13. What Young People Know About Human Trafficking

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Abstract: Human trafficking affects much of the world's population, including children. The need to inform young people about this crime highlights the crucial role of schools and families as major sources of knowledge transmission. This chapter intends to evaluate the knowledge of human trafficking and identify the sources of information on this phenomenon from a sample of young people spread over 14 public schools in the Municipality of Porto, 7 of which are covered by Educational Territories of Priority Intervention (ETPI). A self-assessment questionnaire was applied in the classroom. It becomes clear that the information on this subject is sparse. We suggest that more visibility should be given to this phenomenon, through the integration of this issue in health/sexual education projects in schools. Actions should address preventive interventions of universal character, but also more specific interventions in priority groups identified as most vulnerable.

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1. Introduction

The crime of human trafficking (HT) has been considered a "new form of slavery" (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2009, p. 6), and has proved to be a complex reality because of the sensitivity of the type of crime in question and the number of dark figures involved. The new form of slavery goes beyond racial lines; it is transient and occasionally temporary. Bales (2004) defines contemporary slavery as a "social and economic relationship in which a person is controlled through violence or paid nothing, and economically exploited." It involves the act of offering, delivering, recruiting, enticing, transporting, harboring, or receiving a person by resorting to threats, force, or other forms of coercion, and trickery for exploitation (United Nations 2000).

The crime of HT is an intrinsic reality in today's society that has gained increased proliferation in the wake of the phenomenon of globalization. From this perspective, globalization presents positive aspects; for example, in the development of interpersonal relationships, and negative aspects, particularly regarding facilitating HT internationally (Méndez 2015; Nazemi 2012).

HT does not just affect adults. The growing and disturbing number of trafficked children has been alarming the European and international community. At the European level, "Child trafficking is reported by Member States as one of the trends that is increasing most sharply in the EU. The statistical data for the years 2013–2014 show that, out of the 15,846 registered victims of trafficking in the EU during this time period, at least 2375 were children" (European Union 2016, p. 19). A United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF) press release revealed that approximately 1.2 million children are trafficked worldwide every year (United Nations Children's Fund 2007). Moreover, The Global Report on Trafficking in Persons from 2016 from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) shows that 28% of all trafficking victims are children, and, "In Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America and the Caribbean, a majority of the detected victims are children" (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2016, p. 11). Notably, trafficking in children (anyone under 18 years of age) differs from other forms of HT, as the use of force or a ruse is not necessary to prove that a child has been a victim of trafficking. This distinction hinges on the fact that a child cannot give informed consent and, thus, the combination of any action for any kind of exploitation constitutes a crime of trafficking in human beings (Article 3º of the Additional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children).

The fight against HT is more effective through international cooperation. Prevention is an important tool that is also a priority in the European Union. "The final objective of eradication of trafficking in human beings can only be achieved if the crime is prevented from happening in the first place and using the wide range of available tools at EU and national level" (Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (European Union 2016, p. 55). Several Directives show the importance of prevention; for example, Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 5 April 2011 (European Union 2011), on preventing and combating HT and protecting its victims, replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JAI of July 19. However, the existence of internal preventive measures is essential to assist the European and international measures. Data from the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings, Portugal, show that, in 2016, 264 victims were registered (228 victims of Portuguese and foreign nationality were flagged in Portugal, and 33 Portuguese were flagged abroad). Regarding the number of child victims recorded in Portugal, in 2016, there were 26 child victims (Portugal 2017). Intervention at the level of young populations needs more effectiveness and persistence. Furthermore, this intervention must be adapted to the special needs of the target audience, considering the particular vulnerability of young people (Perista and Brázia n.d.).

HT is a global reality, a violation of human rights, affecting physical and psychoemotional levels, particularly depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress (Abas et al. 2013; George and Sabarwal 2013; Hossain et al. 2010; Oram et al. 2015; Turner-Moss et al. 2014). Therefore, tools have been developed to improve and harmonize the methods and procedures of signaling victims of trafficking within the European Union and intervention projects to combat and raise international awareness about this crime. However, the increasing number of trafficked minors should serve as an impetus for greater introduction of this subject in the education of young people. This gap can easily be filled by integrating the theme into the school environment, as it is an environment dedicated to the training and qualification of citizens.

