



## “Hard on the Heart”

Examining the Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities of Hostesses  
at KTV Venues in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

September 2013

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*Glenn Miles, PhD*

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## **Executive Summary**

*The current study was conducted by Love146 to assess the risk factors and vulnerabilities of women working as hostesses in karaoke (KTV) venues in three areas (Mai Da, Toul Kork, and Russey Keo) in Phnom Penh. KTV venues employ women to keep customers entertained with singing, drinking, and conversation. A questionnaire-based survey was administered to gain a holistic view of the lives of women working in KTV venues. The survey consisted of a series of questions pertaining to demographics, family background, prejudice and discrimination, sexual risk factors, substance abuse, sexual violence and abuse, income generation, spirituality, and future plans.*

*For this purpose, fifty respondents were selected from different KTV venues in Phnom Penh by using the simple random sampling method. A majority of the respondents had low educational levels, strained personal relationships, and previously worked in factories. Many respondents strongly indicated that they desired to obtain alternative work, to learn English and other skills, and to be seen as valuable. Direct service providers can use the findings of the study to provide services that are tailored to meeting the specific needs and to prevent further sexual exploitation of the target vulnerable population.*

The current study seeks to delve into the lives of women working as hostesses in karaoke bars, also known as KTV venues, in order to gain a better understanding of the risk factors and vulnerabilities leading to sexual exploitation. When taking a holistic look, it is critical to examine each individual respondent

completely, taking into account all emotional, spiritual, psychological, and physical effects that the role as a KTV venue hostess plays in their lives. By truly understanding these effects and the factors leading up to entrance into the entertainment industry, the needs of individuals vulnerable to sexual exploitation can best be met.

Through this study, the researchers shed light and bring into question various factors of exploitation. The stories of the respondents, as revealed in the results of the study, challenge individuals to reconsider the paradigms of deserving versus undeserving victims in light of the severity or degree of exploitation they have endured.

## **Key Results**

The results of this study highlight an array of risk factors that contribute to the vulnerability of women working as hostesses in KTV venues in Phnom Penh. The following results give a brief insight into and understanding of the lives of the target population as well as provide a foundation for suggestions and recommendations for meeting their needs through various forms of intervention.

The ages of respondents ranged from 16 to 32 years old. The median age of respondents was 22 years old. Based on UNICEF's definition, 66% of respondents are defined as youth (15 to 24 years old) (2013). In regards to level of education, surprisingly, half of the respondents reported having a seventh to tenth grade level of education, while 8% reported having received no schooling,

20% reported up to fourth grade, 16% reported fifth to sixth grade, and 6% reported 11<sup>th</sup> grade and above.

The study discovered that one in five women were meeting customers for sex. The 40 respondents who stated that they do not meet customers for sex were asked if they would ever consider doing so. Of those 40 respondents, ten responded that they would consider meeting customers for sex if they were comfortable with the customer and they were not afraid to go with them. Furthermore, 100% of respondents had experienced a form of sexual violence while working at a KTV venue. Sexual violence occurrences among respondents were as follows: 43 indicated non-contact sexual abuse, 28 indicated abusive sexual contact, two indicated attempted sex acts, and three indicated completed sex acts.

All 50 respondents indicated that they drink alcohol. The number of cans of beer consumed within the past week ranged from eight to 132 cans. The highest frequency for number of cans consumed was 44% consumed between eight and 24 cans, 28% consumed between 25 and 48 cans, 16% consumed between 49 and 72 cans, 4% consumed between 73 and 96 cans, 6% consumed between 97 and 120 cans, and 2% consumed between 121 and 144 cans.

When asked if they would recommend their job to their sister, surprisingly, all 50 respondents indicated that they would not. When asked to explain why, the most common response of respondents was, "this is not a good job and I do not want others to look down on her like they look down on me."

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the research and discussions with various direct service providers in the field, the authors make suggestions and recommendations to assist in meeting the needs of this target population. According to the respondents, prevention programs should consider examining the impact of encouraging higher levels of education, offering alternative employment opportunities, and explaining the realities of working at KTV venues. The researchers also suggest that direct service providers examine ways to incorporate supportive relationships into aftercare intervention models.

In addition, the findings of the study and the stories shared by the respondents offer a greater understanding of their vulnerabilities and can be used by direct service providers who are addressing the issue of demand by educating customers on the realities of the lives these women lead. Furthermore, the authors challenge all individuals to use the current study as a foundation for examining the conversation on sexual exploitation and to address the paradigms that have been set in place. The concept of “voluntary” and “involuntary” entry into the sex entertainment industry should be confronted.

## **Literature Review**

### **Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation**

According to the United Nations (UN) on Drugs and Crime, trafficking in persons is defined as:

“The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs” (2013).

Based on the above definition, three elements are present when examining the issue of human trafficking: the act, the means, and the purpose. The act is recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons; the means is force, coercion, or deception of a position of vulnerability; and the purpose is for sexual and/or labour exploitation.

Oftentimes, the narrative of sex trafficking or sexual exploitation is different than what some may assume, as this discourse has taken on a journey of change. In the traditional sense, the theme revolves around the antagonists and the protagonists. In this mentality, women are often depicted as “highly oppressed, poor, ignorant women living in a backward culture” who have been



deceived in the first place by the evil forces (Sandy, 2007:195). As such, the need of 'rescue' and 'rehabilitation' is compulsory. It seems that the solution is to crack down on prostitution. However, the reality of sexual exploitation does not end here.

Although estimating such numbers is notoriously difficult due to the secretive nature of trafficking, reports estimate that the current number of individuals who are being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation may be up to ten times greater than the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The UN reports that there are an estimated 700,000 to 2,000,000 women and children being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation worldwide every year, which is equivalent to 2,000 to 6,000 every day. This continually growing and profitable industry is estimated to bring in about 9.5 billion USD per year globally (Chung, 2006).

### **Sexual Exploitation in Asia**

In Asia, sexual exploitation through prostitution is on the rise. Countries such as Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Macau, Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand are well known for commercial sexual exploitation. Japan, for example, represents one of the biggest markets, where it is estimated that the "women entertainers" from the Philippines, Thailand, and other eastern countries are numbered around 200,000. These women work in clubs, karaoke bars, pornography shops, massage and sauna establishments, snack bars, sex telephone booths, catalogue, videos, and video game rooms. Such high

prevalence of sexual exploitation has its own complications with Asian culture (Dios, 1999).

Asian cultural attitudes and values are a major factor contributing to the vulnerability for sexual exploitation and making Asia an infamous hotspot for commercial sex. While Asians highly value loving one's family and supporting them, there is also a socially discriminatory attitude toward women and children. Women and children are often seen as less respectable than men and, in some cases, are viewed as property to be bargained and sold. Vulnerability is further increased when this attitude is concurrent with situations of poverty. Therefore, recruiters who promise jobs that would help support their family are easily able to deceive women and girls, as well as their parents. For some women, being removed from prostitution engenders mixed feelings for them. While they desire and are willing to leave prostitution, they may feel a sense of failure in fulfilling their filial duty as well as shame and guilt brought about by the stigma associated with sex workers (Chung, 2006).

A Western stereotypical view toward Asian women also helps make Asian women vulnerable to being exploited. Asian women are perceived as "subservient, obedient, hardworking, submissive, passive, docile, shy, demure, softly spoken, eager to please, and exotic". This perception contributes to the growing demand for and exploitation of Asian women within the global sex trade (Chung, 2006).

Nevertheless, for casual users of prostitutes, it could be argued that children are less accessible and therefore less at risk. For 16 to 18 year olds, this

is especially challenging because it is believed that they are told to say they are 18 years old even if they are not. Once they have reached a certain age (which varies according to whom is involved and what they understand to be legal/illegal) then they are seen as being capable of making choices about sex work. Thus, making it increasingly difficult to 'help' them even if the situation is clearly exploitative.

### **Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia**

Cambodia, with a long history of prostitution, is infamously known as an origin, transit and destination for sexual exploitation. After the economic liberation in the 1980s and during the transitional peacemaking period of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), prostitution, then primarily limited to brothels, appears to have increased exponentially. However, in 1997, the Cambodian government decided to close down all brothels (Seng, Pol & Srey, 1999). This measure was considered by many civil society organizations as inefficient. Kim Green, HIV/AIDs coordinator at CARE, stated that,

“By cracking down, you are losing an opportunity to do something about getting them out of their situation. It also sends a message to brothel owners and pimps who are peddling in the child sex trade that they need to keep children hidden, which further decreases the likelihood of being able to reach them” (2003).

Since the closure of brothels, it appears as though prostitution has branched out and taken on different facades. Prostitution can now be found at

beer gardens, night clubs, snooker clubs, massage salons, karaoke parlors, barber shops, hidden brothels and on the street (So, 2005). After observing this transition of prostitution, the local and international audience called for some of these places to be shut down. In response to this pressure, the Prime Minister of Cambodia ordered an abrupt closure of all karaoke bars in order “to protect people from criminal activities associated with the venues” (Green, 2003). However, karaoke bars were soon allowed to resume operation and based on the statistics compiled by the Ministry of Tourism, there were 400 karaoke venues operating again by the year 2010 (Sun, 2011).

### **Culture of KTV Venues**

The origin of karaoke is disputable, but it is thought to have originated from Japan in the 1970s. Since then, it has spread to the rest of Asia and other parts of the world. The word karaoke is a combination of two words: kara and okesutora. Kara means empty and okesutora means orchestra (Long, 2009). In Cambodia, a karaoke venue, which is commonly referred to as Karaoke TV (KTV), is unique. Once inside, one could see young women all “dolled up” sitting on long sofas and waiting to greet customers. Upon arrival, the customers are ushered to a private, air-conditioned room with exotic lightings that exude fun, relaxation, and pleasure. A short while later, the supervisors parade and showcase the women who are then chosen by the customers, an act that is culturally shameful to the women. Once picked, the women stay with the customers to sing, drink, and dance. However, some customers expect more

than that: holding, touching, kissing, and fondling. These behaviors very much cross the cultural boundaries of space between a man and a woman, and if such behavior takes place, the woman is seen as looked down upon and not valuable. In fact, the word prostitute is often translated as 'broken woman'. This elicits a derogatory connotation rather than producing a sympathetic response.

### **Risk Factors Contributing to Vulnerability**

Being a place that carries a lot of stigma, it is imperative to look at the reasons why women are pushed into working here. One of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights states "no one shall be held in slavery" (1948). Lorrissa Sandy, in her article entitled *Representations of Choice and Coercion in the Sex Work in Cambodia*, asserts that certain structures in Cambodian society have narrowed women's options into making this choice. She states, "[...] in the transition to a market economy, women's choices are constrained by hierarchical structures as gender class and socio-cultural obligations and poor employment opportunities" (2007).

Based on what Sandy has observed, structural oppression causes the women to come into this job "voluntarily". The causes of voluntary entry vary but some of them include economic oppression, poverty, debt, absence of dependence (husbands died, parents died) and having a broken heart. Other reasons of entering into this kind of work are having their husband's consent if they are married, no job availability, and the pressure of many siblings, or relatives or parents (Seng, Pol & Srey, 1999). If these situations were absent, the

women would not have come here in the first place, which then places them in a vulnerable position to being exploited. This brings into question as to whether it is indeed truly voluntary entry.

In 1999, ADHOC conducted a research on the causes of prostitution in Cambodia. Out of this work, the researchers were able to identify a group vulnerable to prostitution. This group consisted of females, between 16 and 20 years old, poor, single, widow, living in Kompong Cham, Prey Veng, Kandal, Phnom Penh, or Svay Rieng. The respondents were uneducated, having uneducated parents or nobody to depend on, for example, if their father and/or mother died.

