



The Role of Safe Homes in Integrating Children of Sex Workers into Mainstream Society: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Children of sex workers in Bangladesh face severe societal stigma, exclusion, and limited access to essential services, making their integration into mainstream society a significant challenge. Safe homes have emerged as critical interventions, providing shelter, education, and psychological support to these children. However, the effectiveness of these institutions in fostering long-term social inclusion remains underexplored. This qualitative study investigates the role of safe homes in addressing the physical, emotional, and social needs of these children, using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a theoretical framework. The research focuses on a safe home in Dhaka, analyzing the lived experiences of children, shelter administrators, and NGO workers. Findings indicate that while safe homes offer vital support, barriers such as overcrowding, inadequate funding, and persistent societal discrimination hinder their full integration into society. The study highlights policy recommendations, including expanding safe home facilities, strengthening legal protections, and increasing social awareness to combat stigma. These insights aim to inform policymakers and social organizations striving to create inclusive opportunities for children of sex workers.

INTRODUCTION

Sex work is a legalized yet socially marginalized profession in Bangladesh, with an estimated 140,000 women engaged in this occupation (UNAIDS, 2016). Despite its legality, sex workers face systemic challenges, including stigma, violence, and exploitation (Shohel, 2013; Nadarajah & Fadzil, 2015). These challenges extend to their children, who are often born into brothels and grow up in environments characterized by poverty, abuse, and exclusion. Many of these children enter sex work themselves at a young age, perpetuating a cycle of marginalization and poverty (Huq, 2006). Safe homes have emerged as a critical intervention, offering shelter and basic services to children of sex workers. However, while these institutions aim to facilitate social integration, children continue to face significant barriers to inclusion in mainstream society, including persistent stigma and limited access to opportunities (Alam, Hossain, & Akhtar, 2022). Understanding the effectiveness of these interventions and identifying the remaining gaps is essential for ensuring their well-being and future prospects.

While substantial efforts have been made to address societal inequalities in Bangladesh, the children of sex workers remain a marginalized group. Existing research has largely focused on the provision of basic needs, such as education and shelter, within safe



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homes. However, there is limited investigation into how these institutions contribute to the holistic development and societal integration of these children. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the role of safe homes in fostering the social inclusion of children of sex workers, examining both their contributions and the challenges they face in enabling these children to reach their full potential.

This study highlights a critical yet underexplored issue, aiming to provide a platform for one of the most marginalized populations in Bangladesh. By examining the relationship between safe homes and the development of children of sex workers, this research contributes to the discourse on social equity and justice. The findings will offer actionable insights for policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and social workers, paving the way for targeted interventions and policies to ensure these children have equal opportunities to thrive. Furthermore, this study seeks to challenge societal taboos and advocate for the integration of this neglected group into mainstream society, fostering broader societal progress.

Despite having a significant impact of the safe home on the lives of the sex workers' children, no comprehensive research has been done so far on safe homes in Bangladesh. Because Daulatdia is the biggest brothel in Bangladesh and one of the biggest in the world, most safe homes are situated there in Daulatdia union, Bangladesh. However, there is a shortage of information on comparable safe places for these children in other cities. There are limited reports on the role of these safe homes for these children in other cities. This study focuses on the perspective of the children who live in a safe home which is in the capital city of Bangladesh, Dhaka. And tries to explore the challenges they face in their daily life and the requirements they need to have a better life.

Therefore, this study was covered three research questions:

1. How does the safe home play an important role in the inclusion of the children of sex workers into mainstreaming society?
2. What kinds of challenges do they face in their regular life?
3. What types of services do they need to overcome these challenges?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sex workers in Bangladesh often enter the trade under coercion or as a result of constrained socio-economic circumstances. Economic drivers such as poverty and limited career opportunities intersect with sociocultural pressures like harassment, exploitation, and lack of familial support to push individuals into sex work (Huda et al., 2022). These individuals face severe marginalization, denied access to basic human rights such as education, healthcare, and legal protections, and are often reduced to social outcasts (Hossain, Azad-uz-Zaman, & Roy, 2015). While trafficking forces many into prostitution, others enter voluntarily due to economic necessity. Despite differences in their paths to sex work, these individuals share the common burden of systemic exclusion and deprivation of fundamental rights (Sex Workers Network, 2016; Sattar, 2021).

