Is Trafficking Main Direct Pushing Factor for Engaging in Sex Trade: A Study at Kandapara Brothel Tangail, Bangladesh

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Abstract: The sex market is expanding at an unprecedented pace and touching every strata of the society. Over the last decade thousands of Bangladeshi girls were lured under false circumstances and sold into the sex industries in different nations including Bangladesh. To analyze whether trafficking is the main direct pushing factor for engaging in sex trade and to find out the factors which influence the trafficking; we have conducted the study. Total 729 sex workers at Kandapara brothel, Tangail in Bangladesh were the targeted population of the study. A semi structured data collection instrument was developed and data were entered in Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) 12-version. We have found trafficking is significantly different as direct pushing factor than any other pushing factors; it is the main direct pushing factor for engaging in sex trade. Age, education, poverty or unemployment, marital status, geographical area and previous occupation influence trafficking for engaging in sex trade.

Key words: Trafficking, sex worker, direct pushing factor, brothel, sex trade, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

The sex market is expanding at an unprecedented pace and touching every strata of the society. To meet the ever growing and diverse sex demand in the recent years, more and more children and adult women have enrolled in the booming market. Commercial sex takes place in many kinds of ways and involves many different types of people, many of whom are in no way stereotypical. People from various backgrounds and classes sell sex and they do so for a broad range of reasons (Ullah, 2005). Sex workers or prostitutes refer to that section of women population who are engaged, legally or illegally, part time or full-time, regular or irregular sexual acts for money or for any other material gain (Sue, 1998).

Sex work in Bangladesh has traditionally been brothel-based. The past decade has seen the growth of newer typologies. Street-based was the first one to be identified. Hotel and residence-based operations are more recent trends. The last two categories are more fluid with some overlap between them. In fact, while there has been no increase in the numbers in brothels, a growth has been seen in street-based, hotel-based and residence-based sex work (Rout and Iyengar, 2008).

At present about 18 brothels are in operation in Bangladesh. Over 10,000 commercial sex workers and their allies are engaged in these brothels for their livelihoods. Kandapara brothel is the biggest one in the country now. It is thought that the brothel is 150 years old. Brothel is often referred to organized crimes, child prostitution, trafficking, drug business, violence and other para-social activities. Human trafficking is the commerce and trade in the movement or migration of people, legal and illegal, including both legitimate labor activities as well as forced labor. The term is used in a more narrow sense by advocacy groups to mean the recruitment, transportation, harbouring or receipt of people for the purposes of slavery, forced labor (including bonded labor or debt bondage) and servitude. It is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world.

Inter Press Service reported an alarming information; over the last decade, 200,000 Bangladeshi girls were lured under false circumstances and sold into the sex industry in nations including Pakistan, India and the Middle East (Tabibul, 1998). About 27,000 Bangladeshi women and children have been forced into prostitution in Indian brothels.

Objective:
- To analyze whether trafficking is the main direct pushing factor for engaging in sex trade
- To find out the factors which influence trafficking for engaging in sex trade

Hypothesis:
- Trafficking is the main direct pushing factor for engaging in sex trade
- Age, education, poverty or unemployment, marital status, geographical area and occupation influence trafficking for engaging in sex trade

Literature review: A web based literature review was conducted and articles and studies available online formed the preparatory work to design the field study. The field study was designed based on the terms of reference and information emerging from the literature.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

List of respondents: All the sex workers living in the Kandapara brothel at the time of survey were included. A list of all sex workers obtained from the brothel based health program of Society for Social Service (SSS) was used as the population list. In the list, sex workers were identified with the name of landlord and worker category. There were 695 workers in the list and field worker used the list to identify the person by name not by category because the category of workers changes over time. During the survey period, 34 sex workers were found who were not included in the list. They were also approached for interview. However, any worker who was in the list but found relocated in the same brothel was interviewed.

Data collection period: Data collection started on August 01, 2009 and continued up to August 24, 2009. We planned to complete data collection by 3 weeks because the holy month of Ramadan was there from August 22, 2009. In Ramadan, it seems the practice of sex workers and their clients are changed to some extent. However, the survey overlapped 3 days in Ramadan, when only the missing cases were approached if they were available.

Data collection: The interviewers at first identify the sex workers with name and possible category. Then the data collector introduced the survey to her according to field ethics guideline and was invited to voluntarily participate in the survey. If her concept was available, she was taken to a private environment mostly in her bedroom for interview. For the wards that are usually taken care of by their guardians the permission of later also sought to interview her. The responses were recorded in a card immediately with wooden pencil. After every interview the interviewers cross check the interview cards and finalize it. If any respondent was not available at her address, her neighbors or guardians were asked about her whereabouts. Death, migration out of brothel, relocation within same brothel, change in category, temporary absence for health or other reasons etc. were noted on the list of population. In probable cases, three re-attempts were made to interview the respondent before labeling it as a missing case. However, their guardians, landlords, co-workers or a client on the door interrupted some interviews.

