



Understanding the Dynamic of Sex Tourism in Thailand to Encounter its impact on Children



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Requirements for the Degree of Master of Tourism

Student: Kamala Lamichhane

Supervisor: Karina Madsen Smed

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Abstract

Sex tourism in Thailand has become popular in the world since many decades. Through its benefit on the economy of the country, it has also created a negative consequence on the well-being of children in the country. Hence, with the assumption of the existence of the impact of sex tourism on children, this study examines the various dimensions of sex tourism and its direct and indirect impact on children particularly in terms of exploitation, abuse and long-term psychological, health and social consequences.

With the review of various literature and different qualitative data sources, this study addressed the root causes of the problem and identified the preventive measures for the booming sex tourism industry in Thailand. Furthermore, the role of governmental policies, economic status, social and cultural attitudes, family and social background and behavior of the tourists was explored with the identification of different themes through thematic analysis. This research with the identification of various issues brought by sex tourism on children, aims to raise awareness, stimulate further research and suggest effective strategies to protect the children from being vulnerable in Thailand and beyond.

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1. Introduction

Sex tourism, from the academic point of view, can be explained as a phenomenon identified through individuals traveling to specific destinations with the purpose to engage in sexual pleasure that often involves monetary exchange for sexual services (Opperman, 1999). Researchers claimed that sex tourism is mostly popular in the developing or least developed countries where the laws and enforcement against the prostitution is not strict (Clancy, 2002) and mostly used by the Western visitors who are believed to be rich in the eyes of local prostitution in developing countries (Xu & Ye, 2016) while the other two researchers in their article (Omondi & Ryan, 2016) claimed that sex tourism takes place in both poor and rich countries. Different researchers have approached the criticism of sex tourism from various perspectives (Bernstein & Shis, 2014; Khan, 2014, Hung, 2024; Jeong & Lee, 2022; Leheny, 1995). Some argue that sex tourism perpetuates the exploitation and commodification of individuals, particularly women and minors, leading to human rights violations and contributing to the perpetuation of gender inequalities (Hung, 2024; Khan, 2014; Richards & Reid, 2015; Sproul, 2021; Wilson & Ypeij, 2012). On the contrary, other researchers have highlighted the potential risk of health related to physiological and physical including the spread of sexually transmitted infections, as an outcome of the transient nature of sexual encounters in such tourism where both the tourists and service provider are affected including children (Hillis et al. 2021; Panko & George, 2012; Korzeniewski & Juszczak, 2015; Wickens et al., 2007).

Thailand is one of those countries popular in sex tourism for many years even though the prostitution is found to be illegal. As reported by ECPAT, 2009, *“the Thai sex industry alone includes an estimated 800,000 prostitutes younger than 18 years old; of those, 20,000 are younger than 12 years old, including an undetermined number of children involved in sex tourism* (cited in Chrastil, 2010). *ECPAT (2008) has also reported that human trafficking for the purposes of CST is the third most lucrative illegal industry in the world”* (cited in Chrastil, 2010). When it comes to the case of commercial sex worker, mostly women and children are found to be at risk (Vries, 2021; Chrastil, 2010; and Bishop & Limmer, 2017). Furthermore, the primary impact of sex tourism which child sex tourism is a very sensitive issue of the world (Blackburn et al., 2010; Davy, 2014)) due to which every country is condemned by international law and its ethical aspects

(Hodgson, 1994). From the argument discussed above, it is now obvious that every tourist is aware that child sex tourism is not acceptable in any way from legal to moral point of view and mostly view as morally dishonorable from the societal point of view however there has been much evidence found that sex tourism can have numerous impact on children for example, ‘emotional dimension of trauma, violence due to vulnerability as a victim of sex tourism or being a children of parents engaged in sex tourism (Brooks & Heaslip, 2019) often promoted by individuals who travel from another nation with the primary purpose of engaging in sex tourism in the circumstances that would not be acceptable in their nation (Li, 1995; Aston et al., 2023; Hulsbergen & Nooteboom, 2022; Ryan & Kinder, 1999).

1.1. Problem Formulation

As noted above, sex tourism creates a significant impact to children worldwide including Thailand, that gives continuity to exploitation and abuse. Even though awareness has been raised with deep concern in the world (Bah et al. 2021), a gap to address various dimensions of how sex tourism impact on children from cultural, socio-economic, political and technological aspect is still a part of concern of many researchers, INGOs, NGOs, societies and governments (Aston et al., 2023; Tepelus, 2008; Sisavath, 2012). Available research so far has focused on either the socio-economic factors or the psychological and physical impact on victims raised by the popularity of sex tourism (Aston et al., 2023; Bah et al., 2021; Hillis et al., 2021). Nonetheless, few research explore other factors like legal frameworks, cultural factors (Bishop & Limer, 2017; Hodgson, 1994; Hung, 2024; Jeong & Lee, 2022; Vries, 2021) and the role of technology for the engagement of children in sex tourism (Yeoman & Mars, 2011; Murillejo, et al., 2015). However, the need for a deeper understanding of the cultural, socio-economic, political and technological factors that contribute to create the negative consequences such as child exploitation due to sex tourism with proper data and statistics as well as the investigation on long-term physical, psychological and social impact on the children because of the popularity of sex tourism in Thailand still create some sort of gap in the research which has created obstacles in the development of global strategy to prevent such issues. Development of global strategy is important in Thailand due to cross-border trafficking of victims in the commercial sex trade and many countries follow different policies and laws to protect children from such a phenomenon which is challenging (Gugis, 2014). Hence, many argue

that global strategy will help to establish and integrate legal framework to address the impact of sex tourism in children and make sure the countries collaborate and work together to prevent the issue and protect the victims regardless of where the victims are from or where the abuse occurs (Fadia, 2018; Sisavath, 2012; Nuttvuthisit, 2007).

Keeping in mind about the statement discussed above about sex tourism practice in Thailand and assuming that making prostitution illegal is not the solution, this research will address various aspects of sex tourism involving socio-cultural, economic, legal and ethical dimensions, aiming to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the implications and dynamics associated with the sex tourism to investigate its impact in the children in Thailand. Firstly, this study will mainly focus on child sex tourism as a direct or primary impact. Besides that, the study also aims to critically address the issue while exploring the different factors responsible for creating other impacts for the children around touristic areas in Thailand. Lastly, the research will investigate different preventive methods from both locals as well as tourist's point of view that aim to protect children from sex tourism in Thailand. This study paper will focus on the children under the age of 18 years following the policy and guidelines of Save The Children as provided in Appendix 1. Thus, in order to investigate the impact of sex tourism among the children in Thailand and analyze the preventive measures, I will mainly focus on the given research question:

How does the popularity of sex tourism in Thailand affect the well-being of children and what preventive measures should be considered to combat such issues?

2. Literature review

According to Bernstein & Shih (2014), “*There are also a sizable number of women and children who, based on their own consent, voluntarily enter the prostitution industry in order to financially support their households’ subsistence needs*” (cited in Hung 2024) due to increase in demand for sex tourism in Thailand the opportunity in commercial sex has increased (Hall, 2013).

Child sex tourism is a very sensitive issue of the world (Tepelus, 2008) even though every country is condemned by international law and its ethical aspects (Hodgson, 1994; Gusic, 2014) that cannot be accepted in any way from legal to moral point of view and mostly view as morally dishonorable from the societal point of view (Brace & Davidson, 1996) however there has been much evidence found that sex tourism can involve the exploitation of children, mainly enhanced by individuals who travel from another destination with the primary purpose of engaging in such activities (Flowers, 2001; Christiansen, 2015).

This chapter is mainly focused to demonstrate the knowledge and understanding of sex tourism through different academic research, articles and journals to elaborate how it has affected the vulnerable children focusing on the popular destination, Thailand. The author also aims to explore various literature on the situational relationship between sex tourism and the impact of sex tourism to the children with the main focus on socio-cultural, economic and political factors and assuming those factors to influence the circumstances. Thus, with the help of existing research, theoretical frameworks and available evidence, this literature review chapter seeks to identify various available research contributing to the sex tourism and its impact on children.

2.1. Understanding Sex tourists

According to Dumont (1984), international tourism is “*‘a looking down’ or a class dynamic in which middle-to upper-class individuals travel in order to satisfy their curiosity about those who are economically and socially ‘inferior’*” (cited in Gezinski et al., 2016).

There is no particular definition for sex tourists. In general, sex tourists are the people who intend to travel to the destination with the primary purpose of engaging in sexual activities, among which

some target the minors and vulnerable individuals with the exchange of money or other form of assets or compensation. According to Hobbs et al. (2011), *“Two concepts which may influence sex tourists’ imagined authenticities of masculinity and femininity are double blinds and hegemonic masculinity”*. However, the research when talking about the digitalization and artificial intelligence age where many things can be pursued through the online or digital world, the definition of sex tourists has become more complex and broad; following Durkin and Bryant (1995) and Kohm and Selwood (1998), *“The Internet opens up a whole range of new questions, in that the customer is not physically traveling, but nonetheless may be considered a cyberspace tourist, or even a cyberspace sex tourist”* (cited in Oppermann, 1999).

Research has found different demographic and characteristics of sex tourists based on age, gender, nationality, socioeconomic status, psychological profile and marital status (Oppermann, 1999; Hobbs et al., 2011, Jeffreys, 20023; Manieri et al., 2013; Koops et al., 2017; Paat et al, 2020). Understanding the motivation and behaviors of sex tourists is important as researchers have argued that the tourists might be motivated to seek novelty and adventure to fulfill specific sexual fantasies or desires (Ryan & Kinder, 1996; Ying & Wen, 2019). Most of the time sex tourists choose the particular destination according to the legal regulations, cultural attitudes towards sex work, affordability and accessibility (Gezinski et al, 2016; Ryan & Kinder, 1996; Leheny, 1995). However, the author of an article ‘Sex tourism’ stated that the tourists end up doing other activities along with their purpose of travel (Oppermann, 1999); for example, tourists traveling for business purpose might visit the tourist attraction of the destination before they leave the country likewise the adventure tourists might also enjoy unplanned sex activity with the prostitute accessible or cultural activity while being in adventurous tour in the destination.

Child Wise (2007) claimed more than 250,000 sex tourists travel to Asia each year which include 13 percent American, 16 percent German and 13 percent from Australia and 13 percent from the UK (cited in Davy, 2014). Peter (2007) further claimed those data also include those who travel to have sex with children (cited Davy, 2014). Some male sex tourists, when comparing western women to women in the regions they visit, perceive Western women as unattractive and lacking femininity (Gezinski et al., 2016). This perception may be rooted in cultural differences in beauty standards and gender norms as some tourists might find women in other cultures more appealing

due to many factors like traditional attire, behaviors or societal expectations that meet their preferences. Besides that, interviews with male sex tourists in Thailand reveal that their behavior is influenced by racial prejudice and stereotyped views towards the local people they exploit (Jeffreys, 2003). This proves that such tourists may have biased beliefs about the local population, which contribute to their exploitation and objectification of individuals in the sex industry. The author further noted, many times sex tourism is often associated with male tourists however there is evidence to suggest that women also participate in sex tourism even though the number might be lower than that of male sex tourists (Jeffreys, 2003). O'Connell Davidson (1998) added with the statement, *"female sex tourists are as exploitative as male sex tourists in that they use their greater economic power to gain access to and exploit their third world partners"* (cited in Herold et al., 2001).

2.2. An overview of sex tourism in Thailand

According to Brown (2000) and Caouette & Saito (1999), *"A study in northern Thailand where many hill tribe people live, found that fully 60% of families had a daughter working in a brothel to support the family, and daughters who became prostitutes were not frowned on as they once were"* (cited in Roby & Tanner, 2009). In the same study, Bales (1999) further claimed, *"In the absence of quantifiable numbers of victims, anecdotes abound about the circumstances under which some were brought into the trade: some are believed to be sold by their parents while they are very young, with debt bondage to repay over many years"* (cited in Roby & Tanner, 2009). In many levels, the sex market in Thailand is a lucrative business and by-product of the tourism industry driven by international phenomena as according to TAT (2007), the number of international tourists in 2007 were over 14 million that leads to the revenue of US\$16,003 (estimated) in Thailand including the part of the revenue generated from sex tourism (cited in Cheng, 2010).

Sex tourism in Thailand has been a topic of concern for many researchers, government and activists as there are various controversial topics going on in terms of socio-economic and ethical implications even though the prostitution is claimed to be illegal there since 1960 (Yokota, 2006). Even though the entire country is known to be popular in sex tourism, Bangkok, Pattaya and Phuket

are the most popular places often visited by sex tourists (Bishop & Limmer, 2017). Different researchers have found out the various aspects in this topic, the historical, social, cultural and political aspects and have highlighted its consequences to the society or the country (Nuttavuthisit, 2007; Leheny, 1995). Many have been successful to find the root of the origins of sex tourism in Thailand that started from the Vietnam war era, the time when American soldiers were seeking for recreational activities including sexual pleasure which later continue to be the historical context with the development of sex tourism industry in Thailand (Leheny, 1995; Butler & Suntikul, 2013). Leheny, 1995 further argues that prostitution in Thailand exist in foreign tourism for centuries.

