

Original Paper

Development of Boyhood in Female Sex Workers' Family

— *A Representation of their Vicious Cycle*

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Abstract

The brothel based female sex workers (FSWs) are in obstruction in their daily life. Beyond the male politics, mothering and motherhood are a common phenomenon to testify their universal womanhood through procreation. Usually they have settled up their family in their typically constructed community-red light area. Mostly their family is matrifocal and single parent family which was failed to provide proper control and strategies for up-bringing of their offspring. The present study was conducted to explore the development of boyhood in female sex workers' community purposively because there was a need of explanation of the masculinity their community. For that purpose, 50 boys of below 18 years of age were selected adopting simple random purposive sampling and both quantitative and qualitative method of data collection used to get information on their up-bringing process including life experiences. The result showed that their development was enough to continue their vicious cycle of FSW-Child-FSW. Only the educational development, sometimes separate shelter and if their mothers were able to hide their involvement, had brought changes in their pathways of development outside their community.

Keywords

female sex workers, brothels, boys, vicious cycle

1. Introduction

Sex as anatomical and physiological characteristics signifies biological maleness and femaleness. Gender is socially constructed masculinity and femininity determined by social, cultural and psychological attributes in a particular society at a particular time (Beauvoir, 2011). This gender differentiation underpins as an impact of patriarchy—a system of male domination, legitimized within the family and society through superior rights, privileges, authority and power (Mathur, 2004). A child of either sex is socialized according to the norms and culture of his/her community where he/she born. The parental socio-economical, cultural, educational and occupational background determines the up-brining of a child towards adulthood. Then the construction of childhood is a continuous process which needs a

combination of material, physical, emotional needs and so on (Jenks, 2003). It involves with a complex milieu of micro and macro world (Waskler, 2002) which includes social relations and social networks of family (Cochran, et al., 1990). In this context, the parents of a child are the key role players for shaping a healthy childhood because the mother as expressive leader shapes inner world and father as instrumental leader strengthens the link into the outside world (Jamieson, 1988). The family structure and functions are basic inputs for a child's development because it provides appropriate control strategies. It also determines the child's social and emotional development. On the other hand, the poor relational representation and family disadvantages (Wolfe, 1999) are the issue of maltreatment of a child. The lack of attachment and bonding of mother, as first caretaker in the development of a person's inner self constructs their personality differently when he/she has to be under the care of secondary caregiver (Kakar, 2013) or alone. From their early stage of development, kin/siblings' relation is important rather than a relationship with materials world because he/she cultivates a typical milieu where their imagination, a vehicle of hope, healer of trauma, protector from reality, fixer of identity, enemy of fear and sadness, etc are turned into to a complex one. Thus, relationship with materials makes them violent and their psycho-social development might be defective. Ultimately, the academic achievements and other aspects of development suffer from obstruction to become a productive one in their society.

The prostitution is historically oldest and stigmatized profession. Extreme poverty and male politics are the prime responsible factors for which the women in my study are in the sex trade. There are different kinds of worker experiences and varying degrees of victimization, exploitation, agency and choice according to the status hierarchy in the sex industry (call girls- brothels, massage parlours, escorts, etc.) as well as from within the hierarchy along the lines of ethnicity, age and physical appearance (Adhikari, 2008).

We focused our study on female sex workers as mothers in one of the brothel (red-light area, out of eight red-light area) located at Kolkata, the only Metropolitan City of Eastern India. In spite of their obstruction in daily life, FSWs had set up their households or families in the brothels known as 'line bari' because of association with their trade the FSWs stand in the queue to solicit customers (Adhikari, 2007) for dual purposes of shelter and income. Their family was matrifocal, and it was loaded with maternal relations while paternity was thin/absent/insignificant because the male as their counterpart was parasitic. The family members consisted FSW, 'babu' (paramour/husband), child and relatives (sometimes). Their spousal relation was an only impact of emotional tie up either with 'babu' who was their clients or child of FSWs as their paramour (Jamieson, 1988). The fatherhood was costless in their family. So, the structures and functions of FSWs' family were quite different from the family in general which used to determine the level of conflict or cooperation in emerging parent-child relationship (Adhikari, 2007). From the view point of structural functionalist, family is as one of the central institutions regulating sexual activity, reproduction, and socialization of the young, protection and so forth. The focus has also been placed upon the function of the family members within family unit itself, such as the division of labour in terms of instrumental and affectional leadership (Adams & Sydie,

