**Forms of Violence Women and Girls in Prostitution Experience and Challenges Frontline Service Providers and Organization Encounter to Support Victims and Survivors of Prostitution**

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**Context**

Prostitution in Tanzania is illegal but widespread. Prostitution remains one of the modern-day forms of slavery primarily perpetuated by men for sexual pressures in exchange for women receiving monetary compensation. Despite efforts through legislation and policy structures to criminalize prostitution, in many parts of the world, it continues to be propagated. Some of the reasons for rampant prostitution cases emanate from poverty coupled with tough economic times, which makes women and girls vulnerable to offering sexual pleasures to men to make ends meet (Kanayama et al., 2022). To bring it into Tanzania's context, women and girls exercising prostitution come from marginalized societies where levels of poverty remain high, and hope is lost to earn a living. In turn, women and girls experience exploitation, which occurs in different forms of violence (UN Women, 2023). Most recently, sex workers in Dar es Salaam slums experienced brutal enforcement from the police and were taken to the police lock-up premises. These women and girls are being beaten, tortured, harassed, and humiliated due to their prostitution practices. Thus, it becomes imperative to identify the forms of violence women and girls in prostitution experience and the obstacles that organizations and frontline service providers encounter when giving support to these victims.

**Objectives**

* To identify forms of violence that women and girls in prostitution experience.
* To identify challenges that civil organizations and frontline service providers experience in offering support to victims and survivors of prostitution.

**Forms of Violence Women and Girls in Prostitution Experience**

The exploitation of women and girls through prostitution comes with unlimited brutality, either by the pimps or the clients. This way, women and girl prostitutes do not get the expected earnings for their sexual services but rather are deprived of the monetary gains by the pimps, which consequently may lead to physical alterations. Some clients can also be assertive, making the prostitutes vulnerable to harm. Other forms of violence that women and girls in prostitution are likely to encounter involve victimization by their intimate partners or community members, which propagates isolation. Women and girls in prostitution also encounter sexual harm from their clients, which makes them prone to sexually transmitted infections. World Health Organization shows that female sexual workers of reproductive age are thirty times more vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS (WHO, 2019).

Women and girls in prostitution are also psychologically impacted as it increases their likelihood of developing post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and stigmatization, among others. For instance, when the clients do not pay the amount agreed, it can create traumatizing events for the female sex workers. There is also a likelihood that women and girls engaging in prostitution suffer economic violations directly from clients or pimps. Another way in which women and girls in prostitution are threatened is through serving a jail term following a court ruling.

**Challenges Encountered to Support Victims and Survivors of Prostitution**

Protection of victims and survivors of violence against prostitutes is a fundamental step to managing prostitution and its impact. In this regard, civil organizations, human rights defenders, and other frontline service providers have measures in place to create awareness of prostitution by women and girls and support the victims. One of the primary challenges that these organizations encounter is that the women and girls violently abused during prostitution do not have the courage to speak out and, because of fear of stigmatization, are hesitant to seek services from these organizations. As a result, traumatic experiences increase, exposing them to depression and other mental ailments whose support may not be adequately available in public health care facilities.

The frontline service providers do not have enough financial muscle to engage the victims or survivors of violence during prostitution (Okeyo, 2023). For this reason, the victims receive limited services because the organizations can be underfunded to offer a comprehensive service to these women and girls engaging in prostitution. Moreover, organizations and frontline service providers for victims or survivors of assault in prostitution cases may be tied to offer support, especially where the legal interpretation of sex workers' legislation is not clear. Some jurisdictions could have clear laws that address sex workers while others are implicitly applied, making sexual workers victims neglected. On this front, efforts by organizations fighting against violence for women and girls in prostitution may not be achieved as a long-term solution. The scope of their activities might also limit other organizations as it pertains to the protection of women and girls, which does not pay particular attention to the violence women experience during prostitution.

**Thoughts for the Way Forward**

Now that violence against women and girls engaging in prostitution remains high, what can be done to have a long-term solution that considers the underlying reasons women and girls engage in prostitution and offers them protection consistent with human rights provisions? A holistic approach is needed to safeguard women and girls in prostitution without just criminalizing the act but offering sound solutions for economic problems, such as creating employment opportunities for women and girls. It is also imperative that frontline service providers and women's organizations are funded to increase their awareness of violence against women and girls, which also focuses on the perpetrators of violent acts, such as pimps or clients.

**References**

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