

The Social Construction of the Family among the Survivors of Sex Trafficking

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Abstract : Sex trafficking is a traumatic ongoing process which includes human rights violations against the victims. Majority of the trafficked individuals in India are from families with low socioeconomic status, from rural areas, unmarried or married off at a very young age. Many of the sex trafficked feel that it is necessary to make sacrifices, for the benefit of their families. The combination of these cultural family values with the stigma of rape and prostitution are manipulated and used as a tool in the abuse of power against the sex trafficked. The rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of these individuals are usually difficult due to the stigma and social exclusion that they face. In these circumstances, social support is very effective in social inclusion of these individuals. The present study was a qualitative one, using semi-structured interviews with 29 Indian survivors of sex trafficking and a few sex workers. Thematic analysis was done on the data derived from the semi-structured interviews. The major findings indicate that the family can be seen as both the 'cause' for being sex trafficked, and the factor in victim continuing to be sex trafficked. At the same time, it can also become a driver for getting rescued, rehabilitated and reintegrated. The study also explores the social construction about 'family' among the survivors of sex trafficking, reflecting on who they refer to as 'family', what they mean by the term 'family' and how these families emerge. Therefore the analytic concept of 'family' is a crucial element in sex trafficking and cannot be defined only in terms of its conventional definition of a basic unit of society.

Keywords : sex-trafficking, survivor, family, social construction

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