

CHAPTER 2

THE TRAFFICKING PROCESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRAFFICKED PERSONS

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2.1 GOAL

The main goal of this chapter is to develop a knowledge base for better understanding of what a person undergoes during the trafficking experience in order to enable practitioners to provide individualized, holistic and appropriate care and support.

2.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter readers will:

- have a comprehensive understanding of the trafficking process as experienced by the trafficked person;
- possess knowledge needed to recognize a trafficked person's reactions and be able to provide appropriate general and psycho-social support and services;
- be able to identify the specific vulnerabilities of trafficked children and adolescents.

2.3 THE PROCESS OF TRAFFICKING: AN OVERVIEW

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a gross violation of fundamental human rights. As a criminal activity, trafficking can be considered a matter of human 'supply' and 'demand'. From the trafficked person's perspective, the reasons for leaving his/her home country are multi-determined and complex, often a convergence of 'push' factors and 'pull' factors. Timing and the 'apparent' quality of the offer to leave the countries of origin also play an important role. As a rule, the trafficked person is completely unaware of the conditions that await him/her in the country of destination.

2.3.1 Core elements of the trafficking process

There are three core elements of the trafficking process:

- *Economic* – e.g. the significantly unequal distribution of wealth between countries of origin and countries of destination, relative economic deprivation, unemployment, expectations of employment and financial reward, access to material benefits, etc.
- *Social* – e.g. abusive family environment, the corrosion of family, social fabrics and traditional support networks, gender discrimination, lack of education, domestic violence, etc.
- *Criminal* – e.g. the growth and diversification of organized crime, legal deficiencies (or more often the non-implementation of existing laws, corruption), etc.

The success of human trafficking is based, at the start of the chain, on the criminal 'readiness' to provide potential 'targets' and the trafficked person's willingness to consider migration to improve his/her material circumstances. The process usually involves more than one perpetrator who brokers human beings as a commodity. In order to satisfy the demand for cheap labour and cheap sexual services, organized international crime networks have been busy cashing in on the industrial trafficking in human beings. Criminal rings with strong international connections have been able to 'export and exploit living goods'. (Bezpalcha, R., 2003)

2.3.2 Who are traffickers?

Traffickers are recruiters, agents, pimps, madams, pimp-boyfriends, pimp-husbands, employers, owners of a variety of establishments that exploit trafficked persons. They are responsible for and knowingly participate in the trafficking process. Often, they offer a respectable façade and may appear congenial and sympathetic persons on the surface. Men and women of all ages, with various educational, nationality and ethnic backgrounds, are equally involved in this criminal business.

2.3.3 Who are trafficked persons? – Age and gender profile

Trafficked persons are women, children and men. Women and children are particularly vulnerable. They are bought, sold, transported and re-sold mostly for sexual and labour exploitation, but a substantial minority may also end up in situations such as forced begging, delinquency, debt bondage, false marriage, adoption, or as victims of the trade of human organs. The profile of trafficked persons is constantly changing. They are currently observed to be getting younger, and children are increasingly being caught up in the process. (IOM Council Document MC/INF 270, 11 November 2003.)

Age range - As explained before, there are only few publications with well established scientific background on the age and gender profile of trafficked persons. The Regional Clearing Point (RCP) Report, based on data received from the South Eastern European (SEE) region, indicates that the age of identified and assisted trafficked persons used for sexual exploitation ranges from 14 – 32. The majority were between 18 and 24 years of age at the time of identification and repatriation. Insufficient data has been collected regarding the age of trafficked persons when first recruited and trafficked, although comparison between the average age upon identification and length of time in captivity, indicates that most are 17-20 years old when recruited.

Trafficked Women – With the increased feminisation of migration over the past decade, women are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Not only are they exploited, but they are maintained and abused in conditions that impose major risks to their reproductive, physical and mental health. They also lack information on how to protect themselves from secondary risk factors and have little or no access to health care services.

Trafficked Minors – Children are forced into the sex trade every year. Due to their precarious situation, unaccompanied minors (under the age of 18) are highly susceptible to sexual and labour exploitation and physical, mental and emotional abuse. Children and adolescents are trafficked into many of the same forms of labour as adults, e.g. factory work, domestic work, sex work.

As with trafficked adults, children often come from environments that are violent and unstable, such as abusive families, single parent households, orphanages, refugee centres. They may also be runaways from home and surviving on the street. In some instances, close family members directly sell children. (End Child Exploitation: Stop the Traffic, United Kingdom, July 2003.)

