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CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL WORKERS PROVIDING SOCIAL SERVICES TO ADULT VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SELECT SHELTERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Human trafficking is a global multi-million dollar industry which capitalises on the trade in human beings. It inflicts degrading experiences on its victims, hence its characterisation as modern-day slavery. This research aimed to investigate social service provision to adult victims of human trafficking in South Africa. A qualitative approach was used; data were collected using individual interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that social workers faced challenges such as delays in court cases, complicated trauma, security issues and mistrust – all impacting on service delivery.

KEYWORDS: adult victims, assistance provision, human trafficking, shelters, social services, social work

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INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is a global multi-million-dollar industry which capitalizes on the trade in humans – both young and old. Human trafficking inflicts suffering, indignity, shame and other degrading experiences on its victims. It has also been referred to as a crime against humanity (Sweileh, 2018). This is because the traffickers use physical and psycho-emotional control tactics, in combination with physical, sexual and psychological abuse, which then leave deep scars and damage the victims. Various studies show that the reasons for trafficking and exploitation vary. For example, labour trafficking victims are usually migrant workers used in different occupational fields such as mining, fishing, agriculture, forced sex work and factory work (Kiss & Zimmerman, 2019). Other reasons include sexual exploitation and prostitution (Edwards & Mika, 2017), domestic labour (Donger & Bhabha, 2018), body parts and organ removal (Fellows, 2008), and for marriage. Estimates indicate that 40.3 million people (mostly women) are trafficked, and this includes 25 million people trafficked into forced labour and 15 million into forced marriages (ILO, 2016). Given this large number, "intensified efforts require a greater understanding of modifiable factors and causal pathways that lead to trafficking in different contexts and for individual populations" (Kiss & Zimmerman, 2019:1).

Service provision to victims of trafficking is not an area that is well documented globally (Muraya & Fry, 2016; Powell, Asbill, Louis & Stoklosa, 2018) or in South Africa, despite the commendable work done in this field over the last few years. Similar sentiments have also been put forward in a countertrafficking study by Oketch, Morreau and Benson (2011). South African-based studies by Warria (2014) and Sambo and Spies (2014) looked at the roles of social workers in interventions involving child victims of trafficking. A recent paper by Sambo and Spies (2020) looked at the trauma experienced by women survivors of trafficking in South Africa. This study investigates the challenges described by Muraya and Fry (2016) and Balfour, Callands, Okech and Kombian (2020) faced by practitioners in documenting their work for the purposes of sharing information and building an evidence base for social work practice. In South Africa, although the 2004 Service Charter for Victims supports the country's Constitution (1996) and highlights the rights of victims, including service provision to human trafficking victims, few studies have been conducted on this and few organisations provide comprehensive services to the victims. Both authors of this paper are social workers and they chose to study social workers intervening on behalf of victims of trafficking, because social workers have the knowledge and skills set required for this (Clawson & Dutch, 2008; Mapp, 2008; Palmer, 2010).

The aim of the overall postgraduate study was to explore how social workers, as part of the social service professions, assist adult victims of trafficking through rehabilitation and successful reintegration in order for them to reach their full potential. In line with this, the research question posed was: *What are the perspectives of social workers in shelters on the provision of social services to adult victims of human trafficking and what kind of services do they render to these victims?* This paper reports on one of the

objectives of the study, which was to explore the challenges experienced by social workers working with adult victims of trafficking. It builds on work by Warria (2018a) on challenges in service provision to child victims of trafficking in South Africa. First, an overview of trafficking in South Africa will be presented. The authors also review selected literature on social work and human trafficking. Next the research methodology is outlined, and the findings presented. Finally, implications for social work practice are highlighted.

AN OVERVIEW OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African government has adopted the UN definition of trafficking, but also opted for a holistic, broader approach to trafficking. The South African Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (PACOTIP) (2013) takes the local context into consideration with regards to exploitation by listing a variety of ways in which this occurs. In the PACOTIP (2013), Sec. 4(1) defines trafficking as follows:

> "Any person who delivers, recruits, transports, transfers, harbours, sells, exchanges, leases or receives another person within or across the borders of the Republic by means of
>
> - a threat of harm;
> - the threat or use of force, intimidation or other forms of coercion;
> - the abuse of vulnerability;
> - fraud;
> - deception or false pretences;
> - debt bondage;
> - abduction;
> - kidnapping;
> - the abuse of power;
> - the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to obtain the consent of a person having control or authority over another person; or
> - the giving or receiving of payments, compensation, rewards, benefits or any other advantage,
>
> aimed at either the person or an immediate family member of that person or any person in close relationship to that person, for the purpose of any form or manner of exploitation, is guilty of the offence of trafficking in persons.
>
> Any person who –
>
> - adopts a child, facilitated or secured through illegal means; or
> - concludes a forced marriage with another person, within or across the borders of the Republic, for the purpose of exploitation of that child or other person in any form or manner, is guilty of an offence."

