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Intervention with Victims of Forced Marriage

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ABSTRACT

The article presents results of a qualitative research aimed at analyzing how professionals work to support and protect victims of forced marriage in Spain. The study is based on the information gathered from professionals involved in criminal justice and in victim support with whom in-depth interviews were conducted. Given the increasingly common opinion favorable to address forced marriage from a victim-centred and intersectional perspective, away from those that focus on criminalization and cultural "otherness', the research presents the landscape of provisions aimed at preventing and supporting victims of forced marriage in this country. Additionally, the article gives an overview on how professionals adjust scarce resources and unclear paths to earlier detect and to better support victims of this complex phenomenon.

KEYWORDS

Criminal justice; forced marriage; victim support; victims

INTRODUCTION

Forced marriage refers to the situation where a marriage is performed without the consent of one or both parties. Despite the lack of an international consensus regarding its definition, forced marriage has been widely recognized as a violation of human rights, particularly when minors are affected (UNICEF, 2001, 2008, 2014), and as a form of violence against women and children (Ouattara et al., 1998; Gangoli et al., 2011).

In the last decade, academics, government agencies and NGOs have published several reports on the extent of forced marriage at the global and regional level. Findings of those reports suggest that forced marriage is a global phenomenon that is mostly common in certain regions of Africa and Asia, but of which evidence can also be found in the West. Researches developed in Western countries have detected cases of forced marriage in the United States (Tahirih Justice Centre, 2011; Love et al., 2019; Martin, 2018), Australia (Lyneham & Richards, 2014) and Europe (Mirbach et al., 2011); Home Office, 2018; Hamel, 2011; Rude-Antoine, 2007; Kazimirski, 2009; FRA, 2014). However, the scant official data and the fact that it is often practiced in the domestic and family spheres, often between members of cultural minorities who are less likely to turn to the formal control system, have exacerbated the lack of knowledge about the phenomenon and an underestimation of the consequences for its victims, which include isolation, sexual assault, intimate partner violence and servitude (Razack, 2004; Gill & Anitha, 2011a, 2011b; Strier & Zidan, 2013; Chantler, 2012; Chantler et al., 2009; Patton, 2018; Love et al., 2019; Anitha et al., 2018).

Research has highlighted the gendered dimension of forced marriage, which affects mainly young women and girls. Reconceptualising consent and coercion within and intersectional approach has helped define a more comprehensive dimension of this reality, showing that force

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might not necessarily involve violence or threat of violence, but can be carried out by means of coercive control and more subtle forms of pressure (Anitha & Gill, 2009, 2011a; Chantler et al., 2009; Anitha et al., 2018; Chantler & McCarry, 2020; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Askola, 2018). Moreover, forced marriage is increasingly accepted as a process, more than as an event, which broadens the extent of its victims, including those forced to enter a marriage against their will, but also those who may continue to endure coercion throughout its term and those who have not yet been forced but are at risk of being so (Gangoli et al., 2011; Chantler & McCarry, 2020).

Since the 2011 Council of Europe Convention to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), the normative approach adopted to deal with forced marriages in most European countries has consisted of the preferential recourse to Criminal Law (Ebeturk & Cowart, 2017; Gill & Anitha, 2011b; Sabbe et al., 2014), the increase of the legal age to marry (Gangoli & Chantler, 2009; Hester et al., 2007) or in hindering family reunification with minor wives (Phillips & Dustin, 2004; Wijffelman, 2017). The focus on criminal measures has extended to many developed countries, including those which initially took a more protective approach, such as the United Kingdom, where the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) was created in 2005 and in 2008 a "forced marriage protection order" was specifically designed to protect people at risk or already forced to marry (Chantler, 2012; Quek, 2012; Gangoli & Chantler, 2009). Nevertheless, criminal measures do not seem to be able to stop forced marriages from happening and there are growing voices, particularly among academics, alerting of the contradictory effects of the criminalization process (Landau, 2016; Love et al., 2019; Sowey, 2018, Askola, 2018; Ebeturk & Cowart, 2017; Sabbe et al., 2014; Simmons & Burn, 2013; Fell, 2019) and of the Orientalist perspective that focuses only on the cultural aspects of the practice and tends to alienate non-western cultures (Razack, 2004; Patton, 2018; Chantler, 2012).

Regarding forced marriages, the overall context in Spain has much in common with what has been described at the international level. Only recently has research revealed the existence of forced marriages in this country (Igareda et al., 2016; Villacampa & Torres, 2020; Villacampa, 2020). The first quantitative analysis undertaken at a national level (Villacampa & Torres, 2020) showed that people most at risk were very young women, mainly under the age of 21 and even minors, and thus usually still under the care of their parents or other adults. By nationality, the most frequent nationality of victims was Moroccan, followed by a considerable percentage of victims of Spanish nationality and, at a greater distance, Pakistanis and Gambians. These results were coherent with the migration patterns in Spain shown by data from the Spanish National Statistics Institute, according to which Moroccan is the most widespread foreign nationality in this country. The evidence of victims with Spanish nationality and who were legal residents in Spain aligned the results with those studies that relativized the influence of ethnic or religious factors (Hester et al., 2007; Chantler et al., 2009) and that, on the contrary, highlighted the link between forced marriage and patriarchal family structures (Gangoli et al., 2011; Anitha & Gill, 2011b, 2015; Patton, 2018). The research also revealed that mechanisms used to compel the victims to marry were usually low-intensity, subtle or all-encompassing and that the use of more incisive active means, such as intimidation, violence and deception were less frequent.

