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of the Handloom Weavers in Orissa (India)

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## The Nature of Sex Profession in Bangladesh: A Study on Sex Workers

Saleh Mahmud\*

*This study is an attempt to explore the socioeconomic and demographic profile, and livelihood of sex workers in Bangladesh. The more specific objectives are to obtain information about the individual and parents, and social background of sex workers, the circumstances of entrance into the sex industry, duration of profession, professional harassments, range of income and mode of payment, pattern of sex practices and so on. The survey consisted of a structured and open-ended questionnaire and was conducted in three different categories of study subjects i.e. brothel based sex workers, street based sex workers, and hotel based sex workers. Before entering into the sex profession, they are victimised by various social constraints which lead them to join sex trade and even after they are frequently subjected to oppression and exploitation like abduction, extortion, physical torture, group rape and so on. The practice of sex work with the clients is not safe due to infrequent use of condoms and unusual sex.*

### Introduction

Sexual contact between men and women in any society is an outcome of a historical, social, political and cultural reality. Prostitution is the oldest profession and the existence of selling female sex for the gratification of males is also one of the oldest practices in societies. Some have related it to the functional needs of the society, which is served by the females. However, such explanation hides the totality of the phenomenon that demands further insight into the history of prostitution. Among the reasons behind the beginning and sustaining of the profession, the subordination and weaker position of women in the socio-economic structure of society can be assumed as most significant (Hossain et al. 2004).

Prostitution is a transaction in which sexual services are provided by the sex workers in exchange for money or monetary value to another party. A woman who sells sex for her living is commonly called *Poti*, *Beshya*, *Gonika*, *Bajarer Meye*, or *Khanki* in Bangla. The terms are abusive, literally these terms mean a fallen woman, a woman whose sexual services are many men, a woman who belongs to the market, her body being a commodity (Tahmina and Moral 2004). The types of sex workers are broadly categorised under four main groups – brothel based

sex workers, hotel based sex workers, sex work carried on in rented house by small groups of girls, and floating/street sex workers (Khan and Arefeen 1989). It is estimated that there are 60,000-100,000 sex workers in Bangladesh and approximately one million men buy sex work (Kanangara 2003). There are 15-17 major brothels operating throughout the country accommodating approximately 25,000 – 35,000 sex workers (Mondal and Islam 2006).

Various analyses of sex workers and street children in Bangladesh revealed that the major reasons for bringing women and girls into the sex profession include, among others, social constraints, domestic violence, trafficking, oppression and coercion by miscreants (*mastans*), polygamy, dowry, fraudulent, promises of employment, poverty, debt-bondage, deliberate choices based on attraction for lucrative lifestyle and so forth (Sattar 2005). A network of brokers and middlemen exists throughout Bangladesh who entices girls and women from poor families with the promise of lucrative jobs, but sell them either to traffickers or directly to brothels (Deo 1999). Entry into sex work can also have socially rooted causes that can be traced to traditions, beliefs and norms that perpetuate gender inequalities resulting in varied standards for men and women in terms of policies, attitudes and practices (UNAIDS 2001). Maximum number of brothel sex workers and floating sex workers admitted that they chose it for survival followed by easy earning (Ullah and Rahman 2000).

Sex workers generally cannot escape abuses even after their entry into sex trade, primarily due to absence of appropriate institutions to protect their interests (Mondal and Islam 2006). They are frequently subjected to oppression and exploitation like abduction, extortion, gang-rape, physical torture and other violence by pimps, landlady (*sardarni-cum-employer*), *babu* (so-called "lover"-client), clients, *mastans* and even the police. The sex workers in brothels are found to live in sub-human conditions and are terribly oppressed by their masters (Khan and Arefeen 1989).

In Bangladesh, neither the legal atmosphere nor the cultural mindsets, or the state's institutional set up is supportive of the causes of sex workers engaged in the most exploitative forms of labour. Fundamental rights and freedoms of these people, such as the right to non-discrimination, equal protection and equality before the law, privacy, liberty of movement, equal access to education, health care, housing, freedom of speech and association, etc. are often violated.

### Objectives of the Study

The prime objective of the study is to analyse the nature of sex profession in Bangladesh. With this view in mind, the specific objectives

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of the study are as follows:

1. To obtain and present information about the individual and social background of the sex workers including age distribution, marital status, religion, literacy, parents' occupational background, etc.;
2. To elicit information about the circumstances of entrance into sex industry, sex workers' experience and previous occupation;
3. To understand some idea about the extent of sex workers' incomes and mode of payment;
4. To reveal the information about clients' age group and profession; and
5. To investigate the pattern of sex practices of the respondents.