A study conducted by Raboteg-Šarić and Marinović (2005) in Croatia with secondary school students aimed to identify their knowledge about HT for sexual and labor exploitation by evaluating their attitudes toward victims and traffickers and identifying the risks of victimization. They concluded that, though young people are familiar with the problem, the information they have is superficial and

incomplete. The results highlight the need to introduce this theme in youth education (Raboteg-Šarić and Marinović 2005).

Further, the existence of communities that are more vulnerable to trafficking situations (i.e., regions heavily affected by factors such as unemployment and low income) is also evident. Hence, Omorodion (2009), in the Nigerian context, evaluated the knowledge and awareness of students and their attitudes toward trafficking for sexual exploitation to understand the individual perception of vulnerability or risk each student had. The results revealed that the vulnerability factors associated with HT included poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and low social status and that students who attend mixed schools demonstrated increased knowledge and awareness of trafficking issues (Omorodion 2009).

Given the complexity of this crime, it is essential to develop information mechanisms and raise community awareness about the risks and elements that constitute trafficking, aiming to prevent new cases and increase the detection of fraudulent, deceptive, and exploitative practices. Although, in general, communities are more familiar with this phenomenon, there still appears to be a deficit of awareness-raising information and training actions aimed at children and young people; therefore, it is essential to realize what knowledge young people do have about HT to equip them to act effectively. Thus, this study aims to characterize the knowledge of young people in the 9th grade in the Municipality of Porto about HT and their sources of information.

By deepening the knowledge young people have about this phenomenon and about the information sources that served this purpose, we can help develop action guidance for the prevention and detection of situations, enabling young people to defend themselves from any sort of enticement, thus becoming information transmission vehicles for friends and family themselves.

Furthermore, and as previously noted, it is essential to pay special attention to the most vulnerable communities, where recruitment is frequent. In Portugal, the Educational Territories of Priority Intervention (ETPI) Program groups together schools that are in contexts marked by poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion and aims to prevent and reduce early school drop-out, reduce indiscipline, and promote educational success (Abrantes et al. 2011). This study focuses on schools in these territories, as they require more recurrent, active, and increased interventions.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

The study employed 305 students attending the 9th grade in public schools from the Municipality of Porto, Portugal. The sample comprised students from one of the 9th-grade classes from 14 public schools in the Municipality of Porto, 7 of which are ETPI schools. The sample includes young people between the ages of 13 and 18 (median = 14 years old), where 136 (45%) were male and 169 (55%), female. Of the 305 participants, 134 attended ETPI schools.

2.2. Materials

The study employed a questionnaire, constructed and previously tested with eight young people from the 8th and 9th grades. The questionnaire is structured in two parts. The first part presents the objectives of the study, requesting the students'

participation. A set of socio-demographic questions are then presented (e.g., on gender, age, and school). The second part presents 14 questions (e.g., multiple-choice closed-ended questions, multiple-choice single-answer questions, and semi-open questions). The questionnaire was administered between February and May 2015. Each questionnaire was subsequently assigned an identification number, facilitating the processing of data.

2.3. Statistical Analysis

The study employed absolute and relative frequencies to describe the variables studied. It employed the chi-square test, considering a 0.05 significance level, to compare the answers between female and male genders and between schools under ETPI Program and schools not covered by that program. We used the statistical analysis software IBM® SPSS® Statistics version 21.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Sciences and Health of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Porto. The informed consent of the guardians was obtained (as the age of participants was between 13 and 18 years old). Moreover, participants also gave their consent to participate. Students were informed about the nature of the study, procedures, and objectives. They were also informed about the voluntary, confidential, and unpaid features of the study. The ability to withdraw at any stage of the investigation was highlighted.