However, even before this research took place the Spanish legislator had already classified forced marriage as a criminal offense under Organic Law 1/2015. The criminalization of forced marriage became the sole response to Spain's adhesion to the mandate of article 37 of the 2011 Istanbul Convention. Under the new criminal legislation, forced marriage constitutes a coercion offense, in which severe intimidation or violence is used to compel a person to marry. Deception is also included as a mean of committing the offense, but only when it is used to force someone to leave Spain with the aim of compelling him/her to marry. The result of the criminalization process has not been particularly well received by Spanish scholars, who have highlighted both the ascendant nature of this offense over other previously established offenses in the Criminal Code and the unsuitability of prioritizing recourse to criminal law in matters closely linked to

family and community spheres. Furthermore, severe intimidation, violence and deception are the only means provided for in relation to the criminal offense of forced marriage, evidencing the incoherence between legal provisions and the reality of what victims experience and what empirical research shows.

However, besides the punitive response, little action has been taken in Spain at a governmental level for the assistance and protection of those at risk of forced marriage. The design of legal responses should take into account a real holistic and victim-centred approach based on the needs and expectations of victims. This would help prioritize prevention and early detection, as well as establish a set of best practice among professionals. Even if only limited research is available on the needs and expectations of victims, there is growing evidence supporting the fact that survivors and potential victims require a comprehensive response, which includes personal, emotional and material support (Sowey, 2018; Obokata, 2006; Cho & Vadlamannati, 2012). This means having someone who understands their situation and with whom they can speak with about their experience, being offered psychological and emotional support along the process of recovery as well as having access to legal aid and economic resources, if necessary. Taking into account that at times victims need to distance themselves from their family of origin, at least temporarily, until the most pressing crisis situation passes, a network of support would be required which included shelter and economic aid (Chantler and McCarry, 2020; Villacampa, 2020).

This article examines the landscape of service provisions for victims of forced marriage in Spain. Since no legal rules had been established detailing specific support to forced marriage victims, the authors engaged in an exploratory research aimed at learning how professionals identified and supported survivors and people at risk and which measures and resources they usually implemented to protect them. The information was gathered from professionals with experience in supporting victims of this phenomenon.

METHODOLOGY

This research has been developed using qualitative methodology (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2002; Marshall and Rossman, 2006). The research employed an intentional sampling system that led to the selection of a group of professionals either providing support services to victims or active in the criminal justice system. It was expected that participation of experts from both fields would enable a more comprehensive view of the interventions provided. Moreover, taking into account the novelty of the forced marriage offense in the Spanish Criminal Code, it was considered relevant to include professionals belonging to law enforcement and courts, together with those with experience in victim and community support.

Interviewees in the field of victim support were selected among those who had already participated in a previous quantitative research aimed at detecting the existence of victims of forced marriage in Spain (Villacampa and Torres, 2020). In particular, they belonged to any of the 150 organizations that responded to an online questionnaire in which they stated being familiar with forced marriage cases and having assisted at least 2 victims. They were sent a letter explaining they had been selected to participate in the second part of the research, in which their experience with victims would be of special value. The sample finally included a range of professionals operating in different fields. Most of them worked in specialized services for victims of trafficking, forced marriage or gender based violence (both governmental and NGOs), as well as in education counseling, migration policies and community support. Some of the organizations worked at a national level, though others operated only at a very local or regional level, so services provided focused only on people or communities in a particular location.

As for workers in the criminal justice system, many of them were selected among those who had already taken part in a previous qualitative research on intervention with victims of human trafficking (Villacampa and Torres, 2017). Therefore most prosecutors interviewed and some

Table 1. List of interviews conducted with criminal justice system professionals.

Number of interview	Occupation	Destination (province)	Expert in HT*, GV** or FM***
CJS 1	Judge	Lleida	Non expert
CJS 2	Magistrate	Girona	GV
CJS 3	Lawyer in a NGO	Madrid	GV, FM
CJS 4	Lawyer in a NGO	Barcelona	HT
CJS 5	Lawyer	Madrid	HT
CJS 6	Prosecutor	Madrid	HT, FM
CJS 7	Prosecutor	Madrid	HT, FM
CJS 8	Prosecutor	Barcelona	HT
CJS 9	National Police Officer	Madrid	HT, FM
CJS 10	National Police Officer	Madrid	HT, FM
CJS 11	National Police Officer	Madrid	HT, FM
CJS 12	Civil Guard Officer	Madrid	HT, FM
CJS 13	Catalan Regional Police Officer	Barcelona	GV, FM
CJS 14	Catalan Regional Police Officer	Girona	FM

*HT: human trafficking; **GV: gender violence; ***FM: forced marriages.

police officers were specialized in migration and human trafficking. Nevertheless, some professionals in this area were contacted on the basis of information provided by interviewees in the victim support area who had had specific professional interaction with some enforcement officers and lawyers. The final sample included judges, prosecutors specialized in migration issues, lawyers working in NGOs and police officers from national police bodies and from regional police in Catalonia. All professionals in the criminal justice field were sent an explanatory letter requesting their intervention in the research, although not all the ones who accepted had had direct contact with victims of forced marriage.

The sample was finally comprised of 34 professionals, of whom 14 worked solely or mainly in the criminal justice system and 20 in victim support services. Characteristics of the two groups are outlined in Tables 1 and 2.

An interview model was developed and applied both to victim support and to criminal justice system professionals. The interview model developed was merely a guide, without dictating the dynamics of the conversation with the interviewee.

