

WALKERS & HANDLERS: EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF FACEBOOK MEDIATED PROSTITUTION

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Abstract: *This phenomenological case study examined the dynamics of Facebook mediated prostitution among individuals engaged in the sex trade and their clients with the objective of examining how new and emerging forms of media affect the societal landscape. The internet has become increasingly utilized in the sex trade. Now, a migration to Facebook has been seen. The word walker and handler along with specific words have been used by prostitutes and pimps to carry on their trade using the popular social media site as a platform, interacting within the Facebook environment without getting reported to site authorities. The study, which was a collaborative effort of researchers from the fields of media studies, communication arts and language, looks into how the features of Facebook are used specifically for prostitution. A highlight of the study includes a presentation of words and jargon used to discretely signal readiness to accept clients, advertise rates and services offered. The study sheds light on how Facebook negates the need for street prostitution while at the same time bringing with it additional implications of making prostitution more rampant than ever as shared by the informants of the study who prefer Facebook as a tool for their trade. The study also offers a three pronged approach to further exploring the involved dynamics and acting on Facebook- mediated prostitution through creating responsive legislation, generating public awareness, education and vigilance as well as creating anti- prostitution mechanisms on Facebook.*

Keywords: *Qualitative, phenomenological case study, Facebook mediated prostitution, media studies*

1. INTRODUCTION

The more media technologies continue to transform the way we go about our lives, the more we must attempt to understand whether they move society in the right way or not. The multiple transformations that we are undergoing spells a need to look into the effects that these new, emerging technologies have on society itself, its impacts to culture, morals, values and norms. "Social Networking sites, are undoubtedly the most influential and visited sites all over the world."

(Custodio, 2012). Facebook itself has a world population penetration of about 11.5%, translating to about 800, 000, 000 users worldwide and growing. The rise of online social networking is seen as a platform which is utilized in many other activities other than just social exchange. One might argue that since social networking has many varied utilities, it is but a natural occurrence for it to be utilized for good and for bad purpose Facebook has also been used as a promotional, marketing and selling platform. In recent years, scholars have raised concern over the utilization of Facebook for illegal activities such as fraud, stalking, and invasion of privacy among others due to its ease of use, many people have an “anything goes” attitude towards it (Musni- Tagaytay, 2014). Facebook is now even been used by commercial sex workers in their trade.

Technology mediated prostitution is not new in sex trade and has been a point of concerns in terms of regulation and legislation. Prostitution is, after all, one of the world’s oldest professions and the addition of technological tools in the trade could be considered as yet another phase in its continued evolution. The traditional street hawking of flesh has long given way to phone and website based escort services (Cunningham & Kendall, 2011; Rocha, Liljeros, & Holme, 2010). New clientele has been tapped given the anonymity and privacy provided by the online environment. Now, Facebook is a good place to start looking if you want to find escort or sex worker in any major city in the world and has become and increasingly happy abode for commercial sex workers (Kelly, 2011; Venkatesh, 2011). Matyszczyk (2011) stated that by the end of 2010, Facebook had become the no. 1 online medium of recruitment prostitutes. The ladies involved in this kind of activity are openly using Facebook to advertise their services.

With its increased presence on Facebook, this kind of technologically mediated prostitution presents a new set of concerns which must be investigated. First, Facebook can be used by procurers or pimps in recruiting would be prostitutes. Second, it can be used by women and even young girls to prostitute themselves (Iwu, & Ufuophu-Biri, 2014). Third, solicitation of prostitution is made so easy even for minors. Another concern is that this type of technology mediated prostitution can also be utilized for higher, more organized crime that involves the sex trade such as sex and human trafficking (Moule, Pyrooz, & Decker, 2013; Kővári, & Pruyt, 2014).

In the Philippines where Dumlao (2013) reported an estimated 500,000 sex workers currently populate the trade, Facebook- mediated prostitution is also gaining a foothold through Walker groups. “Walkers” which is the Facebook term for prostitutes interact with their clients either directly or through “Handlers” which is a Facebook term for procurer or pimp. The term “walker” is already an industry associated term as prostitutes who ply their trade on the sidewalks are

called street walkers. There are no known statistics on walkers and handlers only that the trade has a presence on Facebook. In an age where many people are tech savvy, the sex trade workers see “not only a surge of interest in their field but a perceived lower risk of arrest” (Morris, 2014). Similar to other internet based forums which serve as a platform for prostitution, walkers are able to interact on a live forum but on Facebook this can be taken to a whole new level since the walker can actually “set up shop” in the form of a profile which may be populated with various content such as photos and videos. The even more tech savvy walkers can depart from having a handler or pimp from making arrangements for them and thus are able to make their trade more lucrative for themselves on Facebook. The status “Walk me now” signals a walker’s being open for business.