The gender class that Sandy refers to is the filial duty that comes for every daughter, which is another reason that accounts for their voluntary entry. Even though a lot of the women fully realize the magnitude of the stigma and shame that associates with working at a KTV venue, they “choose” to do so, because it allows them to fulfill their role as a dutiful daughter. In Cambodia, it is expected of daughters and not sons to take care of their aging parents. Nevertheless, some, not being obligated to support their families, choose to do this job temporarily to survive for a period of time. Almost no women want to do this job for the rest of their lives (Seng, Pol & Srey, 1999).

Involuntary entry is much lower than voluntary entry and has a different nature. Involuntary entry into the sex industry occurs by force either through deception, kidnap, lure, trickery, or being sold by friends, parents, relatives or second parents (Seng, Pol & Srey, 1999). In some cases, recruiters deceive the

girls into working. A lot of the girls that fall in this category come from poor families or their families are in a lot of debt. Similarly, some of the characteristics of the structural oppression that are found in the 'voluntary' entry are also common to this category. Once again, some of these characteristics of the structural oppression make it easy for deceivers to trick the women, and hence making them vulnerable to being exploited. So in actuality, the antagonist of exploitation can be defined as structural oppression. Slaying this giant is one of the main strategies that will help both prevent and get women out of a vulnerable position that makes them susceptible to being exploited.

## **Methodology**

### **Survey Instrument**

A questionnaire-based survey was administered in June and July of 2013 to women working as hostesses or "service girls" at KTV venues in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The survey was adapted from a similar survey used in a study of male masseurs in Siem Reap (Miles & Davis, 2012). The survey was tailored to adequately assess the risk factors and vulnerabilities specific to the target population in the current study. The survey consisted of a series of questions pertaining to demographics, family background, sexual risk factors, substance abuse, sexual violence and abuse, income generation, prejudice, spirituality, and future plans.

## **Pilot Study**

Initially, the researchers intended for the current study to focus solely on women who were working in beer gardens and also meeting customers for sex. However, because of time constraints and difficulty in obtaining participants, the decision was made to focus on women working in KTV venues instead. During this period of transition and formulating the research question, a small pilot study was conducted with five respondents, four working in beer gardens and one working in a KTV venue. The pilot study revealed the diversity and complexity of understanding the various venues for sexual exploitation present within Phnom Penh. The researchers found that working as a hostess at either a beer garden or KTV venue was not synonymous with prostitution. In fact, a majority of the women in the pilot study were not meeting customers for sex. However, respondents discussed many push and pull factors that contributed to their vulnerability of being sexually exploited. Unlike other professions, working in the culture and environment surrounding both beer gardens and KTV venues significantly increases the susceptibility to sexual exploitation.

## **KTV Venues and Respondent Recruitment**

A total of 50 respondents, who were working as hostesses in a KTV venue, were interviewed for the study. The KTV venues chosen for the study were in one of three different areas in Phnom Penh: Mai Da Street, Toul Kork, and Russey Keo. Researchers visited each KTV venue, discussed the purpose of the research with, and gained permission from the owners of the KTV venues. At



venues where owners refused permission, possible respondents were excluded from the study, which is understood may have impacted the results if they had been included. The women who were working as hostesses and were available were then informed of the research and asked if they would like to participate. Respondents were not compensated for their participation but were given phone cards in the amount of five USD as a token of appreciation for giving their time to participate in the study.

### **Survey Interviews**

The owners/supervisors of each KTV venue were contacted in order to receive permission to conduct interviews with employees prior to working hours. Researchers conducted interviews at a location and during a time that does not interfere with the participants' work hours. All interviews were conducted in a quiet and private location at each respective KTV venue. Researchers decided to conduct interviews at the KTV venue because the managers often provided private rooms. In addition, the participants seemed more comfortable with staying at the KTV venue than going offsite as many of the participants stated that they do not spend much time offsite. Two Khmer research assistants conducted the interviews in Khmer and therefore translators were not needed. One expatriate researcher was also present during the interviews to assist with various questions and/or needs if they were to arise. Prior to each interview, participants were once again informed of the purpose of the research, estimated length of the interview, sensitivity of the questions, assurance of confidentiality, and right to

refuse to answer questions or to stop the interview at anytime. Some respondents refused to answer certain questions and one potential respondent was unable to complete the interview due to emotional distress and was referred to a non-governmental organization (NGO) for support.

### **Data Preparation and Analysis**

Results from the surveys were analyzed using SPSS 20.0 (SPSS Inc). Descriptive analyses were used to examine the frequencies of various responses. Common and recurrent themes found in responses to open-ended questions were also coded and analyzed in order to find specific patterns present in the qualitative data that was collected.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Because of the sensitivity of the questions asked, careful consideration was taken to address ethical concerns during the interviews. The interviews were presented by two Khmer women who have been trained on the ethical guidelines for research as outlined by the UNIAP on Human Trafficking (2008). Each participant was given informed consent, did not have to answer any question that she did not want to answer, and was allowed to stop the interview at any point. In addition, researchers maintained complete anonymity in regards to the participant's responses and identity. Interviews were conducted in a quiet and private location at each KTV venue. Special care was taken to ensure that others did not overhear the interviews. If others were in close proximity, they

were either asked to move away or the interview was delayed until the respondent's answers would not be overheard. Respondents were made aware that their responses were to be kept confidential, no identifiers would be connected to their responses, and no videos, photographs, or recordings of the interviews were taken.

## **Limitations**

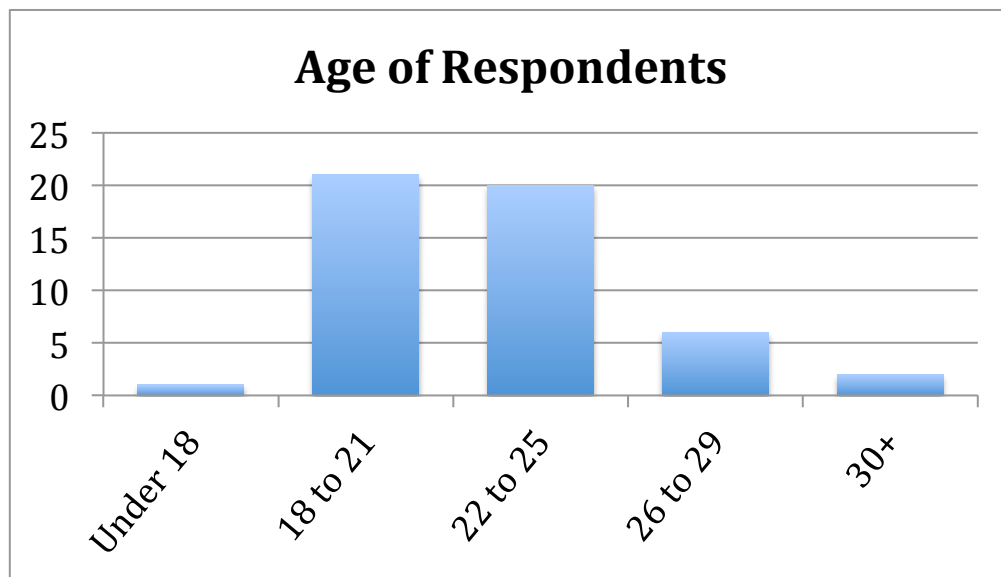
When obtaining permission from KTV venue owners to contact employees regarding participation in the study, some owners refused permission. Therefore, those who were excluded from the study may have impacted the results. Additionally, despite the best efforts of the interviewers to conceal responses, conducting the interviews in respective KTV venues may have led respondents to feel as though they could not speak as openly about certain questions if they feared their responses would be overheard by employers or coworkers. Interviewers also had no previous relationship with respondents and, although many respondents revealed a significant amount of sensitive information, some respondents may have been reluctant to divulge personal and intimate information.

## **Results**

### **Demographics**

The ages of respondents ranged from 16 to 32 years old. The median age of respondents was 22 years old. Based on UNICEF's definition, 66% of

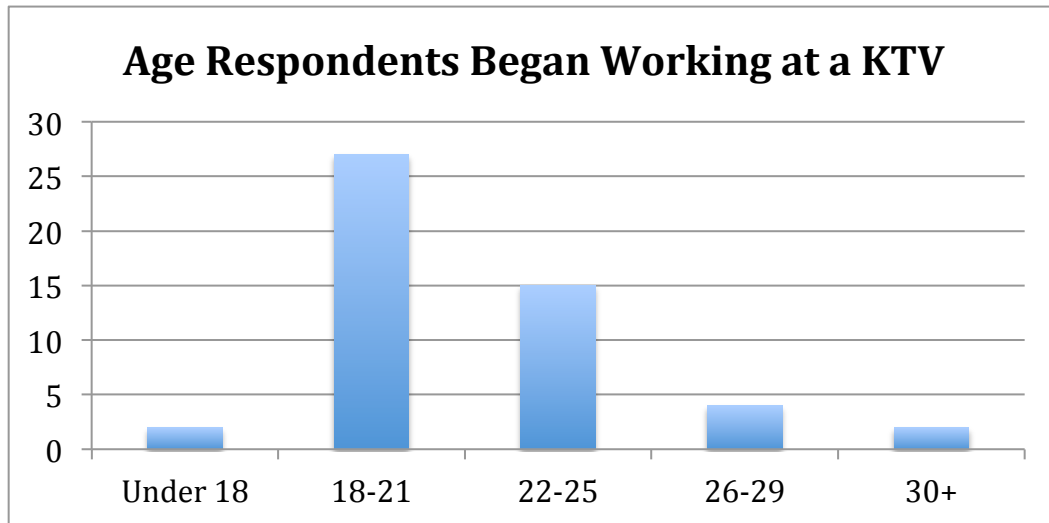
respondents are defined as youth (15 to 24 years old) (2013). In comparison, research conducted in Cambodia by the International Justice Mission (IJM) discovered that 8.49% of females working in KTV venues were minors and they were found in 47.73% of KTV venues (Shaw, 2013).



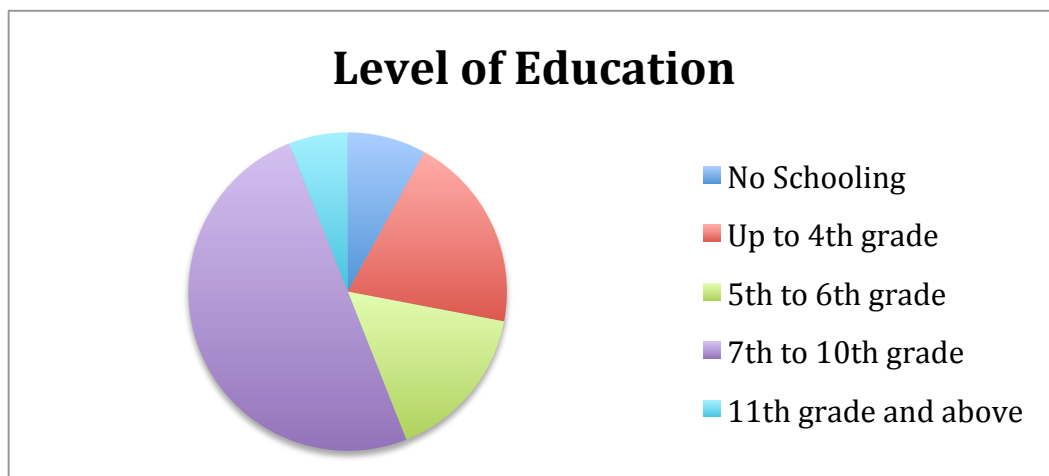
Time living in Phnom Penh ranged from one month to 25 years with a median of two years. Of the total respondents, 40% had been living in Phnom Penh for one to five years, 34% less than one year, 10% six to ten years, and 16% more than ten years. Respondents were from 12 different regions across Cambodia with the highest frequency, or 20%, from Kandal, 12% from Kompong Cham and Kompot each, 10% from Prey Veng, Kompong Thom, and Phnom Penh each, 8% from Takeo, 6% from Srey Rieng, 4% from Pursat and Kompong Chhnang each, and 2% from Kompong Speu and Battambang each.

