and the resources of the vulnerable group.

Divided into five chapters, an introduction and conclusion, this doctoral thesis gives special attention to the vulnerability factors, the mode of interaction and their effect by describing seven types of victims. At the end of the analysis an integrated dynamic model was generated,



that complements the understanding of the dynamics of recruitment and exploiting the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

The introduction provides a "warming" in the topic which, after defining the basic concepts, gives us an overview of the phenomenon of human trafficking, especially for sexual exploitation in Romania and the level of awareness of the phenomenon worldwide. The data analysed were partly obtained in an international qualitative research coordinated for the project ANIMANOVA carried out by The Partnership for The Equality Center Bucharest, together with organisations from Romania and Italy<sup>2</sup>, which focused on integrating victims into the labour market. The author of this thesis was a member of the ANIMANOVA research team and, from this position, contributed to the following: the development of research methodology, conducting interviews with representatives of state institutions and NGOs, conducting interviews with victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, data analysis and developing the Romanian research report. Results of this research can be found on the official website of The Partnership for The Equality Center entitled "Hope for sale. Qualitative research on trafficking for sexual exploitation in Romania and Italy between 2007 and 2011"<sup>3</sup>.

The research report of the project provided a rather descriptive analysis of the phenomenon and its phases, as well as a summary of the vulnerability factors, and of the attitude of the community towards the phenomenon based on 45 interviews with specialists and with 17 victims of sex trafficking. For this thesis 20 more victims and 6 family members were interviewed (27 interview meetings) in order to better understand the victims needs and the support offered by social and protection services and the description was followed by a more complex examination of data, based on human trafficking, victimology and vulnerability theories.

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<sup>2</sup> The project was run with partners from Romania, Philanthropy Federation, and from Italy: Associazione Ricerca e Parsec social intervention, Esprit Soc. cons. arl, Expert Italia Srl, Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, IAL Innovazione Apprendimento Lavoro Srl. The project, carried out between 2009 and 2012, represented a Romanian- Italian partnership and was co-financed by European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013.

<sup>3</sup> <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>

**The introduction of the thesis explains the objectives and presents its conceptual framework.**

**Chapter 1** covers a brief description of the human trafficking within the European context by reviewing the history of the phenomenon, the current directives and extent of the problem in Europe. Then the thesis presents the history of the phenomenon in Romania, as well as the national legal system, the prevalence of the phenomenon, the system of protection and assistance for victims of trafficking, the networks and traffickers in the country and a brief overview of prostitution situation in Romania.

**Chapter 2** presents the theoretical approaches of human trafficking which, beside their scientific value carry a significant applied contribution. In this respect numerous control and prevention strategies have been developed. In reviewing the theories the first ones to be studied are the feminist theories which are the first to problematize women's exploitation and slavery. Feminist approaches fuse in order to link human trafficking with prostitution and emphasizes two powerful feminist approaches: radical and liberal feminism. The chapter also briefly presents the evolution of the policies concerning prostitution .

Addressing trafficking from a human rights perspective is paramount. We believe that it provides the most stable base for collaboration and cooperation between organizations from different countries and between different institutions of the same country. Analysing this subject as a phenomenon that violates a wide range of basic human rights also generated the development of services for protection and assistance of victims regardless of their status and citizenship.

Migration approach captures the cross-border nature of the topic, on which there is an increased interest in international policies and practices in order to manage trafficking.

In the last part of this chapter victimology theories are presented and thus providing a historical interpretative perspective of different theories about the relationship between perpetrators and victims. Victimology studies evolved from opportunity theories (the lifestyle exposure theory - Hindlang, Goffredson and Garofalo in 1978 - and the routine activities theory of Cohen and Felson, 1979) and their additions: violent act of vengeance of the offender (Duncan and Apel,

2005) and comprehensive dynamic model (Finkelhor, 2007, 2008). Other interesting aspect is provided by Shreck's theory of self-control (1999) and by the extended theory of balanced control of victimization developed by Tittle (1995, 2004).

**Chapter 3** presents the results of previous studies on vulnerability factors classified in the following categories: studies in Romania, studies in destination countries, studies of recruitment strategies, studies on the vulnerability of children and studies which analyse the risk factors the most vulnerable of the vulnerable groups (the Roma, people with disabilities or mental illnesses, homelessness, youth who leave foster care) and some results of studies on other personal crime victimization (sexual abuse, rape, bullying, injury, murder, attempted murder).