### Methodology

Relevant data for this research were collected directly from field by using questionnaire that was prepared in the light of the objectives of the study. The field work started in June 2005 and ended in August 2005. The questionnaire contained both open-ended and close-ended questions. It was pre-tested and pre-coded. The study respondents were selected from three categories of sex workers i.e. brothel based sex workers (BBSWs), street based sex workers (SBSWs) and hotel based sex workers (HBSWs). As sex workers comprise a "hidden population" it was not possible to have random sampling in the strict statistical sense. However, purposively 120 sex workers were selected in such a way that becomes somewhat representative of the target population by distributing it by different groups of sex workers. In the case of BBSWs, sample was drawn from Mymensingh and Jamalpur brothel, followed by SBSWs who frequently visit the NGO offices catering services to them and HBSWs from different hotels in Dhaka City.

**Table 1.** Geo-demographic Coverage

Respondents Groups	Locations	Total Respondents
BBSWs	Mymensingh Brothel	20
	Jamalpur Brothel	20
SBSWs	Dhaka City	40
HBSWs	Dhaka City	40
<b>Total Sex Workers Interviewed</b>		<b>120</b>

Social Marketing Company (SMC), Durjoy Nari Sangha (DNS) and Bangladesh Women Health Coalition (BWHC) provided various assistance through their peer workers and peer educators to collect data from BBSWs, SBSWs and HBSWs respectively. Moreover, the respondents were women and the issues discussed were very much gender sensitive. So, female interviewers were selected to collect information for this study. After interviews all questionnaires were checked and edited. The data obtained were then placed to suitable table for processing and subsequent analyses. Various statistical techniques including average, percentage, graphical presentations were applied to analyse the collected data.

Peer interference, crowds collecting to observe interviews and outside interference were the main problems of the investigators. Time constraints and resources limitations were also the barriers for the study.

### Findings and Observations

#### Age Distribution of the Respondents

The age distribution of sex workers would commonly be associated with the age-interval of the physiological limits of active sex life. Average age of the respondents in the sample was about 25 years, while the average age of BBSWs, SBSWs and HBSWs was 28 years, 25 years and 22 years respectively. The study revealed that most of the respondents (55 per cent) were within the

**Table 2.** Distribution of the Respondent by Age Group

Age Group(yrs)	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
13-17	0	0.0	5	12.5	10	25.0	15	12.5
18-22	7	17.5	11	27.5	15	37.5	33	27.5
23-27	15	37.5	9	22.5	9	22.5	33	27.5
28-31	6	15.0	8	20.0	4	10.0	18	15.0
32-36	7	17.5	6	15.0	2	5.0	15	12.5
37-41	2	5.0	1	2.5	0	0.0	3	2.5
Above 41	3	7.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

age group of 18-27 years, followed by of 28-36 years (28 per cent). Number of HBSWs workers (62.5 per cent) was relatively high in the lower age groups (13-17 years and 18-22 years), while number of

BBSWs (30 per cent) was relatively high in the upper age groups (32-36 years and over 36 years). It was found that 7.5 per cent of the BBSWs' age was over 41 years; however, no sex workers of this age group were found in other categories.

#### *Marital Status of the Respondents*

It was found that there was hardly any difference in percentage in the case of married (33.3 per cent) and unmarried (34.2 per cent) among the total respondents. Among the BBSWs significant numbers (42.5 per cent) were unmarried, compared to 22.5 per cent in HBSWs and 15 per cent in SBSWs. The study revealed that 45 per cent of the SBSWs were married, followed by 40 per cent of the HBSWs and 15 per cent of the BBSWs. The case of separation was varied from 5 per cent to 12.5 per cent among the three categories.

