



# Hearing of victims taking into account PHIT

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# Victim interviews

- 15 victims
  - > 5 West-African
  - > 4 Eastern-European
  - > 6 Dutch
- Themes
  - > Childhood
  - > Vulnerabilities
  - > Trafficking experiences
  - > Interaction with stakeholders
  - > Psychological consequences

# Victim interviews

- On average exploitation lasted more than 4 years.
- Few victims, answers not representative for entire population but do give an interesting insight.

# Hearing victims of trafficking

- Vulnerable group
- Often negative perceptions of the police
- Lack of self-identification
- Protecting the trafficker
  
- Two groups:
  - > Victims who self-identify
  - > Victims who do not self-identify
  
- Each group has its own difficulties

# Identification

- Self-identification
  - > Accustomed to violent relationships
  - > Victim stereotypes and autonomy
  - > Relationship with the trafficker
  - > (Mild) intellectual disability
  
- Q. When did you realize you were in a situation of exploitation?
  - > Interviews - File study

# Identification: Problem

- Law enforcement: We know they are victims of trafficking, but they keep denying it and declining assistance, so there is nothing we can do.
- Victims of trafficking: Law enforcement knew that I was being trafficked and they should have done more to make me realize the gravity of the situation.
- Is too much independence and autonomy expected of victims?

# Victims say: more pressure, less independence

- Trafficking victims are used to choices being made for them by the trafficker.
  - > Can I use the bathroom?
  - > What should I wear?
  - > Can I watch tv?
  - > Can I eat some food?
- Sudden independence and individual decision-making is a big step. “We can’t handle that yet.”

# Case

- Eastern-European victim was working in prostitution due to deception by her boyfriend (and father of children).
- During police raid she was offered assistance and declined. Her children were taken away from her.
- Years later, after escaping sexual exploitation, she says: “I can’t believe that the police left me there for so long. I did not understand the situation, but they did.”



# Mixed expectations

- Victims hope / expect that the police will protect and save them
  - > Make sure we don't go back to the trafficker
  - > More thorough questioning
- Law enforcement hopes / expects that victims will collaborate and give consistent testimonies.
  - > Why would they go back to a person who abused them for so long? They are autonomous individuals.

# What's next?

- Victims mention they needed more pressure.
- At the time, they still did not want to cooperate or accept assistance.
- Law enforcement is not supposed to put pressure on victims.
  - > Emphasize negative consequences of declining assistance
  - > Convincing victims of their victimhood

# Emphasize negative consequences of declining assistance

- Especially victims with children seem more likely to accept assistance after ‘pressure’
- “They told me my options were simple. Either I would accept assistance and I would live with my child in a safe location or I would stay with my boyfriend and my child would be taken away from me.”
- Victims were grateful for this approach. Others wished this approach was used with them.

# Convincing victims of their victimhood

- Many victims needed to be convinced of their victimhood by the police.
  - > From evidence: Some victims were aware of the 'wrongness' of the situation but still unwilling to report to the police.
- Some victims only wanted to report after finding out other negative things about the trafficker
  - > His new girlfriend was allowed to keep the baby and I was forced to have an abortion.
  - > He had an affaire with my best friend behind my back.

# Convincing victims of their victimhood: How far can you go?

- Consequences of declining assistance
- Intentions of the trafficker
- Private life of the victim
- Private life of the trafficker
  - > Confronting victim with evidence
  - > Verbally reinforcing victims own thoughts which were found in evidence
  - > Confronting victim with traffickers' private life

# Convincing victims of their victimhood

- Two problems
  - > Secondary victimization
  - > Use of information by defense lawyer

# Studio questioning

- Specially trained
- Prevent secondary victimization because things are explained. With this type of questioning there is less room for 'interpretation of interaction' for the victim.
  - > Why questions are asked
  - > Why so much repetition
  - > Why so much clarification
  - > Use of terminology

# Questions?

- Thank you