1.1. Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to explore dynamics of Facebook- mediated prostitution to gain insight into how the sex trade is carried out on the world largest social networking platform and bring to light implications that need to be further investigated.

1.2. Research Questions

This multiple case study sought to explore the emerging role of Facebook as a medium of communication on prostitution. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the emerging jargons or symbols that are used in Facebook that are associated with prostitution?
2. What are the views of the walkers and handlers on the utility of Facebook for their trade?
3. How has Facebook changed and affected the sex trade?

1.3. Theoretical Underpinnings

In the Philippines, prostitution is not only illegal but also frowned upon by society with most prostitutes having to bear the social stigma that comes with their trade (Shoham & Rahav, 1968; O’Neill, 1997). Within the computer mediated environment, although they are identifiable, there is still a considerable amount of anonymity provided through the use of aliases and the user groups on Facebook which are usually presided upon by administrators. For this study, the researchers utilized the Social Information Processing Theory of Walther (2008) which explains how people get to know one another online, without nonverbal cues, and how they develop and manage relationships in the computer-mediated environment. The interaction of prostitutes and their procurers or pimps along with potential

clients are computer mediated interpersonal communications. The walkers and their handlers manage content and interact with prospective clients within the Facebook environment through messaging, and exchange of media content. As a secondary theoretical anchor, the study also used the SIDE Model which addresses deindividuation, identifiability and anonymity provided in computer mediated communication as having profound effects on behavior. Given that prostitution is socially and morally unfavorable in the Philippines, soliciting paid sex also bears a social stigma. In the computer mediated environment, would be clients do not need to physically interact with the walker or handler in soliciting for paid sex. The transactions are done within the Facebook environment with less fear of being identified as someone who is soliciting a prostitute.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Design

This study was phenomenological multiple case study. Cresswell (2013) describes phenomenological study as attempting to discover the “common meaning of several individuals of their lived experiences of a phenomenon” while case studies involves the “study of a case within real life”. Case study is further discussed by Denzin & Lincoln (2000) as “the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical material... that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives... hoping to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand.”

2.2. Research Locale & Informants

This study was conducted in Region XI, located at the South eastern portion of Mindanao, Philippines. Its regional center is Davao City. There are no solid statistics on prostitution in Davao City although a 1998 report of a former Agency for International Aid reported in 1998 that the number of girls turning to prostitution in the city was as high as 1,000 citing that the discretion and fluidity of the activities of the girls made numbers hard to identify. The study focused on walkers and handlers. Walker is the Facebook term for prostitute referring to individuals who engage in sexual activity in exchange for payment. Handler is the Facebook term for procurer or in colloquial slang known as “pimps” for males and “madam” for female who serves as an agent for the prostitute who collects parts of the earnings.

The inclusion criteria for the informants were, first, the informant must be or must have been a walker or handler who used Facebook as their primary platform for solicitation and negotiation of engaging in sexual intercourse in exchange

for money. The second inclusion criteria was that the prostitute or walker be knowledgeable about how Facebook is used for prostitution, meaning they have been using it for their trade for not less than a year. The last inclusion criterion is that the walker or handler should be of a discerning age of at least 18 years old and above.

The informants were comprised of two prostitutes referred to on Facebook as “walkers” and one handler, who used social media specifically Facebook as their tool in their transactions. The two walkers were females aged 21 and 22 while the handler was a 22 year old male. All three informants had been engaged in the sex trade for 3-4 years. The females no longer worked as walkers at the time of the interviews.

2.3. Trustworthiness of the Study

To reduce the subjectivity and misinterpretation, this research employed data triangulation of data sources since the researchers believe that no one data source can truly shed light on a phenomenon. Two data sources were used in examining how Facebook is used in prostitution in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings. First the researchers employed In Depth Interviews with walkers and a handler to get thick descriptions of not just the responses of the informants but also the context in which their responses occurred. The researchers also examined walker forums on Facebook as well as the profiles of walkers and handlers which were populated with pictures, comment threads various posts and videos. The researchers did this so that both data sources would serve as a rich corpora on Facebook mediated prostitution. The researchers employed the qualitative validation perspective of Lincoln & Guba (1985) as cited by Creswell (2015) which uses attributes of credibility, transferability dependability and confirmability to establish trustworthiness of the study.

