‘‘Does the Netherlands comply with their legal obligations to address the psychological consequences suffered from by victims of sex trafficking?’’

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Abstract

Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in the form of sex trafficking is one element of human trafficking that is often seen as a modern form of slavery. The effects felt by survivors are numerous, lasting and severe, often lasting far longer than the abuse itself. One of the severe effects felt by these survivors of sex trafficking is the psychological consequence that may develop during or after the trafficking ordeal. The aim of the present paper is to explore the various types of psychological suffering that victims of sexual exploitation undergo, and to examine the extent to which the Netherlands comply with their legal obligations to address these types of psychological suffering. This is done by analysing the legal obligations for addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking on European level and national level. In this manner, the study hopes to improve the current practices in the Netherlands as they relate to addressing the psychological consequences felt by survivors of sex trafficking crimes.

Keywords: *Sex Trafficking, Sex Trafficking Survivors, Psychological Consequences, Legal Obligations, The Netherlands*

Abbreviations

C-PTSD	Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
COA	Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers
COSM	Categorale Opvang voor Slachtoffers van Mensenhandel – The Categorial Accommodation and Assistance for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings
CSE(C)	Commercial Sexual Exploitation (of Children)
DID	Dissociative Identity Disorder
DSM-V	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GRETA	Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking In Human Beings
IND	Immigration and Naturalisation Service
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OHCHR	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights
PHIT	Psychological Health Impact of Trafficking in Human Beings
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RMA	Regeling Medische zorg Asielzoekers
TIP	Trafficking In Persons
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
WMO	Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning – Social Support Act
TVPA	Trafficking Victims Protection Act

1. Introduction

‘‘Yeah, because officially I am his girlfriend and he already told me if I leave him, he is going to kill me. If I am going to do something else, he is going to kill me, so yeah it is like, I am sitting in something’’ – Victim of sex trafficking in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands (ECLI:NL:RBNNE:2020:531).

The words above form part of a witness statement by a survivor of sex trafficking in a criminal court case in the Netherlands on February 11th, 2020. The survivor was a young female victim named ‘Lily’ (not her real name). Lily began working in the commercial sex industry voluntarily. One day, she met a man at her place of work, a brothel. She quickly developed a romantic relationship with him and perceived him to be her boyfriend. This ‘boyfriend’ travelled with her around the Netherlands, abusing her sexually, verbally and physically, and exploiting her by selling her to clients. Her boyfriend was her sex trafficker. He was eventually sentenced to forty-two months in prison, once the case reached the ears of law enforcement. Rather unsurprisingly, Lily required psychological assistance having developed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder after her ordeal.

Unfortunately, Lily’s case is not unique. In fact, she is just one example of many comparable sex trafficking cases around the world, including the Netherlands, where victims suffer from sexual exploitation and the anxiety, desperation and hopelessness that come along with this ordeal, and where they are left to deal with their psychological trauma. This present study aims to explore this phenomenon in the Netherlands, as Lily’s case serves to demonstrate, but which is also still certainly an issue around the globe.

Psychological suffering is unfortunately not the only type of suffering that sex trafficking victims face after their trauma. Physical health issues such as sexually transmitted diseases (STD’s) and infections (STI’s) including HIV/AIDS, economic disadvantages, social disadvantages and severe stigma are just some of the issues that sex trafficking victims are left to face following their victimisation (Countryman-Rosewurm & Shaffer, 2015, p.1).

What worsens this situation, is the suspected sheer number of victims who are subjected to this type of suffering. In fact, the global report on Trafficking In Persons (TIP) in 2020 by the United States State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons showed that an estimated 118,932 people were trafficked globally in the year 2019 (TIP Report, 2020, p.43). What is important to note, when analysing these statistics, is that they are only an estimate due to the large grey area in the trafficking of human beings, which is the fact that many trafficking crimes still go unnoticed (TIP Report, 2020, p.43). Furthermore, the aforementioned number covers all forms of human trafficking and not only sex trafficking.

Interestingly, though many European countries are ranked by the TIP report as 'tier 1' countries, which means that they meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) minimum requirements for the elimination of the trafficking in human beings, there is still a large number of estimated trafficking cases (TIP Report, 2020, p.40). For example, The Netherlands, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Spain and Portugal are all European tier 1 countries, yet the TIP report estimates that there were around 17,383 victims of trafficking identified in Europe alone (TIP Report, 2020, p.58). This demonstrates the urgency with which researchers must work towards examining where tier 1 countries such as The Netherlands fall short in adhering to their legal obligations addressing the psychological consequences seen in victims of human trafficking. This will ultimately lead to further develop systems designed to relieve at least some of this psychological suffering.

The simple fact that we must face is that we cannot stop human trafficking in its entirety, today. Sex trafficking is a multi-billion-dollar industry, and individual countries simply do not have the resources to tackle this problem fully, effectively and immediately. Faced with this fact, governments must turn to a cause they can make an immediate difference to. Sex trafficking crimes have already happened, and thousands of victims need professional assistance and specialised support services to help deal with the psychological aftermath of having been sexually exploited. This cause is one that does lie within governments' capacity to aid.

The present study focusses on this issue. More specifically, it analyses the psychological consequences sex trafficking victims may develop and to what extent the Dutch government addresses this in their legal obligations to limit and aid the consequences seen in these victims.

1.1. Research question and sub-questions

The main research question this study aims to answer is as follows:

Does the Netherlands comply with their legal obligation to address the psychological consequences felt by sex trafficking victims in the country?

The research question will be answered in four stages, using three sub-questions.

In the first section, after the introduction of this research, chapter 2, the study will examine the different psychological consequences felt by sex trafficking victims. This will be done by studying present literature, which will lead to an overview of the consequences. By this, the study aims to answer the first sub-question: What are the psychological consequences of sex trafficking?

Subsequently, the research will move on to the following section, chapter 3. In chapter 3, the study will examine different legal frameworks that address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. This section of the study aims to answer the second sub-question: Which obligations do states have to address the psychological consequences as a result of sex trafficking?

Having gained more understanding of the different existing legal framework, the study will move on to chapter 4. In chapter 4, the research shall examine the legal obligations the Netherlands has on European and national level to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. This section answers the third sub-question: What are the legal obligations for the Netherlands to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking?

After analysing the Dutch legal obligations, the study will move on to chapter 5. Chapter 5 will examine how the Netherlands addresses the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. This will provide an answer to the question: How does the Netherlands address these psychological consequences? This section will not only elaborate on how the Netherlands addresses these psychological consequences but also whether the country complies with the legal obligations set out to address these consequences. Having done this, this will provide a conclusion on the compliance of the Netherlands.

The sixth chapter of this study, will provide an overall conclusion, representing a summary of all the findings in the research. Thereafter, a recommendation on further research will be made.

1.2. Methodology

The present study will use content analysis to identify the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. The researcher chose to use content analysis as this is a good way of finding patterns from existing data. Furthermore, this method was chosen as the researcher could analyse specific words and phrases. This is also used when analysing the different legal obligations but instead of specific words and phrases, this part of the content analysis focuses more on the whole concept of psychological consequences. The study collected the most common psychological consequences of sex trafficking in its victims by establishing the theme of 'psychological consequences of sex trafficking' in existing literature. Within this theme the researcher found certain concepts reoccurring. These were the concepts that are elaborated on in the next chapter of the research. Specific words analysed were; Post-traumatic stress disorder, dissociative disorders, major depressive disorders, substance abuse and Stockholm Syndrome. This is a done in a way of qualitative content analysis meaning the researcher focused on the code words mentioned above and focused on interpreting and understanding the code words in terms of the theme. Besides this, the aforementioned words were also entered in to various databases such as JSTOR, Elsevier and SpringerLink. These databases were selected as they contain full articles and thus more extensive information.

Though the present research uses global data for the mapping of the psychological consequences of sex trafficking, the researcher chose to focus mainly on the Netherlands for the legal analysis. The reason for this is that, besides the researcher having the most affinity with the Netherlands, the country has a history of combatting the sex trafficking phenomenon. Furthermore, the Netherlands was one of the first European countries that legalised commercial sex work and because of its proximal geographical location to other major countries/cities, it has always been an interesting transit and destination for sex traffickers around the world.

It is important to firstly gain understanding of what the different psychological consequences of sex trafficking are. A primary reference that is accessed for this is the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) by the American Psychiatric Association (2013). This source is used as it is a widely known manual, used in many countries, containing extensive definitions and information on mental disorders. To understand the link between the series of traumatic experiences sex trafficking victims undergo and the development of psychological disorders the Human Trafficking Process Model by Zimmerman et al. (2011) will be used as an explanation. This framework was chosen as it describes how different psychological disorders may develop at different stages as a consequence of sexual exploitation.

Furthermore, the legal obligations states have will be examined by analysing available data. For example, the European Victims Directive will be used to assess the obligations implemented for sex trafficked victims. Additionally, the recommendations made by Zimmerman et al. (2006) will be analysed, as that research also set out recommendations on what states should do to safeguard the mental health of sex trafficked victims.