Other South African legislation that can and has been used to prosecute perpetrators alleged to have committed trafficking-related offences includes the Children's Act 38 of 2005, the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) 75 of 1997 and the Films and Publications Act 65 of 1996. Kruger's (2010) study looked at the South African legal approach to combating trafficking, and her subsequent paper (i.e. Kruger, 2012) as well as Buthelezi's (2015) and Kreston's (2014) work also pursued this theme. It has been noted that because of the complex nature of trafficking, the prosecution of a case is often an extremely lengthy process (Clawson, Small, Go & Myles, 2003) and can leave the victim re-traumatized. However, recent

convictions in South Africa include *Jezile v S and Other*, where Jezile was convicted of abducting a 14year-old girl for *ukuthwala* (forced marriage).

A number of risk factors associated with trafficking have been identified in several South African studies (Lutya, 2010; Walker & Oliviera, 2015; Warria, Nel & Triegaardt, 2014). Individual risk factors (e.g. gender, age, marginalisation, prior victimisation, homelessness, refugee status) and societal and public policy risk factors (e.g. gender oppression, economic/socio-political instability, trafficking (mis)perceptions) can influence trafficking. Community risk factors (e.g. lack of opportunities, social norms, social isolation, sexualisation of children) and institutional risk factors (e.g. lack of resources, poor implementation of policies) can also increase an individual's risk of being trafficked. Furthermore, inter-personal and relationship risk factors (e.g. family conflict, disruption or dysfunction) can also contribute to trafficking. One of the main causes of trafficking, which links to all risk factors, is poverty, although trafficking and development are often treated as separate policy areas (Danailova-Trainor & Laczko, 2010). The ecological framework shows that the causal factors at every identified level in the system in South Africa are interdependent and they interact with one another.

South Africa is a continental economic powerhouse and as such attracts transnational crime. The geographical position of South Africa puts the country at greater risk of transnational crime, as it is bordered by two oceans and six countries (Araujo, 2011). The IOM (2010) also refers to South Africa's porous borders as an enabler of cross-border human trafficking. Recent media reports indicate that trafficking is on the rise in South Africa (Naidoo, 2019). The report also mentions that people are trafficked through being offered false job opportunities, by friends and/or family members, and through false relationships and recruitment methods such as the lover-boy approach. The Department of Social Development reported that 101 cases of trafficking were identified and assisted in 13 accredited multipurpose shelters (US Trafficking-in-Persons Report, 2016). The media report by Naidoo (2019) highlights 105 cases assisted through the trafficking hotline. These reports show that South Africa is a point of origin, transit and destination for trafficked victims.

SOCIAL WORK AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Several studies have provided evidence on the consequences of trafficking (Aberdein & Zimmerman, 2015; Crisp, 2012; Oram et al., 2015; Rafferty, 2008, 2018; Zimmerman et al., 2006; Zimmerman et al., 2003). The psychological/mental health consequences of trafficking identified in various studies include: PTSD, depression, emotional aloofness, anxiety, self-blame, scary dreams, a sense of helplessness and meaninglessness, anger, anger-control problems, suicidal ideations and attempts, paranoia, memory difficulties, Stockholm syndrome, problems with daily hygiene, difficulty sleeping, high or low appetite, and dissociative disorders. The physical health consequences include neurological issues, respiratory distress, gastrointestinal disturbances, headaches, fatigue, fractures and bruises, broken and missing teeth, brain injury and substance abuse. The study by Zimmerman et al. (2006) highlighted sexual and reproductive health consequences, including abnormal vaginal discharge, pelvic pain, unwanted pregnancies and induced abortions, heavy bleeding, high rates of HIV and sexually transmitted infections/diseases. Recent studies by Kiss and Zimmerman (2019) and Hemmings et al. (2016) argue that although trafficking is a health concern, there has been little engagement with health professionals and government health departments. Trafficked victims have limited educational attainment or lack education, with outcomes including developmental delays, verbal and memory skills deficits, language and cognitive challenges (Rafferty, 2008). When the consequences of trafficking are understood, it becomes possible to have a transformative practice within a social work framework and context that accommodates the victims' experiences of trafficking.