Most of the respondents had been working at a KTV venue for a relatively short amount of time. A majority, 68%, of the respondents had been working at a KTV venue for less than six months, 14% six months to one year, 14% one year

to three years and 4% four or more years. The age respondents began working at a KTV venue ranged from 15 to 32 years old and the median age was 21 years old. Of the total respondents, 74% were considered to be youth when they began working at a KTV venue based on UNICEF's definition of youth being those between ages 15 and 24 years old (2013).



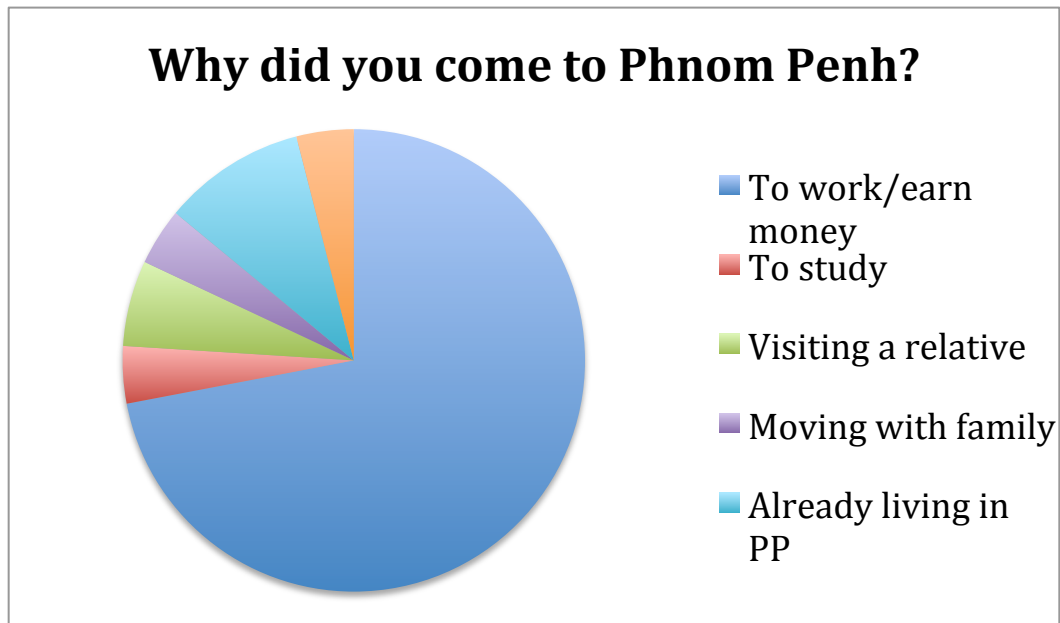
In regards to level of education, half of the respondents reported having a seventh to tenth grade level of education, while 8% reported having received no schooling, 20% reported up to fourth grade, 16% reported fifth to sixth grade, and 6% reported 11<sup>th</sup> grade and above.



Most of the respondents, 86%, lived at the KTV venue while the remaining 12% stayed with friends. Those who are living at the KTV venue stated that rent and food is provided at no cost and in addition to the salary they are given. Marital status among the respondents was as follows: 66% single, 30% divorced, and 4% married. Of the total respondents, 26% had children. However, all of the children were staying with relatives in the respondents' villages and were not currently in their care. Although the researchers did not include questions related to abortion in the survey, three of the respondents stated that they had received an abortion when asked if they had children.

### **Migration**

As expected, a large percentage, 72%, of respondents stated that they moved to Phnom Penh for work and to earn money. In addition, 10% were already living in Phnom Penh, 6% were visiting a relative, 4% moved with their families, 4% moved to study, and 4% were fleeing from strained family relationships.



### Family Background and Income

When asked about saving money, 52% stated that they keep their savings with themselves while 38% stated that they do not save any of their earnings. A majority, 64%, of the respondents stated that their families owe debts. When asked what they did with their earnings, the number one and most common response was sending money home to their families. Additional top expenses listed were clothing, hair and makeup. Because almost all of the respondents live at the KTV venue and, therefore, do not have to pay for lodging or food, these were not listed as common expenses.

A majority of respondents, 66%, did not know the education level of their father. This finding could potentially point to strained family relationships and/or single parent homes where only the mother was present.

Respondents stated that a friend introduced a majority, 56%, to the KTV venue. The remaining respondents stated that they were introduced to the KTV venue according to the following: 18% by a family member, 10% by themselves, 4% by a recruiter, and 10% by other means.

### **Prejudice, Stigma, and Discrimination**

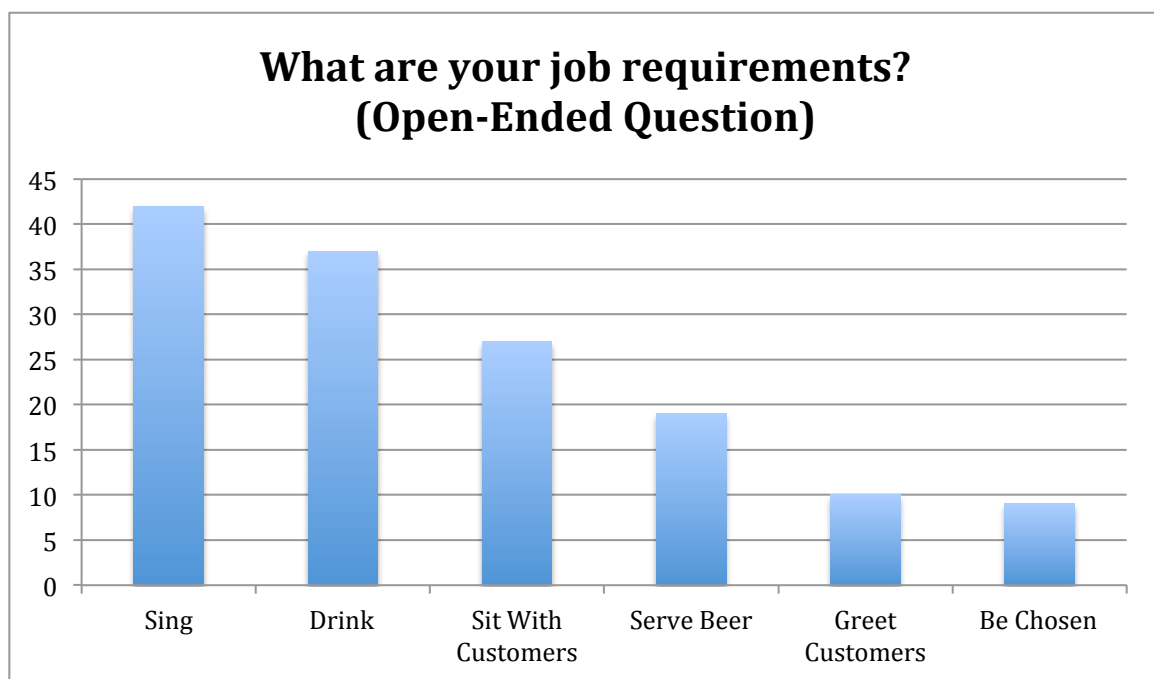
Almost all, 92%, of the respondents stated that the people in their village were not aware of their job as a hostess at the KTV venue. Many noted shame, guilt and fear of rejection as reasons for not informing people in their village. Respondents also shared that they typically told others they were working in a factory, restaurant or clothing shop instead of a KTV venue. Because most respondents keep their jobs at the KTV venue a secret from others, most felt that working in a KTV venue did not have a great impact on their personal relationships; 54% stated that it had no effect and 32% stated that it had little effect. Of the five respondents who noted that their job very much affected their personal relationships, many stated that it negatively affected their friendships and family's reputation. When asked if they had a best friend, 42, or 84%, of the respondents stated they did have a best friend and of those, 26 reported that the person they identified as their best friend also worked at a KTV venue.

Respondents were asked a series of questions related to the stigma surrounding KTV venues. Many respondents felt that other members of society looked down on women who work at KTV venues. They stated that others believed that working in a KTV venue was a "bad" job. A couple respondents felt

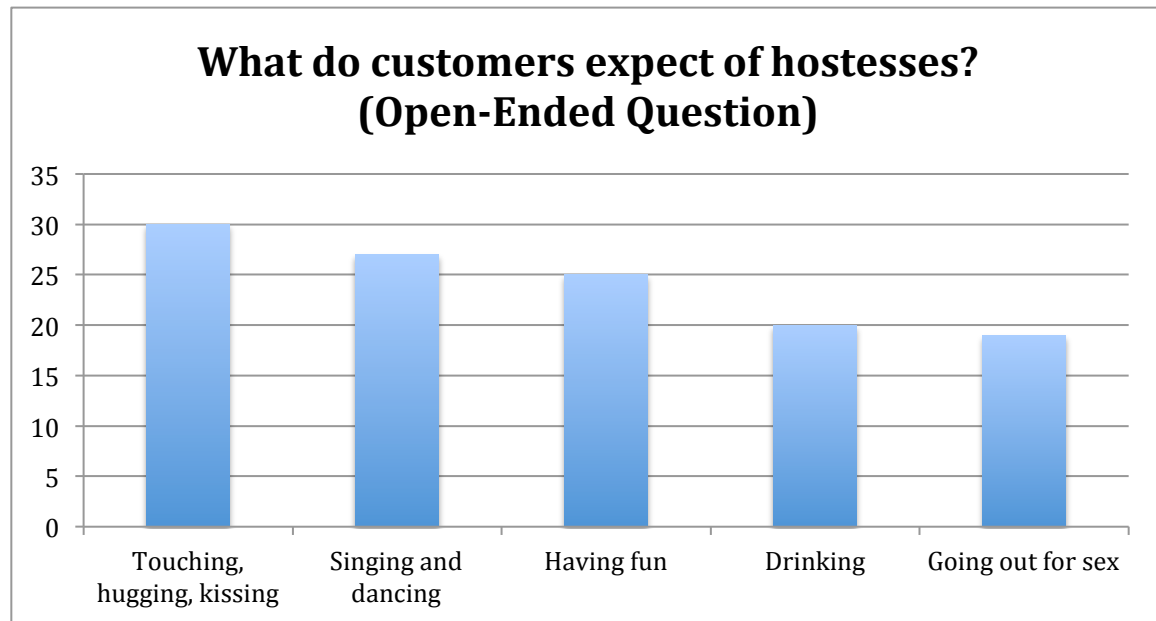


that other women, in particular, looked down on them because their husbands would come to KTV venues to waste money and to look for a “sweetheart” relationship.

Respondents were asked to describe their job and what was required of them. Respondents listed singing, drinking, greeting customers, being chosen by customers, sitting with the customers and serving beer as part of their job requirements. Frequencies of responses are shown in the chart below.