2001). But the structural change within the family was thus perceived as problematic in the sex workers' community. The four fundamental areas of the family advocated differently in their family. For instance, (i) Task structure: "Providing for the physical, emotional, and social needs of all the family members is a full time job for two adults". But here, the females in general were less prepared for well being as they were engaged in a stigmatized job. They were also the ones who most frequently retained the custody of the children; the lowered socio-economic standard bore serious consequence for the adjustment of the children. (ii) Communication structure- Parents are seen as the transmitters of the norms and values of the society to the children while simultaneously representing them in the adult world. The absence/insignificant of fatherhood in the sex workers' family created a void in the dual transmitting function of the remaining and the child used to learn the norms and values of their immediate community. It was influential for their participation in the adult world according to the structure of their community at an early age and thus led to a structural distortion in the child development. (iii) Power structure: the children of sex workers used to perceive power as personal rather than consensual. The non-democratic way in which decisions were made and implemented were creating rigid conceptualization of power in their mind with leeway for mediation and thus adversely affected their healthy development. (iv) Affectional structure- It was perceived as conducive to intensive relationship between children, and it was over-burdened by constant emotional demands of children without having a safe outlet for his or her personal needs with materialistic and poor quality of attachment (Adams & Sydie, 2001) in the in the family of larger society in India. While the sex workers' community (red-light area) was separately constructed according to their profession. The local club, a social unit as well as a platform of males of all ages was controlling the functions of the community and it was a referral agency too to bridging with FSWs, brothel owner, 'babu' and political representative in any crises. Further, it had a power will to permit the unauthorized business of alcohol, etc. Secondly, it used to provide temporary shelter and entertainment facilities to the males of all ages, insisting to stay in the community and provoking to become 'babu'. Sometime, a club was space provider to run education centre by Non-Governmental Organizations with other some activities like cultural programs (Adhikari, 2012).

The social rehabilitation of the female sex worker is a perennial issue because of their involvement in sex trade. It separated them from mainstream society. There was no such initiative taken for the social and economic rehabilitation of the sex workers and their children at least for two decade when the spread of HIV/AIDS as deadly diseases had taken place the female sex workers got attention because they were the high risk intermediately group. And it congregated various services for this. From that period, the minor boys and girls use to get some benefit i.e. education, health care and other related facilities from non-governmental organization working in their area. But there was no such study conducted on the development of child in sex workers community and parenting, etc. Das (1991) studied the development of children in an adverse milieu of sex workers' community where their mothers' role as care-giver was inappropriate. But there is no study on the development of boyhood in

sex workers' community. Thus, Nag (2000) revealed that there was a need of study on childhood in sex workers community because they were representing their vicious cycle and in the absence of proper control and strategies for their development they were unable to merge with the mainstream society. The children in sex workers' community used to get physical, rather than psychological aspect of childcare (Chege, Kabiru, Mbithi & Bwayo, 2002). The structure and functions of the family of female sex worker were very much defective to nurture a baby in FSWs' community. Secondly, their attachment to the trade was a stigma to facilitate the psycho-social development of children (Pardesh & Bhattacharya, 2006). In a study, Adhikari (2008) observed that the girls of sex workers represented their mothers' trade because they used to orient variously from their early childhood by their mothers and their mothers' figure. But the girls were settled outside when they got opportunities of separate shelter outside sex workers community along with others requisite facilities, and it was also supported by a study in Bangladesh by Bernabe (2012). So, the present study examined the development of boyhood in a peculiar social and cultural context of FSWs

2. Methods

2.1 Objective of the Study

The present study was conducted with an object to explore the complicated and adverse experiences of development of boyhood and masculinity among the male child of FSWs purposively which might be helpful to design strategic intervention to rehabilitate them socially and economically

2.2 Participants

The present study was focused solely on female sex workers (FSWs) of Bowbazar red-light area, one of the oldest red-light area (out of eight red-light area) of Kolkata, their family/community and upbringing process of a male child, and 50 boys of below 18 years of age were selected randomly. The researcher was involved with this community for more than 12 years and he rendered the services for their educational development and other aspects particularly for their social and economical rehabilitation. So, he was very much familiar with the whole community and the FSWs and the local community consented this informally.