The risk factors, discussed above, and the consequences highlight how crucial it is for victims of trafficking to receive professional psychosocial care and support. This care should also include spiritual care (Warria & Chikadzi, 2020). Trauma and its impact should be understood by all professions working with the victim, because "when the system is functioning well, the victim receives the message that the

support she has is stronger than traffickers and she regains the power she had lost by becoming a trafficking victim" (Koricanac, 2013:31). Human trafficking victims, whether children or adults, suffer greatly, and when rescued from the exploitive situation, they present with a range of needs (Sambo & Spies, 2020; Warria & Chikadzi, 2018). It is vital that role-players who render services to victims of human trafficking should work within a victim-centred approach, being cognisant of the trauma the person has experienced. They should also display behaviour that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of the victims, and ensures that the victim has a right to choose the assistance needed. This speaks to the importance of transcultural interventions, where the victims' range of complex needs are seen in a broad context and addressed within a holistic framework (Rafferty, 2018). Social workers are ideally placed to play a key role in social service provision. According to Salett (2006:3), social workers "serve as a key access point to services in the social and health care systems; they also have an important role to play in helping to identify individuals who may be trafficking victims and assisting them to obtain needed services".

According to Ife (2013:89), social work should not be limited to, or only associated with, providing for individuals' human needs, but rather be a profession that is focused on "defining, realizing and guaranteeing human rights." This links well with previous comments by Mapp (2008), who reported that social workers have a key role to play when intervening with victims of human trafficking by helping them to realize their rights. This could be done by addressing issues on a macro level such as advocating for legislation to address the needs and uphold the rights of trafficking victims, as well as on a micro level by providing social assistance to enable victims of human trafficking to experience the benefits of their human rights. When linkages between trafficking, development and anti-trafficking policy are made and understood better, then improved policies to promote development and combat trafficking can be designed and implemented (Danailova-Trainor & Laczko, 2010).

The Vietnam Ministry for Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) (2011:1), in its manual for social workers and staff providing services to victims of human trafficking, asserts that by operating from a human rights approach, the practitioner embraces minimum human rights standards to "promote, protect and exercise basic rights of victims of human trafficking". The manual further states that through empowerment, self-determination and non-discrimination, service providers can help victims to participate in their own assistance process by making their own decisions. This, however, can also mean refusing support (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2008; West & Loeffler, 2015).

The South African Victim Empowerment Programme states that core human rights are promoted and protected by generally providing services that adhere to the following principles: "that the needs of victims are identified and addressed, stimulation of volunteer participation, secondary victimisation is minimised, encouragement of working together with the criminal justice system, enforcement of socially desirable behaviour and prevention in terms of services to offenders and potential offenders" (DSD, 2009:1-2).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was used in the study. Leedy and Omrod (2010:94) state that the aim of qualitative research is "to examine the many nuances and complexities of a particular phenomenon." According to Fouché and Schurink (2011), through a qualitative research approach, one can obtain in-depth personal information from study participants. This research aimed to obtain detailed information on the experiences of the participants working as social service workers in the field of human trafficking. A case study design was used in this study because the purpose was to "understand the case in depth, and in its natural setting, recognizing its complexity and its context" (Punch, 2014:120).

The first author interviewed eight social workers at the shelters where they were employed. The shelters that were selected were located in the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces, and they provide accommodation and programmes for female victims of human trafficking. The selected shelters provide long-term accommodation and not simply emergency accommodation. The inclusion criteria were that

participants must be registered social workers working at an accredited shelter, they must have worked with adult human trafficking victims for at least three months, and they need to be available during the data-collection stage. The fact that there are limited shelters in South Africa that provide specialized services to victims of human trafficking ensured that the scope of the research was not too large. Social workers intervening with child victims of trafficking were not included in this study. The social work experience with trafficking for the study ranged from three months to 13 years. Recruitment was limited to geographical areas with shelters providing counter-trafficking services. This, together with the datacollection period, yielded few cases. However, Silverman (2005) states that a qualitative research approach tends to work with relatively few cases, ensuring that the case is studied in detail. However, the rich and thick descriptions, from eight social workers recruited and interviewed for the study, provided adequate data as data saturation was reached. There is a paucity of literature on social service provision at shelters and this study therefore aims to contribute to the subject.

