

*Psychosocial Needs for Child Trafficking Victims  
(A Case Study in Makassar, Indonesia)*

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**Abstract**

Victims of child trafficking, who have been rescued from exploitation, have the need to get recovery treatments or therapies. Being free from trafficking or prostitution is not the final episode. Though an absolute cure cannot be promised, they still need to under go through those recovery processes in order to go back to their normal lives on the society. In this qualitative research, in-depth interviews will be conducted for five respondents, namely girls between fourteen and seventeen years old, who were victims and currently getting protection and treatment at a recovery centre for trafficking victims in Makassar. The findings of this study revealed the various needs of child trafficking or prostitution victims, such as the need for protection and advocacy, the need for secrecy confidentiality, the need for reintegration or society adaptation treatments, the need for constant mediation with parents and other family members, the need for education and employment preparation training. These needs must be met to ensure that children were able to live and be accepted as normal by the society and to ensure that they do not return to traffickers who have exploited them. The cooperation of all parties is crucial in assisting a social worker to play his/her role as case manager

Keywords: Psychosocial Needs, Child Trafficking, Victims.

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## Introduction

In Victimology, children were in the age group that is vulnerable to trafficking (Meadows, 2010), and one of them is human trafficking (Asis, 2008, Reid & Jones, 2011). In 2003, Cambodia's Police estimated that there were about 50,000 girls who were being trafficked for prostitution. The World Human Rights Organization and UNICEF estimated that one to three prostitutes in Cambodia were under 18 years old and they generally come from Vietnam. Cambodia's children were vulnerable to be trapped into prostitution, be abused, even more to have been killed (Shelley, 2010).

The department of State of the United States of America (2011) distinguished 3 forms of human trafficking, which were force child labour, child soldier, and child sex trafficking. The indicator of force labour can be understood from the condition of the children. He or she could be in the custody of any party, his or her members or non-family members and the children had no choice to leave the job (Department of State United State of America, 2011). On the other hand, the child soldiers were recruited not according to proper legal procedure. They were recruited by using pressure, deception, coercion and kidnapping to exploit their labour or for sexual exploitation by the army group. The perpetrators may be member of the government army, paramilitary organizations, or rebel groups. Many children were forcibly abducted to serve as fighters / soldiers, while others were employed as porters, cooks, guards, servants, messengers or spies. Young girls were forced to marry or have sex with the male soldiers. Both girl and boy soldiers often get sexual harassment and found high risk of transmitting sexual disease (Department of State United State of America, 2011).

Children from Indonesia were trafficked both within Indonesia and abroad in many forms, such as maids, forced prostitutes, and home industrial. The girls experience exploitation in the form of coercion to work between 14 to 16 hours a day with very low wages. Children who were abroad were often deceived into forced debt bondage. The agent argued that a mediator in Indonesia, had paid advances to their families. About 60 % of the children who were under five years old did not possess official birth certificates that put them at high risk of being exploited. The trafficker worried use any tactic and strategy to control the victims including making false promises of high-paid jobs, forcing debt bondage, putting them under community and family pressure, giving threats of violence, rape, false marriages, and confiscating their passports (Department of State United State of America, 2012).

Based on the data provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2011) Indonesia was in the top rank of human trafficking with 4,067 cases (96, 64%). South Sulawesi in the 11<sup>th</sup> rank nationally while West Java Province was in the first position (Tinggi Kasus Trafficking, 2012). Makassar city is one of the destinations for the female and child victims and they come from any district in North Sulawesi Province (Agustinanto et. al, 2003).

According to UNICEF, there were 2,000,000 children who were prostitution victims in global commercial sex trafficking. The International protocol and law of all countries in the world obligated the criminalization for children commercial sexual exploitation. Sex trafficking has destroyed the children's lives who faced. Risks of suffering long-term physical and psychology trauma, suffering diseases like

HIV/AIDS, drug addiction, unwanted pregnancy, malnutrition, social exclusion, and death (Department of State United State of America, 2011).

Age of 15 – 17 a majority of the children involved were between the second group is pre-puberty age. They were mainly traded for economic exploitation and some were forced to become beggars. They were also targeted for sexual and pornography exploitation. The third group consists of infant or babies mainly for illegal adoption. Child trafficking covers almost all forms of exploitation, even a combination model. In addition, the evidence also demonstrates that children experience progressive exploitation. Once the children become a victim, they will experience various forms of exploitation repeatedly and in various ways (Sorensen, & Nuyts, 2007).

These children experience a series of abuse and violence and exploitation that give negative impact psychologically and socially. The attempt to rescue these is not the final intervention because they will experience post-exploitation condition; they should be given protection, motivation and security. The most important thing is they will not be re-victimized and they can lead a normal life without stigma and discrimination.