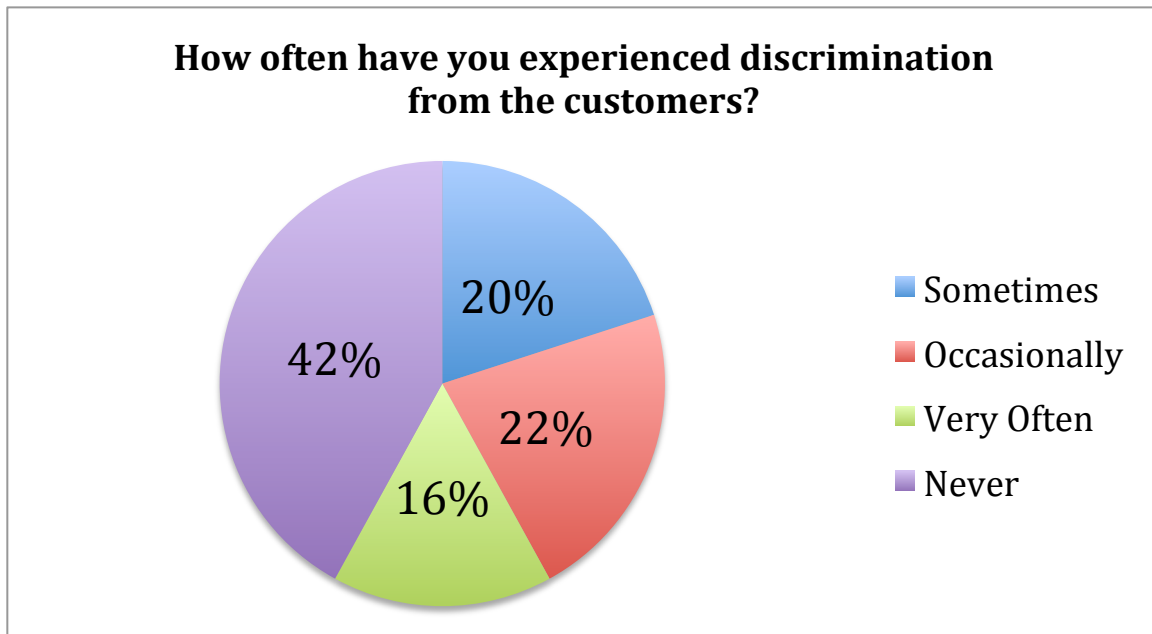
Respondents were then asked what customers expected from women who work as hostesses at KTV venues. The respondents listed that when coming to a KTV venue, customers expect the following from the hostesses: singing and dancing; drinking; having fun; kissing, touching, and hugging; and going out for sex.



Most of the respondents, 80%, stated that they felt pressured to do what the customers expected. In addition, 86% of respondents noted that a customer has asked them to do something that made them feel uncomfortable. Of those indicating that they had felt uncomfortable, almost all of the respondents mentioned that customers had asked them to have sex with them.

When asked if they had faced discrimination from the police, 4% responded occasionally, 2% responded sometimes, and 94% responded never. Respondents were then asked if they had faced discrimination from others in the community and 76% reported never, 10% sometimes, 8% occasionally, and 6% very often. Of those indicating they faced discrimination, many stated that others in the community give accusing looks and make derogatory comments towards them. Some also noted that others looked down on their families because of their job at the KTV venue. When asked about experiencing discrimination from police and the community, many respondents stated that they did not experience discrimination because they “do not go out” of the KTV venue. However,

experiencing discrimination from customers was more frequent for the respondents as over half, 58%, indicated such: 20% sometimes, 22% occasionally, and 16% very often.



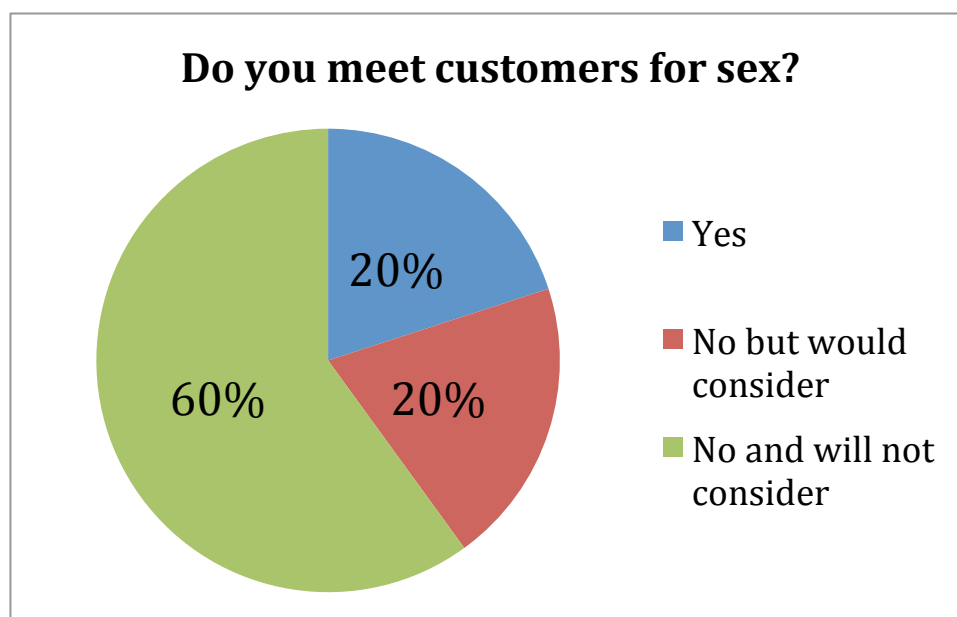
Many respondents stated that they felt degraded when they are paraded in front of customers and wait to be chosen as the customers make comments and remarks about each woman. In addition, some respondents indicated that customers believe they can do what they want to them because they are “KTV girls”.

### **Sexual History**

Out of the 50 respondents, 34 stated that they had had sexual intercourse and the remaining 16 respondents indicated that they had never had sexual intercourse. Respondents’ ages of first sexual experience ranged from 15 to 27 years old and the average age was 19.6 years old. Almost all, 97%, of the

respondents who stated they had had sexual intercourse, were considered to be youth at the time of their first sexual experience. When asked with whom they had their first sexual intercourse, 16 stated with their husband, 14 with a boyfriend, three with a client, and one with a neighbor. Three respondents stated the first time they had sexual intercourse it was coerced while the remaining 31 respondents indicated that it was consensual. Of the three respondents indicating the first sexual experience was coerced, two were with their boyfriend and one was with her husband after having an arranged marriage. Almost 53% were in Phnom Penh and 47% were in their respective villages the first time they had sexual intercourse.

One out of five respondents reported meeting customers for sex. The 40 respondents who stated that they do not meet customers for sex were asked if they would ever consider doing so. Of those 40 respondents, ten responded that they would consider meeting customers for sex if they were comfortable with the customer and they were not afraid to go with them.



Almost all, 90%, of the respondents who meet customers for sex stated that the customers use condoms during sex and 80% stated that they encourage condom use and refuse to have sex if the customer refuses to use a condom.

The number of customers met for sex in the past week ranged from zero to seven. Five respondents stated they met zero customers, four had met one customer, and one respondent had met seven customers for sex. One respondent stated that she had met a customer for sex the day before the interview while the other nine had not. One respondent indicated that twice, she and another woman had sex with a customer at the same time.

## **Health**

Respondents were asked a series of questions related to their health. Six respondents indicated that they had experienced having rashes, ulcerations, or lumps in the genital area, anus, or mouth within the past six months. In contrast, 22 respondents indicated they had experienced discharge or pain in the genital area in the past six months. A little more than half, 56%, of respondents had received both sexual health education and sexual health services from NGOs such as Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC), Friends, and Khemara.

Of the total respondents, 82% correctly identified sexual intercourse as a means of HIV/AIDS transmission and 42% stated that they knew someone with HIV/AIDS.

When asked about their overall health, 80% stated that they had been sick within the past three months. Many cited headaches, stomachaches, colds, and high temperatures as their ailments. Typhoid, post-abortion complications, and difficulty breathing were also briefly mentioned.

### **Violence and Abuse**

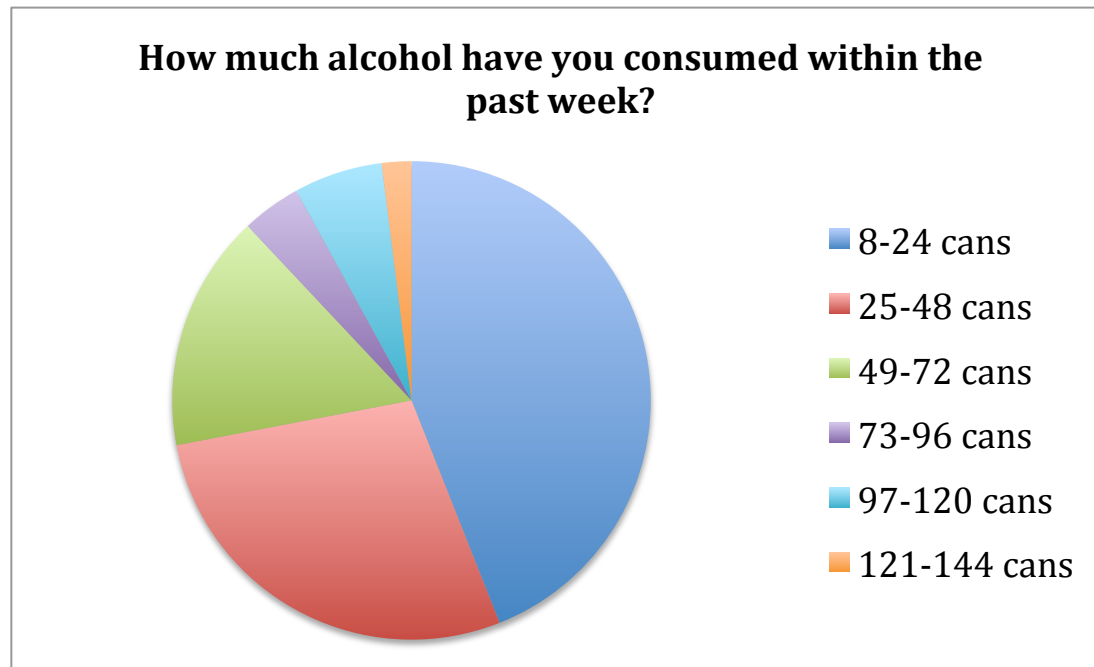
While 34% of the respondents were aware of other women working in KTV venues who were being forced to have sex against their wishes, 10% stated that they themselves had been forced to have sex, 6% occasionally and 4% very often. Respondents shared instances where customers had forced them into the bathroom and forced them to have sex there. Others shared experiences of attempted, but not completed, coercive sexual acts. According to the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC), sexual violence is defined as “any sexual act that is perpetrated against someone’s will”. The CDC continues by listing four different categories that classify sexual violence: a completed sex act which occurs when penetration of the anal or genital opening of a person by a penis, hand, finger, or other object or when there is contact between the mouth and penis, vulva, or anus; an attempted but no completed sex act; abusive sexual contact which is defined as the intentional touching of genitals, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks of a person who does not give consent or is unable to refuse; and non-contact sexual abuse which does not include physical contact, but instead includes acts such as voyeurism, exposure to pornography, verbal sexual harassment, threats of sexual violence, or taking nude photographs

or video without consent (2009). All 50 respondents indicated instances of sexual violence based on the given definitions. Sexual violence occurrence among respondents was as follows: 43 indicated non-contact sexual abuse, 28 indicated abusive sexual contact, two indicated attempted sex acts, and three indicated completed sex acts.

None of the respondents indicated that they had faced violence from the police or from others in the community. When asked, several respondents stated that they rarely, if ever, go outside of the KTV venue and, therefore, have little contact with police and/or the community. However, 10% indicated that they occasionally faced violence from their customers. One respondent shared of an instance when she refused to meet a customer for sex and he came to the KTV venue where he proceeded to beat her.

### **Substance Abuse**

One respondent stated that she used illegal drugs but had not used any within the past two years. All 50 respondents indicated that they drink alcohol. The number of cans of beer consumed within the past week ranged from eight to 132 cans. The highest frequency for number of cans consumed was 44% consumed between 8 and 24 cans, 28% consumed between 25 and 48 cans, 16% consumed between 49 and 72 cans, 4% consumed between 73 and 96 cans, 6% consumed between 97 and 120 cans, and 2% consumed between 121 and 144 cans.