The caution sounded by Clark-Kazak (2017) on the nature of dependence on support received, in this case from the government department where the first author (Botha) was working, was considered carefully during the consent process. When researching violence and victims, "researchers' questions may add to the burden of recalling painful experiences of conflict, violence, violations and abuse" (ClarkKazan, 2017:11) and therefore the authors decided to look at the perspectives of service providers instead. The Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP) provincial coordinators (as gatekeepers) readily agreed that the study could be conducted, but the first author ensured that the study participants understood that they had a right to refuse to participate at any point and that this would not jeopardise their employment or the funding that their shelter receives. In accordance with the duty to protect the service providers' personal information and that of the vulnerable trafficking victims with whom they work, data were anonymised soon after data collection and the names of the organisations where the service providers are working will not be revealed in this paper and/or any future publications or symposiums.

The research commenced after receiving approval from the Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand (certificate clearance number: H15/06/07). Participants took part in the research voluntarily and were assured that they could withdraw anytime without any repercussions. It was explained that if they withdrew from the study, their data would not be used, and it would be destroyed. Botha gave the participants the participation information sheet and explained the contents of the information sheet to them before they signed the consent form to participate and to record the interview. Participants were assured that numbers would be used to safeguard their identity, even when the final report was written up. The data that were collected and transcribed were kept in a locked office, password protected on the laptop used and locked in cabinet. The researchers also ensured that the participants were not harmed in any way. The data were transcribed verbatim by Botha and analysed using thematic analysis.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Providing services to adult human trafficking victims can be complex and challenging. The research participants identified the challenges they experience in delivering social services to victims. These challenges include the real concern over security, mistrust, complications of trauma experienced by the adult victim and the impact of service delivery caused by the length of stay, all of which will be discussed next.

Security

Human trafficking is by its nature a criminal act. The victims of human trafficking are valuable assets to the traffickers, as they are a cheap source of a good income. Therefore, when trafficking victims are rescued, there are major concerns about the security of the individual. The rescue represents a loss of income to the trafficker and, more seriously, can expose the traffickers and their network. Shelters take security very seriously by only allowing referrals by law enforcement agencies and organisations that

form part of the Human Trafficking Response Team. The participants also stated that the shelters enforce further security measures that include taking the victim's cell phones, monitoring calls and restricting the movement of the victims outside of the shelter. These security measures are implemented in order to ensure that the adult human trafficking victim does not willingly or unwittingly disclose the location of the shelter. The comments below elaborate on this point.

> *We take their cell phones* [away] *also first. I check the phones ... I let the Hawks first call and see if it's … if it's the person, the family member she is talking about; and then we work with the Hawks to see what their plan is.* (Social worker 8)

> *With victims of human trafficking we don't allow them to go out … they go out if they are being accompanied by the Hawks or embassy* [officials] *or us ... They are not allowed to have phones with them.* (Social worker 5)

> *The other challenges it can maybe come from the victim herself. It depends if she was trafficked maybe in prostitution how much money she was making them, how much freedom was she having. Because although she was trafficked, some of them they do go shopping and do all those things and now you are caging that person you cannot go to the shop, you cannot do what, what, all those things. It can be a challenge to that person.* (Social worker 7)

These security measures may seem harsh, but are the only viable option for the shelters to keep the victim, other shelter residents and staff safe. These statements are in line with those in the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2007) publication, Sambo and Spies's (2020) article and the Norms and Standards prescribed by the Trafficking-in-Persons Act 7 (2013) for shelters that emphasise security measures. There is, however, a very fine balance between protecting the victim and violating their rights, especially those rights related to movement and association. Therefore, the reason for taking away the victims' cell phone and restricting their movement must be explained thoroughly to the victim.