Thailand is a popular destination among tourists around the world and is well known for its culture and heritage, beautiful landscapes, climate and hospitable people (McDowall, 2010) regardless of that the country is also known as the touristic destination of sexual pleasure even though the Thai government has been frequently denying the fact of sex tourism within the country (Leheny, 1995). The popularity of sex tourism in Thailand carries a dark reality which poses a significant impact to the well-being of children in the country (Breitkreutz, 2015) while many researchers argue that this practice of traveling for the purpose of involving in commercial sexual activities often impacts minors as such tourism in Thailand represents the combination of socio-economic disparities, cultural norms and global demand for exploitation due to racism (Thongsonti, 2024).

With the rapid increase of tourism in Thailand, the dynamic of sex tourism has developed in a very short period of time which results in globalization, urbanization and the misuse of digital technology (Rigg & Nattapoolwat, 2001). In addition to that, industries engaged in tourism are generating finance with the opportunity of different types of employment to the living in Thailand making women as well as children more vulnerable in the tourism sector (Nuttavuthisit, 2007). While Ishii (2012) in her article argues that tourism has provided opportunities for women to empower themselves and earn high incomes in comparison to other professions with no or limited education. On the other hand, Cohen (1982) claimed that tourist-oriented sex workers often change their profession of prostitution depending on their income status (cited in Yokota, 2006).

Even though sex tourism has contributed significant economic growth in Thailand since many years (Nuttavuthisit, 2007), Hung (2023) in his book highlighted that Thai prostitution highly

represents vulnerable and marginalized populations which includes women, children, sexual minorities and ethnic minorities. As already stated, many sex workers, particularly vulnerable women and children, are abused and forced into the industry; some are engaged due to their financial circumstances and some are trafficked (Brooks & Heaslip, 2019). Such arguments point out the complexities of sex tourism in Thailand where the minor and children seem to be at risk at different levels.

2.3. Child sex tourism in Thailand; the primary impact of sex tourism

Before diving into child sex tourism, it is important to understand and define the term ‘children’ through the background of the age. As described by Song (2005), children in western countries are defined as the people who are under the age of 18 yet the girl’s age seems to be eligible for ‘*marriage or puberty, either of which can happen as young as 13 years*’ (cited in Chrastile, 2010). Additionally, according to Ilias & Nash (2003), “*The UN convention on the Rights of the Child Defines a child as any human being under the age of 18, unless an earlier age of majority is recognized by a country’s law. Given their legal status as minors, they are the subjects of involuntary prostitution*” (cited in Panko & George, 2012). Even though the law might differ from country to country to be eligible for the marriage, in many countries as marriage between under 18 can happen with the consent of the parents (Volpp, 2006), this study will consider all the individual under 18 having marriage through the consent of the parent or engaged in commercial sexual industry is still abuse, exploitation or manipulation while keeping in mind about the statement given by Montgomery (2008), “*there are large numbers of young prostitutes in the sex industry who will be post-puberty but who are under 18, and whether or not their clients can be called child-sex tourists remain debatable*”.

According to Tepelus (2007), “*In reviewing the literature, one cannot avoid the consistent nexus between child sex tourism and child sex trafficking. Child sex tourism as defined is traveling with the purpose of or resulting in sexual relations with a minor a clear violation of human rights*” (cited in Chrastil, 2010). Child sex tourism (CST) in Thailand has been a part of controversy due to its dishonorable practice of child exploitation for sexual purposes (Man & Lagendijk, 2021).

Much evidence has been found that tourists, knowingly or unknowingly, are involved in such activity (Montgomery, 2008). Montgomery (2008) has directly reflected such phenomena with evidence and highlighted the problem in socioeconomic, cultural and legal aspects. CST in Thailand is frequently related to the debate of manipulation and abuse, human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and the global sex industry (Wen et al., 2020). Most of the vulnerability of children include the financial background due to which they are misled, manipulated and forced to be in the sex industry due to the demand of tourists looking for underage sexual encounters (Montgomery, 1998). According to UNICEF (2007), “*an estimated number of two million children are subjected to prostitution in commercial settings every year*”; while according to World Vision (2010), “*children as low as five years of age are pushed to the trade to help pay off family debts*” (Cited in Panko & George, 2012).

Besides, researchers have underlined the challenges of collaboration between various stakeholders including local authorities, government, NGOs, journalists, police force and businesses in solving this issue (Bernstein & Shih, 2014) due to various factors like corruption, lack of law and policy enforcement, negligence, lack of knowledge of social responsibility, hidden activity and profit-driven motives (O’Brien 2009; Sahariah, 2021). Then again, advanced technology like apps and online platforms are also influencing and manipulating children in such activity that has drawn the focus of researchers in the modern generation (Hung, 2023). Additionally, the psychological, physical and social consequences within the children as a result of exploitation of involvement in child sex tourism has been continuously investigated while the need for new strategies to intervene the activity for the prevention of child sex tourism in Thailand (Panko & George, 2012). The author further reveals that child sex tourism and child trafficking build the connection in an advanced way “*when children are trafficked to a second country for the consumption of child sex tourists (e.g. trafficking Cambodian children to Thailand for the consumption of Americans tourists)*” (Panko & George, 2012). Hence, the immediate action for the proper collaboration among the stakeholders and investigation and research in this issue to eliminate child sex tourism in Thailand and beyond (Davy, 2014).

2.3.1. Factors influencing child sex tourism

As already highlighted above in the first chapter, the term ‘exploitation’ is the dark side of sex tourism that violates human rights from which the most victims are identified to be the children and women (Jeffreys, 2010) as a negative consequence on their psychological, emotional, physical and social development (Bah et al. 2022; Berdychevsky & Gibson, 2014). Much research has been established with an argument that the child sex tourism, child exploitation and abuse in sex tourism takes place due to the socio-economic factor, cultural factor or legal factor (Aston et al., 2023; Bah et al., 2021; Hillis et al., 2021; Bishop & Limer, 2017; Hodgson, 1994; Hung, 2024; Jeong & Lee, 2022; Vries, 2021).

Socio-economic factor

Child sex tourism in sex tourism is the topic of serious concern as many times it is proved to be the consequences of socio-economic factors (Bah et al., 2022). Thailand is one of the developing countries in southeast Asia. It has been found that poverty is one of the prime factors motivating child sex tourism in sex tourism in that country as the imbalance financial situation within urban and rural areas forces the families to live their life through different challenges and circumstances that leads children engaged in such activity (Sisavath, 2012). On the other hand, lack of employment opportunities and social security push families to adopt different alternatives to earn and survive in the society (Davy, 2014).

According to Cohen (2001), “*Tourism is the major foreign exchange earner, with over 11 million tourist arrivals in 2004, about 60 per cent from East Asia. The major tourist attractions are the friendly people, the culture, the low cost of living, warm climate, beaches, diving, and the attractive and accommodating Thai women*” (cited in Howard, 2008). The popularity of tourism in Thailand is increasing every day where many tourists also travel to encounter sexual pleasure and cheap and accessible sexual experiences for both the international and domestic tourists has led to an increase in demand in the commercial sex including the exploitation of children (Jeffreys, 2010). The hidden activity and exemption from punishment due to corruption in the system has motivated the perpetrators in the tourism industry to create an environment favorable for the exploitation of children in sex industry to earn more profit from the tourists (Breitkreutz, 2015). Many times, due to many aspects of social factors like shame, blame, ignorance and avoidance, the victims in

Thailand face the challenges of addressing and reporting the issue (Tarancon, 2013; Techaphutvorakun, 2022).

Cultural factor

Cultural norms and gender inequality intersect with socio-economic factors while talking about involvement of children in sex tourism. On the top of that, researchers have often criticized sex tourism for its negative footprint on local cultures and communities claiming such tourism as the issue for destroying traditional values (Nuttavuthisit, 2007) and reason to increase crime rates in the form of violence, abuse and exploitation that has on the other hand highly affected children (Jeffreys, 2010). Hence, the debate about the ethical and moral concerns for engaging in the sex industry voluntarily or without force within the tourist destinations are also central to the criticism when children are found to be involved directly or indirectly in such activity (Doezema, 1998). Despite that the root cause of the negativity for such tourism and issues are still unidentified and unsolved (Davy, 2014).

Conversely, the gender role and stereotype in Thai culture has influenced the dynamic of child sex tourism (Montgomery, 1998); most of the time with the female being affected (Bah, 2021). The expectation of femininity, respectful, smiling and obedience among Thai women or Thai girls as a form of cultural representations in media has contributed to the objectification of the girls in the tourism industry in Thailand (Malam, 2008). In addition to that, according to Hobbs et al. (2011), *“Reporting sexual harassment is also a problem in Thai culture. Most Thai women are ashamed to report sexual harassment and then they are blamed for not speaking up to report it”*. It can be argued that such cultural barriers to reporting harassment due to various factors such as societal norms, fear of retaliation and stigma surrounding victims make it easier for sex tourists to exploit vulnerable individuals which create a cycle where victims are silenced, allowing exploitation to continue unchecked.

Legal Factor

Legal factors concerning child sex tourism in Thailand include various aspects that involve both international and domestic law, government policies, law enforcement and effective legal framework's ability to address the issue about not only perpetrators within Thailand but also those

who travel from abroad to engage in child exploitation (Hung, 2023; Hung 2024). On the other side, inconsistencies in laws, lack of resources for enforcement of law, corruption which is the biggest problem in the country, and other cultural and societal factors have created challenges in the implementation of rules and regulation within the country (Chrastil, 2010). Additionally, the broader socio-economic and political context within which these legal factors operate, including issues of poverty, inequality and tourism promotion. According to Andrews (2004), *“sex tourists often escape prosecution in the host countries because of factors ranging from ineffective law enforcement, corruption, and ineffective legal systems”* (cited in Chrastil, 2010).

While Ireland (1993) claimed, the laws in Thailand in relation to tourists have been minimally implemented due to which very few have been convicted for exploiting children as it is also necessary to understand that perpetrators do not necessarily need to travel with the intention of engaging in child sex tourism in the host country as many might seem to be ordinary people in the respective home countries and only turn out to be abusers in the host countries due to other situational factors (cited in Breitzkreutz, 2015). However, the author further added that the government in the country is paying more attention to such issues involving international cooperation (Ireland, 1993).

2.3.2. Exploitation and child trafficking

Child trafficking in the sex tourism industry in Thailand is a very complex issue as a consequence of social, economic, legal and cultural roots (Davy, 2014). Before anything else, Thailand is a popular country when it comes to tourism which ranks in the sixth position in the list of top 20 must visit destinations in 2024 (The nation, 2024). Even though Thailand is popular in many other aspects like its beautiful landscape, weather, authentic and fresh and authentic food, people and culture, the country's reputation as a popular destination for sex tourism is well known by everyone around the world (Scott, 2022). In the second place, the inequality in regards to the financial situation within the urban and rural region pushes vulnerable families into situations where they choose to send their children to work in the sex industry for survival (Sisavath, 2012; Taylor, 2005). As sex tourism in Thailand is mostly powered by factors like poverty, corruption and law enforcement, such issues have created and prevalent the environment of child abuse (Vries, 2021; Nuttavuthisit, 2007). Conversely, the demand from foreign tourists for underage sex drives a

benefitted market for which the businesses or the family abuse children in many ways such as manipulation, by force, deception or outright abduction (Montgomery, 2008; Montgomery, 2011).

Despite the effort of the Thai government and many NGOs to solve the problem of child trafficking (Davy, 2014), various challenges like corruption, inadequate legal framework and cultural attitudes have played a major role that sometimes normalize child exploitation and stand as an obstacle to deal with. Thus, addressing child trafficking in Thailand itself is a challenge because of the various aspects as stated above (Thongsonti, 2024). Montgomery (2008) in her article, 'Buying Innocence: child-sex tourists in Thailand' argue that the complex intersection of various societal aspects in Thailand, particularly regarding the blurred boundaries between adulthood and childhood as well as manipulation and commodification of innocence. The author further noted, many cases regarding the child exploitation from the abuser who record video to the one who physically abuse which was happening under the guise of tourism were disclosed through the campaign after which *'western men were traveling the world, abusing their financial, social, gender and ethnic privileges by buying sex from children was rightly condemned'* (Montgomery, 2008).

2.4. Sustainability in Sex tourism

Sex tourism, a phenomenon of travel that is done with the purpose of having sex in the host country with the people working in the commercial sex industry, is complex and controversial in itself (Simoni, 2014). Even though such tourism has been beneficial from the economic point of view in a developing country like Thailand, the negative consequences are not least as it from time to time comes at the cost of exploitation, trafficking, human rights abuses and environmental degradation due to mass sex tourism (Cabezas, 2019; Ocha, 2020). The need to address the sustainability of sex tourism with the view of its impact on children, local communities, economies, and ecosystem is highlighted by many researchers (Alarcon & Cole, 2019; Hobbs et al., 2011; Brooks & Heaslip, 2019; Tepelus; 2019).

