TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN AND VULNERABILITY TO HIV INFECTION IN URBAN MEXICO

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Abstract

Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation is a prevalent problem that may adversely affect many aspects of women’s health. In this paper, we examine how sexual exploitation is exposing trafficked women to HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases in urban Mexico. This study was conducted in Mexico City and Monterrey, where one hundred and ten trafficked women were interviewed during the year 2003-2006 and 2007-2011. Results indicate that trafficked women are physically and sexually abused and engage in high-risk sexual behavior leading to infection with different kinds of sexually transmitted diseases. This abuse, high-risk behavior coupled with high numbers of clients serviced daily, indicates these trafficked women are at a higher risk of HIV infection.

Key words: Trafficking of women, Sexual exploitation, Sexual behavior, HIV Infection, Mexico

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1 This research was funded by National Council on Science and Technology (CONACYT), Mexico. Project No. CB-2007/83065.
Introduction

Trafficking of humans, especially of women drew international attention during the international counter trafficking treaty signed back in 1904 and this has increased after the 90s due to its multifaceted consequences. Many documents affirm that trafficking of women has increased due to higher disparity between rich and poor. Women migrate inside the country or cross international borders to seek economic security for themselves and for their families. According to Demir (2003) the push and pull factors of migration are similar for men and women, but their outcome and experience of migration is different, for example, women fall into sexual exploitation.

Trafficking of persons especially of women for forced and exploitative labor, including sexual exploitation is one of the greatest human rights violations (Demir, 2003). It is also the darkest features of the lack of equality between men and women (Musacchio, 2004). Trafficking of women has developed into a tremendous, highly organized criminal trade linked to the exploitation of women and it is the second most lucrative activity of organized crime following the trafficking of drugs (Demir, 2003).

The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons that emerged as part of the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime adopted in Palermo in 2000 defines human trafficking\textsuperscript{2} as:

\begin{quote}
“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation”.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{2}https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf
The protocol cites the main forms of exploitation to be sexual servitude, forced labor and the removal of organs. Trafficking involves deception, coercion, intimidation, threats of violence and actual violence for the purpose of labor or sexual exploitation. Traffickers frequently obtain control of their victims through the guise of debt bondage. In contrast human smuggling involves consent and the illegal entry of a person into another country, often a desirable goal for individuals suffering from economic destitution. A common misconception surrounding trafficking of persons is that an individual must cross international borders to be considered a victim of human trafficking. However as evidenced by the United Nations definition, this is not always the case and much trafficking takes place domestically within the borders of one country.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that 2.5 million people worldwide are in a trafficking situation at any given time. According to the ILO, 43 percent of trafficking victims are used for commercial sexual exploitation, while 32 percent are used for forced economic exploitation. Twenty five percent of victims are used for a combination of forced exploitation and commercial sexual exploitation or for undetermined reasons (ILO, 2005). Furthermore, according to the latest ILO’s Global Estimate of Forced Labour” (2012), 20.9 million people worldwide are victims of forced labour, trapped in jobs into which they were coerced and which they cannot leave. Around 9.1 million victims of forced labour, 44 percent of the total, have moved either internally or internationally. This indicates that migration can be an important vulnerability factor. In this context, it has also been shown that forced sexual exploitation is strongly associated with cross-border movement (ILO, 2012).

Research on women trafficking state that young girls and women mainly trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced into prostitution, often suffer extreme
sexual, physical and psychological abuses, these being associated with the gender-based violence. Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation recently has become an increasingly important topic of the international agenda due to its growing concerns on the violence against women as well as its connection with the sex industry, forced and exploitative labor, HIV/AIDS and others forms of human rights violations (Huda, 2006). Though a lot has been done by many anti trafficking agencies at national and international level to understand the process of trafficking, there still is an urgent need for research which addresses and provides information on health status of these women to help to formulate new public policies. Thus, the main objectives of this paper are to explore how the Mexican women trafficked inside the country are later forced into prostitution and are being sexually exploited. This paper also looks into how sexual exploitation is making trafficked women vulnerable to HIV infection.

