“It is an amazing ability to have survived such terrible circumstances”:

Psychological Experiences of Labour Exploitation

Yasmine Ashcroft

D.Clin.Psy. Thesis (Volume 1)

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University College London
I confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signature:

Name: Yasmine Ashcroft

Date: June 2018
Overview

Labour exploitation affects millions of individuals, families and communities worldwide. The issue of modern slavery has come under the spotlight recently, with changes to the Modern Slavery Act (2015) calling for greater transparency across all industries and intervention on a systemic scale. However, despite this increased attention, the experiences of labour exploitation are significantly under researched.

Part 1 is a review of the literature on the psychological impact of labour exploitation. It focuses on the factors involved and how these are characterised. Nine studies were reviewed, appraised and their findings collated. Three studies examined exploitation within labour migration; five on the wellbeing of trafficking survivors as a whole and one on the impact of labour exploitation. The majority of studies used outcome measures to indicate diagnoses. There was a high prevalence of psychological symptoms, which were associated with range of factors found inside and out of the exploitation situation.

Part 2 is a qualitative study exploring the psychological experiences of labour exploitation, by interviewing clients and professionals. It focuses on reported psychological experiences across both narratives, their experiences of receiving and providing help as well as how this could be improved. Accounts were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings emphasised the psychological difficulties faced by this population and the need for early, integrated, trauma-focused care across organisations and services.

Part 3 is a reflective account of the process of conducting the research. It considers the topics of self-reflexivity, involving clients in the research process and reflections on conducting the study.
**Impact statement**

The findings of this study have the capacity to impact a wide range of systems. This could include a clinical impact on the way professionals work with this population; as well as encouraging them to provide support and training for others to understand the complex nature of labour exploitation. An impact on research might result in studies focusing on expanding the literature in this area. In particular, exploring the psychological experiences of labour exploitation earlier on individual’s journey; or focusing on examining the efficacy of empowerment and trauma-focused approaches. The findings could impact service level changes by improving links between statutory services, government organisations and charities, to improve this population’s experience of help. Finally, the study could impact changes on a policy level, as the findings highlight the detrimental psychological impact of navigating the asylum system.
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I would like to thank all the individuals who shared their experiences with me for this research project. I am humbled by your bravery, resilience and strength. It has been a privilege to listen to your stories. I hope I have done them justice.

Finally, special thanks go out to my family and friends for their unwavering support in getting me through the past three years. Thank you for being there for the rants, tears and successes. Mum and Dad - I could not have done this without you.

And to Minnie and Jenson the cats – thank you for sitting alongside me through many solitary and stressful study days. Your valuable insights were much appreciated.
Part 1: Literature Review

The Psychological Impact of Labour Exploitation
Abstract

Aim: The review aimed to explore the psychological impact of labour exploitation. It examined how this impact is characterised in the literature and the variety of factors involved.

Method: Studies were identified through a systematic search of PsychINFO, Medline and Westlaw. Nine studies met inclusion and quality criteria and were included in the review.

Results: Quantitative studies used outcome measures to indicate probable diagnoses, the most common being anxiety, depression and PTSD. Survey methods indicated high levels of physical and sexual violence. Qualitative studies supported these findings and highlighted additional factors which both predispose and perpetuate psychological distress.

Conclusions: The studies consistently reported links between the experience of labour exploitation and psychological distress. Experiences of abuse and exploitation had a significant psychological impact, however other factors including isolation and control played an equivalent role. The findings highlighted pre and post-migration factors associated with the ongoing psychological impact of labour exploitation. The review highlighted the need for further qualitative studies exploring the experiences of this population.
Introduction

Modern slavery is a global human rights issue and often involving severe abuse and exploitation. It is a term used predominantly in the UK and originated in the legal sphere (National Crime Agency, NCA, 2015), with reference to the recent Modern Slavery Act (2015), partially created in response to the estimated 13,000 people engaged in some form of modern slavery in the UK and 40 million people worldwide (International Labour Organisation, ILO, 2012).

Modern slavery is used to categorise several offences, including human trafficking, which is a term used more broadly across health and legal sphere and is defined as ‘the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation’ (UN, 2000).

There are several types of exploitation widely linked to human trafficking. There are some slight differences in the specificity of these categories between the legal and health spheres, and within the UK compared to the rest of the world. However, broadly, these categories include sexual exploitation, organ harvesting, child-related exploitation, forced marriage and labour exploitation.

The characteristics and psychological impact of labour exploitation is the focus of this review and the empirical paper that follows it. However, it is an umbrella term that contains several subcategories – including forced labour, where an individual is compelled to work and domestic servitude, where the victim works
in a household. In both cases individuals may work under threat, have their movement restricted, be in debt to their employers/traffickers, have their passports taken away and receive little to no pay (NCA, 2015).

More broadly, labour exploitation can be understood as ‘all work or service which is exacted from any person under threat or without payment’ (ILO, 2016b). Media reports and publications often focus on individuals who meet this definition – i.e. those who have been trafficked for this purpose using threat, force or coercion (United Nations; UN, 2000). However, there are many individuals who seek work voluntarily, or via an agency to migrate overseas. It can be argued this definition does not take into account the coercive nature of trafficking and exploitation. Often traffickers and agencies abuse their power; or the individual’s position of vulnerability; or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve control over the individual for the purpose of exploitation. Due to the abuse, exploitation or coercion experienced whilst in these situations, the National Referral Mechanism – a UK legal framework for identifying victims of human trafficking - defines these individuals as victims of trafficking, regardless whether they voluntarily or forcibly sought work (National Crime Agency, 2017). Therefore, individuals who have experienced labour exploitation will be referred to as victims of trafficking, throughout part one and two.

With approximately 20.9 million individuals engaged in a specific form of modern slavery, known as labour exploitation (International Labour Organisation; ILO, 2012). Despite such concerning figures, there is little understanding of the broad nature of labour exploitation.
This population often have low socio-economic status, reporting experiences of poverty and deprivation across all areas of life (UN, 2008). This concept is supported on a larger scale in research examining the relationship between social determinants and public health. It is widely understood that socio-economic position and material circumstances are often at the root of poor physical and mental health outcomes (World Health Organisation, 2010). In individuals who have experienced labour exploitation, these factors can include limited work opportunities and financial support; poor education, for themselves and their children; no access to healthcare or resources to meet basic needs. The ILO highlights rural poverty as a key factor in driving individuals to engage in work where they are more likely to be exploited (2016a).

**Psychological impact**

Despite the prevalence of labour exploitation, there is little understanding of the psychological impact of these experiences. This is in part due to the small body of research in this area typically focusing on sexual exploitation, as it is the most well-recognised form of trafficking. This is arguably due to the greater perceived trauma, both physical and psychological, that these individuals have endured (Hossain et al., 2010), which results in a professional, societal and governmental concern and need for increased psychological support. However, a recent updated systematic review highlighted an equivalence in abusive experiences between those trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation (Ottisova et al., 2016). The review also examined physical and mental health difficulties associated with trafficking and found a similar prevalence of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) across both sexual and labour exploitation.
High levels of psychological distress, depression and PTSD have been found across other populations exposed to trauma. One example includes refugees subjected to severe torture, but who are now settled elsewhere (Nickerson et al., 2017). The journey described by these individuals is similar to the narrative told by those who have experienced labour exploitation. A second example involves research on prisoners. The findings identified the prison environment as significantly detrimental to psychological wellbeing, with mental health problems diagnosed in over 90% of this population (Birmingham, 2003). The harsh, isolating and controlling conditions experienced by prisoners is similar to those experienced in labour exploitation. These studies provide a wider context on the impact of trauma and imprisonment on the mental health of individuals.

**Aims of the review**

Although the recent systematic review provides clarity on the factors associated with trafficking as a whole, research examining the psychological impact of labour exploitation as a distinct human rights issue remains limited. By integrating the literature, the review aimed to provide a clearer understanding of the current evidence available. Specifically, the review addressed the following questions:

1. What is the psychological impact of labour exploitation and how is this characterised?

2. What factors are associated with the psychological impact of labour exploitation?
Method

Inclusion Criteria

Due to the limited literature on labour exploitation, the inclusion criteria remained purposefully broad. Studies were included for review if they met the following criteria:

1. The study used either qualitative or quantitative methods.
2. The study examined labour exploitation.
3. The study examined the psychological impact of labour exploitation.
4. The study could examine other forms of exploitation or trafficking alongside labour exploitation. However only the findings on labour exploitation would be considered.
5. The target population included adults (over 18).
6. Articles were published from 2000 onwards.
7. The study was published in a peer-reviewed journal.
8. The study was reported in English.

Search strategy

Preliminary searches indicated that literature on the psychological impact of labour exploitation might be spread across several domains. Due to the complex, multidisciplinary nature of trafficking and exploitation, research has been conducted and published across several fields including medical, psychological and legal fields. After discussions with a professional who has conducted previous literature reviews on trafficking and the psychology librarian, the three databases used in the search were PsychINFO, Medline, and WestLaw. The main literature search was conducted in October 2017.
As labour exploitation is a relatively specific term, synonyms of each factor were included. These were derived from previously published papers. It should be noted that some of the terms included might be defined separately in some of the literature - for example labour exploitation and forced labour (ILO, 2009). However, these terms are often used interchangeably within the literature and were therefore included to ensure as many relevant articles as possible were retrieved.

The search terms were as follows:

\[ (*\text{Domestic servitude or Domestic Service Personnel or Slavery or Human Trafficking or Forced Labour or Working Conditions or Labour exploitation or Modern Slavery or Bonded Labour}) \text{ AND (Psychological impact* or Psychological stress or Distress or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or Depression or Anxiety or Chronic mental illness or Mental disorders or Mental Health))} \]

**Study selection**

Figure 1 illustrates the search process. During the initial screening, titles and abstracts were reviewed and the study was removed if not eligible. Studies that met the inclusion criteria were read in full and reviewed to determine eligibility. To ensure no studies were missed, a citation search was carried out on the nine eligible studies. These papers were reviewed and those that met inclusion criteria were added.
Critical Appraisal using QualSyst

Critical appraisal tools have been a point of contention for many researchers due to there being no ‘gold standard’ (Katrak et al., 2004). This is arguably due to the significant variability and lack of clarity across tools, resulting in the researcher making their own interpretations and adjustments to fit their needs. There are many tools used in assessing the quality of studies with randomised designs,
however there are few available for a mix of quantitative, qualitative and cross-sectional studies, as found in this review.

After researching and discussing a variety of tools “QualSyst” (Kmet, Lee & Cook, 2004) was identified as the most appropriate. It was designed with the purpose of addressing this gap, by assessing a wide range health science studies as found in this review. QualSyst It contains two checklists developed to evaluate the quality of both quantitative and qualitative studies. In the context of this review the qualitative checklist was used to assess qualitative studies. This checklist was then adapted by removing two items, which created a second checklist. This was used to assess the quality of the cross-sectional, longitudinal and case studies. Full versions of both checklists can be found in Appendix 1.

The checklists contain a list of features related to quality, which were evaluated for each study. If the criterion was met entirely, it scored 2; partially, scored 1; or not at all, scored 0. For each study, the summary score was calculated by summing the scores and dividing by the total possible score. Additionally, for this review, an overall rating system was produced based on the summary score. Studies scoring 0.5 and below were rated as “low”, above 0.6 were rated as “medium” and above 0.8 were rated as “high”. Only studies that were rated “medium” or “high” were included in the review. A limitation of using this approach was that appraising studies by translating only three scores to a ranking system at times felt crude. However, it was deemed important to ensure an imperfect appraisal was made. A summary of scores for each study can be found in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Question objective described</th>
<th>Study design evident and appropriate</th>
<th>Context for the study clear</th>
<th>Connection to theoretical framework/wider body of knowledge</th>
<th>Sampling strategy described relevant and justified</th>
<th>Data collection methods clearly described and systematic</th>
<th>Data analysis clearly described and systematic</th>
<th>Establish credibility</th>
<th>Conclusion supported by the results</th>
<th>Reflexivity</th>
<th>Qual Syst</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meyer et al</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Habtamu et al</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kiss et al</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oram et al</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Tsutsumi et al</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>0.77</td>
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<td>Case-series</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turner-Moss et al</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Longitudinal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ostrovski et al</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>High</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Results

Nine studies rated as “medium” or “high” were included in the review. They are summarised in Table 2. Three studies examined exploitation within the context of labour migration; five studies explored the wellbeing of trafficking survivors as a whole and one study focused on the impact of labour exploitation directly. With regard to study design, three used qualitative approaches, utilising focus groups and semi-structured interviews in data collection; four studies were cross-sectional, using survey information and data from measures to examine experiences and their impact; one study was a case series and used health impact assessment data on entry into post-trafficking services; and one study was longitudinal, comparing mental health diagnoses from two time points post-trafficking. Sample sizes varied from n=12 to n=1036 and both men and women were included. One study (Kiss et al. 2015) included data on children, however these findings were not considered in this review. The findings reported a broad range of factors, experiences and outcomes. The features of the studies are considered in this review within the following categories:

1. Pre-trafficking - divided into two subheadings:
   i) Push factors and ii) Social factors

2. In situation - divided into two subheadings:
   i) Abuse and exploitation and ii) Control and isolation

3. Psychological impact - divided into two subheadings:
   i) Formal diagnosis, ii) Psychological outcomes

4. Post-trafficking

5. Protective
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anbesse, B., Hanlon, C., Alem, A.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Exploring the influences on mental health of migrants moving between non-Western countries</td>
<td>N=19, Women, men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packer, S., Whitley, R. Ethiopia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin, S.B. Fehrenbacher, A.E., &amp; Eisenman, D.P. United States</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Examining the conditions experienced by trafficked persons in the context of Biderman’s theory of coercion</td>
<td>N=12, Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-sectional Studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habtamu, K., Minaye, A. &amp; Zeleke, W.A.</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>To determine the prevalence of common mental health disorders and other factors among Ethiopian migrant returnees from the middle east and south Africa</td>
<td>N=1036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiss L; Pocock NS; Naisanguan Sri V; Suos S; Dickson B; Thuy D; Koehler J; Sirisup K; Pongrungsee N; Nguyen VA; Borland R; Dhavan P; Zimmerman C Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Exploring the health of individuals in post-trafficking services in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam</td>
<td>N=1102 Women, men, children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oram S; Abas M; Bick D; Boyle A; French R; Jakobowitz S; Khondoker M; Stanley N; Trevillion K; Howard L; Zimmerman C United Kingdom</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>To investigate physical and mental health and experiences of violence among trafficking survivors in a high-income country</td>
<td>N=150 Women, men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsutsumi, Atsuro; Izutsu, Takashi; Poudyal, Amod K; Kato, Seika; Marui, Eiji Nepal</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Exploring the mental health status of survivors of human trafficking</td>
<td>N=164 Women</td>
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<td><strong>Case Series</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Turner-Moss, E., Zimmerman, C., Howard, L. M., &amp; Oram, S. United Kingdom</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Describe the prevalence of abuse and of physical and mental health symptoms experienced by those who had been trafficked for labour exploitation in the UK</td>
<td>N=35 Women, men</td>
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<td><strong>Longitudinal Studies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ostrovski NV, Prince MJ, Zimmerman C, Hotineanu MA, Gorceag LT, Flach C, Abas MA Moldova</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Describe the mental health status and compare diagnoses two to twelve months after their return, with diagnoses made within five days of their return to Moldova.</td>
<td>N=120 Women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Pre-trafficking**

**Push factors**

Push factors involved in migrating or being trafficked for work can include a wide range of environmental, social, economic and political reasons. Across several studies, references were made to broad push factors including war and political tensions. However, the two main factors reported across studies were economic deprivation and poverty (Anbesse, Hanlon, Alem, Packer, Whitley, 2009 & Meyer, Robinson, Chhim, & Bass, 2004). During interviews, almost all participants described low socioeconomic status prior to migration. The issues most frequently reported included, having little to no money or financial support, few job opportunities, and limited access to food or land with which to earn a living (Meyer et al, 2004). Individuals reported being unemployed and financially dependent on their families; or in contrast, being financially responsible for their family (Anbesse et al, 2009).