One of the important elements of sustainability in sex tourism is its economic impact on host countries (Duffy Smith, 2003). Sex tourism in developing countries like Thailand has become

successful to generate significant revenue with different types of employment opportunities (Hall, 2013). Despite that, such tourism has also influenced and preserved the inequalities among people with different income status, social background, races and gender that contribute to the marginalization of local communities (Williams, 2014). Alarcon & Cole (2019) in their research have reflected the need for inclusive economic policies to empower women and vulnerable communities while ensuring equal sharing of tourism revenue. Furthermore, Hasayotin et al. (2023) point out the importance of diversifying tourism offerings and promoting the alternative of sex tourism to reduce the dependency on such tourism particularly when it has more consequences than benefit and enhance the economy of the country through other types of business and tourism particularly in the context of Thailand. Many researchers have argued that being a popular destination for sex tourism and reliance on this industry has formed various negative social and economic consequences in Thailand (Cheng, 2010; Bernstein & Shis, 2014; Oppermann, 1999).

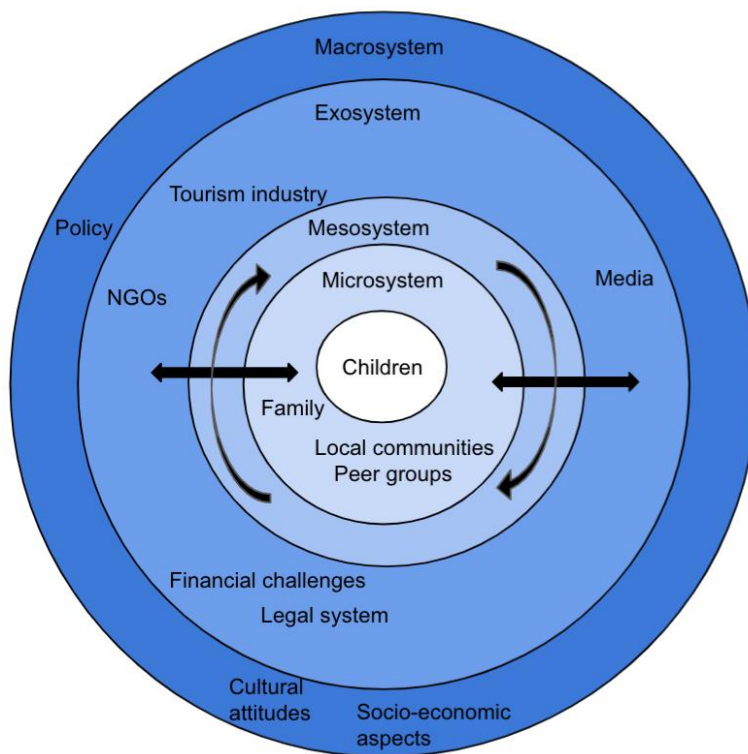
The social impact of sex tourism is deeper and has different sides ranging from exploitation of vulnerable individuals to the destruction of cultural values and social circles (Brooks & Heaslip, 2019; Nuttvuthisit, 2007). Wen et al. (2020) & Curley (2014) have noted the common issue of human trafficking, sexual abuse and child exploitation in sex tourism destinations raising the need for a powerful legal framework, law enforcement efforts and victim support services. On top of that, Jeffreys (2010) underlines the necessity to address the root causes of exploitation such as poverty, racism, gender inequality and lack of education. The vulnerability of sex workers in sex tourism, many of whom faced the challenges of economic and social stigmatization as a consequence of the objectification of local communities and the reinforcement of gender inequalities needed to be reviewed (Davidson, 1996; Lacey, 2012). Sustainable approaches to sex tourism emphasize the empowerment and rights of sex workers which can somehow solve the problem of the direct and indirect impact on children (Alarcon & Cole, 2019; George & Panko, 2011; Bernstein & Shis, 2014) but the long-term sustainability is still a question due to issues such as corruption, income inequality and dependence on foreign revenue (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1999).

3. Theoretical Framework

The idea about applying the theoretical framework in this study is to provide valuable tools for analyzing complex social issues like sex tourism in Thailand and its impact on children as it will help to understand and prevent such issues. Pittenger et al. (2016) stated, “*The ecological approach to understanding human development was articulated by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1997) as a proposed solution to fully account for all influences on human development*”. Hence, for this study, I find Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory relevant as it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the various factors that impact children due to popularity sex tourism in Thailand. On the other hand, according to Miriyam (2023), “*Bronfenbrenner believed that an individual’s development is influenced by the surrounding environment in which they are living. According to his theory, there are five different levels of environment: (1) microsystem, (2) mesosystem, (3) exosystem, (4) macrosystem and (5) chronosystem*”. Along with that, Rosa and Tudge (2013) noted that Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) has been renamed into “bioecological system theory” (cited in Spurrier & Alpaslan, 2017). In spite of that, this study will stick to the old name while defining the theory. This theory will help me to gain holistic understanding of the multiple factors of sex tourism that create various impacts on children in the context of sex tourism in Thailand. In addition, it will also highlight the broader context of the socio-economic factor, cultural factor and political-legal factor through which children are affected as a result of the sex tourism. Lastly, this study will only use the four layers of Bronfenbrenner’s model.

Microsystem is the innermost layer of Bronfenbrenner’s model and refers to the immediate or close environment in which the interacts directly (Spurrier & Alpaslan, 2017). In the case of sex tourism and its impact on children, the microsystem includes family, peer groups and local communities of the victim, that is children. Within this layer, children might have been exposed to different risk factors such as poverty, family breakout and peer pressure that can play a great role to influence their participation in child sex tourism or to increase their vulnerability to exploitation in sex tourism.

Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Pittenger et al., 2016)



Mesosystem is the layer above the microsystem in Bronfenbrenner's model that surrounds the interaction that takes place between different microsystems such as the relationships between families, schools and community organizations (Spurrier & Alpaslan, 2017). For the topic of this research, this layer may involve the interactions between local communities, tourism operators, law enforcement agencies and NGOs that work to solve the problem that affects the children. Hence, this theory will highlight how important is the effective communication and collaboration in between the stakeholders mentioned above in addressing child abuse in tourist destinations.

The exosystem refers to the external environments which indirectly influence the person despite the fact that the child does not directly interact with this system (Spurrier & Alpaslan, 2017). Factors such as the legal framework governing prostitution and child protection, government policies particularly for tourism and economic development and international agreements and

conventions to address human rights and child welfare can either facilitate or become an obstacle to prevent the issue of sex tourism on children in a developing country like Thailand.

Macrosystem is the second layer of Bronfenbrenner's model that represents the broader cultural, social and economic context in which the individuals are rooted. In Thailand, cultural attitudes towards sexuality, gender roles and the tourism industry have a remarkable impact on the sex tourism and the exploitation of children. Besides that, other aspects like economic disparities, the policy of the country, globalization and the commodification of the bodies also form the dynamic of sex tourism that negatively harm the child development.

Thus, while analyzing data, the layers were not used in a systematic way due to the irrelevant structure in the Themes. For example, to analyze about the Theme 1 about the overview of sex tourism was important in the beginning but in Bronfenbrenner's model, the Theme lies in Macro system and again the Theme 2 lies in Mesosystem which did not seem to be structure based on this theory however, to adjust the structure of the Theme in the analysis, I chose to use the theory according to its relevance in the Theme as it seems to be relevant according to the Themes. The theory was mainly used to highlight the influence of different environments on children in order to understand how different layers in the theory play a role to impact the children's development in sex tourism. Thus, this theory was mainly applied to find the factors influencing children due to sex tourism that will mainly answer the question: how does the popularity of sex tourism in Thailand affect the well-being of children?

4. Methodology

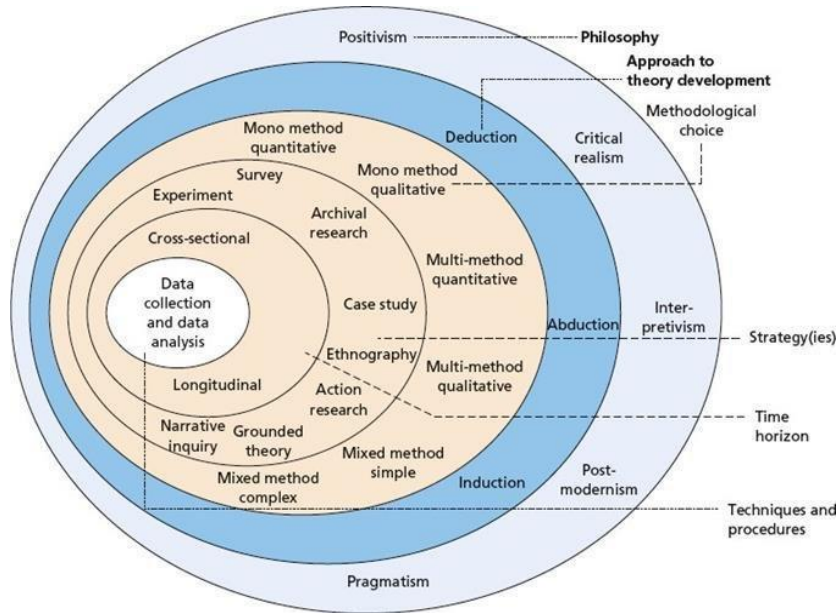
This chapter mainly focuses on the process utilized for this study. Furthermore, the chapter also outlines the research approach used while investigating such a sensitive topic. The methodology of this study encloses overall strategy, procedures and techniques used to collect, analyze and interpret data while writing this research.

Sex tourism is gaining popularity in Thailand. With the purpose of finding out different aspects of sex tourism that impacts children in Thailand, I used a qualitative method for this research. I assume that the use of qualitative methods is more relevant in gathering and gaining insights about the motivations, experiences and perspectives of locals or tourists in Thailand in the first place. I also expect that the qualitative approach used in this study will provide in-depth exploration of the dynamics of sex tourism in Thailand and its impact on children both directly and indirectly; direct being child exploitation and child abuse and indirect impact with insights from the lived or observed experiences and perspectives of the key stakeholders. Lastly, the qualitative methods provide flexibility while adopting the method of data collection with various choices such as interviews, observations, focused groups and text and visual data that helped me adopt an approach based on the unexpected findings and develop the theories that align with the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to explain the dynamics of sex tourism and its impact to the children in Thailand.

To acknowledge a better understanding of the methodological framework of this study a Research Onion model was used as I, as a researcher of this study, find it appropriate to understand the structure of methodological approach in a systematic way while writing about a sensitive topic related to 'sex tourism' and 'children'.

According to Raithatha (2017), *"on the basis of the research onion model an appropriate research methodology can be designed step-by-step, thus it can be used as the main academic research model"* (cited in Melnikovas, 2018).

Figure 2: Saunders et al. Research Onion (Melnikovas, 2018)



Similarly, adopting the research onion model ensures broad understanding and strong analysis that are essential to address such a sensitive issue. Selection of the topic related to ‘sex tourism’ and ‘children’ requires to ensure that the research is conducted ethically, strictly empathetic and deeply considering the sensitivity of the subject matter to the reader as well as other participants of the research. Selecting appropriate methods and the proper way to structure those methodology of any research is important. Thus, with the help of the research onion model, a clear methodological structure and research approach was established, a framework for collecting, analyzing and interpreting data that added the credibility and reliability of my findings while navigating potential challenges like accessing sensitive information or conforming the safety and confidentiality of participants. The application of the research model for this study was used only as a guidance for proper structure of methodology. ‘Table 1’ below is an illustration of the choice of methodology adopted through research onion.

Table 1: An illustration of methodology adopted from Research onion for this study

Layer	Adopted
Layer 1 (Research Philosophy)	Social Constructivist
Layer 2 (Research approach)	Abductive
Layer 3 (Methodological choice)	Multi-method Qualitative
Layer 4 (Research Strategy)	Combination of interviews and YouTube videos
Layer 5 (Time horizon)	Cross-sectional
Layer 6 (Techniques and Procedures)	Semi-structured interview, YouTube videos, and existing research papers. Thematic analysis

4.1. Research philosophy

The research design of any research helps to highlight the structure and methodology of the study. The research design of this study involves making decisions about the whole structure of the study conducted through qualitative methods such as interviews as primary data and YouTube videos and research papers as secondary data.

Methodology of study often depends on the philosophy of its research that supports the researcher's approach to understand the reality. According to Guba (1990), "*The constructivist paradigm believes that each individual creates their own view of the world based on experiences and perceptions*" (Cited in Soontayatron, 2014). So, with the motive to recognize the subjective nature of reality and focus on the understanding of the social phenomena through the opinion and perspectives shaped by individuals within their social and cultural circumstances, this research will adopt social constructivism as a philosophy of research. I am also convinced that this constructivist

approach is well-suited to explore complex topics such as sex tourism in Thailand and its impact on children with the multiple realities that exist through human perception and interpretation.

Regarding ontological aspects, I, as a social constructivist researcher, view reality is multiple and socially constructed or shaped through the interactions and communications of individuals surrounded by cultural and social aspects (Bartmanski, 2018). For the topic of this study, I acknowledge that sex tourism in Thailand and its impact on children are real phenomena that exist through the economic, social and cultural factors and cannot be only theoretically constructed, being invisible reality of the society which significantly indicates the individual, communities and society as a whole. The invisible reality doesn't mean the issue does not exist, instead it indicates that the issues are underreported, masked, hidden, invisible due to the vulnerable population for example, street children and refugees without identity and normalization of abuse and exploitation. The study through the social constructivism approach has explored various stakeholders in Thailand like tourists, children, sex workers, government officials, NGOs and local communities who have different perceptions of the social reality when it comes to my topic of the study 'sex tourism in Thailand and its impact on the wellbeing of the children'.