### **Factors that make Children vulnerable to trafficking**

The Parliamentary Union & UNICEF (2005) stated that at least there were five factors that make children vulnerable to be trafficked; the five factors are poverty, gender discrimination, lack of education opportunities, and negligence by parents, unregistered, human disaster and army conflict. Meanwhile, Miko (2003) suggested several factors that promote children trafficking, namely sub-ordination for girls, high demands for sex workers, including for cheap labour. The offenders feel many faces to commit the crime because of poor law enforcement to prevent child trafficking.

Another factor is expectation of parents for their children's better future. These parents are easily influenced with the modus-operand used by traffickers who promise to provide education, job and wealth for the children. The group of children who are at risk of being victims are street children, homeless children, and runaway children who ran away to escape from foster parents. Somewhere even kidnapped and forced into prostitution (Fong & Cardoso, 2010).

According to Logan, Walker & Hunt (2009) the vulnerability of children to be victims is related with the expectation of the children to improve their family status or income and to get self-income to be independent and to survive because of the absence of family support. In addition violence and sexual harassment are also cause children to run away from homes. Roby (2005) admitted that many girls and boys escape from their homes because of sexual abuse and domestic violence.

Bales (2005) explained that the vulnerability of children to be trafficked is not always due to poverty factor. It can be also from the context of local culture that does not any forms of trafficking as serious crime. Woman and girls were seen as a commodity that can be used to help improve their family economic status. They are expected to stay at home or to do household chores or to work at other places to earn money, such as by being maids (Inter-Parliamentary Union & UNICEF, 2005; Lie & Lund, 2008).

## **Impact on Child Trafficking**

According to Inter-Parliamentary Union & UNICEF (2005), children trafficked will experience a series of abuse, exploitation and violence during the trafficking episode which will cause the children to be locked in a life of full of miseries. This condition will give a disastrous effect on the development of children emotionally, physically and psychosocial.

### **(i) Emotional effects.**

A Trafficked child will show some forms of emotional disorder such as feelings of guilt, shame, low self-esteem and even often stigmatized. They feel betrayed especially if the trafficker is someone known to him/her. The experiences during the exploitation will cause nightmares sleep disorder, feeling of hopelessness, and depression.

### **(ii) Physical effects**

A sexually exploited child is often phoned transmit Sexual Transmitted Disease (STD) like HIV/AIDS. The danger of mistaken faith in many countries that sexual intercourse with a virgin girl can cure HIV/AIDS has triggered a high demand for girls for prostitution. Several victims reported that the intercourse service without condom would be paid much more by the clients.

### **(iii) Psychosocial effects.**

Children who are trapped into trafficking are deprived to education and social relationships. Most of them are homeless and are forced to work at a young age. They also do not have access to education or family support and social activities that will prevent the chance to develop their potentials. In addition, also experience intense control and restriction of movement. Since they do not have contact with the outside world and they do not know how to seek help. Abuses and violence will arouse the feelings of fear in their lives for a long term.

## **Objective and Methodology**

This study aims to identify the psychosocial needs of child trafficking victims. This qualitative study was conducted through in-depth interviews and observation of five informants (14-17 years old). They are victims of child trafficking for sexual exploitation (prostitution). The study was conducted at a Healing and Protection House of child trafficking victims in Makassar, Indonesia.

## **Findings and Discussions**

The findings of this research showed that there are five psychosocial needs of child trafficking victims. They were Protection and Advocating Needs, Need of Secrecy, Need of Mediation with the Family, Training and Education Needs and Reintegration Needs.

### **Protection and Advocating Needs**

Once the children trapped into human trafficking networking, the perpetrators will then use various strategies ways to keep them in their control so as get much more

benefit. The possibility of the victim to escape is really very unlikely, and if the victim could escape, or be rescued from the trap, the trafficker will try to trace the victims continually to be exploited again.

For example, "RT" managed to escape from trafficking after he was rescued by the police. He subsequently admitted himself to the protection and recovery of victims of trafficking organization in Makassar. Unfortunately, he was re-victimized again by the trafficker after the healing process was of 6 months, but he was rescued again by police for the second time.

*"This is the second time to enter this institution (Protection and healing home), I was here for the first time when the police arrested me. Because of my boss knew that I was here, so at that time he always came to see me and after finished the program of my rehabilitation, my boss picked me up to bring to his house and then I become prostitute again.*

The victims also need legal protection since their personal belongings were kept by the trafficker. This is experienced by "RT", those savings and belongings were kept by the couple who exploited her. This situation makes "RT" vulnerable to be trapped again in trafficking or to be re-victimized. If she does not get legal protection, she would not be able back her savings or her personal belongings.

This indicates that the victims not only need time to heal, but they also need a legal protection in order to be free from the perpetrators. Victims should be sent back to their parents or families and it would be better if the presence of the victims after being rescued, should be kept confidential so that their presence will be confidential. The place of shelter should not be known to the public, especially the traffickers.