These circumstances resulted in individuals migrating to other countries to work. In these studies, participants described moving from Ethiopia to countries in the Middle East – including Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi and Yemen (Anbesse et al., 2009); and from Cambodia to Thailand (Meyer et al., 2004).

Due to limited financial resources, a high percentage of individuals reported borrowing money from job leaders, or making agreements with their employers to pay for transportation and paperwork to cross borders. Participants reported that they worried about the repayment of debt incurred prior to migration and that this exacerbated their financial pressure to migrate. Some described being unable to repay the money owed as they returned home earlier than contractually agreed. In one study, participants explained that this was due to the severe psychological
distress they were experiencing as a result of labour exploitation (Anbesse et al., 2009). In another study, participants reported that the money did not allow them safe passage to their destination to work and they were forced to return (Meyer et al., 2004).

Lastly, some participants described an important pull factor as their high expectations of working overseas after seeing other women migrate and significantly improve their economic situation as well as the lives of their families (Anbesse et al., 2009). These expectations outweighed the distress of leaving their home. These experiences were echoed by other individuals who described feeling hopeful, as there were significant push factors in their country of origin – including lack of food, land and water in their community - they reported that this resulted in experiencing having no other choice but to migrate (Meyer et al., 2004).

**Social factors**

Two cross-sectional studies identified social factors which might predispose an individual to labour exploitation and psychological distress.

Both studies reported that women were more often trafficked for sexual exploitation and domestic work (Oram, et al., 2016), whereas men were more likely to be trafficked for labour exploitation in industries such as fishing, factories (Kiss, et al., 2015), agriculture, construction and car washing (Oram et al., 2016). Men reported more physical violence (49.1%) than sexual violence (1.3%), and women reported more sexual violence (43.9%) than physical violence (41.3%) (Kiss et al., 2015). This suggests that gender may be an important predisposing factor in the nature of exploitation experienced; the type of abuse and violence experienced and also whether this abuse was disclosed or not.
Experiencing violence pre-trafficking also appear to be associated with increased physical and mental health symptoms post-trafficking (Oram et al., 2016). These experiences may predispose individuals to psychological distress during and after exploitation by limiting their resilience and coping strategies.

However, this was contrasted in another study, where several women reported that they did not believe there were inherent or predisposing factors to account for the psychological difficulties they experienced, but that their distress was due to the ‘extraordinary circumstances’ they found themselves in (Anbesse et al., 2009).

**In situation**

*Abuse and exploitation*

Six studies in this review reported experiences of abuse and exploitation whilst in the exploitation situation. Longitudinal and correlational studies reported a high frequency of physical and sexual violence (Oram et al., 2016; Turner-Moss et al., 2014; Kiss et al., 2015). However, as reported earlier, these findings varied across men and women. Men reported more physical violence, whereas women reported more sexual violence (Oram et al., 2016 & Kiss et al., 2015). This was supported by the qualitative studies, which reported descriptions of abuse in almost all interviews (Anbesse et al., 2009; Meyer et al., 2004; Baldwin et al, 2015). Physical violence included being beaten, punched, kicked, burned or injured. Sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault, was more commonly experienced by those trafficked for sexual exploitation. However, Oram et al. (2016) reported that 54% of those trafficked for domestic servitude and 21% of those trafficked for other
forms of labour exploitation had been forced to have sex at some point. This was echoed by Kiss et al. (2015), who reported that some men disclosed experiences of sexual abuse, even though they were more likely to be trafficked for forced labour.

Experiences of exploitation during the labour period were also reported. These included having impossibly high workloads; working excessively long hours; being ‘cheated’ of wages (either being paid less than agreed or receiving no payment at all); as well as experiencing hazardous working conditions, inhumane living conditions and a deprivation of basic human needs (including adequate sleep and access to healthcare, clean drinking water and food).

Kiss et al. (2015) reported strong associations between extreme abuse and exploitation and poor mental health outcomes. Individuals who experienced poor living conditions, threats of abuse and severe violence were more likely to report symptoms of depression, anxiety and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Experiences of exploitation and not being paid a salary were significantly associated with anxiety and PTSD. Ostrovschi et al. (2011) echoed these findings, suggesting that experiencing a high number of concurrent stressors in the labour environment may have contributed to a high prevalence of psychological symptoms. These findings indicated a consensus across studies that the individual’s experiences of abuse, violence and exploitation had a significant impact on their psychological wellbeing.

**Control and isolation**

Three studies included in the review reported descriptions of control and isolation within the exploitation situation. In one cross-sectional study, three quarters of men and two thirds of women reported ‘never being free to do what
they wanted’ (Kiss et al., 2015). Two qualitative studies supported this with participants describing direct methods used to severely restrict their freedom. These included being constantly watched by their employers, not being let out alone and being locked in a room (Anbesse et al., 2009; Baldwin et al., 2015). At times, isolation was more indirect, with individuals not being allowed to interact with other workers or engage in worship, as well as not being able to speak to family and friends. Anbesse et al. (2009) described this as cultural isolation, where individuals reported feeling ‘cut off’ from their home country and usual support networks, including family, friends and religion. These experiences were often reported as having the most significant impact on their psychological wellbeing and ability to cope with the abuse and exploitation. This association was supported by Kiss et al. (2015) who reported that those who experienced severe restriction of freedom were twice as likely to report symptoms of PTSD, depression and anxiety post-trafficking. These findings suggest that traffickers and employers use methods of isolation and control to keep individuals physically and psychologically trapped in the exploitative situation.

Psychological impact

Formal diagnosis

One qualitative study reported diagnoses given to women who experienced psychological symptoms as a result of labour exploitation (Anbesse et al., 2009). These included diagnoses of major depression, brief psychotic disorder and bipolar I disorder (APA, 1994) and were provided by psychiatrists after the women had returned to Ethiopia from their country of work. A longitudinal study used formal diagnostic manuals to assess the psychological impact (Ostrovski et al., 2011). The
Romanian version of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis I Disorders (First, Spitzer, Gibbon & Williams, 2002) was used 2-12 months after women had returned to Moldova from their trafficking destinations. The psychiatric diagnoses from this period were compared to an earlier psychiatric assessment, based on the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10, 1993), completed upon arrival to the support centre. They found that 88% of women returned with some psychological distress, most commonly anxiety, mood, adjustment, acute stress and substance use disorders. Approximately half of these individuals (54%) went on to have a psychiatric diagnosis 2-12 months later. These diagnoses included PTSD, mood disorders and harmful alcohol use. An example reported 85% women with comorbid PTSD at arrival had a psychiatric diagnosis 2-12 months after return, compared to 40% of those with a diagnosis of ‘pure’ PTSD, adjustment or acute stress disorder.

The findings suggest that the prevalence of diagnoses are impacted by the nature, duration and severity of the trauma experienced during trafficking and exploitation.

*Psychological outcomes*

Seven studies, using a mixture of qualitative, longitudinal and cross-sectional methods, adopted a number of measures to explore the psychological impact of labour exploitation. These are presented in Table 3. Overall, the studies indicate a high frequency of psychological distress in those who experience labour exploitation. These findings were echoed by Baldwin et al. (2015)’s qualitative study, where interviewees linked experiences of depression, fear and stress to lack of sleep and exhaustion due to excessive working hours.
### Table 3. Outcome measures used in studies included in the review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Studies</th>
<th>Researcher interpretation</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hopkins Symptoms Checklist-25</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kiss et al. (2015)</td>
<td>≥ 1.75 anxiety subscale - <strong>probable anxiety</strong></td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>≥ 1.625 depression subscale - <strong>probable depression</strong></td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tsutsumi et al. (2015)</td>
<td>≥ 1.75 on anxiety subscale - <strong>probable anxiety</strong></td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>≥ 1.75 on depression subscale - <strong>probable depression</strong></td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PTSD Checklist Civilian Version – 17 item</strong></td>
<td>Tsutsumi et al. (2015)</td>
<td>≥ 50, <strong>probable PTSD</strong></td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PTSD Checklist Civilian Version – 4 item</strong></td>
<td>Oram et al. (2016)</td>
<td>≥ 3, <strong>probable PTSD</strong></td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9)</strong></td>
<td>Oram et al. (2016)</td>
<td>≥ 10, <strong>probable depression</strong></td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generalised Anxiety Disorder 7 (GAD-7)</strong></td>
<td>Oram et al. (2016)</td>
<td>≥ 10, <strong>probable anxiety</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harvard Trauma Questionnaire</strong></td>
<td>Kiss et al. (2015)</td>
<td>≥ 2, <strong>probable PTSD</strong></td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turner-Moss et al. (2014)</td>
<td>One or more symptoms present, <strong>probable PTSD</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SRQ-20</strong></td>
<td>Habtamu et al. (2017)</td>
<td>≥ 8, <strong>probable common mental disorder</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test–Consumption (AUDIT)</strong></td>
<td>Oram et al. (2016)</td>
<td>≥ 5, <strong>high risk alcohol use</strong></td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turner-Moss et al., (2014)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ostrovshi et al. (2011)</td>
<td>≥ 8, <strong>hazardous and harmful alcohol use</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean scores</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brief Symptom Inventory</strong></td>
<td>Turner-Moss et al. (2014)</td>
<td><strong>Probable anxiety</strong></td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Probable depression</strong></td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The outcome measures suggest a higher frequency of anxiety, depression and PTSD reported by women than men, with the exception being outcomes measuring high risk alcohol use. Alongside the differences in prevalence and type of abuse and violence experienced which were outlined earlier, these findings suggest a gender difference in the psychological impact of labour exploitation.

Several psychological measures used also explored physical symptoms. These can be features of, interact with and worsen psychological symptoms. Several studies reported high levels of physical health difficulties in individuals who have experienced labour exploitation (Oram et al., 2016; Habtamu et al., 2017; Kiss et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2004). The most common symptoms included dizziness, headaches, fatigue, pain and memory problems. In some cases, individuals reported that these difficulties were a direct result of physical injury, abuse and hazardous conditions experienced whilst working (Kiss et al., 2015; Oram et al., 2016).

Rather than using measures, Meyer et al. (2004) conducted interviews using cultural idioms of distress to understand the psychosocial impact of labour migration. The impact was understood both on an individual level by interviewing those returning to Cambodia from Thailand, as well as a wider systemic level, by interviewing their families and wider community. The idioms were generated from initial interviews, where the individuals and their families identified ‘pibak chet’ (sadness), ‘keut chreun’ (thinking too much) and ‘khval khvay khnong chet’ (worry in heart) as key symptoms of those who experienced labour exploitation. The study reported links between these experiences and physical health symptoms such as irritability, difficulty sleeping and losing appetite. It was uncertain whether the physical symptoms were distinct, or merely aspects of anxiety and depression
disorders. However, the findings indicated a link between labour exploitation and psychological distress, which not only affected the individual, but the entire community.

The studies included in this review suggest a significant association between experiences of labour exploitation and psychological distress.

**Post-trafficking factors**

Several studies explored factors involved in perpetuating psychological distress post-trafficking. Three qualitative studies reported the ongoing impact of labour exploitation on relationships with family, friends and wider community. Almost all participants described struggling to talk about their experiences with those closest to them. One study suggested that this may be because individuals often experience anger and disappointment towards themselves for ‘failing’ to improve the lives of their family (Anbesse et al., 2009; Meyer et al., 2004) or they may feel as though discussing their mental health with others is taboo (Tsutsumi et al., 2008).

As outlined earlier in the review, a key pre-trafficking factor was experiencing low socioeconomic status in their home country. As these individuals were paid very little, or often not paid at all, those who have migrated to another country return home with little financial improvement or still in debt (Anbesse et al., 2009; Meyer et al., 2004). This experience can result in feelings of failure, despair and hopelessness in this population, which may perpetuate existing psychological distress. These feelings are mirrored in trafficked individuals, who often find themselves far away from home, with limited access to healthcare,
housing, benefits as well as no family or friends to provide support (Oram et al., 2016).

These findings suggest that poverty and isolation, both on an individual and community level, are an important factor involved in the ongoing psychological impact of labour exploitation.

**Protective**

Although many of the studies included in this review predominantly focused on the negative factors associated with psychological distress, two qualitative studies made reference to protective factors.

Anbesse et al. (2009) reported that some women challenged their employer’s negative view of their home country, by showing them videos and photos. Others were able to resist the demands placed on them with regard to the hours and nature of their work. These individuals reported being better able to cope with the abuse and exploitation. These examples reflect positive internal protective factors and suggest that those who are more resistant to exploitation are more resilient whilst in the exploitative situation and post-trafficking.

Similarly, external protective factors were considered as a more positive work environment. Examples included those who were able to share their experiences with other workers of a similar background or culture (Anbesse et al., 2009), those who had regular breaks, those were allowed contact with family and visits to friends (Habtamu et al., 2017). These individuals also tended to fare better psychologically post-trafficking. Additionally, it was reported that sharing the religion of their country of work was negatively associated with developing common mental disorders whilst in the exploitation situation (Habtamu et al.,
These individuals might feel less culturally isolated, which Anbesse et al. (2009) reported as having the greatest impact on an individual’s ability to cope.

**Discussion**

The review included nine studies and considered two questions relating to the psychological impact of labour exploitation: 1) the psychological impact and how this was characterised; and 2) other factors associated with psychological distress.

**Summary of findings**

The studies included in the review consistently reported links between the experience of labour exploitation and psychological distress. Experiences of abuse and exploitation had a significant psychological impact, however other factors including isolation and control played an equivalent role. The findings highlighted additional factors present both pre and post-migration which predispose and perpetuate psychological distress.

