Modern Slavery: A System of Exploitation. Study on Vulnerability Factors’ Dynamics

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Abstract

Modern slavery is a hidden social reality that still affects the labour force of European countries. In Italy, migrant workers are among the most vulnerable social groups to exploitative labour dynamics, because of individual and institutional vulnerability factors. Exposing the most prominent theoretical approaches, the paper distinguishes different concepts related to modern slavery and relevant public policies. With qualitative analysis, vulnerability factors are investigated empirically, describing all dimensions of exploitation in detail, its logic and its conditions. The paper describes the widest spread profiles of the victim, the migratory paths, the living conditions, the dynamics of ethnic networks, and the condition of dependency. It investigates the cultural perception of migrant workers towards conditions of exploitation, together with the role of public policies on migration, the role and attitude towards public services, and it analyses the possibilities of emerging from exploitation given by public programmes to contrast modern slavery. The various combinations of all factors produce different situations of vulnerability that require various forms of intervention. The paper also aims to the implementation of a tool to prevent the risk of modern slavery. Using set-theoretic methods and logic, the essay orders the vulnerability factors into necessary and sufficient conditions that drive modern slavery, searching for ideal types. Consequently, with proper theoretical interpretation, the analysis makes it possible to measure the level of vulnerability of an individual and to produce an assessment tool that can be used on the field by social operators and policies makers.

Keywords: human trafficking, labour exploitation, migration, public policies, risk assessment.