



FEELINGS OF ABUSE AND ITS ROLE IN THE ACCEPTANCE OF SELF AMONG FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT Approximately three billion female sex workers are working willingly and unwillingly in India. Research has shown that female sex workers have to face stereotypes and violence from society. Due to this, they feel more depressed, yet they are not able to report everything to police personnel because of the unequal treatment because society considers them taboo. Keeping in mind, the present research aims to investigate the role of feelings of abuse and acceptance of self among female sex workers in India. A sample of 300 women (100- female sex workers, 100-working women, and 100- homemaker women) belonging to the age group of 25-40 was randomly selected from the women living in the Delhi NCR region on an availability basis. Composite Abuse Scale (Revised) Short Form and Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire were used to collect the data. After applying the Composite Abuse Scale (revised) and Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire, unconditional self-acceptance found a significant association with all dimensions of CAS among female sex workers. In this sense, working women are found higher on self-acceptance than the other two groups. Also, obtained results showed a significant difference in abuse among female sex workers, working women, and homemaker females, and all variables, female sex workers have found a significantly higher mean than homemakers and working women which stated that female sex workers are mentally, physically and sexually harassed daily which led to bad health consequences.

KEYWORDS : Abuse, Self-Acceptance, Sex worker

Introduction

Exercising one's control, fantasizing, and having a feeling of authority after buying someone motivates a man to go to a sex worker. Through pimps or brokers, they approach the sex worker. These pimps and brokers supply sex workers or make them available to the clients as per the demand. They hire sex workers irrespective of the decision of the sex worker and marketed them to attract clients. They use media both print & electronic and personal contacts to spread information about the availability of the sex workers. They always take a share out of the earnings of the sex workers. After pimps, there are sex workers who are hired or they come on their own to entertain the clients. Therefore, it shows that sex work moves as per the demand and supply theory which ultimately benefits a smaller section of the society at the cost of damaging the larger part of the society (Parker,1998). Research has shown that sex workers were physically abused and raped by their customers on regular basis. Violence is not only confined to physical assault and rape but sometimes women are murdered also. Research has shown that women in sex work are more likely to be murdered than women of similar age. Research on sex workers mainly categorized the entry of women into sex work into two categories: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary entry means when a woman enters into sex work due to various reasons for her own decision. Involuntary entry means forceful entry due to trafficking, kidnapping, violence, and many other factors. However, these categories are not exclusive. Involuntary entry also, there are various factors which somewhere force a woman to become a sex worker.

Abuse

This is defined as any action taken intentionally to harm or injure the reputation of another person if someone harms a person intentionally is committing abuse. Many types of abuse are faced by adults including physical abuse, psychological abuse, rape, verbal abuse, sexual assault, financial abuse, etc. Out of these abuses, we are focusing more on psychological abuse which is sometimes called psychological violence, mental abuse, or emotional abuse. It is a kind of abuse that is denoted by a subject revealing another subject to that kind of behaviour which can result in anxiety, chronic depression, psychological trauma, etc. Most of the victims who experience psychological abuse in a close or intimate relationship often feel changes in their psychological thoughts and actions. It also differs throughout many types and lengths of emotional abuse in relationships. In female prostitutes, the negative impact of abuse affects their lives and sometimes results in anxiety,

depression, panic attack, lack of adequate sleep, fatigue, difficulty in concentration, and headache.

Abuse among Females

Many studies have shown in their results that sex workers are at a greater risk of violence whether it is physical or sexual. The cases of violence are increased in those countries where sex work is illegal (Barnard, 1993). According to a survey in many countries i.e., England, Glasgow, Scotland, and Edinburgh 30% of female sex workers are those who had been slapped or kicked by a client once in their life, 11% had been raped and sexually assaulted and 22% had experienced an attempt (Church, 2001). Lennon (1994), conducted a study in which he compared housewives and working women. It was found that women who are homemakers feel less autonomous, more interrupted, and are not able to give their 100 percent because they are involved in some activities which are their responsibilities. They feel more pressure and are not able to manage everything properly. On the other hand, working women feel freer and act freely. They are less responsible for the things which are out of their control. El-Bassel et al., (1997), conducted a study on female prostitutes to measure the psychological impact of those who practice prostitution activities. The sex worker compared with the control sample and it was found that the sex workers have a high score in the subscales of obsessive-compulsive symptoms, depression, hostility, anxiety, psychoticism, and paranoia. A report given by Ulibarri et al., 2014 shows that female prostitutes who are victims of abuse have very high symptoms of stress.

The research was done by Farley et al., (1998), the study interviewed 475 prostitutes of all genders from five countries - South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, USA, and Zambia on themes of life history, status, violence, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and exit from prostitution. The result indicated that 73 percent, 62 percent, and 67 percent of samples were victims of reported physical assault, rape, and PTSD respectively. Additionally, 92 percent of data wished of leaving prostitution discussing prostitution as violence and human rights violation. Bartoi et al., (2000), found that physical, enthusiastic, or potentially sexual maltreatment inside a close relationship can make sentiments of inadequacy and uselessness in females, and sentiments of security might be removed by a feeling of weakness in the relationship in females who were in prostitution. The unfriendly messages that encounter of mental maltreatment pass on can affect a

female's passionate well-being.