The history of sex work in Bangladesh is deeply entrenched in colonial socio-political dynamics. During the Mughal and British colonial periods, sex workers such as Baijis and Khemtawalis were integral to elite cultural life, serving as entertainers and earning a measure of social respect. However, with the advent of British colonial policies like the Contagious Diseases Act of 1868, prostitution became a regulated trade tied to brothels, especially in port cities. Over time, the perception of sex work shifted, with workers facing increasing marginalization. The historical transformation from entertainers with

social status to marginalized individuals reflects broader changes in societal attitudes and governance (Mosharraf, n.d.). After the departure of the British in 1947 and Bangladesh's independence in 1971, the sex trade expanded, fueled by socio-political upheaval and economic inequality. The persistence of trafficking and forced prostitution further entrenched the vulnerabilities faced by sex workers.

The legal framework in Bangladesh presents a contradictory stance on prostitution. While the constitution condemns the practice under Article 18(2), prostitution is not explicitly prohibited. Laws such as the Penal Code of 1860 and the Human Trafficking Prevention and Suppression Act of 2012 criminalize specific activities related to prostitution, including child trafficking and operating brothels (Sattar, 2021). However, these laws remain poorly enforced, allowing exploitation to persist unabated. Health risks are exacerbated by systemic neglect, with sex workers often exposed to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, as well as physical abuse and other occupational hazards. Brothel owners, known as Sardarnis, maintain control over workers' lives, perpetuating abuse and exploitation. This legal and social neglect severely limits the opportunities for sex workers to escape their circumstances (Rashpi, 2022; Ullah, 2005).

The exploitation of sex workers has broader social implications, particularly in the context of gender inequality and human trafficking. Following the Liberation War of 1971, the vulnerabilities of women and children increased, leading to the rise of forced prostitution and trafficking. Each year, approximately 25,000 women and children are trafficked out of Bangladesh, often under the pretense of employment. This intersection of trafficking with broader socio-economic challenges underscores the urgent need for comprehensive interventions (Mosharraf, n.d.). Children of sex workers are among the most marginalized groups in Bangladesh. Living in brothels or being trafficked into prostitution, these children face severe exploitation, including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Poor nutrition, inadequate healthcare, and lack of education further compound their vulnerabilities. Girls often enter prostitution as early as twelve, while boys are frequently pushed into drug trafficking or substance abuse (HASAN, n.d.; Alam & Hussain, 2013). The stigma surrounding their mothers' profession isolates these children from mainstream society, denying them opportunities for education and social integration.

Interventions aimed at improving the lives of sex workers' children have largely focused on safe homes and educational programs. These initiatives, led by non-governmental organizations, seek to provide shelter, education, and psychological support to children born into brothels. Programs like those implemented by Karmajibi Kallyan Sangha (KKS) and Save the Children have demonstrated the potential of such interventions. For example, Save the Children's Safe Home program in Doulatdia offers residential care, vocational training, and counseling, while also advocating for societal acceptance of these children. These efforts aim to provide a pathway for children to escape the cycle of exploitation and integrate into mainstream society (Willis, Hodgson, & Lovich, 2013; Khondkar, Akhter, & Deepa, 2017). Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain. Children of sex workers often face discrimination in schools and society, leading to high dropout rates and limited social mobility. Financial constraints and societal stigma discourage mothers from pursuing educational opportunities for their children. Safe homes, though vital, remain limited in scope and coverage, leaving many children without access to essential resources (Billah & Baroi, 2012; Nadarajah & Fadzil, 2015). The lack of systemic support highlights the critical need for expanded interventions and comprehensive policies to address the vulnerabilities of sex workers and their children.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, the needs of children of sex workers have been examined using Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. In the previous studies of the children of sex workers, researchers looked at how disparities are reflected based on the satisfaction of people's fundamental needs and discovered that the inability to access basic requirements frequently results in low levels of self-esteem. They might then turn to violence, drug abuse, and criminal activity as a result.

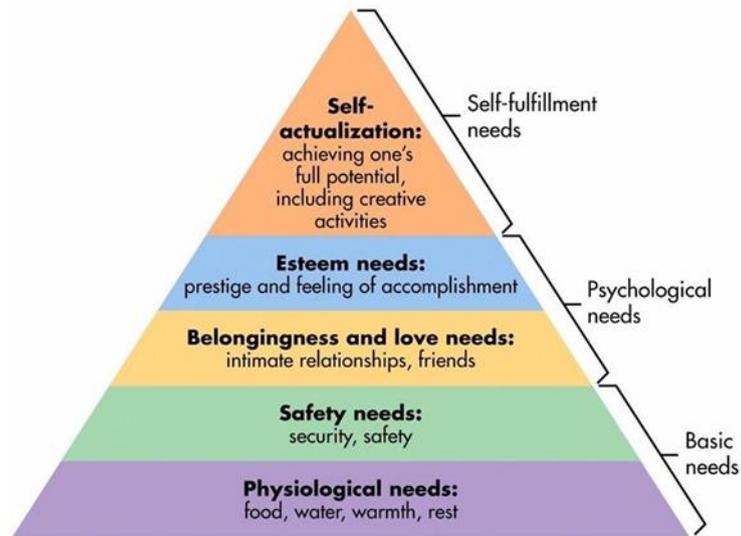


Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943)

