

PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS SCHOOLING OPPORTUNITIES OF A MOST AT-RISK POPULATION OF ILOILO CITY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated several demographic features of a Most At-Risk Population (MARP) of Iloilo City, specifically, Commercial Sex Workers (CSWS). It also investigated their residency status, vocational training history and views regarding the opportunity for schooling for an alternative livelihood. It also aimed to determine the selection criteria for those who would participate in this schooling. A take-all sample of all registered 131 CSWs who worked as masseuses/masseurs, Guest Relations Officers(GRO) and dancers in the city was taken. Data was gathered through a one-shot questionnaire. Frequency distribution was used to describe data, while Chi-square was used to determine relationship between nominal variables. Regression analysis was used to predict the length of time the respondents were willing to commit given two interlaying variables. The survey showed that the registered CSWs of Iloilo City were mostly females, single and in their prime years (21-29 years old). They were sufficiently educated, mostly being high school undergraduates to college undergraduates. Many of them had one child. They were mostly transients coming from different parts of the Philippines but most were from Negros Occidental, Cebu and Manila. Their main work areas were in JM Basa St. while majority had not undergone vocational training, a close number of them had undergone training mostly in massage therapy at TESDA. The CSWS welcomed the opportunity for a different livelihood to better help their families and gain community respectability. Many were willing to accept a scholarship and study Culinary Arts for a short time but most were willing to complete a four-year college degree. They planned to stop schooling if they would encounter financial difficulties. Others did not like to study due to loss of income as bread winners. The critical selection criteria for potential scholarship grantees are age, civil status, number of children, and educational level.

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

A 2013 Global Report on human trafficking by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) provides new information on a crime that shames humanity. According to the report, the most common form of human trafficking (79%) is sexual exploitation where the victims are predominantly women and girls. In the Philippines, the state of sexual exploitation and trafficking has an appalling history. A 2010 compilation of researches by Rhode Island University on trafficking of Filipinos to foreign countries reveals the magnitude of abuse against the females of this country. In 1991, Filipinas were being sold in Japan, often to the Yakuza, at \$2,400 to \$18,000 each. According to a press statement of the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers (1998), in Japan, 150,000 Filipina women have been trafficked into prostitution (<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>).

In African countries, particularly Nigeria, one hundred-fifty Filipinas were sold into prostitution to night club operators (Dalagin, 1995).

In 2001, statistics claim that around 500,000 Filipinos of mixed gender are into prostitution, most of them are young girls. In the Philippines, 75,000 children are being prostituted. The Philippines ranks 4th in the world for child prostitution and 3,366 children annually are forced into prostitution (from <http://www.slideshare.net/andrea1129/child>).

In 2010, the Philippines was in the US Trafficking Tier 2 Watch List for two years in a row. Trafficked women related that they left farming activities in Mindanao in September 2010 hopeful of promised high paying domestic jobs in the Middle East and a good life for them and their families (from trafficking.org.ph/v5/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3496&Itemid=56).

For neighboring Singapore, Filipino trafficking is considered an all time high in 2008. The modus operandi essentially has illegal recruiters promise young women non-existent jobs as waitresses or guest relations officers in restaurants and hotels in Singapore. Expecting to work in legitimate jobs, Filipinas end up working as prostitutes. They are forced to provide sexual services to customers and earn commissions from alcoholic drinks to enable them to pay the S\$1,000 to S\$4,000 they allegedly owe their handlers (Uy, 2008).

In the Philippines, Angeles City is considered to be the hub where 75% of child prostitution is happening (from <http://www.slideshare.net/andrea1129/child>). In the Visayas, Cebu has become a hub for trafficking child prostitutes. It is estimated that there are 10,000 young girls trafficked into sex slavery as the market is growing according to Father Heinz, a Catholic priest who has been involved for more than a decade in initiatives to beat the pimps and child-traffickers. Cebu remains a destination, source and transit area for human trafficking, where women and children victims are brought to be "processed" (Uy, 2008).

The scenario in Western Visayas is no different. Boracay is the hub as it has drawn transient visitors to the island and surrounding areas for the past years. The End Child Labor Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT), an NGO that combats child prostitution, presented a report on the extent of child prostitution in Boracay. It reported that there are six bars that tolerate child prostitution. Another study on commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in Boracay cited by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) identified 11 young women and three boys most of whom were actively involved in the sex trade (Angelo, 2009).