A theory of role accumulation has stated that those women who are working outside their homes are good in interpersonal relationships and are financially independent. As a result, their self-esteem is enhanced and their capacity to deal with the violence is also increased. As per Rossler (2004), sex labourers are a heterogeneous populace gathered with some sex specialists working inside, shielded from brutality and intimidation and acquiring sufficient pay, and other people who are road-based frequently having a compulsion and powerless against misuse by pimps and customers.

Three things were found to be very common in female sex workers i.e., increased physical, verbal and sexual violence from the clients. Violence creates a huge fear and tension among female sex workers. Even some of the female sex workers have left their job because of it. Violence makes them feel inferior and helpless all the time (Spice, 2007). Another study was conducted on female sex workers in Nottingham and it was revealed that almost every female sex worker has experienced any kind of violence once in their life. (Harding, 2008). Female sex workers have to face many problems living in a society. Even they are not given proper treatment at a hospital after disclosing their identity. Female sex workers feel distressed and more depressed than other women (UK NSWP, 2009). Recent studies conducted in this particular field have exposed very high levels of violence. Another study revealed that two-thirds of the sex workers in their lifetime have experienced sexual violence. Female sex workers are not able to report everything to police personnel because of unequal treatment (Sanders et al., 2012).

Qualitative studies have been conducted on female sex workers which showed that sex workers have to face stereotyped behaviour from the society as well as from the client, they used verbal abuse which makes them feel distressed (Dodsworth, 2012). They are presented as a danger to wellbeing, for example, human immunodeficiency infection (HIV) contamination. A few investigations have reported the high predominance of brutality amongst female sex labourers and its relationship with dysfunctional behaviour. There is a solid connection between Abuse and self-acceptance in female prostitution. The mishandled individual regularly battles with sentiments of feebleness, hurt, dread, outrage, and blame about what has transpired. There is a negative connection between mental maltreatment and self-recognition e.g. If a female is manhandled either physically or explicitly or inwardly, her self-observation might be low. It further proves that the majority of sex workers have a past involving sexual and physical abuse (Surratt et al., 2005).

Self-Acceptance

In general, self-acceptance is a kind of phenomenon where an individual accepts himself/herself despite her weaknesses or deficiencies. A difference has been seen in most of the cases about the meaning of self and what is the nature of acceptance (Falkenstein & Haaga, 2013). Two domains of self have been found in previous literature studies which are self-acceptance and acceptance of others. A positive association was found between these two (Sheerer, 1949). Self-acceptance has been defined by much contemporary literature which says that it is a subjective kind of experience that is realistic and it also includes one's awareness related to strengths and weaknesses. One can achieve it by improving the way one tackles a situation or by not criticizing oneself for the sake of our good. One has to accept ourselves the way we are and everyone has flaws and no one is perfect. We can never act in a perfect to every situation we face throughout life (Shepard, 1979).

According to Hayes et al., (2004), "acceptance involves taking a stance of non-judgmental awareness and actively embracing the experience of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations as they occur". Self-acceptance is just similar to the concept of positive self-regard (Roger 1959).

Self-Acceptance among Females

Working women are more autonomous and feel more worthy. They also have fewer role conflicts and get more support from their family members and society. Working women are highly motivated and happy with what they have and are leading prosperous and meaningful life. They think about themselves as an important part of society and have higher self-esteem (Hasnain et al., 2011; Bolognini et al., 1996).

Campbell (2000), examines factors that help or hinder community-based peer education and condom distribution project on 21 FSWs

from South Africa surviving in unworthy living conditions that the 'powerlessness' of women is taken in an easy approach and also fails to acknowledge coping strategies and social support needed by women to tackle with their daily life challenges enabling them. A study was proposed by Kramer (2004), on female sex workers which reported that female sex workers have low self-esteem whether they are street-based or indoor based. Out of the total, 75% of workers reported low self-esteem after engaging in sexual activity.

Stigma experienced by female sex workers often creates a distressful and anxious situation. It also creates self-doubt in their minds which decreases their self-esteem and it often leads to depressive symptoms i.e., lack of sleep and irritability. Internalized stigma is detrimental to health i.e., physical as well as psychological (Wong et al., 2011; Fife & Wright 2000). Treating female sex workers unequally and humiliating their rights is distressful. Victims of such kinds of things generate a sense of inferiority in their minds and they feel shameful and disrespectful.