Correspondingly, epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature, scope and limitation of knowledge that seeks to answer through various theories within studies (Ayikoru, 2009). The epistemological position as a social constructivist researcher will allow me to understand the dynamic of sex tourism and its impact on children through exploring the diverse perspectives and interpretations of the individuals involved such as victims, perpetrators which are tourists in this study case, law enforcement officials and local community members. As a social constructivist, I argue that reality is subjective and socially constructed through interpretation and communication, influenced by the individual's perception and attitude based on their experiences, beliefs and cultural background being active participants. For this reason, I, as a researcher, seek to explore and understand the multiple aspects that create different impacts on children in sex tourism in Thailand to find out the possible intervention for the negative impact of sex tourism on children.

4.2. Abductive research approach

According to Bryman & Bell (2011), *“The qualitative approach highlights “contextual understanding” with an emphasis that researchers usually seek to understand the “behaviour, values, beliefs, and so on in terms of the context in which the research is conducted”* (cited in Azungah, 2018). The qualitative approach for the topic of this study has both the advantages and disadvantages still the advantages are more to deal with the complexity and sensitivity of the issue. Qualitative methods such as interviews, observations and group participation allow for the findings of detailed narratives and perspectives and are very relevant from an academic point of view (Sutton & Austin, 2015). On top of that, the qualitative approach allows me to explore new perspectives, uncover hidden dynamics and identify emergent themes that may be helpful for future research and interventions.

The research approach for this study was followed by an abductive approach as it allows flexibility, triangulation and deep understanding of the complex part of this study while analyzing the collected data (Melnikovas, 2018). Along with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory, the abductive approach facilitated me to reveal the interconnected influences on individuals within their social and environmental background. I started with research into the topic related to the sex tourism in Thailand and its negative consequences for the children. This research approach involves the discussion of the topic or the issue in a broader way with different theories. Such as, data through interviews provided individual perspectives and experiences and the information from the YouTube video highlighted the broader cultural and societal influences which lie within different layer of the Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory.

4.3. Data collection methods

Data collection method was the most essential part of this study to obtain the information through digital platforms and understand the people’s perception about the impact of sex tourism upon the children in Thailand in order to seek for different ideas or tools to prevent such issues. Qualitative data search through the aspects of human behavior, perception, and comprehension without relying on numerical measurements, rather focused on exploring the detail and essence of experiences and interpretations (Alshenqeeti, 2014). According to Kvale, (1996; 2003), *“interviews-compared to*

questionnaires- are more powerful in eliciting narrative data that allows researchers to investigate people's views in greater depth" (cited in Alshenqeeti, 2014). Therefore, this study has focused on interviews as primary data on the other hand YouTube videos and data obtained from research papers as secondary data to supplement the primary data while analyzing data. Also as already pointed out above, this study will focus on the mono method; that is only qualitative method.

4.3.1. Interview

From the beginning of the writing, a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was selected for the topic of this research as I think data collected through this type of method involves direct engagement with participants to gather information, insights and perspectives related to my research topic. As my topic of the study carries sensitive matter of the tourism industry which is 'sex tourism' and 'children', the interview allowed me to explore and address if the issue I raised in this study is still prevalent or not and if it exists then what could be the various reason or factors that is responsible for its existence through lived experiences, opinions and perceptions of different stakeholders of the society.

However, there were some challenges while addressing a sensitive issue related to 'sex tourism' and 'children' through face-to-face interviews. The first pitfall to address the issue of sex tourism through face-to-face interview was difficulty in raising questions related to sex tourism and children as some time participants may become emotionally distressed while recounting their experiences. I, as an interviewer, had to be very careful while asking all the questions to avoid misunderstanding that could trigger distress in participants and provide appropriate support when required or ask the question in a simple way. Secondly, ensuring the trust between us (interviewer and participants) was also very important. I also had to be prepared to deal with other issues like bias in the interview or participant's fear of judgment, cultural differences between us, safety concerns while disclosing the truth if the participants were involved in the activities like child abuse and other many ethical considerations.

Identification and selection of the participants in the interview was a difficult part of this study as interviewing the individuals who had direct experience, that is victims or the offenders was not

possible while living in another country. However, I tried to select the participants according to the destination and experience in the similar field; firstly, the local people of Thailand, particularly those who were working for the protection of the child were given more priority for the interview as I anticipated local and particularly people engaged in NGOs would have more knowledge about the tourism environment of Thailand and know the situation of children better. Secondly, the tourists who visited Thailand were selected to have their opinion since it was more relevant to analyze the case from the tourist's experience as well. In addition, it was also helpful to identify if the tourists were aware about the sex tourism in Thailand or not. In order to get as much data as possible, I was successful in interviewing 5 participants in total. The participants were found from social networking sites and NGOs websites. All the interviews were carried out through a zoom meeting between 19th January 2024 until 11th April 2024. I found zoom as a convenient tool for studying with different features, for example, recording and an easier platform to have academic meetings than other digital platforms. Followed by GDPR regulations all the recordings were stored safely and only in my laptop that required a password for access (GDPR, 2021). Also, a consent form was sent before the interview to make sure they were comfortable with sharing the information with me to use it as data for my study. To ensure that all required ethical considerations were followed due to the sensitive topic of the study, each participant was given information about the recording and asked for their consent at the time of the interview in the zoom as well. The duration of the interview was about 30 minutes on average. Thus, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interview question can be found in Appendix 2 and the transcription of the interview is presented in Appendix 3.

4.3.1.1. Interview question

As already clarified above, this study used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to explore participant's experiences, perceptions and insights regarding sex tourism and its impact on children through digital platforms while ensuring a safe and confidential environment. The questions in the Appendix 2 were prepared for the Interview and the extra questions were asked in between the communication when I realized the participants had more knowledge in the specific topic.

The first question was asked to understand the demographic information of the participant's background as age, nationality, education, profession and relationship status can influence

experiences, attitudes and knowledge related to sex tourism. The second question allowed participants to express and share firsthand experiences and insights about the impact of sex tourism upon children. In connection to the Bronfenbrenner's microsystem that focused on the immediate environment and interactions of individuals, this question also helped to identify how responsible tourists are while traveling to other places or countries. The third question helped me to assess the broader context of sex tourism through the individual experiences from which information needed for prevention and policies were generated. The fourth question was asked to gather information about direct observation regarding child exploitation in Thailand. The fifth question was prepared to explore socio-economic factors that highlighted the root causes and factors that have an impact on children because of the sex tourism which was focused on the immediate environment and interactions between different microsystems to explore how socio-economic factors within families, communities and the society contribute to children's vulnerability to sex tourism. The sixth question investigated the effectiveness of legal and policy measures in preventing and addressing the threat of sex tourism towards the children. It also addressed Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem through cultural, societal and political influences. The seventh question provided me to understand the long-term consequences of child engagement in sex tourism to address the harm towards the children and figure out appropriate prevention. The eighth question was developed to find out how cultural attitudes and norms shape the perception of sexuality and influence risk factors for children. This question also addressed the influence of culture on children's vulnerability to sex tourism through connection of Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem that examined how cultural attitudes, beliefs and norms shape child welfare. The ninth question was included to explore the preventive measures from the participant's view and experiences. The tenth question provided me some information through the participant's view about how the collaboration between various stakeholders can prevent the issue raised in this study. The second last question was mainly asked to know how important law enforcement is to tackle the issue regarding tourism which has provided much benefit to Thailand and children who are the future of Thailand. The last question was asked for my own understanding to adopt an appropriate approach and explore new ideas about ethical consideration while writing this study as the topic I raised carries a sensitive context about sex tourism and children.

Question second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth were developed with the motive of collecting information for the research question '*how does the popularity of sex tourism in Thailand affect the well-being of children*' whereas the information gathered through question seventh, ninth, tenth and eleventh would answer my research question '*what preventive measures should be considered to combat such issues*'. However, the information given by the participants on all questions might be useful to analyze both.

4.3.1.2. Participants

From Table 2, the identification of the participants is presented through fictional names to ensure their confidentiality of the identification. Besides that, the table includes the age, gender, nationality, background of profession and status to identify if they are in a relationship or not. Disclosing such identification for this study was important to understand the perception based on their culture, generation in which they are, their individuality and knowledge and experiences. The last column group was highlighted to reflect if the participants were tourists or the locals who were employed in an NGO. Selecting locals who also worked for NGO in Thailand was important to address the issue of children as I believed the local people engaged as a social worker could provide me broad knowledge about the issue of this topic. From the table above, it is clear that all the tourist participants were female. This occurred due to the lack of access to the male tourists as they were not interested to talk about this topic.

Interview 1

Daisy (fictional name) is a single woman originally from Lebanon and currently living in Sweden. Her purpose to visit Thailand was to explore nature. She was selected as a participant for this study as I found she had traveled to Thailand in the year 2023. I came to know her when she came to apply for a visa to visit Nepal during my Internship in the Nepal embassy. As I have already stated above about a tourist's perception, I expected to gain some insights from her experience as a tourist. The request for the interview was sent through a Facebook messenger where she responded with an interest for the interview. The interview took place through a zoom meeting on 19th January, 2024, at Danish time 14:00 until 14:30 during the day.

Table 2: Participants in the interview

Fictional name	Age	Gender	Nationality	Background	Relationship Status	Group
Daisy	43	Female	Lebanon	Work for shipping and logistic	Single	Tourist
Basil	42	Male	Thailand	Deputy Director in NGO	Married	Local
Jasmine	47	Female	Thailand	Manager in foundation	Single	Local
Rose	null	Female	Nepal	Student, Housewife	Married	Tourist
Tulip	40+	Female	Nepal	Nurse	Married	Tourist

Interview 2

Basil (fictional name) is a married man with two kids from Thailand. He was selected because he works for an NGO named Human Help Network Foundation Thailand (HHNFT) in Thailand that mainly focuses on the issue related to children and adolescents. Basil was one of the perfect participants; he met both the criteria about being local and being engaged in the activity that protects children. The request for an interview was sent through the contact center from the website from where I got a reply from him saying he is happy for me to raise such an issue and is interested to have a talk on such a topic. The interview took place through a zoom meeting on 25th January 2024, at Danish time 11:25 until 12:20 in the afternoon.

Interview 3

Like Basil, Jasmine (fictional name) was also selected because she has experience for many years in child rights and child protection. She is from Thailand and single. She is a manager of Childlinethailand.org. Another benefit of having her as a participant was her specialization in psychology that helped me get more information on a psychological aspect of my study topic. The request for an interview was sent through the contact center from the website where the service department helped me find the right person related to my study topic. The interview took place through a zoom meeting on 22nd March 2024, at Danish time 9:40 until 10:20 in the morning.

Interview 4

Rose (fictional name) is a married woman from Nepal and her purpose to visit Thailand was to have a good time with her husband. I found her through a friend circle when I posted a story on my Facebook stating “Hi all, anyone who has been in Thailand between 2022-2024? Please message me”. A friend of mine after looking at the post messaged me and reached out to me to share that one of her sister’s friends had recently visited Thailand and to check if she was fit for the interview. Then I scheduled a zoom meeting on 10th April 2024, at Danish time 13:24 in the afternoon until 14:05. Most of the time she preferred to speak in our Native language ‘Nepali’ and therefore, I translated the interview to English while transcribing.

Interview 5

Tulip (fictional name) is a married woman with a child. She is originally from Nepal but has been living in Australia for many years. Like Rose, she was also interested to participate in the interview as a tourist who visited Thailand recently after viewing my story on Facebook. She is my neighbor but our relation is like sisters as I have known her since my childhood so this relation made her feel comfortable to express more regarding ‘sex tourism in Thailand’. She visited Thailand with her family while traveling from Nepal to Australia as they had a connecting flight and 36 hours of transit in Thailand. The interview took place on 11th April 2024, at the Danish time 12:28 until 13:08.

4.3.2. Secondary data

After gathering primary data through interviews, secondary data were collected through YouTube videos and data from existing research papers. The secondary data were mainly used when required to compare and support the primary data in order to enhance the validity of the analysis. The use of the secondary data while analyzing helped me provide the existing knowledge and evidence to discuss and conclude the findings.

YouTube video

After getting an opportunity to have an interview with only a few people interested to talk about the topic of this study, I used data collected through transcription of YouTube videos. I primarily focused on the content of the video that mainly highlighted sex tourism and its impact on children in the form of secondary data to support and compare the themes created through coding while analyzing the data and discussing the findings. Firstly, YouTube was selected as it hosts a vast array of information that offer both the verbal and visual representations of various aspects of sex tourism in Thailand (Patterson, 2018). While searching for the context, I searched for ‘sex tourism in Thailand’ in the search option of YouTube. I came across one of the YouTube videos of an interview with one of the tourists who has been living in Thailand for many years and the documentaries exploring the issue of sex tourism in Thailand. These sources of information were selected for secondary data for analysis. In this process, three videos that interpret about sex tourism and child engagement in sex tourism in Thailand were paid more attention and used for this thesis. Additionally, people involved in the videos were considered as informants. The list of selected YouTube videos and its transcription presented in Appendix 4. To save time and give more focus on transcribing interviews on my own, the video was transcribed using a website called YouTube Transcript (YouTube Transcript, 2024).