When examining legal obligations of states, it is important we have at least some background information on the sex trafficking situation in these states. Therefore, certain resources focusing on the country specific sex trafficking situations will be assessed. For example, the annual Trafficking In Persons (TIP) reports of the Netherlands are used as a source of data. These reports are created by the United States (U.S.) Department of State and aim to assess how governments across the globe deal with the trafficking in persons. This is an important source as the reports are detailed and the countries are reviewed annually, so the statistics presented by these reports on this specific type of crime are up to date. However, the findings in these reports run the risk of bias, as they are prepared by one country, that may have its own political agenda (Patton, 2017). For instance, the United states might want to protect international relations with another nation and may therefore be more lenient in its criticism of trafficking in persons combatting strategies used in that country than it may be on countries that posit a threat to the US's national interest, such as China.

Furthermore, the reports by the Dutch National Rapporteur is an important source that will be assessed. These reports are detailed and up to date and provide information on the sex trafficking phenomenon in the country. Additionally, the reports provide the most recent sex trafficking statistics in the Netherlands as well as any consequences of changes in Dutch legislation.

Lastly, the reports by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings are used to examine the legal obligations the Netherlands has for addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. Both the first and the second evaluation on the Netherlands are used as these gave an overview of the recent changes and developments of the trafficking in human beings in the Netherlands through the years.

The GRETA reports are valuable as they are part of the Council of Europe and may therefore be less biased than the aforementioned Trafficking In Persons reports by the United States Department of State.

1.3. Limitations

To understand the relevance of this study, it is important to examine the limitations in this field including the limitations of prior research as well as the limitations of this present study. These will all form the basis for the recommendations for further research made in the last chapter of this study. This section will firstly identify the general gaps in the literature of the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. This is important as this most likely influences the answer of the research question of this present study.

It is evident that trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a global problem. In fact, Heber (2018) states that; ‘‘sex trafficking is often referred to as a growing pandemic of social evil’’ (p.420). What is meant by this, is that the sex trafficking phenomenon has grown and continues to be an issue which globally has social, health and many other consequences on humanity. However, for the sake of this study, the Netherlands is singled out.

This is done for the reasons mentioned in the previous section but mostly because the Netherlands is classified as a tier 1 country, which according to the TIP report (2020) means that the Dutch government demonstrates serious efforts to combat the trafficking in human beings however the estimated number of trafficking victims does not seem to lower. In fact, the latest report by the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children states that the identification of human trafficking cases has nearly doubled from 668 new cases in 2018 to 1334 new cases in 2019 (National Rapporteur, 2020, p.5). Furthermore, an article of the National Rapporteur in 2019 stated that the reported cases of sexually exploited minors saw a rapid and disturbing decrease (National Rapporteur, 2019). Unfortunately, not because there are less victims but because the victims become less visible (National Rapporteur, 2019). In fact, it is believed that only 8% of underaged victims are identified (National Rapporteur, 2020, p.6).

Thus, by studying the Netherlands we may gain insight to what extent the legal obligations implemented to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking works and where these obligations may still fall short. This then may act as an example for the Netherlands itself and other European or even non-European countries that have similar sex trafficking victim profiles, numbers, current tactics to combat sex trafficking and similar legal obligations.

According to Heber (2018) prior global research on the sex trafficking phenomenon often focused on describing, defining and estimating the number of sex trafficking but not actually on the psychological consequences of this phenomenon. This is a problem as the availability of existing literature on the obligations to address these psychological consequences is limited, whilst this is very much needed to gain understanding of the severity sex trafficking can have on one's mental health and to make sure the 'well-being, independence and re-integration' of its victims is addressed in law (Zimmerman et al., 2006, p.22).

Whilst it is important to understand the numbers in sex trafficking, Aronowitz (2010) states that we need to keep in mind that human trafficking has a grey area of crime, not only because many victims are not identified but also because many victims are incorrectly identified by countries. For example, not every country has implemented trafficking legislation.

This causes a problem, as it might be that what is considered trafficking in one country is not considered as such in another. In fact, the question is also whether the countries that have implemented trafficking legislations actually adhere to these. This is especially important for the sake of this study as if the law in a country addresses the psychological consequences of sex trafficking but does not adhere to it in practice, many victims may not receive the professional help they might need to deal with the health impact of this type of crime (Aronowitz, 2010). Scientifically this also causes a problem as data on the consequences of trafficking is often gathered by studying victims that are recognised by shelters or assistance services (Tyldum, 2010, p.5). However, since a large number of victims are unidentified, it is difficult to fully grasp the severity of the health consequences trafficking has on its victims which is needed to set out the legal obligations (Tyldum, 2010, p.5).

Though theoretical data on the psychological consequences of sex trafficking is available, empirical data on how to treat these different psychological consequences, specifically in sex trafficking victims stays limited. This is both a limitation seen in prior research and a limitation in the present study. The researcher is aware of this and tries to use the most recent data possible on which psychological support and assistance is available for victims of sex trafficking.

Though many victims of sex trafficking in the Netherlands are Dutch girls, who are often exploited for the first time under the age of 18, the present research focuses on young adults. This is done for two reasons; 1) In many cases victims are over the age of 18 at the time the trafficking is reported (Bleeker et al., 2019, p.13). Underaged victims are often reported missing to authorities by family members and are therefore often found within a couple of days and therefore may have not been exploited yet (Bleeker et al., 2019, p.9). 2) The available literature often focuses more on adults than on children. Globally, there are still enormous gaps in regards to the numbers of child sex trafficking as well as the psychological consequences of this on children (Ottisova et al., 2018).

The researcher recognises that the study does not specifically include male victims of sex trafficking. This is not to say that there are no male victims who are exploited for the purpose of commercial sex, however as this group is limited, it was chosen to focus solely on the main victims of this ordeal, which are female victims. It is important to note that male victims of sex trafficking may suffer from different psychological consequences as compared to female victims and these consequences may be more severe as male victims often do not come forward about the exploitation, which may lead to developing a more severe psychological disorder (Swarens, 2018).

The researcher also recognises that the present study solely focusses on the psychological consequences seen in victims that are exploited for the purpose of commercial sex. That is of course not to say that other forms of exploitation do not exist. However, the exploitation for the purpose of commercial sex is something that is very much present in the Netherlands with a large number of victims of this particular form of trafficking.

Another recent development, which emphasises the need to assess the legal obligations implemented by the Netherlands to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking, is that since the COVID-19 pandemic law enforcement authorities believe the luring of victims for commercial sexual exploitation has increased significantly as compared to before the pandemic (Europol, 2020; National Rapporteur, 2020). This is especially interesting in the present research as this might mean the necessity for a change in the countries' legal obligations.

Lastly, the researcher chose to solely focus on the psychological consequences that victims of sex trafficking may suffer. The reason for this is because the effects of sex trafficking can vary from physical, social and emotional but studies are often limited on effects that differ from physical effects (World Health Organization, 2012).

1.4. Terminology

Before delving into the research, it is apt that we first define human trafficking and specifically sex trafficking. This is important, seeing as this phenomenon has different psychological consequences and may therefore have different legal obligations addressing these consequences.

According to the Palermo Protocol's (2000) Article 3, human trafficking is defined as;

(a) ''The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation''.

In the present study, it is important to note that the element of 'transportation' used in the Palermo Protocol does not only include the international transportation but also the domestic transportation of persons.

However, as the Protocol was implemented to provide a broad definition of the trafficking of human beings, a more meaningful and in-depth definition of this ordeal needs to be provided by countries' legislative bodies.

For the sake of this study, the term 'domestic sex trafficking' will be used when referring to a sex trafficking crime that entirely occurs in one country and where no international borders are crossed. With domestic trafficking it is also important to note that the victim does not have to be a citizen in the country in which they are trafficked. 'International sex trafficking' on the other hand concerns the transportation of a victim who is a citizen and a resident in another country, to another for the purpose of (commercial) sexual exploitation.

Exploitation is further defined by the Protocol as including: ''at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs'' (Article 3, paragraph 1).

2. The psychological consequences of sex trafficking

To gain understanding of what legal obligations need to be established to address the psychological consequences felt by sex trafficking victims it is first important to understand what psychological consequences are and what the different types of psychological consequences are felt by these victims. This section will do this by an examination of existing literature by carrying out a content analysis, as described in the methodology section of this research, to establish these different consequences. Before delving into this, it is worth first exploring what psychological trauma is. Gharfoenkan (2020) defines psychological trauma as an event or a series of events that were life threatening, severely injuring or threatening to one's physical integrity.

In 2006, Zimmerman and her colleagues aimed to provide statistical data on the different health consequences of trafficking. This research was an important start of the data collection on the psychological impact of trafficking. The research focused on European females from the age of 15 and above (Zimmerman et al., 2006, p.2). One of the studies' main aims was to find out whether and how the psychological consequences of sex trafficking changed over time in its victims (Zimmerman et al., 2006, p.16). One of the research goals was understanding the importance of ongoing psychological support from the moment after the victim becomes a survivor in order to safeguard the victims' ''well-being, independence and re-integration'' (Zimmerman et al., 2006, p.22). The same research also emphasized the importance of recognising trafficking as an health issue with serious health consequences.