Maslow (1943) believed that fulfilling needs in the exact order would enable people to develop into fully capable, self-actualized persons who are accepted by most. Therefore, people cannot go through the following stages—the need to feel secure, to be loved and accepted, etc.—until their basic physiological needs, such as food, shelter, and warmth, has been addressed. He also asserted that the fundamental needs of humans—shelter, food, clothes, and sleep are all physiological requirements for survival. When these needs are met, it inspires people to move on to the next level: security and safety, which includes their house, place of regular attendance at school, and surroundings. A person may feel uneasy about their surroundings, including their house, school, or any other external setting they are attempting to participate in when it comes to safety. Their lives could be hampered, or they could merely put their future lives in peril if they were threatened in any of these locations or if they were unsure about that environment. When talking about sex workers' offspring, it becomes clear that these kids have a hard time getting their fundamental requirements met. Having a safe and secure house is a part of this. The youngsters reside in brothels, which are unquestionably harmful to them due to their frequent physical and mental violence. People require some sort of power to inspire them to improve their surroundings or carry out good deeds. This could be a desire to change one's current circumstances or to become someone. However, to do so, a person must experience love and support from those they care about. In Maslow's hierarchy of wants, safety comes before love and a sense of belonging. This is crucial for the growth and development of sex workers' children as well. It is a well-known reality that these children's homes and societies tend to push them away more frequently than they show them love, affection, and acceptance. They are frequently

stigmatized or labeled in a way that society expects the worst about them because of their mother's line of work. Therefore, for them to succeed, these barriers must be broken. Before they can proceed, their psychological and physiological requirements must be satisfied. Maslow (1943) asserted that children and adolescents must feel respected to succeed in life.

Self-actualization, the ultimate degree, is related to the idea of "becoming a survivor," and it comes last. When the needs of the children of sex workers are met on all four levels, they may be completely integrated into society and live happier lives. When the children of sex workers live in a safe home, they can meet their physiological needs like education, health, shelter, food, etc. Once these needs are fulfilled, they feel secure there and they felt to be loved and accepted by their surroundings and so they will be able to achieve their full potential.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

Utilizing qualitative research design, this study explored and answered the research problem. A qualitative method was chosen to explore in-depth the lived experiences, needs and challenges faced by children of sex workers. Semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data as this enabled capturing the rich and nuanced insights of participants in a flexible manner.

Sample size

This conducted research used purposive sampling to find the sample population. The sampling strategy chosen was the inclusion of participants who could contribute relevant and pertinent information on the research problem. This study was conducted in SJA (Shishuder Jonno Amra) (Adabor Shelter Home) in Dhaka city among children of commercial sex workers. A total of 40 children were studied, and the study included 25 purposively sampled participants aged 12 to 18 years. The selection criteria were designed to capture a range of experiences and challenges that these children face.

Study period

We used in-depth, semi-structured interviews to collect data that reflect the experiences of participants. This approach facilitated open-ended conversations, in which participants could discuss their experiences, challenges, and aspirations without being limited by pre-defined response categories. To foster rapport with participants, interviews were conducted within a safe home in person so that the environment was comfortable and non-intimidating for participants to speak openly. Because of the sensitive nature of the research, specific efforts were made to ensure that participants felt safe and respected through the method. Moreover, open-ended questionnaires were administered to obtain detailed written responses and to further illuminate the qualitative dataset through the description of their thoughts.

Data Analysis

The gathered data was analyzed qualitatively and thematically using the process employed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006), allowing for the identification, interpretation and

reporting of salient patterns that emerged from the qualitative data. The process started with getting familiarized with the data, with the verbatim transcription of the interview recordings, along with review of responses from open-ended questionnaires to obtain a macro-level view of the participants' narratives. Next, initial coding was carried out, which involved noting down consistent words, phrases and ideas that related to the research questions, then a search for themes, where similar codes were collated into broader thematic categories (e.g., perceived safety, educational opportunities, psychological well-being, social stigma etc). The meshed themes were then interpreted of their content and reviewed until they adequately reflect the participants' experience and representative of the object of study prior to defining and naming the themes in accordance with the structure of the research objectives and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The final analysis was then consolidated into a coherent, integrated narrative structured accordingly and supported by direct quotes from the participants, with the findings interpreted and situated within the context of existing literature identifying similarities and differences between these and previous studies. Triangulation was used to compare the perspectives of the children themselves, the director of the safe home, and the NGO team members, to compare themes and mitigate biases across the analysis to achieve validity and reliability. Also, member checking was done by sharing important findings with the participants to confirm that the author had correctly interpreted them and that their experiences were accurately represented.

PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS



Figure 2: Step-by-Step Process of Data Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical Board of the Centre for Advanced Research, Dhaka, prior to conducting the research, ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines for research conducted with minors and vulnerable populations. Participants, which were children aged 12–18, underwent a multi-step informed consent process comprised of: 1) written consent from legal guardian (Hazera Begum), and 2) verbal and written assent by each child, confirming intention to participate voluntarily. The purpose of the study, confidentiality and freedom to withdraw from the study at any time were explained in an age-appropriate manner, along with providing the informed consent form in Bangla to ensure complete comprehension. All names were identified, and personal identifiers were deleted from transcripts, in order to ensure participant privacy. The interviews took place in a comfortable, safe environment, and a child psychologist was on standby to provide emotional support when necessary. The study was conducted as per Bangladesh's Children Act (2013)

and international research ethics guidelines ensuring that participants would not experience psychological distress. Furthermore, all data collected including audio recordings and transcripts, were securely stored on a device protected by a password and accessible only to the researcher and authorized supervisors from the Ethical Board of the Centre for Advanced Research, Dhaka.

RESULTS

This study found that the children of sex workers have physical and psychological needs through which they fulfilled the self-fulfillment needs that help them to integrate with this society. As they are the children of sex workers, they faced various challenges to integrating into a mainstream society which was also found by this study. Based on the findings from the participants, different themes emerged, and the researcher obtained new things into the role of safe homes to fulfill the needs of these children with evidence supporting Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model. Many of the themes and sub-themes are related to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs model, and the next section will explore how this model aligns with the study's findings.

Response from the Participants (the Children of Sex Workers)

Most of the children of sex workers who live in this safe home came here through their mothers as their mother also wants that their children should live in a safe place where they can meet their basic needs. In the safe home, most of the children came here from the age of 4 or 5, and since that, they are living here under the responsibility of Hazera. One 12-year-old child said,

“Ammu raised us here and provides us with all the facilities that we need. In this place, we are provided food, shelter, education as well as medical facilities. Every month a doctor comes here and checks up on us and also provides necessary medicine to us. Boro vaiya and Apu (NGO workers) have taught us about the maintenance of hygiene, and we follow the instruction as are they told.”

They are also provided with the necessary material that is related to education, health, and entertainment with the help of various non-governmental organizations. One 14-year-old child added,

“We go to school nearby our home regularly, we also attend tuition and sometimes our tutor has come here to teach us. Our educational or other necessary materials are provided by Boro vaiya and Apu (NGO workers). They take care of us.”

Safety is also included in the physiological needs where the children of sex workers feel secure. the children who live in the brothel can engage in the sex profession that deprives them to have a safe life and if they are not ready to do so, they are mentally and physically tortured. So, they need a secure life where they are not threatened by their mother's profession. In the Adabor Safe home, the children lead a secure life. Though it is registered by the government, it is a congested place for around 40 children. Most children said,

“We are happy here. We have all the opportunities here, but we need a big, nice place where there should have a large building, separate floors for girls

and boys, medical facilities, and a big playground where we can easily play.”

Everyone wants to be loved, and it is no different for the children of sex workers. The children who live in the safe home lead a safe life from those children who live in the brothel. The children who live in the brothel are always neglected by all even by the inside people. They can meet with outside people who want to give them a secure and safe life. In the safe home, the children refer to each other as siblings. They love each other, and they cared about each other. One of them said,

“We want more brothers and sisters here. Though it is difficult to live around 40 children in one place, we want more because we live here happily. Our bonding is strong, no one could harm us, if we have more people in this shelter home, we will become stronger.”

Some organizations have arranged various even on Eid-ul-Fiture and Eid-ul-Azha that gives them much pleasure. One child said,

“On the occasion of Eid, we are provided Eid cards, Eidi, Mehendi, and various gifts that make us feel loved. When they also arranged Qurbani for us on Eid-ul- Azha, our happiness knew no bounds. We also celebrated New Year or Pohela Noboborsho. These occasions are celebrated here by arranging special dishes or providing gifts or cards. We also celebrate Mother’s Day, and this is so special day for us as well as Ammu. We give her cards and make wishes for her. When she opens the cards, her smiley face makes us happy.”

Maslow's (1943) hypothesis states that the interactions a child experiences have an impact on how they develop. The educational system, whose structure is inclusive, is among the most significant factors. Every student gains an identity as well as steered in the appropriate way for their future careers. Any type of education, whether formal or informal, enables children to participate in society by enabling them to express themselves in ways that are challenging to learn in other contexts. The children who live in the safe home have access to formal education.