3. Results

Overall, 305 of 345 students participated in the study. The remaining 40 students did not participate because they were not present on the day and time scheduled for the questionnaire. As shown in Table 1, 95% of students claimed to have heard of HT; however, only 24% (n = 74) knew the definition of this crime. Of the 74 students, only 7 (10%) correctly noted that HT involves sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, begging, slavery, extraction of organs, child adoption, servitude, and exposure to other criminal activities.

Moreover, of those 74 students, slightly more than half (69%) correctly answered all the alternative questions on the types of people who may be potential victims of this crime (men, women, children, and young people). Comparing the number of students who knew the definition of HT with the responses to the questions on types of HT and potential victims, only six students answered all options correctly. However, of these six students, one believed HT only occurs internationally. Hence, of the 74 students who knew the definition of HT, only 5 knew, in fact, the correct definition of this crime and its contours.

Of the students who had heard about this crime, 94% obtained that information via television, and 21%, lectures at school. Notably, only 19 students had attended awareness-raising or training activities on this subject. Furthermore, approximately half of the students (49%) reported that they had already been contacted through social networks by unknown persons, and 22% mentioned that they had already received dubious proposals through social networks.

Comparing the differences between genders revealed that young women have heard more about this crime from their family than their male peers (p = 0.016). There

is also a significantly higher percentage of young women who say they have only an idea of the definition of HT. However, there is a significantly higher number of young men saying they know the definition of HT ($p = 0.010$). There are also significant gender differences regarding child adoption. Accordingly, 52% of girls consider that HT encompasses child adoption, relative to only 35% of boys ($p = 0.002$). Further, in a greater percentage than girls, young men consider that HT can have male ($p = 0.049$) and female ($p = 0.021$) victims.

Finally, a significantly higher percentage of girls indicated that they have been contacted on social networks by unknown persons and have received dubious proposals through social networks than young men ($p = 0.003$ and $p = 0.014$, respectively) (Table 1).

Table 2 describes the questionnaire results, comparing schools covered by the ETPI Program and schools not covered by this program (non-ETPI). All students from ETPI schools claimed to have heard about HT ($p = 0.001$). There were also significantly more ETPI-school students claiming to have acquired this information through television (94%) and lectures at school (25%) ($p = 0.023$ and $p = 0.038$, respectively).

Table 1. Questionnaire results from 305 young people by gender.

Items	Total *n* (%)	Male *n* (%)	Female *n* (%)	*p*
Have you heard of "Trafficking in Human Beings"?	291 (95)	127 (93)	164 (97)	0.129
If so, where:				
Television	273 (94)	119 (94)	154 (94)	0.944
Internet	165 (57)	72 (57)	93 (57)	0.998
Among Family	78 (27)	25 (20)	53 (32)	0.016
Lectures in school	61 (21)	21 (16)	40 (24)	0.103
Among colleagues	58 (20)	26 (20)	32 (20)	0.839
Did you receive training on this issue outside of school?	19 (6)	6 (7)	10 (6)	0.786
Do you know the definition of "Trafficking in Human Beings"?				0.010
Yes	74 (24)	43 (32)	31 (18)	
No	20 (7)	11 (8)	9 (5)	
Have an idea	211 (69)	82 (60)	129 (76)	
Types of Trafficking in Human Beings that you think exist:				
Sexual exploitation	285 (93)	125 (92)	160 (95)	0.333
Labor exploitation	150 (49)	71 (52)	79 (47)	0.242
Begging	62 (20)	25 (18)	37 (22)	0,449