In addition, a framework that continues to explain the psychological consequences of (sex) trafficking, is the Human Trafficking Process model by Zimmerman, Hossain and Watts (2011). This model suggests that trafficking happens in a 'series of event-related stages' in which the development of psychological consequences may arise at any stage and may stay or disappear at any stage (Zimmerman et al., 2011, p.328).

The stages include;

1) The recruitment stage (where the victim is vulnerable due to earlier factors such as previous abuse, social or economic factors and existing mental disabilities);
2) The travel-transit stage (this is often where the initial trauma beings – the victim may now experience dangers which leads to the development/beginning of (a) psychological disorders);
3) The exploitation stage (the actual (sexual) exploitation takes place. This stage also consists of other forms of abuse such as psychological and physical abuse by the trafficker);
4) The detention stage (this stage is not applicable to every victim – this is the time when a victim of trafficking is detained by authorities);
5) (re)integration stage (where a victim is (re)integrated in to their old community or in to the new community, being the country the victim now resides in. This is where many victims start to severely suffer from the psychological consequences of the trauma they have experienced);
6) The re-trafficking stage (this stage is not applicable to every victim – this is the moment a victim is revictimized and entered back in to the cycle of sexual exploitation either by the same trafficker or a different one).

Furthermore, it is equally important to understand what psychological torture is, as certain psychological effects can develop as a result of psychological torture. Psychological torture is defined as the deliberate and/or systematic infliction of mental suffering (Ojeda, 2008). This type of torture can be isolating, debilitating, disorientating, sensory assaulting, threatening, degrading and/or manipulating an individual, and is just as severe as physical torture (Ojeda, 2008). When examining sex trafficking victims, it is evident that most of these victims suffer from more than one element of psychological torture. They are often isolated in brothels and from their family and friends. Some (young) victims are found to have a minimum of twenty clients per day (Terre des Hommes, 2019). This is debilitating to the victims' mental health. Some victims are deprived of contraceptives such as condoms which can possibly lead to victims contracting sexual transmitted diseases (STD's) or becoming pregnant (Terre des Hommes, 2019). Furthermore, both traffickers and clients can become mentally abusive. Some traffickers in the Netherlands for example, have also been found to threaten their victims and degrading them by sabotaging them to leak their victims' private photographs and videos (Terre des Hommes, 2019).

Sexual exploitation has always had serious impact on its victims' health (Farley, 2004). Victims of sex trafficking deal with similar psychological and physical effects as victims of other violent crimes, such as a single instance of assault (Farley, 2004). However, what may intensify these effects is that they, unlike most other types of violent crime survivors are often held captive, isolated and subjected to traumatic instances for a more extended period of time (Palmer, 2010).

Another highly important concept to acknowledge before examining psychological disorders that victims of sex trafficking may suffer from is that it has recently come to the attention of researchers that many health effects are cumulative (World Health Organization, 2012).

For example, physical consequences can be the result of psychological consequences of sex trafficking and vice versa. An individual who, for instance, suffered violence at the hands of their trafficker, may develop chronic pain following the abuse, which can lead to depression as a result of this constant presence of pain. However, just as easily, an individual who has suffered violence at the hands of a trafficker may not have lasting physical damage, but suffer from neurological difficulties such as brain tumours, headaches and other difficulties such as diabetes and weight gain for example because of the stress they maintain after the trafficking ordeal has ended (Deshpande & Nour, 2013).

Not only do physical and psychological consequences of sex trafficking impact one another, they are also cumulative in and of themselves. In other words, physical consequences add up. For instance, a victim of sex trafficking suffers rape, often multiple times.

This rape is often perpetrated without the use of contraceptives which makes these women vulnerable to STD's such as Chlamydia and HIV, and unwanted pregnancies (Zimmerman et al., 2003). In addition, individuals with a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder diagnosis following sex trafficking may be more prone to developing Depression as a result, or a concurrent anxiety disorder.

The above evidence serves to highlight the simple fact that there is no easy answer and no 'one form' of physical or psychological trauma for sex trafficking victims (Zimmerman et al., 2003). The way individuals respond to their sex trafficking experience may have some overarching commonalities, but each trauma is different, and the effect it has is unique. Therefore, it is important to explore these as one can imagine that the legal obligations set by states need to deal with the complexities of the psychological consequences. The sections below discuss some of the more frequently reported psychological disorders following sex trafficking trauma.

2.1. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

One common diagnosis seen in sex trafficking victims is the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A trans-European project regarding the Psychological Health Impact of Trafficking in Human Beings for sexual exploitation (PHIT) found that the development of PTSD and depression were the most common psychological health consequences of these victims (PHIT, 2019). According to a study by Hossain (2010), 77% of 204 girls and women from seven European countries who were trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation showed symptoms of PTSD.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is defined as a condition that causes someone to have flashbacks, anxiety or nightmares about a single or several event(s) that is experienced as terrifying (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.271). PTSD can arise as a result of both direct and indirect experiences of a traumatic event. In the case of sex trafficking, this means that victims may develop PTSD as a result of having been sexually exploited, as well as developing certain symptoms or a full diagnosis of PTSD as a result watching other victims being physically and/or sexually abused (Hossain, 2010).

Another form of PTSD is Complex PTSD (C-PTSD). This form of PTSD is mentioned in the tenth edition of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10, 2016). C-PTSD, or Complex Trauma, is classified as chronic and cumulative exposure to extreme stress and trauma, such as child sexual abuse or neglect (Gonzalez, 2018). C-PTSD is often developed in the early developmental years of a child's life, and causes individuals to be more vulnerable to secondary victimisation later on in life (Gonzalez, 2018). Gonzalez (2018) noted that many sex trafficking survivors had experienced some type of abuse in one form or another prior to being trafficked. For example, many victims had already experienced sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse or some sort of neglect (Gonzalez, 2018). This prior abuse may thus have precipitated the abuse they suffered as sex trafficking victims, and may make them more vulnerable to victimisation in the future.

The characteristics of C-PTSD overlap with characteristics of people with Dissociative Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.272). An example of this is that individuals with C-PTSD often experience disruptions in their memory and consciousness (Gonzalez, 2018). Furthermore, they may experience disruptive thoughts, such as deep feelings of paranoia towards others, or feeling as if they want to hurt either themselves or others around them. These victims may also feel helpless, worthless and they might experience physical symptoms such as migraines and stomach-aches (Gonzalez, 2018).

2.2. Dissociative Disorders

Dissociative Disorders can be one of the results following psychological torture. The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) states that: ''Dissociative Disorders are characterised by a disruption of and/or continuity in the normal integration of consciousness, memory, identity, emotion, perception, body, representation, motor control and behaviour'' – American Psychiatric Association (2013, p.291). According to the DSM-V, Dissociative Disorders can interfere with every area of our psychological functioning. The DSM-V clusters Dissociative Disorders in to three types:

1) Depersonalisation/Derealisation Disorder;
2) Dissociative amnesia;
3) Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID).

The most common Dissociative Disorder that is linked to sex trafficking victims is the latter, DID (Cruz, 2016). According to the DSM-V, people who suffer from this disorder are disrupted in their identity, often by two or more personality states (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This disorder can lead to a variety of difficulties in the lives of sex trafficking victims. Those with a diagnosis of DID may find it hard to recall everyday events as well as personal information relating to their traumatic events. Lastly, people with DID's may feel distressed and/or socially impaired. Thus, they experience difficulties not only in their own minds and personal functioning, but also often find strain in their interpersonal relationships, leaving them feeling isolated and alone.

2.3. Major Depressive Disorder (Depression)

Major Depressive Disorder, also more commonly termed ‘‘depression’’, is a disorder which is classified as a mood disorder by the DSM-V. According to the DSM-V, this disorder occurs when someone experiences 1) a depressed mood and/or 2) a loss of interest or pleasure (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.160). Major Depressive Disorder causes loss of interest in day to day activities, for an extended period of time (at least two weeks) (ibid). Furthermore, someone with Major Depressive Disorder has a distinct sense of disrupt emotion regulation, for instance feeling extremely sad, hopeless or irritated, irrespective and out of proportion to their context (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Additionally, the person may have problems sleeping (restless or sleeping for hours in a day also called insomnia and hypersomnia, respectively) (ibid).

Individuals with this diagnosis may find it hard to concentrate and may experience feelings of worthlessness, inappropriate guilt such as thinking the sexual abuse they suffered was their fault, delusions and suicidal ideations (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Depression can be debilitating to survivors of sex trafficking. Having already suffered from the ordeal of being sexually exploited, often for years, they must now also face a disorder that can severely increase chances of suicide (Hallfors et al., 2004).

Major Depressive Disorder can take a variety of different forms. However, sex trafficking victims often suffer particularly from Persistent Pervasive Developmental Disorder (the National Health Institute of Mental Health, 2019). Persistent Depressive Disorder also called Chronic Depression is when a victim feels depressed for a period lasting at least two years (the National Health Institute of Mental Health, 2019). This does not mean that victims always have to experience severe depression. It can also mean that victims suffer from the depression more and less severely depending on any given time (ibid). However, for a diagnosis to be established, this depression must persist the course of a minimum of two years (the National Health Institute of Mental Health, 2019).