Even have the opportunity to get higher education. One of the children of the sex worker Maisa said,

“I have completed my SSC and HSC Examination and now I am a student at a university. This safe home gives me this opportunity. Without staying in a safe home, I would never be enabled to get this opportunity. I have got this opportunity because the people of this place and our Ammu gives us the priority to take our own decisions, but the decision should be fruitful.”

The safe home also provides them the opportunity to involve in extra-curricular activities as they also learn and practice handicrafts, and some of them raise chickens. A 15-year-old child Nijhum said,

“Ammu allows us to raise chickens in a safe home or any other pets like dog, cat, or rabbit as we all like all of this very much. Ammu never said no if we have this type of demand. Ammu always encourages us to learn or make handicraft things that make us pleasure.”

The highest level in Maslow's hierarchy, self-actualization needs, is concerned with

realizing one's potential, finding contentment in oneself, seeking personal development, and having peak experiences. This level, according to Maslow (1943), is the drive to achieve one's full potential and maximize one's potential. The children of sex workers have been given safety, security, and formal education in a safe home.

The children who live there have different dreams, some of them want to be a doctor, and others army or teachers or pilots Even 14 years old child said,

“I want to be a businessman then I will contribute my earnings to this shelter home so that the children who will live here have fulfilled their needs easily.”

Most of the children said,

“I want to work as a social worker so that I may aid our society and a group of people like us who require a little assistance from others to live peacefully. Numerous social professionals support us in meeting our needs and inspire us to build a successful future for ourselves. They greatly influence us. Their motivation encourages us to envision a successful life in the future.”

Response from the owner of the Safe Home

Hazera Begum never wed and had no biological kids. She is, nevertheless, the "Ammu" (mother) of 40 children who, at one point, fought for their identities and the jobs that their original moms had. She is now incredibly proud of her 40 kids as they steadily mature, excel in school, cross life's milestones, and perform well overall.

A refuge for children of sex workers called "Shishuder Jonno Amra" (We are for the children) was founded in 2010 by Hazera, who had 25 children at the time. Up until the age of 23, Hazera worked as a sex worker in brothels and on the streets. In 2000, she began working with "Durjoy Shishu Nibash," a program sponsored by CARE Bangladesh for the kids of sex workers. With the help of her lifelong savings and volunteers from the humanitarian community, Hazera opened her shelter in Savar in 2010 after the center was forced to close due to financial difficulties in 2008. Later, in 2011, it was relocated to Adabar.

When questioned about the reason behind the establishment of this safe home, Hazera explained that,

“I established this safe home to fulfill my unfulfilled dreams. The harsh truth taught me a lesson. I don't want to see a girl raised in a brothel while a guy witnesses her mother accepting payment from a pimp. I don't want much. While my boys have a life free of drugs and extortion, I only want to make sure my girls never wind up in the sex trade.”

“These children have contact with their mother, but they are not allowed to stay with their mother who lives in the brothel. Polash's mother, who is currently employed by an insurance company, visits him around once or twice a year. Polash is unconcerned about her mother's prior employment,” she continued.

Though her love is equally shared among boys and girls, she expresses more concern for girls. She added,

“Some of the girls' moms, who are sex workers, come to take them back, but I firmly disagree [with them] because I know they would be put in a brothel. When a girl reaches an adolescent, I devote extra attention to her.”

These children can meet with other people like NGO workers, various university students come here to spend some time with them. Hazera said,

“Some university students come here and have quality time with the children and these children love to spend time with them. The children also learned various things from them that would help them in their regular and future life.”

Hazera arranges their education in different schools, tuitions, and hostels for older children. She added,

“My older sons had to move to new locations because my daughters are growing up. A few of them needed to be given back to their mothers. The kids, however, desire to be together. We'll even arrange everything if any of them wants to do a Ph.D. abroad. We'll beg anyone for help. Our children go to Surer Dhara to learn music. They play different sports. One of them plays in Abahani Sports Club. All of these give me peace.”

As this safe home was established in 2010, some of them have lived their own life with full potential they have taken vocational training. Hazera asserted,

“Six of them have finished their studies and gone to work. They take care of their mothers now. Even some of them have got married. This is what I enjoy. They even come here to meet other children and bring them delicacies,”

“One day, I hope these kids will contribute to the nation and inspire everyone. People would use it as an illustration. That day, I would be the happiest mother ever,” Hazera opined.