Research questions were designed to ascertain the following topics, on which no previous research in Spain had focused:

1. How victims of forced marriage were detected by the institution in which the professional worked.
2. How professionals intervened with people at risk and with survivors of forced marriage. At this point emphasis was placed on support and protection measures.
3. What professionals believed the victims' expectations were when they sought those services. Professionals were also asked to assess their own intervention with victims and, particularly, if they considered that their actions had met the victims' needs.
4. What professionals needed to further support and protect victims of forced marriage. They were therefore invited to evaluate the resources available in their respective unit and the need to approve a specific protocol to protect victims of forced marriage.

Participation in the research was voluntarily and expressly consented to. In-depth, semi-structured interviews lasting between 30 to 90 minutes were conducted with each professional, usually in person at the interviewee's workplace and a few of them online or by phone. Interviews were conducted between July 2017 and July 2018 in Madrid, Barcelona, Zaragoza, Tarragona, Girona and Lleida, fully recorded and completely transcribed. All interviews were conducted in the languages spoken by interviewees (Spanish and Catalan) and only specific quotations were afterwards translated into English. The data was analyzed using the thematic

Table 2. List of interviews conducted with victim assistance professionals.

Number of interview	Occupation	Destination (province)	Expert in HT*, GV** or FM***
VS 1	NGO Coordinator	Madrid	HT, FM
VS 2	NGO Educator	Girona	FM
VS 3	NGO Social Worker	Zaragoza	FM
VS 4	NGO Unit Coordinator	Madrid	HT
VS 5	Midwife in Health Center	Girona	FM
VS 6	Social Worker. Support Service for women	Lleida	GV, FM
VS 7	Social Educator. Family Orientation Center.	Lleida	Non expert
VS 8	Social Educator. Coordinator of Basic Social Services.	Barcelona	GV, FM
VS 9	Psychologist. Women's Information and Support Coordinator	Barcelona	GV
VS 10	Social Educator. Women's Information and Support	Barcelona	GV
VS 11	Expert of Equality at a Regional Council and Intercultural Mediator	Barcelona	GV
VS 12	Expert. Information and Support Service for women	Girona	GV, FM
VS 13	School Counselor Secondary Education Center	Barcelona	Non expert
VS 14	Social Educator. Specialized Intervention Service	Tarragona	GV
VS 15	Expert in Migration Policy	Girona	GV, FM
VS 16	Manager of Violence Against Women Unit. Catalan Government	Girona	GV, FM
VS 17	Expert in Social Inclusion	Girona	GV, FM
VS 18	Community Mediator	Girona	GV, FM
VS 19	Social Worker. Education Department. Catalan Government	Girona	FM
VS 20	Victim Assistance Office	Zaragoza	GV

*HT: human trafficking; **GV: gender violence; ***FM: forced marriages.

analysis methodology (Guest et al., 2012) according to the phases of familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, search and review of the topics, definition and assignment of names to themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESULTS

The objective of the research was to find out how forced marriage is being addressed in Spain and the opinion that professionals have of such treatment. The main results of the research are dealt with in the following sections.

1. Ways in Which Professionals Came into Contact with Victims

All professionals interviewed were aware of the existence of people who had experienced or had been at risk of forced marriages in Spain. However it was common belief among most interviewees that this is a phenomenon that does not easily come to light. The very nature of the practice, occurring often within the victim's trusted family environment, means that those affected do not always identify themselves as victims. Furthermore, even if the victim perceives the danger, it is complex that other people became aware of such a risk.

CJS 14 (Catalan regional police officer): "Cases do exist but women and girls will not come to tell you that they are being threatened because many are not even aware that they are being victimized. We have to understand that forced marriage takes place in an environment of maximum

trust: the family nucleus is their comfort space and therefore the alerts are not set, because they are not your enemies, on the contrary, they are your parents and they want the best for you (…)".

Among professionals in the victim assistance field such knowledge was frequently obtained directly from the victim herself, whether she was at risk or the marriage had already occurred. Professionals who appeared to be in a best position to come into contact with people at risk were teachers, social workers and those developing prevention workshops. In this regard, considering that subtle forms of coercion were often deployed while the girl was still in school, many interviewees pointed out that teachers were in a key position to detect cases (VS 1, 3, 6, 8, 11, 13, 17). Teachers might be the first recipients of this information, either directly from the victim or from peers, or after noticing a girl's repeated absenteeism from class. However, it was also stated that teachers and those in education services had no clear guidelines about what to do in the event of detection since misinformation and insecurity reigned on this subject within the education system.

VS 1 (NGO Coordinator): "The girl, who was still a minor, asked for help when she became aware. She overheard a conversation of the lady who was organizing her marriage, and when she realized it was all about her, she asked for help to one of the teachers of the secondary school she was attending and it was the teacher who was mobilized."

VS 3 (NGO Social Worker): "Now it seems that some cases have been detected in certain secondary schools and it is a "hot potato" that nobody knows what to do with (…). Recently the education authorities called and they did not know what to do. Normally, they do not know where to direct them, they do not know what resources they can put in place, it is just not clear."

VS13 (School Counselor): "We couldn't do much. The cases ended as planned. The girl who was locked up in the house is now in Pakistan. The girl from Bangladesh is now being held by a couple on assignment. And the girl from Morocco who got married, I don't know is she leads a happy life or not".

Likewise, those developing preventive and awareness-raising activities such as social workers, cultural mediators and other professionals performing in NGOs, appeared to be in a relevant position to detect victims at risk (VS 3, 15, 17, 18). Interviewees highlighted that community prevention activities focus on population at risk and try to create a bond of trust with young women and provide a reference point where victims seek advice and help when necessary.