**Chapter 4** presents this qualitative research methodology based on semi-structured interviews, its theoretical and practical objectives, and the research group. We also describe research procedures and methods and present the characteristics of the research group. The last part of this chapter deals with the ethical aspects of research.

The main purpose of this research consists in a comprehensive evaluation of risk factors for victimization by trafficking with intention of sexual exploitation and modeling the interaction of these factors.

#### **a. Theoretical objectives of the research**

1. General assessment of the phenomenon
2. Assessment of human trafficking route from recruitment, transportation, exploitation to escape;
3. Identification of vulnerability factors (societal, community, relational and individual level);
4. Capturing the heterogeneity of the victim populations and trying to establish typologies showing characteristics of the interaction of risk factors.

**b. The practical objective** of this thesis is identifying the level and the sectors of the intervention that would increase the capacity of communities by mobilizing social networks to protect vulnerable people from being recruited.

### **c. Theoretical framework of the research**

As stated previously in this summary of the thesis, I have started from the idea that human trafficking was rather ignored in criminology studies and much more in victimology, hence the explanations of trafficking tending to be included in the broader phenomenon of migration or prostitution. In order to differentiate between victims and describe vulnerability factors data interpretation will use a combination of victimology and the ecological theory of vulnerability..

Borrowed from the explanatory theories of violence against children and other types of violence, **ecological theory of vulnerability** can provide a suitable framework to structure and analyse vulnerability factors in human trafficking. This approach allows the presentation of those common factors working to facilitate all forms of trafficking (internal and external, use of fraud or abduction during the recruitment phase, explicit use of extreme violence or “only” of manipulative techniques in the exploitation phase). The ecological approach divides vulnerability factors that affect or increase the risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of violent acts in four different levels: community level, societal, relational and individual level (Krug et al., 2002)

**The societal level** of the model contains those factors which create an environment of acceptance of the phenomenon and reduce inhibitions of perpetrators or potential perpetrators. Here there can be included cultural norms that tolerate exploitation, the patterns that support the exploitation of the disadvantaged groups, the norms that support or facilitate corruption and discrimination. Societal factors may also include social policies that maintain inequality between large social groups.

**Community level** model analyses the community context (school, work, neighbourhood, and zone) the relations within this community and identifies those characteristics that are associated with the risk of becoming a victim or a trafficker. Usually the risk factors are the following: high level of residential mobility, community’s heterogeneity, high population density, and community characterized by problems such as drug trafficking, prostitution, high unemployment, alcoholism and / or social isolation. The manner in which the community responds or tries to conceal the human trafficking phenomenon may be an important factor in perpetuating it.

**Relational level** explores the extent to which interpersonal relationships with other people (family members, colleagues, neighbours, partners, etc.) increase the risk of being a victim or perpetrator of violence.

**The individual level** also include the characteristics of the educational level, personal history of abuse and violence, risk behaviours for acts of violence or becoming victims of such acts. These features can increase the risk for a person to become the perpetrator or the victim of violence in general.

It is widely known that even in a high risk community not every individual becomes a victim or a trafficker. Moreover not all well-known relational and individual risk factors appear in all cases of victimization. Fading of victim's needs by using an inadequate "prototype" brings many dilemmas in identifying victims. To increase the accuracy of victimological typologies I have used the theories of opportunity (routine activities theory Cohen and Felson, 1979), the lifestyle exposure theory (Hindelang, Goffredson and Garofalo, 1978) and Finkelhor and his collaborators' dynamic theory of comprehensive vulnerability (Filkernhor and Asdigian 1996; Finkelhor, 2007, 2008).

The basic concepts that build cluster analysis of relational and individual factors are: the motivated offender, the congruent target and the lack of competent supervision.