**Sexual exploitation and trafficking in Mexico**

According to Esteinou (2011) prostitution in Mexico has become a public concern in the last few years, especially on children. Mexico ranks second in the world in the prostitution of underage persons. Children are trafficked from poor areas of the country and most often exploited by American tourist. Though prostitution has been practiced in the country since the Pre-Hispanic period, today this activity not only persists among women, men and children it has expanded throughout the country. According to Azaola (1998, in Esteinou, 2011) the rapid increase in number of children for commercial sexual exploitation is due to the following factors: (1) The deterioration of life condition of poor families, (2) the promotion of child prostitution by close family members, (3) the use of sexual activities as a means of survival by street children who escape from abusive home, (4) the recruitment
of children as sexual workers by organized crime network and, (5) the transfer of children as sex workers from underdeveloped countries and illegally introduced into developed ones. Children are seduced and recruited through different kinds of promises and once they are trapped are usually are taken to distant work places far from their homes.

The above studies explain how child prostitution through the trafficking has increased in the country, however during the last few years, Mexico has undergone deep changes regarding trafficking in persons especially of women. Firstly, it is an important country of origin, destination and transit for international trafficking, and secondly, it is one of the important countries with regards to internal trafficking. Trafficking of women in Mexico is difficult to ascertain. There is little empirical data on trafficking of women in Mexico. Up to date there is no official statistics on trafficking of women, but some studies indicate that every year approximately 10,000 people are trafficked within Mexico particularly to six cities: Cancun, Acapulco, Mexico City, Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez and Monterrey and 5,000 are trafficked to United States (Acharya, 2009). Also, Teresa Ulloa, President of the Regional Coalition Against Trafficking of Women and Children in Latin America and Caribbean stated that every day 400 women enter into prostitution (this figure includes trafficked and non-trafficked women) in Mexico City, out of which 80 per cent do it against their will (González, 2003). In a study, Acharya (2009) found that in Mexico from 10 trafficked women 7 are trafficked inside the country and 3 are taken outside the country.

Previous research on trafficking and prostitution in Mexico indicates that there is a bigger health crisis among these women. Studies conducted by Case et.al (2008) and Michelle et.al (2007) on Mexico’s northern border indicate that many trafficked women working in prostitution are infected by HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections including Hepatitis B. Similarly, Patterson et.al (2008) studied 924 female sex workers in
Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez and found that around 6 percent of women were infected by HIV. They also indicate that HIV infected women were more likely to have syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhea.

The study conducted by Bucardo et. al (2004) interviewed 25 female sex workers and found that the condom use among these women was very limited. Also this research states that women frequently suffered from unwanted pregnancies, diseases and risk associated with physical assault. Similarly to this study some other researchers on sex work and trafficking (Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998, GAATW, 2001) have identified that this business is associated with high health-risks primarily caused due to the lack of access to services, isolation and exploitative working conditions. The trafficking of women for sexual exploitation is accompanied by potentially lifelong and/or life-threatening health consequences. It prevents victims from attaining the highest possible level of physical, mental and social wellbeing.

In Mexico the approach of national public health to sexually transmitted infection and HIV/AIDS increasingly recognizes that women’s vulnerability to HIV is integrally connected with discrimination and violence. Today, this has become an important subject for politicians, academicians and for the general public due to its consequences on health and rapid changes in the number of HIV/AIDS patients. For example, in the year 2007 there were 114,127 personas living with HIV-positive in Mexico, which in 2011 increased to 153,109 in total (CONASIDA, 2011). This data provides a glimpse as to how the country is experiencing a serious epidemic of sexually transmitted infection, like HIV. One of the important factors of this increasing number is unprotected heterosexual behavior and the growing sex market in various Mexican cities.