2.3 Materials Used

In the first stage, a survey of FSWs and their family were carried out and we implemented the second stage of data collection that of conducting in-depth interviews with 50 males/boys of below 18 years of age of FSWs adopting random purposive simple sampling through unstructured interview schedules and participant observation during group interaction and group activities.

2.4 Research Tool

The researcher collected data for a period of 2 years. During field study, he as social worker regularly interacted with the respondents, their mothers and community members. He also collected data from the siblings of the respondents. He arranged programme for group interaction with them. The personal interview with single respondent was for about 3-4 hours. Secondly in order to explore the complexity

of growing up and life experiences of an individual, the qualitative data were captured through case studies

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Description of the Respondents (Boys) in the Study

The religious background of FSWs had an impact in the trade with reference to their entry and their dominance in the trade. In FSWs' community, the researcher found (table 1) that there was a ranking (FSWs who were directly in trade, 'malkin'-female brothel owner and FSWs who were withdrawn or retired from the trade) according to their involvement in the trade. Most of them (66%) were the children of FSWs, 30% of them were the children of 'malkin' and 4% of them were withdrawn or retired from the trade. Majority of them (52%) was from Muslim community.

Table 1. Religious pattern according to mothers' ranking in the trade

Mothers' ranking	Religion		Total
	Hindu	Muslim	
FSWs	15(30%)	18(36%)	33(66%)
Malkin	8(16%)	7(14%)	15(30%)
Withdrawal from trade	1(2%)	1(2%)	2(4%)
Total	24(48%)	26(52%)	50(100%)

Table 2. Educational background of boys according to their mothers' position in the trade

Educational background	Mothers' position			Total
	FSWs	Malkin	Withdrawal/retired	
Pursuing education	2(4%)	4(8%)	1(2%)	7(14%)
Dropped out	15(30%)	7(14%)	7(14%)	29(58%)
Non-school going	8(16%)	4(8%)	2(4%)	14(28%)
Total	25(50%)	15(30%)	10(20%)	50(100%)

The table 2, describes the educational status of the respondents. It gravitated that 14% of these respondents were admitted in formal school and they were the children of 'malkin' (female brothel owner). On the other hand, the rate of dropped out(30%) and non-school going (16%) were high among the children of FSWs who were directly involved in the trade.

3.2 Boyhood in FSWs' Family

The FSWs used to take care of the child for a limited period of 6-8 weeks after his birth because of their retention into the trade. So, a child's growing up was generally under secondary/surrogate caregivers (female brothel owners, retired FSWs, siblings, relatives or other FSWs) or alone from their early childhood. But when the child used to start physical mobility they were introduced outside their rooms to lane firstly and then he used to take shelter at a local club. And their homogeneous relation was developed. They used to learn the activities guided by the seniors. The milieu of their community and interactional pattern used to orient them to do indulgences according to the instructions of seniors members. It was also supported by their mothers as a norm to their community for their existence. Gradually from the age of about 8 years they had to involve with the sex trade when their mothers or neighbours used to use them as an errand boy for domestic chores (i.e. fetching water, shopping, etc) and assisting their clients in many ways (supply of alcohol, foods, etc). Beside these activities, they were in schedule for their whole day that was either in the local club where they used to watch television or used to enjoy some indoor games. Sometimes boys' peer groups used to play within the street/lane, or they had to use the playground located within a radius of 1½ kilometres from the community. It was studied when they were reaching their age of 10 years they used to self-restrict in their movement within their community. They also used to assist males and FSWs who were operating the business of alcohol, eateries and other shops in the community to earn some money for their own purpose.

But at their school age, they were failing to get proper support for their education because of their mothers' attitude and income. Generally they used to attend the education centres run by Non Governmental Organizations in their local club for certain hours of the day. They used to learn primary literary and numerical skill. Then they were admitted into local government run school. The stigma attached to their life, non-familial support and lack in parental monitoring they were unable to continue their education for a longer period by which their rehabilitation might be accelerated. So, majority of them dropped out and entered into their community life as followers of their seniors.