Statistics about depression in sex trafficking often do not solely focus on depression but also on other types of disorders, with depression as a comorbidity rather than primary diagnosis. This is important to conceptualise as it makes it difficult to generalise data. For example, Oram et al. (2016) showed that almost 80% of female sex trafficking victims portrayed characteristics of psychological disorders such as depression but also including anxiety and PTSD.

2.4. Substance Abuse

With regards to sex trafficking in particular, a study done on minor sex trafficking victims found that 36 out of 41 victims developed a substance abuse disorder following their trafficking (Goldberg et al., 2017).

The DSM-V defines substance use disorders as: ‘‘a cluster of cognitive, behavioural and physiological symptoms indicating that the individual continues using the substance despite significant substance related problems’’ (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.481).

The DSM-V recognises a number of substances that may be associated with substance use disorders including: heroin, alcohol, caffeine, cannabis, hallucinogens, inhalants, opioids, sedatives such as tobacco, hypnotics, anxiolytics and stimulants such as amphetamines. However, the DSM-V also recognises any other strong substances which may not be covered (yet) by the manual. The DSM-V places substance abuse disorder in to two categories: 1) substance *misuse* disorders and, 2) substance *induced* disorders.

First, substance *abuse* disorders are defined as the development of a pattern of symptoms that someone experiences as a result of taking one or multiple substances, which someone continues to take knowing the symptoms he or she is experiencing is a result of the substance (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.483). The DSM-V has established three levels of severity for substance abuse disorders: 1) mild; 2) moderate; and 3) severe (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.481).

The severity depends on how many symptoms someone experiences. The manual recognises eleven symptoms. Symptoms include: overusing the substance; not being able to stop using the substance; craving the substance; and developing withdrawal symptoms. Having six or more symptoms is classified as a severe substance abuse disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.483-4).

Second, substance *induced* disorders on the other hand are defined as the intoxication, withdrawal and the mental disorder one develops as a result of taking an illicit substance (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.485).

These mental disorders induced by substance abuse may take the form of psychotic episodes, neurocognitive disorders, depressive disorders, sexual dysfunctions or anxiety disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

What is important to note with substance use disorders is that they may permeate not only the experience of victims after their sex trafficking ordeal, but also often form part of their experience as a victim and can also form a risk factor for being exploited. Indeed, Lederer and Wetzel (2014) found that the majority of sex trafficking victims had abused strong substances such as marijuana and cocaine prior to being sexually exploited. This can also form a recruitment tactic for sex traffickers. Traffickers, especially domestic sex traffickers, lure already addicted victims in with offers of illicit substances, and sometimes use it as a form of payment for their sexual exploitation (Veldhuizen-Ochodnicanová, Jeglic and Boskovic, 2020).

Furthermore, forced substance ingestion is a tactic used by sex traffickers to ensure continued compliance from their victims (Macy & Johns, 2010, p.88). They may for instance be met with less resistance from the victim, and the victim may be able to cope better with a large volume of clientele (ibid).

It is important to note that research on substance abuse disorders of sex trafficking victims, while present, is still limited. In addition, most research has been conducted in the United States, with little research existing in the Netherlands, making it difficult to grasp the vastness of this problem. However, the evidence that does exist indicates a pervasive and vast problem.

2.5. Stockholm Syndrome

Lastly, a common condition, though not mentioned specifically by the DSM-V, is Stockholm Syndrome. Stines (2018) defines Stockholm Syndrome as a psychological condition that occurs when a victim of (sexual) abuse becomes emotionally attached to their abuser in a ‘‘positive manner’’. A positive manner can cover a variety of concepts, including for instance acting friendly towards the trafficker, defending the trafficker in court, creating a ‘‘friendship’’ or ‘‘relationship’’ with the trafficker (ibid).

According to Stines (2018), a victim of Stockholm Syndrome presents with certain characteristics. The victims are often unwilling to escape their unhealthy situations, finding it hard to detach from their trafficker and mistakenly believe that the trafficker is actually the one keeping them safe (ibid). They often do not inform authorities of their abuse and their overall relation with the authorities is marred by a lack of cooperation, with which they hope to protect their trafficker who they have such a strong emotional attachment to (Stines, 2018).

This may also be because victims that show the ‘‘typical’’ characteristics of Stockholm Syndrome have been found their personal wellbeing or that of their loved ones to be extremely jeopardised by the trafficker, in the sense that the trafficker may threaten to kill the victim or the victims’ family if the victim tries to leave (Stines, 2018). If the victim strongly believes the trafficker to be capable of doing such things, the victim could develop this psychological condition as a sort of protective coping mechanism to shield themselves from the fear they feel towards their trafficker (ibid).

In many sex trafficking cases where the trafficker was an ex-boyfriend or someone the victim knew. Such as a relative or friend, the victim developed a loyal attachment to their trafficker (Stines, 2018). This makes it harder for such victims to leave their trafficker and to press charges. Studies have also found that victims suffering from Stockholm Syndrome are often revictimized, because after the victim has left the situation and returned to a safe environment, their trafficker contacts them again which results in them returning to the situation of sexual exploitation (ibid). As there are many young, inexperienced, poorly educated victims of sex trafficking, it is believed that the manipulation by traffickers and the time victims are sex trafficked increases the likelihood of developing the syndrome (ibid).

2.6. Chapter conclusion: common psychological effects of sex trafficking

Above, the Human Trafficking Process Model by Zimmerman and her colleagues is explained. The framework states that human trafficking is an traumatic event that happens in stages. Victims of human trafficking may suffer from psychological consequences at any stage and these consequences may endure for some time or in more severe cases, become chronic and last forever.

In the research of the psychological effects of sex trafficking, Zimmerman and her colleagues carried out important studies with positive findings that allowed more understanding of the severity of this type of crime. For example, an important finding by Zimmerman et al. (2006), in which the psychological consequences of sex trafficking were studied in a group of females from the age of 15, showed that sex trafficking victims should receive ongoing psychological assistance from the moment after their trafficking ordeal has ended to help these victims deal with the psychological aftermath of the traumatic experience(s).

Additionally, this section examined the most common psychological consequence of sex trafficking. These are PTSD, DID's, depression, substance abuse and Stockholm Syndrome. Most of these psychological consequences are recognised in the DSM-V. Many different studies recognise the psychological consequences of trauma and in particular sexual trauma. In fact, studies recognise the severity of these consequences and the fact that victims need to be provided with the correct assistance to help deal with these traumas. The section above, shows that though the psychological consequences of sex trafficking can be addressed by professionals, their approaches may vary. For example, some psychological consequences might require short treatments, like short term substance abuse while others like chronic depression require life-long psychological treatments.

3. Addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking in law

As shown in the previous chapter, sex trafficking can have a detrimental impact on a victims' mental health. In fact, Zimmerman et al. (2017) states that the health consequences of this type of crime are so extreme that it should be seen as ''public health problem of global magnitude''. According to the International Labour Organization, an estimated 4.8 million people were trafficked globally for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation in 2016 (ILO, 2017). Global efforts are made to combat human trafficking but also to protect its victims. The following chapter will examine the legal obligations implemented by states to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. This section will in particular examine the international treaties that form the basis of the legal obligations for states.

3.1. International sex trafficking legislation and guidelines

One of the first international laws addressing the trafficking in human beings was the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), 2000. The aim of the convention was to emphasize the importance of international cooperation between countries to prevent and combat transnational organized crime in a more effective manner.

What is specifically relevant to the present study and is a supplement to the UNTOC, is the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. This is an important Protocol, as it was the first that addresses the protection and assistance of the victims of human trafficking, in particular their international human rights. The Protocol currently consists of 178 parties (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2020). The sixth Article mentioned in the second general provision of the Protocol is the 'Assistance to and protection of victims of trafficking in persons'. This is an important article as it states in Article 6 (3);

''Each State Party shall consider implementing measures to provide for the physical, psychological and social recovery of victims of trafficking in persons, including, in appropriate cases, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, other relevant organizations and other elements of civil society, and, in particular the provision of:

(a) Appropriate housing;
(b) Counselling and information, in particular as regards to their legal rights, in a language that the victim of trafficking in persons can understand;
(c) Medical, psychological and material assistance; and
(d) Employment, educational and training opportunities.''.

As seen above, the Protocol clearly addresses the need for psychological assistance for victims of human trafficking. However, a major criticism of Article 6 (3) is that it does not require State Parties to provide these measures. In fact, it only states that State Parties should consider implementing these measures (Hyland, 2001, p.31). Nonetheless, the implementation of the Protocol was a positive start to protect human trafficking victims. In fact, the UNODC created a 'Model Law against Trafficking in Persons' with the aim of providing an example of how State Parties could implement the law. The seventh chapter of the model address the psychological assistance further. For example, in Article 20 (1), it comments that; ''Referral to assistance agencies should take place at the earlies moment possible and preferably before the victim makes an official statement'' (UNODC, 2009, p.44).

Furthermore, Article 20 (2) states that; ''Assistance shall include: (c) Counselling and psychological assistance, on a confidential basis and with full respect for the privacy of the person concerned, in a language that he or she understands'' (UNODC, 2009, p.45).