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Research Methodology

Trafficked women are treated as hidden population, thus an appropriate and flexible methodology was pursued during the fieldwork. To locate the trafficked women in Mexico City and Monterrey, first we went to the downtown area of the city, where brothels are located. We entered to a brothel and talked with a woman. Later we paid her solicited amount (200 pesos in Mexico City and 300 pesos in Monterrey)\(^4\) and took her to a private room to talk freely. We informed her about the details related to our project and asked her to find out about other trafficked women who are working in the same or nearby brothels. In the beginning she declined to help, but after regular interaction she agreed to cooperate with us in locating trafficked women in exchange of 100 pesos ($8 USD) per woman. Whenever she located a woman, she arranged an interview and called us.

After getting the information we went directly to the indicated woman, produced our identity and asked her about an interview. As all brothels have a constant vigilance by the madrina/padrino and traffickers, it is not possible to talk for a long time with a woman in front of everyone. Therefore we had to pay the solicited amount and take her to a private room located inside the brothel. This method was also adopted in order to keep our identity hidden from the madrina/padrino and traffickers, once inside the private room we were able to make her the interview.

Moreover, at the beginning of the interview, we offered the women to come to our house or to any other location, but they always responded with a “no”. They used to tell us “….this is our area; it is not possible for us to go out from this place, because madrina (madam) do not permit us to work in other places…. ”. Since women were not allowed to leave the brothel, we acted as “clients”. Once we were inside the private room, we were

\(^4\) 1 US dollar is 12 pesos in Mexico.
interviewing them for around 30 minutes. After completing the interview, we also requested her to help us to finding other trafficked women like her. With help of these women, we constructed a chain and discovered other trafficked women in both the cities interviewed 110 women (70 in Mexico City and 40 in Monterrey) during 2003-2006\(^5\) and 2007-2011.

**Personal characteristics of trafficked women in Mexico**

The personal characteristics of trafficked women are very much important from two points of view. First, they aid researchers to understand the determinants of sex trafficking (in particular) and second, it indicates the demand side of the illicit “market”. In this study we have found that trafficked women in Mexico were significantly younger, out of 110 interviewed women, nearly 85 percent (93 women) were less than 20 years old and rest were in-between 20 to 25 years old. It is necessary to underline that out of 93 women a considerable number of women (42 percent) were less than 15 years old, and this indicates an important characteristic of this illicit market, where adolescent are taken into consideration. We have seen from the analysis that brothel owners do not prefer women who are older in age. According to a madrina of Mexico City: “….woman after 25 years old is consider as older and aged for this industry and also clients do not prefer this kind of woman…..”. She explained that clients often told her “….the aged women do not have same passion as a 15 years of have....”.

When we analyze the marital status of the trafficked women, around 79 percent (87 women) were unmarried; 15 percent (17 women) were single mothers but currently not living with their children, whereas only 5.5 percent (6 women) were married and at present

\(^5\) Data obtained during my doctoral research (2002-06) at National Autonomous University of Mexico.
they are separated from their partner because of family violence. This finding shows another characteristic of this sex market, where only young and unmarried women are preferred, as a madrina said: “....I do not want to buy a married woman even a divorced, because for me she is just like a used cloth, where she does not have the same smell like a new one....”.

On the other hand, among the other characteristics of trafficked women, it is clearly observed that 71 percent of them (78 women) were mestizo group (Spanish mixed race) and the rest were indigenous. The question is: why more women were mestizo? After the conversation with few brothel owners study concludes that; mestizo women are highly preferred by the clients because of their white skin color. One madrina says: “....clients do not want to have sex with dark skin girl, they do not prefer indigenous women, though I can buy an indigenous woman in a cheaper price than a mestizo, but on her my (economic) gain is very marginal...”. In Mexico in general the Spanish mixed people have fair skin whereas the indigenous have the dark skin, This indicates one more attribute of this market.