**The motivated offender** is the person who is motivated to commit a certain crime.

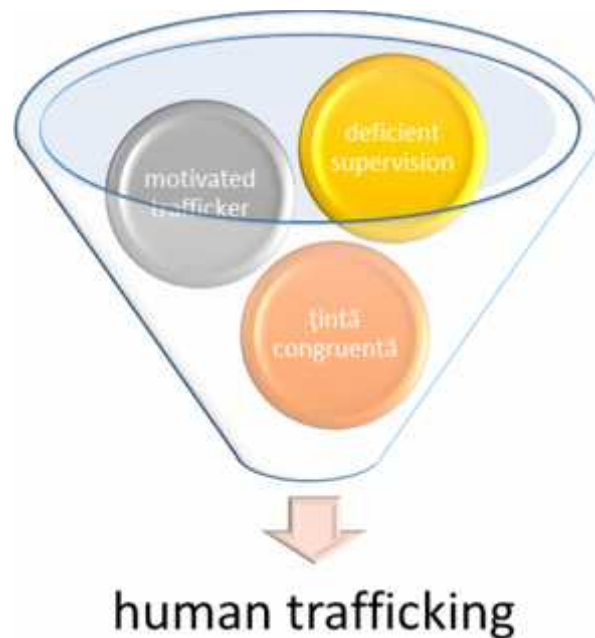


Figure 6: Basic concepts of data analysis

Congruent target representing the object or the person that fits the criteria on which the motivated offender chooses his victim.

The congruent target characteristics are:

- a) Attractiveness, represented by all those features that makes the victim attractive for the offender
- b) Vulnerability, addressing the individual characteristics that limit or diminish victims' capacity to protect themselves.

**Deficient supervision:** lack or inefficient monitoring that could lead to risk detection and inaccessibility or inadequate protection that could safely shelter potential victims.

### **Methodological framework of the research**

This research is a qualitative one and the methodological triangulation is assured by the diversity of the research group which is composed of two main subgroups: 1. of specialists in the field of assisting trafficking victims and 2. of people who have experienced trafficking and of their families.

Research methods used in the interviews with experts were the semi-structured, face-to-face guide-based interview carried out by the interview operator. The interview guide was structured around the following areas of investigation: the evolution and characteristics of the phenomenon of human trafficking, assisted victims profile; factors of vulnerability of potential victims; victims relationship with the recruiter / exploiter / trafficker; family and community attitudes towards the victim; approaching trafficking phenomenon and attitude towards the victims of social professionals experienced in assisting victims and prevention.

For people who have experienced trafficking, the method used was semi-structured in-depth interview, conducted face to face and based on an interview guide and administered by the author of the thesis. The interview contained a narrative, live-story part, but mostly centered on the process of becoming a victim.

The interview guide was centered on the following themes: describing the state of the respondent at the moment of the interview; victim's personal history before trafficking (narrative part), the way it got to be trafficked, the way of escape, and future plans.

Transcripts of the interviews obtained were subjected to a thematic analysis. This involved, according to Chenail (2008), categorization, summarization and data reconstruction with the aim to highlight key issues and convert them into representative models. Segmentation and categorization of data was carried out through thematic coding. The process of analysis focused on relevant issues in relation to 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 by the author based on specialized literature and were supplemented and amended by generating new codes emerged from the analysis of texts, since encoding represents a continuous process from which the researcher identifies, organizes and systematizes ideas, concepts, and categories found in the data. Coding consists in identifying potentially interesting events, features, phrases, behaviors, or stages of a process and differentiating them by using labels (Benaquisto, 2008).

Data were analysed using the qualitative data analysis programme called Qualitative Data Miner Analysis 3 (QDA Miner 3). The advantage of using this software consist in allowing the

possibility of analysing large amounts of data management, and in the rigor and transparency of the analysis provided by the software used.

The main issues identified were based on research topics and on the theoretical concepts used. 7 sub-themes were identified, 11 operational categories by using 117 codes presented in Annex 3 of the paper.

### **The research group.**

**The first research group** was composed of specialists who usually assist victims of trafficking (social workers, psychologists and other specialists who assisted the group at the moment of the interview). This category gathered a total amount of 45 interviews out of which 31 were conducted by representatives of local and regional social services and 14 by representatives of non-governmental organizations, providing psychological and social assistance.

Between 2008 and 2013 interviews were conducted for the **second research group**, with 37 people victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. Altogether there are 44 interviews with victimised people (seven people have had two meetings) and 6 meetings were held with caregivers (4 mothers, a father and a sister - this category has not been aimed by the research but when they accompanied their children, parents shared their experiences).