Some respondents stated the reason for keeping careful tallies of the number of beers consumed was because the owner of the KTV venue offered financial incentives based on the amount of beer each woman could consume within a single month. One respondent stated she would receive an additional 20 USD for every 15 cases, or 360 cans, she could consume within one month. In addition to financial incentives, customers also force some of the respondents to drink beer with them contributing to increased consumption of alcohol. Of the total respondents, 60% stated that customers force them to drink: 28% sometimes, 12% occasionally, and 20% very often.

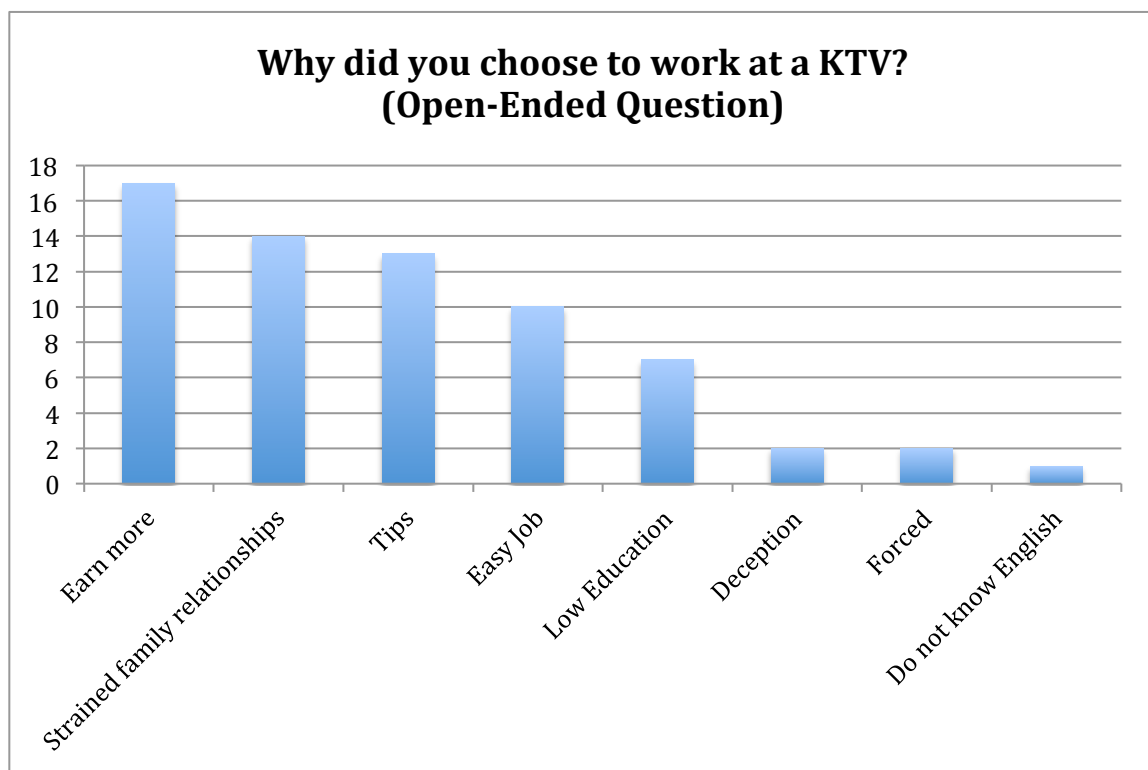
Of the ten respondents indicating that they meet customers for sex, four stated that they always use alcohol during sex with customers, two stated very often, and two stated sometimes.



## Income Generation

A majority, 74%, of respondents indicated that they were working elsewhere prior to working at a KTV venue. Of that 74%, almost 66% reported working in a factory. Respondents stated poor working conditions, low salary, and health problems as reasons for leaving the factories to seek employment elsewhere. In addition to working at a factory, 17% were selling products, 11% were working at a restaurant, and 6% were working at other jobs.

Respondents listed various reasons for choosing to work at the KTV venue instead of another job. These reasons are depicted in the graph below.

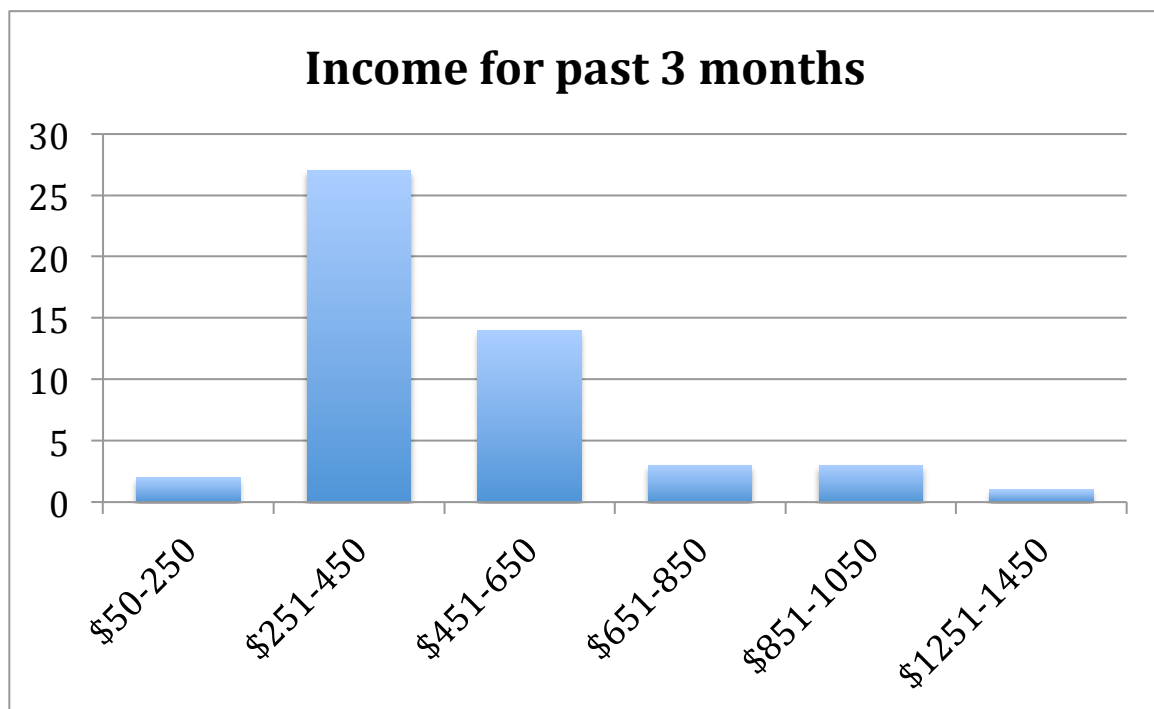


Respondents were asked if they would take another job that pays 80 USD a month and 54% said definitely, 26% said maybe, and 20% were not interested. Several respondents said they would consider taking another job if the job offered good working conditions. Others stated that 80 USD a month would not

be enough to provide for their needs and to continue sending money home to their families.

The number of hours worked ranged from 49 to 99.5 hours per week. Data revealed the respondents worked an average of 70.7 hours per week.

Income for past three months ranged from 175 USD to 1,340 USD and the median income was 420 USD.



The range of weekly income for respondents was from 17.50 to 95 USD while the average was 42.18 USD. Income for respondents was divided into three different components: salary given from the owner of the KTV venue, tips from the customers, and incentives for drinking beer, ordering food, or booking rooms for customers. Weekly salary ranged from 12.50 to 35 USD and averaged 24.45 USD. Of the 50 respondents, 23 indicated earning between 31 and 45 USD per week while 12 earned between 46 and 60 USD, ten earned between 15

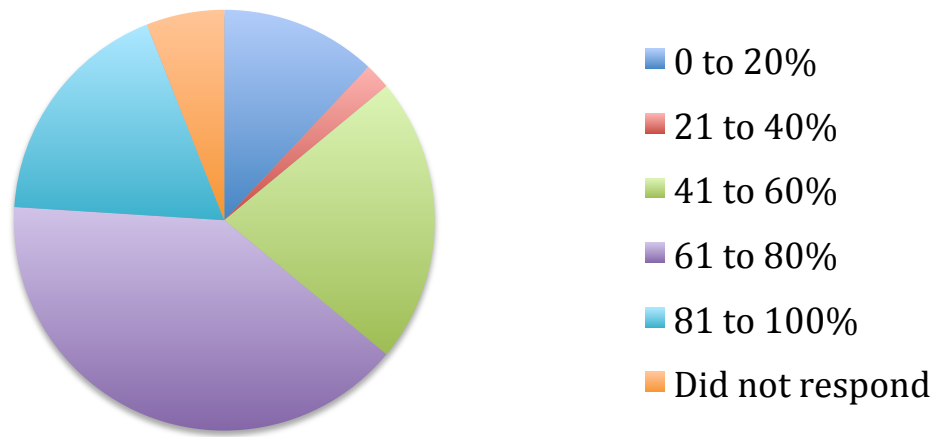
and 30 USD, two earned between 61 and 75 USD, two also earned between 76 and 90 USD, and one earned between 91 and 105 USD. Tips earned in the previous week ranged from 0 to 50 USD and averaged 16.85 USD. Finally, 5 respondents indicated receiving incentives ranging from 1.50 to 30 USD and averaging 10.90 USD within the previous week.

### **Faith and Dignity**

When asked about their faith, 98% of respondents stated that they have a faith. Of those stating they have a faith, 89% stated they follow Buddhism, 10% stated they follow Christianity, and 2% stated they follow Islam. The percentage of respondents identifying as following Christianity was higher than expected. Because of the presence of an expatriate interviewer, one plausible explanation is respondents may have assumed this is the response the researchers wanted to hear. In addition, 42 respondents indicated that they pray and/or worship regularly.

Respondents were asked to indicate how much value they had as a person from 0 to 100%. Of the 50 respondents, 20 stated that their value was between 61 and 80%, 11 stated between 41 and 60%, 9 stated between 81 and 100%, one stated between 21 and 40%, and six stated between zero and 20%.

### How much value do you have as a person?



Respondents were then asked if there was anything they could do to increase their value: 16 mentioned to quit working at the KTV venue, 13 stated to have good behavior, four indicated to work hard, and three noted to receive an education.

### What can you do to increase your value? (Open-Ended Question)

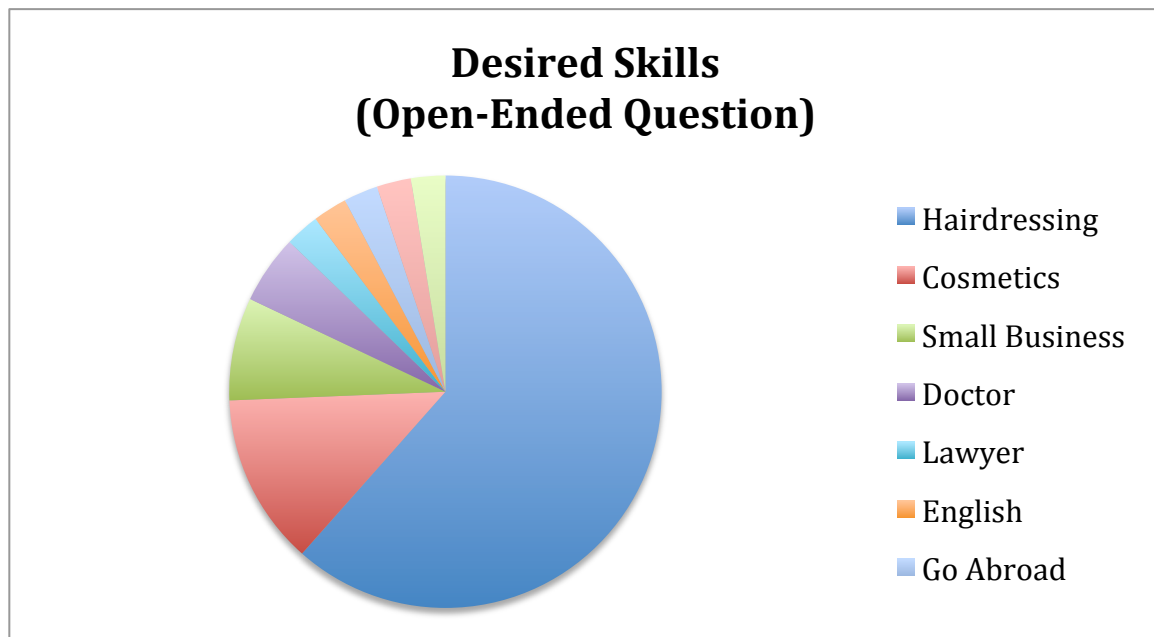


All 50 respondents indicated that they would not recommend their job as a hostess at a KTV venue to their sister. When asked to explain why, the most

common response of respondents was, “this is not a good job and I do not want others to look down on her like they look down on me”.

