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Post-traumatic stress disorder and depression among female survivors of trafficking in rehabilitation centers of Nepal

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Background: Trafficking of women is increasingly recognized as the significant violation of human rights occurring worldwide. Because of the several often extreme sexual, physical and psychological abuse and violence during trafficking period, these populations encounter the increased risk of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. Yet to date, very few studies have been conducted in Nepal assessing the mental health status of female survivors of trafficking.

Objective: To assess the PTSD and depression among female survivors of trafficking in rehabilitation centers in Nepal and to explore association between socio-demographic status and information on trafficking.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out at rehabilitation centers of Kathmandu and Pokhara, Nepal. A total of 103 women survivors of trafficking were enrolled in the study from April to July 2016. Purposive sampling technique was employed for the study. We used PCL-C (Civilian version) and PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire) to measure the symptoms of PTSD and depression, respectively. Face to face interview was carried with a participant residing in rehabilitation centers of different settings of Nepal encompassing the information on trafficking and socio-demographic status. SPSS version 16 was used for the analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to assess the PTSD and depression and their association with other variables.

Result: Of the interviewed 103 female survivors, 57.3% belonged to the Dalit caste. The mean age of the respondents was 20.37 years whilst majority 57.3% of them were in 18 to 24 years aged group. About two-third (66%) of the women were lured to traffickers by their close relatives and majority (59.2%) were taken to India as destination country. Inevitable rates of PTSD (65%) and depression (68.9%) was observed in the study. Education and duration of trafficked period were associated with PTSD and depression. Type of trafficking was associated with depression (p-value). Age of participant at the time of trafficking was associated with PTSD.

Conclusion: Our finding from this study highlights the mental health status of female survivors assessing the severity of PTSD and depression after returning to their origin. Further, it suggests addressing the mental health issues and needs of this specific population.