Iloilo City, as a growing metropolis faces the same situation. A news article in the Daily Guardian dated November 25, 2012, states that the Iloilo City government and national government agencies plan to meet to plot solutions to the rising prostitution of minors in the metropolis. The article mentions that public high school students are being pimped particularly in the Smallville area (Angelo, 2012).

In the context of this research the role of education is premised to bring about a better life for people and therefore the uplift of society. This research focused on the schooling perspectives of people caught in the sex trade or generally known as the Most-At-Risk Populations (MARPS). Most At-Risk Populations (MARPS) are individuals who are at high risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV (Human immunodeficiency virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) because they engage in behaviors that predispose them to acquiring HIV (from <http://nascop.or.ke/marps/>). Of this general population, this research focused on the commercial sex workers (CSWS). They are men and women peddling sexual services, not out of a social or psychological need, but as an income-generating activity or form of employment (from <http://prostitution.procon.org/view.answers.php?questionID=000849>). Considering their high-risk livelihood, this research aimed to survey their perspectives for an alternative livelihood through a free educational opportunity.

According to Margie Cook, author of the UNICEF/Australian Aid Report for the Philippines (1998), there are three common causes of their vulnerability to this trade: (from <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/focus/focuspdfs/childlbr.pdf>).

1. Impoverished living conditions in semi-rural or urban areas
2. Jobless parents
3. Experiences of sexual abuse

A review of related studies shows that tangential studies have been made on education and MARPS. A study by Jacobi (2008) investigated the use of alternative literacy education to juvenile recidivists who found little or no success in traditional schooling. Alternative practices such as writing workshops and local and national publishing opportunities offer incarcerated juveniles vital opportunities for achieving meaningful literacy skills which can contribute significantly to youth offenders' positive self-esteem and self-image.

An article by Arnold, Stewart and McNeece (2000), focused on the need of a variety of intervention for street walking prostitutes. It asserts that few community-based programs exist to provide outreach services to help these individuals get off the street and into treatment. It also suggests that intervention is needed regarding substance abuse, mental health problems, child custody, victimization, glamorization of prostitutions and describes the need for community collaboration.

A case study of a former female sex worker testifies to the role of a holistic intervention to leave the sex industry. Beverly Carter was a FSW for 30 years but today, aged 47, Carter is free from alcohol, drugs and prostitution, citing a 12-step drugs programme and a conversion to Christianity as her turning points (Aumord, 2009).

An investigation of researches on commercial sex workers show a wealth of studies from the medical point of view or specifically on the HIV/AIDS exposure and not from the sociological and pedagogic perspectives. An article by Liddle and Hogue (2000) introduces an intensive, family-based preventive intervention for high-risk adolescents called Multidimensional Family Prevention which combines the advantages of standard prevention models (curriculum based and protection focused) with those of psychosocial treatment models (assessment based and problem focused).

A study of Potter, Martin and Romans (1999) comparatively looks at one demographic characteristic of sex workers in the Otago Women's Child Sexual Abuse (OWCSA). It looks at the family environment of sex workers. The research shows that sex workers' families were of lower socio-economic status and had experienced more parental separation than had the OWCSA families. The sex workers were more likely to have left home early, to have become pregnant before the age of 19 years and to not have completed tertiary study.

For gender, a study by Weinberg, Shaver and Williams (1999) examines gender differences in the work of 140 sex workers in the San Francisco Tenderloin area. In this study, men, women and transgender men who are workers were the subjects. Looking at work-specific characteristics, the study found that women do not suffer inequities of income.

A research on educational level by Solomon, Smith, and Del Rio, (2005) studied its relationship with sexually transmitted diseases and risk-taking behavior among sex workers in Quito, Ecuador. Lower educational level was associated with more STIs, poorer knowledge of HIV/AIDS, earlier first prostitution, willingness to engage in group sex and work on the street, and presence of non-paying sexual partners. CSWs with lower educational levels were disproportionately afflicted with STIs and participated in more high-risk behaviors. Low educational level may predispose CSWs to STIs and associated risk factors.

Childbearing and schooling were studied by Hofferth, Reid, and Mott (2001). The study shows that there is a significant negative impact of a teenage birth on rates and years of completed schooling.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to determine the perspectives or ideas of the commercial sex workers towards educational opportunities. This research specifically aimed to:

1. describe their personal demographic profile;
2. describe their work-related demographic profile;
3. describe their vocational training history;
4. determine their schooling perspectives; and to
5. determine the selection criteria for those who are willing to study.

