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| Institution: De Montfort University | | |
| Unit of Assessment: 18 | | |
| Title of case study: Tackling Modern Slavery | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015–2020 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Name(s): | Role(s) (e.g. job title): | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: |
| Dave Walsh | Professor in Criminal Investigation | February 2018–present |
| Laura Pajón | VC2020 Lecturer | October 2018–present |
| Karen Lawson | Senior Lecturer in Law | July 2017–present |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: March 2018–December 2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N | | |
| 1. Summary of the impact | | |
| <p>Research undertaken by Walsh and Pajón led to the formation (in 2018) of a multi-agency modern slavery (MS) partnership in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, resulting in a 260% increase in law enforcement operations and a 31% increase in reporting of victims' exploitation, as evident from 2020 data, while increasing frontline workers' awareness of MS. Research has also directly informed police operations in their dismantling of over 30 'County Lines' operations in Northamptonshire in 2020. Further research has led to a 36% reduction (in 2019) among East Midlands companies non-compliant with MS legislation, while identifying (in 2020) a further 264 non-compliant companies nationally.</p> | | |
| 2. Underpinning research | | |
| <p>Modern slavery is a global problem affecting over 40,000,000 victims. The UK has led initiatives in the response to MS, both through legislation and policymaking to ensure law enforcement prioritises modern slavery.</p> <p>Walsh and Pajón have undertaken research, engaging with many police forces throughout the UK, and particularly those in the East Midlands Regional Crime Unit and in the Leicestershire force. Walsh and Pajón's research found continuing knowledge deficits existed, primarily concerning the police's effective working in multi-agency partnerships to (1) underpin crime prevention efforts through increased awareness and reporting of human trafficking (HT) crimes by both the public and frontline staff in key agencies (e.g. local authorities); (2) improve intelligence-sharing between these agencies; and (3) inform more effective multi-agency working when the police undertake complex HT criminal investigations [R1, R2, R4].</p> <p>In detail, Pajón embarked on research to deepen understanding of these significant issues. She conducted interviews with highly experienced investigation professionals across the UK to identify the essential activities in these investigations. This research identified a structure of the key actions that investigators should undertake, with multi-agency collaboration emerging as fundamental in tackling MS. However, the research found no common understanding among police officers concerning either which partners to involve in such collaborative working, or how (and when, during criminal investigations) to undertake effective and meaningful multi-agency collaborations [R4]. Pajón and Walsh developed a new research-based model covering practical approaches to multi-agency collaborations, intelligence-gathering and -sharing, tactical advice and support, consideration of risk and resources, and evaluation and monitoring of activities that included the principles to ensure active collaboration and information-sharing [R1, R2, R4].</p> <p>The research highlighted the challenges to police investigations, in incorporating other agencies while undertaking HT criminal investigations (which include so-called County Lines cases, where young vulnerable people are enslaved into selling drugs for organised criminals). Particularly, Pajón identified through her research the dilemma for the police as to whether to allow these</p> | | |

investigations to continue (in order to build up evidence against perpetrators) or to curtail them (because of ongoing harm to victims, but then their having insufficient evidence to either prosecute or disrupt organised criminal gangs). Her research found effective practice through early involvement of certain agencies in such demanding and dynamic contexts.

Further, Walsh and Lawson conducted research concerning how UK businesses have embraced their legal responsibilities in assessing risks of MS in their businesses and supply chains, identifying that many had not yet fully engaged with the legislation even at the most fundamental levels [R3]. This research established reasons for such non-compliance through direct contact with those companies, still to engage with their legal requirements (many years after the legislation's introduction, requiring annual reporting on the steps they have taken to manage the risks of MS in their business and supply chains). The research also established how to prompt such fundamental engagement. In 2020, Walsh conducted further research across the whole UK, identifying 264 non-compliant companies, with another 367 assessed as partially compliant [C9].

3. References to the research

[R1] Pajón, L. and Walsh, D. (2018) 'Fighting modern slavery: How to build multi-agency partnerships that work', *Policing Insight*. Dated 13th April 2018. This is an article for a highly regarded publication for police practitioners in the UK.

[R2] Pajón, L. and Walsh, D. (2020) 'Proposing a theoretical framework for the criminal investigation of human trafficking crimes', *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 14(2): 493–511; <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/pay031>

This is a peer-reviewed article for an academic journal referenced on multiple occasions including by leading scholars in the field. Its groundbreaking nature is that it captures for the first time the core components of essential activities of the criminal investigation of HT.

[R3] Walsh, D. and Lawson, K. (2020) 'New insights into business sector compliance and Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015', *Modern Slavery Research Consortium Bulletin*, MSRCB No.55

A bulletin reviewed by the esteemed Editor in this field, Prof. Gray Craig, for a consortium of interested scholars.

[R4] Pajón, L. (2020) 'Towards an evidence-based investigative framework for human trafficking crimes', unpublished PhD thesis, De Montfort University.

Supervised by very experienced research academics (Professors Walsh and Dingwall) and examined by three academics (including two independent external examiners), containing three groundbreaking studies.

4. Details of the impact

This body of research has led to benefits to criminal investigations, multi-agency working, public and professional awareness, and within the business sector. The work cited in this case study has been cited both by the UK Government and the United Nations (UN) as an exemplar of academic impact [C1].