VS 3 (NGO Social Worker): "We have programs aimed at sub-Saharan women. Many are on health issues since our work focuses on the prevention of female genital mutilation. Within a group of teenagers, one of the girls aged 18 mentioned that from a very young age her parents had told her that she was to marry a cousin and that she believed her marriage would be like that. So, we finished the activity in winter and next summer she called for help."

When forced marriage is not a current risk but was committed in the past, this emerged from the stories of women who turned to professionals seeking help for domestic abuse or in the course of counseling on the procedure of a divorce to end the marriage (VS 4, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14).

On the other hand, professionals in the criminal justice field did not seem to have much direct contact with victims but only when the latter were referred to them by other professionals. Police officers explained they would become aware of victims of forced marriages mainly when their intervention was requested from social workers, teachers or members of victim support institutions, particularly when a rescue or a protective operation was required. However, police officers interviewed could gain knowledge of cases of forced marriage also by odd grounds. For example, one of the police officers interviewed (CJS 12) explained the case of a man who had had his marriage arranged and was waiting for the girl to turn 18. He filed a complaint for breach of contract when he found out that the young women had also been sold to another man.

2. Method of Intervention with Victims

2.1. Programmes and Resources Used in the Victim Support Field

Professionals acting in victim support organizations, whether in the area of gender violence, human trafficking or specifically in forced marriage, mentioned they focused part of their activity in prevention. They held community-based prevention workshops that targeted potential communities and offered themselves as a resource to which victims could turn to if they detected the risk.

VS 3 (NGO Social Worker): "What we work on is prevention. We try to work with families, mothers and daughters, to bring this issue to light, doing prevention and then, if something happens, they can come to us."

Some NGOs, particularly those specialized in forced marriages placed special value on the work carried out by survivors who currently collaborate as mediators within the organization (VS 2, 4). Such mediators are women who at one point in their lives suffered a similar experience and who belong to those communities to which prevention and supportive actions are directed. Both the experience as a survivor and the first-hand knowledge of the patterns of the community provides mediators, whether professional or volunteer, with skills that are particularly useful to get in contact with people at risk, intervene in family mediation and give support to women in crisis.

VS 4 (NGO Unit Coordinator): "Let's see, our biggest potential is the rescue unit where the team has about twelve mediators. And they are mediators who had been victims of trafficking and are now survivors. Each one of them has decided to work in our organization to be able to help women who are in the same situation that they were in."

On the intervention strategy once the risk of forced marriage had been detected, two main positions could be observed among workers in the victim support area. On one side, those who would prioritize contact with victim's families aiming to persuade the parents to withdraw or postpone the marriage plans. In this regard, some interviewees indicated that even when only a delay of the marriage was obtained at least that gave hope that time gained would enable the young woman to assist school, continue her education and as a consequence get sufficiently empowered to decide about her future. On the other side, some specialized workers would focus exclusively on the person at risk, so they would give her all support needed to avoid the marriage without addressing the family context. As one of the interviewees stated:

VS 2 (NGO Educator): The first thing we do is contact the victim to offer our support, which is total and absolute, comprehensive at all levels. We guarantee that if she accepts our support we will never leave her and will always accompany her. The process can last 2,4,6 months or whatever, and it implies having a residential place or resources to live in, continue studying, find a job, etc. This is what we offer. Because of course, taking a step like this implies being very brave and not being alone.

However, even in those cases when contact with the family was firstly considered, when the situation of risk turned to be perceived as urgent or when the parents would not even respond to the social services' meeting request, professionals in victim support would give notice to the criminal justice professionals. A protective intervention would then be adopted in cooperation with criminal justice professionals, which could involve the withdrawal of passports to prevent a trip to a third country and/or even removing the young woman from her family environment. The deployment of protective measures could also imply additional material resources such as alternative accommodation and livelihood resources. Although some organizations specializing in forced marriage had their own residential properties, in most cases people at risk might resort to the existing shelters available for gender-based violence or for human trafficking victims.

Emotional support dedicated to empowering victims and psychological treatment would be offered to victims by most institutions (VS 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 20). Likewise, legal advice appeared to be one of the important services that support institutions provide and some had lawyers who could guide the victims, either in the possibility of denouncing the relatives who

hatched the marriage plan, or in initiating a divorce procedure after a forced marriage. Finally, with regard to translation and interpretation services, victim support workers explained they would guarantee this service through the cultural mediators they worked with or they would otherwise turn to other organizations that could provide this service.

2.2. Programmes and Resources Used by Criminal Justice Professionals

Among professionals in the criminal justice system, intervention in forced marriage was primarily aimed at identifying victims, implementing protection measures and prosecuting perpetrators.

When asked about protection measures for victims of forced marriage, criminal justice professionals referred to those foreseen in the Spanish legislation such as the prohibitions to approach and to communicate with the victim, which can be imposed on family members and on those directly allegedly linked to the marriage. Additionally, the victim would be offered legal advice and she would be notified of all proceedings. Such legal advice was sometimes offered by lawyers who worked in NGOs and who could even provide legal representation if the victim decided to file a complaint against her relatives.

Regarding mediation in cases of forced marriage, some interviewees in the criminal justice system were particularly reluctant regarding both the scarce regulation of restorative justice in criminal matters in Spain as well as the vulnerability of the victim (CJS 2, 8, 14). Some professionals warned that in some cases mediation could result in a new coercion for victims.

