

Child Trafficking and Associated Factors in Earthquake Affected Area of Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Background: Child trafficking popularly known as recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, and/or receipt of kidnapping of under 18 years child. The purpose of trafficking might be for forced labor, slavery and different types of exploitation including sexual exploitation. The main objective of this study was to assess the knowledge about child trafficking and factors associated with child trafficking in Gorkha district of Nepal

Methods: Cross sectional study conducted to determine the knowledge and factors related to child trafficking in Gorkha district. Two urban municipalities selected purposively and other three rural municipalities were randomly selected. Out of 160,772 households, total 300 households for survey was calculated by using Yamane formula ($n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$). Wards of the municipalities were Primary Sampling Unit. Based on Population Proportionate Sampling technique; required number of households of each Wards was identified. In Wards, households for survey were selected by using simple random method. Head of the selected household were the respondent for household survey. Ten Key Informant Interviews were done with policemen, teachers, social workers, community leaders, stakeholders and six Focus Group Discussions were done with Youths (15-25 years), Parents and Social worker/teacher/community leader groups.

Results: Remarkable proportions of respondents have correct knowledge about the child trafficking. Near relatives, unknown person, peers group, parents/family members and neighbor were common traffickers. During and after disaster is the most vulnerable time/event for child trafficking. False marriage, assuring lucrative job, asking for adoption and proposing good education were tricks of traffickers for child trafficking. Homeless children, children travelling without parents, socially isolated children, children travelling at night, unprotected girl, orphan children separated from family or without parent are most vulnerable for child Trafficking.

Conclusion: Family, social groups, government officials and stakeholders should jointly initiate for anti- child trafficking movement. School teacher and management committee should also take initiation to make fully aware to school going children about different dimensions/aspects of Child Right and Child Trafficking.

Keywords: Child trafficking, earthquake, traffickers, vulnerable, homeless and orphan children

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INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking has been considered as a form of modern day slavery. All over the world, millions of people including children are victims of this serious problem i.e. human trafficking.¹ Human trafficking is done for the exploitation of human beings, especially vulnerable populations and also considered as one of the most severe abuses of human rights today. Human right violation in different form can be the both cause and consequences of human trafficking². Child trafficking is a severe problem mostly found all over the world which refers to persons under the age of 18 years both male and female. Children are trafficked globally and domestically for the purpose of labor, sex and other forms of violation and torture. Child trafficking for sexual purpose is a particularly intolerable form of human trafficking due to the natural and inherent vulnerability of children.^{3,4} and symbolizes a severe form of child ill-treatment and cruelty.⁵ In Nepal 5,000 – 15,000 women and girls are trafficked annually to India and other countries for the purpose of commercial sex and other forms of exploitations. Similarly, one thousand to two thousand children are working in the circuses at any time. Among them, about ninety percent are boys and rest are girls.⁶

Trafficking to children may occur within the country also known as the domestic trafficking. Children are moved across borders to neighboring countries or transported to third countries thousands of miles away from their home town which is regarded as (international or transnational trafficking).⁷ Usually, girls are at more risk of getting sold for sex work or domestic work and boys are for forced labor and sometimes for sexual activities. The earthquake of 2072 B.S. in Nepal

has destroyed the several homes and property which hit the schools, health institutions and livelihoods of the country's poorest people and in most remote areas of the country. Traffickers sometimes use the tricks of intimidating their parents into abandoning their children to orphanage homes so that they can capitalize on the adoption trade. It can be assumed that if parents are tempted with unbelievable promises of education, employment and an improved quality of life, these children might be at higher risk and enforced in below par managed adoption, exploitation and different abuses. One of the major cause of entry of traffickers in the community and easy access to parents might be due to loss of livelihoods and deteriorating living conditions. During the critical time, traffickers easily convince parents to provide better life to their children and motivate their best for trafficking. Usually, traffickers promise for better education, better lodging and fooding and monthly allowance as well. In reality, lives of children could end up with being bored and extremely exploited and abused for longer period of time.

Reflection of newspapers and research reports have shown that after the devastating earthquake of 25th April, 2015, the traffickers have visited the rural areas and lured the people with small supports. This non-interventional cross sectional study was conducted to find out the truth related to knowledge on child trafficking and factors related to child trafficking in Gorkha district of Nepal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Out of 14 earthquake affected districts, most affected Gorkha district was selected for study.