Data collectors: Five staff members of Society for Social Service (SSS) interviewed the respondents. They were two research officers, one education program staff and two field workers of brothel based health outreach program of SSS. One but all of them were female. Except the two brothel based field workers, all are new to any program in Kandapara brothel.

Data collection instrument: A semi structured data collection instrument was developed with 61 questions covering different aspects of demographic, social, economic and health related information. The questionnaire was printed on both sides of A4 size cards.

Data management: All the cards were carefully checked for any obvious errors, incompleteness, missing data, etc. Completed cards were cleaned and edited by the research investigator with the help of the data collectors.

A master codebook was developed then. Two data enterer were trained for the survey data entry. They entered the whole data set in SPSS 12 version spreadsheet. The research investigator again cleaned the data set.

Quality support
Training of the data collectors: All the data collectors were formally trained on the survey project by the research investigator. They were oriented on the survey project as a whole, data collection instrument, field ethics management and techniques of interview and field research plan; there was ampoule field practice session in the training.

Field-testing of questionnaire: Before finalizing the survey questionnaire, it was field tested in the brothel. Accordingly the questionnaire was improved and finalized.

Field guideline: A detail field guideline was developed in Bangla. In the training session, the data collectors were briefed fully on the field guideline. The data collectors used it at the time as a note of reference.

Continuous supervision: For the data collectors, during the survey period, supportive supervision was available from the research investigator all the time. All the cards were critically checked according to a structured policy. The data collectors did not have any daily target to fill in. One to one interaction and group interaction was done to uphold the field research quality.

Phrases used: Different local terms are used for different categories of sex workers and their allies. Their work is also described using phrases those are very often stigmatized. These terms usually sounds like slang. In the research, we used alternative words and phrases those are free from any stigma.

Ethics: The ethics committee of Society for Social Service (SSS) reviewed the survey proposal. The interview was done strictly on informed consent of the respondent. They were assured that there was no benefit or harm in participating or not participating in the survey. The research sponsor confirmed the confidentiality of collected data. The interview was conducted in a comfortable private environment. A field ethics note was provided to the interviewers as a guide for field ethics management. The research team was careful not to harm to their business interest any way.

Definition of words used:
Chukri: It refers to wards; actually they hand over all of their income to their Sardarnies (guardian) and the Sardarnies fulfill their demand like food, cloths, habitants, cosmetics, etc.

Bharatia: Bharatia refers to independent sex worker in brothel.

Sardarnies: Sardarni refers to them who own Chukries.

Bariwala: Bariwala refers them who own house in brothel.

Monga: Monga is a seasonal food insecurity in ecologically vulnerable and economically weak parts of north-western Bangladesh, primarily caused by an employment and income deficit before aman is harvested. It mainly affects those rural poor, who have an undiversified income that is directly or indirectly based on agriculture (Zug, 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Number of sex workers by category: We prepared a list of all sex workers of Kandapara brothel through door-to-door visit. Like many other brothels in Bangladesh and in the region, sex workers in Kandapara brothel are classified in different categories like Chukri, Bharatia, Sardarni and Bariwali. In the list, there were 729 sex workers all together. About >50% of them were actually Bharatia, kind of independent sex workers. About 30% sex workers were Chukri, who were owned by the Sardarnies. They had in fact no control on their work and income. Figure 1
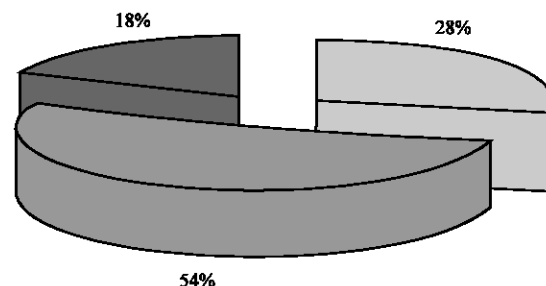

Fig. 1: Distribution of different types of sex workers at Kandapara brothel

Table 1: Distribution of sex workers by interview status

Interview status	N	Percentage
Interview reasonably complete	301	41.3
Interview incomplete	37	5.1
Migrated	07	1.0
Permission could not be obtained	384	52.7
Total	729	100.0

shows the distribution of sex workers by category at Kandapara brothel. In the study, we approached all the sex workers in the brothel for interview. Out of 729 sex workers, 329 persons actually agreed to participate in the study. Out of them (329 respondents), 321 interviews were reasonably complete. In 37 cases, the guardians, co-workers or a client on the door interrupted the interviews. About >50% of the sex workers (n = 384, 52.7%) could not be interviewed. Seven listed sex workers were found migrated elsewhere from the brothel. Table 1 shows the distribution of listed sex workers by interview status.