The researchers took down detailed accounts of the respondents’ experiences by documenting the In Depth interviews and doing word for word transcriptions of the interview. The researchers also employed peer debriefing from a disinterested party to ensure that the researchers biases or own assumptions would not get in the way of data analysis and the study’s findings. The researchers allowed the peer to also examine the data and critique the analysis of the researchers as well as examine the research process to ensure that the analysis and findings were supported by the collected data. To aid in the confirmability of the study, the researchers preserved all the documentation of the study from researcher’s notes to interview transcripts to screen shots examined for content analysis and employed an audit trail that would allow the researchers to support findings that were traceable in the data.

Table 1: Audit Trail

DATA SOURCE	CODING SYSTEM
Participant Identification	P+ participant number (P1, P2.etc)
Interview Question	Q+ Interview Guide Question Number (Q1, Q2, etc.)
Screen Shots	Screen Shot+ Assigned Number (S1, S2, etc.)

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

Locating informants for the study was done by the researchers by approaching the administrators of Talikala Foundation Inc., a non- stock, non- profit organization in Davao City that was engaged in helping women and girls who were victims of abuse, trafficking, exploitation and prostitution. Extensive consultations were held with counsellors from the foundation in order to ensure that the study would conform to the highest standards of ethics. The researchers developed the interview guide and submitted it to the foundation for screening and fine tuning before translating it to the Filipino and the local dialect. The translation was done by employing a forward- backward- forward technique wherein the questions which were crafted in English were translated into the target dialect by one translator then translated again into English by another translator using the local dialect version. This was done to ensure that the translations were as accurate in thought and meaning and as loyal as possible to the original interview guide questions. Once the interview guides were ready, they underwent validation from university faculty from the fields of psychology and sociology to evaluate the appropriateness of the questions and ensure they were congruent with the research objectives. The researchers were then able to proceed with arranging the logistics of the In Depth interviews.

The walker informants were contacted by the researchers through Talikala Foundation who, after being informed of the inclusion criteria were able to refer potential informants. These informants had already gone through prolonged counselling through the effort of the foundation and were thus able to relate their experiences with minimal suffering emotional trauma or upheaval. The researchers approached the informants and informed them about the study, its objectives, the length of time they were to participate as well as benefits for joining. They were then asked if they would like to participate in the study. The interviews were scheduled to be held within the confines of the foundation at a time of the informants choosing to put them more at ease. The researchers employed the expertise of a counsellor for the In Depth Interviews so that the manner of questioning as well as the pacing

of the interview could be properly gauged depending on the responses of the informants. During the interview the counsellor from the foundation was adept at emotionally assuring the informants and guaranteed that the proper ethical protocols agreed upon were being observed by the researchers. The interviews started by thanking the informant for their participation, with a short reiteration about the study and its objectives, the length of time the interview was estimated to take, the procedures that were involved in the study, including confidentiality guarantees and informed consent as well as instructions to the informants that they had full discretions in answering the questions and that they could back out at any time during the interview. The informants were also made aware of the fact that the interviews would be recorded and documented. The researchers served as observers and documenters during the interviews.

After the interviews, the researchers read and re-read the data, to become immersed and intimately familiar with its content. The researchers then tried to find commonalities between the responses to generate labels or codes that would identify important features on the data and might be relevant to answering the research questions. The researchers then went about coding the entire dataset, and after that, collated all the codes and all relevant data extracts, together for later stages of analysis. The researchers then examined the codes and collated data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning or potential themes. After this the researchers then collated data relevant to each potential theme eventually coming up with dominant themes where codes accumulated. The researchers then checked the dominant themes against the dataset, then refined to themes that directly answered the research questions, splitting themes into sub- themes whenever a theme was too broad or combining themes that were closely related and ultimately discarding themes which were irrelevant to the scope of the study. The researchers then developed a detailed analysis of each theme, worked out the scope and focus of each theme. The researchers then wrote an analytic narrative supported by data extracts, to answer the research questions put forth at the start of the study and contextualized the analysis in relation to existing literature.