Table 1. *Cont.*

Items	Total *n* (%)	Male *n* (%)	Female *n* (%)	*p*
Slavery	272 (89)	120 (88)	152 (90)	0.634
Organ extraction	261 (86)	115 (85)	146 (86)	0.651
To adopt children	135 (44)	47 (35)	88 (52)	0.002
Servitude	158 (52)	73 (54)	85 (50)	0.557
Exploitation for other criminal activities	187 (61)	78 (57)	109 (64)	0.203
Do you think this crime affects Portugal?	247 (83)	105 (79)	142 (85)	0.135
Do you think this crime occurs				0.596
at an international level?	63 (21)	26 (19)	37 (22)	
at a national and international level?	240 (79)	108 (81)	132 (78)	
Who do you think may be a victim of Trafficking?				
Men	204 (67)	99 (73)	105 (62)	0.049
Women	288 (94)	133 (98)	155 (92)	0.021
Children	291 (95)	130 (96)	161 (95)	0.894
Young people	269 (88)	119 (87)	150 (89)	0.735
Have you ever been contacted on social networks by unknown persons?	149 (49)	54 (40)	95 (57)	0.003
Have you ever received any proposals that you consider dubious on social networks?	67 (22)	21 (15)	46 (27)	0.014
Do you know someone who has been deceived with job offers?	30 (10)	12 (9)	18 (11)	0.585
Do you think it is important to disclose information on the subject?				0.188
Yes	294 (96)	129 (95)	165 (97)	
No	6 (2)	5 (4)	1 (1)	
Maybe	5 (2)	2 (1)	3 (2)	

Source: Table by authors, based on the questionnaire designed for this study.

However, 31% of the students who attended ETPI schools admitted to knowing the definition of HT, revealing a significant difference relative to students attending non-ETPI schools ($p = 0.002$). Regarding a specific type of HT (sexual exploitation), students from non-ETPI schools signaled a higher awareness regarding this kind of trafficking (55%) ($p = 0.022$). Moreover, 85% of ETPI-school students consider that this crime occurs internationally and nationally, while 75% of students from non-ETPI schools have the same response ($p = 0.025$). Regarding the type of victims, significantly more students from non-ETPI schools chose men (72%) ($p = 0.034$). Finally, significantly more students from ETPI schools admitted having received proposals they consider questionable through social networks ($p = 0.035$) (Table 2).

Table 2. Questionnaire results comparing non-ETPI schools and ETPI schools.

Items	Non-ETPI *n* (%)	ETPI *n* (%)	*p*
Have you heard of "Trafficking in Human Beings"?	157 (92)	134 (100)	0.001
If yes, where:			
Television	147 (86)	126 (94)	0.023
Internet	87 (51)	78 (58)	0.202
Among Family	42 (25)	36 (27)	0.647
Lectures at School	27 (16)	34 (25)	0.038
Among Colleagues	31 (18)	27 (20)	0.655
Have you already attended training actions on this subject outside school?	10 (6)	9 (7)	0.717
Do you know the definition of "Trafficking in Human Beings"?			0.002
Yes	32 (19)	42 (31)	
No	17 (10)	3 (2)	
Have an idea	122 (71)	89 (66)	
Types of Trafficking in Human Beings you think exist			
Sexual exploitation	160 (94)	125 (93)	0.921
Labor exploitation	94 (55)	56 (42)	0.022
Begging	33 (19)	29 (22)	0.614
Slavery	154 (90)	118 (88)	0.577
Organ extraction	142 (83)	119 (89)	0.155
For child adoption	69 (40)	66 (49)	0.120
Servitude	91 (53)	67 (50)	0.577
Exploration for other criminal activities	109 (64)	78 (58)	0.325
Do you think this crime affects Portugal?	141 (83)	106 (81)	0.668
Do you think this crime occurs			0.025
Internationally?	43 (25)	20 (15)	
At a national and international level?	126 (75)	114 (85)	
Who do you think may be a victim of trafficking:			
Men	123 (72)	81 (60)	0.034
Women	159 (93)	129 (96)	0.214
Children	161 (94)	130 (97)	0.236
Young people	153 (89)	116 (87)	0.435

Table 2. *Cont.*

Items	Non-ETPI *n* (%)	ETPI *n* (%)	*p*
Have you already been contacted on social networks by unknown persons?	81 (48)	68 (51)	0.548
Have you already received any dubious proposals on social networks	30 (17)	37 (28)	0.035
Do you know someone who has been deceived with job offers	20 (12)	10 (8)	0.213
Do you think it is important to disclose information on the subject?			0.089
Yes	166 (97)	128 (95)	
No	1 (1)	5 (4)	
Maybe	4 (2)	1 (1)	

Source: Table by authors, based on the questionnaire designed for this study.