Efforts to improve the Protocol were also made in 2008, when the UNODC launched the 'Good practices for the Protection of Witnesses in Criminal Proceedings Involving Organized Crime' publication. Though these practices particularly focus on witnesses in Criminal Proceedings, which not all victims of sexual exploitation end up in, the publications makes valuable points. For example, the publication address the psychological consequences of trafficking by stating that witness security can be reached through providing psychological assistance before and during the criminal proceeding which helps victims cope with not only the psychological consequence of the crime but also with the psychological stress of the criminal proceeding (UNODC, 2008, p.27-28). This also means that the victim is allowed to be accompanied by a professional such as a psychologist, law enforcement official or a therapist (UNODC, 2008, p.34).

In 2008, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime also published a background paper called ‘‘An Introduction to Human Trafficking: Vulnerability, Impact and Action’’. The paper addresses the psychological consequence of human trafficking by acknowledging the possible severe and long lasting mental health effects of this ordeal unless support and appropriate counselling is given to its victims (UNODC, 2008, p.84). Furthermore, the paper mentions that some trafficking victims may never recover from the trauma and the psychological damage they have experienced (UNODC, 2008, p.87). This may have various reasons. For example, the damage may be so sever that it needs life-long treatment, which is seen in sex trafficking victims that suffer from chronic depression (the National Health Institute of Mental Health, 2019). Another reason might be that victims face difficulties in accessing the appropriate resources. For example, victims are not referred to the right support service. It might also be the case, that victims find it difficult to communicate with support systems such as psychologists or therapists, leading to unfinished treatments and therefore untreated psychological disorders (UNODC, 2008, p.87).

3.2. European sex trafficking legislation

Besides the global efforts to implement legal obligations addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking, the European Union has established laws as well.

The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings published in 2005, aims to combat human trafficking, protect the victims of human trafficking and though it is a European Convention, emphasise the need for international cooperation. Article 12 of this Convention address the importance of addressing the psychological consequences of human trafficking by stating that; ‘‘Each Party shall adopt such legislative or other measures as may be necessary to assist victims in their physical, psychological and social recovery’’.

Additionally, the seventh paragraph of this article states; ‘‘For the implementation of the provisions set out in this article, each Party shall ensure that services are provided on a consensual and informed basis, taking due account of the special needs of persons in a vulnerable position and the rights of children in terms of accommodation, education and appropriate health care’’.

Another interesting article in the convention, that does not explicitly address the psychological consequence but which is in important as without the means mentioned in the article, addressing psychological consequences may be extremely difficult is Article 29(1) which states that; ‘‘Each Party shall adopt such measures as may be necessary to ensure that persons or entities shall have the necessary independence in accordance with the fundamental principles of the legal system of the Party, in order for them to be able to carry out their functions effectively and free from any undue pressure. Such persons or the staff of such entities shall have adequate training and financial resources for their tasks’’. For example, this means that without the necessary financial resources, organisations and professionals are not able to provide victims of sex trafficking with the psychological treatment they may need.

The EU Anti-trafficking Directive on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, is aimed to prosecute traffickers and protect victims on European Standards (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011). The Directive implement different legal obligations that Member States of the European Union have to adhere to.

The first article specifically addressing the psychological consequences of human trafficking is Article 11. Article 11 (5) states that; ‘‘the assistance and support measures referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 shall be provided on a consensual and informed basis, and shall include at least standards of living capable of ensuring victims’ subsistence through measures such as the provision of appropriate and safe accommodation and material assistance, as well as necessary medical treatment including psychological assistance, counselling and information, and translation and interpretation services where appropriate’’ (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011). Additionally, this same article has another important paragraph addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking which is the seventh paragraph.

Article 11 (7) emphasises the importance to cater to special needs victims of human trafficking by stating that; ‘‘Member States shall attend to victims with special needs, where those needs derive, in particular, from whether they are pregnant, their health, a disability, a mental or psychological disorder they have, or a serious form of psychological, physical or sexual violence they have suffered’’ (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011). This is an important article, in terms of the present study as the previous chapter has shown that sex trafficking victims often deal with all the special needs forms mentioned in the article. The victims are often vulnerable, young, have an intellectual disability and they have often suffered from (previous) psychological, physical and sexual violence.

Another important publication that addresses the psychological consequences of human trafficking is the EU strategy towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings 2012-2016. This was a five-priorities strategy, implemented by the European Commission to support the implementation of the aforementioned Directive, the EU Anti-trafficking Directive 2011/36/EU (European Commission, 2012).

The five priorities mentioned in this strategy are as follows;

1) Identifying, protecting and assisting victims of trafficking;
2) Stepping up the prevention of trafficking in human beings;
3) Increased prosecution of traffickers;
4) Enhanced coordination and cooperation among key actors and policy coherence;
5) Increased knowledge of and effective response to emerging concerns related to all forms of trafficking.

According to this strategy, as the EU Anti-trafficking Directive states, assistance and support should be given to victims taking in to account their individual needs (European Commission, 2012, p.5). A relevant action this strategy provides is that Member States should ‘‘ensure that formal, functional national referral mechanisms are established’’.

The EU Victims' Directive 2012/29/EU is a Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. Article 4 (1) is the first article of the Directive that addresses the psychological impact a crime may has on a victim by stating; ''Member States shall ensure that victims are offered the following information, without unnecessary delay, from their first contact with a competent authority in order to enable them to access the rights set out in this Directive: (a) the type of support they can obtain and from whom, including, where relevant, basic information about access to medical support, any specialist support, including psychological support, and alternative accommodation''.

The Directive continues to address psychological consequences in Article 8 and 9, in which it focuses on the availability of victim support. In Article 8 for example, the Directive mentions the responsibility of Member States to facilitate the referrals of victims to competent authorities which should provide services that are specialised and free of charge for both victims and family members that may need victim support as well. Article 9 of the Directive adds to the previous article by stating what victim support services should at minimum offer, including the mentioning of specialised psychological support.

3.3. Analysis: Are the obligations met in practice ?

Having examined the legal obligations that address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking on an international and European level, the following section will examine whether these obligations are met in practice.

The most recent report published on the aforementioned EU Victim's Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, was published in May 2020. The report aims to assess to which extent Member States comply with the obligations set out by the Directive (European Commission, 2020, p.2).

The report found that in regards to the aforementioned Article 8 and 9 several Member States do not meet the obligations in practice. In fact, the report states that in some Member States victims of human trafficking and their family members do not have access to specialised victim support (European Commission, 2020, p.6). Additionally, in some Member States the aforementioned referral mechanisms fail to refer victims to the relevant support services or not all types of victims are referred (European Commission, 2020, p.6). This can mean that not all identified victims of sex trafficking that should receive psychological assistance indeed receive this support.

Furthermore, interestingly the report found that the victims' right to protection as mentioned in Article 18 in the Directive, are not always met. This was specifically found in some Member States where relevant protection measures were not implemented and left victims prone to unaddressed psychological harm (European Commission, 2020, p.7).

3.4. Chapter Conclusion: legal obligations

This chapter highlighted the global legal efforts to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. The first section of the chapter gave an overview of international legislation. The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime adopted in 2000 was a major step in the right direction of addressing victims of sex trafficking and victims of other organized crime.

Furthermore, this chapter examines European laws that address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. These are , for example, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the EU Anti-trafficking Directive and the EU Victims' Directive. All these acknowledge the psychological consequences of trafficking, yet in practice countries do not always succeed in addressing the psychological consequences on victims.

4. The Netherlands: Addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking

Having examined the global laws that address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking, it is now time to examine the Netherlands more thoroughly. As an active Member State of the European Union, all the aforementioned trafficking legislation is applicable for the Netherlands. However, the country has implemented specific legal obligations to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking as well. This chapter will focus on the legal obligations the Netherlands has developed. However, before examining these it is important to understand the true scope of the sex trafficking phenomenon in the Netherlands. Therefore, this chapter will also examine the typology of sex trafficking victims and the number of victims identified. Besides this, this chapter will also briefly overview a number of available psychological support services present in the Netherlands. This will allow better examination of the legal obligations and subsequently better evaluation of the obligations in the next chapter.

4.1. Profiles of sex trafficking victims in the Netherlands

As mentioned earlier in the present study, the Netherlands is classified as a Tier 1 country by the U.S. Department of State (TIP Report, 2020). This means the country has shown efforts to combat the trafficking in human beings, provide victims of human trafficking with assistance and support and implement appropriate trafficking legislation (TIP Report, 2020). However, the National Rapporteur reported that an estimated 6000 people are trafficked annually, with nearly half of the victims being trafficked domestically (National Rapporteur, 2018). Interestingly enough, the domestically trafficked victims are often young adults that fall victim to 'loverboys'.

This portrays the first type of sex trafficking victim represented in the Netherlands. The 'term' loverboy was established in court by a sex trafficking victim to refer to their sex trafficker, whom they considered to be their boyfriend (Bovenkerk & van San, 2011, p.189). A 'loverboy' is defined as a (young) man that targets underaged girls through (online) grooming, schools, clubs and other public socialising areas (Aussems et al., 2020).

