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# The Causes and Consequences of Child Commercial Sex Work in Arba Minich City, South Ethiopia

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**Abstract:** The general objective of this study was assessing the causes and consequence of commercial sex worker in Arab Minch city, South Ethiopia .Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to analyze and interpret the data. Due to the hidden nature of the problem, it is difficult to know about the exact number of total victims or the target population so that the snow boll sampling technique was employed to determine the sample size. Hence, 30 victim respondents' for quantitative data (questionnaire) and purposely-selected 6 respondents for semi – structural interview were involved in the study. To analyze the quantitative data sample distractive analytical technique (frequency and percentage) was used, while qualitative data (summarization and narration) was used to triangulate with quantitative data. The major finding of this study revealed that peers-pressure, seeking better life in urban area, seeking job opportunity in urban area, Poverty, lake of employment Opportunity, Lack of information , & family conflict or divorce were the major suggested causes that forced children to involve in commercial sex work. This study also identified negative consequence (i.e. victimization in the street, health problem, social isolation and anxiety and depression.) on the children. Moreover, abuse (i.e. physical, sexual and psychological abuse) as the major adverse effect of child commercial sex workers. Enhancing Education, job opportunities and awareness are critical mechanisms to handle child commercial sex work. Based on these findings, the study is recommended a collaborative action of all stakeholders should encourage through creating awareness to the family, the community and society. Mobilizing public participation also, a means to tackle the problem at it grass root level.

**Keywords:** Child Commercial Sex Work, Children, Attitude, Causes, Consequences, Mechanisms

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## 1. Background of the Study

Prostitution is variously described in the literature as sex-work”, violence against “women” or “slavery”. The root meaning of “prostitute” implies a transaction. It follows that a prostitute performs some kind of sexual activity in exchanging for money. Prostitution cannot exist without customer. Who objectively and dehumanize themselves, the prostitution and human sexuality. Work is any sexual performance carried out by a person for payment of certain amount of money or in exchange of goods and service. Child commercial sex worker is the use the child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration (Flores, 2002).

Children who engaged in commercial sex work by many reasons such as, running away from home, child abuse and neglect, psychological and emotional difficulties, family -

related risk factors, child -specific risk factors, socio-economic related risk factors, environmental -related risk factors, poverty, personal life style and illiteracy. And children who engaged commercial sex works has it's own consequence such as ,physical like victimization on the streets: beating, rape and murder, crime like delinquency and contact with the juvenile- justice system, health concern like HIV infection and other sexually transmitted disease and psychological disorders including depression and risks of suicide and substance abuse (As cited in Pollet, 2010)).

The children involve in commercial sex work experience negative effect. Sex work has been identified as the core group for remission of HIV/ AIDS and STD; thus, that face discrimination throughout the world (as cited in Zurita, 2012).

Child prostitution is growing in both urban and real area of Ethiopia .in the capital city Addis Ababa the number of children victimized in committal sexual exploitation (CSE) is increased at an alarming rate. Numerous children migrate

from rural areas in order to scope poverty. There are different types of child commercial sex work such as working on the street or alcohol houses working, in rented house/beds and working in rent places for chat & drugs (Huynh et.al., 1993)

Children according to international NGOS, child prostitution was agrgrading problem particularly in urban areas. According to NGO report 60 present of present exploited in prostitution were the age between 16 and 25 underage girls worked as hotel workers barmaids , and pervasive poverty, migration to urban centers early marriage HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted clause, limited educational and job portends aggravated the sexual exploitation of children (As cited in Brezlaff, 2008).

The children often blamed lock family death poor education or unwanted pregnancy for driving them towards prostitution. Many of the child commercial sex worker had been victims of serious sexual and physical abuse. Almost half of the children said they had been raped on the streets and at hired had fallen pregnant with some resorting to back strict abortions “the abortions were performed mainly by traditional medicine and in the street illegally “said the report (Qayyum et al., 2013). The majority of girls who inter prostitution appear to have suffered prior childhood sexual abuse (Conteh, 2011)

## 2. Methodology

The study design: the mixed research approach (both quantitative & qualitative) was employed to conduct this study.

*Participants:* The target population of this study was the children who were already engaged in commercial sex work in Arba Minch city, Ethiopia

*Sample size:* From the total children who were engaged in commercial sex work in Arba Minch city the investigators have selected 30 respondents for the quantitative data gathering process & six participants were selected purposively. This is because assessing the whole population or target participants consume time. Moreover, the difficult nature of the problem also limits the investigators idea and opinions.

