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# MOTHERHOOD & INTEGRATION

A Summary

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INTAP – Intersectional approach to the process of integration in Europe for survivors of human trafficking

## 1. Motherhood and integration

Another issue affecting survivors of trafficking (SOT) in the context of an intersectional approach to integration, which is hardly addressed, is motherhood. An intersectional, gender-specific and cultural integration approach seems to be lacking:

*"They often feel that the system that is supposed to protect them instead imposes conditions on them in order to remain with their children that do not respect their forms of childrearing, and they feel punished if they do not do things in the European fashion. When the State works with these women and their children, it must ensure their right to express their own identity, which includes respecting cultural practices regarding childrearing and motherhood, as well as religious and spiritual traditions. These are all aspects of the right to private and family life, protected under the European Convention on Human Rights"* (Maleno Garzón et al. 2018:43).

This working paper addresses what integration measures for mothers that are SOTs currently exist and why suitable integration measures are lacking. The working paper also looks at how human trafficking experiences effect motherhood and what implications this has for integration. This is followed by a brief discussion on why motherhood and intersectionality needs to be addressed in integration measures.

### 1.1. Integration of survivors of trafficking that are (expectant) mothers

The children of Nigerian SOT either live in the country of origin, are born in transit or in the host country. Some of the children are a result of the exploitation experienced in cases of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Most Nigerian SOT are single mothers (Maleno Garzón et al. 2018). Motherhood in THB (trafficking in human beings) cases and the integration of SOT that are (expectant) mothers are hardly addressed in the literature. References to the implications of motherhood in the context of SOT are therefore made on the basis of migrant and refugee mothers. Focus is given here to mothers that are living together with their children in the EU or are expectant mothers.

Problems identified in the literature with regards to the integration of migrant mothers is that e.g. language courses are unfit for mothers to participate in, especially if they are illiterate (Nieuwboer and van't Rood 2016). Labour and language integration is also said to be hindered, since the access to kindergarten and nurseries are limited and financial constraints negatively impact accessing childcare facilities. If, however, SOT mothers decide to do e.g. an integration course, they often also feel overwhelmed with caring for both themselves and their children at the same time, leading to feeling stressed. Additionally, limited financial means result in SOT mothers feeling that they are 'bad mothers', as they lack financial means of providing for essential goods for their children (Vervliet et al. 2014).

Traumatisation also impacts on the integration of SOT mothers. The implications of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are said to negatively impact motherhood, in particular during or after pregnancy (Fisher, Acton, and Rowe 2018). Giving birth can recall traumatic experiences (Fritzmeyer 2016). Further, a migration situation, in which a SOT e.g. does not have a long-term residence permit, can cause additional stress and emotional tensions

between the mother and her child in particular shortly after giving birth. SOT mothers that have a history of PTSD are at particular risk of suffering from postpartum depression (Rickmeyer and Leibiger-Vogel 2016). As regards to motherhood, especially during or shortly after pregnancy, the aspect of medical treatment is often left out. It is important that research concentrates more on combining a medical and psychological approach in cases of pregnancy and not to discuss these aspects as two distinct issues (Khan-Zvornicanin 2018).

In the context of motherhood, it is also important to take a look at the aspect of unwanted pregnancy, especially since asylum seeking women and women in human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation are at greater risk of experiencing unwanted pregnancies. As regards to unwanted pregnancies of Nigerian refugee women living in transit countries such as Morocco, Kastner (2007) finds that pregnancies are often the result of sexualised violence and abortions do not seem to be uncommon during their flight (Ibid.). This finding can also be important in the context of Nigerian SOT. Research needs to proceed in three regards: firstly, there is a lack of data on the prevalence of unwanted pregnancy and abortions; secondly, qualitative data entailing the experience and viewpoints of affected refugee women are lacking and thirdly, health care and socio-scientific research needs to examine the access barriers and treatment of affected refugee women (Khan-Zvornicanin 2018). It can be argued that having experienced an abortion or carrying an unwanted child, can also negatively impact on integration.

## 1.2. Implications of trafficking experiences on motherhood

As regards to parenthood or rather motherhood, studies have mainly focused on comparing German families to families with migration background. Problems identified with migrant families and their integration are particularly the lacking socialisation of parents and children in German society. The literature thereby makes reference to poverty risks (i.e. children's development deficits) and the importance of expanding offerings to parents to improve their parenting skills in order to enable successful integration. Mothers with migrant backgrounds are seldom identified and incorporated as educational partners into parenting programmes in kindergarten or schools. Intercultural parental work or parent work is a rather newly identified research area, incorporating gender, class and cultural components and their framing for parenthood (Westphal 2014). Research on intercultural parental work should in particular focus on the distinct situation of Nigerian SOT mothers, as having experienced trafficking can have several implications for motherhood. Surtees (2017) carried out a study, where she interviewed 15 women that have experienced human trafficking mainly for the purpose of sexual exploitation that primarily came from Moldova. Some of the findings as regards to parenthood are important to acknowledge for the INTAP project in the case of Nigerian SOTs: tensions and challenges in the mother-child relationship after leaving the trafficking situation; community acceptance or rejection of being a SOT or a child of a SOT; institutional barriers to integration. Even if children are not born in a trafficking situation or are a result of their mothers having experienced sexual exploitation, the children also suffer from long-term impacts of trafficking: e.g. living in substandard conditions causing health problems; alcohol abuse during pregnancy; pre-mature birth; lack of attachment to the mother, as the child is the result of sexual exploitation or being highly traumatised from the trafficking situation as such.