4. Discussion

Even though the results of this study cannot be extrapolated to the national reality, they emphasize the lack of knowledge young people have about HT, constituting a somewhat invisible theme. Several reasons may help explain the situation (i.e., complexity and conceptual evolution). Despite its complexity, this issue has unique characteristics. It is of great importance to carefully identify this problem (i.e., to know what it is and how trafficking in human beings occurs) and differentiate it from other phenomena with which it can be confused, such as migration, migrant smuggling, prostitution, and sex tourism. Government authorities and organized civil society must possess correct and complete knowledge of this crime such that appropriate actions can be developed and implemented (i.e., actions aimed at preventing and combating HT with necessary rigor) to restrain an illegal affront to the dignity of the human person.

Several steps can be taken to promote awareness, information, and training of this group and the entire civil community. This study documents that only 20% of the students approached this subject at school, and only six students have a correct understanding of the phenomenon. The data indicate the urgent need for the school to assume the role of an active partner in awareness raising and training: "A escola, na medida em que reúne uma enorme diversidade social e cultural, permite uma intervenção transversal, representando ainda um local privilegiado de desenvolvimento de ideias para melhor prevenção." (Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima 2013, p. 79). Thus, it is important to sensitize the educational community to the integration of this content in the context of sex education, health, and citizenship projects. This intervention should promote a general level of knowledge about these phenomena, provide detection skills, and encourage mobilization capacity and local activism to prevent and combat HT.

However, further studies should deepen the understanding of the situations of vulnerability to which young people are prone and understand more clearly the

information published in the media on this subject to intervene more appropriately and proportionally to the inherent needs of each group.

In general, a high percentage of young people who claim to have heard about the crime of HT obtained such information through television and the Internet; a lower percentage claimed to have received information on the subject at school. Thus, there is a wide disparity at this level. Young people spend much of their time in the school environment. However, the dissemination of information on this crime in this environment seems to be insufficient. Therefore, it is worth emphasizing that the school represents the space and time for building citizenship and that the various subjects of the formal curriculum should contribute to the development of critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills comprise the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. They include the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking. Thus, it is necessary to develop practices that encourage dialogue, questioning, reflection, and reasoning about social phenomena, contributing to the formation of autonomous and empowered citizens (e.g., Freire 1996; Silveira et al. 2008).

Despite the efforts undertaken by various institutions and non-governmental organizations, such as the UNODC and the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, on the prevention and combating of HT, much remains to be done. It seems to be more important that young people receive information in person and not just through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). In a face-to-face intervention, doubts can be clarified immediately.

Although some students claimed to know the definition of HT in theory, few seemed to know the definition in practice, as they could not answer the questions related to this theme correctly. These results show insufficient knowledge and a lack of support in the introduction of new knowledge and concepts in their continuous learning, corroborating the results of Raboteg-Šarić and Marinović's (2005) study, where the lack of information obtained by young people about this crime revealed a need to introduce the theme in youth education. The need to adapt the dialogue to the youth for a better understanding of this issue is evident. Advertising campaigns contribute to publicizing this type of crime to young people, but they do not bring to the fore the risks and implications of the crime.

Today, with the progress of ICT and cyber globalization, the proliferation of social networks greatly impacts young lives. With globalization, largely achieved through the Internet, the approximation of people and places has become evident. However, given the risks associated with the Internet, the exposure of young people to social networks should be monitored and performed consciously. Nearly half of the students involved in this study have been contacted by strangers on social networks, and some of them received proposals that they considered dubious. The need to alert young people to the risks inherent to social networks should be combined with the alert to the risk of contact for HT purposes.