While selecting the video the views on the video were given preferences to know the reach of the audience for the particular issue. Therefore, the most watched videos were selected. All the videos were posted between 2021 to 2024. Also in my view, YouTube videos often capture real-life events and experiences which allow me to access a wide range of viewpoints of tourists, locals, activists, journalists and content creators to understand the real issue of sex tourism among the children. While selecting the video the key context ‘sex tourism’ ‘issue’ and ‘child’ were considered. Along

with that, the relevant comments on the videos were also used as information while analyzing and comparing the information.

The 1st video, which is a documentary, was uploaded by Java Discover (Free global documentaries and clips) from France that joined the YouTube channel on 23rd October, 2013. The channel has 415k subscribers with many documentaries around the world. The documentary includes many informants such as journalists, tourists, the sex workers, the employee of NGO and the deputy police chief. This documentary according to Basil (participants) was banned in Thailand. As he stated, *“the government has always been in denial even with the exposure about the documentation by the German documentary that you might have seen already. Even that you know, a few weeks later after that this things was exposed in Thailand, the youtube documentation was banned from Thailand.. yeah.. we cannot access that anymore. And then the Pattaya city you know the..I think it's the chancellor or the President of the Pattaya Chamber of Commerce, he gave a very awkward interview that he insisted there is no such thing as prostitute here in Pattaya. But here I live in Pattaya over the past 6 years and you know..ahh.. less than around 800 or 900 meters away there is like bar and there lots and lots of girls, especially very young girls providing such services for the tourists.”*

The 2nd video was uploaded by Thairish Times from Ireland. According to this YouTube channel, it mainly covers content related to Thailand. It has 48.5k subscribers and was added on 9th June 2020. This video is an interview by the journalist with one of the tourists who has been living in Thailand for many years and has disclosed many realities of sex tourism from a tourist point of view.

Lastly, the 3rd video is also a documentary which was uploaded by Mystery Bypass with 264 subscribers. The video was selected due to its content and large number of views. The channel joined YouTube on 22nd October, 2021 from the United States. The channel also claimed that it mainly focuses on exploring and disclosing real life stories. The documentary includes journalists and Thai women who worked as sex workers or who were married to foreign men.

4.4. Data analysis

As already stated above, this study adopted an abductive approach which means the information for predefined research questions was generated based on observed patterns and evidence. Due to the flexible aspect of the abductive approach while analyzing and interpreting the data allowed me to move back and forth between data collecting and analysis to answer the main concern of this study.

After collecting data through interviews, YouTube videos it was important to transcribe collected data. Since all the interviews were recorded it was easy for me to transcribe it after the interview. Among 5 interviews, 4 were taken in English and 1 was in my native language ‘Nepali’ which was later translated in English while transcribing. In addition to transcription of the interview, it was also important to transcribe a YouTube video. Lastly, the data from the existing research were used as it is as supporting data while analyzing the data.

Thematic analysis

According to Walters (2016), “*thematic analysis may be particularly useful where interpretation of both written and visual text is required, such as research using newspapers, magazines, advertising brochures, or social media*”. First of all, I found thematic analysis very suitable for this study to analyze qualitative data collected from interviews and YouTube videos to provide quality insights from the experiences, perspectives and narratives that include sex tourism in Thailand. Consequently, using thematic analysis to analyze qualitative data within the framework of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory supported the goal of my research to address the impact of popularity of sex tourism on children in Thailand. Application of this analysis allowed me to explore the complex, different factors influencing the issue and the possibility of its preventive measures. Using thematic analysis guided me to identify the repeated themes and patterns in the data to generate possible explanations during analysis. Also through this analysis I identified themes at various levels of the ecological system from the microsystem (personal experience) to the macrosystem (cultural and societal influences) linked with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological levels.

Secondly, this study used different types of data within a qualitative method, thematic analysis supported the integration of different data from multiple sources like interviews and YouTube videos to represent diverse perspectives and separate the finding according to different patterns and themes. Thematic analysis including the abductive reasoning process enabled me to develop and refine the object of this study based on the data. All the different data will be compared while analyzing to reach into discussion and conclusion. Lastly, with the use of thematic analysis, I recognized the complexities of the ecological system, identified key themes that highlight the interplay between individual, interpersonal, community and societal factors underlying the popularity of sex tourism in Thailand and its impact on the children.

According to Rogers (2018), *“The researcher is the main instrument in qualitative research, and coding is primarily an interpretive, heuristic, and exploratory process that requires a problem-solving process and a synthesis of the data”*. Therefore, to find out the main themes, the initial codes from the data collected through the interview were generated and presented through the table in Appendix 5. Since the data I collected were subjective, the generated codes were turned into the sub-themes after which the overall sub-themes were merged to develop the main themes. In that process, seven main themes were developed which are presented in Appendix 5. Finally, the review and identified themes were used as the topic to discuss and analyze the data in the analysis chapter.

4.5. Time Horizon

The time period for writing this thesis was from 1st of February 2024 until end of May 2024 which was four months in total. As the time period was a short-time period the participants were not contacted again after one interview to generate more information or to update the new data also the information on the YouTube was also not retrieved once after which I didn't revisit the video to check if the information was edited or updated after the date I accessed. Hence, a cross sectional study was selected as a research time horizon (Melnikovas, 2018).

4.6. Ethical considerations and Limitations

This qualitative research which was done with the purpose to find out the socio-cultural, economic and political aspects that have created some sort of impact on children due to sex tourism in Thailand that ensure the well-being and anonymity of the participants, prioritizing ethical considerations that need to be taken while studying such a sensitive topic about children. As the first step while collecting data, I ensured that all the participants were informed and asked for their consent before participating in interviews while explaining to them the purpose of the study, the reason for their involvement and the confidentiality while presenting data in the study. Nobody was forced to participate in the interview. Each participant was sent the consent form prior to the interview and all five participants filled the form and submitted beforehand. In addition to that, everyone was asked for the consent to record the video and informed about the use of the data at the time of interview as well. In the second place, the confidentiality of the participants was focused more while storing their data securely, replacing their name with a fictional name and transcribing data even though they didn't find it to be problematic with the sharing of their name. Thus, the record is only kept with me and will be deleted right after my oral exam. On the contrary, following the rule of GDPR (2021), as YouTube videos were publicly posted it was not compulsory to request for consent. To make the video anonymous, the list of videos selected was presented separately in Appendix 4. Also, the topic with sensitive content was taken into consideration and used with caution without judging the individual. Because of the sensitivity of the topic no graphic content was used in the analysis chapter.

Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter of the topic, there were many limitations that I found while writing this study. Most importantly, as I started to collect the data at the early phase, the questions I created for the interview were difficult in itself, which I realized when there was not much time left and after interviewing 3 participants. Thus, with a short time left it was not appropriate to change the questions. Another limitation I found while writing the project was the topic I chose; it was very hard to find people particularly directly engaged people such as sex tourists and the victims who are an adult now but were affected by sex tourism in Thailand. As a result, I had to choose the tourists to address if they encountered any such issue and the local people who are aware about the issue raised in the topic. Due to this reason, to avoid bias as much as possible and to support the data from the interview, I decided to use data from other sources as

well. However, due to many ethical considerations to be considered while using information from social media like YouTube, at some point it also created difficulty for me to decide how I was going to use such data. In addition to that, being unable to visit Thailand and observe everything directly was not possible due to personal reasons.

4.7. Reflexivity

I have never been to Thailand, however the first idea to write this thesis on the topic of “sex tourism and children” came to my mind when I saw a documentary about sex tourism in Thailand. After that I did search for other documentaries based on similar topics and found many. I also started to read different news articles that highlighted the issue of sex tourism in Thailand among children. I found the same while searching for research and an article in the ‘google scholar’ which motivated me to stick in the subject matter like ‘sex tourism’ and ‘children’. Another aspect I found interesting about the topic was that prostitution is illegal till date but when I observed it on YouTube videos related to ‘sex tourism’ it didn’t look like the prostitution was prohibited. The first attempt to address child sexual exploitation in sex tourism failed due to less data so I had to refine my topic based on the data I had for which I changed it to ‘impact of sex tourism on children’. When asked for the interview for the research in the sensitive topic of the tourism industry in Thailand in the Facebook page name ‘Love Thailand’, many people showed their interest but as soon I explained about my topic, everyone denied saying they had no knowledge in the particular subject matter. One was very offended by my post and claimed that I was in the wrong place asking for their opinions and it was a kind of disrespect for them after which I deleted the post but there were some who supported me despite the fact that they stated that they did not have knowledge on it. The tourists being offensive for the research like this, for me it was also questionable, why would anyone get angry if they had not done anything wrong or felt disturbed with the post “I am writing my thesis based on a sensitive topic related to children and tourism in Thailand”.

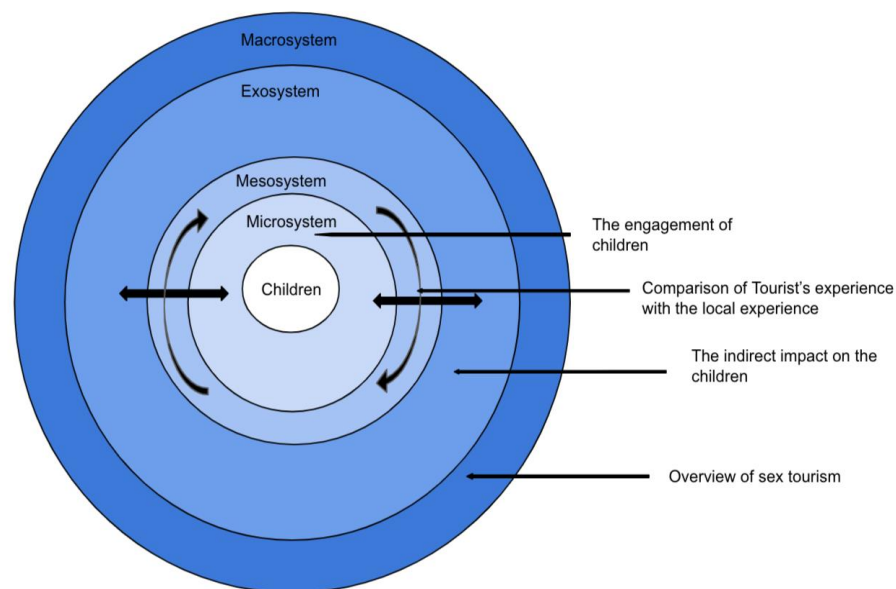
Being myself from the developing country where I heard different news about child trafficking, exploitation and selling the children by their own parents for financial benefit or because they

could not raise their children due to poverty and the documentary I saw in the YouTube video, influenced me to investigate sex tourism and its impact on the children.

5. Analysis

This section will deal with the data collected through interviews and the transcription of YouTube videos. Firstly, main headings to analyze the data were generated from the themes from the interview using thematic analysis as already stated in the methodology section. Secondly, through the analysis of the identified patterns, themes which were connected and compared to develop broader conclusions about the impact of sex tourism towards the children in Thailand. The common themes identified cover different factors related to economic, social, cultural, influential and political and legal framework of the society. Based on the patterns and themes identified for the study, I analyzed the data in a broader way with the help of collected information and linked the applicable themes with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to discuss the overall phenomenon of the issue raised in this study. The socio-demographic information about the participants is already presented in table 2 (Page 27) in the methodology section. While the theory of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems after identifying the themes has been recreated in the below figure.

Figure 3: Conceptual figure of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory through identified themes



5.1. The impact on the well-being of children

Theme 1: Overview of sex tourism (Macro system)

As this theme consists of broader societal and cultural norms, economic disparities and legal frameworks that define the context of sex tourism, the theme lies in the top layer in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory which is the macro system. As discussed in the theoretical framework section about Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, this layer shapes the overall context of sex tourism in Thailand with the answer to how it started, why it is successful and how it can influence or create issues among children. The first identified themes outline the sex tourism from the participant's views as well the data from the transcription of YouTube videos.

As participant of interview, Basil, described in the interview, the origin of sex tourism in Thailand is linked with the history from the US Navy during the Vietnam war era in the 1960s. He also points out that sex tourism has built an image among the four attractions of Thailand. According to him, *"the westerners and foreigners, they know that we are the center of sex tourism and we are very famous for 4S tourism which is Sand, Sea, Sun and unfortunately Sex tourism"*. His statement illustrates that the sex tourism exists in Thailand and it is well known by the world. Even though Basil believes Thailand has a general image of being a destination for sex tourism, prostitution is still not legally accepted till date (Siviero, 2023; World Population Review, 2024; Hung, 2024). In addition to that, the two statements from the journalist in the 1st video (Appendix 4), *"For almost 2 years, the capital of sex tourism has laid dormant as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. Thailand has turned on its red light once more to the delight to hordes of foreign men"* and *"There are more than 30000 sex workers in Pattaya..Thailand remains one of the main destinations for sex tourism, flushing several billion dollars in tax revenue into the state every year"* also spotlight the popularity of sex tourism Thailand and its economic benefit in the country.