As a result, it can happen that children suffer from developmental problems and health issues (Ibid.).

Having looked at how having experienced trafficking affects motherhood, what does this mean for integration? The literature does not seem to suggest how motherhood as such, in particular in THB cases, impacts on integration. Rather it seems that programmes are created targeting mothers to integrate into the labour market in order to reduce their social welfare dependency to the state (Westphal 2014). In Germany, there are a variety of existing projects that target migrant women mothers in particular in integrating into the labour market, such as programmes sponsored by the Initiative „*Ressourcen stärken – Zukunft sichern: Erwerbsperspektiven für Mütter mit Migrationshintergrund*“ (BMFSFJ 2013) i.e. In the EU-funded project "*Stadtteilmütter*" / Neighbourhood Mothers, migrant mothers are trained as mentors to support other migrant mothers in integration and also parenting matters and has proven successful (Europäische Kommission 2018).

One report that looks at motherhood in the context of Nigerian SOTs is the Women's Link Worldwide (2018) publication on mothers in human trafficking networks. From the interviews with Nigerian SOT mothers in four country cases studies - amongst others Germany - , Maleno Garzón et al. (2018) find that Nigerian mothers often tend to not follow European-style childrearing techniques, but rather learn to help themselves by following alternative childcare models, as their children e.g. cannot visit kindergartens. In this four country case study it proved not to be uncommon for other mothers to take care of the children or the children are in the hands of child protective services as a result of considered neglect (Ibid.).

Slight evidence on the impacts of motherhood on integration has become apparent in projects of one of the project beneficiaries - SOLWODI Deutschland e.V. -, who has carried out children's projects for SOLWODI clients. The mothers hereby benefited as an indirect target group, amongst which some mothers were Nigerian SOT. In the children's projects funded by the World Childhood Foundation, *Globus Stiftung* (Globus Foundation), *Niedersächsische Lotto-Sport Stiftung* (the Lower Saxony Lottery-Sports Foundation) and the *Lotto Rheinland-Pfalz-Stiftung* (Lotto Foundation Rhineland-Palatinate), it became apparent that motherhood can both pose benefits and challenges to integration (Angelis and Wells n.d.). On the one hand, motherhood has proven to be a challenge for integration in as such as becoming a mother can lead to diminished psychological well-being, as studies show that mothers not living in their country of origin are at greater risk of developing anxiety symptoms or postpartum depression. On the other hand, motherhood enables SOT mothers to come into contact with mothers from the host society and can generally be a turning point in the lives of SOT mothers, leading to positive feelings, being open towards the future, etc. (Vervliet et al. 2014).

### 1.3. Motherhood and intersectionality

Motherhood should be looked at from an intersectional angle, incorporating the residence status and the family status of SOT. The importance of including intersectionality when discussing motherhood is hardly considered, as the 'intersection of motherhood' often goes

unnoticed in migration policies (i.e. lacking mother-child friendly places in refugee accommodations, motherhood being ignored in asylum decisions) (Vervliet et al. 2014).

SOT mothers experience different intersections based on their reproductive and cultural role as well as ethnicity (Anthias 2012). In the context of SOTs,

*"[s]tereotypical ideas of women as mothers also play a role [...], hindering the exercise of these women's right to family life and to be mothers. They are often not considered 'fit' to take care of children and, consequently, are deprived of custody of their children. For example, when women do not accept a reflection period (because they don't self-identify as trafficking victims or because they are afraid), children are often placed in childcare facilities or foster families by the authorities. Interpretation of the best interests of the child is often based on the stereotypical perception that a victim of trafficking for sexual exploitation cannot be a good mother, because she is seen as a 'prostitute'" (Rosell et al. 2018:15).*

In the case of Nigerian SOT, the importance of taking an intersectional approach to integration becomes apparent: Nigerian SOT mothers do not only experience stigmatisation on the basis of their residence status, ethnic origin or former involvement in prostitution, but in their role as mothers, as Nigerian mothers are often considered to be distant or authoritarian mothers or unable to raise their children. They are also faced with the stigma of the '*anchor baby*', meaning that they only become pregnant in order to remain in a given EU host country by receiving a residence status through the child (Maleno Garzón et al. 2018). An intersectional integrational approach to motherhood for SOTs could include the following ideas:

*"[M]otherhood [...] must be enjoyed without discrimination and in conditions of equality, meaning that motherhood must not create disproportionate burdens on women because of their gender, race, ethnicity, immigration status, or any other condition. Therefore, for example, States must take all necessary measures to ensure that pregnancy and motherhood are not stigmatized or used as a basis to deny access to rights" (Maleno Garzón et al. 2018:67).*

Incorporating motherhood as an intersection of an intersectional integrational approach for Nigerian SOT can be helpful in enabling SOT to participate in the society of the host country. The idea of this approach will be tested in the INTAP project.

Further, it should be stressed that hardly any attention is paid to the children of THB victims in the literature, although they are secondary victims. They either accompany their mothers or they are actually born in the context of THB. Their special needs and identification as secondary victims often go unnoticed (Surtees 2017). The provisions for SOT mothers should also be improved in order to meet the key principle of the '*best interest of the child*' of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Rosell et al. 2018). This is why it is equally important to take an intersectional integrational approach for Nigerian SOT.

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