CJ 2 (Magistrate): "Mediation within the criminal process is a strange matter (…) You need to be aware of the victim, because when the victim is vulnerable in front of the aggressor then you don't know if you are even coercing the victim (…)"

A relevant difference was detected in the interviews with police officers operating in various police bodies in Spain. At the national level, police officers stated that they did not have a specific protocol for dealing with cases of forced marriage, although their intervention was very well evaluated by members of the Prosecutor's Office.

CJS 7 (Prosecutor): "We have a very well prepared and specialized police force, so as soon as police identify a possible victim of trafficking or forced marriage they activate specific protocol of action and they send a statement to both the Court and the Prosecutor's Office. They then refer the victim to an NGOs specialized in human trafficking. Therefore, Prosecutor do not normally request protection orders because the police have already carried out protection work."

Only at a regional level, did the Catalan regional police officers specifically mention an existing Protocol for the prevention and police intervention in forced marriage cases[1]. In this case, the regional police officers referred to a context much more attached to intra-family practices linked to certain ethnic or cultural communities than it was perceived in the statements of National Police and the Prosecutors Office for Immigration. The Catalan regional police officers described a programme of joint action with social services that gave priority to an initial intervention of the social services in order to contact with the victim's family, mediate with them and persuade parents to withdraw the marriage plans. However, when such an intervention was not effective and the family would not collaborate, police officers would inform the Court and the Prosecutor's Office in order to adopt legal protective measures such as prohibition to contact or approach the victim.

[1]The "Protocol for the prevention and police attention of forced marriages" was approved by the Catalan government, Department of Home affairs, Institutional relations and Participation in June 2009. The protocol provides members of the Catalan regional police with operational guidelines for dealing with the problem.

2.3. Referrals between Victim Assistance and Criminal Justice Systems

A system of referrals and coordination between professionals in the field of victim support and criminal justice was outlined by the interviewees.

Police officers and prosecutors explained how victims were referred to victim support organizations, particularly with regard to psychological recovery and access to residential resources when required. The level of coordination with NGOs was rated as acceptable by Catalan regional police officers and other professionals within the criminal justice system –an assessment which seemed to be due in part to the establishment of an intervention protocol in the Catalan province of Girona[2].

VS17 (Expert in Social inclusion): "I think coordination has improved. For sure it can improve more, but it has increased thanks to the protocol, the local guidelines, to the fact that we have been meeting periodically and this helps us to know each other and to know how to act when a new case arises".

Similarly, professionals in victim support stated that they would report to the Public Prosecutor or to the judge depending on whether the person at risk was a minor or and adult and whether risk was perceived as imminent or not (VS 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18). On this matter, there seemed to be a certain tendency among professionals to respect the will of the victim regarding whether to report when she was an adult and risk was not perceived as imminent (VS 2, 12, 14, 16, 18). Many of those working in social services refused that among their commitments was included trying to persuade the victim to report the offense. In fact most of them were particularly critical with the idea that people at risk of forced marriage should report the crime:

VS 2 (NGO Educator): Sometimes girls are asked to report to police. And for us this is a mistake, because you can't ask a girl to denounce her father or her mother. You can't. And just because it is not reported and written down at a legal level doesn't mean she's no longer a victim.

However, when the victim was a minor, there seemed to be widespread practice among professionals to inform the Public Prosecutor's Office. Moreover, when risk was perceived as urgent and professionals feared for the victim's security, whether adult or minor, public prosecutor and judge would be asked to adopt special measures to protect the victim, like prohibiting contact or approach from relatives or the removal of passports if there was a risk of traveling abroad.

Even if referrals between professionals existed, interviewees pointed out that coordination was far from perfect and needed to be enhanced (VS 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 17, 18). They considered it was important to draw a clearer circuit on the intervention of professionals depending on whoever detected the person at risk (in school, in women's service, by the social services, etc.) and at what stage the case was detected (initial or imminent risk).

VS 17 (Expert in Social inclusion): Depending on the case, if it is only a situation of suspicion, or if it is a possible risk or an imminent risk or the marriage has already been committed, then the professional will have to act differently. There is a part relating to information, sensitization, networking and activation of different services. But there is also an immediate action to activate the public prosecutor's office or the judge if it is necessary to protect the person. And this should be clearer.

2.4. Applicability of Assistance Programmes outside Spain

All professionals interviewed agreed that the intervention is more complex when the victim of the forced marriage has been transferred abroad. In this context, the possibility of implementing

[2]The "Protocol to tackle forced marriage", was approved in the province of Girona in December 2014.

protection measures decreases drastically and it is difficult to guarantee the return of the victim to Spanish territory.

The National Police and Civil Guard officers gave a less negative image in this regard, detailing a possible intervention through international police cooperation organizations, mainly by resorting to Europol and the Attachés of the Ministry of Interior. However, the options for intervention would be reduced when the victim had been transferred outside Europe to a territory in which Interpol's operations are limited or non-existent. In such cases, an intervention appeared to depend on the existence of a complaint by the victim in the country of transfer and a fluent bilateral relationship between the authorities in both countries.

CJS 10 (National Police Officer): "If it is outside the European Union, we try to go to Interpol. What happens is that Interpol does not reach all countries. Normally, if we have an embassy, we give it to the delegate of the Spanish embassy where the victim is so he/she can transfer it to the authorities. It is a bilateral communication."

Catalan regional police officers are excluded from the option of international cooperation. This is somewhat paradoxical considering that Catalan police has a specific protocol for detecting forced marriage within the region and that they may have intervened with the victim before being transferred abroad.