**Table 3.** Distribution of the Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Married	6	15.0	18	45.0	16	40.0	40	33.3
Unmarried	17	42.5	6	15.0	9	22.5	41	34.2
Divorced	8	20.0	5	12.5	4	10.0	17	14.2
Separated	5	12.5	4	10.0	2	5.0	11	9.2
Abandoned	1	2.5	6	15.0	8	20.0	15	12.5
Living with partner	3	7.5	1	2.5	1	2.5	5	4.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### *Education Level of the Respondents*

The sample was not homogeneous with respect to educational attainment. The literacy rate was very low among the study groups. It was found that illiterate respondents were the highest (65 per cent) among the BBSWs, but it was the lowest (25 per cent) among the HBSWs. The number of respondents 'who can sign only' was almost the

**Table 4.** Educational Status of the Respondents

Educational Status	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Illiterate	26	65.0	16	40.0	10	25.0	52	43.3
Can sign only	5	12.5	12	30.0	11	27.5	28	23.3
Can read and write	3	7.5	2	5.0	1	2.5	6	5.0
Upto class v	2	5.0	5	12.5	4	10.0	11	9.2

**Table 4.** (Continued)

vi-x	4	10.0	5	12.5	10	25.0	19	15.8
Above x	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	10.0	4	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

same among the SBSWs (30 per cent) and HBSWs (27.5 per cent), but it was about 12.5 per cent among the BBSWs. The highest educational attainment of the sex workers were up to class ten and most of them were among the HBSWs.

#### *Place of Origin of the Respondents by Birth*

Despite occupational similarities, the survey showed that an overwhelming majority (71 per cent) of the respondents were born in

**Table 5.** Distribution of the Respondents by Birth Location

Birth Location	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rural	28	70.0	26	65.0	31	77.5	85	70.8
Urban	12	30.0	14	35.0	9	22.5	35	29.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

rural areas, whereas about 29 per cent in urban areas. It was found that 70 per cent of the BBSWs were born in rural areas, followed by 65 per cent of the SBSWs and 77.5 per cent of the HBSWs. On the other hand, 30 per cent of the BBSWs were born in urban areas, followed by 35 per cent of the SBSWs and 22.5 per cent of the HBSWs.

#### *Religious Affiliation of the Respondents*

The survey shows that majority (95 per cent) of the BBSWs were Muslims, followed by Hindus 2.5 per cent and Buddhists the same per cent. On the other hand, all the respondents of SBSWs and HBSWs were Muslims. This is quite natural in a country where 85 per cent of the total population is Muslim.

#### *Fertility of the Respondents*

It was revealed that 65 per cent of the BBSWs had children, followed by about 48 per cent of the SBSWs and 35 per cent of the HBSWs. Majority (about 75 per cent) of the respondents had children between 1 and 2, followed by about 20 per cent between 3 and 4 and about 5 per cent over

4 children. However, the numbers of children per respondent were found to be high among the BBSWs.

**Table 6.** Fertility Status of the Respondents

Number of Children	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1-2	19	73.1	14	73.7	11	78.6	44	74.6
3-4	4	15.4	3	15.8	3	21.4	12	20.3
Above 4	1	3.8	2	10.5	0	0.0	3	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### *Fathers' Profession of the Respondents*

Occupational pattern of sex workers' parents could enrich our idea about their socio-economic background. In respect of father's profession (even if father is dead), it was found that about 43 per cent of the BBSWs, 40 per cent of the SBSWs and 32.5 per cent of the HBSWs fathers were farmers and their activities were related to agriculture. Moreover, about 12.5 per cent of the BBSWs, 5 per cent of the SBSWs and 2.5 per cent of the HBSWs were not sure about their fathers' professions, as they did not

**Table 7.** Distribution of the Respondents by Fathers' Profession

Fathers' Profession	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Farmer	17	42.50	16	40.0	13	32.50	46	38.3
Small business	10	25.00	6	15.0	9	22.50	25	20.8
Service holder	3	7.50	3	7.5	6	15.00	12	10.0
Unemployed	1	2.50	4	10.0	5	12.50	10	8.3
Labourer	1	2.50	5	12.5	2	5.00	8	6.7
Rickshaw puller	2	5.00	3	7.5	3	7.50	8	6.7
Contractor	1	2.50	1	2.5	1	2.50	3	2.5
Don't know	5	12.50	2	5.0	1	2.50	8	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

maintain any contact with them due to social and cultural barriers. It was also found that larger per cent (38.3) of the total respondents' fathers were farmers, followed by small businessmen (about 21 per cent), service holders (10 per cent), unemployed (8.3 per cent), labourers (6.7 per cent), rickshaw pullers (6.7 per cent) and contractors (2.5 per cent).