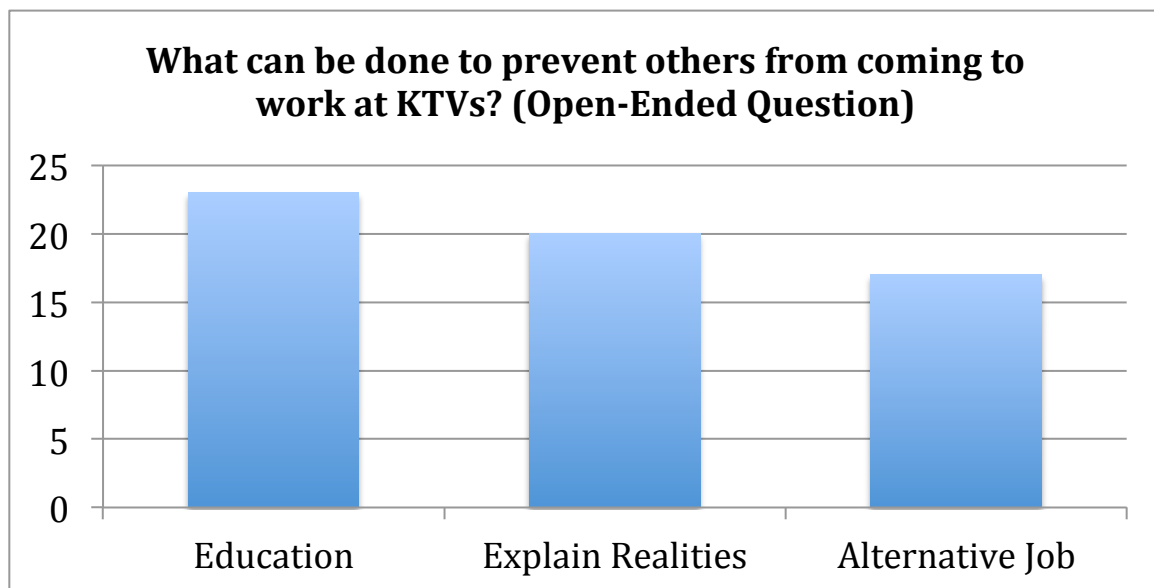
### Future Planning

Most respondents, 90%, expressed an interest in learning English if it were available. In addition, respondents listed other skills they would be interested in learning if they had the opportunity. While several, 24, stated that they wanted to learn hairdressing, others listed a variety of different skills: five respondents want to learn how about cosmetics, three listed wanting to open a small business, two mentioned becoming a doctor, and one respondent each desired to study law, tailoring, English, dramatic art, and to work abroad.



## Prevention

Respondents were also asked what measures could be taken to prevent others from coming to work at a KTV venue. Respondents listed three different actions that needed to be taken: offer alternative jobs, provide education, and explain the realities of working as a hostess at a KTV venue.



## Discussion

### Working Conditions

A noticeable and surprising trend among respondents was the description of their working conditions. A vast majority, 86%, of respondents lived at their respective KTV venue. Although this meant that they were not responsible for paying for rent or food, living at the KTV establishments brought with it many negative factors. For instance, women living at the KTV venue were expected to entertain the customers regardless of the time they arrived. Therefore, if a

customer arrived at noon and the women were not “expected” to be at work until 3:00 pm, the women were still required to work even if they were just waking up from the previous long night of work. These working conditions led to an overwhelmingly high average of 70.7 hours worked per week with some women reporting having worked as many as 99.5 hours.

In addition to working long hours, many respondents stated that they do not receive any time off. Some respondents stated that if they ask permission for one day off then five dollars is deducted from their salary. If they do not ask for permission then ten dollars is deducted from their salary. The amount deducted for missing one day of work in these KTV establishments is almost three times greater than the average salary per day, which is 3.49 USD.

### **Implications of Alcohol Use**

Alcohol use is widespread throughout the KTV environment as all 50 respondents indicated alcohol use. The amount of alcohol consumed within the past week ranged from 8 cans of beer to 132 cans of beer. Many respondents stated that they felt pressured to drink. Of the 50 respondents, 60% stated that customers force them to drink. Respondents at one KTV venue reported that they also receive an incentive of 20 USD for consuming 15 cases of beer in one month from the owner.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), heavy drinking for women is defined as consuming more than one drink per day. Binge drinking for women is defined as consuming four or more alcoholic drinks within two hours.

One 12-ounce can of beer is equivalent to one drink. Based on these definitions, the respondents participate in heavy and/or binge drinking on a consistent basis. While, according to the data, most women work in KTV venues for less than six months, the implications of the effects of alcohol can be severe. Adding the adverse effects of excessive alcohol use with the demanding nature of their job, the compounding long-term health risks of working as a hostess at a KTV venue are harmful and potentially even fatal.

Furthermore, the question needs to be asked, "Why are the women expected to drink so much?" One possible explanation is simply because if they drink more then the customer will drink more and, therefore, sales will go up. But another possible justification is because male customers hope that the women would be more compliant to their sexual advances after becoming intoxicated.

### **Sexual Violence and Exploitation**

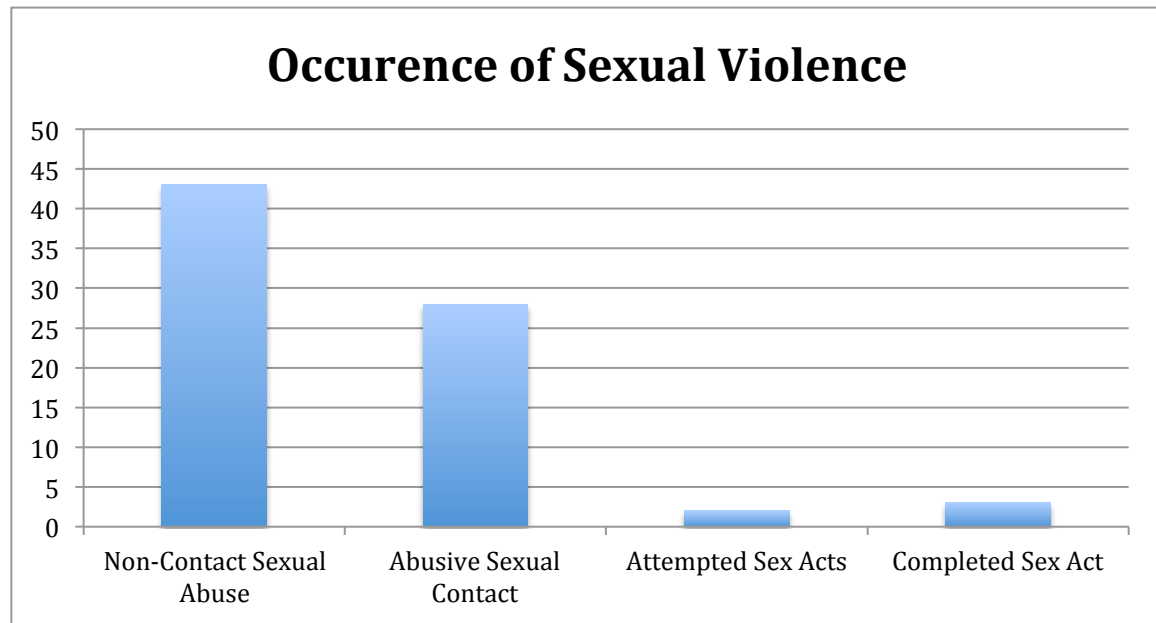
The United Nations (UN) defines sexual exploitation as "any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another". The UN continues by defining sexual abuse as "the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions" (2010).

All 50 respondents indicated some form of sexual violence during their interview. The forms of sexual violence experienced by respondents range from verbal sexual harassment to being forced to have sex with the customers. Upon



discussion of experiencing sexual violence, women recounted feelings of degradation, being taken advantage of, cheap, and worthless. One respondent stated that she felt “like a dog” as customers made sexual remarks about her when she was paraded in front of them and waited to be chosen.

Many women expressed their fear of being abused while working. KTV venues create this environment of fear for many of the women working as hostesses as they are often uncertain about what their customers will expect or demand and how they may respond if she refuses. If, by chance, the customer becomes angry or begins to force the woman to do something, then she is at the mercy of the manager or security guard to help her in time. If the manager or security guard is indifferent to her suffering or does not see the violence occur, then it is very likely that the woman will not be able to stop the violence and abuse from continuing. Because of this, the occurrence of sexual violence within KTV establishments is widespread. This brings into question the long-term physical, emotional, and psychological effects of enduring sexual violence and exploitation.



### Stigma and Discrimination

The level of stigma and discrimination experienced by the respondents is severe. The ideas and stereotypes regarding women who work at KTV establishments are intricate and occur within the women themselves. Several respondents attempted to justify working as a hostess in the KTV venue by saying that it was acceptable for them because they had been married before but it was not acceptable for women who are single to work as hostesses.

The label of a “KTV girl” carries a negative connotation within the KTV environment. The respondents would recount instances of customers referring to them as “KTV girls” as they asked them to perform sexual acts. Customers would expect the women to engage in sexual acts simply because they were “KTV girls”. Many respondents indicated that they felt degraded, cheap, and worthless when others referred to them as “KTV girls”.

While it is essential to address the stigma and discrimination in the general population, it is also vital to the psychological and emotional well being of the women working at KTV venues to understand that their identity is not based on their occupation as a hostess at a KTV venue. Many respondents held tightly to the stigma and discrimination within themselves. One respondent even stated, “I felt so disgusted with MYSELF when they touch me.” This statement reveals the deep level of shame and guilt that is a present and daily reality for the women.

### **Inconsistency in Responses**

Researchers noticed discrepancies in responses when respondents were asked about themselves and when they were asked about recommending the job to their sister. During the interviews, the interviewers observed that respondents would quickly get defensive about their decision to work at the KTV venue. Many respondents made comments that working at the KTV venue “is not a bad job.” However, when asked if they would recommend the job to their sister, respondents quickly and adamantly responded, “no!” When asked why they would not recommend the job to their sister, several respondents stated that it is “a bad job.” it was noted that many respondents were battling an internal struggle with knowing that working at the KTV venue was not acceptable, but also trying to feel justified in their choosing to do so. This highlights the complexity of the various factors contributing to their vulnerability, as well as the need for collaboration of NGOs, intricate intervention plans and prevention strategies that address a wide array of concerns.

## **Recommendations**

### **Direct Service Providers/NGOs**

As seen in the results of the study, the factors contributing to vulnerability are vast and intricate. Intervention programs and plans must have components to address all of the various factors. Therefore, collaboration between organizations and direct service providers is essential.