**Psychological impact**

The studies included in the review used a variety of methods to measure the psychological impact of labour exploitation. Two studies used formal diagnoses and indicated a high prevalence of mood, anxiety and adjustment disorders. The other seven studies used a mixture of outcome measure data and found that a significant percentage of this population experience symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD as a result of labour exploitation. The qualitative data from interviews indicated frequent descriptions of fear, worry and depression both whilst in the situation and post-migration/trafficking. These findings were consistent with the
previous systematic review, which found a high prevalence of anxiety, depression and PTSD in survivors of sexual exploitation (Ottisova et al., 2016).

It is important to consider the use of outcome measure scores as an indication of probable diagnoses – in particular anxiety, depression and PTSD. Several studies included in the review acknowledged the diagnostic limitations of linking outcome measures and diagnoses (Kiss et al., 2015; Turner-Moss et al., 2016). It could be argued that using formal diagnoses might provide a clearer understanding of the psychological impact; however, the findings suggest that the majority of this population have comorbid or partial diagnoses. A heavy focus on formal diagnosis may miss the complex layers of trauma and stress experienced by this population (Hopper, 2017).

Moreover, there can be practical difficulties in interviewing victims of labour exploitation, or accessing cross-sectional data available for this population. This may be explained by understanding that those accessing post-trafficking service often have only recently left the trafficking/exploitation environment and may need more immediate support.

**Factors associated with psychological impact**

**Abuse and exploitation**

Experiences of abuse and exploitation were prevalent across six qualitative and quantitative studies included in the review. These experiences have a strong relationship with psychological distress. Severe violence is associated with increased risk of depression, anxiety and PTSD; and experiences of exploitation with anxiety and PTSD. These findings support the previous literature review, where
almost all victims of trafficking reported severe physical and sexual violence (Ottisova et al., 2016).

Previous literature has tended to focus on sexual exploitation due to the nature of trauma experienced. However, the findings from this review highlight the prevalence of sexual violence experienced by victims of labour exploitation. This suggests that the complexity and severity of trauma experienced in labour exploitation may be under-estimated.

The review findings highlighted apparent gender differences in the nature of labour exploitation and type of abuse experienced. Men tended to be exploited in construction and factory work and experienced more physical violence; whereas women tended to be exploited as domestic workers and experienced more sexual violence, but only slightly less physical violence (Oram et al., 2016 & Kiss et al., 2015. This is consistent with previous research, which found that men and boys experienced exploitation in fishing, manufacturing and begging (Pocock, Kiss, Oram & Zimmerman, 2016) and a high level of physical violence, often experienced at the hands of traffickers in relation to work-related injuries. However, these findings may also reflect a generalised difficulty for men in disclosing sexual abuse as they do not want to be seen as a victim (Alaggia, 2005). These explanations might be especially pertinent within this context, as often these men are working to provide income for their families in the midst of other stressors. This explanation may also account for the higher prevalence of anxiety, depression and PTSD across reported outcome measures by women compared to men. The exception being outcomes measuring high risk alcohol use. This may highlight men underreporting reporting symptoms of psychological distress, and using alcohol to numb, compensate or
avoid psychological difficulties. These issues have been widely reported across other populations, with significantly more men reporting using alcohol to cope with depression (Nolen-Hoeksema & Harrell, 2002). This highlights a lack of research exploring the experiences and psychological impact of labour exploitation on men and boys.

**Isolation and control**

Three studies included in the review considered the prevalence and impact of control in situations of labour exploitation on psychological distress (Kiss et al., 2015; Baldwin et al., 2015; Anbesse et al., 2009). Biderman’s chart of coercion (Amnesty International, 1975) was originally developed to explain methods used to control prisoners of war. It was applied by Baldwin et al. (2015) to their qualitative findings. They suggested that traffickers use abuse and violence to first dehumanise the individual and then to control them. This method of control ensures the individual remains isolated and fearful and is therefore more likely to stay in the exploitative environment.

More broadly, a lack of control was found throughout the lives of those exploited for labour. Findings from qualitative studies suggested that individuals came from positions of low socioeconomic status, where they had little control over improving their lives. These pre-trafficking factors can contribute to a negative cycle of poverty (Meyer et al., 2004), described by the authors of this study. This is where individuals leave their home countries due to poverty, often become further indebted to traffickers or employers, experience significant psychological distress and return home to poverty. This cycle has been supported by the World Health Organisation, who identified a significant association between health and agency
(WHO, 2010). In effect, those who have more control over their work and lives, tend to have better health outcomes.

Isolation was another predominant factor during this population’s experiences of labour exploitation. Isolation sometimes included individuals being separated from other workers or forcibly locked in rooms (Anbesse et al., 2009; Kiss et al., 2015), however a key finding was that indirect methods, such as cultural isolation, often had a greater psychological impact. This population often work in different countries and cultures, and sometimes not able to speak the language. These experiences are exacerbated by not being able to contact home. Feeling linked to their families and community, either directly or indirectly, may have been an important coping strategy for these individuals. The experience of cultural isolation has been found to be a key factor in sexual exploitation of migrant women in Greece (Lazaridis, 2001).

Additionally, the studies highlighted isolation as factor involved in perpetuating psychological symptoms post-exploitation. Individuals described struggling to discuss their experiences with others. A partial explanation might be avoidance of trauma-related thoughts and feelings, a key symptom of PTSD (APA, 2013). However, another explanation might be due to the isolation experienced by settling in different countries. They have limited access to support networks, which perpetuates their psychological distress.

**Protective**

Protective factors were described in two qualitative studies. These served to limit the psychological harm whilst in the exploitation situation. Protective factors in
the work environment, such as rest breaks and contact with friends and family had a protective effect on psychological distress. Internal protective factors and resilience, such as resisting and challenging employer’s demands also lessened the psychological impact of labour exploitation. The importance of internal and external protective factors, including social support in mediating trauma, has been reported in refugee children who have experienced significant trauma (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, Stein, 2011). The findings from the studies included in the review highlight protective factors as an important area for future research.

Limitations

The limitations of this review should be kept in mind when considering the findings. There were a small number of studies included in this review. Labour exploitation is an under researched area and therefore the pool from which to draw generalisable findings is limited. Several studies acknowledge the limited power of their findings, due to small sample sizes (Anbesse et al. 2009; Baldwin et al., 2015; Turner-Moss et al., 2016 & Oram et al., 2016)

Secondly, there were sampling considerations. Several studies recognise that individuals able to take part in research are no longer in the exploitation situation (Anbesse et al., 2009; Oram et al., 2016; Kiss et al., 2015). This means the mental health of those still in the exploitation situation remains unknown, and limits the generalisability of their findings. In addition to this, studies using interviews tended to use convenience based sampling, with several studies excluding those who were too physically/psychologically unwell (Oram et al., 2016; Habtamu et al., 2017; Turner-Moss et al. 2016). This may bias results in favour of those who were psychologically well enough to take part, as well as those who felt
safe enough to discuss their traumatic experiences with professionals. This approach may exclude many pockets of this population, who are not trusting of professionals or are not yet able to share their story. These limitations indicate that the psychological impact of labour exploitation is significantly underestimated.

**Recommendations for future research and clinical implications**

The findings reported in this review have several clinical implications. Firstly, poverty appears to play an important pre-trafficking role in increasing the risk of an individual experiencing labour exploitation. This highlights a need for further research within communities at risk of labour exploitation. Secondly, future labour exploitation research should attempt to ethically involve individuals who might not be as actively help-seeking as those included in this review. This may involve using more survey-based approaches to gather information when an individual is first accessing help.

It appeared that the qualitative studies reported more pre-trafficking, post trafficking and protective factors. It may be that qualitative methods allow individuals to tell their story, whereas cross-sectional and longitudinal studies tended to use survey data, which may not tap into other factors associated with the psychological impact of labour exploitation. This may reflect a need for more qualitative studies to be carried out with this population.

More recently the issue of modern slavery has been gaining media and political interest (Evening Standard, 2018). It is hoped this will lead to a greater awareness of labour exploitation as a distinct human rights issue, as well as promoting further research into this area.
References


Concepts cited developed from Biderman’s Chart of Coercion.


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Part 2: Empirical paper

“It is an amazing ability to have survived such terrible circumstances”:

Psychological Experiences of Labour Exploitation
Abstract

Aims: Labour exploitation has become a pertinent issue in recent times, however there is limited literature from which to draw on. This qualitative study aimed to explore the psychological experiences of labour exploitation, from the perspective of the individuals themselves and the professionals who work with them.

Method: The study recruited eight clients receiving help from a London-based charity, and seven professionals from different organisations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and client and professional accounts were analysed using thematic analysis.

Results: There was significant overlap between client and professional themes. Experiences of abuse, exploitation and isolation were prevalent. There was a dichotomy in client experiences of help; with trust and positive experiences associated with charities and organisations contrasted with fear and negative experiences with the authorities. Professionals emphasised the vulnerability of this population to re-exploitation and the need for better links between services.

Conclusions: The psychological experiences of labour exploitation are complex and long-lasting. The findings highlight the limited applicability of diagnosis for this population; a gap in service provision immediately after escape; and a need for long term, integrated, trauma-focused care.
Introduction

Modern slavery has become a prominent issue in recent times. Despite changes to the Modern Slavery Act (UK Government, 2015) demanding transparency across supply chains and guidelines for government intervention, there have been several high profile articles in the media outlining labour exploitation as an ‘open secret’ (O’Connor, 2018). In 2017 alone more than 5,000 individuals who have experienced modern slavery were referred to the UK National Referral Mechanism (NRM), a framework in place to identify and support victims of trafficking and slavery. Globally, it is estimated that one third of the 20.9 million individuals in forced labour have been trafficked for labour exploitation (International Labour Organisation, 2012).

Labour exploitation

A definition provided by the National Referral Mechanism (Home Office, 2018) defines labour exploitation as having two components: “means (being held, either physically or through threat of penalty – e.g. threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability) and service (an individual provides a service for benefit)” (NRM guidance adult, 2016). The nature of labour exploitation can encompass a wide range of work, including domestic servitude, catering, agriculture, nail bars, clothing factories, fisheries and construction (UN, 2000).

Labour exploitation was the most common type of slavery cited across the 5,000 referrals made to the NRM in 2017 (National Crime Agency, 2017). These statistics are at odds with previous research exploring the impact of trafficking, which has typically focused on sexual exploitation (Oram et al., 2012). However,
there more recently research carried out which highlights the complex and long-lasting physical and psychological impact of labour exploitation. These studies report a prevalence of physical and sexual violence; threats, abuse and exploitation; and severe psychological symptoms including, but not limited to, anxiety, depression and PTSD (Habtamu, Minaye, & Zeleke, 2017; Kiss et al., 2015; Oram et al., 2016; Tsutsumi et al., 2008; Turner-Moss, Zimmerman, Howard & Oram, 2014).

A recent systematic review on human trafficking reported a need for further research into the psychological impact of labour exploitation (Ottisova, Hemmings, Howard, Zimmerman & Oram, 2016). The majority of studies to date have used correlational or longitudinal approaches, based on outcome measure data, to gain valuable insights into the experiences of this population. There are several qualitative studies which have reported abuse, violence and psychological distress as a result of trafficking (Anbesse, Hanlon, Alem, Packer & Whitley, 2009; Baldwin, Fehrenbacher & Eisenman, 2015; Meyer, Robinson, Chhim & Bass, 2004).

It is important to note that although an estimated third of individuals currently experiencing labour exploitation having been trafficked for this purpose, there are many who seek work voluntarily or via an agency. However, as they still experience exploitation, the NRM defines these individuals as victims of trafficking (National Crime Agency, 2017).

To our knowledge, there have been no UK-based studies exploring the psychological experiences of labour exploitation. This highlights a gap in the qualitative literature specifically addressing this issue using methodology that would capture the rich narratives of the individuals themselves.

**Experiences of help**
The Council of Europe’s Convention on Action Against Trafficking (2005) states that victims should be identified and protected. This is supported by the UK Border Authority guidance, which maintains that victims of trafficking and exploitation are likely to be considered as vulnerable persons and detention is not appropriate (UKBA, 2009). Nevertheless, research has reported that often victims without appropriate documentation are frequently detained (Hoyle, Bosworth & Dempsey, 2011). As such, individuals who have experienced labour exploitation often remain under the radar, keenly aware that escape does not guarantee them safety.

These experiences understandably have a significant negative impact on help-seeking. This has been supported by research which has reported the difficulties victims of labour exploitation have experienced in accessing help (Ostrovschi et al., 2011; Turner-Moss et al., 2014). This is exemplified by the knowledge that the majority of referrals to charities and organisations are made by solicitors.

Due to their complex needs, survivors of human trafficking require a network of organisations providing support (Hemmings et al., 2016). The first step in protecting individuals from further harm is to guarantee them discretionary leave to remain. This can be provided by immigration authorities, the police or UK Border Forces. The next step involves a referral to the NRM, where a decision is made as whether there are reasonable grounds to believe the individual is a victim of trafficking or modern slavery. It is at this point that they should receive appropriate support (National Crime Agency, 2018). There are few organisations that provide specialist care for this population. This help includes navigating the asylum system,
engaging in psychological therapy, accessing recourse to public funds and housing and liaising with police (Human Trafficking Foundation, 2015). However, to our knowledge, there have been no studies exploring this population’s relationships to, and experiences of, help.

The current study aimed to expand the literature in this area. A phenomenological approach was used to firstly, gain a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of labour exploitation and secondly, address one of the key commitments of qualitative methodology - giving voice to individuals who have been marginalised (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). This is achieved by by focussing directly on individuals who have experienced labour exploitation to gain a rich, descriptive picture of this particular human experience. Additionally, qualitative research attempts to broaden the understanding of an issue by considering multiple perspectives (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). This was addressed by interviewing professionals who work directly with this population; such as solicitors, social workers and therapists. The aim of this was provide other perspectives on a complex and important issue.

The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the psychological experiences of labour exploitation?
2. What are participant’s experiences of help and how could this be improved?

**Method**

**Setting**

Recruitment took place at a small independent charity dedicated to working with victims of trafficking. Individuals were usually referred by their GP or solicitor
and referrals required details of trafficking experiences including exploitation, torture and abuse. The charity provides long-term support for individuals who have been given discretionary leave to remain. This includes writing medico-legal reports to support their asylum claims, providing therapy and medical help. As this group of individuals are considered at continuous risk from others, the charity remained anonymous to ensure confidentiality.

**Ethics**

Several ethical challenges were considered. The topics of trafficking and labour exploitation are sensitive and were broached gently, within the wider context of the client’s story. Participants had the option decline speaking about the nature of the trafficking situation, if they wished. If the individual was distressed after the interview, a clinician was available for a debrief. The participants were made aware that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from University College London Research Ethics Committee (See Appendix 2).

**Recruitment**

**Clients**

Staff who worked at the charity were asked to identify Individuals who met the following inclusion criteria:

a) Individuals must have trafficked for forced labour under reasonable grounds, defined by the NRM (Home Office, 2018).
b) Individuals must have been out of the trafficking situation for a minimum of six months, as not to subject them to an interview when they are vulnerable.

c) Individuals were deemed to be well enough to participate by their key worker.

d) Aged 18 and above.

