



MENTAL HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF TRAFFICKED WOMEN: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Damen Queen J.¹ and Umesh Samuel A.²

¹PhD Research Scholar, (PT), Department of Social Work, Bishop Heber College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli.

²Dean (Research) & Associate Professor in Social Work, Bishop Heber college (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli.

ABSTRACT :

Human Trafficking is the most awful violation of human rights. Perhaps not many crimes are as frightening as trading in human despair. Human rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution are undeniable, non-negotiable and widespread. 'It is viewed as a gross commercialization of innocent human lives, indulged in by organized criminals' (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Trafficking is the organized crime which violates the basic human rights. Trafficking in persons is the control of one human being by another for the purpose of exploitation. In this world of tragic and complex human abuse, women and children are more vulnerable. The area of mental health concerns among these populations has been largely forgotten because the victims are geographically transitory and exist within an illegal framework (James & Udo 2017). In this paper, three mental health issues will be discussed Stockholm syndrome, Post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse disorder. In addition to these diagnoses, many victims of sex trafficking also have secondary psychological problems such as alcohol and drug abuse plus concurrent medical illnesses, which add to the psychological burden of the victims endure' (James & Udo 2017). Thus, this study will be an attempt to explore the mental health issues and Challenges concerning the trafficked women. The main objective of the paper is to discuss the mental health issues of trafficked women.

KEYWORDS : Trafficking of women, Mental Health, Substance abuse disorder, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Human Trafficking is the most awful violation of human rights. Perhaps not many crimes are as frightening as trading in human despair. Human rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution are undeniable, non-negotiable and widespread. 'It is viewed as a gross commercialization of innocent human lives, indulged in by organized criminals' (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Trafficking is a violation of numerous human rights including the very right to life, the right to freedom and human dignity, and security of person, and the right to liberty and free from torture or cruelty, inhuman treatment in any form of abuse and exploitation.



Trafficking violates all known canons of human rights and dignity. Most trafficking victims are subjected to the worst conditions and several of the most terrible crimes including abuse, exploitation, dishonesty, abduction, rape, torture, and enslavement. According to Trafficking in persons Report released by the U.S Department of State 1.8 out of every 1000 global citizen are currently enslaved in human trafficking.

Trafficking is a phenomenon hidden in ambiguities involving issues which most would prefer to avoid. In this world of tragic and complex human abuse, women and children are more vulnerable. In the existing social scenario in India, vulnerability is the by-product of inequality and injustice, low social status and discrimination as well as the patriarchal and captivating authority unleashed on children, especially the girl child (Sen, 2004). Trafficking of women and children is referred to a business wrapped in layers of silence. Victims of trafficking are bought, sold, sometimes transported across national boundaries, and forced to work in illegal activities and thereby they experience sexual and labour exploitation. According to National Crime Report Bureau (NCRB, 2005) human trafficking consists of crimes such as importation of girls from foreign countries, procuring, buying and selling of minors for prostitution. Human trafficking is a modern-day slavery that involves the illegal trade of exploiting human beings especially young girls and women for the purpose of some form of forced exploitation. The scale of the problem, the gravity of the crimes involved, and the vulnerability of its victims combine to make human trafficking. The victims are "broken in" through a process of torture, starvation, forced drugging, gang rape, and many other forms of violence. Day-after-day, thousands of women and young girls are subjected to this hellish life and lots more are trafficked into it every day and perhaps it is the greatest injustice in the world today.

OBJECTIVE AND RATIONALE OF RESEARCH:

Trafficking of women is largely a hidden crime, while nature of the crime; accurate statistics on the nature, prevalence and geography of human trafficking are difficult to estimate. The dismaying scenario of trafficked women is in helpless positions and may be unable, or unwilling, to expose their lives to report to or seek help from relevant officials. When gender plays a key role in the link between trafficking and women being sexually exploited, morally judged, shame, blame and given women's lower standing in the social hierarchy and so on, researcher intends to focus on trafficking as gender-based violence and how it mentally affects the mental health of women. But the fact cannot be denied that victims may live daily with emotional, mental and physical abuse and sexual exploitation. The area of mental health concerns among these populations has been largely forgotten because the victims are geographically transitory and exist within an illegal framework (Levine, 2017). Hence understanding the mental health issues concerning such trafficked victims is a very vital and there is a greater need to document and analyze victim's mental health issues and challenges. The high levels of psychological stress associated with sexual exploitation results in causing mental health issues among the trafficked women. Mental health issues experienced by trafficked women are Suicidal disorder, Anxiety and Panic Disorder, Eating Disorders, Sleep Disorder, Stockholm's Syndrome (identifying with the abuser), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Psychosomatic disorder etc. In this paper, three mental health issues will be discussed. Stockholm syndrome, Post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse disorder. In addition to these diagnoses, many victims of sex trafficking also have secondary psychological problems such as alcohol and drug abuse plus concurrent medical illnesses, which add to the psychological burden of the victims endure' (Levine, 2017). Thus, this study will be an attempt to explore the mental health issues and Challenges concerning the trafficked women. The main objective of the paper is to discuss the mental health issues of trafficked women.