3. Assessment of Intervention with Victims of Forced Marriage

3.1. What Professionals Think Victims Expect from Their Intervention

All interviewees were asked what they thought victims would expect from their intervention. Professionals working in the criminal justice system found it particularly difficult to define what victims would expect from them. At least 5 of them of them highlighted the dilemma suffered by victims in deciding whether to resort to the criminal justice system due to the harmful effects that such an intervention could have on their families (CJS 6, 8, 9, 10, 11).

CJS 6 (Prosecutor): "I would not dare to say what they expect … (…) We are investigating and asking for many years of prison for their parents. This is an element that must necessarily influence the mood of this person."

CJS 8 (Prosecutor): "I don't know if later they really receive the reparation and help … At the level of criminal justice, I do not know to what extent it is fully restorative … getting a conviction … I do not believe that this type of victim feels satisfied."

Nevertheless, workers in the criminal justice system considered that victims wanted to get out of the situation they were in (CJS 3, 7, 8, 12, 13) and to obtain protection and help (CJS 5, 7, 8, 14).

CJS 3 (Lawyer in NGO): "They intend to stop the hell they live in."

CJS 5 (Lawyer): "What they ask for is sometimes protection, very rarely compensation, they ask for protection. Feeling they are being able to go back to ordinary life and to fight against whoever has hurt them."

CJS 8 (Prosecutor): "When someone takes the courageous step of revealing a situation of forced marriage or a situation in general of having been used, what they ask for is help. (…) and they go to the police or they go to assistance entities or they go to whoever can help them."

However, some police officers showed a certain level of disconcertment with the work they were to carry out since they were aware that victims had not come to them on their own initiative but referred to them by other professionals. Even some pointed out that it was difficult to work with such victims because some of them did accept those circumstances as part of their cultural tradition, so they would not expect anything in particular from police intervention (CJS 9, 10, 11).

CJS 9 (National Police Officer): "They just don't come. Because of their culture, they have accepted it."

CJS 11 (National Police Officer): "Normally, the majority even defend them. The victim defends the perpetrator."

The discourse was completely different among officers of the Catalan regional police, who recognized that what victims were seeking was protection and that they would only come to them as a last resort in view of their situation, in the hope of changing their parents' minds or making their partners reflect on the abusive situation resulting from the forced marriage.

CJS 13 (Catalan Regional Police Officer): "Some girls just want us to change their parents' minds. This also happens to us with gender violence, and they tell us: "I don't want you to arrest him, just to make him think".

Among victim assistance professionals there was great consensus that what victims were seeking above all was help and that included being heard and understood and not feeling alone (VS 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 20). In their view that meant accompanying the victim throughout the complex path of wanting to remain linked to the family and cultural roots and, on the other hand, be willing to maintain and make real her own expectations for the future. Likewise, it was a common idea among victim support professionals that victims sought help, mainly in the form of emotional and psychological support (VS 3, 10, 11, 20) but also of a financial nature, including housing and working (VS 9,16), and that such support was required during the long process the victim would be going through (VS 1, 10, 16).

VS 6 (Social Worker): "They seek help. Avoiding the marriage. And they don't understand "how am I going to marry such a person?" Because they've grown up here, like you and me. And you can accept your culture and the rhythm of your home and values … but suddenly someone tells you "you have to marry someone you don't know … "

VS 4 (NGO Unit Coordinator): "The girl needs to see that the person who is trying to help her understands her situation, that at least she has some knowledge of how his culture works, of how things are done within the community. Otherwise the feeling is a little bit like if you don't even understand what I'm going through, you can't help me."

3.2. Professionals' Assessment of the Interventions Implemented

Criminal justice professionals, both in the police and in the judiciary, considered their intervention had been successful in having prevented the marriage from taking place or helped to prosecute the offense (CJS 5, 6, 7, 12, 13). However, one of the prosecutors (CJS 8) interviewed recalled that one of the victims she could remember about had complained that there was no adequate response to her situation as she did not understand why she was being removed from the family nucleus.

Among police officers, those pertaining to national police bodies seemed particularly pleased with their work, although more modest responses were obtained from Catalan regional police officers. The latter highlighted that even in those cases when the intervention could be considered successful, once the situation of risk was over, women's lives would already be marked by the violence experienced.

Regarding victim support professionals, their assessment was quite ambivalent. Those who intervened in specific cases of people at risk considered that they had somehow given an adequate response, particularly in terms of accompanying the victim (VS 1, 8, 12, 15, 16). But, overall, such professionals were more critical about their intervention capacity, than what was observed among professionals in the forensic field. In this regard, those working in organizations specialized in forced marriage denounced difficulties they went through to provide adequate care for victims, find a shelter or obtain financial support since resources were all so scarce (VS 5, 6, 10, 11).

Professionals in the victim assistance area raised one of the most complex dilemmas on this issue: whether it was better to remove the victim from her family environment or whether intervention within the family should be prioritized. On this issue, professionals specialized in forced

marriage, particularly those working as intercultural mediators, expressed a preference for mediation and raising awareness with victims and their families in their own environment (VS 11, 17, 18). The removal of the victim from her environment would not be a priority, except when that was considered necessary to guarantee the victim's safety. Mediation processes, as interviewees stated, would focus on the prevention of the marriage and maintaining the links between the victim, her family and the community, but also in growing a climate of trust between families and the administration.

VS11 (Expert of equality and Intercultural mediator): We use mediation so that there is no clash between the family and the administration, so that there is a climate of trust. We try to make it understandable that the administration is here to help, no to act as the police, not to report. There is often a relationship of mistrust and fear, which is regrettable, but that is how it is.