Individuals where English was not their first language, or who had limited comprehension of English, were included as interpreters were available.

It was agreed that a convenience sampling approach be used as this population are understandably wary of speaking to strangers. This was managed by ensuring clients were approached by their key workers and provided with brief verbal information about the study. If they were interested, the researcher provided further written information (Appendix 3a). Clients who agreed were invited to take part in a one-off qualitative interview held at the charity base. Signed consent forms (Appendix 4) were obtained during the interview and participants were made aware that if they disclosed information pertaining to risk, this would be shared with their key worker. Clients were given a £10 supermarket voucher as a thank you for their time. The researcher highlighted that their key worker would be available after the interview if they felt distressed. It was hoped this approach ensured clients felt safe and trusted the intentions of the study. Recruitment stopped when no significant new information was being added.

Professionals

Professionals were also recruited using a convenience sampling method. Clinicians from the charity had access to individuals from other organisations
involved in providing support for exploited individuals. Professionals who were interested in taking part were provided with written information about the study (Appendix 3b) and asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 4). Interviews were conducted either in person, or over the phone.

**Interviews**

*Client interview*

A semi-structured interview was developed alongside professionals and other researchers (Appendix 5a). The interview schedule was developed based on those found in several qualitative studies which have interviewed individuals who have experienced trauma (Meyer et al., 2004), professionals who have worked with them (Domoney, Howard, Abas, Broadbent & Oram, 2015) and interviews used by the charity and other organisations when gathering information from trafficking victims. One of the key points made by experienced professionals and researchers was to ensure the structure of the questions intended to allow the client’s narrative to unfold. First, questions explored how the individual had come to the charity for help as well as their journey to the UK; second, their experience/s of labour exploitation, its impact and how they manage/d their difficulties; and finally their experiences of, and relationship to, help, alongside any unaddressed needs. The interview was designed in a flexible way to allow for differences in experience and exploration of personal themes. The interviews lasted between 35 and 80 minutes, with an average of 60 minutes.

Discussions with my research supervisors highlighted that understanding the psychological impact of labour exploitation might be difficult to assess. This issue may not be a predominant difficulty or priority for these individuals at this stage.
Therefore, the interview allowed these questions to be asked within the wider context of other difficulties and needs, such as housing and finances.

*Professional interview*

The professional interview (Appendix 5b) followed a similar pattern to the client interview. Questions invited the professional to describe their experiences of working with individuals who have experienced labour exploitation; how this population present and manage their difficulties; and finally, questions exploring their own experience of helping, including barriers to providing and accessing help for these individuals. These interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, with an average of 50 minutes.

*Analysis*

Analysis was carried out using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), using a phenomenological approach. As labour exploitation has a limited literature base, with most studies focusing on cross-sectional data and semi-structured interviews, using this method of analysis was considered appropriate. Additionally, thematic analysis is not tied to any particular theory, which allowed for a flexible understanding of exploitation, as well as holding pre-determined research questions in mind.

Whilst conducting the analysis, the subsequent steps were followed in accordance with Braun & Clarke (2006). First, I transcribed all client interviews and all but one professional interview verbatim. The remaining interview was transcribed by an undergraduate student. Second, to familiarise myself with the data I read through each anonymised transcript carefully. Third, I comprehensively and systematically worked through paper copies of the transcripts. Information and
ideas that were definitely or potentially relevant to the research question were annotated in the right hand margin and points of interest were annotated in the left (see Appendix 6 for an example). Fourth, as a comprehensive list of codes formed, recurring themes began to emerge (see Appendix 7 for an early example). This process continued as data was still being collected, therefore themes were revised as more information was gathered. A research supervisor (EW) familiarised herself with two client interviews. I discussed the emerging themes with EW and other research supervisors. Fifth, client and professional interviews were initially analysed separately, however similar themes emerged in both sets of transcripts. Therefore, I began to collate and review them across the data set. Themes were developed into overarching categories and themes not fully supported by data were removed. Sixth, quotations were selected to exemplify how themes were related to the data.

Credibility

The criteria for qualitative research (Barker & Pistrang, 2005) were carefully considered to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the analysis. My research supervisor, who had many years of experience working victims of labour exploitation, was asked to independently code interviews. These codes were used in the process of reviewing themes. Direct quotes from the data were used to provide examples of themes across both individual and professional interviews. It was hoped that interviewing clients and professionals would elicit multiple perspectives.

Researcher’s perspective

I have always had an interest in working with those who have experienced trauma prior to or as a result of migration. During my early twenties I spent time
working with refugees and gained a humbling appreciation of their stories. After having conversations with those who work in this field, I became aware of the gap in research where these individuals can share their experiences in their own words. This was emphasised as the complex issue of migration became more prominent both politically and in the media. With these themes in mind at the beginning of the study, I anticipated that findings might highlight negative psychological experiences of labour exploitation and a significant gap in their needs. Whilst carrying out the interviews and analysis, I attempted to ‘bracket’ these expectations through conversations with my supervisor (Fischer, 2008). This experience allowed me to facilitate detailed narratives from participants, without including leading questions.

**Results**

**Participant characteristics**

**Clients**

Twelve individuals were identified as meeting inclusion criteria by staff, however, eight consented to take part in the study. Of those who were initially approached, one declined to take part and two were not currently psychologically well enough to be interviewed. Eight individuals were interviewed, five were female and three were male. Two individuals required interpreters. Further participant characteristics are presented in Table 1, with some information omitted to preserve confidentiality.

**Professionals**

Seven professionals were contacted and agreed to take part in the study. To preserve the confidentiality of the individuals and the organisations they work for,
complete characteristics are not reported. The professionals included two clinical psychologists, two solicitors, one legal officer, one individual working in counter trafficking and one GP. The professionals had between three and ten years’ experience working with individuals who have experienced labour exploitation. Their work ranged from psychological therapy, writing medico-legal reports, representing clients in legal cases and liaising with a vast network of organisations, the home office and social services.

**Overview of themes**

During analysis, similarities emerged between client and professional interviews. Therefore, it was felt that both client and professional themes should be presented interwoven together. Therefore, four client domains – presented as one, two, four and five, contained themes and subthemes, with related professional quotes as support. Another domain – presented as domain three - contains themes generated from the professional analysis.

**Themes**

The analysis of the client and professional transcripts generated twelve themes, which are presented in Table 2. The prevalence of these themes is outlined in Table 3. These are illustrated with quotes. Client quotes are denoted by ‘C’ (e.g. client 1 = C1) and professionals by P (e.g. professional 1 = P1). Two clients were interviewed with interpreters and their quotes will be annotated with ‘via interpreter’. For ease of reading, repeated words and non-words have been removed, unrelated segments have been replaced with an ellipses (...) and connecting words have been inserted by using square brackets ( [ ] )
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Number</th>
<th>Age bracket</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Type of labour exploitation</th>
<th>Countries where exploitation took place</th>
<th>Length of exploitation</th>
<th>Length of time out of exploitation situation</th>
<th>Mental health diagnosis from charity</th>
<th>Current status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>Domestic servitude</td>
<td>Scandinavia; UK</td>
<td>3 months in Scandinavia, 5 months in UK</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Leave to remain</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Domestic servitude</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Leave to remain</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Domestic servitude</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Leave to remain</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Domestic worker</td>
<td>Middle East; UK; UK</td>
<td>10 months in Middle East; 2 weeks in UK</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Leave to remain</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Domestic worker</td>
<td>Middle East; UK</td>
<td>1 year in Middle East, 2 years in UK</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Leave to remain</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Forced labour</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>On and off for 5/6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Asylum seeker</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Domestic worker</td>
<td>Middle East; UK</td>
<td>3 years in Middle East, 1 month in UK</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Leave to remain</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Forced Labour</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1 year in UK</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Leave to remain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domain</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Subthemes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clients</td>
<td>1. Traumatic experiences</td>
<td>“I experienced so much back home”</td>
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<td>and their impact</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.1 Prior to exploitation</td>
<td>“I was tricked”/Lied to</td>
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<td>“They beat up”</td>
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<td>“I work 24/7, no rest”</td>
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<td>1.2 Abuse and Exploitation</td>
<td>Not paid salary</td>
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<td>Threat of death</td>
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<td>1.3 “Mental suffering”</td>
<td>Delayed experience</td>
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<td>“Thinking thinking thinking”</td>
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<td>“I can’t sleep”</td>
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<td>Stress/Worry/Fear</td>
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<td>Depression</td>
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<td>“I wanted to give up”</td>
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<td>Shame</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Increased vulnerability | 2.1 After escaping | “I ran away”  
“I spent many nights on the streets”  
Stranger connections |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------|
|                           | 2.2 “Re-exploitation” | “They are the population as most risk of re-exploitation”  
Multiple experiences of exploitation |
|                           | 2.3 Isolation | “I have to support my family”  
"I am far away from my family and I know no one”  
"What if the same thing happens again?”  
"I don’t know the country, I don’t speak English” |
| 3. Experience of help | 3.1 Trusting charities/organisations | “I have a space to talk”  
Facilitating help with system  
“I am grateful for the help” |
|                          | 3.2 Not trusting authorities | “They treat us like criminals”  
“They do not believe your story”  
Fear of being detained/deported |
|                          | 3.3 Unmet needs | “If I had gotten help earlier, after escaping”  
“We are trapped by the system”  
Difficulty meeting basic needs |
### 4. Resilience

#### 4.1 Survival and Coping

- “I had to survive”
- “I think of my family”
- Faith/Prayer
- Avoiding thinking/talking about it
- Taking mind off it
- Survivor’s guilt

#### 4.2 Moving forwards

- “I will always need a space to talk”
- “I’m making positive changes now”
- Seeking justice
- Hope for research

### 5. What gets in the way of helping LE clients

#### 5.1 Passivity

- Not putting themselves forward
- Impasse between professional and client

#### 5.2 Not addressing psychological needs

- Avoidance of 'going back there'
- Putting work before mental health
- Practical help first, then emotional

#### 5.3 More support

- Links with other organisations/more training
- Less burn out
Table 3. Prevalence of themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
<th>CLIENTS</th>
<th>PROFESSIONALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1  2  3</td>
<td>4  5  6  7</td>
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<td>1  2  3</td>
<td>4  5  6  7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traumatic experiences and their impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior to exploitation</td>
<td>x  x  x</td>
<td>x  x  x  x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abuse and exploitation</td>
<td>x  x  x</td>
<td>x  x  x  x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mental suffering”</td>
<td>x  x  x</td>
<td>x  x  x  x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immediately after escaping</td>
<td>x  x  x</td>
<td>x  x  x  x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Re-exploitation</td>
<td>x  x  x</td>
<td>x  x  x  x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>x  x  x</td>
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<td>Experience of help</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trusting charities/organisations</td>
<td>x  x  x</td>
<td>x  x  x  x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not trusting authorities</td>
<td>x  x  x</td>
<td>x  x  x  x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unmet needs</td>
<td>x  x  x</td>
<td>x  x  x  x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Survival and coping</td>
<td>x  x  x</td>
<td>x  x  x  x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moving forwards</td>
<td>x  x  x</td>
<td>x  x  x  x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barriers to helping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of autonomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not addressing psychological needs</td>
<td>-  -  -</td>
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<tr>
<td>More support</td>
<td>-  -  -</td>
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</table>
Domain 1. Traumatic experiences and their impact

Themes in this domain reflect the prominence of traumatic experiences across client narratives, not just whilst in the exploitative situation. Descriptions of these were often interwoven with the resulting psychological impact, and therefore these themes were clustered together.

1.1 Prior to exploitation

Six clients described difficult or traumatic experiences prior to exploitation. Most of these events occurred in their home country, prior to being trafficked. These experiences often included abuse within their family.

“...because of the life I had experienced...grow up in abusive relationship, abusive family...all this drunk family, I grow up, and that’s suffering as well.” (C1)

Several clients described the traumatic loss of important people in their lives whilst they were in their home country. This resulted in them being isolated and vulnerable to exploitation.

“[There was] ...no one to help me out or...I don’t have a parents, no father, no family, but I used to struggle...” (C3)

“I was adopted when I was like, a baby...I stayed with the family...for about five years when my adopted Mum died of cancer. And then my Dad got into alcohol...and then after that I ended up in the street because there was no one to look after [me]...” (C6)

Clients often reported positions of low socioeconomic status in their home country, including experiencing severe poverty and being financially responsible for their family. In the client narrative, these experiences and hope for a better life for their family were key pre-disposing factors in migrating/being trafficked for work.
“I don’t have anything in my country, I was not able to save really…we have age discrimination in our country. So mostly people they are reach 30 and they have no choice to work overseas.” (C4)

Some individuals incurred financial debts to their traffickers or employers to pay for travel overseas, which they are unable to repay. As a result, clients who have escaped in another country, experienced great stress and worry about what might be happening to their family.

“She’s hoping lawyer will be able to assist her get a job as she has lots of debts to pay back home, threatening to her children is still going on...” (C7, via interpreter)

“I feeling worried because...I came to this country with the snakehead...to trafficking me here...yeah I still owe them money. So I don’t know what’s happening to my family.” (C8)

Experiences of pre-trafficking trauma and difficulties were supported by professionals, who reported long histories of exploitation, abuse and limited resources within this population.

“[They] come from backgrounds with low incomes, few opportunities in their lives, poor education...and they’ve already been working, for example, from when they were a child.” (P2)

### 1.2 Abuse and exploitation

All clients reported being lied to or misled during the migration or trafficking process. Similarities across domestic workers emerged from the transcripts, with all three individuals signing up to an agency in their home countries. The terms in the employment contract initially appeared agreeable. However, upon arrival, they found that they were lied to about their employers, their passports were taken away and they were forcibly kept in the house.
“When I applied in the agency...they told me that I would work in the big palace. And then everything was really good in the contract, that you can say no, but when I reach [the country], everything was a bit dodgy, yeah...nothing follows in the contract.” (C4)

Some clients experienced domestic servitude, but their migration was facilitated by family members or someone they knew. They often migrated with the intention of “helping out” (C1) whilst also providing financial support for their family. In other instances, individuals merely hoped for a new life.

“My journey...so I will say, I thought I was getting help to escape from some certain things [back home] ...I later realised that I was being tricked.” (C2)

Exploitation was described by all clients. The most common experiences reported were firstly being expected to ‘work 24/7, no rest’ (C4); secondly, not having their basic needs met, including ‘not being fed enough to get through the day’ (C7, via interpreter); and thirdly, not receiving a salary.

“The unpaid work that I’ve done...was probably in the village when I was very young...they would tell me to do all sorts of stuff...to go to cut grasses and feed like animals and cook food...otherwise they would not give me food and I had to sleep outside in the cold...” (C6)

“There were seasons that she was not able to send [money] because she was not paid...3 years working, no pay” (C7, via interpreter)

These reports were supported by three professionals who acknowledged experiences of abuse and exploitation as a key factor in psychological distress.