### **Prevention**

According to the respondents, prevention programs should consider examining the impact of encouraging higher levels of education, offering alternative employment opportunities, and explaining the realities of working at KTV venues. Although the educational level of the respondents in the study was surprisingly higher than expected, it is still not enough to provide the women with access to alternative employment. Prevention programs that encourage finishing high school and offering young women the opportunity to even continue on to obtain higher levels of education, are essential in addressing and breaking the cycle of poverty and offering better alternatives to women and girls. In addition, providing alternative jobs and livelihood projects or skills trainings also enables the women to become self-sufficient. Some organizations have started to address this by providing training for hairdressing and sewing. However, it is important that skills outside of sewing and hairdressing are developed so the market does not become saturated and women do not end up in a different

exploitative situation. Finally, educating young women who are in the provinces about the realities of working in the city and to be cautious of recruiters is critical. Certain opportunities and situations, such as working at a KTV venue, seems to offer a quick way out of debt or an easy fix to a financial crisis. However, many women are not aware of just how taxing, psychologically, emotionally, and even physically, the jobs actually are until they are already working.

Direct service providers who are addressing demand can utilize the results in the study to explain and understand the realities of the lives of women working in the entertainment industry. By relaying the stories of women, such as those present in the current study, customers who frequent entertainment establishments for sexual services will be made aware of what female entertainment workers endure. Hopefully, through a clearer understanding of who the women are as individuals, educated customers will come to see them as vulnerable individuals instead of as objects for selfish desires.

### Aftercare

According to the results, all but one of the respondents claimed to be over 18 years old at the time of the interview. Therefore, there is a great need for services provided to women over 18 years old not just girls under 18 years old. However, the number of services available for women over 18 is greatly limited. The focus and attention seems to be primarily on children in terms of the global view of sexual exploitation. This can possibly be explained by the idea of “involuntary” versus “voluntary” entry into the sex entertainment industry, which

has led to the standard of those who deserve to receive assistance and services versus those who do not deserve to receive such. Because of the risk factors and vulnerabilities established in the current study, it is harder to justify that introduction to working as a hostess at KTV venues is indeed “voluntary”. Therefore, intervention models and programs for women over 18 years old should be implemented just as vigorously as those addressing the needs of girls under 18 years old.

Several factors should be addressed when considering intervention programs for this population. After living in an environment of fear where sexual exploitation and violence occurred on a consistent basis, it is vital for women who have worked in KTV venues to have a place of safety and comfort in order to address the psychological and emotional trauma they may have endured. One component of providing a safe place is creating a community of support. If services are provided but women do not feel empowered, then it is likely that they will not take advantage of resources. Service providers should consider programs and interventions focused on building strong and supportive relationships to address issues holistically. Building relationships with women will help to tear down walls that have been built by stigma and discrimination and erase paradigms of deserving and undeserving. Supportive and caring interactions can rebuild self-worth and restore value. Therefore, women can be empowered to be self-sufficient and independent while also equipped to go after their personal goals and live up to their full potential.

## Community-Based Intervention

In addition to addressing programs for prevention and aftercare, NGOs and the Ministry of Social Affairs can also consider engaging communities and government in other forms of intervention. Prevention at the individual community level within families and schools is essential in advocating for the rights of women working at KTV venues. For example, individuals can be challenged to campaign for beer companies to promote their products ethically instead of utilizing the objectification of women to market for them. It is also important for individuals to be educated about the lives of women who are working in exploitative environments. Through education, the stigma and discrimination towards women working at KTV venues can be addressed and hopefully reduced. This will also enable and inspire individuals to advocate for women's rights, address issues of poverty, and pressure businesses to become socially responsible by following and enforcing labor laws that protect women and children.

## Future Research

Through the findings of the current study, researchers developed a variety of additional questions and factors that should be addressed in future research. Researchers believe that it would be important to further explore respondents' reasoning for not completing or continuing their education. While inference can be made from the current research, respondents were not specifically asked about their decision to discontinue their education. A better understanding of

why respondents did not continue their education would allow direct service providers to create intervention programs that target these specific areas of need.

Also understanding how women are introduced to the KTV venues can help give insight and assistance to prevention. For instance, a couple of respondents mentioned that recruiters from the KTV venues deceived them into thinking they were coming to Phnom Penh for a waitressing job. It is important to research further if a debt was incurred through the KTV venue recruiters and if the women are expected to pay the debt back through working, which then creates a situation of debt bondage. This information can allow proper legal action to provide rescue for victims of deception. It can also be fundamental in creating educational programs for vulnerable women who are at-risk of being targeted by recruiters, such as those who live in the provinces and are seeking better employment opportunities in the city.

In addition, future research can examine the long-term effects of working as a hostess at a KTV establishment. Researchers can question the impact of enduring sexual violence and exploitation, excessive alcohol use, and harsh working conditions on the physical, emotional, and psychological well being of women who have worked or are working in KTV venues.

Researchers interested in addressing the demand side of sexual exploitation can also use customers who frequent KTV venues as a means of gathering a holistic understanding of the demand for sexual services. It is vital to know and add to the body of research about the demand for sexual services in



order to effectively educate the customers about the realities of the lives of women working in the entertainment industry.

Finally, future research should focus on other venues where female entertainment workers are employed such as massage parlors, beer gardens, nightclubs, bars, and more. A collective look at these establishments will provide a critical foundation for understanding the vastness of sexual exploitation and violence of female entertainment workers. By increasing the awareness of the vulnerabilities and risk factors of all female entertainment workers, not only can both intervention and prevention models be most effective but the stigma and discrimination surrounding female entertainment workers can be addressed and challenged.

### **Conclusion**

Over the past few years, the narrative on sex trafficking and sexual exploitation has seemingly taken on a stereotypical view of its victims. Oftentimes, the portrayed victim is a woman or child who has been forcibly taken against their will, imprisoned by locks and chains, and forced to provide sexual services to clients upon command. While situations such as these do unfortunately occur, there are many victims of exploitation who have been overlooked and overshadowed by stories of those who have experienced “greater” trauma. These victims are exploited by systemic injustice and are often seen as having voluntarily entered the sex entertainment industry. It appears as though there is a competition between deserving (“involuntary” entry) versus

undeserving (“voluntary” entry) victims. This does not seek to undermine the experiences of women and girls who have suffered under these harsh situations, but instead hopes to bring to light the experiences of women and girls who are suffering and enslaved to systemic injustices.

Marilyn Frye explains the concept of systematic oppression of women to a birdcage made of wires. She says that when looking closely and only examining each individual wire, it is hard to grasp why the bird stays inside the cage instead of merely flying around the single wire to escape. However, once the birdcage is viewed in its entirety and all of the wires are seen, the impossibility of the bird escaping is understood. The same analogy can be used when analyzing the risk factors and vulnerabilities leading women to be victimized by sexual exploitation. The “wires” of poverty, low educational levels, familial obligations, debt, and limited employment opportunities make up the invisible birdcage of systemic injustice that imprisons women such as those presented in the current study. However, because they are often viewed as having chosen to work as a hostess at a KTV venue, they are provided with few services and are deemed as undeserving of assistance (Frye, 2000).

A discussion regarding the deserving versus the undeserving among survivors of sexual exploitation and violence should be ignited. If systems and persons of power are challenging the dignity and self-worth of vulnerable individuals, then exploitation is indeed taking place. The fight for justice and abolition should not be limited only to those who are deemed deserving, but to

every person who is experiencing forms of injustice, including those who suffer under the pressure of systemic injustice.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Case Study 1**

Pov\* is 32 years old and was born in Takeo province. She married at 18 years old, but later divorced. Now, on her own, she is providing for her three children. Initially, she was working in construction, which was really tiring and provided a low salary. With her fourth grade education, she felt that she had little choice but to work as a hostess at a KTV venue where she could earn an average of 80 USD a month. According to Pov, even though some people think that working as a hostess is wrong, she believes that it is the right thing to do in order to fulfill her role as a mother. Therefore, Pov told her villagers the truth about her job and many sympathized with her because of her situation.

In addition to pleasing the customers by drinking with them and allowing them to kiss, hug, and dance with her, Pov also meets customers for sex when urgent needs arise in her family. One of her customers became a regular, also known as a “sweetheart.” One day, the customer called her to meet up with him. When she refused, he came to the KTV venue and beat her. The physical abuse left her with four broken nails and a swollen head from the impact. Pov stated that no one was there to help her. In addition to enduring physical abuse, Pov also partakes in excessive drinking. She consumes an average of 105 drinks per week, which often causes her to experience severe stomachaches.

Because of the nature of her job, Pov indicated that she often feels insignificant. She believes that the only way to see herself differently is to ‘quit this job and do something else.’ It is her desire to go back home, be with her kids,

and sell vegetables. Ultimately, she wants to begin studying and practicing dramatic art again. She is confident that if good jobs with appropriate salary were provided, then girls would not come to work at a KTV. When inquiring about taking another job, Pov stated that she does not believe 80 USD per month is enough if an emergency arises. While continuing to work at the KTV venue, Pov does not focus on her dreams, but instead worries about her kids at home. Because they are in the care of relatives, she is unable to ensure they receive the care they need. Therefore, currently, they do not go to school and she fears that her step dad is abusing them.

## **Case Study 2**

Da\* is 25 years old and was born in Kompong Cham Province. Her mother passed away when she was a young child. When her dad remarried, he focused entirely on his new family. Feeling neglected, Da was sent to live with her biological aunt while her siblings were sent elsewhere. However, according to Da, her aunt treated her like a domestic servant and she grew up without receiving enough food, care, attention and love. At 19 years old, she married a car mechanic, whom she thought would meet her needs and fill the hole inside her aching heart. Unfortunately, her husband did not love or understand her and was unable to provide for her financially. At one point in their marriage, with the little education that she had, Da forced herself to work as a hostess at a KTV venue. She recalled times when her husband did not ask her how her day at work was when she came back home but instead cared only about how much

she earned in tips. One day, she ran out of formula for her child; she then forced herself to go out with a client. However, what she thought to be a safe arrangement, turned out to be a group of men who mercilessly abused her.

Da is no longer married to her husband and has since been promoted to supervisor at the KTV venue. Even though her working condition as a supervisor is better than before, she often remembers the time she spent as a hostess. As a hostess, she stood among the other ladies in a room as they waited to be picked by customers. She discloses, “I felt so cheap, like a dog. I was disgusted at myself when I was being picked by a customer.” Being a supervisor means that she earns a higher salary and her child does not go hungry. Her siblings tell her since they are together now, she needs to forget her past and just be happy. But Da says that she cannot forget the pain brought about by her childhood and marriage. According to Da, “this disgraceful KTV is a hiding place of my past.”

### **Case Study 3**

Chann\* is from Svay Rieng Province. After being physically beaten by her sister, she decided to abandon her studies in high school and ran away to Phnom Penh. When she was 15 years old, she moved in with her boyfriend, whom she referred to as her husband. Her ‘husband’ was a construction worker and he drank alcohol quite heavily. Not having an ID card and having a low educational level, Chann had no choice but to go to work as a hostess at a KTV venue. She was introduced to the KTV venue through her husband’s supervisor. Now, at 16 years old, she’s been working at a KTV venue for a little over a year.



Her experience at the first KTV venue was extremely unpleasant. She elaborated on her experience by saying that her boss refused to pay her salary and also forced her to have sex with customers. Chann said her biggest monthly expense is to send money back to her family to help pay the family's remaining debt of 66 USD. Her family is not aware of her job as a hostess at the KTV venue. Chann said that her family would look down on her if they knew because they do not like "KTV girls." With all of the demands and pressures from customers, she sometimes questions how she ended up in this place and why she is still there. Chann noted that she never meets customers for sex and, therefore, indicated having 70% confidence in herself. She believes that she can continue to keep her value and increase her confidence by refusing to go out with customers. Chann does not recommend this job to her sister because she does not want other people, especially men, to look down on her sister as they have done to her. Chann does not have any plans for the future yet, but she does know that she wants to be out of this place.

\*Names were changed to protect the identity of the respondents.

