THE UNDERLYING LEVEL OF DEMAND AND FACTORS GENERATING DEMAND FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

Factors Perpetuating the Demand for Sexual Exploitation of Children

This Summary Paper explores the underlying level in the Demand Tree as introduced in Summary Paper 2 and studies the factors generating demand that sustain and perpetuate children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Several root causes influence both the demand and the supply sides of the market trading sexual exploitation of children (SEC) in the online and offline environments.

The Gender Dimension

Men are traditionally the main sex market demand drivers, while women and girls are socialised to respond to male-generated demand. Research suggests that, while sex perpetrators are disproportionately male, victims are mainly girls and women. A 2012 United Nations report estimated that 75 percent of all trafficked people worldwide were women and girls, primarily for the purpose of sexual exploitation.[1] In parallel, ECPAT International research on sexual exploitation of male children and adolescents in Colombia unveiled that 86 percent of abusers were men.[2] In 2014, 80% of victims depicted in child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) were girls.[3] Cultures that impose feminine gender stereotypes contribute to the sexual exploitation of girls.[4]

Established gender norms and expectations often lead to gender inequalities that, while affecting severely girl children, impact boys as well. Prevailing social norms of masculinity may prevent families from protecting boys adequately by perceiving them as immune to sexual violence.

1 UNODC (2012), "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons", United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.IV.1 2012, accessed 27 July 2016, http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf.
2 ECPAT International- Fundación Renacer (2010), "Aproximación a la explotación sexual comercial de niños y adolescentes de sexo masculino en Bogotá y Cartagena de Indias", ECPAT International, Colombia, 2010, accessed 27 July 2016, http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/Columbia%20Reserach_final.pdf.
3 IWF (2015), "IWF Operational Trends", accessed 19 April 2016, https://www.iwf.org.uk/resources/trends.
4 UN Human Rights Council (2015), "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography", UN Doc. A/HRC/31/58, 30 December 2015, para. 43.

Social pressure may also lead boys to refrain from admitting to having been abused and from seeking assistance.[5] Conversely, the conventional expectation of female sexual behaviour as passive and non-aggressive supports the misconception of women as incapable of committing abuse.

Sexual Interest in Children and Adolescents

A deep-rooted determinant of sexual exploitation of children relates to sexual disorders. While preferential offenders, including paedophiles, display an attitude leading to deviant behaviour,[6] many offenders who engage in SEC are actually situational offenders who abuse underage victims when the opportunity arises.[7]

In societies where premarital sex is proscribed, a premium may be placed on girls' virginity and buyers of sex services may be willing to pay an extra cost for virgins, which are also viewed as safer from disease. In the market of mainstream pornography, a special interest has been documented in adolescent girls. On the largest pornography Website, Pornhub, in 2013 and 2014, "teen" was the most searched term in the world.[8]

Personalities prone to committing sexual crimes appear to share common characteristics, including aggressiveness, impulsivity and risk-taking or sensation-seeking. Research evidences that hyper sexuality or excessive sexual preoccupation tend to be overrepresented in men who have committed sexual offenses.[9] It has been suggested that excessive sexual interest, particularly in boys, can be linked to early and increased exposure to online pornography.[10]

Sexual Victimisation in Childhood and Familial Clustering of Sexual Offending

Early childhood experiences may profoundly influence sexual attitudes and behaviours as these develop in later years.[11] Sexual violence suffered at a young age cannot only deeply harm a small child, but also result in perpetuation of abuse in the teenager and the adult who may turn from victim into perpetrator. Sexual violence against children, sexual deviances among family members and/or negative attitudes toward sexuality may result in an intergenerational transmission of sexual violence in the household and the community.[12] One study suggested that both online and offline SEC offenders displayed greater rates of childhood physical and sexual abuse as compared to the general population.[13] This does not imply that all young victims of sexual violence become sex offenders themselves in later life.[14]