*Sampling techniques and procedure:* In order to select sample from the total population, the investigations were employed non-probability sampling techniques specifically snowball and purposive sampling technique.

*Methods of data analysis:* Simple description such as using percentage, tabulation, narration and summarization has made. In order to know the clear nature of the problem, investigators forced to use the above mentioned data analysis mechanisms.

*Ethical considerations of the study:* In the process of conducting this study, the researchers have followed the major ethical standards in the research. In data collection process, researchers have obtained the informed consent from the participants, permission and volunteerism before starting gathering data process. Besides this, in writing the research report, the researchers have wrote only what has

obtained from the relevant related literature and the data collected. And all informants and participants were well informed about the purpose of the research.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. The Causing Factors of Child Commercial Sex Work

Table 1. The causing factors of child commercial sex work.

| No.                | Items   | Categories   | Frequency                        | Percentage       |
|--------------------|---|--|----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1                  | what factors contributes to engage in commercial sex work                             | Family factors(divorce, conflict, ...)                   | 11                               | 36.67            |
|                    |   | Peer pressure  | 5                                | 16.67            |
|                    |   | Seeking better ways of living in city                    | 6                                | 20               |
|                    |   | Socio-economic factors?(unemployment, social perception) | 6                                | 20               |
|                    |   | others   | 2                                | 6.66             |
|                    |   | total  | 30                               | 100              |
|                    |   | 2  | To whom you are living together? | With your family |
| With your friends  | 15  |  |                                  | 50               |
| Alone              | 4   |  |                                  | 13.33            |
| With the relatives | 8   |  |                                  | 26.67            |
| total              | 30  |  |                                  | 100              |
| 3                  | Do think your living resident place has contribution to engage in commercial sex work | yes  | 12                               | 40               |
|                    |   | no   | 18                               | 60               |
|                    |   |  |                                  |                  |

As data obtained from the above table shows that about 11(36.67), 6(20), 6(20),5(16.67)& 2(6.66) of participants related child commercial sex work with family factors, peers pressure, better life, socio-economic factor & others factors respectively. In addition, about 18(60)) of the participant stated that their current resident places have no contribution to engage in commercial sex work while the remaining 12(40) of the participants stated it has a big contribution to engage in commercial sex work.

How resident places can contribute its apart to engage in commercial sex work? Respondent has revealed that a numbers of Bars and nightclubs are bearing from the time to time in their resident places attracted children attention to involve in sex for commercial purposes. Having a liberal kind of sex related communication with bar women and other teenagers directly or indirectly bending children’s and young adolescents’ attention to engage in commercial sex work.

In addition to the quantitative data analysis, the investigators have used the qualitative data analysis. This is in order to support the quantitative information and evidences that was obtained from the participants. According to the semi-structured interview result, the majority of the participants believed that children are interested to engage in commercial sex work because of lack of job opportunities, family conflict, and family divorce, poverty, & lack of clear information and knowledge.

The above statement clearly supported by the key informant who participated in the in-depth interview “Conflict is a day today job in my family, really I hate it, so I

am not interested to live with them. It is annoying”.

The second key informant revealed that “ I am not happy on the act of my stepfather; he has attempted four or five times to rape me because hopefully he has unsafe sexual relationship with my mom. I morally tortured because of his act”.

### 3.2. Consequences of Child Commercial Sex Work

*Table 2. Consequences of child commercial sex work.*

| No. | Item  | Categories   | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----|---|--|-----------|------------|
|     | Do think that commercial sex work has negative consequences   |  |           |            |
|     |   | yes  | 30        | 100        |
|     |   | no   | 0         | 0          |
|     |   | total  | 30        | 100        |
| 2   | If your answer in question 11 is yes, what do think the consequences?   |  |           |            |
|     |   | Victimization of the street  | 4         | 13.33      |
|     |   | Delinquency and crime  | 0         | 0          |
|     |   | Health problem( exposing to STDs, HIV/AIDS, Unwanted pregnancy...) | 11        | 36.67      |
|     |   | Social isolation   | 6         | 20         |
|     |   | Anxiety and depression   | 6         | 20         |
|     |   | others   | 3         | 10         |
|     |   | total  | 30        | 100        |
| 3   | With how many persons you have make sexual intercourse per day.   |  |           |            |
|     |   | with one person  | 11        | 36.67      |
|     |   | with two persons   | 7         | 23.33      |
|     |   | more than two persons  | 12        | 40         |
|     |   | total  | 30        | 100        |
| 4   | Do have any experience to use condom(women's or forcing sexual partner to use condom) in practicing sexual intercourse? |  |           |            |
|     |   | yes  | 30        | 100        |
|     |   | no   | 0         | 0          |
|     |   | total  | 30        | 100        |
| 5   | Have you ever abused as the result of commercial sex work?  |  |           |            |
|     |   | yes  | 27        | 90         |
|     |   | no   | 3         | 10         |
|     |   | total  | 30        | 100        |
| 6   | If your answer in a above question is yes, what types of abuses you experienced so far?                                 |  |           |            |
|     |   | physical abuse   | 5         | 16.66      |
|     |   | sexual abuse   | 5         | 16.67      |
|     |   | psychological abuse  | 11        | 36.67      |
|     |   | others   | 9         | 30         |
|     |   | total  | 30        | 100        |