However, professionals in favor of mediation also pointed to the need to properly assess the victim's vulnerability before engaging in a mediation process. In this regard, professionals in the victim support context were particularly aware of the emotional pressure that any intervention could generate on the victim. At times, the stress would be so intense that some victims called into doubt whether their situation at home was really so serious and whether it wouldn't have been better to get married. Therefore, greater sensitivity on the part of professionals was a need expressed by several interviewees, particularly those who admitted that their intervention could trigger harmful consequences for young women (VS 11, 13).

VS 11 (Intercultural Mediator): "Because taking a girl to a shelter is not a good solution. The shelter is not a good solution for young people. Because then they find themselves much more lost than before, helpless, uprooted; in the cases we have known, the results have not been good … Well, I have heard some girls saying "if I had known, I would have got married!"

4. What Professionals Need to Further Support and Protect Victims of Forced Marriage

4.1. Resource Requirements

Professionals working in the victim support field assessed positively that resources designed for victims of human trafficking could be applied to those of forced marriage. They hoped that, since the resources available for victims of forced marriage were clearly insufficient, at least that could expand victim support resources available. Similarly, the possibility of using services specifically designed for victims of gender-based violence was raised. However, the attachment of the Spanish legislation to a concept of gendered violence excessively restricted to intimate partner violence had proved to be a difficulty to gain access to these measures for those affected by forced marriage.

VS 5 (Midwife in Health Center): "What these girls need is a place where they can go to. If they leave home because they can't stand it anymore, then let them have a place to stay, as it is provided for victims of gender violence".

At the level of human resources, interviewees insisted that more skilled professionals were needed. Their role should develop, on the one hand, at community-based interventions aiming to deploy prevention programs, improve mediation within families and communities and create supportive spaces for women, particularly mothers, who want to break family traditions but feel under a lot of pressure. On the other hand, more professionals are needed to accompany the victims at risk or in a crisis situation.

Regarding economic resources, the most repeated request was that of residential resources, mainly shelters and supported accommodation (VS 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18). Some interviewees highlighted the lack of adequate residential resources when the victims were minors (VS 2, 16, 17, 18).

Victim assistance professionals also recalled the economic constraints that affected the families and young people, and how this challenged those who had to decide whether to leave their family environment, given that they could not survive without financial support from the government.

VS 18 (Community Mediator): "They depend on their parents and as long as there are no resources from the state and the girls are not empowered, they will continue with this marriage."

Criminal justice professionals were mainly aware of a general lack of resources, although some of them were not so much confronted to that because they were not the ones having to directly provide victims with material resources (CJS 9, 10). However, many pointed out that existing means were clearly insufficient and that access to such resources was too slow (CJS 1, 3, 4, 7, 13, 14).

CJ 3 (Lawyer in NGO): It is easy to pass new laws, develop programs, etc. but that's only paper. Human and economic resources are fundamental to reach there where it's needed.

CJ 4 (Lawyer in NGO): Resources are insufficient and partial, they are not enough to offer a comprehensive response, and there are no real and effective protection measures.

Some of the most critical professionals in this area were the prosecutors specialized in migration, who stressed the lack of specific residential resources and of specialized staff for underage victims, which seemed to be only available in certain parts of the country (CJS 6, 7, 13).

4.2. Is a Specific Protocol Necessary to Protect Victims of Forced Marriage?

Regarding the need of a protocol that establishes how to intervene with those at risk of forced marriages, professionals in the criminal justice system were less inclined to adopt a specific instrument and only one of the judges as well as the officers of the Catalan regional police valued the need for a protocol.

The reasons why professionals did not consider the protocol necessary fell into four categories: i) the existence of several regional protocols for gender violence would be sufficient to address cases of forced marriage, bearing in mind, at most, a revision of each protocol to ensure that forced marriage was also covered, ii) the existence of a national protocol for human trafficking cases was valued by prosecutors and police officers as sufficient and all-encompassing to cover forced marriages, iii) a multiplicity of protocols would increase the risk of being repetitive and would not necessarily improve the intervention of professionals, and iv) there were not enough cases of forced marriage at the moment to warrant a specific protocol.

CJS 8 (Prosecutor): "I think that having many protocols is confusing and not useful, so the protocol of gender violence should include the appropriate services for forced marriage and how to act in these cases."

CJS 12 (Civil Guard Officer): "I think it is enough. And I'll tell you more. Many times we start making rules, norms and standards and professionals get lost. You have a lot of information, rules, and wow!, you have to be very good to go outlining and giving the guidelines for each issue .... I think it is saturating."

On the other hand, most professionals in the field of victim support services, as well as officers in Catalan regional police were inclined to approve a specific protocol, which they considered necessary to guide the intervention of professionals in case of risk. Supporters of a specific protocol alluded to the lack of a comprehensive approach to this phenomenon that addresses its specificities and allows an intersectional vision (VS 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18) At this point, recourse to gender-based violence protocols was considered inadequate since cases of more subtle pressure exerted by family members were frequently not properly perceived as violence (VS 5). It is revealing that a significant number of those who supported a specific protocol operated in a geographical and professional environment where such an instrument was already available (in the Catalan region of Girona). Such professionals defended extending or replicating the existing Protocol in Girona to make it profitable for professionals operating in other areas.

VS 17 (Expert in Social Inclusion): "Maybe with existing protocols you can already work it out and protect the person. But even for the introductory part of the protocol where it explains what exactly forced marriages are, where they are practiced, risk indicators, etc., it is already important enough to make the protocol extensive. Because if you don't know about something you are not able to detect it. Once you know about it, you are more capable of foreseeing it and detect it."