#### *Mothers' Profession of the Respondents*

The survey revealed that majority (87.5 per cent) of HBSWs' mothers were housewives, followed by, 80 per cent of the SBSWs and 72.5 per cent of the BBSWs. It was also revealed that 7.5 per cent of BBSWs' mothers were involved in sex business. It was found that amongst the total respondents majority (80 per cent) of the sex workers' mothers were housewives, followed by housemaid (about 7 per cent), small business (about 4 per cent) and about 7 per cent respondents were not sure about their mothers' profession due to lack of contact for a long time.

**Table 8.** Distribution of the Respondents by Mothers' Profession

Mothers' Profession	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Housewife	29	72.5	32	80.0	35	87.5	96	80.0
Housemaid	2	5.0	4	10.0	2	5.0	8	6.7
Small business	1	2.5	2	5.0	2	5.0	5	4.2
Sex worker	3	7.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	2.5
Don't know	5	12.5	2	5.0	1	2.5	8	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### *Respondents' Profession before Entering into Sex Work*

Table 9 shows the respondents' profession before entering into sex work. The respondents reported that they were housewives (24.2 per cent), factory workers (24.2 per cent), unemployed (16.7 per cent), housemaid

**Table 9.** Respondents' Profession Prior to Sex Work

Prior Profession	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Housewife	10	25.0	8	20.0	11	27.5	29	24.2
Factory worker	3	7.5	12	30.0	14	35.0	29	24.2
Unemployed	13	32.5	6	15.0	1	2.5	20	16.7
House maid	3	7.5	6	15.0	5	12.5	14	11.7
Student	4	10.0	4	10.0	3	7.5	11	9.2
Daily labourer	0	0.0	1	2.5	3	7.5	4	3.3
Stay at home	6	15.0	2	5.0	2	5.0	10	8.3
Actor of opera	1	2.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.8
Business	0	0.0	1	2.5	0	0.0	1	0.8
Service	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.5	1	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(11.7 per cent), students (9.2 per cent) and daily labourer (3.3 per cent) before coming into sex trade. It was found that majority of the BBSWs (32.5 per cent) were unemployed before entering into this profession, whereas 15 per cent of the SBSWs and 2.5 per cent of the HBSWs were unemployed. It was also found that 7.5 per cent of the BBSWs were factory workers, followed by SBSWs 30 per cent and HBSWs 35 per cent. Some of the HBSWs informed that they were engaged in other profession but they were not satisfied with the income. So, they changed their previous profession and joined as sex workers for better earning.

#### *Duration of Profession of the Respondents*

Table 10 shows the distribution of experience of sex workers in sex industry. It was found that about 48 per cent of the HBSWs started their profession less than one year ago, followed by about 18 per cent of the SBSWs and about 8 per cent of the BBSWs. About 33 per cent of the

**Table 10.** Duration of Profession of the Respondents

Duration (in years)	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 1	3	7.5	7	17.5	19	47.5	29	24.2
1-4	7	17.5	11	27.5	13	32.5	31	25.8
5-8	9	22.5	14	35.0	3	7.5	26	21.7
9-13	11	27.5	5	12.5	3	7.5	19	15.8
14-17	2	5.0	2	5.0	2	5.0	6	5.0
More than 17	8	20.0	1	2.5	0	0.0	9	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

HBSWs were involved in this profession between 1 and 4 years, followed by about 28 per cent of the SBSWs and about 18 per cent of the BBSWs. The study also revealed that 20 per cent of the BBSWs and about 3 per cent of the SBSWs started this profession more than 17 years ago. And 26 per cent of the total respondents of different groups experienced this profession between 1 and 4 years, where 24 per cent less than 1 year.

#### *Motivating Factors of the Respondents for Entering the Sex Profession*

Table 11 shows the various adverse social and economic factors that motivated the respondents to enter into sex profession. Table 11 demonstrates that about 33 per cent of the BBSWs were involved in this profession due to economic hardship, followed by 20 per cent of the SBSWs and 45 per cent of the HBSWs. The table also states that about

18 per cent of the BBSWs, 28 per cent of the SBSWs and 23 per cent of the HBSWs were involved in this profession being trapped by *dalals* (pimps or brokers). When the respondents were grouped together, it is evident that about

**Table 11.** Motivating Factors for Entering the Sex Profession

Motivating Factors	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Economic Necessity	13	32.5	8	20	18	45.0	39	32.5
Trapped by <i>dalal</i>	7	17.5	11	27.5	9	22.5	27	22.5
Forced by someone	5	12.5	6	15	4	10.0	15	12.5
Family disorder	6	15.0	4	10	4	10.0	14	11.7
Easy earning	5	12.5	2	5	2	5.0	9	7.5
Convinced by someone	1	2.5	5	12.5	1	2.5	7	5.8
Sexually abused by house owner	2	5.0	2	5	0	0.0	4	3.3
Cheated by lover	1	2.5	2	5	0	0.0	3	2.5
Taken by husband	0	0.0	0	0	2	5.0	2	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>32.5</b>