**Responsible factors for trafficking of women in Mexico**

The literature indicates that poverty, lack of employment opportunities, violence against women, armed conflicts and natural disasters are some of the leading factors behind the women trafficking (Sabella, 2011). Today due to changes occurred in economic, social and family sphere, women are leaving their place of origin in search of a better livelihood in the urban center or in other countries (Huda, 2006). On the other hand, while analyzing the factors behind the trafficking in Mexico, we can understand that there are series of factors associated with the phenomenon, which we have divided into four categories:

1. Family factors
2. Economic factors
3. Social factors
4. Personal factors

**Figure 1 here**

From the above analysis it is clear that family factor is more important than the economic, social and personal factor. For most of the women the family violence and disintegration are the main reason for trafficking. For example Linda a twenty years old girl trafficked from the Mexican state of Oaxaca to Monterrey said:

*When I was around 5 or 6 years old (don’t remember exactly) my father died and a few years later my mother married to another person. Once she married we went to Oaxaca (city) and were living in his house. My stepfather was an alcoholic. Every day he was fighting with my mother and when I tried to defend my mother, he scolded and beat me. Later he started abusing (sexually) me and one day in the absence of my mother he forced me to had sex with him and when I tried to escape, he beat me with an object and forcefully had sex with me. Thereafter, I left home (on the same day) and went to Mexico City. When I arrived to Taxqueña (a bus terminal in Mexico City), I was recruited by a person for a domestic job, after accepting his offer he took me to a hotel where he introduce me with a señora (madam), later that señora sent me to Monterrey with a group of young ladies. Once we reached Monterrey they forced us to work in this place (massage parlor).*

There are many women like Linda in Mexico who were victim of family disintegration and domestic violence. In her study, Esteinou (2011) underline that most sexually exploited women and children in Cancun, Mexico come from a similar family
background. Many have been victims of family violence and/or neglect and many have experienced sexual abuse from a family member.

We have seen from our analysis that women accepted the false promises of trafficker or left their home to escape from the poverty as well to get an employment to sustain their family. Similarly, when we analyze the social factors we found that women of rural and small town are gender discriminated. They are not allow to go to school as well as, forced by their parents to contribute in family economy, as Rosa an eighteen years girl of Michoacan state said: I have one brother and two sisters, I am the elder one. When I was 9 years, my father stopped my schooling, he used to tell me: “la escuela no es para las mujeres, solo para los hombres”, (schooling is not for women, it is only for men). I was taking care of my younger brothers in the absence of my parents. A year later my father asked me contributes in the family economy. He forced me to work in a tortillera (bread store). My earning was very less (around 250 pesos 20 USD per week). Everyday my father was insisting me to earn more money; he was also threatening me that, if I will not earn more money he will stop providing food. I was tired with my father, and one day I left the house and went to Mexico City. In Mexico City I started working in stall close to university (UNAM). After working six or seven months my owner contacted me with a pollero (trafficker) who promised me an employment in USA. I paid him 15000 pesos (1200 USD). Few weeks later I started my journey with three others girls to USA in trafficker’s car. After traveling a day and half we reached Monterrey. In the hotel he obliged us to stay with him… when we do not accept he told us that he is very nice person and just a matter of a night. Even he told us that he do not have much money to pay room rent. After that we accepted and stay with him in the night. In night he forced us have sex with him, he beat us and told that tomorrow he is going to sell us in a huge amount of money to work in a bar.
He kept us inside the room for a day, he tied our hand and sealed our mouth and in the evening a person went to the hotel and he brought us to this place. Before leaving the hotel room, the trafficker threatened us with a gun and knife that if we open our mouth he will kill us.

