I32   Criminological Analysis of Human Smuggling and Migrant Trafficking Into Italy

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the identification and criminal characteristics of human traffickers, as well as the organizational structure of trafficking operations into Europe.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by elucidating the findings of a recent study investigating migrant smuggling and human trafficking operations into Europe in an effort to propose empirically based identifiers to assist naval intervention. Furthermore, this presentation will define the role of the forensic and mental health advisor in operations designed to thwart these crimes.

With increasing frequency, migrants have been entering Europe. The use of human traffickers is a common method used by migrants to achieve these goals, despite being subjected to dehumanizing treatment and perilous journeys. Previous studies regarding human trafficking have primarily highlighted that the smuggling of migrants is operationalized within a stable, hierarchical, and transnational structure, using non-banking, intermediary, financial circuits called Hawala as payment. These organized crime efforts have been difficult to study because of variable investigative methods. In addition, traffickers make efforts to avoid detection, and migrants, typically instructed to avoid identification photographs, are difficult to identify.

The goal of this research study, conducted on behalf of the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean/Operation Sophia (EU NAVFOR MED), was to identify criminological aspects of migrant smuggling and the characteristics of traffickers in order to aid in halting human trafficking in Italy.

This study examined a large number of relevant court cases and reviewed national and international literature on the topic with the goal of identifying potential criminal traffickers, from a criminological perspective, during the first moments of migrant survivor rescue. This study found that traffickers are generally male, between 25 and 35 years of age, speak several languages, have good persuasive communication skills, live in shelters, have legal residency paperwork, and are sometimes married.

This study also proposes a scientific investigative protocol, based on holistic and systemic methods, to better characterize and study the *modus operandi* and style of the perpetrators of these crimes. Strategic investigation may be conducted on two levels, direct and indirect, while migrants are detained and recovering from rescue.

A direct investigative approach involves the use of digital audio and video recordings of survivor behaviors; these materials are often requested by the judicial authorities. Alternatively, an indirect investigative approach focuses on interviews of survivors, specifically women with minor children, who generally have fewer ties to the traffickers. This method would be managed through the use of behaviorally trained forensic consultants.

This study proposes that forensic consultants, used to evaluate these survivors, employ a questionnaire that evaluates the communication methods used by traffickers. The Self-Administered Interviews (SAI) questionnaire was found to be most efficient for this task. In addition, a direct interview to reconstruct the context and the actions of traffickers would be helpful using a Cognitive Interviewing (CI) technique. This technique provides validation for the concerns of migrant survivors and provides investigators with a wealth of information on human traffickers.

The use of these investigative methods in a systematic manner will aid in accumulating relevant data regarding this phenomenon.

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