As indicated above table about 30(100) of the participants agreed that commercial sex work has negative effects on the children's wellbeing. On the other hand, about 11(36.67), 6(20),6(20) & 4(13.33) of the participants stated that commercial sex work expose children to health problems, social isolation, anxiety and depression;& victimization. The remaining 3(10) relate its effect with other factors. As shown in the table above around 30(100) of the participants have concrete experience to use condom during their sexual intercourse with their sex partners. Moreover, about 27(90) of participants state that commercial sex work expose children to abuses at various level. For example, about 11(36.67), 5(16.66), & 5(16.67) of participants are experienced psychological abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse due to commercial sex work. In addition, the remaining 6(20) of participants are experienced other types

of abuse.

The information obtained in semi-structured interview shows that being engaging in commercial sex work exposes children to pessimistic thought (hopelessness), stress, physical torturing, discrimination and stigma, unwanted pregnancy and self- haltering.

In addition to the above, a 16 years old key informant stated that “Male are selfish, look even they agree to have a short sex, but they are forced to have a full night sex by using their force in the private bedroom. If you are crying or shouting, no one can hear you. If you try to protect yourself from the victim, they can bitterly bit and seriously damage you. Even sometimes bad drinkers want to use sex without condom by using their force. Oh.... It is disgusting (tearing for a long time)...” a key informant.

As a key informant explained her lived experience “Due to a multiple or forced sexual intercourse I have faced abortion (a long salient) twice in my lifetime, thanks to Almighty God I am HIV/AIDS negative. Really unbelievable for me”

### 3.3. Attitudes of Children Towards Commercial Sex Work

As indicated the above table 29(96.67) of respondents are agreed with having sex with different person can increase their daily monthly income. About 14(46.67), 9(30), 7(23.33) of the respondents are neutral, agreed, & disagreed with whether having sex with different persons can expose them to STDs & HIV/AIDS respectively. About 15(50) of respondents are ashamed on their current practice while 13(43.33) of the respondents are not feel any shame on their current practice. Majority of the participants believe that it is possible to withdraw from commercial sex work if they obtain another job (i.e about 18(60) of the respondents solid position to withdraw from commercial sex work while the remaining respondents face difficulty to decide on it. Around 16(53.33), 11(36.67) & 3(10) of the respondents agree, disagree & neutral on whether engaging in commercial sex work is a private issue or not respectively.

### 3.4. Mechanisms to Handle Child Commercial Sex Work

Awareness creation on the effect of child commercial sex work, creating a job opportunity for children, & creating advance educational opportunity for children in rural area are critically emphasized means to overcome the problem. In addition, fulfilling educational facilities (i.e. exercise books, textbooks, pens, pencil, bags), & preparing lunch meal for children from the low-income family the other direction to overcome the problem. Creating awareness on child labor, child trafficking and parenting style are also the suggested direction to overcome the child commercial sex work.

“Look it creates a big job opportunities/source of income for us, so why I leave my job. Even you know I can obtain 300/400 Eth birr /pair sex with my customers. However, if I get better job, trust me without any doubt I will leave it. Unless and otherwise it is my life...my sister (a smile face)” a 15 years old key informant.