Though the family, economic and social factors are important behind the trafficking, personal factors are also other contributing reasons behind trafficking in Mexico. We have seen from the interviews that young girls left their parents and home with a promise of marriage with their boyfriend. Most of these boyfriends use the nobility of young girls and sell them to the hand of traffickers; which we can see in the case Cindy, a thirteen years young girl from Guerrero state. She mentioned: Every Saturday and Sunday I used to go my village tianguis (market) to sell vegetables. In that place I met a boy named Carlos... he was very kind to me. After few months we developed our relationship (love). Every weekend he was taking me for lunch and we were spending whole after noon together... he always mentioning me that he loved me very much and I am the only girl to whom he wants have his family. After three years of relationship, one day he asked me to marry him... I talked with my parents about Carlos, they were totally disagree with the relationship and marriage... They told me I was too young for marriage... when I mentioned Carlos, he got angry and asked me to choose among him and my family. He also told: “if you love me let escape from this place and get marry. once we get marry nobody will say any things.”. I was so blind in his love that I left my parents and went with him to Acapulco, we stayed there for months and from there we went to Tijuana to cross the border, but could not reached USA. After staying few weeks in a hotel, one day Carlos at very early morning left the hotel, told me that he is going to meet a trafficker who can take us to USA, and after that he never returned. Next day, during midday a lady came and she introduced herself as
Carlos friend, asked me to follow her.... She told that Carlos was in her house... I left with my luggage and after driving few minutes, she took me to a bar where she forced me to work with some clients...I got surprised and when asked about Carlos, she told me that he sold me in a 25,000 pesos (2000 USD), I tried to escape, but suddenly they captured me and beaten me a lot... they were very cruel with me... I stayed a year in Tijuana and after that they brought me to Monterrey... last six months I am here.. I do not know anything about Carlos... sometime when I asked about Carlos, they just laugh...

Living conditions of trafficked women

Trafficked women live in a very hazardous environment. It is not only because of poor hygienic conditions, but also due to the clandestine nature, exploitation and violence they face in their day-to-day life (Zimmerman et. al, 2009). In this place power is asserted through threats and violence from traffickers, clients and owners, and it is a daily event in the life of trafficked women. Much of the available empirical research on trafficked women and commercial sex indicates that women experience high levels of violence, including but not limited to, physical assaults, sexual assaults, verbal threats or abuse and psychological abuse (Raymond, 2004).

A study conducted in some European nations found that 95 percent of trafficked victims had experienced physical violence in relation to that work, including being kicked while pregnant, burned, punched, thrown against a wall or floor, hit with bats or other objects or dragged by the hair (Zimmerman et al., 2008). Rates of injuries to Indonesian women are highest in the category of vaginal bleeding followed by bruises, head trauma, mouth and teeth injuries, broken bones, soreness and swelling from frequent sex and sudden bleeding after violent intercourse (Dzuhayatin and Hartian 2002).
Trafficked women in Mexico face both physical and sexual violence at the hand of traffickers and the madrina/padrino. In the interview women reported that they have been hit, kicked, punched, struck with objects, burned, cut with knives, raped and others kind of violence by madrina. To understand the intensity of violence and their impact on women’s health, we have constructed an index of violence faced by trafficked women (in the past six months from the time of interview) in three different frequencies, i.e. frequently, occasionally and rarely. These levels are categorized as follows: Frequent violence: as aggression faced every day, occasional violence: as aggression faced once in a two week period and rare: as violence faced once in a month.

The result shows that trafficked women in Mexico face a wide range of frequent violence; such as: abused verbally, locked inside a room without food for days, threats of death by madrina/padrino, forced to have sex with more than one client at a time, hit, kicked and punched by madrina/padrino as well as by clients. Whereas, in occasional violence, the study found that women were struck with objects, burned by cigarette, raped by pardino, and sometimes the madrina/padrino put chili powder in their eyes and vagina. In case of rare violence, women were burned by madrina/padrino and cut with knives by them (see figure 2).

