

Exploitation of Trafficked Adolescents: Survey Evidence from Sex Workers in Bangladesh

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Abstract

A number of adolescents in developing countries engage in sex work due to poverty, lack of alternative job opportunities, and victimization of human trafficking. While empirical studies on sex workers have been increasing, it is not well known to what extent the living standard of trafficked sex workers differs from that of non-trafficked workers. The goal of this study is to evaluate the impact of entering sex work through human trafficking on the wage of adolescent sex workers in Bangladesh. Using the frequency of natural disasters occurred in the hometown of sex workers for instrumental variable, we find that entering sex industry through the human trafficking significantly decreases the wage of sex workers by 75%. We also provide suggestive evidence that the lower wage is attributed to the coercion by the owner of victims and receipt of non-pecuniary support such as free accommodation. However, it cannot be explained by poor quantity/quality of service, or high risk of sexually transmitted diseases.

Keywords: human trafficking, commercial sex worker, child labor, Bangladesh

JEL Classification: