

Street women prostitutes in Agartala city

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ABSTRACT

In this study an attempt was made to assess the overall profile of street women prostitutes in Agartala, particularly in terms of income and social status. The results indicated that prostitution is the major challenge before the society. It was evident from the study that the poor financial condition and family problem were the basic reasons for it. Bengali women were more involved in this profession and they are easily identified for their dresses and makeup. Women prostitutes are facing more health hazards because most of them do not use any preventive measures. Thus, the paper suggests that government should take initiatives for rehabilitate those prostitutes.

KEY WORDS : Customer, Income, Prostitution, Sex

Sarkar, Sukanta (2011). Street women prostitute's in Agartala city, *Adv. Res. J. Soc. Sci.*, 2 (1) : 131-133.

Prostitution is low-skill, labour intensive, female, and well paid. Street level prostitution entails sexual acts for money or for barter that occur on and off the streets and include sexual activities in cars and hotels, as dancers in gentlemen's clubs, massage parlor work, truck stops, and crack house work. It represents that segment of the prostitution industry where there is the most violence.

Viewing street level prostitution as a combination of both pimp-controlled prostitution and independent entrepreneurial prostitution is probably more representative of the phenomenon of street work. A pimp is one who controls the actions and lives off the proceeds of or more women who work the streets. Pimps call themselves one "players" and call their profession "the game." The mobility of the people involved in prostitution has always represented an element that distinguishes the phenomenon of prostitution, whether in relation to the market, to exploitation, to control systems, to government or to the repression to which this phenomenon is subjected. Street prostitution is also the most visible and, at the same time, that which creates the most attention and social alarm.

Street prostitution varies with the type of prostitutes involved and their commitment to prostitution, the market size, the community's tolerance levels, the degree to which prostitutes are organized, and the relationship of prostitution to drug use and trafficking. Street prostitution accounts

for perhaps only 10 to 20 per cent of all prostitution, but it has the most visible negative impact on the community. Street prostitution areas are typically small, less than a square mile. Larger cities usually have several such areas. They are typically industrial, declining residential, near major thoroughfares (including tunnels, bridges or airport access roads), or near transportation hubs such as train and bus stations. Street prostitution flourishes around convention centers and hotels, especially when mostly male conventions are held.

Prostitution is a multibillion dollar business that employs millions of women worldwide. A recent study by the International Labour Office estimated that in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, between 0.25 and 1.5 per cent of the female population work as prostitutes and that the sex sector accounts for between 2 and 14 per cent of the gross domestic product. Prostitution is more common in less developed countries but far from absent in developed. The main objectives of this paper are to analyse the socio-economic status of street women prostitutes and to identify the probable solution for that problem.

The present study was conducted in Agartala city which is the capital of Tripura.. The Agartala city was selected purposely since large numbers of prostitutes are lives in this city. Forty prostitutes were selected from the

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city by using stratified random sampling. There are no government official data present about the total existence of street prostitutes in the city. The respondents were selected from each identified areas of the city in consultant with local person and a few community members of the area concerned. Data were collected by the investigator with the help of a well prepared, structured interview schedule employing personal contract. Thereafter, data were analyzed, tabulated and interpreted in the light of the objective of the study.

Prostitution is the exchange of sexual acts for payment.

Table 1 indicates that adult women were more involved in street prostitution.

Table 1: Age of the prostitutes

Sr. No.	Age	Number of prostitutes	Percentage of prostitutes
1.	Below 15 yrs.	4	10
2.	Between 15-25 yrs	27	67.5
3.	Between 25-35 yrs.	9	22.5
4.	Above 35 yrs.	0	0
Total		40	100

Source : Field survey

Table 2 shows that poor financial condition was the major problem before the prostitutes and many times family also force them in this profession.

Table 2 : Reasons of prostitution profession

Sr. No.	Reasons	Number of prostitutes	Percentage of prostitutes
1.	Poor financial condition	40	100
2.	Lack of alternative work	10	25
3.	Migration	10	25
4.	Self pleasure	0	0
5.	Family force	34	85
Total		40	100

Source: Field survey

Table 3 depicts that in street prostitutes, the married women were ahead than the unmarried girls.

Table 3 shows that Bengalis were more involved in street prostitutes than the tribals.