Sexual development is influenced by the social context of childhood and by a child's experiences (Saraswati, 1999). Children' experience the world as boys and girls. The development of sexuality in the sense of sexual activity and sexual identity in boys and girls was at an early age by observing their mothers' as well as neighbours' engagement in the sex trade. That's why they at their early childhood used to ask frequently to their caretaker some questions i.e. what the mother was doing with that person or lucidly used to observe the scene inside the room from any whole in the door/window. Thereafter, they used to practice it with their peers as a game. Gradually they had to learn to behave in sexualized manner when they were involved in gossip with slung with their peers, girls and the FSWs of the community. It was evident that there was no separate shelter, and there was no supervision or monitoring on their acts and movements. The scope of free mixing (Maccoby, 2000) was immensely influenced to involve them in romantic relations easily at their early teen. The dating and oral sex were very much common

occurrence in their daily life. In some cases, they were getting oral sexual experience with a FSWs after payment of Rs.50/- or more.

It was found that their language development, sexual development and other activities were controlled by their social and cultural milieu. Similarly they used to addict with alcohol and smoking and so forth from their seniors members of the community. Firstly they were acting as assistant to bring it directly for their seniors from local shops. Secondly they were getting orientation to look after the business from their early age. For instance, boys at 6 years of age were experienced to testify the differences of 'beer' and 'whisky' because occasionally they used to buy it collectively for their entertainment. In their own words, 'beers' was a simple drink while 'whisky' was hard and after consumption, they felt drowsiness. On the other hand, there was no restriction from shopkeepers or seniors or mothers.

In conclusion, we find that boys were in identity crises. That's why they were confined themselves within their own community. Their psychosocial moratorium shaped their mind to restrict their movement and interaction outside their community. The stigma of born identity of sex workers' child or up-bringing with paternal identity was a prime factor in their daily life. Surprisingly they considered their biological father as 'mayer lok' (mother's man) or as uncle. So, there was no expectation from their father figure, and in many times they were sharing common platform of enjoyment (Emery, 1999).

In India, the boys are treated as assets in their family. That's why they usually enjoy various benefits from their community rather than girls who are treated as liability. According to this cultural practice in India' patriarchal society, the boys of FSWs' community used to enjoy more benefits from their mother. They were allowed more freedom and leisure, and minimal expectation in terms of participation in household chores. Only expectation from the boys was to rescue their mothers from the trade an education was the main instrument for this(Saraswati & Dutta, 1998).

Table 3. Behaviour and competencies of boys growing up in FSWs' family

Behaviour and competencies	Boys in FSWs Community
Behaviour as infants and toddlers	Clingy, anxious, distant, angry, dependent, disorganized, impulsive
Obedience	Closed; protest redirection, oppositional, devious, defensive; don't know what behavior is expected, feel controlled
Getting along with peers, making and keeping friends	Aggressive, manipulative, selfish, unwilling to share, bullying or easily victimized; withdrawn, isolated, distant, distrusting, unpopular; shallow friendships;
In preschool setting(observation of 3½ year olds)	Hesitant, less curiosity to learn
Empathy, caring	Selfish, insensitive, unsympathetic
Problem-solving capabilities	Highly frustrated, negative, give up more quickly, less adaptive

Self-worth, confidence	Low; lack confidence
Show of emotions	Stuff feelings; uncontrolled anger; react inappropriately; either overreact or calm up
Use of adult resources(facilitators)	Distrust; don't seek help; avoid eye contact
Sense of right and wrong	Don't feel remorse; confused sense of right and wrong
Adult outcome	Morally immature, risk of violence and sociopathic behaviours; problems with intimacy; less likely to be fulfilled in marital relationships; prone to addictive behaviours.

