

Good research paper on the hidden slaves in human civilization

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



Women migrant workers from South and Central Asia territories migrate to Hong Kong every year in search of a better life. Their quest for economic emancipation is hijacked by sex traffickers and abusive employers who end up selling them for sex and not paying them for their domestic services. Because of the lack of enough research into the number of women working in Hong Kong's sex industry who are forced into this illegal trade, little energy has been expended towards helping victims of sex trafficking. The complication of the case of women who are trafficked to Hong Kong comes becomes of the nuanced way in which the different types of sex workers are categorized, hence, a misrepresentation of the cause and concern of these women.

Women who work in Hong Kong's sex industry can be classified into four distinct groups (Emmerton 12). The first group is that of women who are recruited to work as prostitutes in the streets. The second group comprises of women who are recruited to work as sex workers in brothels. The third group is composed of those women who are recruited to work in other jobs but are forced to work in the sex industry when they arrive in the city of Hong Kong. The fourth and last group is made up of women who are recruited to work in Hong Kong night clubs as escort services.

This paper specifically explore the recruitment and trafficking of the third group which comprises of women who leave their home states in search of better jobs but end up being used for prostitution against their will. The absence of enough data and research on migrant workers who are forced into prostitution has made it impossible for both policymakers and scholars to believe that there is a sex trafficking crisis in Hong Kong (Emmerton 24).

Instead Hong Kong authorities dismissed a recent report by the United States State department that argued that Hong Kong's sex slavery industry burgeoning and little is done to bring the sex traffickers to justice. The US state department reports that more than 320, 000 of domestic workers in Hong Kong were being hostage because they owed people who brought them to the city money (Lee n. p.). This exercise called " debt bondage" is rife among agencies that traffic domestic workers who some end up working as sex workers because that is the only way to raise enough money to pay off their debt. The practice is also called " compensated dating" where by women or girls trafficked are forced to " date" random strangers for months and even years until their debt is paid off (Lee n. p.). Even when they manage to pay off the debt, they find it difficult to go and try something different which creates a cycle of a life of prostitution.

Because of the different groups of women involved in the sex industry in Hong Kong, it is difficult to tell which of the women voluntarily a sex worker became and which of them were forced in into the trade. It is easy for authorities to deny the existence of forced sex work when the forced workers are lumped together with individuals who come willingly into the trade. This creates room for authorities to have justification for inaction. Denial and the lack of statistics do not translate to the absence of abuse. Among the chief reasons for Hong Kong's dismissal of the State Department report is the understanding that out of the 320, 000 mentioned domestic workers, only 3, 000 worked as prostitutes and not all of them were forced into the illegal trade (Lee n. p.). Previous research into the case of modern domestic slavery in Hong Kong has also shown that there is a problem of statistics when it

comes to sex trafficking and forced sex slavery. One research observes that for the past decades there has been a reported 16 cases of sex trafficking involving around 39 women in Hong Kong. The unavailability of reported cases however is argued to be the “ tip of the iceberg” (Emmertson 23). Evidence suggests that most victims do not report their cases. This is because they are afraid of sex traffickers taking revenge on the victim’s family. There is also little support from organizations tasked with helping these victims.

What complicates the sex trafficking of individuals intending on working as domestic workers or other menial work in Hong Kong is the fact that even when the victim manage to take the case all the way to non-governmental organization. Prosecution might take time or might not happen. This is due to the fact that The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (the CEDAW Convention) which was adopted in 1979 and ratified by more than 166 states in 2001 has a provision on the protection of women who are trafficked for work (Emerton and Petersen 12). It calls for states and local authorities to take upon itself measures in the form of legislation to deal with sex trafficking of women and their exploitation at the hands of traffickers (Reandal 203).

The problems lie in the lake of particular measures and instruments to deal with trafficking. For example, Hong Kong’s laws go along with the CEDAW convention. The law prohibits human trafficking and that includes trafficking for the sake of prostitution. The law has some strong clauses. It denotes that consent by the victim is not enough proof for the trafficker to engage in the act. Trafficking is a punishable offense that can draw a 10 year sentence

(Emmert 30). The problem is that despite the availability of laws outlawing trafficking for prostitution, prostitution is not illegal in Hong Kong, that leaves enough room for traffickers to weave into the system and argue that trafficked women are escorts rather than sexual slaves (Pearson 246). The Hong Kong authorities have no way or mechanism to argue against this excuse so they barely prosecute traffickers. Their objection to the US State Department report shows how indifferent they are to the cause of the victims of sex trafficking.

Complications of sex trafficking cases arise when women who had agreed to act as a witness for the prosecution may find themselves in difficult circumstances due to the ability of the trafficker to maneuver around the legal system and in most cases to take away the victim's identity through the confiscation of the victim's passport. Once one commits to the legal system, they are sometimes not allowed due to the possibility that they might not have the right work authorization documentation. The Hong Kong government does not offer protections and ways of life for a reported victim; they have to search for a non-profit organization capable of providing them with accommodation and food. They do not have a way to cover the cost of their lifestyle while their cases are being reviewed. The government does not provide safe houses or witness protection programs. Some of the victims end up getting victimized by the society who sees them as the perpetrators of crime and prostitution. The misrepresentation here is that these women are part of crime syndicates and when they report to local authorities it is either they have fallen out of their crime group or they are just afraid of getting caught (Emmert 2001).

Most women who are victims of sex trafficking end up not having their concerns addressed or getting their freedom because in most cases the pressure is on them to prove that they are victims of trafficking (Altink 2). Reports and research on Hong Kong's sex trafficking industry have been met with denial and refutation by Hong Kong authorities. It has constantly denied the accuracy of reports by United State authorities that although it has a lot of laws and statutes in place against trafficking; Hong Kong lacks practice and enforcement of the laws (Cross n. p.). Hong Kong authorities argue that enforce the law even though research has shown that it has not been fully compliant with prohibiting eliminating and punishing those who were caught trafficking. Because of the fight between Hong Kong and other US and international organizations is done at an international policy level, the voices of these people working as sex slaves is drowned while the trade grows every day. Their immigrant status also makes them less of a sympathetic group to locals who belief that foreigners have the capacity and capability to destroy their communities with drugs and crime.

Sex trafficking is also sexual violence committed on innocent bodies. The best way for the sex trafficking problem in Hong Kong to be solved is by pressuring the Hong Kong authorities to do more in terms of arresting and prosecuting those involved in the trade. For women who are taken from their homes with promises of getting a job only to find themselves working as sex prostitutes, it is difficult to make a case for victimization and abuse in a world where prostitution is not entirely illegal.

In conclusion, it should be noted that only enough international outcry and enough verification of laws that allow domestic migrant workers into Hong

Kong can solve this problem. Migration and organized crime walk hand in hand. A crack down and more efficient Hong Kong immigration system would reduce the number of women that are promised a fortune and end up as sex slaves for individuals who are supposed to be their agencies. In 2009, Hong Kong was downgraded from Tier 1 to Tier 2 in terms of compliance with legislation that relates to human trafficking (Cross n. p). As a Tier 2 compliant, it shows that Hong Kong is not being fully compliant with the minimum standards for protecting victims of sex trafficking. It is doing less in prohibiting, punishing and eliminating trafficking especially the severe type of sex trafficking.

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