According to the RCP report, case data regarding the proportion of trafficked minors in the SEE region are insufficiently documented at present. Unpublished statistics of the IOM Kiev rehabilitation centre provide an indication: During the period of 2002 - 2004, out of 402 assisted women only 28 (7%) were minors when trafficked. Out of all known 44 minors in the period of 2001 – 2004, only three were boys (aged 12 -13 when trafficked). This sample may not be representative for other locations.

Adult males – Although it is well known that adult men (age 18 and over) in SEE are also trafficked, mostly for the purposes of forced labour, unfortunately no scientific data has been published on the magnitude of this problem. In the case of male trafficking, it is even more difficult to make a distinction between smuggled and trafficked persons, although the end stage (forced labour) is frequently very similar. The relatively small number of reported cases of trafficked men may be related to the fact that most of the program initiatives regarding trafficking in human beings have concentrated on trafficked women, resulting in low awareness of trafficking in men.

Recent data suggests that men and young boys are likewise sexually exploited, forced into begging or become victims involved in the trade of human organs.

When setting up mental health assistance services for trafficked persons, one has to seriously consider the age and gender differences that should be addressed.

2.3.4 Features of the trafficking process

The trafficking process presents three components: recruitment, movement and exploitation. These features are usually interrelated and usually unfold chronologically in the following order.

1. Recruitment in country of origin during the pre-departure stage,
2. Movement within the country of origin or across international borders.
3. Exploitation mainly at the point of destination, referred to as the country of destination.

Internal trafficking – Internal trafficking essentially means trapping persons from mainly rural areas and small towns for sexual exploitation in major cities and in border areas of high commercial transit.

2.4 MAJOR PHASES OF THE TRAFFICKING EXPERIENCE

The stages of psychosocial significance in the trafficking process include:

1. pre-departure stage,
2. travel and transit,
3. destination stage,
4. rescue or escape, detention and deportation, criminal evidence, and
5. return and reintegration.

(Gushulak, B & McPherson, D., 2000; IOM Counter-Trafficking Handbook, in press)

2.4.1 Pre-departure stage

The *pre-departure stage* covers the period before the individual enters the trafficking situation.

“I met him. Fell in love. Married him. After some time, I came to him abroad. We went to his friend’s café. When I entered it I understood what kind of house it was. My husband simply left me there and went away. He had sold me to a brothel.”¹

In making a decision to migrate, women (the most frequent targets for traffickers) are often influenced by their past and present circumstances such as poverty (the need ‘to earn money’), breakdown of the family unit, experiences of interpersonal violence and abuse, false promises of a better life/marriage, promise of a tourist holiday, etc. (Zimmerman, C., Watts, C., 2003.)

While two of the major push factors of human trafficking are poverty and unstable socio-economic resources, the vulnerability factors of ‘potential recruits’ also seem to include the presence of a history of violence and abuse. (IOM: Situation Report in Kosovo, 2002.) Abuse by parents, spouse or other family members, figures of authority, exposure to a violent experience can drive persons into the hands of traffickers. This may be because, as research suggests, sexual abuse among pre-adolescent girls is associated with low self-esteem, feelings of shame, vulnerability and unworthiness. (Grayston A.D., De Luca R.V., & Boyes D.A, 1992.; Limanowska, B, 2002.)

IOM Moldova’s 2000-2004 statistics show that 57% of the (over 1200 assisted) trafficked persons come from families of lower socio-economic status. (IOM Chisinau, 2004.) However, it must also be noted that many trafficked persons are in fact quite educated. Based on IOM Ukraine’s Return and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons programs in 2003, over half of the assisted trafficked persons had completed technical and university degrees. (IOM Kyiv, 2002.)

¹All italicized personal quotations are true stories from trafficked persons assisted by IOM.

Trafficking in persons implies the recruitment of “potential victims” who will be exploited for profit. This is often achieved forcibly through abduction, but is more commonly conducted on the basis of complete or partial deception as to either the nature of the work they are given to believe that they will engage in, or deception as to the financial and labour conditions under which they will operate, or both.

Traffickers usually use different techniques of manipulation during the recruitment process. For example, a stranger may approach a woman at a bar, disco, or on the street, offering an opportunity to go abroad, but often the offer comes from someone the woman has known for a long time, and therefore she has no reason to be suspicious about it. Women might also see a tempting advertisement for a job abroad as an au-pair, waitress, dancer, or sometimes even for a marriage proposal in a newspaper. Some could even be kidnapped or abducted. In some cases, the persons may have an idea of the kind of work they will be obliged to do, but are not at all aware of the conditions they will find themselves in.