Mistrust

The adult trafficking victims who access shelter services have been lied to and betrayed by so many people – people whom they thought they could trust, like the recruiters, or often even family members. They are frightened, not knowing what lies ahead for them, and scared that their safety will be compromised, or that they will be arrested. The research participants shared the following comments to illustrate the challenge of working to gain the trust of the victims:

> *Yoohhh! It's a huge challenge. It's a huge challenge because imagine for a person who … for the first time if you notice for the person who came up for… because of human trafficking that person … ahhh… lose trust because she doesn't know what is going to happen because she has been promised that we are going to give* [you] *… this and that to improve your life. Then after it doesn't go* [cell phone interruption] *then it doesn't go like that. Then ahhh … but in a long run you will see this person she is trying gently by gently to gain trust. Yes … They don't trust anyone … because the last time they trusted they were betrayed.* (Social worker 2)

> *Their trust has been so violated and I think multiple times over* [in] *their life … there has been so much manipulation and trauma and physical* [abuse] *and they are there* [in shelters] *to feel safe and us creating that safety really comes from being consistent and our boundaries* [clear], *being consistent and our communication is … you know* [we are] *all on the same page … how we really model those things, boundaries and communication and acceptance and* [being] *nonjudgemental; and so a lot of the smaller work for me it's just how we really run the safe house because I find I had this one resident who was so profoundly distrusting, and when she came all she wanted to do was leave because she was so distrusting, but in that consistent work … she you know, she felt safe when she disclosed you know. She said to me she doesn't even know if she can trust herself that's how you know.* (Social worker 4)

They are so traumatised … It makes it difficult to work with her [female victim] *… she does not trust anyone.* (Social worker 3)

The responses from the participants highlight what Clawson et al. (2008) and Johnson (2012) found – that is, that there is a certain level of mistrust in victims when they are rescued. This mistrust is levelled at everyone, including professionals who want to assist them. These findings are in line with the report by DeBoise (2014), which highlighted that when working with victims of trafficking, social workers ought to be consistent, non-judgmental and accepting to win their trust.

Complicated trauma

Human trafficking victims have suffered abuse at the hands of the trafficker, both physical and emotional. They have been exposed to violence and threats that have left them broken. These are all tactics used by the traffickers to keep the victims obedient and prevent them from running away or disclosing information when rescued. The trauma they have been exposed to can have a severe impact on their mental health and can hamper their functioning in society. The research participants shared the challenges they faced in managing this trauma.

That's the thing is, is the saying working in human trafficking where there are such profound needs and because it's such a hard … what I've experienced in working here is that trauma is so profound and often because it's where their vulnerability has been exploited, is often charged with neglect or abuse or family dysfunction, initially there's already some sort of trauma there; and this profound trauma is … from my experience working [here] *…it really sort of breaks down from the most basic function self-regulation you know, sort of basic self-awareness, ability to … create boundaries maintain boundaries and so your role come in, I as a social worker is to try… is really required to be as hands-on supportive as possible you know ... I would say trauma because it's you know, I have been trained in trauma, but this is a very severe continuous … multiple … long* [trauma] *… and I'm not equipped to deal with that* [complex trauma] *when I'm also dealing with* [nervous laugh] *the practical issues.* (Social worker 4) *…but I have to do a lot of adaptions for her because they are extremely traumatised. I think the trauma is much bigger because they are not in their own country. They don't have any support system. They don't even eat their own food. So, I think … we need a programme that goes much deeper into* [complex] *trauma for human trafficking victims.* (Social worker 8) *Yes. Just to be able to do the debriefing because if you don't have a specific trauma counselling* [training] *you will open that wound and then you won't be able to cover this wound. You have to open the wound and also be able to heal it.* (Social worker 1)

The responses of the participants illustrate the severe trauma presented by the adult human trafficking victims. The responses correlate with studies done by Clawson et al. (2008), Johnson (2012) and Oram et al. (2015). The present study also found that the social workers felt overwhelmed by the interventions needed to address the complex trauma and some even articulated the challenge that they lack the required specialised skills. Complex trauma and other mental health issues experienced by victims pose a real challenge to social workers working in shelters, as highlighted in a UK study by Oram et al. (2015). This is because most of the victims showed signs of post-traumatic stress disorder and affective disorders that needed further specialised psychiatric interventions in ensuring that the trafficking victim gets optimal service. Although psychological disorders might start or be made worse by traumatic trafficking experiences, poor psychosocial wellbeing might lead to individuals being at risk of trafficking in the first place. However, simultaneously addressing the social needs of victims is crucial in predicting adverse outcomes in relation to trafficked victim's psycho-emotional wellbeing.