Important to note, is that the victim is not always necessarily underaged. The victims that are targeted have been selected for their vulnerability: they are often young, have very low self-esteem, may be homeless, have difficulties and may also have learning disabilities (Moeyersons, 2015; Terre des Hommes, 2019). This vulnerability, as mentioned earlier in Zimmerman et al.'s (2011) Human Trafficking Process Model, renders these girls as an 'easy' target for strangers. These strangers then enter the scene and spoil them lavishly with compliments, gifts, attention and money (Veenvliet, 2012).
Taken in by this attention, these strangers convince these girls to start a relationship with them, simulating a convincing act as the 'perfect boyfriend' (Veenvliet, 2012).

Once the relationship is established, the victims are often isolated as a trafficker's tactic to gain control and sexually exploit the victim. It is therefore no wonder that most of them need to be discovered by law enforcement agencies in order to find their way out of these dire situations (Terre des Hommes, 2019).

Research has found that 'loverboy' tactics are to some extent comparable to the tactics used by perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence, more commonly known by the term domestic abusers (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016). Domestic abusers likewise often demonstrate lavish romantic behaviour before psychologically, physically or sexually abusing their victim (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016; Huebner, 2017). Indeed, a Dutch study on adolescent partner violence including the violence of 'loverboys' towards their victims, found that many victims of such crime develop dissociative disorders and mood disorders, such as depression as well as PTSD (Wyckmans et al., 2014). The psychological consequences of such tactics are thus severe. Another common psychological consequence of sexual exploitation by 'loverboys' in the Netherlands, is the development of Stockholm Syndrome (Bovenkerk & van San, 2011).

According to Europol at least 10,000 unaccompanied minors have disappeared off the radar in Europe in the last decade (the Observer, 2016). These are individuals under the age of eighteen, who enter the territory of an EU Member State without the company of the adult responsible for them by law or by the practice of the EU Member State (Official Journal of the European Union, 2011). Like many other countries, the Netherlands has also reported a number of unaccompanied minors entering the country. Europol (2018) reported that many unaccompanied minors are from Nigerian and Syrian descent in the Netherlands. An unfortunate believe is that many of these minors end up in trafficking rings and are sexually exploited in brothels, domestically and internationally (Europol, 2018).

The last type of sex trafficking victim found in the Netherlands are foreign-born adults. The Dutch National Rapporteur reported that an estimated 21% of identified sex trafficking victims in the Netherlands are born outside of the Netherlands (National Rapporteur, 2018, p.8). Many of these victims are from countries with a lower GDP, such as Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria to name a few (National Rapporteur, 2018, p,8). It is important to note that women from these countries have an increased chance of suffering from double or even triple the traumatic events as compared to domestically sex trafficked victims (Simkhada et al., 2018).

For example, they may be fleeing war, terror or political persecution in their home countries; they may have suffered from extreme poverty; and they may have been physically and/or sexually abused by their traffickers enroute to their trafficking destinations (Payoke, 2017, p.22).

Foreign born victims of sex trafficking in the Netherlands are often referred to a specific accommodation, the Categorial Accommodation and Assistance for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (COSM). The organisation was established in 2010, and since then counts approximately 70 specialised support and assistance services that provide psychological assistance, shelter and other support the victims may need (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Victims that are placed in a COSM are often referred by the Coordination Centre Against Human Trafficking (CoMensha) (Ministry of Justice, 2016).

4.2. National obligations

The Dutch National Referral Mechanism (NRM) was established in 2013 with the aim of improving existing support services for victims of all forms of human trafficking (Ministry of Justice, 2013). The mechanism was supposed to give more insight and knowledge on which support service should be available when a sex trafficking case has been discovered (Ministry of Justice, 2014). As a supplement to the NRM, a National Referral Site (NRS), named 'Wegwijzer Menshandel' was set up. The website was initially developed for professionals, such as psychologists, that work with victims of human trafficking but also for trafficking victims themselves (Ministry of Justice, 2018). Victims can now use the website as a guide to find the correct support services near them as well as to read regular news updates, reports and articles on human trafficking (Ministry of Justice, 2018). An important organisation in the Dutch National Referral Mechanism, is the aforementioned CoMensha. CoMensha is responsible for registering all (suspected) cases of human trafficking and refer these victims to the correct organisation. The non-governmental organisation, which does receive subsidies from the central government, works closely together with law enforcement agencies, the National Rapporteur, municipalities, care institutions and ministries.

Furthermore, the Netherlands implemented the Social Support Act (WMO) in 2015. This Act led to municipalities becoming responsible for providing support to people who are unable to support their selves in society (Ministry of General Affairs, 2015). In the case of sex trafficking victims, municipalities are responsible for making sure that these victims receive the necessary psychological support as well as shelter. The municipality must also make sure that the shelter a victim is placed in has the victims' best interest at heart, especially focusing on stabilising the victims' psychological and psychosocial stability (Rijken et al., 2018, p.33). In compliance with the Act, a municipality should provide the necessary help within 48 hours of an emergency (Ministry of General Affairs, 2015). This can be a temporary solution whilst a professional is figuring out what actual assistance is needed. Furthermore, a municipality is not allowed to deny support to victims from another municipality (Rijken et al., 2018, p.35). The Act also outlines some safeguards implemented for victims that need support. For example, municipalities are in charge for contacting the necessary organisations so victims do not have to personally call different organisations (Rijken et al., 2018, p.35)

If the municipality needs to provide assistance to an internationally trafficked victim, who does not (yet) have a status, the municipality is in charge of the financial costs of these assistance services (Ministry of Justice, 2015). For example, if a Turkish sex trafficking victim is discovered, with no Dutch passport and the victim therefore does not have health insurance the municipality should provide shelter and psychological assistance, and any other necessary assistance, free of charge. The government has a special law for this which is the 'Regeling Medische zorg Asielzoekers (RMA)'. This law, which mainly focuses on asylum seekers, for example, covers basic health insurance. However, interestingly, since December 2019 a change was implemented in that for the first two months when refugees over the age of eighteen are discovered in the Netherlands, they only have access to strict emergency health assistance (RMA, 2020).

The RMA specifically addresses the psychological assistance that sex trafficking victims may need. In order for victims to receive complimentary psychological support, the RMA states that only psychological disorders as recognised in the DSM fall under the general health care (RMA, 2020, p.11). Psychological assistance is both offered for complex and non-complex disorders, but again these need to be acknowledged by the DSM (RMA, 2020, p.12).These can be given by clinical psychologists or psychiatrists (RMA, 2020, p.12).

Besides the municipality, foreign victims of sex trafficking can receive help from the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA). The COA has its own reception centres where victims of sex trafficking are offered mental health support (Wegwijzer Mensenhandel, 2020).

Another Dutch law addressing the psychological consequences of foreign sex trafficking victims is the Aliens Act of 2000. The Act distinguishes between two types of sex trafficking victims under section B8 and B9. Section B8 focuses on sex trafficking aliens that want to stay in the Netherlands for a short period of time, also called 'Humanitarian temporarily', whilst section B9 focuses on sex trafficking aliens that either want to either permanently stay in the Netherlands or stay in the Netherlands for a longer period of time, previously had a Dutch nationality, are underaged and lived in the Netherlands or adults that previously stayed in the Netherlands for a period of time, also called 'Humanitarian not temporarily'. In terms of the psychological consequences, section B8 states that a victim of sex trafficking may apply for a temporary residence permit if the victim is unable, or unwilling to participate in criminal proceedings against their sex trafficker because of a psychological disorder (Aliens Act, 2000). The Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) is in charge of granting the application for temporary residence. Furthermore, this section states that a care coordinator is responsible for making sure a victim is medically (including psychologically) tested (Aliens Act, 2000). Similar to section B8, B9 states that in order to apply for 'permanent' residency in the Netherlands, a sex trafficking victim must, at the time of application, still suffer from a psychological disorder, making them unable to participate in criminal proceedings. Important to note is that these are not the only conditions under which aliens can seek residence, however these are the only ones specifically focusing on the psychological consequences that may have been developed after their trafficking ordeal.

The Netherlands has recently seen an increase of sex trafficking victims that apply for a residence permit under the B8 section of the Aliens Act 2000 (National Rapporteur, 2020, p.30). This is because the Netherlands saw a rise of Nigerian sex trafficking victims with a Dublin status also called a Dublin claimant. Once a victim applies for and is granted residence under the B8 section of the Aliens Act 2000, this Dublin status expires, which means that the Netherlands is now responsible for the victim. The number of B8 applications are expected to decline and rise quickly after the decrease, because of the COVID-19 pandemic (National Rapporteur, 2020, p.31). A reason for this is that many countries have closed their borders since the pandemic, making it unable for aliens to travel to neighbouring countries (ibid).

4.3. Available psychological support services

To give an idea of whether the Netherlands address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking in law, it is equally important to assess what psychological support services are available in practice. This next section will provide an overview of some of these support services, what support they actually provide, which victims they help and any other important aspects these support services cover.

As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, municipalities are in charge of providing sex trafficking victims with the appropriate support and assistance. The municipality of Drenthe has its own centre for transcultural psychiatry called 'De Evenaar'. De Evenaar specifically aims to provide support to those with ethnic minority backgrounds, refugees and asylum seekers. The centre has a team of different professionals such as psychologists, youth-workers and therapists.