All victims interviewed were beneficiaries of psycho-social or legal assistance programmes or are being monitored as victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. All have cooperated with the criminal justice system.

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

Out of 37 interviews, after a first analysis, one case has been redefined and used only in analysing the characteristics of recruiters / traffickers, because the case best fitted the trafficker's profile.

The interviewed victims' important data are presented in tables no. 2 and no. 3. As shown in these tables in the victims' subgroup were gathered 24 Romanian victims, 10 Roma ethnics and



2 Hungarian ethnics. Regarding the age at recruitment of victims more than half (18 persons) were recruited as minor, 6 of them younger than 15 years, at the second recruitment (4 cases) there were two minors and two adults. When interviewing majority, a number of 31 people, were adults.

Ethnicity/ No. of people		Age	Recruitment 1	Recruitment 2	Interview	Educational level/ No. of people		Numbers of interviews/ No. of people	
			No. of people	No. of people	No. of people				
Romanian	24	12-15	6	1		no	2	One interview	28
Roma	10	16-17	12	1	5	1- 4	3	Two interviews	8
Hungarian	2	18-20	8	1	15	5-8	12		
		21-33	8	1	16	9-12	16		
						professional	1		
						college	2		
<b>Total</b>			34	4			36	<b>Total</b>	44

Table 2. Frequency table of personal data of interviewed victims on ethnicity, age, number of interviews, educational status.

Regarding the education level of the victims at the time of recruitment 5 people graduated primary school, and another 12 victims graduated secondary school tops. As concerning those who have been trained in high school education system many dropped out of school because they have been trafficked. Countries where victims were exploited reflect the variety shown in the official reports (ANITP 2011, 2012, 2013, Eurostat, 2014), almost half of victims being exploited inside the country, the most frequent destination of traffickers being Italy and Spain.

Looking to the various experiences of the victims, we can see that : 7 people were exploited from one day to 3 weeks, 4 up to 3 months, 6 people between 4 and 6 months, and most of them for a period longer than half a year: 9 victims at least eight months and up to one year while 8 people from one year to three and a half years.

According to the number of trafficking experiences, we found: 2 trafficking attempts, 3 cases of re-victimization (victims escaped the traffic situation and were re - victimized by trafficking again) and 5 cases in which we can speak of multiple sales (these victims never managed to escape between two sales).

Trafficking country/ no. of people	no. of people		Place of exploitation/ no. of people		Period of exploitation/ no of people	
	first	Second				
Romania	14	4	street	12	1 day - 3 weeks	7
Italy	7	2	club	7	1 month– 3 months	4
Spain	4	1	apartment	6	4 months – 6 months	6
France	2		customers' houses	2	8 months– 12 months	9
England	1		street, apartment	2	13 months– 42 months	8
Austria	1		street, hotel	2		
Switzerland	1		bar	1		
Greece	1		hotel	1		
Ireland	1		shop windows	1		
The Netherlands	1					
Sweden	1					
Germany	0	1				
Turkey	0	1				
attempt	2					
<b>Total</b>	36	9		34		

Table 3. Frequency table of the personal data of the interviewed victims on the destination country, location and period of operation

**Chapter 5** contains the results of the present research structured in four sections: 1. The first step of data analysis represented the study of information on sex trafficking in Romania, describing the phases of trafficking: recruitment, transportation, exploitation and escape (with the possibility of re-trafficking); 2. After the descriptive analysis I identified the vulnerability factors acting at societal and community level having consequences on the phenomenon in general; 3. To highlight the heterogeneity of the population of victims I carried out an analysis based on opportunity in order to outline 7 subcategories, clusters of sex trafficking victims where relational and individual factors act differently but whose interference lead to increased risk of victimization in the presence of a motivated trafficker; 4. After studying the literature and the information outlined by respondents in this research I generated a model called integrated

dynamic model of vulnerability to victimization by sexual trafficking, which is extendedly presented in the last part of this chapter.