The response from another participant, Jasmine, *"Thailand is probably another country among many countries in the world that would be the target and the popular destination for the tourists with sexual desire with both children or adults and even a third gender..because..if you know a Thailand, we speak a layer ladyboys..or the.. because we respect every gender here"* explains that the nature of sex tourism in Thailand is beyond age and gender. Her statement highlighting third gender also reveals about the tourists who prefer third gender and who might not have the same

freedom in their own country. This can be because even in this generation, the issue of gender in many countries in the world still exists. While Thailand has become successful in respecting and accepting all the gender in the community, there are many countries that do not as a result of which people travel to fulfill their sexual desire where they feel accepted. Another aspect from the children is, there are many countries that have powerful law when it comes to children, particularly western countries seems to be strict in the case of child abuse or any kind of harm to children. Thus, the people from these countries travel with the main intention of abusing children in poor countries where the law is not strictly implemented. While Daisy in the interview further added, *“it seems, its the culture there..to be honest...like.. I..I knew what I was gonna..what I was going to expect there..because you hear so much..like many go to meet women there..to go...(laugh)...sleep with women....so for me it wasn't ohh..shock you know..ya.. (laugh) you even see many...ah ..what are they called..like these..ladyboys.. Working the same..because sometimes you mistake them for women because they are really pretty. There are a lot in Thailand..this.. Ladyboys”*. Like Jasmine, her statement also illustrates the normalization of sex tourism, cultural expectations and the presence of various forms of sex work, including transgender which is referred as ladyboys by both the participants. However, Rose has a different opinion on this topic. According to her, *“I saw that female are high in demand that is why men are also converted into lady boy as it seemed that the country is lead by the women in terms of earning or financial aspects”*. The statement of Rose highlights the economic benefit driving sex tourism in Thailand where high demand for female sex workers leads some men to transition to “lady boys” to be benefitted from market opportunities which suggests that sex tourism significantly influences gender roles and behaviors which she encounters on her visit. For children such a phenomenon can result in confusion in the family structure due to economic pressure. Besides that, according to the journalist in the 3rd video (Appendix 4), *“Until some village women came across a more lucrative harvest: foreign men (..)”*. The statement can be linked to the statement of Rose, as the context of the statement in the 3rd video reflect about the village women in Thailand, who are depicted as realizing that they can pursue relationships with foreign men to improve their economic situation. The idea of women being in demand due to economic benefits from both the statements on the other hand objectify male tourists as a driver of economic motivations which form the intersection of sex tourism with economic realities. Nonetheless all the three statements indicate

that the sex tourism industry is not solely focused on biological women but also includes transgender individuals who are perceived as attractive to tourists.

Furthermore, the tourist in the 2nd video (Appendix 4) discusses a lot of his experiences as a long-term expat in Thailand's sex tourism industry. According to him, he spent nine years involved with Thailand's sex workers before meeting his wife and luckily didn't get any health issues such as HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases. In the video he has shared many experiences including tragic stories emphasizing the challenges faced by sex workers in sex tourism. His statement, *"I always respected the girls..I would treat her like princess. I would to know their life story"; I like I got an insight into the way they live..I would take them for the whole night"* humanize sex workers by portraying their motivations and showing curiosity in their life while challenging stereotypes and stigmas associated with the profession. He also narrates the description about the influence in the recruitment process and the motivations of different types of workers, providing insight into the internal environment of sex tourism industry while reflecting the empathy and highlighting the emotional side of sex workers and those around him.

Theme 2: Comparison of Tourist's experience with local experience (Mesosystem)

As explained in the theoretical framework section, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory reflects how various environments interact to affect an individual's development. This theme lies in the second level of the theory, Mesosystem as this layer focuses on the interconnections between the environment. In this theme, the interactions between tourists, local communities and other social institutions are the environment that affect the children.

When asked Daisy in interview about her experience about sex tourism in Thailand and child exploitation if she had witnessed any, she replied,

"Children no..no..children no..but of course many women working in massage or sex field (laugh)..but they are not forced..if you..I think..you see many on the street of course..you know...many men going in..it's their job..so they do like massage or..you see also many women with elder man..like many young women..18..may be less..I do not know now..(laugh)..but young women are with men that are 50/60 foreigners." (Daisy, Participant)

Her reply was 'no' as she was not sure if the girls roaming around with tourists were less than 18 years as they had put much makeup on their face and it was hard to recognize the age even if they were less than 18 years. The statement of Daisy, expresses about the presence of sex tourism in Thailand with her statement *"but of course many women working in massage or sex field"* and on the other side it also indirectly reveals the issue regarding the age *"you see also many women with older man..like many young women..18..may be less..I do not know now."* Like her, many tourists might fail to encounter the age of the girls/women due to various reasons like lots of makeup on the face, the Asian skin that looks younger than the actual age. Another issue that can be highlighted through her statement is that 'not being forced' in the eyes of tourists. The statement also highlights the visible and normal interaction between tourists and sex workers in Thailand. It reflects how her experience is shaped by her cultural acceptance of sex workers, and the open nature of sex tourism during her visit as she did not express herself feeling bothered by sex tourism in Thailand however the age gap between tourists and the Thai ladies have definitely bothered her.

The experience of Rose (Participant) as she encounters the vast difference between Nepal and Thailand regarding the openness of sex industry as a tourist in Thailand. Like Daisy, she claimed that the sex work in Thailand is visible and acceptable with a noticeable preference for western tourists over tourists from other countries. Tulip (Participant) further added the same kind of statement as Daisy and Rose while reflecting the direct impact of visible sex tourism on family-oriented tourists as she expressed the discomfort and cultural shock experienced. *"It is amazing country and when you go with the family you feel a bit awkward."* (Tulip, participant)

The experience of the three tourists demonstrates the contrasting experience for the tourists from different cultural backgrounds and forms of tourism.

"(...) the Thai government have always been in denial that we do not have what so called sex tourism here in Thailand". "Back in the days it used to be like millions of people per year. Yeah.. along with influx of the tourists are of course the downside is that we have lots of social problems concerning poor management by the government" (Basil, Local)

As stated by Basil, the denial from the government highlights a failure in the mesosystem due to the government's refusal to accept the issue that needs effective regulation and management. This lack of recognition leads to a direct negative impact on local communities that include children as well. Furthermore, the flow of tourists, while economically beneficial, can create issues as discussed on the Theme 1, HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases, orphaned children and organized crime intersecting both economic gain and social harm in the mesosystem.

“(..) we do not have a law to allow or not allow any children or adults to work as a sex workers (..). “(..)it depends on other, you know if the family is or they can blame anything, they can blame the social norms, they can blame about the financial difficulties (..)” (Jasmine, Local)

The lack of clear legislation as expressed by Jasmine, when there is no particular law for commercial sex it can influence anyone willing to earn easy money that on the other hand leads to degradation of cultural value and social issues such as affecting the wellbeing of children. Furthermore, the influence of social norms and family structure is another important aspect of the mesosystem. From the statement of Jasmine, such factors indicate local socioeconomic conditions that interact with broader societal; influences which can push vulnerable populations towards the commercial sex industry. Also, from her point of view, dysfunctional family structure will further lead to a situation that makes it easier for children to be exploited. To add more, her statement *“(..)it may create a culture of choosing (..)”* underlines how economic and social pressure can push individuals including minors to please foreigners.

Thus, the comparison between the tourist's experience and the local's experience draws attention to the cultural background. For locals, sex tourism appears as an economic benefit for the country which has on the other side created a bad image in the world, however they are also concerned about the social problems and the influence toward the children because of it. On the contrary, tourists, especially those from more traditional cultures where kissing and hugging to opposite sex is even not considered as normal, mostly experience awkward and cultural shock due to the visible and open nature of sex tourism in Thailand. All other tourists in the interview often expressed discomfort and awkwardness by the public sexual activities and interactions they witnessed; for example, Rose compared Nepal and Thailand in terms of visibility of her encounter regarding

gender differences and Thai-girls and tourists activities, Daisy expressed her new encounter about young girls with old tourists and lady boy and Tulip expressed about awkwardness for family tourists due to visibility of sex activities between Thai girls and Tourists. The mesosystem hence discloses the vast contrast between the tourist's and local perception. This also draws attention to the impact of sex tourism on tourist's children due to the unfamiliar and distinct culture. The observation of the sex tourism industry by the locals is taken as a common aspect of their society where they also accept the negative impact of it upon the kids and society. On the other hand, tourists view sex tourism through the lens of their own cultural values, leading to varied and often conflicting experiences. While, it is also clear that the status of the tourists, whether single or couple of family their experience and perception towards the ongoing sex tourism in Thailand vary from that point of view as Daisy did not talk about any uncomfortable aspect for family with children whereas Rose being married and planning for child and Tulip being a mother of small child highlight that it can bring negative experience for the family who travel in Thailand particularly the place popular in sex tourism.

“But because now it is more easily, everyone can search and everyone know that if you want to have sex with the children, where to go? I probably think Thailand and Philippines would be the, maybe a top three or may be Kenya would be like a top five, top 10 that is appear on the internet.”
(Jasmine, participant)

Jasmine believes like many other countries; Thailand can be the destination for the sex tourists who prefer children.

Theme 3: The engagement of children (Microsystem)

The engagement of children in sex tourism in Thailand from first-hand perspectives through interviews from both tourists and locals mainly focus on the Bronfenbrenner's microsystem as everyone had the similar statement about the engagement of the children that mainly lies in the microsystem as it is the result of mainly influenced due to immediate environment like family background or family structure, parents, neighbors, peers or relatives as a influencers and economic hardships, lack of parental supervisions and community norms that tolerate or normalize

prostitution (Spurrier & Alpaslan, 2017) . For all this reason, this also reflects the direct impact on children because of the popular sex tourism in the country.

“(...) especially with the westerners when they come here, they have very specific taste when it comes to sexual pleasure and then..yeah..for many of the occasions we have seen that there are under age bar where the under age prostitute or in this a case you can say that the minor is being forced from time to time willingly provide such services for the tourists.” (Basil, participant)

With the same context, Hung (2023) in his study claimed,

“Ample international tourists, especially those from Western countries, enter Thailand and Cambodia to seek cheap (child) commercial sex. These foreign tourists exploit the relatively low costs of living in developing SEA countries and seek sexual entertainment and pleasure.”

It sounds like the preferences of the tourists also play a great role in the engagement of children in sex tourism due to issues such as child trafficking or forcedly made prostitutes or the poor family of children might sell them for a large sum of money. However, underage girls involved in providing sex services to tourists on their own wish is still a question if it is a matter of concern or what, as it still directly or indirectly has some consequences such as hidden abuse and exploitation, being addicted to easy and quick money and not willing to try to do something that needs more effort. For which Jasmine to a great extent revealed, *“I will say like, if you want to buy something but they do not sell but why I will sell something if there are no buyer (..).”* Jasmine thinks that the offenders are not child sex workers, so in her eyes, even though they are engaged on their own will, child sex workers are always victims. She further added, *“(..) unluckily if it is that children..they are related to the community who value the money or material things, they probably enter as the sex worker or sex tourism more easily.”*

Hung (2023) in his study stated, *“(...) the loose social control and the high degree of social influence drive underage girls within the sex industry to develop a certain degree of self-and social acceptance with respect to working as prostitutes.”* Tulip (participant) as a tourist further expressed from the legal aspect of sex tourism and the ethical concerns surrounding child exploitation for the voluntary engagement of children in sex tourism,

“I think if you are like you know..if you are adult and you want to do the in my perception if you are adult and you want to do.. You know..make that things because I think that in Thailand for the adult. I think prostitution is legal in Thailand and if you want to gain money for that, then that is fine for the adult. If you are talking about the child exploitation I think they do not have that much you know..the capacity to judge the sexual exploitation, they actually facing the sexual exploitation on them. I think yeah...and they can attract the tourist just for the sex if you are like adults you can go with that but I think that is you know illegal to do the same thing with the child.”

Through her statement, Tulip has addressed the legality of prostitution in Thailand and the distinction between adult and child exploitation. According to her understanding and observation, prostitution is legal for adults in Thailand. She also acknowledges that children lack the capacity to understand and judge sexual and other kinds of exploitation because of which they often face it. Rose (participant) expressed, *“From what I have seen, they are mostly young girls, as far as I know, they do not seem to be adult, right. I just remembered that they look like 16-15 year old girls to me. I did not go and ask them, but I observed that they are also involved it.”* This highlights the visible engagement of children in sex tourism from a tourist’s observation. The immediate and personal encounter with young girls who are perceived to be under 18 years old engaging in the commercial sex industry in tourist areas underline the visible issue to tourists. However, she also argues that she is not sure if they are children or not which also reflects the misunderstanding about the age of Thai girls among tourists. The influx of the tourists exploring low-cost sexual services and the weak enforcement of social controls further enable the acceptance of the children in the commercial sex industry due to the power of earning easy and quick money from such industry after the influence from different immediate environments.