## Appendix 2

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN WORKING AT KTV VENUES IN PHNOM PENH

**INTRODUCTION:** “Our names are ... We’re working for Love146. We are interviewing women who are working in KTV/beer gardens. This study result will help us to plan programs for women working in establishments such as KTV/beer gardens in the future.

**CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONSENT—**We are going to ask you some personal questions that some people may find difficult to answer. Your answers are confidential. Your name will not be written on this form, and will never be used in connection with any of the information you tell me. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. However, your honest answer to these questions will help us better understand what women working in KTV/beer gardens think, say and do about certain kinds of behavior. We would greatly appreciate your help in responding to this questionnaire. However, if you feel uncomfortable at any point of time, you can skip a question or stop the interview. The interview will take about 60 minutes to ask the questions. Would you be willing to participate?

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

A. PLACE: PHNOM PENH

Respondent Nos.

B. Site Name \_\_\_\_\_ KTV ☐ Beer Garden ☐ Both ☐

Interviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Accompanied by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview (DD/MM/YY)

Back-checked by: \_\_\_\_\_

□□/□□/□□

Back-checked ☐

Scrutinized ☐

Coded ☐

Data Entered ☐

Survey began: ____:____ AM/PM	Break began (if any): ____:____ AM/PM
Break ended (if any): ____:____ AM/PM	Survey ended: ____:____ AM/PM

<b>1. Profile of women working in KTV/beer gardens</b>	
a. What is your age? (Please incorporate specific age in no 1)	1. 2. Don't know 3. Refused to respond
b. How long have you been living in Phnom Penh? (Please incorporate specific number)	.....Years &..... months
c. What is your birthplace?	
d. What is your highest level of education? (Only one answer)	1. No schooling 2. up to 4 <sup>th</sup> grade 3. 5 <sup>th</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> grade 4. 7 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> grade 5. 11 <sup>th</sup> grade and above
e. How long have you been working at a KTV?	
f. What is your job position?	1. Serving ice 2. Playing music 3. Hostess 4. Manager 5. Other: _____
g. Can you describe your job requirements?	
h. With whom do you stay in Phnom Penh? (Only one answer)	1. Family ( Immediate) 2. Friends 3. Relatives (distant) 4. Peers 5. KTV 6. Others (Specify)
i. From what you know, do the women who live at the KTV have rules to follow?	
j. What is your marital status?	1. Single 2. Married 3. Divorced 4. Widowed
k. If married, what is the occupation of your spouse?	
l. What does your spouse think of your job?	
m. Do you have any children?	1. Yes 2. No
n. If yes, what are the ages of your children?	
o. If no, do you want to have children in the future?	
<b>2. Family Background (General) &amp; Income</b>	
a. How much was your total income in the past 3 months? (Put the figure in US\$)	
b. How much was your income in the past week?	

(Put the figure in US\$)	
c. What do you do with the money you have earned? (List top 5 expenses in order from what they spend <b>most</b> on to what they spend the <b>least</b> on)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Send home</li> <li>2. Save</li> <li>3. Food, lodging, etc.</li> <li>4. Clothes</li> <li>5. Alcohol, cigarettes, drugs and gambling</li> <li>6. Other (List)</li> </ol>
d. If you save money, where do you save your money? (Multiple answers)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Keep it with Peers</li> <li>2. Give it to family member who you live with to look after</li> <li>3. Keep it in bank</li> <li>4. Any other</li> </ol>
e. What is your father's educational level?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No schooling</li> <li>2. up to 4<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>3. 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>4. 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>5. 11<sup>th</sup> grade and above</li> </ol>
f. How many of the family members are earning? (Please incorporate specific number of USD)	
g. Does the family owe any debts? (If yes, then ask "h" or skip and go to "3a")	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>
h. What is the amount of debt left to pay back? (Please incorporate specific number)	
Are you aware of another position within the KTV where you would earn more money? What position? Would you consider taking that position? Why or why not?	
<b>3.Prejudice, Stigma &amp; Discrimination</b>	
a. Are people in your village aware that you are working at a KTV/beer garden?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>
b. If not, then why not? please tell us in detail	
c. Does working at a KTV/beer garden affect your intimate personal relationships? (If more than little, then ask "d")	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not at all</li> <li>2. Little</li> <li>3. Moderate</li> <li>4. Very much</li> </ol>
d. If yes, then please explain how?	
e. Do you have a best friend?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>
f. If so, he/she is	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working at a KTV/beer garden</li> <li>2. Boy/Girl in village</li> </ol>

	3. Someone else
g. At what age do you think women <b>should</b> start working in KTV/beer gardens? (Please incorporate specific age)	
h. At what age did <b>you</b> start working at a KTV/beer garden? (Please incorporate specific age)	
i. At what age <b>do</b> women normally start working at KTV/beer gardens? (Please incorporate specific age)	
What do you think other people say or think about women who work at KTVs?	
k. What do you think influences their views and/or opinions?	1. Religion 2. Culture 3. Morals 4. Other: _____
l. What do customers expect from girls who work in this position?	
m. Do you feel pressured to do what customers expect?  Why or why not?	1. Yes 2. No
Has a customer ever asked you to do something that made you feel uncomfortable?  How did you respond?	1. Yes 2. No
<b>4. Reason for Migration</b>	
a. Why did you come to Phnom Penh? (List multiple responses, if necessary)	1. For Pleasure 2. For Work/To earn money 3. To Study 4. Visiting a relative 5. Visiting a friend 6. Moving with family 7. Already lived in PP
b. Did you work anywhere else before working at a KTV/beer garden?	1. Yes 2. No
c. If yes, where else did you work? Why did you stop working there? (Probe)	

d. How did you come to start working in KTV/beer gardens? (Probe)	
e. Why did you choose to work in a KTV/beer garden instead of another job? (Probe)	
<b>5. SEXUAL HISTORY, NUMBER AND TYPES OF PARTNER</b>	
a. Have you ever had a sexual relationship?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Refused to respond
b. At what age did you have your first sexual experience? (Please incorporate specific age here)	
c. With whom did you have your first sexual experience?	1. Male 2. Female
d. If male was he	1. Relative 2. Neighbour 3. Friend 4. Client 5. Husband
e. If female was she	1. Relative 2. Neighbour 3. Friend 4. Client
f. Where did you have your first sexual intercourse?	1. Village 2. Phnom Penh
g. The first time you had sexual intercourse was it...?	1. Coerced 2. Consensual
h. In the past 6 months did you have any rashes, ulcerations or lumps in the genital area/anus/ mouth	1. Yes 2. No
i. In the past 6 months have you had any urethral discharge, difficulty passing urine, pain in your genital area?	1. Yes 2. No
j. Have you been sick in any other way in the past 3 months?	1. Yes 2. No
k. What sickness/symptoms? (List all of them)	
l. Have you had any sexual health education for your work here? From whom?	1. Yes 2. No
m. Have you received any sexual health services? From whom?	1. Yes 2. No
n. How is HIV/AIDS passed from one person to another? (Ask modes of transmission and if the first answer is sex then stop there)	
o. Do you know anyone with HIV/AIDS?	1. Yes 2. No
p. Do you meet customers for sex? (If yes, go to r. If no, ask q then skip to 6)	1. Yes 2. No
q. Would you ever consider meeting customers for sex?	1. Yes 2. No

Why or why not?	
r. Can you please tell us the number of clients that you met last week for sex? (Please incorporate specific number)	
s. Can you please tell us the number of clients that you met yesterday for sex? (Please incorporate specific number)	
t. Have any of your clients ever used a condom?	1. Yes 2. No
u. Have any of your clients used a condom in the last week?	1. Yes 2. No
v. Do you have one with you right now?	1. Yes 2. No
w. Do you encourage your clients to use condoms?	1. Yes 2. No
x. If they refuse, what do you do?	
y. How many times have you had sex with more than one client at the same time in the past three months?	
z. How many times have you and (an)other girl(s) had sex with a client at the same time in the past three months?	
<b>6. Substance Abuse</b>	
a. Do you do use illegal drugs? If yes, then ask "b" or else go to "c"	1. Yes 2. No
b. Which drugs have you used in the past 3 months?	
c. Do you drink alcohol?	1. Yes 2. No
d. How much alcohol have you used in the last week?	
e. How often do the customers force you to drink alcohol?	1. Sometimes 2. Occasionally 3. Always 4. Very Often 5. Never
f. Do you use any alcohol during sex with clients?	1. Sometimes 2. Occasionally 3. Always 4. Very often 5. Never
<b>7. Sexual violence and Abuse</b>	
a. Are you aware of other women working in beer gardens who are being forced to have sex against their wishes?	1. Yes 2. No
b. In your experience has there ever been a case, where you have been forced to have sex against your wishes?	1. Sometimes 2. Occasionally 3. Always 4. Very often 5. Never

c. Would you mind sharing about these experiences even though it may be painful?	1. Yes 2. No
d. Can you please tell us what happened?	
e. In the past 3 months, how often have you experienced discrimination by the police?	1. Sometimes 2. Occasionally 3. Always 4. Very often 5. Never
f. Have you faced violence in the past 3 months by police?	1. Sometimes 2. Occasionally 3. Always 4. Very often 5. Never
Who would you go to if you experienced violence from police?	
g. In the past 3 months, how often have you experienced discrimination by others in the community?	1. Sometimes 2. Occasionally 3. Always 4. Very often 5. Never
h. Have you faced violence in the past 3 months by others in the community?	1. Sometimes 2. Occasionally 3. Always 4. Very often 5. Never
Who would you go to if you experienced violence from community members?	
i. In the past 3 months, how often have you experienced discrimination from your clients?	1. Sometimes 2. Occasionally 3. Always 4. Very often 5. Never
j. Have you faced violence in the past 3 months by clients?	1. Sometimes 2. Occasionally 3. Always 4. Very often 5. Never
Who would you go to if you experienced violence from clients?	
<b>8. Income Generation</b>	
a. If given a chance to do some other job that pays 80 USD a month, would you take it?	1. Maybe 2. Definitely 3. Not interested
b. How many hours did you spend in the last week working at a KTV/beer garden? (Please incorporate specific number)	
c. What did you earn by working in a KTV/beer garden in the last week? How much did you earn from the owner? How much did you earn through tips? (Please incorporate specific amount in US dollars)	
d. What are some ways that women working in this position can	



earn tips?	
e. Do you have any job other than working in a KTV/beer garden? (If No, then go to 9)	1. Yes 2. No
f. If yes, what? (List all responses)	
g. How many hours did you spend in the last week in your other job? (Please incorporate specific number of hours)	
h. What did you earn in your other job(s) in the last week? (Please incorporate specific number in US dollars)	
i. Would you be interested in learning English if it was available?	1. Yes 2. No
j. Are there other skills you would like to learn if you had the opportunity? If so, which ones?	
<b>9. Spirituality</b>	
a. Do you have a faith? (If No, then go to 10)	1. Yes 2. No
b. Which one?	
c. Do you pray/worship daily?	1. Yes 2. No
d. How often do you visit the wat /mosque/church?	
e. How do you feel after you have prayed or visited the wat/ mosque/church?	
<b>10. Dignity</b>	
a. What is the meaning of word "Respect" for you (Probe for responses)	
b. How much value/confidence do you have as a person on the scale of 1 to 10	
c. What can you do to increase your value/confidence (Write in details all that she says)	
<b>11. Future Planning</b>	
a. Where do you see yourself in two years time?	
b. And how do you plan to reach that point?	

c. Would you recommend your occupation to your sister? Why or why not?  If yes, skip to "e"	1. Yes 2. No
d. What do you think would prevent other girls from working in this profession?	
e. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?	

We thank you for taking the time to talk with us. The information you have given is very valuable to us.

We also promise and assure you that your name will never be disclosed and your responses will not be identified as yours. The collective data will be used to develop specific interventions that will try and give women working in KTV/beer gardens like you a better life. Do you have any questions?

THANK YOU!!!!!!!