Contrary to Raboteg-Šarić and Marinović (2005), where young people see HT as a problem that affects other countries, 83% of the students surveyed knew that this crime directly affects Portugal. Hence, Portuguese youth are more aware of the inherent fragility of this type of crime, considering the current situation of the country (i.e., unemployment), which may induce an increase in fraudulent or misleading proposals to vulnerable people. This study suggests that girls are more aware that HT is a complex crime, though the amount of information available about or received

with regard to this subject is small. A significantly higher percentage of girls have heard about HT in the family context. The data seem to reflect social representations of gender in the sense of a greater concern regarding the safety of girls because girls are thought to be more vulnerable to recruitment or enticement. However, the danger is effective for young people of both genders, highlighting the necessity of changing stigma of differentiated education based on gender. A significant percentage of girls seem to have been contacted by strangers and received dubious proposals on social networks. Despite all equal rights efforts, the female gender remains characterized by greater vulnerability; thus, it is thought to be normal that there are more enticement and deceit attempts targeted towards people of this gender.

We also found significant differences between students attending schools covered by the ETPI Program and students attending schools not covered by this program. A higher number of ETPI-school students claim to have heard about the crime of HT. This difference can be explained by the higher number of family weaknesses in this group of students. Furthermore, a significantly higher number of ETPI-school students say they have acquired information about this crime on television and in lectures at school. Thus, ETPI schools show greater concern about (in)forming their students on this matter, drawing a parallel with the universe in which these schools are inserted. This need to promote new perceptions in young people with obvious vulnerabilities is also supported by Omorodion (2009).

A significantly greater number of ETPI-school students claim to know the definition of this crime, which does not mean that their knowledge is effective, because by not identifying labor exploitation as a possibility, they may still be in danger. In fact, considering that these territories are more vulnerable to trafficking situations because they are affected by unemployment and social disruption, it seems urgent to clarify that the successful migration myth can be one of the tools used by recruiters. A significant number of ETPI-school students also agree that this crime can happen internationally and internally, showing knowledge of the disparities in Portugal and how it may be related to this crime. However, a significantly larger number of non-ETPI-school students identified men as possible victims, showing that ETPI-school students are not aware of the dangers to which men may be subjected and the possibility of them being victims. Finally, a significantly higher number of ETPI-school students received dubious proposals on social networks. Given that the Internet is prevalent, this group of students may lack adequate monitoring of their Internet access.

In short, this study suggests that the knowledge of young people on the subject is scarce and that the most important sources of information are television and the Internet. However, it seems essential that this knowledge is mostly provided by the school and, despite the efforts that have been made to integrate this subject in the school context, particularly in ETPI schools, it seems to be insufficient.

5. Conclusions

A high deficit of knowledge about the crime of HT seems to exist in the studied group. Few young people responded correctly to the questions posed on HT. This suggests that efforts to inform young people have been insufficient, corroborated by the fact that most young people only have a general idea of the definition and not a thorough understanding. In fact, without adequate and realistic information, young people cannot learn to protect themselves and be alert to situations of particular

danger. However, it seems young people would not know how to act in a dubious situation or which authorities to contact.

A large part of young people acquired information on this type of crime through television and the Internet. However, the information must also be transmitted in person at school and extracurricular levels to eliminate doubts that may arise instantly and immediately clarify them. A low percentage of young people acquired information about HT in school lectures, which is worrying, as the school has an important role in educating and introducing topics of high importance to young people. The need to strengthen this theme in the school environment is essential to clarify doubts and incorrect pre-established ideas and provide a thorough understanding with a broad enough distribution capacity to reach the families of students. Families must also be informed that all members can be victims.

It is necessary to develop new projects or extend the recipients of existing projects against HT. Young people are an important information transport vehicle and an acute vulnerability group that must be alerted to possible cases of enticement, for example, by virtual contacts. Young people must be alerted to the danger posed by social networks, and the first step in encouraging such awareness is drawing attention to the HT crime. Despite the significant difference between girls being contacted by strangers on social networks and receiving dubious proposals, boys can also be the target of an increase in demand from traffickers. The alert level for risk situations on social networks must be high for all young people of both genders attending ETPI and non-ETPI schools.

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