This condition was experienced by "RT":

*I saved my money in my kos-kosan (rent room monthly), I stayed with my lover [trafficker]. He was sometimes angry with me if he were know that I want to go back to my hometown, Palu. So, He kept my money. He did not want me to go back to my home town. He said that he would keep my money, my clothes and my other belongings in my kos-kosan.*

Based on the data, we can understand that the victim needs protection, especially legal protection to get back their personal belongings. A social worker as a case manager in the healing program can co-operate together with the police or other parties to help the victims.

### **Need of Secrecy**

The need for secrecy is important to ensure the security and safety of the victim, as well as the dignity of the victims so that they can be accepted by their parents, to prevent discrimination, stigma and exclusion. Of course, this applies to victims who have not been acknowledged by their family and society members as they had been trapped into the prostitution. Some informants said that they were very scared and felt disgraced if their parents or relatives were to know they were prostitutes before. For example,

a. IR Said :

*"I am really scared of my Parents if they know that I was a prostitute. They will be angry. I may be killed. I said to my friend who took me here not tell this to my father".*

b. DW Said :

*"I hope none of my family members know that I had been a prostitute before. If anyone were to know, I will feel ashamed and I did not dare to meet them, they will insult, mock one even hit me".*

Fog and Cardoso (2010) also supported the need for secrecy of the victims needs to be given anonymous name, while being engaged in group therapy.

### **Need of Mediation with the Family**

This is a very urgent need for the victims because some of the victims escaped from their homes because of conflict or personal problems with parents or with other family members. To resolve this conflict and to re-build harmony with their families the third party, A social worker, can play this role as mediator.

Generally, the victim ran away from home because of conflict with their parents or family members. Because of that, they would be afraid to go back to their homes. It can be seen from IW's statement *"I want to go back to my home, but I am not sure that my parents can accept me again. For almost one year I have not gone back to my home, I am very afraid"*. This is similar with DW's case *"I am afraid to go home they [Parents] will scold and beat me"*.

In mediation process, the social worker as a mediator, will make an effort to help parents understand about the victim's condition and will persuade them to accept their children. The social worker also need to explain about the rights and needs of children for their care and protection. The parents have to realize the threat of danger that children face outside their homes. They are really vulnerable to child exploitation and abuse.

### **Training and Education Needs**

Vocational training is really an important need for the victim's future. It is really hard to live independently and to get a job in order to prevent re-trafficking if children have no skills to earn their living. When they were made prostitutes, they learned to become independent and not to depend on others, including parents. If they were not prepared to have an alternative job, they could go back into prostitution.

The case as presented by "END". *"I want get a job after I am out from here [centre of healing], but I do not know anything, I have no skill. I want to run a business, I need skills."* Roby (2005) was in the opinion that when the victims are free from sex trafficking, they often lack education and skills to survive.

## **Reintegration Needs**

Prostitution is a something unacceptable by the society for violating the norms and values of society. It would be a shame for the victims, parents and family. This will have an impact on their self-esteem, the victims will be judged for itself as having low dignity by the community. Sometimes people cannot understand and accept the fact that they were victims or had been victimized. They were children who had been trapped into prostitution by those who want to make fortunes. The community only sees that these children have been involved in something disgrace. That is why they need an effort / intervention to ensure that victims can be accepted back by their parents, families and communities, without any discrimination, stigma and exclusion. For example, GMK said:

*My parents have already known what I had done before. They yell at me but they still love me. But how about my other family members, and my friends' opinion of me ?. I am embarrassed. How do I go back ? . "*

Reintegration service is necessary to restore dignity to the victims and to prepare them to return to the community so that they will be able to live normally. This activity is very important to ensure that the children will not be return to prostitution.

The third parties can be involved in the integration process, such as the local government, police, religious leaders, and community leaders, including the victim's peers. They need to be given an understanding so that they are able to help the victims so that the victims can return to normal life and be accepted as citizens who have dignity. This is in line with the opinion of Roby (2005) that the model participatory involving children and their families as well as community leaders as key players is very helpful in the process of integration of the victim.

## **Conclusion**

The issue of child trafficking is a problem that continues until now in every part of the world. Children who were victims of trafficking experience a various of problems that were complex. Once they were caught in the trafficking, the offender will continue to exploit them again and again. That is why the victim's needs should be responded appropriately by involving parties who are competent in helping them. The psychosocial needs that are reflected in the results of this study were advocacy and protection, education and training, assurance of confidentiality, mediation with family and reintegration services. These results demonstrate the importance of considering the social aspects of the environment (ecology) in providing interventions and services to child victims of trafficking. Social Workers can play roles as mediator, advocator and case manager to help the victims. The current intervention policy of child trafficking needs to be re-established. Child victims of trafficking should be viewed differently from professional prostitutes. So, child trafficking victim intervention must be planned and managed properly.

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