POST TRAUMATIC SYNDROME:

Trafficked victims may face moderate to severe psychological trauma from daily Physical, mental, emotional, psychological abuse and torture. Post-traumatic stress disorder, acute anxiety, and depression are all common mental health issues among the victims (Deshpande & Nour, 2013). During the post trafficking assessment professionals identified frequent post-trafficking reactions such as fearfulness, shame, sadness, guilt, anger, isolation, hopelessness, emotional numbing, feelings of being cut off from others, suicidal ideation and self-harm (Orametal., 2015). The majority of victims have depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder or a more severe diagnosis: Disorders of Extreme Stress (DESNOS). Anxiety, Panic, Nightmares, threatening Flashbacks, trauma triggers, Numbing, sense of Irritability, extreme discomfort, disconcert reaction, Poor concentration, Loss of sense of future are the few posts traumatic

symptom are experience by trafficked victim. The life in the cob web of trafficking is itself traumatic. The occurrence of Post-traumatic stress disorder is evident in many cases of trafficked women. Research studies specify that there are substantial mental health consequences, particularly with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. Researchers from the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London 2015, identified 133 trafficked people, including 37 children, who sought mental health treatment at National Health Service facilities and compared them to randomly selected non-trafficked patients who sought treatment there. Of the trafficked people, 51% were trafficked for sexual exploitation. 39% percent of adults and 27% of children in the trafficked group were diagnosed with PTSD. Depression was found in 34% of adults and 27% of children. And 15% of patients were diagnosed with schizophrenia. Medical records also indicated that three-quarters of the trafficked children were victims of child abuse, while 43% of adults were abused during their childhood. The issue of post-traumatic stress is as intense as another study conducted among 66 female sex trafficking survivors in Nepal. Hopkins Symptoms Checklist–25 instrument and PTSD symptomatology were measured using the PTSD Checklist–Civilian Version. The study result indicated that all 87% of trafficked survivors had symptoms of anxiety, 85.5% of them had depression and 29.7% of them had PTSD symptoms (Rimal & Papadopoulos, 2016). But the huge challenge lies in assessing the mental issues among the victim as they may fear disclosing information about their experiences due to threats of harm to themselves or either to their family members, because of a risk of detention or deportation, or they may be inhibited by feelings of shame or guilt (Zimmerman & Borland, 2009).

SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER:

Usages of drugs are linked to sexual exploitation in a number of ways. In Kadiri Division, Anantapuramu district, Delhi police authorities have rescued 51 trafficked victims from Delhi brothel houses. Most of them are in the age of 23 to 30 years. It is revealed that majority of the victims have been in brothel houses for four to eight years. About 80% of the victims are addicted to alcohol, pan parag, gutka etc., all these victims were given rehabilitation under NGO -PRAJA SEVA SAMAJ (PSS). So, there is a greater need to address the addicted issues of the trafficked victims. From the initial stage, these young girls and women are drugged into submission and are often forced to use drugs and are kept under sedation, for better cooperation with the clients and brothel owners. Use of drugs and alcohol are very common among victims. (Warburton & De la Cruz, 1996). When these victims are rescued, they face serious problems of drug addiction that affect their daily routine and are required to undergo treatment for de-addiction.

STOCKHOLM SYNDROME:

It is a condition that causes victims to develop a psychological bonding with their captors as a survival strategy during captivity (Jameson, 2010). Generally speaking, Stockholm syndrome consists of strong emotional ties that develop between two persons where one person recurrently abuses, harasses beats, threatens, or intimidates the other. 'Psychologist believed that the bond is initially created when a captor threatens a captive's life, deliberates, and then chooses not to kill the captive. The captive's relief at the removal of the death threat is transposed into feelings of gratitude toward the captor for giving him or her life' (Laura Lambert, 2017). The victims over a period of time develop a strong emotional bond with the captor and identify themselves with the captor. This case is very common among the trafficked victims who stay with the trafficker for a long time. In fact, rescued victims get distressed with the rescued team for they continue to live the expectation of the captor. This is one of the major challenges in the rehabilitation process. It is also very important that people involve in rehabilitation and especially the mental health professionals should be aware of these mental health issues.

SUGGESTIONS & CONCLUSION

Once the trafficked women are rescued, a detailed health check-up should be made. Along with that assessment for mental health issue should be made mandatory for all the rescued women. Based on the assessment report - Individual intervention care plan should be drafted. Presence of Mental health issues needs immediately intervention, if unattended; it may be vulnerable and worsen the health situation of the women. Hence clinical treatment along with regular therapy for the mental health issues should be provided and this is be paired along with the intervention plan of the victim. Individual crisis counselling service will be helpful for the victims. This should be provided by professional social workers. De-addiction service can be provided for the victims who are addicted with any kind of substance, including alcohol, drug etc.

Psychological abuse, threats, and violence, are an integral part of the trafficking process. Victims of sex trafficking endangered to all kind of abuse, their traumatic experience results in huge psychological damage and are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation. Psychological distress is often channelled into psychosomatic symptoms that victims connect with their torture experiences. (Angel Coalition, 2005). Since the victims of trafficking undergo immense psychological trauma, Therapeutic (psychiatric) intervention can play a positive role during this period and facilitate the victims to overcome the memories of the traumatic episode (Pandey et al 2013), Hence professional mental health care plan to be included in the rehabilitation service for the rescued victims.

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