

Internet, text messaging luring girls to sex trade

Technologies such as the Internet and text messaging are becoming common tools in recruiting young girls to the sex trade

Source: Taipei Times

Date published: Wednesday, December 17, 2003

Reporter: By Debby Wu

Editor: By Debby Wu

Technologies such as the Internet and text messaging are becoming common tools in recruiting young girls to the sex trade, social groups said yesterday.

The groups, including the End Child Prostitution Association in Taiwan, Garden of Hope Foundation, Taipei Women's Rescue Foundation and Mennonite Good Shepard Center, said the results came from a survey of 94 girls in shelters who had worked in the sex trade.

The survey showed that 40 percent of the girls were lured into the trade by their peers and 20 percent through Internet chat rooms. Only about 10 percent responded to newspaper advertisements or were recruited by employment agencies or through other media, compared with 30.9 percent in 1990. The remainder were recruited in a number of other ways.

While 42.5 percent of the girls knew what they were getting into, 34 percent did not know but could accept the situation afterwards, and 15 percent did not know and could not accept the situation, but could not leave. The others did not respond to the question.

Taipei Women's Rescue Foundation executive director Wu Pei-ling said the result showed that in contemporary society the girls were more affected by their private personal networks than before, when young people would be more influenced by the media.

The survey also showed that 47.9 percent of these girls had engaged in enjo-kosai, a Japanese term describing the phenomenon of schoolgirls selling their bodies to older men.

The survey quizzed 40 girls who had voluntarily entered the sex trade to understand their motivations. They were given multiple choices and could pick more than one answer.

"Among these girls, 70 percent said they engaged in enjo-kosai because they needed the money, 35 percent said the job paid better than others and 35 percent said it was out of curiosity," Wu said.

Wu said it was worrying that so many young girls would try enjo-kosai simply out of curiosity.

"The Internet and mobile phone short message systems also allow young people to get in touch with the sex industry easily," Wu said.

"With another survey we have done on the Internet, we have found that 37 percent of Internet users encounter pornography every day, 51 percent have viewed information regarding the sex trade and 52 percent of users search for pornography actively, with 15-to-19-year-olds the most keen searchers," Wu said.

Wu said that 85.12 percent of users said they had received sex messages via the Chunghwa Telecom, Taiwan Cellular Corp or FarEasTone Telecommunications Co networks.

To address the issue the groups urged the government to improve its education program in shelters for teenagers, sex education in schools and its online detective work. They also demanded telecom service providers prevent sex short messages from spreading across their networks.

Reference:

TAIWAN: Internet, text messaging luring girls to sex trade <http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=5672>
accessed on 29 October 2008