2.5. Role of the Researchers

The researchers served as observers, documenters and transcribers in this study. During the conduct of the in-depth interview, the researchers took down notes, were responsible for the recording of the interview proceedings and then transcribed the recorded conversation between the researchers and the participants word for word before proceeding with coding and data analysis.

2.6. Ethical Considerations of the Study

The ethical considerations of the study were given paramount importance by the researchers given the sensitive nature of the study as well as having vulnerable human subjects. First the researchers made sure to work in close coordination with the foundation, allowing the counsellors at the foundation to assess the informants who would be most helpful to the study and capable of answering the interview questions without emotional or psychological distress.

The researchers tried their best to be as attentive and sensitive to the informants by being clear and forthcoming about the reason for having the interview, the objectives of the study and giving the informants full discretion about their participation in the study. The researchers also took care to include informants who were of a discerning age with the help of the foundations as younger participants might feel pressured to participate and not be able to easily articulate any emotional or psychological discomforts during the course of the interview.

The informants were properly oriented at the start of the interview, as well as asked by the interviewer from time to time if they still wanted to continue. The informants were also guaranteed confidentiality as to all identifying information that they would give during the course of the interview and in the presentation of the findings of the study. The informants then signed Informed Consent forms prior to the start of the interviews. After the interview the informants were given tokens of gratitude by the researcher in the form of gift packs and were reimbursed for their transportation expenses in travelling to and from the interview.

2.7. Data Sources

This study employed two data sources for its data collection. First is the transcript of the in depth interviews with the informants. The audio recording of the In Depth Interviews were transcribed in verbatim by the researchers. No translation was done on the transcripts until after analysis were completed and only done during the final preparation for the presentation of the study. The second data source was screen shots of walker forums as well as the public profiles of walkers. These were public forums and groups found on Facebook by the researchers through the recommendations of the informants. Posts and threads on these Facebook pages were captured by the researchers and saved in document and image formats. These allowed the researchers to preserve located data since the content of the forums as well as the profiles are constantly changing due to the interactions done and also through the updating of statuses, pictures and videos.

2.8. Data Analysis

Before data analysis could begin, the researchers first put together the corpora to be analyzed. The recording of the in depth interviews were transcribed prior to coding. The researchers made use of the audit trails to be able to trace the responses to a particular informant as well as the question in the interview that was being answered by the informant. The screenshots were numbered as well and examined for words that kept reappearing on the Facebook posts. Responses that were similar in thought were grouped together and assigned a theme. After all the information was properly coded, the data set was again re-examined by the researchers, grouping closely related themes or splitting broader themes into more specific themes. The screen shots were then examined for the most repeated words while other screenshots which reinforced the already identified themes were grouped together. The researchers then wrote a narrative of the findings that the data set shed light on to answer the research questions expressed at the start of the study. The researchers then inferred as to the implications of the findings to the greater society. The researchers also outline as to how prostitution is carried out on Facebook which is a social media platform.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Walker & Handler Territory: The World of Facebook Mediated Prostitution

Prostitutes and procurers who go about their trade on Facebook refer to themselves as walkers and handlers. The word walker is a thinly veiled term as street prostitutes refer to themselves as street walkers. The word handler is used to distance the individual from the word “bugaw”, the Filipino term for pimp. The “handler” is responsible for handling details for the walker in exchange for a part of the earnings. The handlers could handle multiple walkers at a time. These words distance the activity from the fact that prostitution is being carried out. They know that Facebook has a report abuse function where they can be reported to site administrators and their profiles and uploaded content can be removed. In order to be able to discreetly carry out their activities on Facebook, the walkers and handlers assume aliases. Although they do not use their real names, the walkers use their real pictures on their dummy profiles (P1, P2: Q6). Some walkers’ dummy accounts are also accessible to their handlers however the walkers are the ones who mainly post contents on their fake profiles. Other walkers are visible only through the profiles of their handlers on pages that look like catalogues. The handlers are able to operate with complete anonymity of Facebook because there is no need for their images to be visible unlike the walkers who use their physical looks to attract potential clients. The handler profiles have the walkers labelled as “models” similar to internet based escort services websites. The respondents related that