In summary, various recruitment methods are used:

- targeting of potentially interested persons (i.e. men/women in bars, cafes, clubs);
- informal networks of families and friends;
- advertisements offering work and study abroad;
- agencies offering work, study, marriage or travel abroad;
- false pre-arranged marriages.

“I was just 15 when I left Romania. When I was 12 my mother died, my father became an alcoholic and would beat my brother and me. A cousin said he would get me out of this situation and into a ‘normal’ life. He sold me like a slave”.

2.4.2 Travel and transit stage

The travel and transit stage begins at the time of recruitment and ends upon arrival at the work destination. Recruitment is followed by a movement phase that is not based upon the transported person’s free and informed consent. Already during the journey, s/he may suffer grave human rights and physical abuse, and a variety of other crimes. Most trafficked persons have never left their country of origin before and they are therefore completely dependent on the traffickers. Some leave their country without international passports, but for many, even if they do hold a passport, it is often taken from them and held by the traffickers as a way of securing greater compliance.

Traffickers often use common modes of transportation, as this is cheaper and may convince the trafficked person that her/his travel has a legitimate purpose. But there are also instances where trafficked persons are exposed to dangerous modes of transportation (e.g. car boot) and/or high-risk border crossings, accompanied by threats, intimidation, and violence, including rape and other forms of sexual abuse along the way. Trafficked persons are vulnerable to abuse by many individuals during the movement phase, including the trafficking agents, escorts, drivers, border officials, etc. It is also not unusual to find trafficked persons who have had several cycles of travel and transit and have been re-sold or re-trafficked several times along the way.

For most trafficked persons, the movement phase is also the stage of *initial trauma* since this is when illicit activities begin. Departure from home triggers high levels of stress and anxiety for almost all persons who have been recruited. For the vast majority, it is the first time they leave home and break away from family and social support mechanisms. It is also when they begin to realize that they have been tricked, misled. They feel vulnerable, powerless and face a bleak and uncertain future. In these dangerous situations with no means to escape, the trafficked person may no longer be able to concentrate and think rationally. In most cases, trafficked persons have a poor recollection of the unfolding events and forget even significant details.

Common control tactics used by traffickers may include the following: terrorizing (by instilling persistent and relentless fear), lying and deceiving, maintaining unpredictable and uncontrollable conditions (so the victims remain confused and are not able to plan or anticipate events), eliminating all decision making power, and emotional manipulation (such as threatening to let the family know of their activities). (Zimmerman, C., Watts, C., 2003.)

"We were kept as cattle, with no exaggeration. We did not even have the possibility to wash. We even had limited drinking water, without even mentioning food. We were poorly fed – once a day."

2.4.3 The destination stage

The destination stage is when the trafficked person is put to work and subjected to a combination of coercion, violence, forced labour, debt bondage or other forms of abuse.

Many different mechanisms are used to gain power to control trafficked persons during the exploitation phase.

- Usually their passports and identity documents are seized, entrapping them in an illegal migration environment (in which they are vulnerable to prosecution and deportation for breaking immigration laws and regulations, or for prostitution).
- Traffickers also use violence and sexual abuse: for most women, rape is a frequent first step into being sexually exploited.
- Normal physiological patterns are routinely manipulated in what amounts to torture and brainwashing: sleep deprivation, starvation, limited personal space and privacy, life threats, repeated violence and torture.
- The physical and mental torture is compounded by threats to their families' safety, prohibition to contact any family member or friend, frequent monetary fines and seizure of money, valuables and limited assets that they may have, forced use of alcohol and other substances, and other coercive techniques to ensure their 'cooperation' and prevent them from escaping. Unsurprisingly trafficked persons eventually are no longer able to exercise free will, capitulate, and succumb to the control of the traffickers.
- Debt bondage: enslavement occurs under the pretence of repaying an accumulated debt which includes the price the 'owner' paid for the person's travel, false documents and purchase. In some instances, traffickers increase the victims debt by charging for accommodation, re-sale to other 'owners', penalties, food, lodging, etc.