### **The main research results**

Regarding the evolution of the phenomenon, most interviewed experts reported that in recent years the internal trafficking has increased, the percentages of external and cross-border trafficking have tended to be equalized, as more victims are sexually exploited in Romania, a fact confirmed by official statistics (ANITP, 2013). Regarding the spread of the phenomenon, although official statistics show a decrease in the number of trafficking victims identified in 2011 compared to 2010 and 2012 to 2011 (ANITP, 2013), most experts believe that the phenomenon is increasingly spreading. According to both experts, and official statistics (ANITP, 2011), during the research, the main destination countries remained Italy and Spain, followed by France, The Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Greece, Great Britain, Cyprus, Croatia and, lately, the Scandinavian countries, as well as non-EU countries such as ex-Yugoslavian countries or even Japan. Interviews with experts and victims showed that in case of multiple acts of exploitation (multiple sales or exploitation in multiple locations) the routes used by traffickers to exploit a person are not necessarily unidirectional from the home country (Romania) to the destination country, but may show a circular dynamic: victims to be exploited in Romania, then abroad and then again in Romania.

The analysis, both of the literature review, and the of the results of qualitative data analysis of the interviews with experts, victims and caregivers outline some key relationships: informing the public and raising awareness on the phenomenon characteristics, and developing the state system of protection and social assistance do increase the capacity of this system to identify trafficking cases; the instability of protection / assistance services adversely affect the ability to identify cases as well as the capacity to maintain victims in social assistance and/or in collaboration with representatives of the judiciary system; lack of government support and the continuous reform of government institutions increased services' instability by limiting the ability of victims' identification, support, case management capacity (including the ability to enter data into the national database) and the power of social control of traffickers.

One category of factors that distort the evaluation of the phenomenon's prevalence is due to the lack of international collaboration, of a European/worldwide information data base. Another obstacle in gathering real information is the reluctance of the exploited people to acknowledging themselves as victims or in asking for help.

Interviews reveal that the trafficking networks have decreased in number compared to 2000-2005, and are made out of 2-4 people and are usually part of the same family. The roles are very well defined, men play a protective part, women can be matrons or recruiters, but they also handle the control over the victims' behaviour and during "working hours" play an active part in recruiting clients looking for sexual services (on the street or in bars). European Union citizens coming to Romania led implicitly to the reconsideration of the human trafficking process, starting with recruiting, transportation, exploitation and up to the speculation of differences in legal system regarding prostitution, the methods becoming much more refined.

By analysing vulnerability factors, poverty's role in increasing the risk level persists. People who come from areas or families that live under the subsistence level suffer the most excruciating forms of exploitation, economical poverty showing a direct connection to different risk factors such as school drop-out, drug use within the family or friends' circle, the existence of violence and the proximity of crime whose influence proportionally increase vulnerability.

Corruption, discrimination, the lack or limitation of getting integrated and accomplished on the labour market, the superficial or neglecting attitude of those having duties in fighting crime or in giving assistance in the social network assistance system (child's protection, and of those in difficulty) have a general negative effect on all socio-economical categories.

In discussing interview data we proceeded to the analysis of the stages of human trafficking. The first one being the recruitment, the results confirm the notifications that indicate a large variety of recruiting methods (Anino anu, 2012, Gavril i T ma , 2009, Arpinte i Cre u, 2007, Yea, 2005 Vocks i Nijoboer, 2000) with a large variety, using more or less violence with a tendency of manipulation, without its direct use. Physical violence appears more in the exploitation phase.

As actual recruiting strategies we identified kidnapping, job offers, care taking offers, the offer of reaching financial wealth, of reaching financial autonomy and the "elite entourage", the work

offer with the hope of starting a relationship and the plan for the future of an already formed couple. The starting point of a contact with the potential victim is usually a face to face encounter, but there are also cases in which virtual channels or telephone is used by the recruiters. The contact established via internet is realised through social networks or job mediation platforms. Regarding the recruiting through job offers, this kind of offers usually appear among the real ones diminishing thus the vigilance of the possible victims.

During the transportation stage of the victims we notice the high degree of liberty of movement of the Romanian citizens, neither traffickers nor victims are pressured in choosing risky ways or methods in crossing the border. The majority cross the borders of the country/ countries legally. Concerning the situation of the underage whose parents did not agree in front of the public notary they can be in the situation of illegally crossing the border when trafficker either have false papers or have connections within the customs workers that are bribed (“fees” vary between 20 and 50 euro) in order to let minors pass the borders without checking their papers.