although some walkers have found that they no longer need a handler when operating on Facebook, the handlers' catalogues tend to get more attention from would be clients because there are more girls to choose from. The catalogues list details about the walkers such as their code names which are usually the names of gemstones and other aliases, the walker's age and present location as well as their service level. The participants had different explanations as to what service level meant. A service level labelled "Xpress" means that a walker was available at that current time or ready to meet with the client and does not need to be pre-booked for an engagement with the customer. The service level "Xpensive" usually meant that the walker had a high rate for one reason or another although the informant (P3: Q9) clarified that rates usually had something to do with a walker's age, being a virgin, their beauty or being skilled in bed. The catalogues were always accompanied by pictures of the walkers. The pictures were usually recently taken as selfies by the walkers themselves using their own mobile devices or as candid photos. It is worth noting that on the public forums there are no nude photos of the walkers as one would expect from something related to prostitution. Knowledge of the nature of these pages is usually spread through word of mouth. The photos are usually wholesome in nature, featuring the walkers fully clothed and looking much like ordinary girls. Street prostitutes are usually easily identifiable based on their manner of dress and their location. On Facebook, the walkers are not as easily identifiable as street prostitutes since it is only when a person clicks the photos sections of the profiles will they be able to see the catalogues of the walkers. In cases where the walker maintains only one profile, it is even more difficult to tell as the profile could look like any other personal profile on Facebook.

Walker forums are where the walkers and handlers mainly ply their trade. If a person were looking for a prostitute on Facebook and do not know the walker's or the handler's alias, the walker forums is where a prospective client would start browsing. The forums or Facebook groups are maintained by multiple administrators. Again, knowledge of the name of the group to look for would usually be spread by word of mouth. The word "walker" and a geographical location would usually comprise the name of the group although there is no indication that this is a rule. On the group forum, walkers and handlers would usually post statuses that signal readiness to accept clients at which point a potential client sees who is available. From there a person can access the walker's individual dummy account or see the walkers who are associated with a particular handler. Walkers can also post pictures on the group thread together with their picture. Since there is already an understanding in the group of what is going on, there is no need to categorically mention the word sex. In fact, it is not visible at all on the thread. Similar to face to face solicitation of prostitution, the street prostitute and potential client already assume roles in the transaction and go right to talk over price and details.

Matrix 1: Transactional Jargon and Symbols Associated with Facebook Mediated Prostitution

Emerging Jargon and Symbols	Meaning	Usage
<i>Walk</i> (S _{2'} , S _{3'} , S _{10'} , S _{11'} , S _{12'} , S _{13'} , S _{14'} , S _{16'} , S _{17'})	Refers to paid sexual activity	<i>"Ready now, walk now"</i> (Ready to accept clients)
<i>Walker</i> (S _{1'} , S _{2'} , S _{3'} , S _{13'} , S _{14'} , S _{16'} , S _{17'})	An individual who engages in paid sexual activity; a prostitute	<i>"Any available walkers here?"</i> (Are there any available prostitutes here?)
<i>Xpress</i> (S _{28'} , S _{29'} , S _{36'})	Prostitute is available or on call;	<i>"Service Level: Xpress"</i> (Prostitute can meet with client at that particular time)
<i>Xpensive</i> (S _{28'} , S _{29'} , S _{36'})	The prostitute is high priced for one or more reasons such as age, skill, or beauty	<i>"Service Level: Xpensive"</i>
<i>Nhb</i> (S _{2'} , S _{33'} , S _{34'})	Acronym for no holds barred	<i>"Walk? Coffee Candy nhb"</i> (invitation for no holds barred sexual encounter with a young prostitute)
<i>Candy or candies</i> (S _{11'} , S _{8'} , S _{9'})	Reference to new prostitutes, young prostitutes	<i>"Walk with my candies"</i> (Try the handler's fresh new girls)
<i>Sure Taker</i> (S _{3'} , S _{4'} , S _{37'} , S _{38'})	Refers to clients who are not just looking or browsing but really will go through with the transaction	<i>"Contact only if sure taker"</i>
<i>Money Down</i> (P _{1'} , P _{2'} , P _{3'} , S _{2'} , S _{3'})	Refers to the client having to pay the agreed upon fee in advance or prior to engaging in the sexual activity	Used in Transactional agreements
<i>Pay Later</i> (P _{1'} , P _{2'} , P _{3'} , S _{2'} , S _{3'})	Refers to the client having to pay the agreed upon fee after engaging in the sexual activity	Used in Transactional agreements
<i>Poss/ Pose</i> (S _{18'} , S _{19'} , S _{32'} , S _{39'})	Sexual position/s	<i>"Poss up to you"</i> (position is up to you) <i>"Unli Poses"</i> (unlimited positions)