The most frequently observed or reported emotions of trafficked persons at the destination stage are the following (Bezpalcha, R, 2003.):

- *Fear* of being caught and painfully punished by traffickers, being infected with HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, forced into becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol, being taken to court and punished for prostitution, people finding out that s/he is or was a prostitute;
- *Guilt* for making a mistake and being naïve, stupid and foolish; for breaking laws of decency and religion (if s/he is a believer), for not succeeding in earning money for his/her family;
- *Rage* at his/her own self for 'letting such things happen', at other people, because they did not defend him/her, at her own society and community for letting him/her down, and because his/her life is broken;
- *Betrayed* by people who introduced her/him to the traffickers, by God (if a believer), by the State or by his/her own family/friends;
- *Distrust* in the ability to evaluate people and situations appropriately, or in everybody who is near to him/her, even those who did not betray him/her;
- *Helplessness* that s/he has no right to run his/her life, that things will never get better;
- *Shock*: constant state of shock and an inability to cry or express emotions
- *Suspicion*: did this really happen?, why me?;
- *Lost*: inability to stay quiet in one place, memory lapses.

Tanya's Story: "Then I was beaten and raped by the bar owner and his friends. They forced me to provide sex services to clients. I felt a strong aversion to my clients and to sex because I consider sex for money, sex with an unloved person, which they often forced me to practice, as distasteful and nasty and perverse."

Other commonly observed reactions include the following (IOM Kosovo, 2003.):

Apathy/Resignation: Through anecdotal evidence, it is clear that the many physical and psychological methods of enslavement place trafficked persons in a helpless situation in which they learn to accept anything. Means and abilities to respond to or face danger are annihilated and they are subjugated into sexual exploitation.

Submissiveness: As a direct consequence of such an abusive environment, trafficked persons are pushed towards adopting conformist behaviours; they become obedient to avoid violent abuse. Moreover, the trafficked individual lives in a perpetually deceptive environment: the traffickers feed them with false information, which is meant to prevent them from turning to the police or trying to escape on their own.

Maladaptation: Cumulated trauma and fear make the trafficked person incapable of trusting anyone. Their reality is distorted, and they come to doubt themselves and others. Under these conditions, it is almost impossible for them to take sound, yet radical decisions, such as breaking the cycle of violence and looking for help. The debilitating effect of

uncontrollable and aversive events demonstrates to trafficked individuals that they have no choice and that they must change themselves to accept and fit into their abusive environment. This may occur after repeated failed attempts to escape from the traffickers.

Loss of Personal Autonomy: The trafficking experience violates a person's autonomy at the level of basic bodily functioning and integrity, decisions as simple as when to eat or when to rest are denied, and s/he is repeatedly injured and invaded. This loss of control is also often narrated as the most humiliating aspect of the trauma. In many cases, the trafficking process denies the person's basic identity by withdrawing his/her personal documents and giving him/her false papers. The trafficked individual's point of view is systematically squashed, thus destroying the belief to control one's existence, carry out basic actions and autonomous decision-making. In the end, it is perhaps not surprising that trafficked persons become numb and passive with regard to their terrible predicament and mentally unable to mobilize.

Self Medication: Being overwhelmed with feelings of anger, sorrow and despair on an ongoing basis, trafficked persons lose hope and feel helpless. Under these conditions, alcohol and substance abuse become an escape into altered and less painful mental states. Traffickers also put this tendency to use by encouraging the consumption of alcohol and drugs, initially allowing the dulling of emotional distress. Some trafficked persons increase alcohol and substance consumptions especially when they know they will be beaten or forced to cruel punishment from the owner for refusing clients. The cycle leads to various addictions and, in the end, to greater dependency on the traffickers.

Self-harm and Suicide: Trafficked persons are at high risk for suicidal attempts, although actual numbers of successful suicides are unknown. It is known that some trafficked persons knowingly make suicide attempts as a strategy to force the traffickers into seeking treatment and hospitalisation.

Secrecy: A majority of the trafficked women and men opt to preserve themselves and/or family members keeping the full extent or the nature of their predicament secret. Creative fiction and outright clumsy lying are used as strategies to explain their absence from home. The trafficked persons may try to pass their absence as a prison sentence or a rape while in detention, in case the trafficked person contracted STIs. Because the narratives do not come across as credible, even to the trafficked persons themselves, they are subjected to the additional stress and anxiety of being unmasked.

Resilience/Quest for Meaning: As with all categories of persons exposed to trauma, trafficked persons may present amazing resiliency in the face of adversity. Coping mechanisms rely on a variety of internal resources, including a spiritual belief system. Some trafficked persons refer to religion as the source of their strength to overcome desperation and to get through the ordeal. Some persons are able shore up their self-esteem and withstand overwhelming feelings of guilt, shame, unworthiness, fear of becoming targets of gossip, hostility, blame, stigmatisation, ignorance and intolerance. Resilience, coping mechanisms, beliefs, and the presence of other protective personality-related factors are important factors in facilitating the process of "breaking out" from the hardship and exploitation.