Figure 2 here

Analysis indicates that some women face physical and sexual violence everyday and sometimes the intensity of these aggressions are also high which cause severe wounds or injuries to the woman. A woman indicated during the interview: “….when I do not want to accept clients for any reason rather than understanding my situation they (padrino/madrino) just beat and kick me. They also tell me very often that: we will not
hesitate to kill you. I have to obey whatever they say, if I do not obey them, they use their power and attack me, most of the time they do not provide food and also snatch my money and force me to have sex with many clients at a time without using preservatives (condom). Since I left my native place, I have become an object for them. They uses me the way they want, nor my sentiments nor my pain are important for them. In this place, my body don’t belongs to me and neither do I have any right to think for my body…..”.

Above analysis indicates that trafficked women experienced a higher degree of violence by the surrounding persons, and this kind of exploitations resulted for vast majority of women in serious health implications.

**Sexual experience by trafficked women**

Sexual experience by trafficked woman is very important, as this is closely associated with the HIV and STIs/RTIs, unintended pregnancy and abortion, infertility and cancer resulting from STIs, and sexual dysfunction. In this section we have measured the sexual experience of trafficked women taking into consideration two aspects, (1) the numbers of clients received per day and (2) the type of sexual relation practices, which we have analyzed in the following table.

**Table 1 here**

From the above table we can conclude that around 57 percent of women received more than 10 clients per day, whereas 30 percent women received 5 to 10 clients and only 13 percent trafficked women get less than 5 clients per day. The study found that there are differential characteristic patterns that dictate the quantity of clients seen by women. It has
found from the interviews that as the age of the women increase the number of clients per
day decrease. It is due to client preference as it has been noted earlier in this discussion.
Similarly, clients also do not choose the women who were working many years in the
brothel because the client assumes that women working as prostitutes for a long time may
have been infected by diseases.

Moreover, when we analyze the type of sexual relations practices by trafficked
women, it is seen from the table that majority of women (63.3 percent) practice the vaginal,
oral and anal sex with the clients and only 23 percent and 13 percent practice vaginal and
vaginal-oral sex with their clients.

In order to perceive the sexual activities of trafficked women we asked some
questions; like whether their clients use condoms during the sexual relations. The study
found that, clients rarely use condoms, because the madrina/padrino with an intention to
earn more money forces women to have sex without condom. It is necessary to mention
that a client will pay more to have sex without condom and in these circumstances women
cannot negotiate with client for a safe sex, as we can observe in the case of Frida who is a
girl of 18 years: *it is very difficult to negotiate with a client to have safe sex, because they
paid extra money for this kind of services* (sex without condom), *I do not have options to
decide for safe sex, though I prefer it....who knows what kind infection I get from clients.
There are girls (in this place) when they insist clients to use anticonceptivo (condom), they
get angry and complain to señora. In this case señora punish the girl in many ways.*

**Health threats and infectious diseases**

Sexual exploitation and violence experienced by the trafficked women in the place of
destination resulted in life threatening consequences preventing victims from attaining the
highest possible level of physical, mental and social wellbeing (Gushulak and MacPherson,
On the other hand, the health implications of sex trafficking extend not only to victims but also to the general public as well as those who frequent brothels and who can become carriers and core transmitters of serious diseases. For that reason, highly vulnerable sex workers can be seen as disease vectors carrying and spreading infections to men in destination places (Huda, 2006). As it is pointed out in the earlier section that the sex workers frequently suffer from unwanted pregnancies and diseases, similarly in our study in the two cities found that out of total one hundred and ten women interviewed, 57 were exposed to unwanted pregnancy and had gone through abortion. Among them 46 women reported that they had at least one abortion since they had been trafficked, whereas eleven women reported receiving an abortion more than twice. Many women indicated that they have undergone unsafe and self-induced abortions by physical stamping on or punching their stomach.

