

UMSAEP Report July 5, 2022

Visit to Cape Town, South Africa May 30 to June 17, 2022

Project Title: Exploring substance use, ideal interventions, and legal needs of human trafficking survivors in Cape Town, South Africa

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Past Collaboration

Dr. Rich and I met in the spring of 2018 when she visited UMSL. We submitted and were granted a UMSAEP award for me to travel to UWC in summer of 2020 to conduct qualitative research exploring the substance use, ideal interventions, and legal needs of human trafficking survivors in Cape Town, South Africa. This was a parallel project to data I collected in St. Louis. The project was delayed for two years due to COVID and I completed my travel to UWC in summer 2022.

Based on our planned collaboration, in December of 2019, Dr. Rich, myself, and other colleagues submitted an application to conduct other distinct anti-trafficking research in the Western Cape. We were awarded that grant funded by the United States Agency for International Development and South Africa's Department of Science and Innovation via Purdue's LASER PULSE between March 2020-March 2022. That project had three goals, a prevalence survey, an electronic provider survey, and a social media study. We conducted significant outreach in order to screen 665 high-risk individuals for trafficking in persons (TIP) and recruit service provider participants. Additionally, in that project, we met with and presented our findings to key South Africa government stakeholders including the National Intersectoral Committee on Trafficking in Persons (NICTIP) multiple times. That research allowed us to develop a great deal of capacity on a topic that is hard to engage stakeholders on, which allowed us to be successful at a much quicker pace for the research reported on here.

Goals of Project

The trafficking of domestic and foreign-born men, women, and children for labor and/or sexual exploitation is of great concern in South Africa. Despite the South African government's effort to eradicate trafficking, little progress has been made, and there is a paucity of literature on the topic. Western Cape is one of two provinces with an operational victim referral network, making it an ideal location for research. This study proposed to expand limited research on interventions and services for victims, and to establish

foundational research on demographic composition, substance use, intervention, and legal needs of survivors, all of which have been discussed as important aspects for services, but of which little is known.

The objective of this project was to expand the understanding and knowledge base of human trafficking in Cape Town by synthesizing the expertise of anti-trafficking service providers. Specifically we aimed to understand the following aspects of victims of human trafficking served in Cape Town:

- The demographic composition of the population (i.e. race, ethnicity, foreign or domestic status, gender, LGBTQIA+ status, age, rural and urban origins).
- Substance use and abuse (alcohol and drugs)
- Interventions and services needed
- Legal service needs

Description of Project

Ethics approval was attained from both UMSL and UWC. Research Assistants and Dr. Rich utilized and built on the anti-trafficking contacts our team made in prior TIP research in South Africa. Each member of the team conducted face-to-face or virtual in depth interviews, as preferred by the participant. Interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. Participants were asked about their own basic demographic background prior to audio recording. Then using an audio recorder, participants were asked about the services they provide, the number of human trafficking survivors they have served, the demographic composition of survivors served, substance use patterns among survivors, ideal interventions, and survivors' legal needs. Audio recordings were transcribed and cleaned.

Outcomes

Our team reached out to approximately 102 individuals and organizations that are likely to work with survivors of trafficking in South Africa to recruit participants. Between May 17 and June 17, 2022, our team conducted 23 semi-structured interviews with 28 anti-trafficking stakeholders. Most participants were from the Cape Town area, but we did not exclude participants with important insight from other provinces in South Africa. While in Cape Town, Dr. Rich and I conducted nine interviews. The first in-person interview was conducted in Hangberg, an informal settlement in an upscale part of Cape Town. This was notable as in our previous prevalence survey, we had recruited a sizable number of high-risk participants from this area of the city. It was incredibly meaningful to be able to conduct an interview in such an important high-risk community.

Each in-person interview lasted quite a bit longer than the hour to hour and a half that we anticipated. Several participants had important things to say about the field that was off the record, before and/or after recording the interviews. As a researcher who has been working on human trafficking in Cape Town for a few years, I cannot overemphasize the importance of hearing stories directly from participants to help contextualize constructs that I understood in theory. Hearing the detailed experiences of providers', their

clients', and their own loved ones made it much more real. I have a much deeper understanding of what trafficking and related risk factors look like in reality in the context of Cape Town after having visited Cape Town.

Planned Work

Our team's next steps are to finish cleaning the interview transcripts and begin to synthesize the findings. The first analysis that will be conducted will focus on ideal interventions for survivors of human trafficking as described by the service provider participants. Various members of the team will take the lead on different papers for publication with the participation of other team members as appropriate. We also plan to share the findings of our research with the participants who shared their time and expertise with us.

Appreciation

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have received a UMSAEP award to travel to Cape Town to conduct this research and meet with research team members and participants in person. Because of COVID, I was not able to travel to South Africa for our prior research. As a researcher, it was difficult to fully understand the context of the setting in which I worked without having actually been there. While in Cape Town, I was able to have conversations with participants and team members that generally do not take place virtually. I was able to meet my research partner's family and experience briefly what day-to-day life is like for an academic in South Africa. I was surprised to find that even in every day conversations with strangers in the community, not for research purposes, that women spoke of the danger and risks for violence in their lives. My UMSAEP trip to Cape Town was meaningful and I will remember my experiences going forward.