33 per cent of the sex workers were involved in this profession due to dire economic necessity, followed by about 23 per cent trapped by *dalals*, 13 per cent forced by someone, about 12 per cent due to family disorder, 7.5 per cent for easy earning, about 6 per cent being convinced by someone, 3.3 per cent being sexually abused by house owner, 2.5 per cent cheated by lover and about 2 per cent taken by husband.

#### *Status of Legal Document of the Respondents*

As to how they see the status of sex work in the eye of law in Bangladesh, a large number of respondents opined that the profession is illegal. On the other hand, the practice of making an affidavit before a magistrate had been misconceived by a large number of respondents among the BBSWs as a government "license" to practice the trade. It was also found that ignorance of the legal status of sex work was relatively higher among the SBSWs and HBSWs.

### Other Professions or Services of the Respondents

The respondents were involved in other professions or services in addition to sex trade. Table 12 shows the data on whether or not the respondents had other profession. It was found that most of the sex

**Table 12.** Other Professions or Services of the Respondents

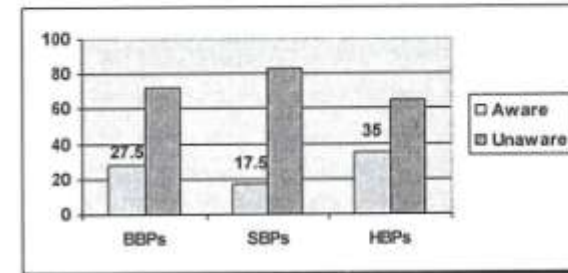
Involvement in Other Profession	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	12	30.0	13	32.5	3	7.5	28	23.3
No	28	70.0	27	67.5	37	92.5	92	76.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

workers did not have alternative sources of income. The survey showed that about 77 per cent of the total respondents had no other source of income, while about 23 per cent had alternative jobs. The table depicts that 30 per cent of the BBSWs and about 33 per cent of the SBSWs were involved in other jobs or services, whereas only about 8 per cent of the HBSWs were involved in other jobs and the types of jobs or services were small business, garments work, attendants in clinics or hospitals. On the contrary, among the three categories the HBSWs were less involved in other jobs due to their higher income than other categories.

### Guardians' Knowledge Regarding the Profession of the Respondents

The survey stated that about 83 per cent of the SBSWs entered into this profession beyond the knowledge of their guardians, followed by about 73 per cent of the BBSWs and 65 per cent of the HBSWs. They pretended that they worked in a garment factory or in a clinic in the city. It was also found that irrespective of different categories of sex workers (those family were aware) about 38 per cent respondents informed that their guardians allowed them to be involved in this profession due to sharing income, followed by 25 per cent due to poverty.

**Figure 1.** Family Knowledge of Sex Work



### Other Family Members' Involvement in this Profession of the Respondents

It was found that 20 per cent of the BBSWs and about 3 per cent of the HBSWs had other relatives who were involved in this profession. But among the SBSWs, no respondents were found whose relatives were engaged in this profession.

**Table 13.** Involvement of other Family Members

Other Family Members' Involvement	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	8	20.0	0	0.0	1	2.5	9	7.5
No	32	80.0	40	100.0	39	97.5	111	92.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Problems Experienced by Respondents from Clients

It was evident from the study that the sex workers of three categories faced different problems from their clients, such as torture by police (35.29 per cent), sex without pay (33.33 per cent), physical abuse

**Table 14.** Nature of Problems Experienced from Clients

Types of Problems	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	(N=11) %	N	(N=32) %	N	(N=8) %	N	(N=51) %
Tortured by police	0	0	10	31.25	8	100	18	35.29
Not paid for sex	5	45.45	12	37.5	0	0	17	33.33
Physical abused	5	45.45	6	18.75	3	37.5	14	27.45
Panicked	3	27.27	8	25	0	0	11	21.57



**Table 14. (Continued)**

Verbal abused	2	18.18	7	21.88	1	12.5	10	19.61
Looted the valuables	0	0	7	21.88	0	0	7	12.72
Forced to drink alcohol	0	0	5	15.63	0	0	5	9.8

Note: Multiple responses; percentage has been computed amongst those who faced problems.

