

The role of women as traffickers of human beings for the purposes of sexual exploitation: victim to traffickers

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ABSTRACT

It has been suggested that in the trafficking of human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation there is an unequal distribution of gender; Most of the victims are women and girls, and men are among the traffickers. However, this distribution has changed in recent years in Spain. Among those arrested and convicted of trafficking for sexual exploitation, 40% were women. In this paper, the roles acquired by women as traffickers in trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation are analyzed. A qualitative methodology has been used to obtain information through six interviews with people convicted of the crime of trafficking, who are serving their sentence and the analysis of more than 80 sentences on trafficking in human beings.

The results indicate that women tend to play two fundamental roles in which they are especially successful: as captors in the areas of origin of the victims and as exploiters in the country of destination in which they are and bring their compatriots. Sometimes they can play different roles. Once they stop being victims, when paying their debt, they become exploiters of other women, or even at the same time that they are victims and are paying the debt to come to Spain, they are exploiters and traffickers of others women. These women come mainly from Sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria, and Eastern Europe, especially Romania.

But the role of each of them and of the men involved is different. Nigerian men dedicated to trafficking play a minor role in the country of destination and a key role in the transfer and transit to Spain. In such a way that the risk assumed is greater for women in the country of destination, whose danger is the condemnation for the crime of trafficking, and for male traffickers the risk is in the journey through sub-Saharan Africa to cross it. In the case of Romanian women, although they can play the roles of captors and exploiters, they are usually in greater connection and subordination to male Romanian traffickers. The risks for both are the same, the possible arrest and conviction for the crime of trafficking, with high penalties of deprivation of liberty. It is possible to think that while for Nigerian women it is an opportunity for empowerment in criminal organizations, for Romanian women it may be to continue with subordinate roles to men.

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