Responses from the Key Informant

Project Pothchola is a program under the Give Bangladesh Foundation to work closely with a group of children of sex workers. The children are under the governance of Hazera Begum from 'Shishuder Jnno Amra' who acts as the children's mother. The project aims to help grow children into sensible individual decision-makers. One KII said,

“We have arranged different activities in different sessions through which they will be able to become a self-dependent person. We have also helped them to understand the importance of team building so that they could live together and there would be no chance to make any discrimination among them. And this team building will help them in their future life in any job sector or other sectors,”

Pothchola also aims to ensure a healthier lifestyle by providing medical assistance as required. Another KII asserted,

“We have arranged monthly medical camps where MBBS doctors have come and checked up on the children. The children got free treatment if any of them got sick or need treatment.”

Pothchola is an emphasis on learning English and Mathematics with the children. They have taken various sessions through which these children can learn basic English and Mathematics through different activities.

“We never give these children any lecture on any topic. They have learned anything by doing activities or participating in related activities so that it would be effective for them, and they could catch easily.”

Another worker said about the safety of these children, said,

“When I started working for these children, we went to a brothel to meet with their mothers to know about the mental and physical health of these children. We were astonished when become known out that while their mother was doing their job sometimes, they hide under the bed or behind the curtain. We decided to work for these children for their mental and physical development as we can. We are working hard for giving them a better life.”

As they are not living with their family, the members of the shelter home are their family. They live together there. They learned about ethics, norms, and values from Pothchola and other organizations. Moreover, Pothchola has organized different kinds of events like the Art competition, Mogoj Dholai (Book reading Competition), and cultural Programs on national days. One of the NGO workers mentioned,

“In 2017 we had arranged an art competition then we exhibited their art in a gallery where some respected person was invited and appreciated their creativity. we have celebrated Eid, new year, and Christmas day with them so that they could realize that they are also a part of this society, they should be loved by celebrating this special day.”

Pothchola has provided various materials that are related to their basic needs. One worker said,

“I’ve been working in Pothchola since 2017. I am working in the PR team (Public Relations), I’ve to manage the PR team which is responsible for collecting the funds which are distributed to the SJA children.”

Through the Branding team of Pothchola, it raises people’s awareness to think about these children, and to contribute to these children to give them a better life. Narmin added,

“We make a different post and upload those to our page and other volunteers have shared their ID so that we can reach the people of our society to make the realization that these children are also a part of their society, and we should do every possible thing to include them into the mainstream society.”

Various things are done by this organization. They have also taken the children to various places for their refreshments and those places from where they could learn something.

“Whenever we take them outside of the shelter home like a national museum or park, they feel so happy and their happiness always makes us glad,” one of them added.

Another participant said,

“I’ve been working in Pothchola since 2015 when this organization was established, and I felt proud that day when one of these children have done his SSC examination in 2017. A sex worker’s child can’t reach that position. As they live in the shelter home, and we can do something to help them to be self-dependent people.”

Many children mainly female children faced various problems as they must go outside of the shelter home. Sometimes they have been harassed by another person so they get afraid or demotivate to go outside because they haven’t any idea how they can handle this situation. So Pothchola has taught them how to handle this and taught them what is good for them and what is wrong. In this regard, other respondents said,

“Some sensible matters we learn from our families like the differences between good touch and bad touch, and how to handle a sensible matter. However, most of the children of sex workers haven’t any idea about this so we take sessions on this topic to make them aware.”

Another participant said,

“Though SJA children are provided with various facilities, the environment of the SJA is not suitable for them to fulfill their needs effectively. We haven’t any control over the environment of the SJA. It will be good for them if we can design a safe home for them.”

“The children have knowledge about the modern science, many of them have used social media nevertheless we take on some sessions on this regard to make them aware using these media,”

one of them added.

Despite Project Pothchola and other organizations have working hard to integrate them in this society, to make their life meaningful, still they are vulnerable and deprived from this society. These organizations must go through difficult path to raise fund for them. one of the social workers said,

“Recently we want to arrange a book reading competition ‘Mogoj Dholai 4.0’ among the children of sex workers. Every year we arranged this event among different school children, and we raised a big amount of fund. But this year we have decided to organize this event among the children of sex workers, and it is matter of sorrow that we couldn’t raise fund as our expectation. Whenever people become to know that we collect funds on this purpose they are denied giving us. It makes us so disappoint.”