(27.45 per cent), panic (21.57 per cent), verbal abuse (19.61 per cent), loss of valuables (12.72 per cent) and force to have alcohol (9.8 per cent).

It may be mentioned that the National HIV Surveillance (1999-2000) found that between 52 per cent and 60 per cent of SBSWs reported being raped by men in uniform in the previous 12 months and between 41 per cent and 51 per cent reported being raped by local criminals. Many sex workers considered violence "normal" or "part of the job"; as a result, they are often reluctant to report incidence of beating, molestation, sexual assault to the law enforcing authorities.

#### *Age Groups of Clients as Reported by the Sex workers*

As regard the age of the clients of the respondents, Table 15 illustrates that 90 per cent of the HBSWs identified their clients as young, followed by about 73 per cent of the BBSWs and 68 per cent of the SBSWs. On the other hand, about 43 per cent of the BBSWs, 33 per cent of the SBSWs and 22.4 per cent of the HBSWs reported that their clients were adolescents. Moreover, about 48 per cent of the SBSWs identified their

**Table 15. Clients' Age Group**

Age Groups	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Adolescent	17	42.5	13	32.5	9	22.4	39	32.5
Young aged	29	72.5	27	67.5	36	90.0	92	76.7
Middle aged	14	35.0	19	47.5	7	17.5	40	33.3
Old aged	2	5.0	1	2.5	0	0.0	3	2.5

Note: Multiple responses.

clients as middle aged, followed by 35 per cent of the BBSWs and 17.5 per cent of the HBSWs. Most SBSWs generally contact their clients in the dark places of the parks or streets, often in specific areas established by clients for that purpose. They engage in sex with their clients wherever they are able, sometimes they are picked up by their clients who use their own places (mess, family homes, and hotels) for sexual enjoyment. HBSWs meet and serve their clients in hotels, where the

hotel managers/other employees often act as brokers or pimps between sex workers and clients.

#### *Profession of Clients as Reported by the Respondents*

A wide variety of occupational categories were evident among the clients as reported by the sex workers. As reported by the respondents, clients' professions were businessmen (52.5 per cent), rickshaw pullers (45.8 per cent), factory workers (37.5 per cent), students (27.5 per cent), bus drivers (22.5 per cent), police (16.7 per cent) and different service holders (11.7 per cent).

**Table 16. Distribution of Clients' Profession**

Clients' Profession	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	(N=40)	N	(N=40)	N	(N=40)	N	(N=120)
Businessmen	25	62.5	13	32.5	25	62.5	63	52.5
Rickshaw pullers	21	52.5	29	72.5	5	12.5	55	45.8
Factory workers	16	40	21	52.5	8	20	45	37.5
Bus drivers	12	30	11	27.5	4	10	27	22.5
Students	12	30	9	22.5	12	30	33	27.5
Police	3	7.5	8	20	9	22.5	20	16.7
Service holders	7	17.5	2	5	5	12.5	14	11.7
Musclemen	2	5	4	10	5	12.5	11	9.2
Teachers	1	2.5	1	2.5	2	5	4	3.3
Don't know	3	7.5	11	27.5	14	35	28	23.3

Note: Multiple responses.

#### *Income of the Respondents per Sex*

Table 17 reveals the data collected on the sex workers' income per sex. The range of income for sex work depends on the age of the sex workers. The study found that the range of income and the age of the sex workers are negatively related. It was evident that the sex workers in the lower age groups and old age groups received less earnings compared to the sex workers in the middle age groups. It was observed that majority (55 per cent) of the respondents reported that their per

**Table 17.** Distribution of Respondents by Income from per Sex Work

Income per Sex (Tk)	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 50	23	57.5	13	32.5	3	7.5	39	32.5
50-100	17	42.5	21	52.5	28	70.0	66	55.0
101-150	0	0.0	4	10.0	6	15.0	10	8.3
151-200	0	0.0	2	5.0	1	2.5	3	2.5
201-250	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	5.0	2	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

sex work income ranges between Tk 50 and Tk 100, while 33 per cent earned less than Tk 50, followed by about 8 per cent between Tk 101 and Tk 150, about 3 per cent between Tk 151 and Tk 200. It was found that the main items of sex workers' expenditure go for food, clothes and house rent and also for items such as cosmetics, entertainment, medical cost, commission, extortion and other.

#### *Number of Clients Entertained by the Sex workers Each Day*

Table 18 depicts that more than half (55 per cent) of the BBSWs had between 6 and 10 clients per day, followed by 40 per cent of the HBSWs and 30 per cent of the SBSWs. The table also indicates that 35 per cent

**Table 18.** Distribution of Respondents by Number of Clients Each Day

Clients' Age Groups	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1-5	2	5.0	24	60.0	8	20.0	34	28.3
6-10	22	55.0	12	30.0	16	40.0	50	41.7
11-15	12	30.0	2	5.0	14	35.0	28	23.3
16-20	4	10.0	2	5.0	2	5.0	8	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

of the HBSWs entertained between 11 and 15 clients per day, followed by 30 per cent of the BBSWs and 5 per cent of the SBSWs. Among the total respondents the two ranges of '1 to 5' and '6 to 10' presented the dominant trend of the numbers of having clients per day.

#### *Mode of Payment for Sex Work*

When the respondents were grouped together, the study showed that about 74 per cent of the sex workers reported that their clients paid regularly, while about 26 per cent irregularly.

#### *Accidental Pregnancy Caused by Clients*

It was found that about 53 per cent of the BBSWs had experience of pregnancy by clients, followed by 33 per cent of the SBSWs and 10 per cent of the HBSWs. Table 19 depicts that 75 per cent of the HBSWs and about 69 per cent of the SBSWs who became pregnant preferred to be aborted, while about 43 per cent of the BBSWs terminated their pregnancy. The catastrophic cycle an HIV positive woman can transmit

**Table 19.** Preference of Pregnancy and/or Abortion

After Pregnancy	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Child born	12	57.1	4	30.8	1	25.0	17	44.7
Abortion	9	42.9	9	69.2	3	75.0	21	55.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>

the virus to her baby during pregnancy, labour and delivery, and through breastfeeding. In this reality, the focus has been on prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV infection. Besides, HIV can pass from mother to unborn baby while growing inside the womb and sharing mom's blood supply.

#### *Types of Sexual Intercourse*

Table 20 shows that there were no substantial variations among the three categories in the case of vaginal sex. The table also indicates that about 92 per cent of the total respondents made vaginal sex, followed by about 6 per cent oral sex and about 2.5 per cent anal sex.

**Table 20:** Types of Sexual Intercourse

Types of Sexual Intercourse	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Vaginal	33	82.5	38	95.0	39	97.5	110	91.7
Oral	5	12.5	1	2.5	1	2.5	7	5.8
Anal	2	5.0	1	2.5	0	0.0	3	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### *Frequency of Condom Used by Clients as Reported by the Sex Workers*

Table 21 reveals that about 67.5 per cent of the BBSWs reported that their clients used condom irregularly, followed by 60 per cent of the HBSWs and 55 per cent of the SBSWs. The table also indicates that

**Table 21.** Frequency of Condom Used by Clients

Frequency of Condom use	BBSWs		SBSWs		HBSWs		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Irregular	27	67.5	22	55.0	24	60.0	73	60.8
Regular	10	25.0	17	42.5	14	35.0	41	34.2
Rare	3	7.5	1	2.5	2	5.0	6	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

about 61 per cent of the total respondents of different groups reported that their clients used condom irregularly, about 34 per cent regularly and 5 per cent rare. The consistent use of condoms during sexual intercourse—vaginal, anal, or oral can greatly reduce the clients' and sex workers' risk of acquiring or transmitting STIs.

### Conclusion

The sex workers are not born as sex workers. Poverty and unfavourable social circumstances provoke and push them to entering into sex business as a means of survival constituting the most vulnerable segment of the society in Bangladesh. In the domestic sphere they are subject to various abuses both before and after their sex trade entry. Before entering into the sex trade, they are abused and suffered by human traffickers, divorce or separation, family quarrel, rape, lack of family bond and attachment, sexual exploitation by relatives and lovers, physical and mental torture by husband. On the other hand, after entering into sex trade, the sex workers become subject to several other abuses notably, physical torture by clients, *mastans* (musclemen), *sardarni* and police (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

The sex workers are looked down upon as the most downgraded people in the society. They are subject to inhuman treatment and are denied of their human, economic and social rights. They are bound to face many difficulties that are making them socially, economically and physically insecure. They suffer from all-pervasive social stigma, lack of alternative jobs with limited or no skill, lack of safe shelter/social safety, family breakdown and lack of respect and dignity, etc.