“The conditions are bad...and they’re not being paid and they’re not given enough food to eat and they’re being woken up at all hours...it has a big impact.” (P1)

Physical abuse was reported by all but one client, however, individuals were often reluctant to speak about it in detail.
“I was trafficked as a domestic worker...so I’ve been used in slavery...there was a lot of things I went through there, like beaten up every day, bullying, shouting and scared.” (C3)

There were other brief mentions of violence, verbal threats and in two cases, sexual abuse.

“I wasn’t able to get much sleep. And that man was constantly pestering me... (long pause)” (C5, via interpreter)

Whilst reflecting on the transcripts, at this point in the interview long pauses were often noted, with several clients becoming tearful as they spoke briefly about what they had experienced.

One important theme that emerged was that experiencing continuous abuse and exploitation lead to a breaking point, where the individual then escaped. Two thirds of individuals described this breaking point as an indirect, or in several cases a direct, threat of death.

“She couldn’t stand it anymore. She was not given her own foods that she could eat...she would see in the mirror, she was losing a lot of weight...so she was afraid she would die...” (C7, via interpreter)

In two interviews, the threats took place in the UK. All reports highlighted that due to previous experiences of severe abuse, threats were taken seriously.

“[The madam] blamed me for her getting ill. So she said to me, I will pay for that when we get back to [the Middle East]...I had already experienced to be beaten...so I was really scared [of dying]” (C4)

“There was an incident following that...they threatened me...by saying that as soon as we return to [the Middle East], he’d make sure I would not return to India alive...” (C5, via interpreter)
1.3 “Mental suffering”

All clients spoke about the psychological impact of labour exploitation; with two thirds reflecting that full awareness of the impact only “came up much, much later” (C2), often in detention, or several months or even years after the exploitation took place.

“I think it like popped up when I was in detention, I kinda got really depressed...everything came up, came back, things that had happened to me in the past, the abuses I’ve been through” (C6)

Though all clients were formally diagnosed with PTSD whilst at the charity (see table 1), two clients who had been out of the exploitation situation the longest and were integrated within organisations used diagnostic terms, such as “depression”, “anxiety” (C1) and “PTSD” (C2), to describe their psychological impact. More generally, clients described physical effects, the impact on relationships as well as more typical psychological symptoms.

Almost all clients described thinking a lot about experiences that happened whilst in the exploitation situation.

“...like isolated, lonely, thinking about it all the time and stuff like that...when I’m with people that I know, I am kind of like, okay, but when I’m mostly alone, it’s difficult.” (C6)

“...when I’m alone a lot come on my mind and it’s been a tough time, and I still can’t get it right and [it’s] still lingering.” (C2)

Two thirds of clients described difficulty sleeping, due to a variety of reasons including thinking a lot, nightmares and pain, which was often a direct result of the abuse experienced.

“I was think too much, lot of things in my head and when pressures, thought, everything, can’t be released...makes me can’t sleep.” (C8)
“I can’t sleep on my back or lie on my tummy…I don’t sleep in bed, I have to sleep in the couch because…I can always sleep sideways...yeah, because of my physical injuries.” (C2)

Clients also reported worry impacting their ability to fall and remain asleep.

Approximately half of clients reported worrying about the asylum process, finances, their family and the future.

“She’s worried for her children and so it just stresses her and afterwards...each time she remembers them [things she has been through] it just adds...the doctor advised her not to worry so much as it’s not helping her physically.” (C7, via interpreter)

In addition to this, several clients spoke about being fearful that their former employers or traffickers might find them.

“I had to change my name...because I always panic that this lady if she find me she might do this [kill me] ...I cut my hair. So you know when you’re just...fear inside of you every day.” (C3)

Feeling low or depressed, was mentioned by less than half of the clients interviewed, but a theme reported by almost all professionals. The feeling of ‘wanting to give up’ (C1) was more commonly spoken about. This referred both to giving up on the asylum system in the UK and ending their life.

“Though it was difficult and couple of time, a lot of times I want to give up and just (quietly)...end it all...because it was too much for me.” (C2)

“When I am alone I always thinking that I just want to give up. There are one time where I told our co-ordinator I just want to go back in Philippines. I just don’t want to wait my [asylum] paper...” (C4)

It was important to note that shame was only explicitly mentioned by the male clients, and appeared to be linked to their experiences of exploitation and abuse.

“My sexual abuse...I had never shared with anyone and really I was ashamed and I was embarrassed and I was angry.” (C6)
“Sometimes I’m feeling shame and guilty to talk to them [family]...think it’s my fault.” (C8)

Another noticeable theme that emerged when reviewing the transcripts was that clients often had difficulties with their memory. Several clients explicitly mentioned this, however almost all found it difficult to remember their timeline of events.

Overall, the psychological impact appeared to be more complex than discrete clusters of symptoms; a view that was strongly supported by almost all the professionals.

“I would say that a lot of clients fall in a lot of the gaps...they kind’ve have a few symptoms of depression, they’ve got generalised anxiety symptoms, but again, probably don’t meet the full threshold.” (P1)

Both psychologists and solicitors were keen to highlight that the psychological impact often does not fit neatly into diagnostic categories.

“Really broadly...often diagnosis is tricky...they are not necessarily fitting into DSM criteria, which from a legal perspective is tricky sometimes in terms of explaining what their needs are...” (P1)

This was supported by solicitors who emphasised that this raises difficulties as most legal proceedings with the Home Office require diagnoses.

“The main thing is always because they do not meet diagnostic categories...so that can make it tricky to write medical or legal reports to support them.” (P3)

**Domain 2. Increased vulnerability**

All clients spoke about feeling vulnerable due to their experiences of labour exploitation, especially after escaping. The following three subthemes overlapped in
the client’s narratives, but emerged as distinct factors involved in increasing the vulnerability of this population.

2.1 Immediately after escaping

Almost all clients reported escaping or running away from their employer. These decisions were high risk and often made quickly, due to the nature of the abuse and threats experienced.

“She just decided to escape from the house, she took advantage of them calling a repairman, she pretended to throw the garbage in the bin. She just ran out.” (C7, via interpreter)

“I ran out...I just ran out into the road and just start walking and then running and then walking...I didn’t know where I was” (C5, via interpreter)

As most escapes took place in the UK, clients knew few or no people. This resulted in all clients describing periods of homelessness after escaping, which left them vulnerable to further harm.

“She slept on the street...she doesn’t know where to go... [it went on for] a while...she just go in the park, in the street, would sit with people...” (C7, via interpreter)

“I had to live in boarded up houses, where people already messed it up with faeces, they come there to take drug...and you still have to go there to sleep at night.” (C2)

An interesting theme that arose from almost all client interviews was that their first experience of help after escape was often a stranger. This was often followed by reports that they were not aware of where to go for help or were fearful of being caught by their employers or the police.

“I was sitting on this bench and I just didn’t know what to do...after a while I thought...I might as well keep on walking...that’s when I met this man, who was on
his way to feed the pigeons...I spoke to him and told him that I’ve not been treated very well...he helped me find another job [with another family].” (C5, via interpreter)

Half of the participants described these stranger interactions as positive, as strangers provided them with food and shelter, or helped them find work. However, some were abusive or exploitative.

### 2.2 “Re-exploitation”

Following on from the previous theme, “re-exploitation” was a term used by professional 3. It aptly described an important feature found across both client and professional interviews, which appears to significantly increase the vulnerability of this particular population. Some clients described experiencing labour exploitation in their home country prior to migrating/being trafficked. However, in general, re-exploitation most commonly occurred after escaping.

“I met this man [in the park], I couldn’t speak the language, I didn’t know where I was...he was my main help. He gave me contact details for other people...I could get in touch with for work...so when I contact them they are just male...and when you call them they will say things like ‘oh you haven’t got a visa, so I’ll help you but you’ll have to sleep with me...or I’ll take you to the police.’” (C5, via interpreter)

Clients reported still feeling responsible for their families, even after escape. This increased the risk of re-exploitation as the individual, often homeless with limited social support, found work and were re-exploited.

“Luckily, my friend helped me...but, the sad thing is she is also undocumented so she can’t help me...she gave me some [illegal] part time jobs...the same thing happened to me again and again.” (C4)

This was a predominant theme across all professional interviews and was described as a specific concern for those who had experienced labour exploitation.
These individuals have a strong motivation to support their families, even if it puts them at risk of further exploitative work.

“They were under so much pressure to provide for their families...the need is still there and they still need to send money home...[they] put themselves in vulnerable positions by working illegally in this country whilst they’re still waiting for their status...” (P6)

Several professionals, both psychological and legal, hypothesised a differentiation between individuals who experienced predominantly sexual exploitation compared to labour exploitation. Due to the more immediate and violating nature of trauma in sexual exploitation, these individuals tended to have more immediate physical and mental health needs. They were also less likely to return to exploitative situations – ‘they tend to realise that this was wrong and should not have happened to them’ (P3). Whereas, labour exploitation is a ‘more chronic wearing away at someone’s psychological wellbeing, but no less traumatic’ (P4). Individuals may still be relatively ‘well’, or not entirely understand that what they experienced was exploitative and therefore are willing to risk re-exploitation to help their families.

2.3 Isolation

Either being or feeling isolated was common theme which came up across all client interviews. As all participants reported escaping in the UK, they often knew little about the country or language. This often resulted in difficulties navigating the health and legal system, especially when first accessing help.
“At that time [after escape] I can’t speak any of English...like, you don’t know nothing in this country and you come tell the people [police] what do you want...it is a very hard time” (C8)

Isolation was exacerbated by both being away from their families and still feeling responsible for providing for them. This, as outlined in the previous theme, can often lead to an increased risk of re-exploitation.

“I didn’t have a visa...I didn’t have any rights, but because I have three children and a husband who was sick, I just simply couldn’t go back because they were financially dependent on me.” (C5, via interpreter)

“I don’t have right to work, I can’t work full time, if they will give me negative [outcome to application] ...what will happen to me? I will end up nothing...I will go back to my family nothing.” (C4)

Approximately half of the clients described feeling isolated as they struggled to trust and connect with others. For some this was due to their symptoms of anxiety post-exploitation, or an understandable wariness of strangers.

“It’s really difficult to build an attachment with friends right now because I feel like...am I going to be judged just because of my terrible past experiences...” (C6)

Professionals identified isolation as having a significant impact on this population’s wellbeing, in particular the detrimental impact of being separated from their families.

“Generally because they tend to be in an unstable housing situation, much of the time they’re fairly isolated, they’ve been moved somewhere they don’t know and they don’t reach out to neighbours or people locally, they tend to shut themselves away...” (P5)

Professionals described a lack of social integration and sense of community as key factors in maintaining their psychological difficulties. This can also at times increase their risk of re-exploitation, as they seek out the only people they know for support, who are often those who trafficked them.
Domain 3. Experience of help

All clients reflected on their experiences of help with charities, legal organisations, authorities and the home office. The themes in this domain reflect the reported dichotomy between trusted organisations and negative experiences with the ‘system’.

3.1 Trusting charities and organisations

All clients but one discussed the largely positive experiences they had with various charities and legal organisations. They were appreciative of the wide range of support they had received.

“[They have been] more than good. Very, very good. (Laughs). I don’t know what word to use...very amazing people and I thank God for everyone who helped me.” (C3)

“They give me a lot of helps, give me a lot of strength in my life...I very appreciate.” (C8)

This included therapy with psychologists and counsellors, who ‘gave a space to talk’ (C1) as well as helping them process and understand their experiences, improve their symptoms and gain tools to help them manage going forwards.

“I’m doing the therapies...counselling here and it has been very helpful to kinda link up with things that have happened to me in the past....” (C6)

“There are some things I’ve been [able to] manage within me and I was thinking that it was not normal or something...but when I had a session...we found there are some things [tools] which actually good...which have helped...they make sure I am on the right path.” (C2)

This was supported by several professionals who articulated that psychological help should be provided by ‘specialists, who have experience working with these individuals, who are vulnerable to re-traumatisation’ (P5)
Clients discussed being involved with multiple organisations who helped them navigate the asylum and legal system. However, several clients mentioned that charities and organisations are more trustworthy as they are separate from the authorities.

“Gradually, you get introduced to some organisations and they are not connected with the system...the government...they are different...I trust them, they help.” (C2)

3.2 Not trusting authorities

Following on from the previous theme, almost all clients described a fear and mistrust of authorities – including the police, the government and the wider asylum system. Many clients reported this fear as being passed through communities of illegal or trafficked individuals and was predominantly around being caught, detained or deported.

“I was scared...I didn’t know who to go to for help...I was also scared to go outside because everyone told me that if I left the house police will find me and I will be sent back...” (C5, via interpreter)

Clients described their interactions with police and authorities as mostly negative, often feeling as though they were being punished, as opposed to being offered help or protection.

“We are scared to report ourselves, or to step forward to seek help from the authorities, from the police...they are detaining us, they didn’t try to find out why we seeking help...we are victims, we are not the criminals. It seems that we are the criminals in their eyes.” (C4)

They described instances where their stories were not believed, or did not appear to carry much weight. Many clients reported seeking help from the authorities and not being given it.
“Because in the first place they hardly even believe you when you are telling them, so…what more can you give? You are too scared that even when you tell them...they still push you out on the street.” (C2)

In one case, an individual was wrongly imprisoned for the illegal work he was forced to carry out; it took many years for him to be freed. The psychological impact of this was long lasting.

“Yes, they didn’t believe me…they don’t want to say they are wrong until my solicitor find a very strong evidence and...put my case in high courts. It was a very hard time for me.” (C8)

3.3 Unmet needs

All clients reported having unmet needs, most commonly post-exploitation.

Two thirds of participants highlighted the need for help earlier in their journey, in particular after they had escaped.

“…if I’d gotten the right kind of help at the time when I ran away from there then maybe I would not have had to come here [to the charity] as much as I am.” (C5, via interpreter)

This was supported by several professionals, who highlighted the need for early help in navigating the immigration system.

“I think people need to have good advice and practical support from a very early stage. Things that are theoretically meant to be in place but aren’t always.” (P2)

As outlined earlier, it is often post-escape when individuals are isolated and significantly more vulnerable to homelessness and re-exploitation.

“If someone can help you in early times maybe…it’s very hard for understand for foreigners, especially if they don’t speak English…it’s very hard to find any organisation or people, charities [that] can help. Not easy.” (C8)

A key issue which spanned almost all client transcripts was feeling trapped by the UK visa and asylum system.
“It’s quite depressing. We are stuck in this tight visa system. I have family I need to support, but really sending...giving my family, my children full support. I can’t really do it.” (C4)

The impact of this was clients were unable to work or send money home to their families. These difficulties put individuals at risk of re-exploitation as they attempted to work illegally.

“I know somebody who right now is going through similar kinds of things...she’s forced to work in the circumstances because she doesn’t have a visa, so she can’t go back and she is trapped.” (C5, via interpreter)

Almost all clients and professionals described waiting significantly longer than promised to receive the right to remain and work visas. This often left them reliant on charities for financial help.