The centre reports that many victims that they provide assistance to suffer from a range of different psychological consequences, such as; insomnia, burn-outs, nightmares, anxiety and loss of interest in daily activities (De Evenaar GGZ Drenthe, 2020). In other words, many victims suffer symptoms of post-trauma, dissociative disorders and major depressive disorders. These psychological disorders may be treated in various different ways, such as cognitive behavioural therapy or interviewing (De Evenaar GGZ Drenthe, 2020).

Another organisation that addresses the psychological consequences of sex trafficking in its victims, is the 'Blijf Groep'. The organisation is located in the capital of the Netherlands, Amsterdam, and covers its surrounding cities as well. The Blijf Groep initially focused on victims of domestic violence and child abuse but since last year they have started the assistance of sex trafficking victims. According to the organisation, it offers a unique approach the 'blended-assistance'. This is a combination of online assistance and face-to-face meetings with victims. One can imagine that in these times of a global pandemic and restrictions to in-person contact this is a positive addition to their organisation. The organisation welcomes both domestically trafficked victims, often those of 'loverboys' and internationally trafficked victims.

An organisation which is probably one of the biggest organisations offering psychological assistance to victims of sex trafficking in the Netherlands, is Fier. Fier is both a expertise centre and a treatment centre. Victims that receive treatment at Fier, are referred by their local GP.

Like De Evenaar, Fier offers various methods to address psychological disorders suffered by victims such as intensive trauma treatment, cognitive behavioural therapy and psycho-education, where the focus lies with creating coping mechanisms.

4.4. Chapter conclusion: legal obligations in the Netherlands

This chapter focused on which legal obligations the Netherlands has to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. As an European Member State, the Netherlands already has European laws implemented that focus on the need of addressing psychological consequences such as the EU victim's Directive, the EU Anti-trafficking Directive and the Council of Europe Convention Against Trafficking in Human Beings.

The country itself has implemented various hard and soft laws addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. However, before assessing these it is important to first examine the Netherlands as a whole in terms of the sex trafficking situation within the country. This chapter has portrayed that like other European countries, the sex trafficking phenomenon is still very much present in the country even though the latest Trafficking In Persons report of 2020 by the U.S. Department of States classifies the Netherlands as a tier 1 country, that is a country that shows good efforts in the combatting of human trafficking and the protection of its victims.

Furthermore, the National Rapporteur reported an estimated 6000 trafficking cases per year, with a large number of victims being from the Netherlands itself. These victims are often trafficked by their boyfriends also called 'loverboys' as their boyfriends' only goal is to exploit them in to the commercial sex industry.

Additionally, the Netherlands has to abide with the Social Support Act (WMO). This Act, that was implemented in 2015, allows victims of trafficking to be ensured of health care and other assistance they may need. Foreign victims of trafficking have the RMA, with which they can receive basic and more complex psychological care from professionals, and the Aliens Act B8 and B9 of 2000.

5. Analysis the Netherlands: Are the obligations met in practice ?

Now that the research has examined the psychological consequences of sex trafficking, the international legal obligations that address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking and the Dutch national obligations that address the psychological consequences, it is now time to analyse whether these obligations are met in practice. For this part of the present research, an analysis will be conducted by reviewing reports of organisations such as the Group of Experts on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) reports, the reports of the National Rapporteur in the Netherlands and other articles on the psychological assistance offered to sex trafficking victims in the Netherlands.

5.1. The GRETA reports on the psychological assistance in the Netherlands

The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings is a monitoring body within the Council of Europe. The group publishes reports evaluating how European countries implement the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. This section will examine the first and second report on the Netherlands, and in specifically on the availability of psychological support and assistance for sex trafficking victims.

The first report on the Netherlands, by GRETA was published in June 2014. The first comment made on the psychological consequences of sex trafficking victims, portrayed concerns of the aforementioned COSM's. According to the report, many foreign victims do not receive psychological assistance on time or at all due to the lack of places in these shelters. The shelters do provide the necessary psychological assistance to sex trafficking victims within the shelters, but as many victims need to stay beyond the three-month reflection period, other victims are put on waiting lists (GRETA, 2014, p.41).

A reason for victims to stay longer in the COSM shelter, is a psychological evaluation without a positive outcome for the referral to another shelter or facility (GRETA, 2014, p.41). An evaluation visit by GRETA at one of the COSM shelters in the capital, has found that victims within the shelter received psychological support twice per week, however one can argue that for some victims with more complex psychological disorders this is not sufficient (GRETA, 2014, p.42). In fact, the report comments on the continuity of the psychological assistance given to these foreign-victims by stating that; ''the Netherlands must ensure continuity in the psychological and medical support provided to victims after the reflection period, including by clarifying and reinforcing the role of regional care coordinators''.

Additionally, the report addresses the psychological consequences of sex trafficking victims that are domestically trafficked, as seen earlier in this research, these are often Dutch victims of 'loverboys'. In the special centres created to shelter victims of sex trafficking and especially 'loverboys', victims are given psychological care depending on their specific needs (GRETA, 2014, p.44). An interesting note here however, is that victims of 'loverboys' over the age of 18 are allowed to leave at any time and discontinue psychological counselling (GRETA, 2014, p.44). Given the fact that many victims of 'loverboys' had a romantic relationship with their trafficker and many having developed Stockholm Syndrome and other psychological disorders, it is likely that these victims may be revictimized or suffer from these disorders for a very long time as they are left untreated.

The second report on the Netherland, by GRETA was published in 2018. This report, specifically addressed concerns about the implementation of the Social Support Act (WMO) in 2015. According to the report, it is likely that many victims of sex trafficking do not receive psychological assistance in time as the municipalities are now in charge of ensuring victims receive the correct assistance, which may take longer (GRETA, 2018, p. 27). Even though, according to the Social Support Act (WMO) a victim of sex trafficking should receive emergency care within 48 hours if needed, the GRETA report shows that in practice this sometime takes longer.

Another reason why correct assistance may take longer is, that municipalities choose not to recruit care coordinators but carry out the investigation in to the victim and their needs their selves (Rijken et al., 2018, p. 47). Another major issue with this is that victims might disappear off the radar again because of the long waiting times (ibid).

Another problem addressed in the latest report, was that though already commented on the previous GRETA report, many foreign victims are still left without the correct psychological assistance after their reflection period (GRETA, 2018, p.27).

Since the Social Support Act (WMO) municipalities have struggled to succeed in referring to the necessary psychological treatment professionals (GRETA, 2018, p.27). According to GRETA this was a major problem as it portrays that municipalities have insufficient resources for this responsibility. Indeed, the report states; ''GRETA considers that the Dutch authorities should ensure that the assistance provided to victims of the trafficking in human beings is adapted to their specific needs and that minimum standards are guaranteed across the country, regardless of the service provider and which municipality is responsible for arranging the assistance measures'' (GRETA, 2018, p.28).

5.2. The National Rapporteur on the psychological assistance in the Netherlands

The 2017 report by the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children does not specifically focus on the psychological consequences of sex trafficking, yet it touches up on various important aspects that influence the availability of psychological assistance for sex trafficking victims in the Netherlands.

A major concern expressed multiple times by the National Rapporteur is the decreased identification of sex trafficking victims for various reasons (National Rapporteur, 2017). The main reason being shifted national priorities that do not include the combatting of human trafficking in practice (National Rapporteur, 2017, p.8). This is an important finding, as this means that the Netherlands does not necessarily have a decrease in sex trafficking victims but rather a reduction of resources used to identify sex trafficking victims.

Consequently, this may mean that many victims that are unidentified receive the necessary care for the psychological consequences they may have suffered from the trafficking ordeal. In fact, a factsheet for the Human Trafficking Victims Monitoring Report, reported that the approach of the Dutch National Police is extremely lacking, even though the police force has grown (National Rapporteur, 2019).

According to the National Rapporteur, only an estimated 15% of actual human trafficking victims are identified and if this number is decreasing the country seems to lose a view on the severity of the phenomenon within the country (National Rapporteur, 2018, p.10). These numbers were a concern in 2017, but currently in 2020 it might even be a bigger concern, as global priorities now are even more shifting as many countries focus on the economy (International Labour Organization, 2020). Since the pandemic, countries have developed other priorities such as saving jobs and finances whilst there seems to be an unfortunate increase of victims of sexual exploitation (International Labour Organization, 2020).

Another important concern expressed by the National Rapporteur, is that in practice foreign victims are not always recognised as victims of sex trafficking (National Rapporteur, 2018, p.13). This is because organisations such as CoMensha, do not always register valuable information of a victim (National Rapporteur, 2018, p.13).For example, the form of exploitation they have endured. Additionally, the implementation of new privacy legislation has not made things easier (National Rapporteur, 2019).

Consequently, this may lead to problems in addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking found in foreign victims, which then of course also leads to psychological disorders untreated.

A recommendation on the aforementioned concerns are made. The National Rapporteur recommends that ‘‘The Ministry of Justice and Security should make structural and substantial investments coming years to enhance municipal policy to combat human trafficking and to ensure that every municipality is capable of preventing and recognising human trafficking, protecting victims and passing on signals to the relevant agencies’’ (National Rapporteur, 2017, p.13).