Conceptual Framework

This research is both a survey and a relational study. The relational study is used as basis for the selection of possible grantees of a scholarship program. As a relational study, the demographic features of sex, age, civil status and educational attainment are the independent variables and the willingness to study is the dependent variable.

Significance of the Study

The data generated from this research may serve as basis for an educational intervention program for the future of the CSWs who are seeking for an alternative livelihood. The demographic profile will give direction to educators and educational institutions as to the scope and limit of such a program, or whether this population will in fact, be willing to take an opportunity designed to help them have a new life. The data will also be useful to other educators and researchers who would study different variables related to the MARPS or CSWs in particular. It fills an information vacuum regarding the profile of CSWs in Iloilo City.

Local, national and international government agencies can benefit from the profile and attitudes of the CSWs. It could also be used by NGOs specifically those working with this population like the ones earlier cited in the related literature. The data can also be used to generate support from partners and funding agencies for the educational intervention.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The respondents of this research were limited to registered CSWs only. The freelancers and street workers were excluded. While the sex trade involves both the Buyers and the Sellers, the respondents were Sellers only. They were further limited to those who come to the health clinic for medical check-up. The data collection venue was limited to this area only. No data collections was done in their areas of work.

METHODOLOGY

Considering the objectives of the study, a quantitative-qualitative descriptive research was used. A one-shot researcher-designed questionnaire in Hiligaynon or Tagalog was used for the quantitative data. The questionnaire with a total of 18 questions was validated by experts and pre-tested on 12 CSWs. The portion inquiring about attitudes was in a yes-no format. A focused group discussion followed after all the questionnaires were collected for further elaboration of some of the questions. Purposive sampling was used. The target respondents of this study were commercial sex workers (CSW) of any gender who were registered with the Social Hygiene Clinic, Iloilo City and who went to the health center for medical checkup as required for their pink cards. The number of registered CSWs varied from month to month. However, as of March 14, 2013 there were 131 registered CSWs. A take-all sample size was chosen. For statistical analysis, frequency distribution was used for descriptive data, chi-square for relational and regression analysis for predictive data.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the profile of the registered CSWS of Iloilo. Majority at 85.5% are females, between 21-29 years old, single and with one child. Many of them at 33.6% are high school undergraduates. Many of them are transient workers but most of them at 26.7% are from Iloilo City. Their work area is generally at J.M. Basa Street. For vocational training, most of them at 59.1% do not have vocational training but for those who had training, it was through TESDA for the Massage Therapy program. Majority at 76.3% are willing to accept a scholarship to study cooking for as long as four years. A high majority at 91% will stop this schooling if money becomes a problem. Immediate loss of income as bread winners was the common reason given by those who refused the opportunity for a scholarship.

Table 1. Summary of Findings based on the Highest Number of Responses per Variable

Variables	Category	Total number of respondents	Highest number of Response		
			Category	f	%
Personal demographics	Sex	131	Females	112	85.5
	Age bracket		Prime Years (21- 29 years old)	79	60.3
	Civil Status		Single	101	77.1
	Number of Children		One child	48	36.6
	Educational Attainment		High School undergraduate	44	33.6
	Residency status		Transient	87	66.4
	Place of Origin		Iloilo City	35	26.7
Work –related demographic	Place of work	131	J.M Basa Street	35	26.7
Vocational Training History	Vocational Training	131	No Training	68	59.1
	Training Institution	63	TESDA	45	71.4
	Training program		Massage Therapy	43	68.2
Schooling Perspectives	Willingness to Study	131	Willing to study	100	76.3
	Area of study	100	Culinary Arts	49	49.0
	Length of time committed to studying		4 years	36	36.0
	Reason to self-terminate schooling		Financial reason	91	91.0
	Reason for refusing to study on a scholarship	100	Loss of income as breadwinner	9	29.0
		31			

Table 2 shows the four demographic features of sex, age, civil status and educational level as tested for significance their willingness to study. Only sex was not significantly related to willingness to study. Civil status and educational level are significantly related to willingness to study at 0.05 level of significance while age is significantly related to willingness to study at 0.01 level of significance.

Table 2. Relational Data of For Demographic Features and Willingness to Study

Variable	p value
Sex	.769
Age Bracket	.000
Civil Status	.020
Educational Level	.013

Level of significance for Age $p < 0.01$; for Civil Status and Educational Level $p < .0.05$

Table 3 shows the predictive data. Regression analysis was used to predict commitment to studying based on age and number of children. The table below shows that there is a negative relationship between age and number of years committed to studying. As the respondent ages, the length of time she is willing to study diminishes.