“My trafficking case after two years...I was given positive, reasonable ground [to] stay in here, but I don’t have right to work...so I was referred to [several charities] for help.” (C4)

“Going through the immigration system doesn’t help people’s mental wellbeing...it takes a really long time...I have one client who’s been waiting three years for a decision...” (P2)

These systemic issues are often exacerbated by difficulties meeting other basic needs such as finances, housing and healthcare.

“My stay has expire, now they won’t be giving me benefits anymore...that makes me depressed because I got gas, electricity to pay, house, transport...” (C3)

Unmet basic needs were a key theme from the professional interviews. The legal professionals reflected that practical needs should be met first, prior engaging in psychological work; whereas psychologists and medical staff highlighted the need for help to be ‘wraparound – it needs to be a combination of emotional and practical, as sometimes the practical is the way in.’ (P1)
Domain 4. Barriers to helping

This domain contains themes discussed by professionals that were distinct from those described by clients. As these themes reflected professional barriers to providing and facilitating help, it felt appropriate for this domain to follow on from client’s experiences of help.

5.1 Lack of autonomy

The predominant theme reported by all professionals was that individuals who have experienced labour exploitation often lacked autonomy. They were often quite passive and found it difficult to make decisions, or feel as though they could make changes.

“Not being able to feel like they have any control over that future, the idea they get to have choices in what might change their future…it’s really difficult for them” (P5)

This was in part due to their experiences of labour exploitation, where “having little or no control over their own lives can grind away at their sense of assertiveness” (P1)

Professionals explained that this was the biggest barrier to helping these individuals either directly or indirectly. Typically, they will not seek help, put themselves forward for support they are entitled to or demand their rights be upheld. This can mean they require intensive support when attending appointments.

“It’s that...not being able to stand up for themselves...and I think that’s really mixed up with constantly being subjugated, always being told what to do, not being allowed independent thoughts...that’s a real barrier for them to access help...” (P7)
5.2 Not addressing psychological needs

Two thirds of professionals reported that this client group have a tendency to avoid addressing their mental health needs and revisiting their experiences during exploitation.

“They don’t think about them [the memories] if they can...they don’t want to read documents about themselves...don’t want to be reminded of things that happened to them...but this manifests in other ways, whether that be panic attacks or flashbacks.” (P2)

Professionals stated that avoidance of distressing thoughts and feelings was common across individuals who experienced different kinds of exploitation; however, those who had experienced labour exploitation tended to do this by prioritising work above help.

“They have an overwhelming motivation to keep trying to work, often to the detriment of themselves and getting help.” (P2)

Professionals linked this back to the common thread throughout all interviews – these individuals often prioritise the needs of their family above their own.

“The strength of the individual who hasn’t seen their family for years...they never complain about it, but it must be immensely painful...and one of their big motivations is to make sure their children are educated.” (P5)

5.3 More support

All professionals identified a need for more support between and within organisations working with individuals who have experienced labour exploitation. Many legal professionals identified the training gap in understanding this population’s complex needs, reporting that that they had to ‘figure out as we went along’ (P5).
“In terms of working with people and [understanding] the psychological impacts, I don’t think I have received extensive training. It was something I have just learnt as I went along.” (P3)

This was echoed by psychologists and medical professionals who spoke about the creative care needed for these individuals, as they often fall between gaps in mental health diagnoses.

“There isn’t a very clear avenue for mental health support...where a treatment plan naturally follows from diagnosis...sometimes it’s about being more creative or flexible in how we’re supporting clients.” (P1)

Professionals described wanting more productive links with statutory services, especially further training so all organisations understand that these individuals are victims and have complex practical, physical and psychological needs.

“[This population] need joined up thinking...there is a massive lack of understanding of trafficking in the wider field, in mental health services as well as normal health services as well as all others – housing etc.” (P7)

Lastly, a common theme amongst all professionals was wanting to create time and space within their organisations for reflection and self care, to prevent burn out.

“I think self care, which is a massive thing...to be thinking about it or investing time in it, but there is a lot of burn out working with clients, and it’s not good for the clients. You’re getting stressed and frustrated, and I always welcome the opportunity to learn, to make what you do better for clients.” (P2)

**Domain 5. Resilience**

Though resilience was not explicitly spoken about by clients, it emerged as a prominent theme across client’s stories. At times, these descriptions were incredibly moving, as clients often minimised moments of strength, bravery and
resilience. The themes within this domain reflected descriptions of coping, both in the exploitation situation and afterwards, as well as looking towards the future.

4.1 Survival and coping

Two thirds of clients described not knowing how they coped whilst in the exploitation situation, but felt as though they ‘were forced to just to cope with whatever I had to face’ (C5, via interpreter).

“(long pause)...I don’t know how we coped there...it was bred into us, we’re like immune to the system.” (C4)

It seemed as though their focus was on survival. This often involved thinking about their family, both in terms of needing to provide for them, as well as what eventually pushed them to escape.

“I believed that my parents wouldn’t want me to be a loser...so if I’m the last person within the family, so whatever it takes, I need to stay [alive].” (C2)

“I had no choice, especially when I thought about my children. They were completely dependent on me, just seeing their faces in front of me, just gave me the strength to do what I did.” (C5, via interpreter)

Their bravery and desire to help their family as a coping mechanism was a common theme that often moved professionals.

“Theyir sense of obligation and responsibility is just breath-taking...their self-sacrifice and being prepared to go across the other side of the world to support their family...is quite astonishing.” (P5)

However, two professionals highlighted that the word ‘resilience’ can often be difficult with this population, especially when used improperly in a legal context.

‘Resilience is a word we sometimes avoid, because we don’t want the home office going – you’re resilient, you’re fine! It’s not that kind of resilience, it’s an amazing ability to have survived such terrible circumstances...’ (P4)
With regard to more specific methods of coping, half of the clients interviewed spoke about using faith and prayer to help them cope whilst in the exploitation situation.

“I can only say it’s God, because I always pray to God... there was no one I could talk to” (C3)

“The only thing that kept me going was my faith.” (C2)

Post-exploitation, clients described ‘trying not to think about what happened’ (C1) and two individuals spoke about turning to alcohol to numb their feelings. Others reported trying to distract themselves it by talking and being around others.

4.2 Moving forwards

All clients spoke about their hopes for the future. Almost all reflected on how helpful they had found therapy, and that they would “always need a space to talk” (C1) and to process their psychological difficulties going forwards.

“I don’t want to stop seeing the therapist because... you have someone to talk to, to talk with...” (C8)

“Sometimes I need to voice out some of the pains, which I’ve been carrying for ages. And I’m glad I’m able to offload... the pain.” (C2)

Others spoke about the positive changes they had made. Some of these changes were with regard to their own personal development, whereas others made changes for their families.

“I came here [to the UK] to finish my studies and do something with my life rather than just stuck here forever.” (C6)

“Although I went through a lot of mental suffering, I have gained a lot of knowledge over the years. I didn’t have a house then, my children were living in a rented
property, but I have managed to build a small house. So my children are now living in that house.” (C5, via interpreter)

Two clients described experiences of risking detection by former employers and traffickers to rescue others they knew from labour exploitation.

“I even helped my friend, the one who I left there, I helped her escape...I promised to myself that after I will come back. If God permits me, I will come back and help her.” (C4)

Some mentioned taking a step further and becoming involved with organisations seeking justice for those who have experienced labour exploitation.

“That’s why I’ve been committed myself [to working with the charity] too much because I’m still lucky to these other domestic workers...why not we personally stand up for our rights.” (C4)

Several clients reflected on the sadness they felt that there were others still in labour exploitation. They appreciated being able to tell their story and had hope for this study and future research in giving other individuals who have experienced labour exploitation a voice.

“I feel very sad that they are going through these kinds of things and that’s why I agreed to take part in this, in the hope that [this] can eventually help people.” (C5, via interpreter)

Discussion

To our knowledge, this study represents the first attempt to explore the psychological experiences of labour exploitation, using qualitative methods, from both client and professional perspectives. There is currently increased media attention on the issue of modern slavery and yet limited literature to draw on, resulting in this population becoming silent victims of terrible circumstances. However, the clients interviewed described their experiences of labour exploitation
and accessing help in rich detail. This was supported by professionals providing a complementary, yet distinct perspective.

**Psychological experiences of labour exploitation and experiences of help**

Both clients and professionals highlighted the chronic abuse and exploitation experienced whilst in the situation, reporting that this had a significant psychological impact. These findings are in line with previous research with trafficked individuals as a whole (Kiss et al., 2015), however there were fewer reports of sexual violence than previously reported by domestic and labour workers (Oram et al., 2016). One explanation for this may be their observed discomfort when discussing the abuse in detail, combined with the open questions around experiences during exploitation, which allowed participants to disclose only the information they felt comfortable with. This was noted in particular during interviews with men, who described feeling shame when disclosing their abusive experiences. They also spent less time talking about these experiences during the interview than female participants. This was broadly consistent with the literature review in Part 1, which found gender differences in both trafficking experiences and disclosure of abuse (Kiss et al., 2015; Oram et al., 2016).

Psychological symptoms described by participants appear to cluster around criteria used in diagnosing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD; DSM-V, 2013). These included hyper vigilance, rumination, anxiety, nightmares, memory difficulties, flashbacks and delayed specification. However, descriptions of these symptoms often overlapped and were difficult to separate. This was generally consistent with previous studies which used measures as an indication of probable diagnoses of anxiety, depression and PTSD (Turner-Moss et al. 2014; Kiss et al.,
2015; Oram et al., 2016), with high comorbidity found in individuals who experience labour exploitation. Comorbidity has been reported as prevalent across many populations with more severe difficulties (Newman, Caspi, Moffitt & Silva, 1998). This was supported by professionals in this study, who reported that this population often meet partial criteria for a several diagnoses, due to the complexity of their presentations and needs. This can make psychological treatment plans and legal provision difficult. More recently, research has moved towards understanding the psychological reactions to trafficking and exploitation within a complex trauma framework (Hopper, 2017). This approach takes into account the complex layers of stress and trauma experienced by this population, rather than purely focusing on separate symptoms or diagnoses. This approach has been explored as a better framework in understanding other populations who have been exposed to trauma. This includes continuous trauma experienced by young people (Murray, Cohen & Mannarino, 2013) and children with complex trauma histories (van de Kolk, 2005).

Overall, however, clients described the psychological impact of labour exploitation more broadly. They often referred to many impacts including experiences prior to trafficking. These included incurring financial debts to traffickers. This is highlighted as a tactic used to control individuals as these debts often do not reflect the actual costs involved in transport or arranging work.

They often referred to the wider social, economic and legal impacts post-exploitation. These findings supported a hypothesis from Part 1 of the thesis, which suggested that a focus on measures and diagnosis, though understandable due to the nature of research with trafficked individuals, might miss the psychological and social complexity of this population and their experiences.
During interviews, clients acknowledged the long term impact of abuse and exploitation, however their experiences post-exploitation were also reported to have a psychological impact. Both clients and professionals highlighted the association between isolation and their vulnerability to homelessness and re-exploitation, especially post-escape. Clients were separated from their families and friends in an unfamiliar country. This was consistent previous literature describing the significant psychological impact of cultural isolation, where the individual is away from their usual support networks, culture and community (Anbesse et al., 2009). Strikingly, almost all clients described making both positive and negative connections with strangers at this particularly vulnerable time. However, clients reflected that receiving help at this point in their journey would have significantly improved their wellbeing. This highlights a potential gap in service provision, where individuals are not able to access help post-escape, either because they do not know where to go, or are afraid or mistrustful of contacting authorities.

Professionals stated that these vulnerable individuals require appropriate help and advice from an early stage, however the systemic separation between statutory services and specialist organisations often makes this difficult. Professionals maintained that forging links between all organisations, including voluntary services, would significantly improve this population’s experience of help. This was supported by a systematic review of the health needs of trafficked individuals (Hemmings et al., 2016), which stated that victims of trafficking require close co-ordination between statutory and voluntary services in providing trauma-informed care which takes into account their complex needs.
There appeared to be a dichotomy across client interviews between charities and other organisations in comparison to the police and authorities. These descriptions were often mirrored with having positive experiences of help from the former; and negative experiences with the latter.

Distrust of authorities and negative experiences of help were predominant themes throughout all client and professional narratives. This has been supported by reports of fear and distrust of police and other authorities across different populations of trafficked individuals (Erez et al., 2004; Tvetkova, 2002). This finding reflected a possible juxtaposition. Professionals described this population as lacking autonomy and therefore, it could be hypothesised, less likely to complain about negative experiences. An explanation could be that most clients included in the study had been both out of the exploitation situation and had engaged with organisations for a significant period of time. Therefore, they may have been better able to discuss their positive and negative experiences of help.

Some of the initial descriptions provided by professionals in this study, as well as the findings reported in previous literature, suggested that the key characteristics of this population are exploitation, vulnerability and passivity. However, this was not the entire picture. Whilst clients did express the difficulties of their experiences, using a qualitative approach often allowed an alternative narrative to emerge. Clients spent time speaking about the strength they found to continue; what they had learnt about themselves and others; the positive changes they had made for themselves and their families; and their hopes for the future. This was supported by professionals, who discussed the bravery of these individuals.
in surviving; as well as reflecting on their overwhelming kindness and generosity when thanking them, despite their limited resources.

**Cycle of exploitation**

As the analysis progressed, it appeared that similar themes emerged at the similar points during the narrative. These findings were initially used to make sense of the data. However, over time these themes formed a tentative cycle which appeared to broadly encompass each client’s story.

**Figure 1. Cycle of exploitation**
The risk of re-exploitation was a predominant theme across both client and professional interviews and occurred at different points in the client's journey. This included experiencing exploitation in their home countries prior to migration, after escaping in the UK and also whilst navigating the asylum system with support from organisations. It became apparent that one of the key risk factors in re-exploitation was their responsibility for their families, which meant clients were likely to put working above all other needs.

This continuous risk of re-exploitation emphasised a different focus of care necessary for this population and highlighted a need for services to provide long term support. This finding has been supported by recent research showing the mean duration of contact between psychiatric services and trafficked patients as approximately four years (Cary et al., 2016). This long-term approach is currently being implemented by some specialist organisations, including the charity involved in this study. However, as professionals discussed in their interviews, more services need an understanding of the nature of labour exploitation, to provide better, more integrated care for this population.

Limitations of the study

The study successfully provided some understanding of the psychological experiences of labour exploitation; relationships to and experiences of help; as well as insights from a professional perspective. Additionally, alternative narratives of strength and positive change emerged, which are not often represented in the literature.

However, some methodological issues need to be considered when interpreting the findings. It was hoped that a service user who was not involved as a
participant in the study could advise on the content of the interview schedule and participant information sheet. However, due to recruitment difficulties, it was hard to identify an individual who did not meet inclusion criteria for the study, but was able to be involved as an advisor. Therefore, the content of the interview might not have adequately reflected this population’s perspective. However, I attempted to address this by asking clients at the end of each interview, whether there was anything that should be changed or added to the interview structure. Additionally, it was hoped that alternative perspectives would be in part explored by the professional interviews.