Table 3 : Marital status of prostitutes

Sr. No.	Marital status	Number of prostitutes	Percentage of prostitutes
1.	Married	30	75
2.	Unmarried	10	25
Total		40	100

Source: Field survey

There are several social and economic factors that are associated with entry into prostitution. Among the more prevalent factors are age, economic conditions, and family condition. Some other factors are also responsible like as, early home leaving, childhood sexual and physical abuse, substance abuse, and runaway behaviour. Additionally, parental violence, cohesion of a family unit, parental alcohol abuse, adolescent substance abuse and self-esteem contribute to an individual's involvement in prostitution.

Street prostitutes have lower status than prostitutes who work indoors. They are often in some state of personal decline (e.g., running away from abusive situations, becoming drug dependent, deteriorating psychologically, and/or getting less physically attractive). Most have social, economic and health problems. Most come at first time in prostitution at a young age, often before they are 20. In Agartala city prostitution is legally not recognized. Street prostitutes are not openly found in day time but in time they are found in various parts of the city. Basically young boys and motor drivers are the main customers of them. As they are not looking so good therefore revenue earned by them is also less *i.e.* Rs. 100- 200 per night. In major cases it has been found that husband of the prostitutes are rickshaw driver and they generally collect the customers. It is very painful that husband forces his wife in prostitution. Some prostitutes are migrated from other places and also join in this profession for the easy money. Some street prostitutes are highly mobile, traveling from one part of the city to another part, sometimes on a regular circuit, or when they think the risks are too high in one part or the money is better in another. Basically hotels are the main place for the intercourse and also prostitutes have also own place for that. Local police are also well connected with them and therefore rarely police take any operations against them. In many cases, lonely land and forest areas are the open place for this business.

Prostitution is not wanted sex, it is unwanted sex. Although the women are agreeing to sexual activity in order to survive, provide livelihood for their children this is unwanted sexual activity. Prostitution is intrinsically harmful and traumatic and just calling it a job won't make it harmless. Prostitution is a market based on demand and if there is a demand from men to use women and children

Table 4 : Tribe of the prostitutes

Sr. No.	Tribe	Number of prostitutes	Percentage of prostitutes
1.	Bengali	33	82.5
2.	Tribal	07	17.5
Total		40	100

Source: Field survey

sexually for money then this will be met, by whatever means necessary. Prostitutes have their best earnings while young, as opposed to many other professions that have a flat or positive age-earnings profile. A low-skilled woman who plans to remain so does not give up much in terms of training possibilities and hence future career options by a stint in prostitution. Women tell us that they need stable housing, social services, medical treatment, and job training in order to get out of prostitution.

Street prostitution is dangerous. Street prostitutes are at a much higher risk for any kind of violence due to the private nature and location of their work. As many women do not take preventive measure during the intercourse and therefore they are bearing high risk of complex diseases like AIDS. In addition to the dangerous lifestyles street prostitutes are exposed to, long-term psychological and health effects are more prevalent in this population. The amount of physical and psychological harm associated with street prostitution is undeniable.

Concluding Observation:

Socio-economic status of street women prostitutes is not good. They are found in various parts of the city in night. Financial crisis and family conditions are the major reasons of prostitution. Young boys and the motor divers are main customers of them. Bengali are more involved in this profession and young girls are generally more involved in it. Most of them are illiterate and in many cases they don't use protective measure. Therefore, they bear high health risk. City police are also involved with them and so hardly any steps are taken against them.

Rehabilitation is more important for changing the socio-economic status of the street women prostitution. Society has a responsibility to educate the public about the social and economic factors associated with entry into prostitution. Education initiatives should include the use of school programmes and the media to convey the message that prostitution is often a result of coercion and desperation. Further, future social development initiatives should continue to acknowledge prostitutes as victims, and realize that the punitive nature of the criminal law is rarely of any help in addressing a social problem like prostitution.

The following are potentially useful measures for reducing the street prostitution:

- Enforcing laws prohibiting soliciting, patronizing and loitering for the purposes of prostitution;
- Establishing a highly visible police presence;
- Enhancing fines/penalties for prostitution-related

offenses committed within specified high-activity zones;

- Banning prostitutes or clients from geographic areas;
- Encouraging community members to publicly protest against prostitutes or clients;
- Educating and warning high-risk prostitute and client populations;
- Serving restraining orders/civil injunctions against habitual prostitutes;
- Closing streets and alleys, diverting traffic or regulating parking;
- Imposing curfews on prostitutes;
- Exposing clients to publicity;

Enforcing zoning, nuisance abatement and business license regulations against properties used for prostitution.

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