Delay in court cases

The prosecuting of human trafficking cases is a complex and lengthy process, which can often last for many years. This causes a huge service delivery challenge for shelter services, as most shelter residents are a mix of domestic violence and human trafficking victims. Domestic violence victims typically exit

the shelter within three to six months, while human trafficking victims can stay much longer. The following are statements made by the research participants about the length of stay for adult victims of trafficking because of the court cases.

> *... the court cases take so long, and I really don't understand how the court works and it's not going to get better. I know that, but the frustration that the victim has, at a certain point then they are ripe to go out, they are stronger enough. They want to, they want to leave South Africa, and they want to go back, or they don't want to be in a safe house anymore and if they go out of the safe house, they are not under your wing anymore then the Hawks usually get ... concerned because what are they going to do now? Are they going to leave, let the case go? What's going to happen?* (Social worker 8)

> *...because once you have been rescued the only thing that comes to my mind* [is] *wanting to go home ... you don't care about the court and the ... like the court ... you know this long process of the court. All this cross-examination, you know, it is taking* [long] *... You end up sometimes* [saying] *let me just give up ... If* [only] *the court process can be sweet and short.* (Social worker 7) *...it's difficult. It's very difficult. It depends you know. Some of them ... I remember the one from Pretoria North just said, you know what? I'm going to stick to this, I'm going to witness because I want this guy to go behind bars. I don't want to quit because if I quit then he is going to do what he did to me to other girls. She really stuck for 2 years, she stayed with us for 2 years saying that I'm not going to quit, I'm doing this for other people. It's a challenge 2 years, 3 years is too long. And if we don't allow them to go out they feel so frustrated, but you know you do a lot of things just to please them. During that time, you ... must provide. If they want to do whatever they want to do you must provide within your means.* (Social worker 5)

The responses from the participants indicate the frustration felt by the victims and shelter staff because of the length of court cases, which corresponds with the findings of Clawson and Dutch (2007). The harsh South African reality, however, is that court cases are generally delayed. Adult human trafficking victims are extremely frustrated because, as discussed above, they are housed in a rather strict security set-up, and therefore many would rather give up on the case and move on with their lives. For example, the ongoing trafficking and rape trial against Pastor Omotoso has been going on for more than 30 months (Koen, 2020). The impact of the lengthy stay at the shelter obviously has an economic impact on the shelter as well, as they are usually funded in terms of the Department of Social Development Draft Shelter Strategy (2013) prescripts of providing a safe space for up to a maximum of six months. This funding model and the generally poor state of shelters has been criticised in the past (Okoye, 2019) as not being conducive to dealing with the plight of victims seeking temporary accommodation there. A positive impact on victims of trafficking being allowed to stay longer, however, is that the social worker may get a chance to intervene therapeutically (in depth), and also involve other professionals in the holistic healing journey of the victim.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Work with victims of trafficking is a process. When rescued and located in a shelter, the trafficked victims are found to have multiple vulnerabilities and needs. Multi-disciplinary healing and recovery takes time and often requires multiple interventions, as it addresses a range of needs and the victim is viewed holistically, in contrast to the traditional and clinical perspective, which consider only individual aspects of recovery. It ought to be noted that the victims' trafficking experience will impact on their ability to utilise services provided (Dewan, 2014; Oram et al., 2015). For example, if the trafficking experience was normalised, they might struggle to see the harm that was caused to them (Warria, 2018b). However, the primary goals of social work services should be empowerment and recovery (subsequently promoting growth, mastery and efficacy). This calls for the social worker to be knowledgeable and have practical skills in applying different nuanced approaches interchangeably and also to act with flexibility to advance human rights and socio-economic justice for victims. Furthermore, social workers intervening with

victims of trafficking require additional specialized training. From a practical perspective, specialised training could include understanding the rights violated by trafficking, the nexus and intersections between social norms and trafficking, and skills training as identified by victim in order to promote resourcefulness (Warria, 2018a).