A second limitation of the study was the relatively small sample size. However, due to the amenable nature of this population, it was important to ensure they were able to decline participating. All clients were recruited from the same London-based charity; had been receiving support from the charity, and other organisations, for at least six months and had been out of the exploitation situation for at least a year. It was hoped recruitment was somewhat broadened by including clients who did not speak English, however the sample still represented a subset of individuals who had received help; including those who were able and willing to discuss their often traumatic experiences. This subset may be particularly resilient or more amenable to help. It could be argued that the generalisability of the findings is limited and may not apply to those who have not accessed help, have remained under the radar within marginalised communities; or have more recently escaped, have been re-exploited, or are still in the situation.

It was noted that some clients were better able to understand the open interview questions and reflect on their experiences. This was often due to their
level of English, with clients who required interpreters needing closed questions or further clarification. This resulted in a varying level of richness and detail across the transcripts. I attempted to account for this, by ensuring material was used from all participants.

Finally, due to the small recruitment window in this study, there was a small sample of professionals. Several worked in the same organisation and may have similar experiences of these clients. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to a wider range of professionals working with this population.

**Research Implications**

This study set out with the intention of exploring the psychological impact of labour exploitation, however both clients and professionals explored psychological experiences and their impact more broadly. This has implications for research. Turner-Moss et al., (2014) examined case records and reported a high prevalence of abuse, psychological and physical symptoms in individuals who had left the exploitation situation less than a month prior. However, future research might consider carrying out qualitative interviews with individuals who have more recently left the exploitation situation, or are in the early stages of the asylum system. This could be carried out in detention centres, for example. Studies of this type might provide insights into the experiences and needs of this population at a particularly vulnerable stage in their journey. However, careful consideration of study design would be needed as these explorations would risk of re-traumatising individuals who are experiencing significant psychological distress.

**Clinical implications**
The findings have implications for clinical practice as well as suggestions for wider system change. Themes across all interviews suggest there is a gap in service provision for this population, especially immediately after escape. Providing help at this stage can be difficult as this population are often homeless or hide within communities of other exploited or trafficked individuals. However, as the findings from professionals suggest, this may be improved by forging better links between organisations with specialist knowledge and statutory services. For example, this could be carried out by improving the use of the Trafficking Survivor Care Standards (Human Trafficking Foundation, 2015), which contain guidelines and practical recommendations to improve care for trafficked individuals within existing agencies and organisations. Additionally, service level improvements could include liaising with police and other authorities around the nature of labour exploitation, as has been promoted with sex trafficking in women across the EU (Goodey, 2004).

Additionally, this joined up thinking might improve the contrast in client experience between organisations and the authorities.

With regard to individual clinical practice, the findings suggest that those who have experienced labour exploitation appreciated having an ongoing space in which to talk and process their traumatic experiences. Clinical psychologists have the skills necessary to provide this long-term care, with the support of other organisations. Furthermore, they are well placed to support other professionals in understanding the complex psychological impact of labour exploitation. Recent research has highlighted that service identification of trafficked individuals is poor (Hemmings et al., 2016), therefore those who do seek help, may not receive appropriate care for their needs. Clinical psychologists could be involved in
providing training on identifying and caring for victims of labour exploitation, within primary care and other statutory services. This is particularly pertinent as the services most likely to come into contact with someone who has experienced labour exploitation are mental health, maternity and emergency medicine (Department of Health Policy Research Programme, 2015).

Overall, the findings demonstrate the ongoing challenges for this population as a result of labour exploitation. Though their stories contained numerous experiences of abuse, exploitation, isolation and fear, they also highlight their remarkable strengths. As the findings suggest, this population can improve their psychological wellbeing given the space and time and have the propensity to become involved in justice, on an individual or wider organisational scale. The significance of these meaningful changes, created by these individuals with the integrated support of organisations, is under-estimated by clinicians, under-researched in studies and largely ignored by the media. Clinicians and researchers should be encouraged to focus on these positive outcomes and promote the support necessary to facilitate these changes.
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Part 3: Critical Appraisal
**Introduction**

This critical appraisal outlines and explores some of the issues raised during the process of this research. The first section examines what role self-reflexivity plays in qualitative research, and considers the impact of my preconceptions on this study.

In the second section I reflect on checking and maintaining credibility in qualitative research as well as discussing the challenges in involving victims of labour exploitation at several stages of the research process. In the third section, I describe some of my personal experiences conducting this research, which spanned the process of recruitment, interview and analysis, with both individuals and professionals.

**Self-reflexivity**

The aim of qualitative research is to both understand and represent how individuals engage with and make sense of to psychological and social experiences (Willig, 2013). During interview and analysis, the way participants attribute meaning to these experiences is considered. More specifically within thematic analysis, this involves identifying and reporting patterns of themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative researchers accept that they are unable to set aside their perspective, but use the process of reflexivity to reflect on the ways their values, beliefs and experiences might shape or influence the research (Elliot, Fischer & Rennie, 1999).

I identified three points during the research process where my experiences and assumptions inhibited my ability to be reflexive. Firstly, having previously worked with refugees and asylum seekers, I had an initial understanding of the
psychological impact of migration. This developed further as I read previous literature around trafficking and exploitation and the distress these populations experience as a result (Ottisova, Hemmings, Howard, Zimmerman & Oram, 2016). This understanding had an impact on my ability to be reflexive during the process of developing the interview questions. I reflected that I was approaching the research assuming both clients and professionals would only report experiences of abuse, violence and psychological distress. I used this awareness to ‘bracket’ my assumptions (Fischer, 2009), and ensured that the interview schedule was developed with the help of those who had experience of working with this population, as well as those who did not, to ensure questions were kept open and curious. This was especially pertinent in this study as the majority of prior literature on labour exploitation tended to focus on quantitative data, whereas I wanted to use a qualitative approach to allow for a variety of narratives and experiences to emerge.

Secondly, as most of the professional interviews were carried out over the phone, I completed approximately half of these prior to interviewing clients. Overall, this was a useful experience, as I gained a great deal of context and understanding, not only with regard to labour exploitation, but how this population are often situated within a vast network of services and organisations. However, a key theme from the professional interviews was the lack of autonomy often displayed by those who had experienced labour exploitation. This made bracketing my assumptions difficult, as I conducted my first client interview with the assumption that they might be passive, need prompting, or feel reluctant to report negative experiences of help. I attempted to address this, by ensuring I gave clients
time to settle into the interview, allowed them space to add depth and clarity to their answers and ensured my follow up questions remained open and stayed close to their story.

Thirdly, I found that as I began to conduct client interviews, psychological distress was not reported in the way I had expected. Despite having previous experience working with migrant populations, I realised I had assumed that the psychological impact would be described in a way that made sense to me. I quickly learned that even when questions were asked about their experiences in the exploitation situation, psychological distress was more than likely not the focus of the client’s narrative; and when it was, it was often interwoven with a variety of other impacts and experiences. This provided me with a much richer understanding of the nature and type of psychological experiences of victims of labour exploitation. Furthermore, this experience allowed me to become aware of on my own need for clear descriptions of psychological distress, possibly as I felt a need to control the interview, as opposed to letting their narrative unfold - something I was not previously aware of. In the following interviews I was able to adjust my questions and acknowledge that the process may be longer than expected and at times take involve a route which deviates away from the intended focus (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

Interestingly, the findings challenged all three of my assumptions. As I reviewed the transcripts, it appeared that most clients discussed their negative experiences of help. As explored in Part 2, this may have been because they had already experienced help from various organisations and services and as such felt better able to reflect on both positive and negative experiences. Moreover, clients
did not only report negative experiences of labour exploitation, but often spoke about what they had learnt, the positive changes they had made and their hopes for the future. This was also a theme found across professional interviews. They frequently reported their client’s resilience and dedication to their families many miles away; as well as describing examples of their client’s touching generosity in thanks of professional help, often and especially when they had very little themselves. Reflexivity has been also been reported to influence the researcher’s understanding of the issues being considered (Willig, 2013). This was something I experienced when conducting the interviews and reviewing the transcripts. It was often these somewhat more positive descriptions that provided me with a greater depth of understanding of the characteristics of this population and their life experiences. Discussing these themes with my supervisor allowed me to explore the nuanced psychological impact of labour exploitation, both on the client and the professionals who work with them, and allowed me to to acknowledge the strengths of this population as a key theme across the data.

Involving clients in the research process

It was hoped that a client could provide a perspective on the interview schedule and participant information sheet. However, as many of these individuals’ experience peaks and troughs in their wellbeing, recruiting a large enough sample for the study was a concern. Therefore, it was difficult for staff to identify an individual who did not meet criteria, but could be involved as an advisor. I felt this was a key limitation of the study as the interview schedule might not have adequately reflected the client’s views and as a result I may have omitted questions which tapped into other important areas. In addition to this, it may have been
useful to have several ‘cultural consultants’ whose knowledge and expertise could be drawn on during the research process. I interviewed clients from several countries, where distress and the psychological impact are expressed in different ways. This would have been an important and valuable contribution to the study and one that may have allowed me a greater understanding of the themes which arose. Upon reflection, I was anxious about recruiting clients who were well enough and willing to take part, however I could have allowed more time to identify a client who could have provided input at this important stage.

However, there is often a significant power difference between researchers and participants – which in this case was exacerbated by the nature of this population to be amenable and agree to do things they may not necessarily feel comfortable doing. Therefore it felt important to allow these clients to refuse to take part in the study, if they so wished.

Checking the credibility of themes is an important part of qualitative research (Elliot, et al., 1999) and is carried out using a variety of methods. One, known as triangulation, involves collecting information from multiple sources (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). In this study, this was achieved by including both professional and client perspectives. Admittedly, this process was at times challenging and impacted on my ability to be reflexive. However, I believe that the professional interviews both enhanced the richness of the client data, whilst also providing distinct themes. I would not have gained the depth of understanding of the psychological experiences associated with labour exploitation without listening to professional voices.
Another method to assess credibility involves checking themes with the original participants for verification and has been argued to be a crucial technique in establishing credibility (Cresswell et al., 2000). I reached out to several clients I interviewed, however two did not respond and two were not able to meet me as they were working or had other appointments. Not being able to involve clients in this important aspect of the research left me feeling disappointed, as I felt the study missed out on valuable input and this limited the impact of the findings. I discussed these experiences with my supervisor and upon reflection, they appeared to mirror the experiences of professionals. A key theme from the professional findings was that clients often prioritised work and other commitments regarding their asylum claim above appointments designed to support their mental health. Though the study was not directly related to improving their psychological wellbeing, my supervisor reassured me that this was a common experience with this population.

**Experiences of conducting the study**

This study was my first experience of conducting qualitative research. I found that the process of recruitment, conducting interviews and analysis raised methodological, ethical and emotional challenges. I have considered them here alongside methods I used to manage as well as suggested changes I would make.

The process of recruiting professionals was relatively easy, as those who worked within the charity where the study took place had connections with a network of organisations. However, due to the narrow window for this research, I was only able to interview seven professionals, the majority of whom worked for the charity. This may have biased the results, not only because these professionals may hold similar beliefs and experiences, but also because they may answer more
favourably in support of the research. With this knowledge, if I were to change my recruitment approach I would have focused on recruiting professionals from other services and organisations.

There were some challenges with regard to interviewing professionals. Due to their purposefully integrated service approach, many professionals knew many of the individuals involved in the charity who had experienced labour exploitation. As a result, there was a risk of professionals potentially disclosing confidential or revealing information about a specific client (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012). I was able to manage this concern by asking professionals to speak about those who had experienced labour exploitation in general and that if they felt it necessary to use a specific example, to ensure they did not give away any identifiable or confidential information.

The process of recruiting clients was not as difficult as I had anticipated. During interview, professionals often described difficulties engaging this client group, as they understandably rarely trust strangers or professionals. However, because clients were identified and approached by their key worker within the charity, they may have felt more comfortable taking part in the study. I did experience some wariness from clients at the beginning of the interviews, however I found that once I explained my association with the charity, they often felt more at ease.

I wanted to ensure the sample contained as wide a range of clients as possible, therefore individuals who required interpreters were not excluded. However, the process of developing an adequate interview schedule for all clients was a challenge. On occasion, this involved altering the structure and delivery of the
questions. For example, individuals who required an interpreter as well as those who were not fluent in English sometimes struggled to understand the open nature of the questions. Therefore, I modified some of questions into direct questions, leading to more open questions. By allowing the questions to unfold gradually clients were encouraged to add more detail to their answers (Barker et al., 2016). I found that this approach allowed the client to build up their narrative slowly and feel more comfortable throughout the duration of the interview. In addition to this, only interpreters who were experienced in translating clinically relevant information were chosen and some time was spent discussing the the study with them as well as with the client. In this way, it was hoped all clients were supported in telling their story. This approach has been supported by a research review on cross-language qualitative research (Squires, 2009), stating that considerations for language barriers should be as systematic as possible.

At times, the experience of interviewing clients was challenging. There were several questions in the client interview schedule relating to experiences during exploitation. The questions were kept purposefully broad, to allow the individual to provide as much or as little information as possible as well as informing them that they could speak to their key worker after the interview if needed. It was hoped these considerations would limit the amount of distressed caused. However, many clients did become upset, tearful or were silent for several minutes. In the early stages of client interviews, it was difficult to tell if the client needed more time to continue their story, however as I felt it necessary to limit distress at these points by ensuring they understood that we could move on to another question. I found that the balance between allowing the client space to think and ensuring they did not
feel pressured to answer any questions developed throughout the interview process as I grew more confident.

Following on from this, at times difficulties arose in managing the client’s emotional responses during the interview. Some clients were still experiencing difficulties within the asylum system, and many had experienced instances of injustice by the authorities. This resulted in individuals, understandably expressing anger and frustration during the interview. The challenge was allowing them space to explore the negative experiences of help, whilst ensuring this did not dominate the interview. In addition to this, at times I struggled to managing my own feelings of deep sadness, in particular when clients described their traumatic experiences, or being away from their families for many years. Discussing these experiences with my research supervisors was extremely helpful, as they not only provided proactive support and advice, but a space in which to explore these feelings. I found that this had a positive impact on other interviews, as I felt better able to acknowledge the emotions in the room, both mine and theirs, whilst maintaining my reflexivity.

Separately analysing and then interweaving both client and professional transcripts was a complex process. There was a large amount of information from multiple perspectives and the codes, themes and domains went through a series of iterations. However, what made this process challenging in part, was the sense of responsibility I felt in ensuring this issue was done justice. Many professionals spoke to me about labour exploitation as an important and significantly under researched area, however upon reflection, I believe this pressure was rooted in my own motivation to ensure these individual’s voices were heard. I reflected that as this
study was my first experience of carrying out qualitative research, the experience of pressure may have been exacerbated.