What is extremely worrying again with this concern, is that the report also found that municipalities, in practice, do not know whether human trafficking occurs within their borders (National Rapporteur, 2017, p.14). One can understand how difficult it is to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking in its victims by municipalities, when they are, as seen in the previous chapter, the one responsible for providing victims with the necessary support, but do not even know the severity of human trafficking in the borders of their municipalities.

Lastly, the report states that ‘‘human trafficking cannot be addressed incidentally as the consequences of human trafficking are too severe’’ (National Rapporteur, 2017, p.15). Efforts were promised to be made within the following four years after this report, however it is questionable that these efforts will be made since the global pandemic.

5.3. Research: Human Trafficking: The victims' perspective

A study that gives more insight to what happens in practice, regarding addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking, is an exploring research to the wants and needs of sex trafficking victims by Rijken and her colleagues of the International Victimology Institute in Tilburg (INTERVICT), published in 2013. The following section will focus on what the research found in terms of the psychological assistance given to sex trafficking victims in the Netherlands.

The interviews done in this research with victims, shows concerns in terms of whether the victim feels helped. For example, a victim stated that she had not received enough therapy to cope with her depression after the trafficking ordeal, as the therapy was only available for a period of time. In which she did not receive an individual psychological assessment to continue the therapy (Rijken et al., 2013, p. 104). Another example was given by a sex trafficking victim that reported to not have received psychological treatment at all in a shelter, where she ended up in twice (Rijken et al., 2013, p.104).

These are only two examples of the view on victims. However, the research also evaluated the main psychological needs victims report. On a short-term basis these are; 1) adequate and concrete psychological treatment in a safe environment, psychological assistance during trial to, for example, help deal with feelings of revictimization, specialised trauma and substance abuse treatments and the psychological help with learning to trust people again (Rijken et al., 2013, p.124).

Another considerable concern is that Dutch victims of human trafficking that receive psychological support from the Social Support Act (WMO), pay a contribution for their services. Though the Social Support Act (WMO) of 2015 was not implemented at the time of the study, a similar contribution had to be paid for general mental health care (GGZ) and for the National Act on Exceptional Medical Expenses also called AWBZ. A victim in the study, reported that she was unable to receive the necessary psychological assistance as she did not have the financial means to pay the contribution the GGZ required (Rijken et al., 2013, p.126). In fact, the same victim also reported that the shelter she was in at that time, made insurance declarations for psychological assistance which the victim did not even receive (Rijken et al., 2013, p.126).

The research recommended that national policies should be made for the financing of the psychological assistance of all victims of human trafficking (Rijken et al., 2013, p.137). However, this has yet to be implemented today in 2020. This is a worrying factor as this may mean that financial resources in the time of this global pandemic has become limited for victims of human trafficking, and that these therefore suffer from untreated psychological disorders.

The conclusion made by victims on the psychological support they received, were that these should be available for a longer period of time (Rijken et al., 2013, p. 127). Interestingly, this is often reported in literature. For example, as shown at the beginning of the research, Zimmerman and her colleagues mentioned the importance of psychological support after the exploitation has ended and for as long as an individual victim may need.

European legislation states that the psychological support of victims should meet their individual needs, which means that if a victim needs psychological support for a longer period of time, this should be given. However, as this study portrays this does not always happen in practice.

5.4. Chapter conclusion: Complying to legal obligations the Netherlands

This chapter has evaluated whether the Netherlands abides with its legal obligations to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. This is done by examining reports of the Dutch National Rapporteur, GRETA and a research carried out by the International Victimology Institute of Tilburg.

The chapter found that in practice, the obligations are not always adhered to and that victims have reported to feel unheard in regards to receiving psychological treatments. Furthermore, both GRETA reports issued concerns about the lack of clear rules on who is in charge of the referral of sex trafficking victims to psychological professionals as well as the municipalities incapability to offer psychological assistance in a timely manner.

Additionally, the National Rapporteur expressed its concerns with the identification of sex trafficking victims. If victims of sex trafficking are not identified or identified incorrectly, this may cause victims to not receive the necessary psychological support they may need to help deal with the aftermath of the exploitation.

Likewise, this chapter showed that some victims who receive psychological assistance from professionals do not always feel satisfied with the outcome of the support. The psychological support may stop because, in cases of foreign victims, the reflection period is over or in Dutch victims, it may be that they do not have the financial means to cover the necessary contribution as mentioned in the Social Support Act (WMO).

6. Conclusion

The present study has identified the many psychological consequences seen in sex trafficking victims. In the aim to answer the first question, the study found that the trafficking of victims for sexual exploitation is an severely traumatic experience. Victims of sex trafficking often suffer or witness extreme violence, such as sexual and physical abuse. The type often falls victim to sex trafficking, are those shown to be more vulnerable and often have already experienced trauma prior to the exploitation. Psychological consequences of sex trafficking include the development of (C)PTSD, Dissociative Disorders, Major Depressive Disorders and Stockholm Syndrome, which if left untreated can worsen.

An important framework that explains the development of psychological consequences as a result of sex trafficking, is the Human Trafficking Process Model by Zimmerman and her colleagues. The model shows how at any given time of human trafficking during or after the exploitation psychological consequences may occur.

Furthermore, the research examines different legal obligations that address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. On an international level, the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime is examined. On European level, the EU Victims' Directive, the EU Anti-trafficking Directive and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings are examined. All these address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking, some more in depth than others.

In order to understand the legal obligations the Netherlands has, the study firstly briefly examined the sex trafficking situation within the country. The study found that approximately, there are around 6000 sex trafficking cases per year. Almost half of these cases involve domestically sex trafficked victims. These victims are females, sometimes underaged that fall victim to 'loverboys'. 'Loverboys' are traffickers that establish a romantic relationship with their victim and once the relationship is established, they exploit their victim in to the commercial sex industry. A Dutch study found that many victims of 'loverboys' end up developing Stockholm Syndrome and some are revictimized because of their loyalty to their sex trafficker.

Additionally, the aforementioned statistics on sex trafficking cases have recently seen to be declining, however this is not because the sex trafficking situation within the country is improving rather it is because identification of victims has declined and victims of sex trafficking are reported less.

Though not a focus of the research, the Netherlands, like other European countries was found to have a significant issue with unaccompanied minors entering the territory. Some of these unaccompanied minors disappear from shelters and are believed to fall victim to international sex trafficking rings.

The main finding the present study has established is that though there are international, European and national laws that address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking in its victims, these laws are not fully abided by in practice in the Netherlands.

This may be because the resources are sometimes limited and the obligations the Netherlands has are therefore difficult to fulfil or that these obligations are simply too ambitious to work in practice.

Thus, to conclude: the psychological consequences of sex trafficking are severe and can be long-lasting. In fact, they can be so severe that victims may develop chronic psychological disorders that need life-long treatment(s). The Netherlands has implemented various hard and soft laws to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficking, yet these do not always seem to be effective in practice. Different victims and organisations report that many sex trafficking victims are left with unaddressed psychological disorders. Especially, in these times of a global pandemic the Netherlands must make sure that addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking in its victims stays a priority. This study aims to be an eyeopener for the Netherlands to realise that though the country is classified as a tier 1 country, we have a collective long way to go to ensure that sex trafficking victims have a fair chance to reintegrate in to society, with their trauma addressed as good as possible to help safeguard their dignity and wellbeing.

7. Recommendations on further research

In the first section of the present research limitations of this study were mentioned. These limitations are the starting point of the recommendations for further research.

Firstly, the research does not focus on male victims. It is important that research on not only the psychological consequences of sex trafficking in male victims is studied but it is also important to research how the Netherlands addresses the phenomenon in males as this is greatly understudied.

Additionally, the research emphasises that more research on the psychological consequences of sex trafficking in the Netherlands needs to be done. As a result of this, the present research often uses data from researchers outside of the Netherlands, such as Zimmerman and her colleagues. However, this means that the findings of the research cannot be generalised in all aspects.

Furthermore, as shown in the aforementioned chapter, the Netherlands must prioritise addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking and the available psychological support organisations offer. A major concern now a days however, is that sex trafficking is unlikely to be the priority in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the Netherlands has seen a noticeable decrease in the identification of sex trafficking victims. This is a problem as this means that these victims do not receive the necessary psychological support they may need. This means that further research needs to be conducted on how to correctly identify victims and ensure that all these victims receive the appropriate psychological support for as long as the individual victim may need.

Additionally, research needs to be gathered on the trafficking situation in the Netherlands during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, research on how to provide psychological support during these times where face-to-face contact is limited and where sex trafficking victims may have limit access to the internet but where the likelihood of becoming a victim of sexual exploitation increased.

The Netherlands has to conduct further research in to its policies addressing the psychological consequences of sex trafficking. The research has found that there were no specific policies that only address the psychological consequences solely of sex trafficking victims. The policies are rather more general and are applicable to different type of victims of human trafficking.

Furthermore, the Netherlands should ensure further research on the countries' national bodies. The country may implement an organisation to report whether the legal obligations set out to address the psychological consequences of sex trafficked are met. For now, this is only done on European level by GRETA for example.

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