DISCUSSION

A safe home plays a vital role in fulfilling physiological needs such as health, clothes, and education as well as other needs of the children of sex workers. The children have the facilities to live in a place where they could accomplish their basic needs. They shouldn't have lived in a place where they faced various challenges and where their needs don't meet. They live in a secure place where they are not threatened to involve in sex work too as their mother does. They are safe from mental and physical abuse. They are also safe from criminal activities or other illegal work. They lead an invulnerable life; they are not discriminated with other children. Prominently the female child faced difficulties in the brothel most. She is forced to engage in this profession generally when their mother becomes old and so she has nothing to do without engaging in this profession to take care of her mother. Similarly, the male child is also engaged with laboring work to take care of his mother at an early age. They live a life just they had to live it. However, the children who live in safe homes, have the passion to lead a meaningful life which helps them to fulfill their dreams.

Access to Education is the most challenging factor for the children of sex workers are facing. The children who live in a brothel haven't any access to get both formal or non-formal education. However, the children who live under the maintenance of the Hazera in the SJA have educational access to both formal and non-formal institutions. though Hazera had faced many problems in the enrollment of these children to the school now the scenario has changed. Even some of the children of this safe home have studied undergraduate which is the most significant information of this study. Other children are studying in school or college and besides, and they have engaged in extracurricular activities. They regularly attend Arabic classes where they have learned the Quran which helps them to see some ethical issues from a religious point of view. Children who have an interest in music, dance, poetry, sport, sewing, and crafting have attended classes to learn all of these. The safe home has given them the priority to express their creativity. They have participated in various competitions such as art, recitation, music, and so on. They have participated in their school's cultural programs too. Teenagers between 15 to 19 years have used social media and are active on Facebook, they have their IDs, and they relate to some NGO workers as well as their school friends. As we know that social media has both negative and positive impacts on everyone who used this. To make these children aware of using social media effectively, Pothchola has taken various sessions on it. Even Pothchola has arranged debates on the advantages and disadvantages of using social between the children so that they could understand this on their own.

The children of sex workers who live in Safe homes also get medical facilities. Pothchola has arranged a monthly medical camp for them and provides them with treatment and medicine if they are in need. To achieve a person's full potential, it is important to fulfill physical and psychological needs, as asserted in Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs. The children of sex workers also need the accomplishment of peace of mind. A safe home plays an important role in emphasizing meeting the psychological needs of the children of sex workers. The children become stressed less or feel relaxed when they express their emotions. They felt esteem when they are given priority in expressing their decisions. The children of sex workers have expressed their emotions to the people who are concerned about them. They can easily share their problems with their Ammu (Hazera), the seniors, or the NGO workers who listen to them carefully and have given them tentative solutions. The SJA children are provided greetings at various festivals that give them pleasure. They get gifts on special occasions like Eid, New year, and Christmas day. they also get the opportunity to meet

their mothers whenever they want. In school, they study with other people whose mothers are not engaged in sex work, but they are accepted by them. They have good relationships with them because other children haven't any headaches that what their mothers do, they are concerned about that where they live, from which environment they are surrounded by. Since brothels and safe homes are separate areas, the children are safe from sex work or other illegal activities that have a hurt peer at school.

From the above findings, this study has also expressed that the children of sex workers are given the priority to take any decisions in their life. They are independent in this regard. They can easily express their choice. they have dreams, they love to dream. Most of them want to be social workers so that they will help the children like them, they have the potential to do something for society.

Some want to be army as they want to protect the nation, and from this, they love the nation as others do. They have concern for the welfare of this country. Some of them want to be a teacher as they will take the responsibility to eradicate illiteracy from the nation. These children have the passion to build up a bright future. Their passion as well as potential help them to integrate into mainstream society.

Moreover, this shelter home has been established in 2010, and the former children of sex workers are now achieving their self-actualization by successfully establishing themselves. Most of them have taken care of their mother, made their own family, and led their life family. They haven't need to look behind that where they were from, or what their mother was doing for her livelihood. Even they have contributed their earnings to the children of sex workers who have been living in safe homes.

Though the safe home helps the children of sex workers in the inclusion of mainstream society, there are some challenges they still faced in their regular life. The environment of the safe home, where they are living is an unhealthy place. This unhygienic place becomes a hindrance to accurately meeting these children's basic needs and thus may make it challenging for them to integrate into mainstream society. The building of the safe home is not well furnished and there is a shortage of rooms that's why they have to live many children in one room which is congested for them. because of the shortage of rooms, it is difficult for them to study attentively. It is also difficult for the shelter homeowner to maintain them.

As there live 40 children in a shelter home, there aren't any medical facilities. Only a monthly medical camp is arranged by NGOs but there isn't any scope to arrange emergency response for these children. though Pothchola has arranged a medical camp every month, it is informed by the owner of the safe home that after COVID-19, the medical camp is not arranged regularly.