Conclusions

During the research process, I reflected on the need to be reflexive, especially when conducting research with individuals who have experienced labour exploitation. I found that I was able to become aware of my experiences and the ways in which these might bias the study. With the help of research supervisors, I was able to negotiate bracketing my assumptions, whilst also allowing them to shape the research process. Some of the issues considered here highlight the flexible and ethical approach needed when conducting interviews with this population. However, although some adaptations were necessary, this study successfully demonstrated that rich, meaningful information can be gathered. I was especially moved and intrigued by the descriptions of resilience and strength alongside reports of incredibly traumatic experiences. These findings have important clinical and research implications. They support the need for an empowering, trauma-focused approach in caring for these individuals, integrated across all services and organisations; as well as for more research to focus on bringing these stories to light.
References


# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Appendix 1a – QualSyst checklist for qualitative studies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Yes (2)</th>
<th>Partial (1)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Question / objective sufficiently described?</td>
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<td>2. Study design evident and appropriate?</td>
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<td>3. Context for the study clear?</td>
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<td>4. Connection to a theoretical framework / wider body of knowledge?</td>
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<td>5. Sampling strategy described, relevant and justified?</td>
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<td>6. Data collection methods clearly described and systematic?</td>
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<td>7. Data analysis clearly described and systematic?</td>
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<td>8. Use of verification procedure(s) to establish credibility?</td>
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<td>9. Conclusions supported by the results?</td>
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<td>10. Reflexivity of the account?</td>
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### Appendix 1b – Adapted from QualSyst, checklist for cross-Sectional Studies / Case Studies / Longitudinal Studies

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<th>Criteria</th>
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<td>8. Conclusions supported by the results?</td>
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Appendix 2 – Ethical approval

UCL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ACADEMIC SERVICES

22\textsuperscript{nd} July 2017

Notification of Ethical Approval
Re: Ethics Application 11481/001: The psychological impact of labour exploitation on trafficked individuals. A qualitative study.

Further to your satisfactory responses to the Committee’s comments, I am pleased to confirm in my capacity as interim Chair of the UCL Research Ethics Committee (REC) that your study has been ethically approved by the REC until 22\textsuperscript{nd} July 2018.

Approval is subject to the following conditions:

Notification of Amendments to the Research
You must seek Chair’s approval for proposed amendments (to include extensions to the duration of the project) to the research for which this approval has been given. Ethical approval is specific to this project and must not be treated as applicable to research of a similar nature. Each research project is reviewed separately and if there are significant changes to the research protocol you should seek confirmation of continued ethical approval by completing the ‘Amendment Approval Request Form’: http://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/responsibilities.php

Adverse Event Reporting – Serious and Non-Serious
It is your responsibility to report to the Committee any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to participants or others. The Ethics Committee should be notified of all serious adverse events via the Ethics Committee Administrator (ethics@ucl.ac.uk) immediately the incident occurs. Where the adverse incident is unexpected and serious, the Chair or Vice-Chair will decide whether the study should be terminated pending the opinion of an independent expert. For non-serious adverse events the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Ethics Committee should again be notified via the Ethics Committee Administrator within ten days of the incident occurring and provide a full written report that should include any amendments to the participant information sheet and study protocol.
The Chair or Vice-Chair will confirm that the incident is non-serious and report to the Committee at the next meeting. The final view of the Committee will be communicated to you.

**Final Report**

At the end of the data collection element of your research we ask that you submit a very brief report (1-2 paragraphs will suffice) which includes in particular issues relating to the ethical implications of the research i.e. issues obtaining consent, participants withdrawing from the research, confidentiality, protection of participants from physical and mental harm etc.

With best wishes for the research.

Yours sincerely

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Professor Michael Heinrich  
Interim Chair, UCL Research Ethics Committee
Appendix 3 – Information sheets

Appendix 3a – Client information sheet

Information Sheet for participant in Research Studies

You will be given a copy of this information sheet.

Title of Project: Impact of labour exploitation on people who have been trafficked

This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee (Project ID Number): 11481/001

We would like to invite you to participate in this research project.

Details of Study: The study is looking at the impact of labour exploitation on people who have been trafficked. You should only participate in the study if you want to. It is important to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others, including people at the Helen Bamber Foundation, if you would like to. Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Who are we recruiting to take part?
We are recruiting adults, over the age of 18, who have experienced being trafficked for labour exploitation.

What will happen if you agree to take part?
If you agree to take part, you will be interviewed and asked questions about your experiences.

What are the potential risks?
Some people may find some of the questions upsetting, as we may be asking you to talk about your experiences. However, if you do not wish to answer questions about the details of your experience of labour exploitation, we can get this information from the person you work with at the Helen Bamber Foundation. If you find the interview upsetting, one of us will be available to talk to after the interview. We will also encourage you to speak to the person you work with at the Helen Bamber Foundation.

What are the possible benefits?
Some people might find the experience of telling their story to someone helpful. Additionally, we will let you know the outcome of our interviews, if you would like to know this information. You will be compensated for your travel and time with
£20. Your participation will help us understand the impact of labour exploitation on people who have been trafficked.

Arrangements for ensuring anonymity and confidentiality

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will be securely stored electronically, using a numbered code so that you cannot be identified. Recorded interviews will be transcribed and then the recording device will be wiped clear. Only researchers directly involved in the study will have access to your information. All data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The data you provide will be used only for informing the research question in this study and the results of the research will be disseminated in peer-reviewed scientific journals, but you will in no way be identifiable from such publications.

If you decide to take part in the study you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. This will not affect any support you receive from the Helen Bamber Foundation.

Please discuss the information above with others if you wish or ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. If you do decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

All data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering take part in this research. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.
Appendix 3b – Professional information sheet

Understanding the impact of labour exploitation
Information Sheet for Professionals:

We would like to invite you to participate in this research study. You should only participate if you want to. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is taking place and what it will involve.
Please take time to read the information and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is this study about?

In this research, we would like to speak to professionals working with people who have been trafficked and subjected to labour exploitation. This can include forced labour, domestic work, cannabis cultivation, and other types of labour where the person is subjected to poor working conditions and treatment. We would like to understand the impact of these experiences. We will also be asking clients to participate in the study. We are interested in this research question in order to understand the needs of people who have undergone these experiences.

Who is conducting this study?
The study is being conducted by (omitted for confidentiality)

Who can take part?
We are recruiting professionals working (or who have worked) with people who have been trafficked and subjected to labour exploitation.

What does taking part involve?
If you decide to take part in this study, you will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form. We will invite you to take part in an interview.
The interview will last up to 60 minutes. We will ask questions about your understanding and views of this particular group.
If you decide to take part in the study you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

Will I be recorded and how will the recordings be used?
With your permission, we will audio-record the interview so that we do not miss anything important that you say. The audio-recordings will be transcribed and all identifying information will be removed. No one outside of the research team will be allowed access to the original recordings. Once the study is complete the original recordings will be destroyed.
During the study the original recordings will be stored electronically and protected through password and encryption. When the study is written up for publication quotations from your interview may be included, but any quotations used will have all personally identifiable information removed to make them anonymous so it will not be possible to identify you. Any further presentations or publications resulting from the study may include anonymous quotations.

**What are the risks and benefits of taking part?**

We don’t anticipate any risks of taking part, although recognize that this will take up approximately an hour of your time. We will arrange this at a time and place that suits you as far as possible. You will be able to have a break or stop the interview at any time.

We hope that your involvement in the study will assist us in contributing to the very limited research literature available on this topic.

**Confidentiality and anonymity**

All information which is collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will be securely stored electronically, using a numbered code so that you cannot be identified. Information, after it has been fully anonymised, can be shared with the researcher’s supervisors. Recorded interviews will be transcribed and then the recording device will be wiped clear. All data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Confidentiality will only be breached if the information given in the interview highlights a former or current risk to you or to others. The researcher will need to discuss this with their supervisor, other professionals ...

**What will happen to the results of the study?**

The results of the study will be written up as part of the researcher’s Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at University College London and may also be submitted for publication in a scientific journal and presented at conferences. These written documents may include quotations from your interview, but any quotations used will have all personally identifiable information removed to make them anonymous. It will not be possible to identify you from the quotations. A summary of the results will be sent to everyone who participated in the study. We hope that the findings of this study will help us understand the impact of being trafficked for labour exploitation.

**What do I do now?**

If you would like to take part in this study or if you have any questions, please contact the researcher,

You do not have to take part in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Thank you for reading this information sheet. If you have any questions or comments, please contact:

(Omitted for confidentiality)
Appendix 4 – Consent form

Informed Consent Form for participant in Research Studies
Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.
Title of Project: Impact of labour exploitation on people who have been trafficked
This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee (Project ID Number): 11481/001

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Before you agree to take part, the person organising the research must explain the project to you.
If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher

Participant’s Statement

I ___________

• have read the notes written above and the Information Sheet, and understand what the study involves.
• understand that if I decide at any time that I no longer wish to take part in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw immediately.
• consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study.
• understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
• agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in this study.
• agree that my interview will be recorded and I consent to the anonymous use of this material as part of the project.
• Understand that the information I provide will be published as a report and I will be sent a copy if requested. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me from any publications.
• Agree that my data, after it has been fully anonymised, can be shared with other researchers [to satisfy Research Council funded projects as Research Councils have changed their guidance regarding data sharing]

Signed:               Date:
Appendix 5 – Interview schedules

Appendix 5a – The interview schedule for clients

We are interested in understanding the psychological impact of labour exploitation. We would be grateful if you could answer some questions about your own experiences. Your information will be kept confidential. We would appreciate it if you could ask the questions as honestly as possible with as much information as you feel able to give.

Opening questions

Could you tell me about what was happening that lead to you coming to the Helen Bamber Foundation?

Prompts: Ask about country of origin, how long they have been in the U.K., how did they get to the U.K., where are they currently living, who are they living with now?

Labour Exploitation

One of the things we’re interested in is understanding the effect of not being treated well in your work. If you want to tell me a bit about it, you can do, but if you do not, that’s okay as HBF have already given me some information about what happened.

If they do want to talk about it, ask:

Could you tell me about how you arrived here?

Prompts: Where were they brought to, by whom and who with?
What happened after you arrived here?
Prompts: Where did they stay, with whom?

Could you tell me what kind of work you did?
Prompts: Where, with who, for how long?

If they do not want to talk about it, move on to this question:
How did you manage during these situations?
Prompts: Any change in behaviours, reaching out to others, withdrawing?

**Psychological impact**

How do you think these experiences have affected you?
Prompts: Effect of trafficking, effect of labour exploitation, effects felt afterward leaving the situation? Ask about physical impact as this may be more noticeable?

When did you first notice that something felt wrong?
Prompts: Did they notice something felt wrong immediately during the labour exploitation? Or was it slowly over time? Did they not notice until after leaving the situation?

What did you notice first?
Prompts: physical sensations, thoughts, feelings, behaviour change?

How did you cope with this?
Prompts: behaviour change – smoking/drinking?

Have these experiences changed anything about what you do now?
Relationship to help

When did you first get help?

Did anyone encourage you to get help?

Prompts: If yes, what did you think about this?

Did anything make it easier to get help?

Did anything make it difficult to get help?

Experience of help

What has your experience of getting help been like so far?

Prompts: What kind of help, from who, what has been helpful, unhelpful?

Unaddressed needs

Is there anything you feel you need help with now?

Is there anything that they feel would have been helpful for them earlier?

Prompts: In what way would this have made things easier?

Are there difficulties that no one has asked you about?

Closing

Is there anything you would like to add to what you have told me today?

Have you understood the questions?

Is there anything you would like clarified?
Appendix 5b – The interview schedule for professionals

We are interested in understanding the psychological impact of labour exploitation.
We would like to understand your experiences of working with this population in particular. We would appreciate it if you could answer the following questions.

Can you start by telling me a bit about your experience of working with people who have been trafficked for labour exploitation?

Prompts: How long? Which services or organisations?

How do you find this particular client group present?

Prompts: What do you notice first? How do they present to the organisation? What about services as a whole?

What particular difficulties have you noticed that they have?

Prompts: These could be practical, physical, psychological? What do they present with first? Any any of the difficulties more urgent than others?

Have you noticed any particular psychological difficulties?

Prompts: These could be diagnoses, or general symptoms of effects?

How do you think they manage these difficulties?

Prompts: Are there any particular coping strategies? How did they cope prior to accessing help? Do they need help in managing these difficulties? If so, what kind of help?
Do you find these difficulties impact on their relationships with others?
Prompts: Relationships with their family? Friends? Their community? Yourself and other organisations?

What are your particular concerns about the vulnerabilities of this particular group?
Prompts: Anything specific to their experiences that make them more vulnerable?

Have you noticed any patterns over time? What makes things better/worse?

Have you found any barriers to getting these individuals help? Or them getting help themselves?
Prompts: Organisational, practical, emotional or physical barriers?

What do you find stressful about meeting this population’s needs?

Are there any noticeable risks or safeguarding concerns around this population?

What kind of care do you think this population need?
Prompts: Care can be individual, within the community, within wider organisations and systems

What are the strengths of this particular group?

Do you think you need extra support or training in dealing with this client group?
Appendix 6 – Example of annotated transcript

1. Um, even after coming here that employer was disturbing me quite a bit. And he used to come and disturb me in my sleep. They didn’t respect me as a worker, um, they just gave me just a wooden floor to sleep on. (long silence). What else would you like me to say?

2. How did you, um, get out of that situation? What was the journey like from leaving that family, how did you leave that family, to where you are now?

3. Because I was mistreated so much I was forced to leave them.

4. Okay.

5. Because my visa was very...a short visa...um, all the people I worked for after that treated me very badly because they knew that I didn’t have a visa and I didn’t have any, you know, I couldn’t actually stand up to anything. I didn’t have any rights.

6. Okay.

7. But because I have three children and a husband who was sick, um, I just simply couldn’t go back because they were financially dependent on me.

8. Okay...is this back in India?

9. Yes.

10. Okay.

11. So, I was forced to just, um, cope with whatever I had to face.

12. No, that sounds really difficult. So you said because of how badly the family were treating you you were forced to leave them. How did you leave the family?

13. Um, there was an incident following that they threatened me...by saying that as soon as we return to Qatar, um, he’d make sure I would not return to India alive.

14. Did you get help to leave?

15. No.

16. Did you run away?
Appendix 7 – Example of collating themes

Coping/Managing/ Moving forward
- expectations
- getting to breaking point in situ?
- escape?
- fear strangers offering help – people not professionals
- positive experience of help – finding about others.
- post exploitation?
- not getting help, lack of adequate help, making vulnerable, risk of re-trafficking, risk of re-exploitation,
- lack of basic needs
- lack of social support
- multiple stressors
- fear of traffickers? Fear of being found?
- losing right to work, disappointed expectations.

During exploitation
- Abuse – physical, sexual
- Exploitation – not being paid
- Basic needs not being met
- Threats – police, immigration, home office
- Feeling scared
- Isolated? Controlled?

Pre-migration – trauma, abuse, isolation, no family
Post-migration –
- What would have been helpful earlier?
- Unmet help.