3.3 Co-Relation of Up-Bringing of Boys with Education, Pattern of Dependency, Occupation and Marriage and Marital Pattern

The education is a process of socialization in each and every community (Wolfe, 1999). The children get admit in school at their proper age of schooling. But it depends on factors like parental attitude and background, economy and availability of education services, etc. In sex workers' community, there was no school, but it was at their nearby place. But the pre-primary education centres were set up by NGOs in their club. Initially the mothers used to take it as an opportunity for temporary care of their children. Then they took admission in the formal school. But they did not get requisite support for their education. So, after a certain period of their school years, they were being dropped out. In our study, we find that highest percentage (58%), out of 50 boys were dropped out, and 28% of them did not attend school while only 14% of them were in education because of some strategies (i.e. materials support, special remedial coaching outside their community, mothers' participation and close monitoring and sometimes separate shelter outside their community) taken by their mothers/immediate guardian.

The table 3 describes the pattern dependency of a male child in sex workers' milieu. The boys in the study were mostly depending on the earning of others, and only 18% of them were self dependent.

Table 4. Pattern of dependency

Nature of dependence	Marital Status		Total
	Unmarried	Married	
Independent earning from trade	9(18%)	-	9(18%)
Mothers' earning	28(56%)	4(8%)	22(44%)
Earning of partner	-	2(4%)	12(24%)
Earning of others	7(14%)	-	7(14%)
Total	44(88%)	6(12%)	50(100%)

We also find that there was a practice of underage marriage, and in these cases, the boys(8%) were

depending on their mothers' income and 4% of them were depending on their partners. Lastly the milieu states that 14% of them were dependent on others.

In our study, we observed that out of 50 boys, 6 boys were married off below 18 years of age. All of them selected their marital partners from their own community through romantic relation. Among them, 8% marital partners were the FSWs and beside that 4% were the girls' child of FSWs.

The table 4 shows that only 16% of these boys of below 18 years who had an education, but dropped out were doing jobs of catering, courier agency, and selling of a movie ticket and long distance bus ticket outside their community. Apart from this, 84% of them were engaged in different jobs within their community. But 18% of them were unemployed. Of them, 16% were working as male brothel owners, 28% of these boys used to operate unauthorized liquor shop and 20% of them were as maidservants.

Table 5. Education and employment pattern

Education status	Occupation							Total	
	Within community				Out side				
	Brothel owner	Selling alcohol, etc	Maid-servants	No work	Caterin g job	Selling movie ticket or ticket of long distance bus	Job in courier service		Other
Pursuing	1(2%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	3(6%)	-	-	-	-	7(14%)
Dropped out	4(8%)	8(16%)	6(12%)	2(4%)	3(6%)	3(6%)	2(4%)	1(2%)	29(58%)
Non-school going	3(6%)	5(10%)	2(4%)	4(8%)	-	-	-	-	14(28%)
Total	8(16%)	14(28%)	10(20%)	9(18%)	3(6%)	3(6%)	2(4%)	1(2%)	50(100%)

Figure 1 describes the pathways of development of male children in sex workers' community. It was analyzed that education was the key changing instrument to mainstream them. Otherwise they had to keep them within their vicious cycle, FSWs-Child-FSWs.