Other difficulties are faced by these children when there are inadequate materials that are related to their basic needs. They face these problems when Pothchola or other organizations are not able to raise enough funds for them. sometimes it is difficult to raise funds for the sake of the children of sex workers because still in our society many people are not changing their mindset. they see these children from different points of view. Especially religious people thought that if they contribute a small amount to the children of sex workers, it will be a sin. They focus on the profession of their mothers rather than the welfare of the children.

When this children's mother becomes old, and not able to serve her job, her child becomes the only one who can take care of her and so the male child has to switch his education and involve as a rickshaw puller or other labor work. It makes them self-dependent however, it breaks their potential to have a bright future. These challenges most male children have faced demotivate other children of the safe home to take formal education.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The study underlines the importance of safe homes in rehabilitating and re-integrating children of sex workers into general society. Through providing shelter, education, healthcare and emotional support, these organizations help rescue children from the cycle of poverty, stigma and exploitation that is prevalent in brothel environments. Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the findings reveal that meeting basic and psychological needs allows these youths to imagine and strive for a brighter future. But safe homes – despite their benefits, including confining domestic violence – are challenged by overcrowding, bad medical care, financial insecurity and entrenched discrimination, which impedes their full potential. These barriers are often addressed through policy reforms and continued, sustained support from institutions to ensure these children receive the rights, opportunities and dignity they deserve.

Key policies must be enabled to ensure safe homes become more efficient and sustainable. The state and NGOs must also expand the availability of safe homes in areas with a high concentration of brothels while also upgrading these facilities to improve living conditions and medical access. In order to establish an atmosphere of safety, girls and boys should be provided separate amenities. You should also focus on expanding financial support through Public-Private Partnership (PPP), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and a national trust fund for a continuous funding for education, healthcare and vocational training.

Vocational and higher education programs should also be integrated into safe homes to promote long-term self-sufficiency. Technical Education - Industry collaborations with technical institutes and universities can act to help provide the necessary skills training, mentorship, and career guidance that support employment prospects. Even when they are able to access education, social stigma is a significant barrier. Professionals and educators working with children and families with disabilities should organize media campaigns that are present in schools and community programs to combat discrimination and promote equality for these children.

Bolstering legal protection is also key. Bangladesh has laws that protect children, but they are poorly enforced. The government must ensure that women in prostitution can avail the benefits of the Children Act (2013) and recognize the children of sex workers as a vulnerable group in need of priority access to education, social services and legal protection. In addition, safe homes must include mental health support, with trained psychologists and social workers providing psychosocial counselling that addresses emotional distress and trauma.

Another important policy recommendation is to support sex workers to move into alternative livelihoods. Diane, like many mothers, want to leave the profession but don't have the means to do so. Introduce micro finance programs, vocational training and employment initiatives by the government and NGOs that support economic independence, thereby reducing the chances of children being forced in sex work. Moreover, a joint effort of many agents, including government authorities, NGOs, and international organizations, is crucial for enhancing child protection policies. To ensure greater accountability and long-term impact, a national task force to oversee the status of safe home initiatives, funding mechanisms, and social integration programs should be established.

With these policies in place, Bangladesh can pave the way for a society that provides equal opportunities and ensures that no child is discriminated against based on their

parent's profession. Upholding their dignity, safety and aspirations for a better tomorrow is no longer merely a humanitarian responsibility; it is also a matter of social justice and equitable development.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

Although this study offers important insights on how safe homes support the integration of children of sex workers into mainstream society, there are several limitations to consider. This research is confined to one safe home in Dhaka, which limits the generalizability of these findings. Experiences in other safe homes for children, especially those with different socio-economic and cultural contexts, may be very different. Future research should include comparisons across several safe homes to understand regional differences in support services. The authors conclude that since direct interviews were not conducted with the real victims, as well as a small sample of their study including 25 children, one safe home director, and five NGO workers pose a limitation to in-depth analysis. Data from a larger and more diverse sample would help improve the reliability of the findings, potentially offering insights about age and gender, as well as the duration of stay in the safe home.

Another limitation is the absence of biological mother's (sex workers) perspectives which limits the understanding of parental influence and emotional issues in children. Hearing their voices in that kind of future research could shed light on the processes of decision-making, aspirations and family dynamics. As a qualitative study, findings are derived from subjective narratives, which are vulnerable to recall and social desirability bias. Longitudinal or ethnographic studies may offer a more dynamic view of children's experiences over time. Moreover, this study is not addressing safe home funding sustainability and operational bar. Future work should focus on assessing financial weavings, public-private partnerships (PPP), and policy interventions with a view to sustainability.

These gaps are essential to address in order to improve academic discourse and inform policy decisions intended to strengthen structural, psychological and economic support systems to facilitate social reintegration of children of sex workers in Bangladesh.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exists.

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