Pathways to Child Trafficking in Prostitution

**Donna Kristyl S. Olave, Maricel L. Alea,
Rose Ann Dinampo, Mae Rennielyn D. Galanto,
Mar Jhay P. Padolina, Rowena E. Mojares**

College of Criminal Justice, Lyceum of the Philippines
University, Batangas City, Philippines

Abstract - *This study aimed to determine the pathways to child trafficking in prostitution specifically in Batangas City, Philippines. It sought to identify the demographic profile of the subjects in terms of age and educational attainment and the present status of child trafficking in prostitution in terms of population from 2010-2013; determine the prevailing pathways into victimization to child trafficking and to provide the necessary plan of improvement based on the results of the study. The study utilized the officers of the Local Social Welfare and Development in Batangas City as respondents and some of the victims of child trafficking in prostitution as interviewees. To obtain pertinent data for this study, the study used data taken from the Local Social Welfare and Development Office of Batangas City. Follow-up interviews were also conducted to the officers and victims of child trafficking in prostitution. Results showed that all of the victims were female, with age bracket of 15-16 and most of them had reached elementary level. There were 54 victims of child trafficking into prostitution from 2010 – 2013; 10 in 2010, 17 in 2011, 11 in 2012 and 16 in 2013. These figures, although small, were quite alarming since care and protection of the youth were concerned. Also, revealed that peer influence was the greatest contributing factor in child trafficking in prostitution. Respondents may have lacked proper communication to authorize agencies like their parents, elders or local social units to discuss problems related to their lives. Unsound decision making may result them also to be victims of child trafficking into prostitution.*

Keywords: *Child trafficking, Prostitution, Child*

INTRODUCTION

Operating in the shadows, the trafficking of minors in prostitution is considered among the most difficult forms of child maltreatment to expose or investigate (Reid, 2010). In an era of unprecedented technological accessibility, coupled with greater assurance of anonymity, the number of children exploited by the commercial sex industry continues to escalate (Reid, 2012). Yet, their tragedy remains virtually invisible within a society reluctant to acknowledge the crime or its victims. While using a tiered system to assess and sanction other countries based on their attempts to combat human trafficking, the Batangas City is failing to combat trafficking in prostitution of children.

A variety of labels have been applied to minors used for prostitution in the illegal commercial sex industry, from child/juvenile/teen prostitute or sex worker to child sex trafficking victim. The conflicting terminology prevents the identification of victims, impedes efforts to recover victims from traffickers, hinders criminal investigations and prosecutions of traffickers, and hampers the delivery of victim services (Grant, 2009).

Ultimately, this disparity in labeling results in discrimination in the treatment of the minor victims of sex trafficking, depending on the particular form of sexual exploitation to which the minor has been subjected.

In many instances when a prostituted minor comes to the attention of state or local authorities, instead of the offense being treated as a case of child victimization, the crime is often classified as a public nuisance crime by law enforcement and the minor is arrested. The scant information gleaned from the few existing studies on the topic of child sex trafficking has consistently exposed both individual and community risk markers that affect the likelihood of a minor becoming entrapped in prostitution (Clawson, 2009).

Child sex trafficking is one of the many forms of trafficking in persons and is categorized as a severe form of trafficking. Child trafficking in prostitution would comprise all activities involved in inducing a minor's involvement in commercial sexual exploitation remunerated in cash or in kind commonly known as child prostitution in the streets or indoors, in such places as brothels, discotheques, massage parlors, bars,

hotels, restaurants, etc. The trafficking of girls and boys and adolescents for the sex trade, child sex tourism (William & Frederick, 2009).

The prostituted minors are the most marginalized and overlooked type of child sex trafficking victim (Williams & Frederick, 2009). Incorporating the typically observed risk markers of such victims and circumspectly drawing from the propositional components of sound criminological theory, this study delineates a process or pathway into victimization in child trafficking in prostitution.

With the foregoing menace against our youth, the researchers were provoked to conduct a study that will offer in-depth understanding of its causes. The researchers truly believe that through this effort, a solution could be proposed and possibly contribute in decreasing the incidents of victimization among our youth.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the pathways to child trafficking in the province of Batangas City, Philippines. Specifically, it sought to determine the demographic profile of the victims in terms of gender, age and educational attainment; to determine the incidence of child trafficking in prostitution from 2010- 2013; to determine the prevalent pathways to child trafficking in prostitution, and to propose strategies to lessen child trafficking incidence.

METHODS

Research Design
This study used descriptive type of research method using documentary analysis. It is appropriate for this study which involve collections of quantitative information that can be tabulated along a continuum in numerical form (AECT, 2001).