Table 3. Prediction Table for Number of Years Committed to Studying by Age of Respondents

Age of Respondent	Number of Years Willing to be Committed studying
18	2.596
19	2.508
20	2.420
21	2.332
22	2.244

Table 4 shows predictive data for number of children and years of commitment to studies. As for number of children, a negative relationship was also seen. Number of years committed to studying also decreases as number of children increases.

Table 4. Prediction Table for Years Committed to Studying by Number of Children of Respondents

Number of Children	Number of Years Willing to be Committed studying
0	2.196
1	1.907
2	1.618
3	1.329
4	1.040

DISCUSSION

The variables surveyed intended to profile the Commercial Sex Workers of Iloilo City. The data for age, sex, civil status, number of children and educational level show that they cut across all categories. While majority are high school undergraduates, the total percentage including the higher levels exceeds the lower levels. This means that the CSWS are sufficiently educated. Their residency status which includes transience, work place and place of origin show that migration accompanies the sex industry in Iloilo City. Specific work areas implies the recruitment by establishments by such migrant workers. The 25 places of origin of the CSWS again supports the migration practice in the sex trade in Iloilo City. The almost comparative percentage of those who underwent vocational training versus those who did not, shows that vocational training was a useful entry point in the sex industry. Majority received training in massage therapy but they are still in the sex industry aiming for higher tips. Free schooling is welcome to a big majority to be terminated only if money becomes a problem. Cooking is the popular choice. While many signified the intention to complete a four-year course, the rest of the population want short term training of 3-6 months only. Focused group discussion revealed monetary gain as the major advantage and loss of societal respectability as the major disadvantage of the trade.

None of the cited related studies specifically aimed at profiling CSWs of any country. The earlier cited study of Potter, Martin and Romans (1999) looked at one demographic characteristic (family environment) of sex workers in Otago, New Zealand, but this is not among those investigated by this research. The gender related study of Martin, Shaver and Williams (1999) examined gender differences among sex workers in the San Francisco Tenderloin area while this study examined whether it affected their willingness to seek a new life through education.

On the variable of educational level, the study by Solomon, Smith and del Rio (2005) varies from the current research. While the current research found out that the CSWs are sufficiently educated (mostly from high school undergraduates to college undergraduates), the study by Solomon et al. associated it with their high-risk conditions for sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS and early entry into prostitution. For childbearing, the current study validates the findings of Hoffert, Reid and Mott (2001) where there is a significant negative impact on teen age birth rate and years of completed schooling. This study predicts a reduction in years of commitment to study as a CSW has more children.

The study also validates the claim of the UNICEF/Australia Aid in the Philippines (1998) that lists impoverished living conditions in semi-rural or urban areas and jobless parents as top causes to vulnerability to the sex trade.

CONCLUSIONS

The basic reason why Commercial Sex Workers (CWSs) in Iloilo City and other parts of the Philippines chose to work in the sex industry is need for income to support one self and close family members. An adequate education does not allow them to find jobs forself-sufficiency and so they turn to the high income opportunity of the sex industry and forego respectability and honest declaration of one's true identity. Between the two sexes, the women are more prone to succumb to this livelihood. Youth is a main asset in this trade. Migration is a juxtaposing issue to the sex industry. CSWS come from different parts of the Philippines. They come and go to Iloilo City depending on the job available to them. The transients are recruited and housed by registered clubs in the city. This issue of migration puts not only these workers at high risk- but their clients in the city as well.

The CSWs are generally indifferent to the idea of going to school again in preparation for a new livelihood. The reason most of them never continued schooling is the lack of money in the first place. But upon realizing the advantages of schooling through a scholarship, they are willing to take this chance. In studying they would rather choose skills related courses like cooking and computer.

For an educational program to succeed with CSW-students with a higher probability of staying in school, they should be between ages 18-25 years, at least high school graduates, single, and with none or at least one child only. Since majority of the CSWS in Iloilo City are transients, a long term intervention is not feasible. Only short-term courses will be suitable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings which led to conclusions, to the following recommendations are given to various institutions:

1. for schools, to conceptualize a short term academic and skilled-based program centering on culinary arts being the preferred discipline, specifically designed for exiting commercial sex workers taking into account the migratory issue;
2. for the Department of Social Welfare and Development to establish a program of counseling to students of public high school to detour them from joining the sex industry;
3. for other researchers to investigate related socio-psychological variables like family background, personal factors and individuals that encourage choice to be a commercial sex worker.

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