Based on the interview with specialist and victims, most of the victims that have been identified in Romania or abroad have been exploited on the street (outdoor) but there also seems to be sexual exploitation irrespective of the location or legal norms existing in the destination country. The traffickers show their creativity and their capacities to adapt to different contexts and constraints in maintaining the victim in the exploitation status. During the analysis of the exploitative relationship we recognized many elements that were already known to us through the study of the violent couple relationships or by studying the behaviour of the abusive people: blackmail, physical violence, the alternation of violent behaviour with special attention, financial constraint, excessive control, emotional manipulation (Forward, 2014, Simon, 2009) .

Some of victims succeeded in getting out of the exploiting situation on their own (they found the moment when they could run) or with the help of a client who came in search of sexual services or with the help of the law enforcement. In most cases a mix of the above elements was needed: the courage of taking the risk and asking a client for help, not knowing if he is a collaborator /friend of the traffickers, the help of the family that acted in parallel from home and the victim that had to actively contribute to free herself (for example: to come to a previously arranged meeting and to state in a loud voice that she/he is being kept against her/his will and wants to

leave that situations were the necessary conditions for the police to intervene). We managed to also notice some facts that ease the escape: knowing the language or the existence of the supportive people that speak the native language of the victims (if they reached the denouncing stage, each victim benefited from the presence of a translator); taking the risk by the victim and persisting in looking for means of escape; the prompt and clear reaction of the authorities at the victim's request, the existence of at least one supportive person, actions, police raids.

In the analysis of the vulnerability factors at societal and community level we included three big categories: the economic factors, the legal ones and the ones connected to values, traditions and social attitude.

1. the economic factors: poverty and the lack of opportunity, problems connected to the work environment and payment, educational system and policies of deficient job training.
2. the legal factors: the legislative deficiencies and inefficiency in the practice of bringing the traffickers to justice for the committed crimes and ensuring the rights, protection, information and assistance of the victim, corruption.
3. the factors connected to values, traditions, attitudes: discrimination, problems of gender, the normalization of buying and selling sexual services.

By using the cluster analysis we crayoned the existence of seven victim type whose vulnerability can be described by the opportunity theory centred on the interested trafficker, congruent target and lack of supervision through the existence or nonexistence of the relational and individual risk factors.

**The cluster of the needy and without support** can be described as the group of homeless people, with mental or other illness, without the experience of positive attachment relationships during their lifetime, whose interpersonal relationships are characterized by a lot of violence, abuse and neglect. People from this victim group do not benefit from institutional support, have a low education and no formal education. Their vulnerability consists in the high degree of exposure to crime, the lack of life abilities, substance use, and risky sexual behaviour. The interested trafficker of this category uses the method of offering food, shelter or bathing.

**The group of those exploited by their own family:** the minor representative of the group are exploited by their own parents or tutors (formal or informal) and those adult are exploited by husbands or lovers. These cases are more likely to be presented through the terms of the sexual abuse on the child (and not only) and that of the domestic violence. In this cases, the perpetrators come from the most familiar area of the victim, they are the ones that should offer supervision and protection against victimization. A characteristic of the cases of domestic violence is that interpersonal relation outside the family are very difficult to make, and thus the existence of support from outside is also lacking. The vulnerability if the victims can be described by the consequences of the abuse in the family (the ambivalence towards the exploiter, the lack of trust in the chance of changing their life for the better, the hope that the situation will solve itself and the aggressor will change). The interested trafficker is here the familial aggressor that seems to be involved in exploiting other women, girls or in committing other crimes: stealing, robbing, physical aggression. It also worth mentioning the existence of the underworld families where a part of the family members are exploiters (men and older women) and the rest are being exploited (children and younger women).

**The group of those who escaped violent relationships,** is a group similar to the one presented before with underage and adult victims. The most important difference is that the members of the family are not connected and do not contact the trafficker's network. Here also we encounter family violence that marks the lives of victims who struggle to escape these circumstances and take on risky escaping methods through which they end up by being recruited. Supervision is lacking because of the abusive relationships and generally these victims' violent relationship remain invisible for the social care and protection system so they try to find a solution themselves. In this situation resourceful elements may appear: at least a person with whom they had a positive attachment experience which is interpreted as an internal resource in the wish of changing her life for the better. The aspirations connected to the escape and gaining freedom on their own turned out to be a major risk factor in the presence of an interested trafficker, without the support of different other means. The interested trafficker acts successfully as a "trusted friend" who approaches the victim by offering a job and emotional support.