<i>Details</i> (S ₂₀ ; S ₂₉ ; S ₂₂ ; S ₂₃ ; S ₂₆)	Refers to who determines where the prostitute & client will meet for the completion of their transaction.	“Details up to you” (The prostitute
<i>Meet Up</i> (S ₄ ; S ₅ ; S ₆ ; S ₇)	Meeting of prostitute and client	“ <i>Meet Up downtown area only</i> ” (a prostitute will agree to meet up only in the downtown area; the prostitute is not willing to travel far)

Sexual slang is also utilized in Facebook mediated prostitution to distance the conversations from suspicion and circumvent getting reported to Facebook for violations of terms of use. Acronyms are used to sanitize the interactions that take place on the group threads and make them less obvious.

Matrix 2: Sexual Slang used in Facebook Mediated Prostitution

Emerging Jargon and Symbols	Meaning	Usage
<i>Pops</i> (S ₃ ; S ₂₄)	Reaching sexual climax; one round of sexual intercourse which is usually priced at a fee.	“4K/ 2 pops” (Rate is four thousand for 2 rounds of sexual intercourse)
<i>Coffee</i> (S ₁₁ ; S ₁₄ ; S ₁₆ ; S ₁₇)	Sexual Intercourse	“A Walk and Coffee, anyone?” (An invitation to potential clients)
<i>Drive</i> (S ₃₃ ; S ₃₄ ; S ₃₅ ; S ₃₆)	Woman on top position	“Unliposs and drive” (The prostitute will allow intercourse in any position including woman on top position.
owc, owo cim& cif (S ₃₃ ; S ₃₄ ; S ₃₅ ; S ₃₆)	Referring to the prostitutes limits or services <i>Oral Sex with Condom</i> <i>Oral Sex without Condom</i> <i>Ejaculate in the mouth</i> <i>Ejaculate in the face</i>	“No CIM or CIF” (The prostitute will not allow cim or cif) “Walk candy with owc” (paid intercourse that includes oral sex with condom)
BB (S ₃₃ ; S ₃₄ ; S ₃₅ ; S ₃₆)	Acronym of the slang word Bareback or Unprotected Sex	“NO BB please” (The prostitute will not allow unprotected sex)

Walker engagements are usually settled in the Facebook environment. Stauses indicate readiness for clients while the threads on each post are used for

prospecting and interaction. However, when the real negotiations begin, the walker and the client depart from the public space and complete negotiations via private messaging. Once all arrangements have been made prior to the face to face meeting of walker and client, communication continues using mobile phones where the walker and the client meet up as agreed upon and engage in paid sexual activity.

3.2. Utility and Effects of Facebook to the Sex Trade

The informants had varying views about their trade. Their reasons for entering into it were mainly because of dire financial need (P₂: Q₅; P₁:Q₅). The informants shared that some walkers willingly chose the life that they lead as a “practicality” to solve poverty (P₁:Q₆; P₂:Q₆; P₃: Q₆), find a means to sustain material needs or wants (P₂:Q₇), settle debt (P₂:Q₄) or “satisfy lust while making money on the side” (P₃: Q₅). The informants shared that other people could also serve as influences in the choice to engage in prostitution such as peers or even their own parents and relatives.

With the advent of Facebook mediated prostitution the need to stand on a street corner is removed. The informants relate that it is a favorable medium for plying their trade since even potential clients who do not live in their vicinity such as tourists are able to contact them for bookings. The walkers and their handlers can wait in the privacy of home or some other place and still be able to carry out their trade. This means that the walkers and handlers involved in the sex trade are no longer visible. The implication of this is that this could give authorities the false belief that prostitution has lessened when it could be the opposite. Due to the presence of Facebook mediated prostitution, statistics on the sex trade are sketchy at best since they only represent obvious manifestations of the sex trade such as those in brothels, clubs, bars and prostitutes on the street. The informants themselves shared that they feel the social stigma is lessened because they do not need to hustle with others on the streets until wee hours of the morning. They are also able to hold different jobs while still going on with their being walkers and handlers. Two of the informants study on a part time basis while the third participant held a job during the day. All three could still participate in the sex industry by maintaining their fake profiles since Facebook is available on mobile devices.

3.3. IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers find that although prostitution as a trade has been around for centuries, social media sites are giving it a new face. The means may be new, but it is still the same trade, the main reason for resorting to this trade is still poverty.