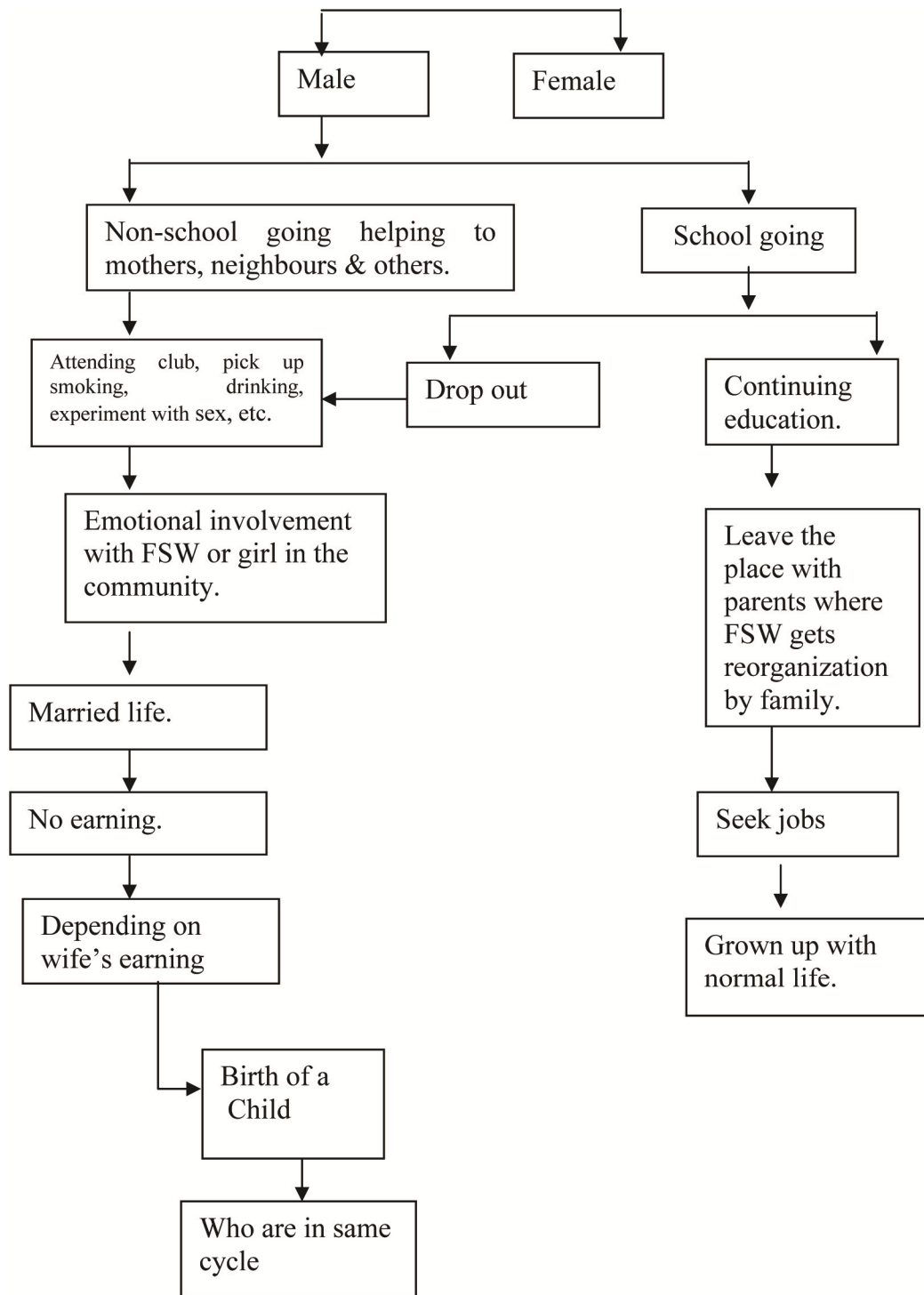


Figure 1. Pathways of development of sex worker's male children (Boy to Boyhood)

4. Conclusion

The motherhood and mothering were the common cultural practice among FSWs. The obstruction in their stigmatized profession did not change it. That's why, they had settled their household in red-light area for dual purposes of shelter and income. The relationship with male was only emotional tie up as

'babu'. This relationship was not sanctified legally as husband, and he was not taking any responsibility of their family. So, the fatherhood was absent/insignificant. Secondly, their typical community had been constructed according to the need and the emergence of their trade. The child grew up with inappropriate control and strategies.

The boys in their community were preparing themselves from their early childhood only to represent their community. The boys used to take shelter at their local club and they were getting orientation from their seniors. Generally they used to learn to consume alcohol and smoking from their early age. Secondly the sexual development was experienced at an early age.

The parental monitoring and supervision were absence usually. From their early adolescence, they were entering into the sex trade indirectly through becoming brothel owner, selling alcohol or as errand boys. But boys who had education were come out from their community and they were trying to settle through earning from outside their community. They used to perform various jobs in catering agencies, courier services or other. We find that the majority of the boys were depending on their mothers' earning. Apart from this, a portion was dependent of their partners' or relatives' earning. They were also practicing early marriage through romantic relations either with girls of FSWs or FSWs in the community or outside.

The study reflects that boys in sex workers' community were in their vicious cycle. The education as an instrument could bring a change in their life because those (18%) who had education were trying to come out from their community. So, promotion of educational development with proper facilities and guidance might be rehabilitated them from this trade.

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