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

The main goal of this research was to analyze the way in which professionals work to support and protect victims of forced marriage in Spain. The study is based on the information gathered from professionals involved in criminal justice and in victim support with whom in-depth interviews were conducted. Given the increasingly common opinion favorable to address forced marriage from a victim-centred and intersectional perspective, away from those that focus on criminalization and cultural "otherness' (Gill & Anitha, 2011a; Anitha & Gill, 2015, Simmons & Burn, 2013), the research presents the landscape of provisions aimed at preventing and supporting victims of forced marriage and gives an overview on how professionals in Spain adjust scarce resources and unclear paths to earlier detect and better support victims.

The results obtained suggest that detection of victims of forced marriage, which is prior to offering any protection and support, is not an easy task. Professionals interviewed, both in criminal justice and in victim support, were aware that many of those at risk did not recognize themselves as victims or were not willing to disclosure their situation. Among those who did not recognize themselves as victims, professionals mentioned those unable to recognize the abuse or who might have normalized a situation of continued subtle pressure under family expectations. Likewise, reasons why victims of forced marriage might be reluctant to reveal their situation have been well studied in the academy and range from the wish to maintain family ties and one's own identity, to the fear of being ostracized by the family and community, or not wanting to see family members prosecuted (Gangoli el al., 2006, Simmons and Burn, 2013; Sowey, 2018; Love et al., 2019, Villacampa, 2020).

Therefore a holistic and victim-centred approach to forced marriage requires on the first stage preventive and awareness-rising programmes to be developed (Sowey, 2018). Such programmes should be directed both to young people at school age and to groups that could be considered at risk, because of reasons related with gender, cultural background, disability or social or economic position. The effectiveness of preventative actions would probably be enhanced if the education system and experts in specialized organizations were in charge of them. The current research has shown that preventative programmes have already been deployed in Spain by specialized NGOs, even if not on a general basis and taking into consideration that some of those organizations operate only at a local or regional level. Anyway, they have revealed to be of capital importance: at times women at risk had been detected after joining such workshops, meaning that participation enabled them to become aware of their situation and to find out an organization or a professional to which they could resort and ask for help. Moreover, this sort of prevention activities sought to impact both on people at risk and on other members of the community, mainly mothers, who could be empowered to detect pressures to which they were themselves subjected and consequentially help stop abusive behaviors.

Likewise, a victim-centred approach should also inform the catalogue of protective and support measures for those at risk. Concerning this issue two perspectives need to be considered. Firstly, from a legal perspective, it is necessary to critically point out that legal provision for the protection of victims are still excessively linked to the criminal system in Spain. Unlike other regulations where civil measures are arranged, in this country most protection measures can only be ordered through the initiation of a criminal process. The design of legal mechanisms to protect victims should include solutions that do not necessarily require the use of the criminal system.

Even if recourse to criminal law and the strict separation of victims from offenders may be adequate in cases when gross violence has been employed, other resources need to be developed for those cases where the victim suffers from more subtle forms of coercion, linked to family and community expectations, and when she does not want to engage in a criminal process against her family (Sowey, 2018; Simmons & Burn, 2013). In fact some of our interviewees highlighted that pressuring the victim to report the offense could have pervasive effects and might function as an additional coercion to that already experienced.

Secondly, from a functional perspective aimed at exploring how to effectively deploy protection measures, it is important to assess in each particular case the existing risk and the will and needs of the victims. The current research has revealed that even if a system of referrals between professionals seems to exist, the paths are not clear enough and professionals do not always have precise knowledge on what victims expect from them and how they can proceed to fulfill their needs. This can imply certain randomness in the measures undertaken on the basis of which professional is in charge of the victim or who first considers that something needs to be done. When the professional belongs to the criminal justice system, particularly prosecutors, judges and national police officers, it is possible that a surgical type of intervention prevails, tending to separate the victim from her family and community environment. Contrarily, when the professional belongs to the victim support field, lawyers in NGOs and Catalan regional police officers the intervention may probably prioritize mediating with the family and accompanying the victim over the long term. Such differences however are not in the interest of the victim protection. It would therefore be important to create structures that enable cooperation between professionals in different fields, enhance coordination and clarify paths to assess the risk and to response accordingly. Multi-agency working schemes similar to those designed in the UK to handle cases of forced marriage would be of particular interest. This would enable victim support and criminal justice professionals to work together to assess the adequacy of a protection measure and thus to avoid both overreacted responses in which victims might be counterproductively separated from their family and too passive attitudes where subtle forms of coercion are despised (Villacampa, 2020).

Finally, there is an obvious lack of resources to guarantee victims' protection and support. If a victim-centred approach is to be legally implemented, instead of the current narrow focus on criminalization, more human, residential, economic and support resources are needed. Regarding human resources, many interviewees in victim support highlighted that the use of restorative justice and mediation with parents were to be given priority, particularly in those cases when no imminent risk was perceived, the victim was unwilling to report her family and there appeared to be a chance for the reconstruction of family ties. This means that trained mediators are required, preferably if they are also survivors, have lived a similar experience in the past or are from similar backgrounds to that of the victims. However, when such mediation does not appear to be feasible and family members are reluctant to change their plans, protecting the victim might involve adequate lodging, economic resources and emotional support to the victim. Regarding lodging, most professionals pointed out existing deficiencies in shelters and support flats for victims. More should be invested from the governmental sphere to create adequate lodging for victims of forced marriage, taking particularly into account the special needs of victims who might still be minors. Additionally, given that those at risk are often young people who still depend economically on their families, some resources have to be considered essential such as funding to continue schooling or to find an employment and above all emotional support, which needs to be maintained thorough out the whole process until the complete recovery of the victim.

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