On the other hand, the study Zimmerman et al. (2008) indicate that the most prevalent and severe physical health symptoms reported by the women include headaches, fatigue, dizzy spells, back pain, abdominal pain, pelvic pain and memory problems. The most frequently injured body regions are the head, the neck and the face. A research conducted by Beyer and Stachowiak (2003) in Southeast Asia found that sexual and reproductive health, as well as fertility, are a significant concern for trafficked women. Syphilis, gonorrhea, Hepatitis B and chlamydia are some of important infections presented in trafficked women. Similarly, in our study we have seen that most of the trafficked women commonly cited illness like frequent fever, backache and sleep disorder. Some women indicated that they have irregular menstruation, stomach and back pain during menstruation, some have heavy bleeding during menstruation, pain during intercourse,
bleeding after intercourse, lower abdominal pain, abnormal vaginal discharge and burning sensation while urine pass.

From the study we have found that women do not have access to good medical facilities, if they have any health problem, the madam is the only person who can take them to a clinic (which is usually located near the brothel) and most of these clinics are fake. There are also numerous drug stores located near the brothel where they sell imitations of many medicines as well as medicine with expired dates at a cheaper price. If a woman reports to the madam her health problems, first the madam provides some kind of medicine and in the case of emergencies she takes them to a clinic. But before going to clinic, the madam tells them not give any identification and also threatens the women about the consequences of mentioning anything to the doctor. After returning from the clinic, the madam never shows the bill to prove how much she spent in the clinic and typically informs the woman she spent a lot of money, which must be repaid by taking more clients.

Vulnerability to HIV infections
The role of sex trafficking in the spread of HIV and AIDS is of particular concern (Sabella, 2011). Many studies concluded that the sex industry has played key roles in the spread of HIV and given the enormous and young populations of the region such an outcome would be a true public health catastrophe (Beyer and Stachowiak, 2003, UNAIDS, 2006). For example it is thought that sex trade solely propelled India’s HIV epidemic. Contact with commercial sex workers represents a 70 percent increase in risk of HIV contagion among Indian men, likely because of inconsistent condom use (Nagelkerke et al., 2002, Rodrigues et al., 1995). Trafficked persons are at increased risk of HIV infection because of the limited power they may have in negotiating safe sex, also because they are subjected to
more repetitive and violent forms of sex and because of limited or no information about HIV risks and safe sexual practices. Frequent vaginal, oral and anal sex as well as multiple sex partners and the presence of other sexually transmitted infections increases the risk of HIV infection (IOM, 2009).

Like the above studies, trafficked women in the two cities studied are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection because of their sexual practices and their living environment. In this study we have classified the risk of HIV infection by trafficked women into three categories: (1) no risk at all, (2) little risk and (3) high risk. This classification we have made takes into consideration the number of clients received per day, type of sexual relations practices and condom use. The category of No Risk at all include those women who practices sex always with condom and received less number (less than 5 clients) of clients every day and only practice vaginal sex. The second category has been classified taking into consideration women who sometimes use condom during sex, have sex with less than 5 clients per day and practice vaginal and anal sex. For the category High risk we have taken into consideration those women who never use condom during sexual practice, reported any type of sexually transmitted diseases, receive more than 5 clients per day and practices vaginal, anal and oral sex with multiple partners. Result of this analysis indicates a significant difference between these three categories (see table 2).

Results indicate that out of one hundred and ten trafficked women only in the case of 16.7 percent it is seen that at the point of interview they were not at all in risk of HIV infection, whereas 26.6 percent were at the stage of little risk of HIV infection and it is surprisingly see that nearly sixty percent women were at high risk stage of HIV infection.

Table 2 here
Thus, the present study demonstrates that the majority of trafficked women in Mexico are at a high risk of acquiring HIV due to their unsafe sex practices, the presence of STIs and numbers of clients received. The study suggests that infection rates are growing alarmingly among this population and in the near future it may lead to a greater social and economic impact.