5   Instituto Promundo-US (2011), "Toward a better future for this generation and the next... A report for the Oak Foundation on male engagement in the protection of children from child sexual abuse".
6   ECPAT International (2008), "Questions and Answers about the commercial sexual exploitation of children", 4th edition, accessed 6 September 2016, http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/faq_eng_2008.pdf.
7   Bang, Brandy *et al*. (2014), "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children", *SpringerBriefs in Psychology*, 36, accessed 19 April 2016,http://download.springer.com/static/pdf/536/bok%253A978-3-319-01878-2.pdf?originUrl=http%3A%2F%2Flink.springer.com%2Fbook%2F10.1007%2F978-3-319-01878-2&token2=exp=1461027493~acl=%2Fstatic%2Fpdf%2F536%2Fbok%2525 3A978-3-319-01878-2.pdf%3ForiginUrl%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Flink.springer.com%252Fbook%252F10.1007%252F978-3-319-01878-2*~hmac=fc8f20ed6d8beb27252b5b38e683b15d448e5ca4b0952a43210cc72c315f315d; See also, UN ECOSOC (2006). "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Juan Miguel Petit", UN Doc. E/CN.4/2006/67, 12 January 2006, accessed 6 September 2016, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G06/101/70/PDF/G0610170.pdf?OpenElement.
8   Pornhub Insights(2015), "2014 Year In Review", 7 January 2015, accessed 27 July 2016, http://www.pornhub.com/insights/2014-year-in-review.
9   Seto, Michael C. (2013), "Viewing Child Pornography: Prevalence and Correlates in a Representative Community Sample of Young Swedish Men".
10 Dines, Gail (2014), "Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality", Media Education Foundation.
11 Babchishin, Kelly, Hanson, R Karl, Hermann, Chantal (2011), "The Characteristics of Online Sex Offenders: A Meta-Analysis", *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, Public Safety Canada.
12 CARE (2014), "Addressing the Intergenerational Violence: Focus on Educational Settings".
13 Babchishin, Kelly, Hanson, R Karl, Hermann, Chantal (2011), "The Characteristics of Online Sex Offenders: A Meta-Analysis".
14 Spatz Widom, Cathy, Massey, Christina (2016), "A Prospective Examination of Whether Childhood Sexual Abuse Predicts Subsequent Offending", American Medical Association.

Peer Influences

Individuals who indulge in sexual relations with children or consume CSAM may also do so as a result of peer pressure, as research studies have evidenced with regard to men enlisted in the military or peacekeeping forces.[15] Peer pressure may perversely work for victims too, as in the case of young people who engage in commercial sex to be able to access more money or acquire luxury goods as a result of peer influence and shared models; motivations that may also lead to exchange CSAM through ICTs connecting with friends and schoolmates.

Sexual bullying and harassment has been recently amplified by virtual means. Cyber bullying may be conducted by sending phone text messages, images and emails, as well as through online discussion groups and personal web pages.[16] Sexting may be the result of peer pressure as well, while gaming environments and chat rooms are ripe with "community pressure." Anonymous identities can be used to pressure a peer into inappropriate behaviours online, including downloading, sharing or creating child abuse images.

Power Imbalance and Victim Blaming

Power imbalance often marks the relationship between children and adults. The combination of age and gender stands at the core of the real and perceived vulnerability of children, which exploiters leverage to predominantly target girls. In addition, sexual preference, low education, marginal socio-economic class and limited capacity to articulate needs and rights further penalise children in relationships with abusive adults. The power dynamic is typically manifested through the grooming process between an adult and a child.

The asymmetry of power often continues in the way the exploited child may be perceived, resulting in a victim-blaming position that permeates not only the perpetrator-victim relationship, but is evident also at the societal level where victims may be blamed for failing to say no or refusing to engage in the sexual conduct.[17]

Discrimination and Racism

In societies where homophobic sentiments are more accentuated, shifting the blame for sexual exploitation on the victim may result from intolerance.[18] Adolescents interested in validating their sexual orientation and exploring same sex experiences, which tend to be stigmatised in homophobic societies, may be forced to do so in unsafe situations to escape discrimination.[19] In some circumstances, discrimination and racism may lead children and adolescents that are already vulnerable, especially in certain regions and communities, to turn to exploiters through forums and chat rooms or in the streets in exchange for care, believing that they will understand and accept them.[20]

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15 O'Connell-Davidson, Julia (2011), "The Sex Exploiter", Paper for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children; Allais, Carol (2011), "Sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers: the psychosocial context of behaviour change", Scientia Militaria, *South African Journal of Military Studies*, Vol 39, No 1, 2011, 1-15, accessed 27 July 2016, http://scientiamilitaria.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/99/132.

16 ECPAT International (2005), "Violence against Children in Cyberspace. A contribution to the United Nations Study on Violence against Children", Bangkok: ECPAT International, accessed 27 July 2016, http://www.childcentre.info/child-safety-internet-conference/public/Cyberspace_ENG.pdf.

