PATRIARCHAL CAPITALISM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF CAMBODIAN WOMEN BECOME VICTIMS OF SEXUAL TRAFFICKING

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between the patriarchal capitalism structure of Cambodia and Cambodian women’s experience as sex trafficked victims. This is a qualitative study. The socialist feminist perspective was used as the theoretical lens to discover why Cambodian women become victims of sexual trafficking. Ten sex trafficked victims and two key informants were purposively selected from four NGO rehabilitation shelters in the three provinces in Cambodia.

The study shows that in a patriarchal capitalist society, women seem to be brought up and taught to live and adapt to a specific social construction that classifies man as supreme and women as subordinate. Male domination and class oppression especially within the family structure is supported by social practice. This practice ties women with responsibilities for the family, not only with an excessive amount of domestic work but also with the economic dependence. Their excessive work burden is usually invisible and they experience not only physical violence, but with sexual violence. In addition, the lack of social support mechanisms, inefficient existing networks and corruption perpetuated and sustained the power of patriarchal capitalist practice in Cambodia. Therefore, male domination and exploitation exercised as a provocative role to transform innocent women vulnerable into sex establishment. Under patriarchal capitalist system, sex establishment offer men are the most happy with their sexual pleasure but women are the most suffering and their life as the commodity.

This study has broken the silence of patriarchal capitalist power and revealed counter trafficking interventionists through providing measures for protection against extensive violence and oppression. Therefore, education about the danger of the patriarchal capitalist ideologies should be promoted in both school based and community based activities. In addition, official government participation all levels to improve and enforce the efficacy of community networks and to identify and assist families or women who are at high risk of violence and domination will reduce these atrocities.

KEY WORDS: SEXUAL TRAFFICKING / PATRIARCHY / CAPITALISM

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