“In a country of destination, the girls were delivered to a hotel, assembled in one room and told to wait for the company owner. Some time later a man arrived and told the girls in poor Russian, that they were sold to him and now they had to repay their debts by providing sex-services to clients. Initially all the girls refused and were severely beaten. A couple of days later, the hosts transported 4 girls to another place, while Christina and 2 other girls remained in the hotel. When they served clients, the hosts distributed them between separate rooms. Usually, every girl from the group served from 8 to 12 clients daily. To make women less tired and more submissive the hosts forced them to drink alcohol with sedatives and psychotropic substances. For the whole period of her stay in the hotel, Christina was never allowed to leave it; sometimes she was only allowed to walk on the hotel roof with other girls. Windows in the hotel were trellised, rooms were equipped with video cameras and the girls were not allowed to make phone calls to their relatives. Oksana, a friend of Christina’s, once tried to make a call from a mobile phone she had been given by a client, but was severely beaten afterwards.”

2.4.4 Rescue and/or escape, detention, deportation and criminal evidence gathering

Another series of events begins when the trafficked person is rescued or manages to escape from the traffickers and is in police custody or the care of immigration authorities for alleged violation of criminal or immigration laws, or whilst cooperating in legal proceedings against the traffickers or abusive employers.

Trafficked persons who have been caught up in trafficking situations may be:

- *rescued and returned* to their country of origin by a variety of civic organizations,
- *return independently*, or
- *deported*.

Even when relatively ‘safe’ and out of the traffickers’ clutches, trafficked persons are generally observed to be anxious, frightened, and in a confused state. They are also often suspicious of any assistance initially provided, and worry about what awaits them from the time of their escape/rescue, during their stay at the transit centre up to their return home. In some countries of destination or transit, the harsh conditions of detention facilities may pose additional physical health risks.

Additionally from a mental health angle, an almost exclusive contact with the authorities (e.g. arrest, evidence giving, testifying in a criminal proceeding) may have negative psychological effects on a trafficked person. S/he may experience memory lapses, fear of law enforcement officials and deep insecurity about the future. While the stage may be unavoidable, it may be alleviated by sufficient psychosocial support.

“In the prison where I was held, they would not feed the women who had worked as prostitutes. These women had to pay the prison’s staff in order to be fed. Since I had no money, I was starved. During my detention period, I lost 6 kilograms. Sometimes, I was fed by other women who had money and who would pity me.” Z., 26 years old

2.4.5 Return and reintegration stage

This is the phase that covers the period of physical and psychological recovery, and social reintegration. (Zimmerman, C., Watts, C. , 2003.)

This time is also difficult for trafficked persons who have returned and want to be meaningful and accepted members of society. The role of the support network and the individual's coping mechanisms will be crucial during this period. This will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

2.5 HOME-COMING

The psychological reactions to home-coming vary depending on the trafficked person's individual history, traumatic events of the recent past, and present fears and uncertainty about the future. Health care providers must recognize and understand the physical and psychosocial trauma associated with trafficking in order to provide appropriate support and be able to assist in fostering the person's coping mechanisms. Any condemning reaction will generate strong feelings of isolation, unworthiness or being unaccepted, dirty or spoiled. The issue of stigmatisation should not only be seen as a problem generated by the social environment, but also related to the attitude, life style and self-esteem of the individual trafficked person.

Stigmatisation by the social environment, in that it discourages reintegration, is often seen as the main cause behind re-trafficking. Trafficked persons are frequently rejected and shunned by their family or community for having been forced to work as a prostitute, sexually abused, failing to return with the promised income, or for leaving a debt unpaid. (IOM Counter-Trafficking Handbook, in press)

When trafficked persons are asked about the risks of being re-trafficked, they often state that they foresaw the risk but assumed they would be able to control the situation. Furthermore, the conditions that they faced in their home countries and within their families, and the stigma, blame and criticism for their perceived passivity during their predicament (instead of being understood as the consequences of criminal abuse that women are forced to endure), were considered to be so bad that, trying "to find work abroad" again, seemed like a better alternative. (IOM Kosovo, 2003.)