Table 2 shows the status of participation of different types of sex workers in the study. Out of 729 sex workers, interview status of 691 workers was recorded. Though, we could interview more than half of the bharatia or sardarnies but the participation of chukries was much less than others. Only 13% of all chukries could be interviewed reasonably. Their participation in the study was significantly different from other sex workers (p = 0.001).

Reason for joining brothel: We asked the sex workers what was the reason for them to join sex trade in Kandapara brothel. Trafficking in person was the most common reason mentioned by about 40% workers (p = 0.000). About 30% sex workers joined Kandapara willingly but many of them were actually in other brothels before (data not shown).

Figure 2 shows violence in workplace, family or a broken relation was also important reasons for engaging in sex trade. Poverty did not appear to be a common cause though; many of the leading factors they mention may have relationship with poverty.

Table 2: Interview status by workers category

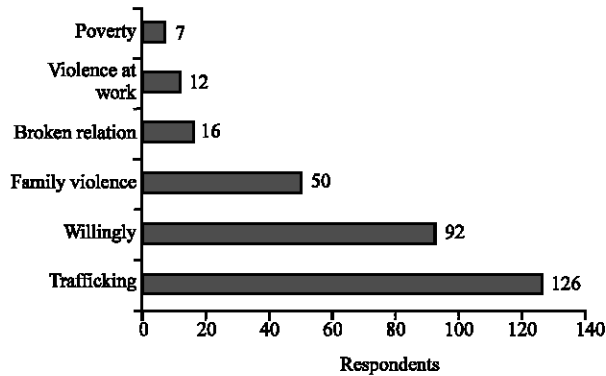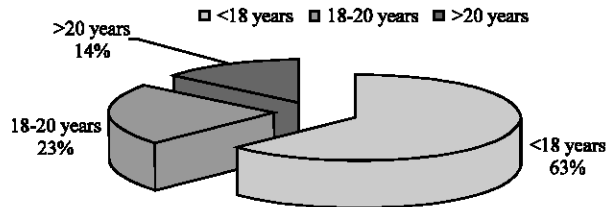| Workers status	Interview complete N (%)	Interview incomplete N (%)	Not interested N (%)	Migrated N (%)	Total N (%)
Chukri	25 (13%)	7 (3.6%)	161 (83.4%)	0 (0%)	193 (100%)
Bharatia	204 (54.8%)	20 (5.4%)	142 (38.2%)	6 (1.6%)	372 (100%)
Shardarni or Bariwali	72 (57.1%)	2 (1.6%)	51 (40.5%)	1 (0.8%)	126 (100%)
Total	301 (43.6%)	29 (4.2%)	354 (51.2%)	7 (1%)	691 (100%)

Fig. 2: Reasons for joining Kandapara

Fig. 3: Age at recruitment

Age at recruitment: Sex workers were asked how long they are in Kandapara brothel or any other brothels. This data was available from 304 sex workers. This was subtracted from their present age to calculate their tentative age at recruitment. Figure 3 shows the actual age at recruitment of the sex workers.

There is a relationship between recruiting age and trafficking. About 65% trafficking occurs in age group of <18 years (n = 303). Age group of 12-15 years is the most vulnerable (38.6%) for trafficking in to brothel (Table 3).

Home district: We asked about the birthplace of the sex workers to understand their home district. This information was available from 328 sex workers. Girls from 49 districts were found in Kandapara brothel. About 58 girls were from Tangail district (17.2%). This was the highest number from any district. Mymensingh follows Tangail with 37 girls (11%). More than 10 sex workers were found from Jamalpur, Dhaka, Comilla, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Faridpur and Barisal (Table 4).

Fifteen sex workers were born in the Kandapara brothel but they are not included in the statistics of Tangail district. Twenty-eight persons are from six Monga

affected districts. These districts are Takhurgaon, Nilfamari, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur and Gaibandha. Table 5 shows the reason of joining in the trade of these districts' girls. A point should be mentioned here, persons who have joined in Kandapara brothel from another one reported that they joined willingly. Hence data reveal that trafficking is the most powerful pushing factor for engaging sex trade of Monga affected district girls. Rather Monga poverty or unemployment influenced the trafficking.