**The group of the social innovators.** The term of social innovator is taken from the works of L z roiu (2001, L z roiu i Alexandru, 2003) and reflects the active character of some of the potential victims that despite their precarious situation wish to improve it and they take action in this sense, as opposed to those that chose acceptance of the current situation. Here we have two subgroups: those who have a relative good situation but they want to improve their living standard and those who live in poverty, sometimes under the subsistence level. Regarding the characteristics of the supervision in this group we find far better family relationships, positive relationships and attachment but they are not that tight so as to convince the victim to abandon the migration plan. The fact that the members of this group consulted the family who has not noticed the signals of the deceit we could think at a vulnerability character of the family itself regarding the capacity of analysing the job offer, the ability of taking a decision based on cost - benefits, and risks - opportunities. The interested traffickers may come from various fields from “family friends” to mediation companies which act through fake job offers.

**The group of the lost and displaced** victims can be described through low quality family supervision, and a life history made out of sequences: e period of time with the mother, one at the grandparents, at a sister, relative and again at the grandparents etc. after which they start moving at close or distant friends. Often enough we meet fathers who abandoned their family and mothers in new relationships in which children (from previous relationships or marriages) are already seen as a burden. The young women tend to be captured in the apartments of acquaintances, or they run or are chased away from their homes. The vulnerability of young women from this group is increased by the fact that the girls drop-out of school (before 8<sup>th</sup> grade), they lack interest in education, personal or professional development, they have lots of unstructured time that they try to fill in by “walks in the town”, with unreal expectation over couple relationship and setting up a family. Another risk factor is the vicinity of people or groups of people with a criminal character that increase exposure level of young women. The trafficker, usually with an interest, reacts at the girl’s aspiration of a “movie-like” love relationship or at her aspiration of the loving parents. In these situations the traffickers act alone or in couple.



**The rebels' group.** The young women in this group belong 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. From the point of view of the education, the parents have a professional education (up to higher education), have a job and are valued in the community. Regarding the lack of supervision, in this category the parents do not give time and attention to their daughters because of their working schedule. The rules existent in the family are either too strict or too permissive and powerless. In both situations the girls declare emotional neglect. In this type of families often there is discrimination between girls and boys (that later usually get more attention, favors and freedom). The conflicts, the tension in the family are treated superficially. The individual vulnerability of the young girls comes from their desire of becoming someone very early, without the necessary financial, human or informational capital in order to fulfil their aspiration of wellbeing and independence. On a personal level there also behaviours connected to experiencing new sensations, subjective poverty, the lack of a real support from an adult, tendency in crossing norms, drug abuse and the mirage of the “scene”. The interested traffickers seem to be the experienced ones, experienced in manipulative approach and that aim beautiful targets, young and educated to exploit in the luxury industry or sex luxury industry.

The last group described according to the interview analysis is that of the **risky altruists**. The expression refers to those apparently or really altruistic types that increase the victim's level of exposure in the proximity of an interested trafficker. The representatives of this group come from families where helping and sacrificing oneself for the other is highly praised. Almost always their families have a sick family member whose care is also the responsibility of children, without totally taking it over. The circle of close friends has the tendency of also exploiting it. Individual vulnerability comes from firstly wanting to help the others, of being of some use, of polite behaviour without contradicting the others. The interested traffickers are exploiting these “saviur”-like tendencies telling the story of a friend or someone closely connected to him who needs “saving” from a possible victim situation and thus the victim is lured to the criminal's vicinity.

In the last phase of the analysis we generated **an integrated model of vulnerability** built on the elements of the interested trafficker, lack of supervision and of the congruent target. The prior analysis of the recruiting strategies and the victim like projection of the exploited persons prove the same time existence of the three elements is the minimum but rarely sufficient criterion for the successful recruiting of the traffickers. The interested trafficker does not observe or select the victim on the basis of her attractiveness, vulnerability and lack of supervision but he/she actively influences/manipulates it in order to increase attractiveness and vulnerability and to further limit the (familial and community's) supervision. In their manipulating activities the recruiters usually use informers that are usually trusted people of the victim and whose actual involvement is difficult to prove, but their presence is also important from the point of view of the vulnerability of the victim.