All total five municipalities, two urban municipalities (i.e., Palungtar and Gorkha) were selected purposively and other three rural municipalities (i.e., Arughat, Bhimsen and Lakhan Thapa) of Gorkha district were randomly selected for this study. Out of total 160,772 households of five study municipalities, all total 300 households for survey was calculated by using Yamane formula $(n) = N / (1 + Ne^2)$. A multistage sampling method was used and Wards of the municipalities were Primary Sampling Unit ((PSU). At Ward level, households sampling frame was developed based on Census 2011 after consultation and discussion with district level stakeholders. Based on Population Proportionate Sampling (PPS) technique; required number of households of each Wards was identified. In Wards, households for survey were selected by using simple random method. Head of the selected household were the respondent for household survey. To collect qualitative data, ten Key Informant Interviews (KIs) were done with policemen, teachers, FCHVs, social workers, community leaders, stakeholders and six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were done with Youths (15-25 yrs), Parents (both male & female) and Social worker/teacher/community leader groups. Prior to data collection, study purpose was explained clearly and informed consent was obtained from the respondents and privacy and confidentiality was ensured during data collection and whole study process. A pre-tested semi-structured household questionnaire was introduced after obtaining written consent from respondents. Data were analyzed by using IBM SPSS version-20 and relevant statistical test has been applied.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio demographic characteristics of the survey respondents

Socio-demographic features	Number (N=300)	Percentage
Age (In years)		
19-29	86	28.7
30-40	80	26.7
41-50	68	22.7
>50	66	22.0
Sex		
Female	170	56.7
Male	130	43.3
Caste/Ethnicity		
Dalit	67	22.3
Janjati	140	46.7
Bramin/Chhetri	80	26.7
Others	13	4.3
Religion		
Hinduism	287	95.7
Buddhism	2	0.7
Islam	6	2.0
Others	5	1.7
Marital status		
Married	281	93.7
Unmarried	19	6.3
Total	300	100.0
Educational status		
Illiterate	17	5.7
Literate (able to read and write)	45	15.0
1-5 grade	64	21.3
6-8 grade	100	33.3
9-12 grade	52	17.3
Graduation and above	22	7.3
Occupation		
Farmer	131	43.7
Business	69	23.0
Foreign employment	17	5.7
Government & NGO employment	28	9.3
Others	55	18.3

Out of total respondents, 170 (56.7%) of the respondents were female and remaining were male 130 (43.3%) and majority (28.7%) of the respondents were 19-29 yr age group followed by 30-40 yrs (26.7%). Large majority (46.7%) of the respondents were Janjati, followed by Brahmin/Chhetri (26.7%) and Dalit (22.3%) and significant of them were Hindu (95.7%). Remarkable proportions of the

respondents were married (93.7%) and remaining was unmarried (6.3%). Similarly, one third (33.3%) of them have attended Secondary level of education followed by Primary (21.3%) and Higher Secondary (17.3%). However, 5.7 percent of the respondents were illiterate. Majority of the respondents were Farmer (43.7%) and Business (23%). Few of them were Government and NGO employ (9.3%) and foreign employ (5.7%).

Table2: Situation of child trafficking

Situation of child trafficking	Number (N=300)	Percentage
Meaning of child		
Correct answer	300	100.0
Incorrect answer	0	0.0
Meaning of child trafficking		
Correct answer	298	99.3
Incorrect answer	2	0.7
Common child traffickers		
Near relatives	168	56.0
Unknown person	87	29.0
Peer groups	36	12.0
Parents	6	2.0
Neighbor	3	1.0
Vulnerable time/events of child trafficking		
Feast and festivals	78	26.0
During and after disaster	125	41.7
All the year round	79	26.3
During travelling	18	6.0
Way/tricks applied for child trafficking		
Doing false marriage	144	48.0
Lucrative Job	119	39.7
In the name of adaption	25	8.3
In the name of providing good education	12	4.0
Vulnerable for Child trafficking		
Homeless child	293	97.7
Travelling at night of child	244	81.3
Travelling without parents	278	92.7
Social isolation of child	267	89.0

Table 2 showed that remarkable proportion of the respondents have correct knowledge (99.3%) about the Child Trafficking. Near relatives (56%) were most common Child

“Illiterate girls from deprived family are mostly missing from northern part of Gorkha because of poor economical condition of the family. But it is not sure whether they are trafficked or not”

-32/F Arughat, FGD participant (Social worker/ community leader group)

Traffickers and other traffickers were as Unknown person (29%), peers group (12%), parents (2%) and neighbor (1%).

During and after disaster (41.7%) is the most vulnerable time/event for Child Trafficking followed by round the year (26.3%) and feast

“After earthquake in Gorkha, there had been health camp in school; after sometime we came to know that girl student studying in Grade-11 has been missing from the school. But none of other (including police) gave attention for this issue”

-48/M, Arughat, FGD participant (Social worker/local leader)

and festivals (26%). Doing false marriage by trafficker (48%) is the most common way or tricks applied for Child Trafficking. Similarly, other tricks applied for trafficking were lucrative job (39.7%), asking for adoption (8.3%) and proposing good education (4%). Homeless children (97.7%) are most vulnerable for trafficking and children travelling without parents (92.7%), socially isolated children (89%) and children travelling at night (81.3%) are also vulnerable for Child Trafficking.

Factors Related to Child Trafficking

Almost all FGD participants from both parent and social workers/local leaders group agreed

that poverty, ignorance, unawareness and discrepancy between girl and boys are the most common factors associated with child trafficking. Most of the FGD participants from social worker/local leaders have heard very painful stories like brother have sold sister and father sold daughter in India for prostitution and Circus. But in society they (trafficker-father or brother) use to say that trafficked/missing child/girl is working or studying in big cities (Kathmandu, Chitwan, Bombay etc).