Education of the sex workers: Education information was available from 338 sex workers. More than 70% of the sex workers at Kandapara did not have any formal education, though 40% of them could sign their name only. About 17% had some primary education and <10% went up to secondary school. Table 6 shows the education level of the sex workers.

Table 7 shows the relationship between literacy and trafficking. There is a significant relationship between education and reason of joining in the trade (p = 0.01). Table 7 shows trafficking occurrence rate is higher in them who have no formal schooling than who have formal schooling.

Who they were before: We tried to know what was immediate past occupation or personal status of sex workers before coming to Kandapara brothel. Specific information was available from 325 persons in the survey. About half (51%) of the girls were just family person and about 15% girls were garments factory worker. About 16% girls came to Kandapara from other brothels. Table 8 shows the immediate previous status of the sex workers.

There is a significant difference in reasons of joining the brothel regarding professions. Garments workers and persons from domestic help services were major victims of trafficking for engaging in the trade. Table 9 shows the relation between previous profession and reason for joining the trade.

Marital status: Over 60% of the girls in Kandapara brothel were unmarried when they first came in the brothel. Another 20% were either separated or divorced. Table 10 shows that there is significant relationship of marital status of the sex workers with the reason for joining sex trade (Fig. 4).

Table 3: Reason for coming to brothel by age at recruitment (n = 303)

| Age at recruitment | Why joined (n, %) | | | | | |
	Trafficking	Willingly and by birth	Family conflict/violence	Broken relation	Violence at workplace	Poverty
Up to 12 years	18	21	9	1	1	2
	14.8%	19.8%	20.9%	8.3%	9.1%	22.2%
12-15 years	29	29	13	5	3	3
	23.8%	27.4%	30.2%	4.7%	27.3%	33.3%
15-17.5 years	32	14	6	0	2	2
	26.2%	13.2%	14.0%	0%	18.2%	22.2%
18-20 years	27	25	9	4	5	1
	22.1%	23.6%	20.9%	33.3%	45.5%	11.1%
>20 years	16	17	6	2	0	1
	13.1%	16.0%	14.0%	16.7%	0%	11.1%
Total	122	106	43	12	11	9
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4: District with >10 workers

Districts	n
Tangail	58
Mymensingh	37
Dhaka	21
Dinajpur	15
Rangpur	15
Comilla	14
Jamalpur	14
Faridpur	12
Barisal	11
Total	197

Table 5: Reasons for joining of Monga affected districts' girl (n = 28, p<0.005)

Reasons	n	Percent
Broken relation	1	3.6
Family conflict/violence	4	14.3
Trafficking	9	32.1
Conflict at workplace	3	10.7
Willingly	10	35.7
Poverty	1	3.6
Total	28	100.0

Table 6: Education level of the sex workers

Level of education	N	Percentage
Illiterate	108	32.0
Can sign name only	136	40.2
Some primary	58	17.2
High school	31	9.2
Others	5	1.5
Total	338	100.0

There is a significant difference in reasons for coming brothel in response to their marital status. Unmarried, divorced and separated persons are more at risk for trafficking than married one.

Analyzing the data a noticeable factor we have found 38.3% sex workers came here by trafficking. This result supports 'sex-trafficking, violence, negotiating skill and HIV infection in brothel-based sex workers of Eastern India, adjoining Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh titled study's finding which reported, almost one in every four sex workers (24%) had joined the profession by being trafficked (Sarkar *et al.*, 2008). And surprisingly poverty contributed only 2.2%. That means poverty is
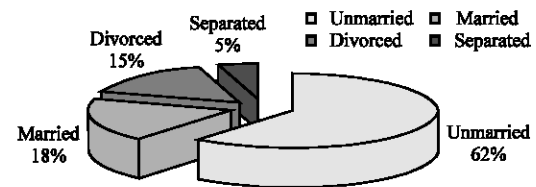

Fig. 4: Marrital status of sex workers before joining Kandapara

comparatively more powerless as direct pushing factor than trafficking. Rather poverty is indirect pushing factor. There is also a significant trend of trafficking in Monga affected six districts.