Along with Tulip, the statement from participant and the finding of Hung (2023), the 1st video (Appendix 4) also reflects about the engagement of underage in the prostitution in Thailand as the journalist in the video highlights, *“We filmed in Pattaya and saw many underaged girls working in the redlight zones. Child protectors tell us pedophile criminals select Thailand as destination again. (...) we see children holding hands with tourists no one intervenes or even seems surprised by it...(…)...A German man has just been arrested on suspicion of child abuse. He allegedly bought child prostitutes in a bar”*

This clearly highlights the engagement of minors either forcefully or voluntarily and raises the concern for the society and new generation as Jasmine above claimed it is the new generation who can change the image of Thailand.

“you know, back in the days, let's say it around 60s or 70s or so we, there is certain area especially north-eastern part of Thailand where they have this norm or trends that people or local people are willing to trade their own children for financial gain. Let's say that, they would allow the 14 or 16 or 17 years girl to get married..yeah.. with the foreigners, so that specific foreigner can provide them with the bigger house or car or money, so on and so forth” (Basil, participant)

Nevertheless, from both the interview and the YouTube video, the concern about the digital issue that also links with virtual sex tourism is encountered. And data from both sources claimed that the issue occurred during Covid19. *“(..) you know the girls who have this online application you know, it offered the sexual services through mobile apps or something like that yeah. It is evolving all the time when it comes to prostitution so they have this. Majority of foreigners I think they called it freelancers, you know. There are actual places or premises that they work but then they provide services online.”* (Basil, participant)

“like online victims a lot. We have a lot of cases during COVID” (Jasmine, participant).

To sum up, again Basil in the interview, said that the main reason for children to engage in the prostitution nowadays is mainly because of poverty in the first place and claimed such a profession to be the track for an easy money which doesn't need any diploma or training like other professions. The second factor he highlighted is the materialistic lifestyle that attracts teenagers to engage in such industry and the last factor he points out is human trafficking that forced children to do so. Simultaneously, both the participants, Basil and Jasmine express about the report of the engagement of the children on online platforms or applications.

“(..) I will still think like that children who involved in sex tourism probably..ahmm..probably they have a low self-esteem they are not proud of themselves or they probably...they just feel low compared to other people in the social, in the community.” (Jasmine, participant)

Theme 4: The indirect impact on the children (Exosystem)

The indirect impact on children due to sex tourism is mainly influenced by the various environmental factors. As the exosystem layer in Bronfenbrenner's theory includes a wide range of social systems which do not directly involve the children however it still affects their development.

"(...)we are not someone to discriminate or look down the sex workers but you know, it is very difficult not only for me but majority of people try to understand and try to explain to siblings or children or to everyone else that this is not ok, this not the things that you should do in the future. And for the kids, whom their parents are working in this industry, you know, I have at least 10 cases in my foundation where I have been taking care of the children, they are the victims. Their parents are sex workers and majority of the time they witnessed their parents having sexual relationship in that very own room, yeah, maybe from time to time they just wait in the corner, from time to time they just wait outside and then they see everything that happens between the guest and... So, it create, they store that reality and they made the reality for the kids when they grow up. (...) If you can see that I think back in the 80s or 90s it was a global pandemic of HIV infection concerning..yeah..and also because of the sex tourism it also created lots of orphans.(...) Just like orphans of course, HIV infected babies of course, drugs, organized crime, abuse and side pornography and so on and on." (Basil, participant)

Basil in the interview, does not only highlight the impact on the children directly engaged in the sex tourism or whose parents are engaged in such industry. From his own experience of encountering the indirect impact to the children who live around the city popular in sex tourism, he also raises the concern towards the psychological health of children who observe such activities and perceive those activities as a normal part of the society. As stated above in the Theme 2, Tulip also had a similar view about impact upon the tourist's children who can observe everything going on in Thailand if brought in the places crowded with commercial sex workers. According to him, whether the parents are engaged or not, there are many chances that such activities can impact all the children who are exposed to such an environment and see everything on a daily basis.

“Since sex tourism has returned to Pattaya, the issue of sexual violence against children has increased massively (...) it is essential that her son doesn’t grow up in the red light district, four year-old (...) lives with her mother in the countryside. This arrangement is very common in Pattaya, the children grow up with their granny’s in the village while their mothers earn a living as prostitutes. (...) yet it is a survival model for tens of thousands of porter families in the country.” (Journalist, 1st video, Appendix 4)

The culture of sending children to the grandmother’s place in the countryside while the mother’s working as a prostitute again raises the concern of psychological impact on the children from being ignored by the biological father who is German as stated in the video and separation from the mother due to her profession.

Additionally, Nuttavuthisit (2007) in her study claimed, *“‘Thailand’s reputation as a holiday destination has been sullied by the many articles and television reports of Thailand’s sex trade, the growing AIDS epidemic and the treatment of orphans, especially girls’ (USA, Female)”*. Again, according to Buranadechachai and Siriattakul (2020) and Coupland et al., (2019), *“(.) engagement in commercial sex is a leading occupational driver that contributes to the infection of HIV/AIDS and addiction to illicit drugs”* (cited in Hung, 2023). The engagement of parents in the commercial sex that can affect the child psychology making them feel low in the society thinking from others perception, changes in financial background due to the engagement of family, relatives, friends or neighbors that can also prepare them to invest their life in the easy money instead of educating and training themselves on some other fields, different health and safety risks that can be passes from the parents including sexual transmitted diseases if unplanned pregnancy happened.

Thus, the reputation of Thailand as a holiday destination has been replaced by an image associated with sex tourism adding the health crises like HIV/AIDS epidemic and the mistreatment of orphans have more complicated the effort to intervene. At the same time, involvement of parents in sex trade makes the children more vulnerable, leading them to psychological, economic and health challenges to break the cycle of poverty and disease.

5.2. Preventive measure to fight against the impact of sex tourism on children

Theme 5: Preventive measures for the efforts to protect children

“(...) 70 boys and girls live here together in small residential groups. Most of them need psychological help. The goal of the facility is to provide the children with an education and build back their self-esteem. Many children had already experienced abuse in their families before they were sold to sex tourists. We asked the director of the facility where he thinks the root of the problem lies?”(Journalist in 1st video) “ It is because that the family unit is not strong here in Thailand, They do not know that is their obligation to provide protection and support for the children. When they start abusing the children, accumulates and makes the children want to run away from home and then when they are away from the home that’s when they are very vulnerable to the pedophiles and later on they are involved into the sex tourism.” (Director of the Childline Foundation in 1st video, Appendix 4)

The speakers in the 1st video have considered to include the child protection organization and their effort to protect the children in the walking street of Pattaya during night time which also reflect both the issue of sex tourism in Thailand towards the children and the efforts of some organizations trying to protect them from being victimized.

“I would say two parts, the first thing is that law and legislation. Because everything that I have said, I have nothing against prostitution. I am not trying to promote prostitution but I have nothing against it. It’s a kind of profession as long as you follow the rules, regulations and you have social responsibility towards your own body, or the guest or social problems and something like that, I think it’s fine. Of course, I am 100% against the underage prostitution.(...) Every school, every level must teach about things concerning sex tourism or prostitution or underage prostitution and only with that you can solve the problem within the national level. First solve this problem about legislation and the second is the proper education.” (Basil, participant)

Basil in the interview reveal that the equal participation and collaboration between government, local society or community and NGOs is very important when it comes to preventive measure to combat the issue of child exploitation or child abuse in sex tourism. In addition he further emphasizes the importance of proper legislation and education to combat the indirect impact of the sex tourism on children and society. On the other hand, like Basil, Daisy also agrees on

education and legislation that provides strict punishment to the offenders could prevent such a social issue. *“But if they go to school, maybe they do not go to school. Parents may need to be more strict.. you know.. with their children. Police may be, you know..ah.. stricter, punishments. Yeah but it’s a hard question like how to stop them.”* (Daisy, Participant).

Again, the argument of Jasmine in the below statement, acknowledges there is a dual impact; the first is the benefit of sex tourism in the Thai economy and the second is its negative impact on the image of Thailand. Hence, this tension between economic gain and social responsibility also reflects a moral dilemma where economic benefits often cover the children’s well-being and societal reputation. Thus, she suggests that the change must come from future generations to protect both; the image of Thailand in the world and the vulnerable children from the adverse effects of sex tourism.

“you think it was happened before and it is still maintained because the image is the image and I do not think you can easily change the image. But however, it might be positive or negative, because the positive is probably the Thai economy is getting better because of the tourism you know, coming to Thailand. If we talk in that way, if I am a business person. I am probably selfish. I do not care about kids, I do not care about the image, I will probably be happy. But if I am talking as a charity worker, I will say that is the bad image but it is not easy to change. Because we cannot change that. We have to let the new generation, let them change that image for Thailand.” (Jasmine, participant)

Tulip’s statement in the interview also supports Basil and Daisy’s views; that providing education is very important and needs to be implemented as a preventive measure. *“Education is the most important thing to prevent such issue..(..)..you know the government or the NGOs. And they have to work on it so that it can be prevented you know, so education, communication and yeah, information.”* She further brings out the importance of communication and information that the government and NGOs need to focus on to prevent such issues from happening in future. This also points out raising the confidence and self-esteem of vulnerable people to motivate towards other kinds of professions through collaboration between different stakeholders, education and the proper system in the country. According to Hodgson (1994), *“The strategies must go beyond the*

symptoms and address the root causes of the problem while appreciating the wider social and international context in which it arises". This underscores the necessity of adopting comprehensive preventive measures by addressing the root causes rather than finding out the symptoms. The statement of Hodgson also recommends strategies that consider the broader social and international contexts to recognize the issue of sex tourism influenced by various socio-economic and cultural factors.

"The government need to make strict law or it might be they were forced to be engaged in that industry. That is why, if the government implements strong rules and regulations then it might be prevented. And if the government make some effort to give facility to make a good environment for children so that they can be raised in a good family environment, then the issue of children in sex tourism might be prevented somehow." (Rose, participant)

This makes a point of the importance of the government implementing strict laws as regulations as a preventive measure to fight against the issue of children being forced or influenced into the sex tourism industry. Like Basil, Daisy and Tulip, Rose also suggests that government action through a powerful legal framework is necessary. In addition, she also believes that the government's role is to provide facilities and support to ensure children are raised in a positive family environment, implying that a healthy upbringing can discourage children from being involved in such industries.

In the same manner, Jasmine in the interview also provides a similar opinion like Rose towards the preventive measures. She also suggests working directly with families is the most effective preventive measure to ensure the children do not fall victim to negative influences or industries such as sex tourism. She also assumes that a good family environment plays a vital role in raising children with proper life skills and awareness which directly reduces the need for external intervention from the government or NGOs. So, according to her, the government needs to take action by giving attention to family education and support beforehand. She also argues that children can develop the necessary attributes to lead better lives independently, making external preventive measures less necessary.

Jasmine again thinks that giving more focus on improving family structure while providing support to the vulnerable family from the government or community is the most efficient strategy to overcome the issue of sex tourism on children.

“Yeah, it is probably I will still give you the same answer, as I say I will work with the families because I believe that if you know a good family build a good children so if a family know how to take care the children so that’s the way then there is no one else that might be the government, NGO or whoever they do not need to intervene because that child you know..already have a better life skill or more awareness because they got trained through their family.” (Jasmine, participant)

Theme 6: Challenges to intervene

“I like to start by saying this, if I was born a girl in a poor Asian family with no education but I had a good body, I would do that too. I would sell my body for a chance for a different life” (Tourists, 2nd video, Appendix 4)

The tourist’s statement in the video points out the socioeconomic aspects such as poverty and lack of education that push individuals into the commercial sex industry. On the other side of the story, the tourists expressing his experience also highlight that it is a challenge to prevent something when people are traveling for a specific purpose like sex tourism. Likewise, Daisy in the interview argues, *“As long as their tourists in million, it will always attract, you know.. the sex trafficking thing. (...) I think it’s all behind a closed door for sure. Because why should a 50/60 year old be with a 18 years old?.. if he is not paying good money to be with him.”* She thinks that until that are sex tourists who mainly prefer vulnerable populations like children it will always be a difficult part to intervene. This also matches the above statement of Jasmine in Theme 3, if there are no buyers then no one is going to sell.

With the tourists claiming above about the sex worker engagement in the commercial sex work due to poverty and the Jasmine argument about demand and supply in sex tourism, Basil in the interview further added, *“I think the tourism in Thailand alone generate like around 18 to 19% of the national GDP which is quite a big amount for the entire country. (...) also of that 18% big*

fraction also comes from sex tourism. So, the point is that for everything has two sides of course when we have lots of income, when we have influx of tourists coming in...(.) with influx of the tourists are of course the downside is that we have lots of social problems....(.)” Basil thinks that the income generated from tourism is a big amount that also includes sex tourism which means the country is progressing financially with the rising number of tourists that also creates many visible social issues. He also mentioned that the government's refusal to accept the presence of sex tourism in the country is another matter of concern that brings challenges to intervene the issue of sex tourism on children; *“(.) the government has always been in denial that we do not have such things as sex tourism so there is no proper management or rules or regulations concerned”*. It can be noted that, when the government is refusing the presence of sex tourism in the country, there is no way the government will be concerned to address the issue created from it.