KII respondent (Chairman, Lakahn Thapa Municipality) stated that ambitious dream to be rich and to accomplish luxury life in cities are pulling and poverty, scarcity of survival are pushing factors for trafficking adolescent and children. Another KII respondent (police inspector) shared that if there is not harmonized environment in family or parents are quarrelling and irritating, not love and attachment in family setting- gives more chances to traffickers and traffickers targets child of such broken family and easily influences to child and parents.

DISCUSSION

According to the definition of United Nations, in broad term, human trafficking is recruitment, transportation, transfer, sheltering or delivery of human beings by threatening, force or abuse of power. In case of child traffickers usually provide them false assurance, and they often leave home because traffickers trap by providing dream of high standard life and opportunity of consuming all modern facilities. It is found that all over the world, traffickers get victory over the expectation and trust of children and their families with false assurance and honeyed talk. With false promise of better life elsewhere

“Children, especially adolescent girls easily come in false assurance of traffickers and have more chances of having trafficked in rural community”

-38/M, Palungtar, KII respondent

from their hometown and sugary conversation, the children fall in trap and become exploited. Traffickers also threaten and torture their families which results that most of the children leave home without adequate preparation and proper counselling and they start their work far from home at any circumstances and compelled to compromise even in ill managed places and conditions. In this context, current study has assessed the situation of child trafficking and factors related to child trafficking in Gorkha district of Nepal. The current study shows that all most all of the respondents have correct knowledge about the child trafficking. Near relatives, unknown person, peers group, parents/family members and neighbor were common traffickers. During and after disaster is the most vulnerable time/event for Child Trafficking. False marriage, assuring lucrative job, asking

“If parents quarrel most of the time, alcoholic and give less attention to child; trafficker target to such family and child; where they can influences easily”

- Police Inspector, 41/M Gorkha, KII respondent

for adoption and proposing good education were tricks of traffickers for child trafficking. Homeless children, children travelling without parents, socially isolated children, children travelling at night, unprotected girl and orphan children separated from family or without parent are most vulnerable for Child Trafficking.

Previous report has pointed that women and children representing from poor, rural and remote areas with low level of education from developing countries are more vulnerable to trafficking.

The targeted area of traffickers is also shelter homes and refugee camps where they can trap victims easily without more efforts.⁸ Most commonly used modalities applied by traffickers are false assurance of highly paid job, an adoring relationship, or new and stimulating opportunities and many forms of violence and exploitations are applied upon them including physical, sexual and psychological violence. The culprit can work individually or a member of networking of criminal gangs who work for profit by wrong doing.⁹

Child trafficking is the consequences of unmet demand for cheap and flexible labour all over the world. One of the major cause of child trafficking might be the fast growing commercial sex markets and high demand of girls and boys for the sustainability of this industry. Though child labour is considered cheap, it is wrong interpretation because children work less and finally they give fewer outputs than other elder age groups. Therefore, mostly children are used for mishandling. The reason is they are weak and do not dare to claim their privileges and forced to work longer hours with nominal wages and facilities. A study has disclosed that numbers of supply factors play a vital role to boost the trafficking of children all over the world. Most common factors represent poverty, aspiration of good earning for their livelihood. One of the motivating factor is want of helping their family members. Lack of education and vocational skill, political instability and conflict

as well as natural disasters that shatter the economy of the people and country, social perception and attitudes toward children and girls also play a dominating role for trafficking. Inadequate /no punishments to traffickers also play the role of increased child trafficking. Child trafficking is also influenced by high demand of young age sex and involving children in criminal activities and or also for begging purposes.¹⁰ Findings of the current study are also compatible with the report on Drugs and Crime Regional Office of United Nations for South Asia¹¹. Results of this study are also well matched with the reports and studies done in different countries and places.¹²⁻¹⁵

This is a cross sectional study done in earthquake affected municipalities of the Gorkha district. In addition, both quantitative and qualitative tools were used to assess the factors associated to child trafficking. Descriptive analysis has been done by using percentage distribution of the variables. However, causality cannot be established regarding the risk factors from this study. So, future study may be conducted with different study design (non-interventional, longitudinal), comparison between urban versus rural setting and between school going & non going children.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that most of the people have knowledge about Child Trafficking. Poverty, unemployment, ignorance and family condition are the factors associated with Child trafficking. Child Trafficking hidden issue and parents and social group must be made aware about the traffickers' tricks and Child Trafficking. Local government, families and

stakeholders must take initiation for schooling of poor and deprived family Children focused to Dalit families. Elimination of Child Trafficking is the responsibilities of family, social groups, government officials and stakeholders so there must be joint effort of all stakeholders in this movement. In addition, income generating program and opportunity of employments at local level should be initiated to overcome from poverty. School teacher and management committee should take initiation to make fully aware to school

going children and their families about different dimension/aspect of Child Right and Child Trafficking. Furthermore, awareness program for non-school going children must be start on in joint effort of local government, families and stakeholders.

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