These results and the generated model were built so as to lead to practical benefits, by improving the understanding of the victim's profile, without which there is not efficient intervention from the part of the system of protection or assistance or justice. Along with the identification of the victim's typology, we can approach victims having in mind their characteristics and specific needs without neglecting those who do not fit the sexual exploited victim "profile". The integrated dynamic model can offer us complementary ideas to those already known in elaborating the protection plan and in establishing the themes for community/family/individual counseling.

**The 6<sup>th</sup> chapter** of the thesis includes the presentations of the conclusions, recommendations, the limits of the research and an outline of the main directions in future research.

The results of the research previously presented lead to conclusions of practical value that we present as a recommendation.

As shown by the analysis, a high social cohesion can have a protective effect against sexual exploitation, even in the presence of different risk factors centered round the families, community and adolescents. This fact marks that in assistance and in reintegration programmes an important path of intervention programs should be the rebuilding of social cohesion around the victims of trafficking.. We do not have enough institutions, organizations to deal with counseling and familial assistance (family centers), so we should rely more on social networks.

Even if there will not be any new services, there is a need of stressing the importance of approaching vulnerability from the larger family and community level as well.

The need of the special programmes for adolescents has also become evident: information and preventions activities, but also activities centered round improving life skills and the promotion of safe relationships.

Results also attract attention upon the traps of the rights stipulated by the law. For a realist assistance plan we need a harmonization between the norms and the services stipulated by the law regarding the category of the victims of human trafficking and the services and general social politics. Otherwise, we risk that all the high elaborated standards will only exist on paper.

The acknowledgment and clarification of the heterogeneous character of the victims of sexual exploitation population 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 of specific prevention and intervention activities, centered on the vulnerability factors corresponding to the respective category.

If we think to weaken the vulnerability factors we need efficient strategies connected to reduce poverty (both subjective and objective poverty) but also school abandonment. In this respect we would like to insist upon the importance of the school programs like “The Second Chance Program”, 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.

As for the prevention, we would like to underline the necessity of the combined action: stopping victimization by preventing crime and promoting acknowledgement of professionals, as well as those who benefit from sexual services.

### **The limitations of the research:**

One of the limitations of the research refers to the selection of the researched group. The study includes only those sexually exploited people who have been included in different assistance or monitoring programmes. We did not succeed to explore the history and characteristics of those who did not benefit from such programmes. Another limitation is connected to the

underrepresentation of the male victims in the research group. Even though their number is less than that of female victims (Eurostat, 2013, UNODC, 2014), interviewing only one male victim in this research is not enough to tell something about male trafficked for sexual exploitation. Similarly, the study does not include sexual exploitation of the refugees, a category that is largely represented in the materials elaborated by the destination countries. All people that have been interviewed for being exploited abroad have been recruited in their country of origin.

Also, by interviewing specialists from the assistance and the victims (with few family members) we had a disproportionate vision and evaluation of the phenomenon. We do not have enough information from the traffickers and clients' perspective that would be also very important in having a complex and real image about the weaknesses of the support and legal systems.

At the end of the thesis are described new directions to the topic of this research:

- To efficiently elaborate the methodology for psycho-social and juridical intervention it would be useful to study interviewed people's evolution during the assistance programme, the services they benefit from and their effect.
- A point of interest would also be the verification of the results (categories and the theoretical model) on 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.
- Another aspect that would deserve testing is the model and the results obtained during this research and enlarging the researched area towards the perpetrator (the interested trafficker) and towards the sexual services industry itself.
- Adding studies that target the attitude and behaviour of the Romanian population connected to their consumer behavior for sexual services/industry would enlarge the picture upon the entire phenomenon and would also touch upon a less studied domain in Romania.

**Key words:** human trafficking in the purpose of sexual exploitation, vulnerability, victimization, vulnerability factors, ecological theory, the opportunity theory, integrated dynamic model.

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### **Legi, directive i strategii**

*DIRECTIVA 2011/36/UE a Parlamentului European i a Consiliului din 5 aprilie 2011, privind prevenirea i combaterea traficului de persoane i protejarea victimelor acestuia*, precum i de înlocuire a Deciziei-cadru 2002/629/JAI a Consiliului, Jurnalul Oficial al Uniunii Europene, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32011L0036&from=RO>, accesat la 20 august 2014.

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