

Exploring the Risks and Vulnerabilities of Child Trafficking in West Java, Indonesia

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Abstract : Although reforms in trafficking regulations have taken place since 2007, Indonesia is still struggling to fight child trafficking. This study aimed to identify and assess risk factors and vulnerabilities in the life of trafficked children prior to, during, and after being trafficked in order to inform the child protection system and its policies. The study was qualitative and utilized in-depth interviews to collect data. Data were gathered in 2014 and 2015 from 15 trafficked and sexually exploited girls aged 14 to 17 years originating from West Java. Social workers, safe home personnel and parents were also included as informants. Data analysis was guided by the ecological perspective and theme analyses. The study found that risks and vulnerabilities of the victims were associated with conditions at various levels of the environment. At the micro level, risk factors and vulnerabilities included young age, family conflict/violence, involvement with the “wrong” circle of friends/peers, family poverty, lack of social and economic support for the victim’s family, and psychological damages due to trafficking experiences. At the mezzo level, the lack of structured activities after school, economic inequality, stigma towards victims, lack of services for victims, and minimum public education on human trafficking were among the community hazards that increased the vulnerability and risks. Gender inequality, consumerism, the view of children as assets, corruption, weak law enforcement, the lack of institutional support, and community-wide ignorance regarding trafficking were found as factors that increased risks and vulnerabilities at the macro level. The findings from the study underline the necessity to reduce risk factors and promote protective factors at the individual, family, community and societal levels. Shifting the current focus from tertiary to primary/prevention policies and improving institutional efforts are pressing needs in the context of reducing child trafficking in Indonesia. The roles of human service providers including social work also should be promoted.

Keywords : child trafficking, child sexual exploitation, ecological perspective, risks and vulnerabilities

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