**Conclusion**

Trafficking of women is a global phenomenon with a growing concern. Millions of women have been trafficked around the world for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation, which has significantly devastated women’s health and wellbeing. These women suffer many forms of abuses and risks, such as physical, sexual and psychological abuse, forced or coerced use of drugs and alcohol, social restrictions and economic exploitation, which has a direct impact on women's physical, reproductive and mental health as we have seen in the above study.

The present study conducted in two important cities of Mexico, where we can observe that every year thousands of Mexican women are trafficked through false promises and later forced into prostitution. There are numerous factors behind the trafficking in Mexico, however, we have observed that the family factor is an important aspect for many women who fall into a trafficking network, including economic, social and personal factors. On the other hand, trafficked women in Mexico have experienced an extreme form of sexual and physical violence. Discussed results indicate that many times women are beaten with objects if they do not follow the instruction of the señora.

This research has found that trafficked women in both the cities (Mexico City and Monterrey) are forced into unsafe sex practices, including having multiple sex partners.
These women are not able to negotiate condom use with their partner due to fear of violence by the señora, though in most of the cases women said: *nosotros queremos que el cliente use anticonceptivos para no infectar nos de alguna enfermedad incluyendo el cliente, pero ellos no quieren, y en el caso de que obligamos, ellos se quejan con la señora, y la señora nos regaña* (we want to use condom in order to protect us and the client, but it is the client who do not want to use it, if we insist them they go to complain with the madam and the madam scold us).

Our study also examined how the sexual violence is affecting the health of the women. We saw that trafficked women in both urban centers experiencing a wide range of health problems, for example, frequent fever, back pain, stomach pain and sleep disorder, whereas the analysis on reproductive health problem showed that majority of trafficked women have been infected by sexually transmitted diseases (STI). This finding reflects that trafficked women are more vulnerable to HIV infection, as the analysis indicated that nearly 57 percent of women are in high risk to HIV infection.

It is important to note that currently in Mexico there are about 153,109 persons living with the deadly virus of HIV (CONASIDA, 2011). Most of the studies reveal that there is a pervasive attitude that stigmatize and blame prostitutes for the spread of diseases and identify the sex workers as a major source of sexually transmitted diseases. This has resulted in prostitution being seen as the cause of disease rather than the consequence of economic marginalization. Inevitably, it has also helped to draw attention away from male sexual behavior, and put the onus of disease prevention on the women. While much of the literature has focused on the potential of sex workers to infect others with HIV, thus often treated as diseases transmitter, little has been written about the need to protect sex workers from abuse and disease. Therefore in order to control the HIV infection, it is necessary to
address the trafficking problem in a multidimensional level (municipal, state and federal), in order to make it visible as well as spreading awareness in the society not only on HIV infection but also on trafficking of women.

References


Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Responsible factors behind trafficking of women in Mexico

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family factors</th>
<th>Domestic violence, physical abuse by the step father, abandoned by parents, alcoholism of father and single mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic factors</td>
<td>Poverty, unemployment, household economic problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social factors</td>
<td>Gender discrimination, sexual abuse, sexual segregation and sold by family member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal factors</td>
<td>Marriage with the boyfriend, in search of a peaceful life, earn more money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on fieldwork

Figure 2: Intensity of violence faced by trafficked women in Mexico

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequent violence</th>
<th>Abused verbally, Hit, Kicked, Punched, Threatening of death, Forced to have sex with more than one client at a time, Locked inside the room without food for days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occasional violence</td>
<td>Struck with objects, Burned by cigarette, Raped, Put chili powder in their eyes and vagina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rare violence</td>
<td>Burned their body, Cut with knives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on fieldwork
Table 1: Percent distribution of trafficked women by their sexual experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual experience</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of client received per day</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 clients</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of sexual relation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only vaginal</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal and oral</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal, Oral and anal</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Based on fieldwork*

Table 2: Percent distribution of trafficked women by risk of getting HIV infection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived risk of HIV infection</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No risk at all</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little risk</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High risk</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Based on fieldwork*