The daily life of the SBSWs and HBSWs differs significantly from that of the BBSWs. While the SBSWs and HBSWs can move out freely, the BBSWs are restricted to go out except seldom to cinema or shop or hospital/medicine shop. Though the streets make the SBSWs vulnerable but sex workers prefer to work on the streets rather than the brothel because it allows them greater freedom from the brothel management and hierarchy. On the other hand, the specific vulnerabilities of the

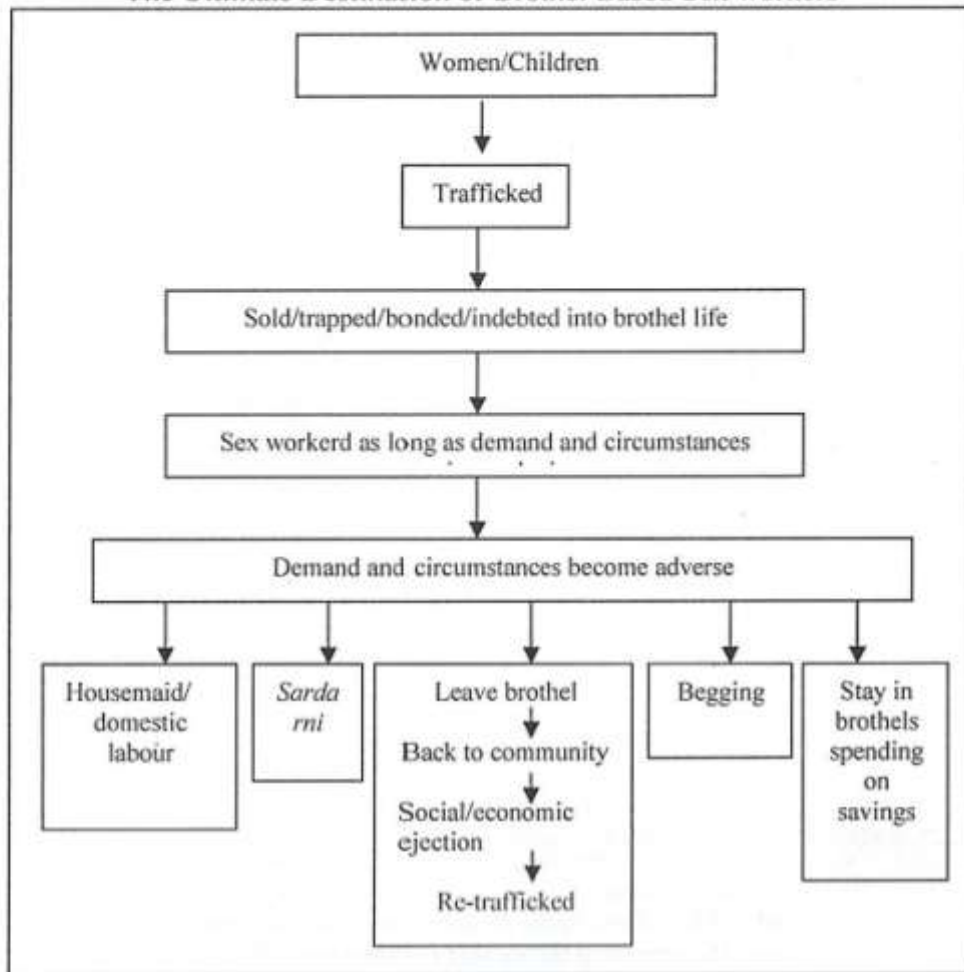
SBSWs are related to their public exposure; frequently *mastan* and police either rape them or negotiate and then refuse to pay. The SBSWs are frequently chased, beaten up, faced with forced sex including oral sex and group sex. On the other hand, the BBSWs are categorically rejected by the *samaj* (moral society) and they cannot even take part in the public or social events. The BBSWs and their children live in an unhealthy physical and social environment with considerable abuses of their human rights. The HBSWs comprise the highest status and are less vulnerable to violence among the three groups except a few police raid. The hotel managers or owners always try to protect HBSWs from any sort of external threats, most importantly from members of law enforcement agencies. At the same, time they are completely at the mercy of the hotel owners as they depend on them for their clients.

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Appendix

**Figure 2**  
The Ultimate Destination of Brothel Based Sex workers



**Figure 3**  
The Life Cycle of Street Based Sex workers