**Table 3.** Attitudes of children towards child commercial sex work.

| No. | Item  | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----|---|------------|-----------|------------|
| 1   | Having sex with different persons can increase my daily/monthly income      | agree      | 29        | 96.67      |
|     |   | neutral    | 1         | 3.33       |
|     |   | disagree   | 0         | 0          |
|     |   | total      | 30        | 100        |
|     |   |            |           |            |
| 2   | Having sex with different person expose to STDs, and HIV/AIDs               | agree      | 9         | 30         |
|     |   | neutral    | 14        | 46.67      |
|     |   | disagree   | 7         | 23.33      |
|     |   | total      | 30        | 100        |
|     |   |            |           |            |
| 3   | I feel ashamed when I think my current conduct/practice                     | agree      | 15        | 50         |
|     |   | neutral    | 2         | 6.67       |
|     |   | disagree   | 13        | 43.33      |
|     |   | total      | 30        | 100        |
|     |   |            |           |            |
| 4   | Commercial sex work is immoral and unethical conduct                        | agree      | 14        | 46.67      |
|     |   | neutral    | 4         | 13.33      |
|     |   | disagree   | 12        | 40         |
|     |   | total      | 30        | 100        |
|     |   |            |           |            |
| 5   | It is impossible to dropout commercial sex work because base for my life    | agree      | 6         | 20         |
|     |   | neutral    | 6         | 20         |
|     |   | disagree   | 18        | 60         |
|     |   | total      | 30        | 100        |
|     |   |            |           |            |
| 6   | I do not care about other persons or society because it is my private issue | agree      | 16        | 53.33      |
|     |   | neutral    | 3         | 10         |
|     |   | disagree   | 11        | 36.67      |
|     |   | total      | 30        | 100        |
|     |   |            |           |            |
| 7   | I never hesitate my self/my current practice because it is my job           | agree      | 19        | 63.33      |
|     |   | neutral    | 4         | 13.33      |
|     |   | disagree   | 7         | 23.33      |
|     |   | total      | 30        | 100        |
|     |   |            |           |            |

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Causes of Child Commercial Sex Work

In the previous studies which are done by Flores (2002) indicated that economic, family conditions, psychological factors, socio-cultural factors and family level of per-income is considered as a pushing and pulling factors of child commercial sex work. Similarly, the current study in Arba Minich town reveals that lack of awareness, lack of educational facilities and access, peer pressure, looking better life in the cities, & the socio economic factors are the major causing factors.

### 4.2. Consequences of Child Commercial Sex Work

Children postulants exposed to physical torturing, psychological and social problems. Beside the problems above children prostitution are highly vulnerable to STDs and HIV/AIDs, victimization, sexual abuse (unwanted pregnancy), & social isolation. Similar with the current study, the previous study which has been done by Conteh (2011), shows that child prostitution are exposed to psychological,

social, physical and sexual abuses.

### 4.3. Attitudes of Child Commercial Sexual Work

Though the participants attached the practices of child commercial sex work with economic advantages, the majority of the participants have negative attitudes towards commercial sex work. That the reason that almost all participants have interest to withdrawal from their current practices if they can get opportunities of other alternative jobs. This current findings have strong similarity with the previously conducted research study by Levitt et al., (2007).

### 4.4. Mechanisms to Handle Commercial Sex Work

Studies conducted previously by Brezloff (2008) shows that family, society, government, social organizations and religious institutions are responsible to overcome the problems child prostitution. Community mobilization, awareness creation, avoiding child labor, & child trafficking are suggested mechanisms to handle the problems of child prostitution. Similar with the previously conducted researches the current finding also confirms the previous study.

## 5. Conclusion

- Children are forced to engage in commercial sex work because of family related factors, pre group pressure, Socio economic factors, poverty and lack of enough education and job opportunities
- Commercial sex work highly expose children to victimization, STDs/HIV/AIDs, sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychological torture, anxiety and depression, social isolation & developing low self-confidence
- Child commercial sex workers have great interest to change their current practice if they can get other job opportunities. They have low level of satisfaction in their current job.
- Advancing education access and facilities, creating awareness, creating alternative job opportunities, & social, physical and psychological supports are critical directions to handle children based commercial sexual work.

## Recommendations

It needs the collaborative action from individuals, family, non- government and governmental organization to alleviate the problem. Some of the measure that should be taken as follow:

- increasing awareness and community mobilization.
- Enhancing education facilities to the children.
- Focusing on family, & children wellbeing.
- Mobilizing public health, economic and social issues in the city.
- Providing economic and social support to children and poor family.
- Enhancing sexual education with in family, schools &

public areas.

Moreover, this study calls others for further and deeper investigation in the area of social environmental and economic impacts of the problem.

#### *Strength*

- Emphasizing on the impact of commercial work on children wellbeing
- Using qualitative approach to assess the problem in-depth
- Focusing on children

#### *Weakness*

- Only limited to use descriptive research design
- The small number of the participants involved in the study

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