(1) MULTI-AGENCY WORKING, IMPROVED CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS, AND RAISING PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONALS' AWARENESS

Our research, revealed the importance of multi-agency partnerships in tackling MS and directly led to the introduction in June 2018 of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Modern Slavery Action Group (LLRMSAG). This group now involves 44 different agencies (increasing from its original 20), including law enforcement agencies, community and faith groups, statutory agencies (i.e. Fire and Rescue Service, NHS, Local Authorities), charities, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and the business sector. This group, co-ordinated by Pajón, meets monthly, acting also as an intelligence hub to secure integrated local responses to MS crimes [C2]. As a result of the collective sharing of information/intelligence between these agencies, the

group has identified risks of sexual, labour and child exploitation. This joint activity has led to a 337.68% increase in the number of MS incidents reported to Leicestershire police after two years of partnership working (2017/2018 figures, N = 69 reports; 2019/2020, N = 302) [C3]; and a 26% increase in the rescue and subsequent safeguarding of victims (from 87 to 114) after 1.5 years [C4].

Having gained funding from local safeguarding boards, Pajón designed and delivered training in autumn 2019 to over 200 people (frontline personnel) in many agencies (as detailed above) in the LLR area (Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland), raising their awareness regarding identifying/reporting MS, and their viewing it as 'beneficial' to their working practices [C5]. The post-training evaluation found a 136.2% knowledge growth concerning the key framework to identify and refer victims, and a 50.15% increase in their broader MS knowledge [C6]. Attendees also felt the sessions 'had useful information that would inform practice' [C7].

Pajón has also designed, planned and conducted public awareness campaigns, undertaken through social media, local radio broadcasts and pop-up events throughout the LLR area. A webpage has also been created for both the public and professionals in the LLR area containing guidance about reporting suspicions, attracting 2,397 views [C8].

Moreover, in 2020, Pajón's research directly informed the conduct of a major criminal investigation of organised crime groups operating County Lines in Northamptonshire, specifically in the police's approach to incorporating agencies to assess ongoing risk to victims, allowing the investigation to build evidence against the perpetrators. Such a revised approach enabled the police to successfully dismantle and disrupt 18 County Lines, arrest 125 individuals, charge 107 with offences, obtain 75 convictions (with more still proceeding through the courts), and safeguard 7 young drug dealers from this contemporary form of MS [C9].

(2) IMPROVING BUSINESS SECTOR COMPLIANCE WITH MODERN SLAVERY LEGISLATION

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires certain companies to report annually steps taken to manage MS risks in their supply chains. Supported by GBP25,000 HEIF funding, Walsh has improved business sector compliance with this legislation. In September 2018, Walsh identified (by analysing company data) that, of 353 East Midlands companies, 38% (N = 134) were non-compliant with the legislation [C10]. Walsh reported these findings to the UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner in October 2018, who subsequently issued these companies with advice about their exposure to risks of labour exploitation, appealing for their compliance. In February 2019, Walsh conducted further research into these companies, finding the non-compliance rate had reduced to 20% (N = 71). Walsh then directly engaged with these remaining companies to understand and reduce non-compliance, providing training and guidance on identifying risk and reporting suspicions of MS. Walsh's interventions by October 2019 directly led to the non-compliance rate reducing to seven companies (2%) in the East Midlands [C10], significantly below the national picture of around 25% non-compliance [R3]. Walsh and Pajón (in December 2019) produced a toolkit and a podcast to guide companies both in enriching their MS statements and identifying/reporting of exploitation [C8; see earlier for number of views].

Walsh reported in 2018 to the government-appointed Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act [C11], recommending an enforcement regime and a public register, both of which have now been incorporated into government proposals.

Walsh has, in May 2020 (1) initiated, as co-lead, the Midlands Anti-Slavery Collective involving all 18 universities in the Midlands to underpin future research and teaching collaborations in this field; while (2) as Co-investigator, been successful in ESRC grant capture (GBP177,000) examining MS after Covid-19 in the context of MS exploitation (i.e. County Lines crimes).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[C1] (1) UK Government's Voluntary National Review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (at p 194);

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-voluntary-national-review-of-the-sustainable-development-goals>

(2) UN citation: <https://academicimpact.un.org/content/ending-misery-millions-promoting-peace-justice-and-strong-institutions>

- [C2] Terms of Reference (ToR) LLR Modern Slavery Action Group.
- [C3] MS incidents reported to Leicestershire police (data provided by Leicestershire police) – note that the recording system of MS incidents reported to Leicestershire police changed in October 2019. Available on request.
- [C4] MS helpline quarterly reports.
- [C5] Testimony from the Operations and Delivery Officer, Leicestershire County Council.
- [C6] Post-training evaluation and testimony training session.
- [C7] Testimony from Safeguarding Learning Project Development Officer, Leicestershire County Council.
- [C8] LLRMSAG webpage views (data gathered 6 January 2021); <https://llrmodernslaveryactiongroup.our.dmu.ac.uk/toolkit-to-help-businesses-tackling-modern-slavery/>
- [C9] Testimony from Chief Constable, Lincolnshire Police, detailing how Pajón’s research informed police operations into County Lines investigations in Northamptonshire in 2020.
- [C10] Redacted spreadsheets detailing progression both phases of labour exploitation project, specifically: (1) Excel spreadsheet from September 2018 initially identifying non-compliant companies in Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire; (2) an Excel spreadsheet detailing the work where we gained compliance during 2019; (3) an Excel spreadsheet detailing the work done in 2020 to identify non-compliant companies in the UK. Available on request.
- [C11] Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act: second interim report. DMU listed as contributors. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-act-2015-review-second-interim-report>