Subject of the study
The subject of the study were the victims of child trafficking in prostitution in Batangas City. Data were taken from

the Local Social Welfare and Development Office of Batangas City.

Instrument

The researchers utilized data taken from the Local Social Welfare and Development Office of Batangas City to obtain the pertinent data for this study. A follow-up interview was also conducted to officers of Local Social Welfare and Development Office and to victims of child trafficking in prostitution.

Procedure

The researchers drafted a letter of request addressed to the Chief of DSWD of Batangas to ask permission to gather data about the study. The same letter of request also contained the approval to conduct interview to officers of the office and victims of child trafficking in prostitution. Retrospective data analysis of research was employed in this study. The respondents were informed regarding the purpose of the study. They were assured that the data collected will only be utilized for the purpose of this study.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the Local Social Welfare and Development Office were tallied, analyzed and interpreted. The statistical treatment used in the study was frequency and ranking. Frequency is the number of occurrences of a particular item in a set of data. Ranking refers to the data transformation in which numerical or ordinal values are replaced by their ranked are sorted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presented the distribution of respondents according to gender, age and educational attainment. The table showed that victims of the child trafficking into prostitution were all female. In terms of age, their age ranges from 13 – 17 years old, with most number of victims at age 15 – 16 years old. Results also show that most of the victims have reached elementary level with half of the number of respondents.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents According to Profile

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Male	0	0	2
Female	54	100	1
Total	**54**	**100**	
Age			
17 years old	12	22	3
16 years old	19	35	1.5
15 years old	19	35	1.5
14 years old	1	2	5
13 years old	3	6	4
Total	**54**	**100**	
Educational Attainment			
Elementary Level	27	50	1
High School Undergraduate	22	41	2
High School Graduate	2	4	4
College Undergraduate	3	5	3
Total	**54**	**100**	

Filipino children are coerced to perform sex acts for internet broadcast to paying foreign viewers. An NGO reported an increasing risk of boys becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Many child sex workers were aged from 11 to 15 years old. Police say that poverty and peer pressure was the most common cause of child trafficking. Also, foreign customers choose girls aged below 18 due to the ignorance that leads them to believe that children are less likely to be affected by the HIV virus than adult prostitutes (McTavish, 2012).

Worldwide, about 20% of trafficked victims are children and the majority of those trafficked are women and girls. It is estimated that the number of enslaved persons as a result of trafficking at any given time in the world today is 12.3 million which is more than the number of people held in slavery in the 19th century (Ezeilo, 2012).

Figure 1 illustrated the current status of victims of child trafficking into prostitution in Batangas from 2010 – 2013. It can be viewed that population of victims fluctuated from one year to another. In Batangas, from the data given by the Local Social Welfare and Development office, there were 54 victims of child trafficking into prostitution from 2010 – 2013; 10 in 2010, 17 in 2011, 11 in 2012 and 16 in 2013. These figures, although small,

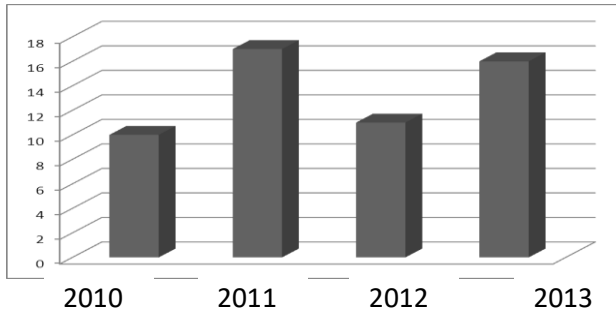were quite alarming since care and protection of the youth were concerned.

Figure 1. Incidences of Child Trafficking in Prostitution

Based on an interview conducted, the prevailing number of incidence of child trafficking in prostitution in 2011 was due to the calamities that occurred in our country. An example of such is the storm surge in Tacloban and the occurrence of typhoon "Glenda". This brought difficulties in living because of the ruined livelihood of the citizen. This property made them decide to migrate to another place to find a job to suffice their needs and their families to settle in a city such as Batangas City because in the locale, they were able to find a job which can give them a high income even though they subject themselves to prostitution.

The incidences of child trafficking in prostitution fluctuated from one year to another because of the demand of the country's present situation. The strike of the nature, such as the typhoon Ondoy, typhoon Yolanda, typhoon Glenda, remarkably contributed a lot to the increasing number of women who subject themselves in this kind of job. Women, especially those of young age, were forced to engage themselves in sexual jobs to earn money to suffice their needs and to support their families. They cannot find a decent job so they chose to offer sex in exchange of money.

The fluctuating incidents of child trafficking in prostitution in Batangas City was due to those victims of typhoons and other nation's crises who chose to leave their home to look for a decent job, but others subject themselves to prostitution saying

that they were recruited by a friend and that they personally chose this job to provide the needs of their family.