Individualized, holistic and reality-based considerations (IOM Counter-Trafficking Handbook, in press) are necessary to meet the needs of trafficked persons in preparation for their return home. They should include:

- A safe return under conditions of personal security, and a dignified return to her/his own community;
- Assistance in securing personal identity documents;
- Access to a range of accommodation facilities: rehabilitation centres, shelters and halfway houses;
- Access to psychosocial and mental health safety nets;
- Recognition of longer term psychological reactions;
- Access to health care services;
- Assistance in educational system reinsertion;

- Facilitating occupational skills, job referrals, vocational training, and gainful employment; and
- Utilization of a good support network for trafficked persons as well as the caregivers.

2.6 SPECIAL FOCUS ON TRAFFICKED CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Trafficked children and adolescents are a vulnerable group with special health needs recognized by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), as well as the Budapest Declaration.

2.6.1 Previous abuse, neglect, disrupted households, trafficking by family members

Trafficked children often come from environments where they experienced loss, deprivation, neglect, or different types of abuse that affect their emotional development and have long-term effects on their self-awareness, self-esteem, and capacity to build satisfactory and secure relationships. Empirical evidence from shelters and support programs for trafficked persons around the world suggest that a significant portion of children who are trafficked either come from abusive homes, single-parent households (e.g. divorced, separated, death of parent), orphanages or state children's facilities, refugee centres, or have run away from home and are living on the street. These are, a combination of risk factors that make them extremely vulnerable to end up in the trafficking networks. In some cases children are even "sold" or trafficked by close family members.

Recognizing the risks that children experienced in their home environment is essential to any assessment of assistance needs, as well as to assessing options for integration and re-integration planning.

Usually children are trapped into the trafficking cycle either through kidnapping and sexual abuse, or the trafficker carefully grooms targeted children. Although not directly observable, both the victimization and the grooming process contribute feelings of guilt and self-blame for not being able to stop the abuse.

During the trafficking experience children are constantly exposed to a highly damaging physical and psychological environment, one that will put their future development at risk. They are persistently threatened and in danger, face chronic abuse and stress, and often sexual violence.

2.6.2 Mental health consequences

The mental health consequences of trafficking can be devastating to young persons. Chronic abuse can affect a child's psychological development and can cause pathological personality development. For example, children learn to "survive", feeling compelled, even while they are abused, to form attachments and to develop trust with their criminal caretakers. After all, children tend to trust adult caretakers, comply with authority figures, and blame themselves or feel guilty for what others impose on them. The trafficking experience has potential disastrous effects on their future capacity to form healthy relationships based on mutual trust and intimacy. (Zimmerman, C., Watts, C., 2003.; IOM Counter-Trafficking Handbook, in press.)

The pathological effects of abuse on development are diverse and affect the physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational spheres. Above all, sexual abuse and trafficking directly affect the capacity of children to carry out normal developmental stages. They are exposed to adult life too early; develop severe identity-, boundary- and role confusion. Children's bodies are undeveloped and unprepared for sexual activity and accordingly the physical sensations of the abuse can be overwhelming, creating discomfort, unbearable pain, or confusing pleasure. Sexual abuse that usually occurs during the trafficking experience impacts on how children, in particular pre adolescents and adolescents, perceive their body, and their relationships with others. For adolescents who are still exploring their understanding of their gender and sexuality, the violent and coercive introduction to sex and sexual relationships harmfully impacts future relationships and practices.

Each child learns to cope with the stress of sexual abuse in his/her own way. When faced with overwhelming emotions of fear, panic, and confusion along with the physical suffering, children develop strategies to mentally dissociate from what is being done to them. The children also sometimes manifest denial, hostility and defying attitude as a way to deal with their feelings of anger and vulnerability. Adolescents in particular are likely to present impulsive and aggressive behaviours.

In summary:

- The susceptibility of children to abuse and its health consequences is determined by the child's age and stage of development. In general terms, the younger the child, the more devastating the impact of the abuse.
- Two types of effects have been noted among young victims of abuse, namely those that are explicitly developmental and those that are specific to trauma, such as disorganized or agitated behaviour, repetitive play, nightmares and symptoms of anxiety and avoidance behaviour.
- Low self-esteem, poor interpersonal skills, anxiety, isolation, induced psychotic thinking, aggressive and/or hypersexual behaviour, learning disabilities, substance abuse, suicidal tendencies are but a few of the potential consequences of child sexual abuse and illustrate the devastating dysfunctional effects of trafficking on children.

2.7 RECOMMENDED READINGS FOR THIS CHAPTER

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