In a country like the Philippines where prostitution is illegal, Facebook mediated prostitution goes unnoticed because of the language utilized in the interactions. It also poses a challenge to law makers to monitor and catch these illegal activities since they go on discreetly. The ease with which the trade is carried out within the Facebook environment could lead to making prostitution as an easy option to take in order to answer the primary reasons for prostitution. Young women may even resort to prostitution without the knowledge of their families since the activity can be done discreetly and on a part time basis.

For legislators, this study finds a need to craft more responsive legislation to curtail activities that turn women into commodities that can be bought or bartered. Although there are laws in place that outlaw prostitution and related activities, there is obviously a problem in the implementation of these laws. Lawmakers as well as police authorities should be made aware of the sex trade's presence on Facebook, if they do not already know about it. Measures need to be taken to deter the proliferation of these activities and avoid the exploitation of women. The researchers also recommend that the government create programs that will allow young women an alternative to using their bodies in making a living. Mechanisms should be set in place to provide empowerment for individuals who would most likely turn to this trade like teaching them relevant skills and giving them an honest and clean livelihood.

Educating the public is also a key factor in solving the problem. A properly informed public would most likely be vigilant in reporting these activities to authorities to curtail if not completely put a stop to them. In doing this the family, the church and schools have key roles to play in inculcating positive values in young people especially about valuing themselves as persons. The media should also do its share in shedding light on these activities so that people know that this kind of activities go on. Media literacy principles should be developed that directly educate young people about how new and emerging media could be used for illegal activities and the exploitation of young people.

The administrators of Facebook as a site should also be alerted to these activities so that they can monitor content on the site more closely to ensure that the site is not used for illegal activities such as prostitution. The trade words and phrases identified in this study may also be flagged by administrators as a mechanism for monitoring the presence of prostitution in public forums on Facebook.

By way of further studies, the researchers hope that even more insight could be shed on this phenomenon. Duplicating the study in different locations and among more informants would be beneficial to gaining a broader perspective of the factors in play regarding Facebook mediated prostitution. The studies could also be done in cooperation with law enforcement authorities, women support groups

and advocacy groups as a solid effort to ending this kind of commoditization of women and instead provide avenues towards protecting women and human rights in general.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide (English Version)

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Greeting: Good Morning/ Good Afternoon/ Good Evening Ma'am/Sir

Thank you for allowing us to conduct an interview regarding on our study about human trafficking, your help is greatly appreciated.

The purpose of this study is to determine how do social media became a gateway for trafficking persons and what made the trafficked persons engage into this kind of activity. Hence we will make sure of the confidentiality of this study.

Before we begin the interview, we would like to remind you that if you wish not to answer the question just say pass. Okay let's begin the interview.

Profile

Nickname:

Gender:

Age:

1. Before you enter into this kind of activity, did you have any knowledge on how to use computers and the internet?
2. Before you enter into this activity did you ever had the idea that this would be your job?
3. Who influence you or introduce you to be part of this activity?
4. Do you have a boss or do you work with someone with this kind of business?
5. Why did you engage into this kind of activity?
6. Can you tell to us what do you do in this kind of activity? Can you share your experiences?
7. How many customers do you have in a day?
8. How much do they pay you? Does it support your daily needs?
9. How do you get the payment?
10. Did you ever try to meet your customers in person?
11. How long have you been in this kind of activity?
12. Do you have plans in quitting into this kind of job? (if ever they are still active)
13. Aside from this kind of job do you have other source of income?
14. What are your future plans?

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide (Visayan Version)

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Pagbati: Maayong Buntag/ Maayong Hapon/ Maayong Gabii Ma'am/Sir

Salamat sa pagtugot kanamo sa pagpahigayon sa usa ka interview mahitungod sa among pagtuon bahin sa human trafficking, ang imong tabang gipabilhan pag-ayo.

Ang katuyoan niini nga pagtuon mao ang pagtino kon sa unsang paagi gigamit ang social media para mang traffick og tao og unsa ang nagtulak sa mga gipangtraffick na mosulod ani nga aktibidad.

Sa dili pa kita magsugod sa interbyu, kita gusto sa pagpahinumdom kaninyo nga kon kamo gusto nga dili sa pagtubag sa pangutana lang-ingon pass. Okay ato ng pagasugdan ang interbyu.