The number of cases involving UK nationals rose 173% to 90. Around two-thirds of potential victims were female (1,122) and around a quarter (450) were children. Of the children flagged as potential victims of trafficking, as well as the 144 trafficked for sexual abuse, 45 were identified as being at risk used as servants (up to 2% on 2012), 123 for labor exploitation (up to 24%) and 138 were unknown (up 9%) ("Number of UK-born Children being trafficked", 2014).

Table 2. Prevalent Pathways into Child Trafficking in Prostitution

	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Peer Influence	15	27.78	1
Broken Family	9	16.67	4
Poverty/Insufficient Food	13	24.07	2
Insufficient parental care/lack of love	11	20.37	3
Recruit	3	5.56	5
Informal settler	1	1.85	7
Domestic Violence at home	2	3.70	6
Total	**54**	**100**	

The prevalent pathways into victimization to child trafficking in prostitution are presented in table 2. Results show that peer influence was among the greatest contributing factor to child trafficking into prostitution with 27.78% or 15 of the total population. It was followed by poverty/insufficient food with 24.07% or 13 of the population. In third rank, the cause to be a victim of child trafficking into prostitution was the insufficient parental care/lack of love with 20.37% or 11 of the population. Being a member of broken family ranked fourth with 16.67% or 9 of the population. The last three causes of were identified to be by recruitment, domestic violence at home and being an informal settler with 5.56%, 3.70% and 1.85 % respectively. The figures states that different aspects contribute to be victims of child trafficking into prostitution. Moreover, based on the data revealed,

respondents may have lacked of proper communication to authorize agencies like their parents, elders or local social units to discuss problems related to their lives. Unsound decision making may result them also to be victims of child trafficking into prostitution.

Upon the interview made by the researchers to those called victims of prostitution, "majority of them were not able to finish their studies". From this point of view, due to lack of education, they chose to involve themselves in this kind of job. None of them were victims of illegal recruitment, but majority were recruited by a friend with only one reason – poverty and financial problems. Some of them were single and unwed teenage moms who chose to offer themselves to others in exchange of money to support their kids. Others were the bread winners of their families. This is the main reason why they subject themselves to this job. Through the money that was paid to them, they were able to suffice their needs of their families and to give them a good life. They cannot afford to leave their job to find another decent job because of the large amount of income they could get from it. The income is even enough to provide the needs of their families.

Another reason is the lack of education wherein the child was promised for a decent job in the city but in fact, they will be forced to become a member of the sex trade industry. Likewise, those children who were never registered from their birth were the most threatened because they were already deprived of their Right to Identity.

Proposed Strategies to Lessen Child Trafficking Incidence

The researchers would like to propose the following actions/strategies to lessen child trafficking incidence. First, increase awareness on child trafficking in prostitution. Awareness campaigns through television and radio as well as educational workshops must be carried out, especially among poverty stricken community where child prostitution is likely to be used as a means to earn money. To achieve this, community leaders must be tapped to facilitate the campaign and information dissemination to their constituents.

Second, the government must address the problem on poverty which was revealed as number one cause of child

prostitution. More livelihood programs must be put up to cater a greater number of unemployed parents to alleviate poverty and to provide better future for their children. A stricter penalty must be serious and consistent in enforcing the laws and apprehending violators of these laws.

Third, strengthening parents' concern with their children. In line with this, a strong collaboration among different sectors of the government including but not limited to DSWD, school, religious organization and the home must be developed. Parents must be provided with knowledge about proper parenting and values formation, to be inculcated among their children. They must be informed of the rights of children as specified under RA 9344, and their duties and responsibilities to their children. They must be thought about their moral, physical, emotional and spiritual obligation to their children. Through these programs, every household will be ensured of their awareness and thus may lessen the incidence of child trafficking in prostitution.

CONCLUSIONS

Majority of the victims of child trafficking were female, 15-16 years old and mostly obtained elementary level of education. The incidences of victims of child trafficking in prostitution fluctuated from one year to another. The greatest contributing factors in child trafficking in prostitution were peer pressure, poverty and food inadequacy and insufficient parental care and love. Proposed strategies were suggested to lessen the incidences of child trafficking in Batangas City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The authorities should increase their efforts to investigate, prosecute and convict an increased number of labor and sex trafficking offenders implicated in the trafficking of children here in Batangas City. Awareness to child trafficking in prostitution may be given to numbers of the family and the community through seminars and efficient programs. The proposed strategies to lessen the incidences of child trafficking in Batangas may be discussed for implementation. Further research may be conducted regarding same variables with different locale.

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