17 W, Lauren (2015), "Child sexual exploitation: police campaign is guilty of victim blaming", The Guardian, 14 January 2015, accessed 27 July 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/social-life-blog/2015/jan/14/child-sexual-exploitation-never-blame-victim-manchester-abuse.

18 Segundo, Marcio *et al*.(2012), "Men, Women and the Commercial sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in four Brazilian Cities – Results from a Qualitative and Quantitative Study", Promundo, July 2012, 14, 34, accessed 27 July 2016, http://promundo.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Men-Women-and-the-Commercial-Sexual-Exploitation-of-Children-and-Adolescents-in-Four-Brazilian-Cities.pdf.

19 ECPAT International (2014),"Informe de Monitoreo de País sobre la Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes en Guatemala", Bangkok: ECPAT International, 19.

20 Wolak, Janis et al., "Online 'Predators' and Their Victims, Myths, Realities, and Implications for Prevention and Treatment", University of New Hampshire Internet Solutions for Kids, Inc, 117-118.

Social and Cultural Norms

In certain collectivist cultures, the notion of shame is central to controlling social behaviour. Where a code of modesty prevails and female virginity is regarded as a value to be preserved toward preparing for marriage, sexual activities engaged in by girls are believed to bring dishonour to the family. Even when the girl is a victim of gender-based sexual violence, she may be blamed for the attack that she has suffered.[21]

Children's Multiple Vulnerabilities

Young people who are neglected, emotionally unstable or confused may be easy prey for various forms of exploitation, including of a sexual nature. The poorest children, children with disabilities, children from dysfunctional families and victims of domestic violence, working children, vagrant and runaway children, children who migrate alone or with their families, children left uncared for at home when their parents migrate, refugee and internally displaced children, stateless children, indigenous children and children in institutions can be all exposed to direct solicitation for the purposes of sexual exploitation and trafficking. A similar fate may be reserved for children discriminated on the basis of gender and sexual identity.[22] Youth with histories of sexual or physical abuse, and other troubled backgrounds, may be further vulnerable.[23] Girls are similarly more vulnerable "as are boys who are gay or questioning".[24]

Globalisation and Consumerism

Although seeking children for sexual exploitation is by no means the mere prerogative of the wealthy, demand does tend to concentrate where disposable incomes are higher, while sexual victimisation is more likely to be prevalent among communities living in relative poverty or utter destitution.

It has been established that consumerism, founded on sustained demand, stimulates uninterrupted supply. Possession or fantasies of children's bodies or digital images can be obtained through a hugely diversified supply of tradable goods and services able to satisfy any kind of desire and pursuit of profit.[25]

The Influence of Media and Advertising

The massive bombardment of sexual messages and violent images by media and advertising has a direct impact on children. Where control systems are weak, media and ads may reach the point of using child images that are sexually suggestive, if not outright explicit and ultimately exploitative.

21 UN Human Rights Council (2015), "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography", UN Doc. A/HRC/31/58, 30 December 2015, para. 46.
22 UN Commission on Human Rights (2004), "Report submitted by Juan Miguel Petit, Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography" , UN Doc E/CN.4/2004/9 (2004).
23 Wolak, Janis et al., "Online 'Predators' and Their Victims, Myths, Realities, and Implications for Prevention and Treatment", 117.
24 *Ibid*., 118.
25 O'Briain, Muireann et al (2015)., "Sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in tourism", Bangkok: ECPAT International, 7.

Impunity has been proven to be an enabler for the SEC. Sex exploiters are prepared to move to areas where law enforcement is poor and social tolerance high to escape consequences for their crimes. Confidence that it is possible to "buy" the complacency of law enforcement has been found to compound a sense of impunity,[26] as in the case of police officers and representatives of the judicial power receiving bribes from offenders to avoid investigation and prosecution[27] The issue of impunity is magnified when SEC goes online, because many offenders using peer-to-peer networks and other ICTs have an increased sense that they are anonymous and one of too many users to ever get caught.[28]

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26 La Strada Ukraine (2014), "Sexual exploitation of children in Ukraine: situation and counteraction", La Strada, Kyiv, 17-18.

27 Donovan, Jeffery (2005), "Transparency International Chief Talks About Corruption In CIS," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, October 2005, accessed 27 July 2016, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1062227.html.

28 UNODC (2015), "Study on the Effects of New Information Technologies on the Abuse and Exploitation of Children", Vienna, May 2015, 18-19, accessed 17 July 2016, https://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/cybercrime/Study_on_the_Effects.pdf.

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