Profile

Angga:

Kinatawahan:

Edad:

1. Bago ka nisulod ani nga aktibidad kahibalo ba ka mugamit sa kompyuter og internet?
2. Bago ka nisulod ani nga aktibidad, nahibalo ba ka nga mao ni ang imong mahimong trabaho?
3. Kinsa ang nag inpluwensya nimo o nagsulod sa imo ani nga klasing aktibidad?
4. Naa ba kay amo o nagatrabaho ba ka para sa laing tao?
5. Ngano ka nisulod ani nga klasing trabaho?
6. Pwede ba nimo ma istorya sa amoa ang imong ginabuhat ani nga trabaho? Mahimo ba nga imong i ambit sa amo ang imong kaagi?
7. Pila ka customer imong ginaakomoda sa isa ka adlaw?
8. Pila pod ilang gina bayad sa imo? Igo na ba kini aron masuportahan ang imong adlaw-adlaw nga panginahanglan?
9. Sa unsang paagi nimo ginakuha ang bayad nila?
10. Natestingan na ba nimo nga makigkita sa imong customer sa personal?
11. Pila na ka katuig ani nga klasing trabaho?
12. Naa ba kay plano nga mobiya ani nga trabaho?
13. Naa ba kay lahi nga panginabuhian, liban ani nga trabaho?
14. Unsa man ang imong mga plano sa mga umaabot nga panahon?

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (English Version)

Walkers & Handlers: Exploring the Role of Facebook as a Communication Medium for Prostitution

INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Monique Musni- Tagaytay, M.A. Ed., Emma Viloan- Sagarino, MBA, Cathy Macrohon, Belle Olarte and ArizaOlarte at the University of the Immaculate Conception, because you fit the inclusion criteria for informants of our study.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will be given a copy of this form.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to examine how Facebook can be used as a communication tool for prostitution. The study will look into the words and expressions that are used on Facebook when it is used for the solicitation of prostitution. The study aims to get a picture of how Facebook has affected or changed the sex trade.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an In Depth Interview with a counselor or psychologist who will ask several questions which are relevant to the study. You will be asked to be as detailed as possible with your responses. The interview will be audio recorded for later transcription. The interview will is estimated to take about an hour to an hour and a half although you will be asked from time to time if you want to continue with the interview. The interview will be held at the Talikala Foundation compound in Doña Vicenta Village, Bajada, Davao City at a day and time of your choosing.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

You may feel discomfort during the course of the interview because of the sensitive nature of the topic being studied. You may opt to not answer questions which make you feel any psychological or emotional distress or you can opt out of the study if you feel that you cannot discuss the information that is asked of you. The researchers value your participation and will place your welfare as their priority during the course of the study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study will help the researchers recommend media and information literacy principles that will help people become aware and educated of how Facebook can be used for exploitation, trafficking and prostitution of women and thus find ways of protecting women and children against this kind of treatment.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

As a participant, the researchers are grateful for your participation. Though you will not be paid for participating in this study, the researchers will be giving you a gift pack as a token of gratitude. You will also be reimbursed for your transportation expenses to and from the interview.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will keep your records for this study confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if we are required to do so by law, we will disclose confidential information about you. The members of the research team and the members of the technical review panel of the University of the Immaculate Conception may access the data. The data will be kept by the researchers for a minimum period of three years after the completion of the study. The audio recording will be transcribed by the researchers for analysis. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential, except if necessary to protect your rights or welfare. This certificate means that the researchers can resist the release of information about your participation to people who are not connected with the study. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no identifiable information will be used.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are

not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the researchers at the University of the Immaculate Conception, Bonifacio Street Davao City through telephone numbers 227 8286 local 132 or through email at mtagaytay@uic.edu.ph or esagarino@uic.edu.ph

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research participant or the research in general and are unable to contact the research team, or if you want to talk to someone independent of the research team, please contact the University of the Immaculate Conception Research & Publication Center at 2278286 local 111.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

AUDIO/VIDEO/PHOTOGRAPHS (If this is not applicable to your study and/or if participants do not have a choice of being audio/video-recorded or photographed, delete this section.)

- I agree to be audio/video-recorded/photographed (remove the media not being used)
- I do not want to be audio/video-recorded/photographed (remove the media not being used)

Signature above Printed Name of Participant

Date Signed

To be accomplished by the Researcher Obtaining Consent:

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this document and freely consents to participate.

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Date Signed