While Rose further stated, *“(...) their lifestyle and their status, I would say their lifestyle was good. It seems like they have good status. As far as I know, what might have influenced them to work in this field? It might be their family background. It might be their surroundings (..)Because it seems like government are also benefited because of the income through foreign currency through the tourists. It is also difficult to convenience the parents because many parents may be surviving from such income from their children. It is also hard to stop it as I see all the age range from young people to the old people involved in such industry as they have already realized it is easy money so they might disagree if the government try to stop it all of the sudden.”* She also argues that it might be conflicting if the government tries to stop sex tourism immediately as she observes people are having benefits due to the popular sex tourism in the country. From her point of view, it seems like Thai people are also maintaining a good lifestyle due to financial achievement as a result of sex tourism.

While the small part of virtual tourism is reflected in the Theme 4, such online issues are another challenge to prevent that requires collaboration between various experts due to various factors involved in it which I do not want to elaborate as it might lead this study towards a different direction.

As Jasmine (participant), views the main problem of the issue in sex tourism is the family structure, financial aspects that drive children into it or impact them indirectly. She also points out that corruption in the country is another big challenge to prevent such an issue. *“(.) when you talk about sexual exploitation, that means it is financial. That means it is money involved. You know, a lot of..you know..a lot of things and it is huge money that involved. So, and when you work with the corruption country, I still think this is still be a really hard work to try to deal with this.”* According to Capaldi (2013), *“A large number of children who are exploited by tourists are street children who are without the protection of their community and child sex tourists are more likely to travel to places where the risk of being detected by authorities is lower because of high levels of corruption”* (cited in Spurrier & Alpaslan, 2017). The authors in their articles also noted that, *“Regarding their modus operandi in finding children, some of the child sex tourists operated on their own, while others used intermediaries (i.t. Pimps, boyfriends or partners and even the parents of children)”*. From the Jasmine’s perception and the report of Spurrier & Alpaslan (2017) in their article, it seems like corruption in sex tourism plays a primary role that allows tourists of such nature to enter the country and abuse the children with some amount of money which create challenges to intervene the act of abusing children in sex tourism.

Tulip, where she also highlights the similar points about difficulty to make understanding to the parents about why such intervention is necessary. Basil and Jasmine considered corruption as a main challenge to intervene in such issues. Similarly, all the participants agree that not having strong laws in the country is another aspect that brings challenges in preventing the issue of sex tourism upon children. Also, according to them prostitution or the sex tourism is not negative overall as far as children are not affected but as I already highlighted in Theme 4, there are always indirect impacts of sex tourism on children in many ways.

Theme 7: Sustainability

The analysis in Theme 5 focuses on the underlying issues, such as poverty, lack of education and inadequate legal frameworks; Hodgson (1994) advocates that giving attention to such preventive measures can be more effective and sustainable. Basil in the interview stated, *“Here we have very poor system concerning you know, education and laws and legislation. And yeah, as I mentioned,*

if you want to reorganize or restructure the whole system, that's the first big step that we need to take otherwise yeah, you cannot solve the problem holistically or in sustainable ways." This suggests the restructuring of the existing systems related to education, laws and legislation by pointing out the lack of systems in the country. He also recommends that addressing such fundamental issues is foremost for long-term sustainable solutions. Thus, by reorganizing and improving the educational and legal frameworks, Basil argues that it is possible to create a more effective solution to the problem that ensures the preventive measures are not only implemented but also maintained from time to time.

According to Hemingway (2004), *"Responsible tourism places emphasis on the education of the tourist, encouraging research into the place of destination and the observance of human rights in interactions between the tourists and those affected by the industry. Education is fundamental for the transformation of tourism into right-respecting industry"* (cited in Hobbs et al., 2011). The statement of Hemingway argues that responsible tourism is a key factor to ensure the sustainability in the tourism industry and prevent children from being affected by sex tourism. The statement further highlights the importance of education on tourists to understand the human rights implications and their interactions. Hence, this also clarifies that the quality of tourists that are informed and conscientious tourists can significantly contribute to sustainable and responsible tourism practices that protect vulnerable populations.

Rose believes that not everyone is a sex tourist and she also accepts that Thailand is naturally a beautiful country and even though there is no sex tourism, the country still has the opportunity to rebrand its tourism and can attract tourists in many ways.

"Also not all the tourists in Thailand are sex tourists, there are many other types of tourists who love to explore the country so even if such activities are stopped I think the tourists will not stop to visit as it is a naturally beautiful country. I didn't see the direct child exploitation in my visit. But if there is, if the children are taken out of such industry and are kept far from such an environment while giving good education, trained with skillful activities and given awareness then they might be successful in future and contribute to the country." (Rose, participant)

Following Michelle and Baskoro (2022), *“Thailand can capitalize on its natural resources to promote its cultural and historical heritage (such as zoos, national parks and vacation islands) as main sources of tourist attraction. Lowering the reliance on sex tourism is a more sustainable and moral marketing strategy that Thailand has to undertake in order to transition the country from a notorious sex industry to a popular tourist destination known for its cultural and historical heritage in the long term”* (cited in Hung, 2023). The importance of replacing Thailand’s sex tourism with its rich cultural and historical heritage can lead to a sustainable and ethical strategy by investing in its natural resources such as zoos, national parks and vacation islands. The country can attract tourists through its unique cultural and historical assets rather than relying on the exploitative sex tourism industry.

“So, I talked with one of the taxi driver in Thailand and he was telling that there is a big corruption in the country” (Tulip, participant). Tulip highlighted the presence of corruption she heard from a driver in Thailand and Jasmine as well as Basil expressing the same issue about corruption in the country as a significant barrier to sustainable and ethical tourism practices. Also, as Jasmine stated in Theme 6, where there is presence of exploitation there is huge money involved, such issues directly reduce the efforts to implement and enforce laws and regulations designed to protect vulnerable populations. Hence, for sustainable tourism, it is always important for the country to take action on corruption to create a trustworthy and stable environment for both the locals and the tourists. Such action also supports the locals and tourists to be more responsible towards the vulnerable.

6. Discussion

From the analysis above, the fact that locals and the journalists revealing the risk of sex tourism upon children on the other hand, the tourists stating they are not aware about the age of the girls they encounter and do not know about the law regarding prostitution while there visit also point out that many tourists do not travel responsibly and with full awareness about the destination. The evidence of the children being at risk due to various factors because of sex tourism highlight the involvement of NGOs only in preventing such issue is not enough that draw attention to the collaboration between different stakeholders in the community or society or the whole country including tourists.

The idea of application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory for this study, provides a structure to examine the different layers of influencers that motivate children to enter in the commercial sex industry that mainly serve tourists or factors that impact vulnerable populations such as children even though they are not directly engaged. At the macrosystem, an overview of sex tourism reveals socio-economic issues influenced by global demand, cultural norms, and economic disparity. The positive consequence is that the country is having a large profit due to foreign expenses and has been developing well since many years. However, the negative consequences lie in the social factor that mainly includes children from different perspectives; either as a child sex worker or the child of a sex worker or the observer. The image of Thailand as a sex tourism destination is mainly social and political issues such as poverty and lack of regulation that design a path for exploitation to vulnerable populations. At the mesosystem, the contrast between tourists' experiences and local realities become evident that they both see such issues from different aspects as tourists often engage in tourism without understanding the issue in the country that later surprises them or they do not witness any issue in the community they are traveling to. The exosystem in the analysis mainly focuses on the indirect impact on the children such as financial pressure that attracts families into the sex tourism that result in the health risk if the unexpected pregnancy happens, create the population of orphan children, psychological trauma and low confidence among the children. Lastly, in the microsystem layer, the immediate environment such as family, other close friends and relatives and neighbors may influence the engagement of children in the sex tourism. Children surrounded by the environment where the commercial sex industry is high in demand and is considered normal and easy money are often

exposed to exploitation, manipulation, forced not to have education and psychologically affected and traumatized. Hence, the implication of Bronfenbrenner's theory explains how the different environments affect the wellbeing of children and provide support to address the root causes of impact among the children.

Many researchers including Spurrier & Alpaslan (2017), have discussed the role of economic situation, gender dynamics and social impacts in making decisions to be engaged in child sex tourism and the psychological and emotional impacts of such exploitation afterwards. Similarly, from the data, a similar opinion is analyzed when it comes to the effect of the well-being of children due to the phenomenon of sex tourism. The above chapter mainly analyzed making a female gender 'girl', a vulnerable people however according to Spurrier & Alpaslan (2017) in their study in different country than Thailand, they have encounter more male victims 'boys' which also reveal that there is no particular gender when it comes to selection in sex tourism however the choice of destination for preferred gender might vary due to cultural norms and attitudes. Additionally, Montgomery, (2008) in his study claimed similar evidence of women travelers in other countries buying sex from young boys. Nevertheless, this study supports the argument of Oppermann (1999) that tourists end up doing other activities than their purpose of travel according to their encounter in the destination that also leads to making tourists available to engage in child sex tourism.

From the analysis above, it also verifies that, sex tourism is economically beneficial for Thailand and because of that Thailand has been successful to develop itself from many aspects. Prohibiting sex tourism all of the sudden can create other social problems like unemployment, starvation, theft and robbery, rise in poverty and business crisis in the country. Thus, in this case I also support the argument of Basil and Hung (2024), legalizing prostitution can help to eliminate child engagement and exploitation in sex tourism. In addition to that, separating redlight area for such activities can help the families to choose the child-friendly place and somehow reduce the indirect impact on children.

Therefore, the analysis section from various sources of data proves the existence of the impact on children in sex tourism due to various cultural, socio-economic, political and technological factors (Brooks & Heaslip, 2019). This also demonstrates the demand of tourists for children or young

people in sex tourism (Ryan & Kinder, 1999; Montgomery, 2008). Although, an argument can be created that the demand also does not exist if there is no supply, it again refers to the children as a victim of trafficking, manipulation and pressure. The assumptions about the preventive measures from political to the individual family context are explored to intervene in the root causes of the issue of sex tourism on children. However, the analysis above makes clear that without active participation, partnership and collaboration between the whole system in the country and the involvement of each stakeholder with the same objective to protect the children of the society, such an issue is unlikely to end in the foreseeable future.

7. Conclusion

The main objective of this study is to find out how the ongoing sex tourism in popular sex tourism destinations like Thailand has affected the wellbeing of children and to find out some useful preventive measures to address such issues. In that process, the implication of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory assists me to address the different layers of environment that affect the children's development due to sex tourism. With the review of literature, theoretical framework, different sources of qualitative data, and the findings from the data, this study portrays that there are more negative consequences of sex tourism than the benefit as it has all kinds of direct and indirect impact on children. For the encountered causes of such issues, various preventive measures are identified through the opinion of participants. Due to various situations and ethical considerations, it is not possible to involve children while collecting data in spite of the fact that the information I find through participants and informants answer my research question to address causes for the main problem and to identify preventive measures that need to be considered to tackle such issues.

Firstly, the environment of sex tourism spreads various sexual diseases which can be transmitted to the child if the women with such diseases get pregnant. Secondly, the poverty, the financial influence and the western influence can attract the children in the commercial sex industry that mainly serve foreigners. In addition to that, the negligence of the government for not accepting the existence of sex tourism in the country and not trying to address the issue followed by a strict law that completely forbids the children under 18 years in the commercial sex industry can also motivate both the children and the employer. Also, the visible action of the sex worker and tourists in the public places may affect the children of young age in their psychological development. Lastly, the normalization of male replacing female in the form of lady boys may affect children's perceptions of gender and self-worth. It seems like the surrounding environment, role of gender, the economic situation, legal framework and policies, cultural and socio-dynamic aspects, the influence and expectation has highly motivated the sex tourism that later creates social issues such as impact on children.

Correspondingly, preventive measures for such issues to be practiced are facilitating quality education and training to the families and providing support to the family in need from the

government side may strengthen family structure that leads to a primary strategy in protecting children for sex tourism. Locals make claims about the NGO making much effort to address such issues and prevent it but the existence of the issue still proves that only the participation of NGO is not enough to combat the issue that impacts the children in sex tourism. There needs to be supervision of every effort from different systems for such problems so everybody is afraid to be involved in corruption when it comes to children and their wellbeing. Furthermore, education and awareness to all the children, strict regulation and enforcement, child-friendly-tourism, active collaboration between government, locals and NGOs to combat child protection or support the victims and research and monitoring such issues from time to time can be implemented as preventive measures to intervene the issue of sex tourism on children. Such approaches for the well-structured system in family structure, education, and legal framework highlight the sustainable solution that gives strength to the future generation to combat the social consequences of sex tourism and help to protect children from exploitation and other impacts.

Despite the fact that this study found various factors responsible to affect children's wellbeing in sex tourism and the preventive measure for that, I only managed to collect information from 5 participants which is still an imbalance between the number of locals and tourists to make comparison. Also looking at the sensitivity of the topic, to make the research more realistic and general, the future research should include their own observations and more participants, particularly the victims who have experienced such impact because of the sex tourism and the sex tourists. Thus, the recommendation for the future research is to figure out the question about how can the country popular in sex tourism replace the image with other tourism and gain the same economic benefit. Another question the research needs to seek is, how can the tourist become responsible and help in protecting children from sex tourism? Similar to that, another recommendation for the future research is to analyze the collaboration between different stakeholders to combat the issue among children as per the result of sex tourism.

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