Referral pathways are important, but they should be related to the available resources in the community. As identified in the 2018 US Trafficking-in-Persons Report, this study found that there were fewer resources and services for victims of trafficking in comparison to other crimes. In South Africa, this is evident particularly in relation to addressing complicated trauma and specialised training. This often requires social workers to improvise substantially in the domestic violence shelters they operate in. Resource gaps should not be seen as incompatible with developing and implementing interventions. This study supports building on the available and limited internal organisational resources, while networking with other organisations and service providers, and working towards offering specialised programmes dedicated solely to trafficking victims. Doing this allows for a victim-focused intervention.

This study has shown that with interventions involving adult victims of trafficking, it is a prerequisite to establish both physical and psychological safety. It is further recommended that each component of service provision be designed to prioritise safety and uphold victims' rights. Additionally, in meeting the victim's needs and irrespective of the social work tools and techniques used in assisting victims of trafficking, establishing and building a strong therapeutic alliance is a valuable tool that social workers can use to support victims in all stages of their healing process. Building trust is a key aspect that should not be rushed when working with victims. The service relationship should be of a collaborative coconstructed nature, while acknowledging any existing structural inequalities. It is usually through this co-created space that healing can occur effectively. This is because the client feels and genuinely knows that they are being heard, supported and validated. To enable co-creation to occur, the social worker needs to be present, available, easy to reach and work with the client's best interests at heart. When providing services to victims of trafficking, Litam (2017) and Oram et al. (2015) implore us not to forget that the majority of trafficked victims are often survivors of long-term childhood trauma and adversities; consequently social workers are tasked with providing, nurturing and modelling corrective relational experiences during service provision in preparation for reintegration.

Organisations are often under pressure from funders to show improved client outcomes despite challenges experienced (Despard, 2016). It is important to use existing resources and services in a collaborative way. For example, through networking and linking with other organisations, social workers could see these facilities as being resourceful and as areas where they can draw assistance. Increased collaboration with stakeholder institutions within the system of care can assist in the development of group-based perspectives on how to tackle similar challenges which emanate from formal alignment and organisational interests (Donger & Bhabha, 2018; Schwarz et al., 2016). The National Freedom Network in South Africa is currently leading by example through steering networking and encouraging swopping of services and other elements among member organisations.

Due to the nature of their work, professionals who provide psychosocial services to victims of trafficking are themselves at risk of experiencing general psychological distress, and they should be regularly debriefed and provided with support as well. Continuous professional development and training is recommended for the professionals. Part of the training should incorporate modules on complex interactions and multi- and cross-cultural approaches to working with foreign victims and legal counselling. It is important to note that individually focused Western conceptualisations of trauma that focus on individuals and offer a narrow lens of victimhood and healing may overlook victims' inherent or culturally-based strengths which can promote recovery. Therefore, developing alternatives to or modifying traditional psychosocial therapies and making them culturally sensitive to the specific needs of victims is recommended (Hennings et al., 2016; Rafferty, 2018). From a practical perspective, this could involve including community leaders, spiritual and cultural leaders and elders to help minimise shame, embarrassment and psychosocial dilemmas held by victims who are eager to leave trafficking

situations. Other practicalities involved engaging with issues such as death, burial, mourning and grieving, and related cleansing rituals (Chung, 2003:91)

Psychosocial services to victims of trafficking need to be trauma-informed, victim-centred and rights based and should ensure maximum benefit to the victims. In addition, the services should "have comprehensive case management systems as well as multidisciplinary, multiagency and where necessary, multinational coordination of efforts" (Muraya & Fry, 2016:204). Social work practice also needs to be informed by the victims' frame of reference in relation to understanding their previous assistance provision experiences and interaction with front-line practitioners – if any (Gearon, 2019). This study also draws attention to the need to design and develop standards for monitoring and evaluating services as provided by social workers and other practitioners in shelters (Balfour et al., 2020; Botha & Warria, 2020; Rafferty, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that social workers intervening with adult victims of trafficking face a range of challenges during the intervention process. What is evident throughout this paper is that despite such challenges, there is room for improving current programmes and interventions to provide victims with quality care by providing support to practitioners to meet the challenges they encounter at work. Monitoring and evaluation of services provided to victims is needed in order to advance the field of social work and shift resources to interventions recognised and proven to be effective. In addition, there is an increased need for the development of a social work assistance provision evidence base, which can be used to develop social policies and guidelines, and further guide general social work undergraduate curriculum development or specialised postgraduate training at universities. This entails reducing barriers between social work research and practice, as practitioners partner with researchers to actively share evidence and dissemination strategies.

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