Trafficking in women and children: The cases of Bangladesh titled reported: girls are sold to traffickers by their parents who consider them to be a burden after a certain age. The findings support it. We have also found >40% of the girls in Kandapara brothel were recruited before 15 years of age. Particularly 12-15 years age appeared as the most vulnerable period for engaging in sex work. Another leading pushing factor is their marital status. We found unmarried girls followed by divorced and separated significantly came to the profession as they were trafficked where married contributed only 25%. As well as data reveal that around 72% sex workers have no formal schooling. That is why we can draw a conclusion that it was easy to lure them for marriage and job option. This information supports the report titled 'Trafficking in Women and Children: The Cases of Bangladesh' which reported. There are two basic methods (by) thattraffickers obtain women and children: one is to kidnap them, the second is to lure the women with false promises of jobs and marriage options. Another major finding of the research is a significant number of sex workers came here from garments factories. There is a common concept that in factory and domestic help the girls sometimes become victims of violence or abuse. It seems they might lured for better job opportunity.

Table 7: Reason for joining brothel by education level (n = 328)

| Education level | Reasons for joining | | | | | |
	Trafficking	Broken relation	Family conflict/violence	Conflict/violence at workplace	Willingly	Poverty
Illiterate	44	6	16	5	27	3
	34.9%	42.9%	32.0%	41.7%	23.5%	30.0%
Can sign only	47	7	18	5	53	5
	37.3%	50.0%	36.0%	41.7%	46.1%	50.0%
Some primary	17	1	12	1	26	1
	13.5%	7.1%	24.0%	8.3%	22.6%	10.0%
High school	16	0	4	0	7	1
	12.7%	0%	8.0%	0%	6.1%	10.0%
Others	2	0	0	1	2	0
	1.6%	0%	0%	8.3%	1.7%	0%
Total	126	14	50	12	115	10
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 8:Immediate previous occupation/ status of the sex workers (n = 325)

Personal status/occupation	N	Percentage
Family member	165	50.8
Student	14	4.3
Domestic helper	41	12.6
Garments worker	48	14.8
Other brothel	53	16.3
Service holder	4	1.2
Total	325	100.0%

Table 9: Reasons for joining by previous occupation (n = 323, p<0.000)

| Previous occupation | Reasons for joining | | | | | |
	Broken relation	Family conflict/violence	Trafficking	Conflict/violence at workplace	Willingly	Poverty
Family member	11	39	64	0	44	6
	78.5%	78%	51.2%	0%	38.5%	66.6%
Student	1	2	6	0	4	1
	7.1%	4%	4.8%	0%	3.5%	11.1%
Domestic helper	2	2	24	4	7	1
	14.2%	4%	19.2%	36.3%	6.1%	11.1%
Garments worker	0	5	28	2	13	0
	0%	10%	22.4%	18.1%	11.4%	0%
Other brothel	0	1	2	1	44	1
	0%	2%	1.6%	45.4%	38.5%	11.1%
Service	0	1	1	0	2	0
	0%	2%	0.8%	0%	1.7%	0%
Total	14	50	125	11	114	9
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 10: Reason for coming to brothel by type of initial marital status (p = 0.001)

| Marital status | Unmarried | | Married | | Divorced | | Separated | | Total | |
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Broken relation	4	2	2	3	8	16	2	13	16	5
Family conflict/ violence	26	13	23	38	1	2	0	0	50	15
Trafficking	86	43	15	25	18	37	7	47	126	39
Workplace conflict/ violence	7	4	2	3	2	4	1	7	12	4
Willingly	51	26	17	28	19	39	5	33	92	28
By birth	20	10	1	2	0	0	0	0	21	7
Poverty	5	3	1	2	1	2	0	0	7	2
Total	199	100	61	100	49	100	15	100	324	100

Limitation: In the study, about 50% of the sex workers were interviewed. Significantly more chukries were missed than other types of sex workers. As such the study result should be interpreted cautiously.

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh has had an HIV response in place for the past 12 years. It has also maintained a low HIV prevalence. Yet, the risk and vulnerability profile of

various populations has not adequately changed. STI prevalence is quite high with a majority of women in sex work in all settings (hotel, brothel and street), reporting lifetime prevalence of at least one cervical or vaginal infection (Rout and Iyengar, 2008). Trafficking is significantly different from any other pushing factor and plays as the main direct pushing factor for engaging in sex trade. Most of the sex workers joined the brothel by being trafficked. In contrast poverty contributed very poor amount in reasons for joining the brothel. Age, education, marital status, poverty or unemployment, geographical area and previous occupation influence trafficking for engaging in sex trade. The girls who joined the brothel in their age of <18 years, most of them were trafficked and age group of 12-15 years is the most vulnerable for trafficking. The chance of trafficking is higher in those who have no formal schooling. Unmarried, divorced and separated persons were more victims of trafficking than married. Trafficking is highest contributor in reasons for joining the brothel among Monga affected areas. Previous occupation is a significant determinant whether they would be trafficked. Domestic help and garments work are more vulnerable occupation for trafficking.

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