Working women have more enjoyment and freedom in their life. Their sense of worthiness is also high than that of other women because of their status and role in society. They considered themselves a positive contributor to society. High self-esteem was also seen among working women i.e., self-satisfaction and self-acceptance (Paudel, 2010). Multi-level analysis was conducted by collecting cross-national data from 28 different countries which showed that working women were slightly happier than housewives. Employment status and financial stability are directly linked with happiness, self-acceptance, and self-fulfilment. Housewives work on a full-time basis compared to working women (Treas et al., 2011).

A comparative study was done on working women and housewives. It was analyzed from the study that out of the total population, only 4 percent of working women had an experience of low self-esteem but in the case of housewives, it was found to be 36 percent. In addition to this moderate score of self-esteem was seen among 62 percent of housewives and 82 percent of working women. High self-esteem is a very healthy approach which indicates a good coping mechanism and 14 percent of working women had high self-esteem which is an indicator of good quality of life (Soomro et al., 2013).

METHOD

SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 300 women (100- female sex workers, 100- working women, and 100- homemaker women) belonging to the age group of 25-40. The sample would be randomly selected from the women living in the Delhi NCR region on an availability basis. Participants were contacted individually. Rapport was established with the respondents by informing them about the purpose of the study. After establishing the rapport with the participants, written consent was taken from them to give their responses to the questionnaire related to the study. The instructions were provided to every respondent carefully about response patterns to the items on the scale given by the researcher. Confidentiality of the response was assured. After giving instructions questionnaires were given to the participants to be filled within specified timings then the questionnaire was taken back.

Measures

Composite Abuse Scale (Revised) Short Form (CASR-SF; Gilboe et al., 2016)

CASR-SF is a 15-item instrument that captures physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, financial abuse, and object of threat. The CASR-SF is based on the 30-item Composite Abuse Scale. The CASR-SF was developed to improve the CAS regarding response burden, brevity, and clarity.

Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire (USAQ; Chamberlain & Haaga, 2001)

Ellis (1977), defines unconditional self-acceptance as someone who, "fully and unconditionally accepts themselves whether or not they behave intelligently, correctly, or competently and whether or not other people approve, respect, or love them". This instrument is derived from rational-emotive behaviour therapy and measures the amount of self-acceptance an individual experiences that are not dependent on some type of evaluative criteria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Relationship between abuse and self-acceptance Intercorrelation (female sex workers)

Table 1

Variables	CAS Psy	CAS Phy	CAS Sex	CAS Fin	CAS Obj
Un S A	.201*	.215*	0.16	0.187	0.155

It was found that unconditional self-acceptance showed a significant association with all dimensions of the Composite Abuse Scale i.e., CAS psychological ($r=-.20$; $p<.05$), CAS physical ($r=.21$; $p<.05$). All other remaining dimensions of CAS non-significantly correlated with the unconditional self-acceptance variable for the group of unconditional self-acceptance.

Intercorrelation (homemaker females)

Table 2

Variables	CAS Psy	CAS Phy	CAS Sex	CAS Fin	CAS Obj
Un S A	-0.015	-0.11	-0.068	-0.055	0.061

It was found that unconditional self-acceptance was non-significantly associated with all dimensions of CAS. All dimensions of this variable were non-significant and associated with the unconditional self-acceptance variable for the group of homemakers.

Intercorrelation (working women)

Table 3

Variables	CAS Psy	CAS Phy	CAS Sex	CAS Fin	CAS Obj
Un S A	-.053	-.043	-.058	-.036	-.143

It was found that unconditional self-acceptance non-significantly associated with all dimensions of CAS. All dimensions of this variable was a non-significant associated with the unconditional self-acceptance variable for the group of working women. Based on the interpreted result, the eighth hypothesis of current research partials is accepted only.

Table 4 Significance of difference among Mean scores of Composite Abuse States among the three groups of females.

Variables	SS (Between Groups)	SS (Within Groups)	SS (Total)	df	MS	F
Composite Abuse Psychological	15486.28	4263.38	19749.66	2	7743.14	539.41
Composite Abuse Physical	1320.66	545.13	1865.79	2	660.33	359.76
Composite Abuse Sexual	17532.64	2879.50	20412.14	2	8766.32	904.18
Composite Abuse Financial	256.82	259.91	516.73	2	128.41	146.73
Composite Abuse Object of Threat	327.08	221.86	548.94	2	163.54	218.93

$P<0.01$

Obtained result explained a significant difference in Composite Abuse among three groups of females. On the dimension of composite abuse psychological, F value (539.41), composite abuse physical, F value (359.76), composite abuse sexual, F value (904.18), composite abuse financial, F value (146.73), and composite abuse object of threat, F value (218.93) which is significant at 0.01 level which clearly states that a significant difference exists among female sex worker, homemaker, and working women. A similar result was observed in all other domains such as Physical, Sexual, Financial, and Object of Threat. All variables significantly differed on mean among female groups of sex workers, homemakers, and working women.

Table 5 Significance of difference between the Composite Abuse scores of the three groups of females (Post hoc comparisons by applying Tukey's Test)

Dependent Variable	Group (I)	Group J (II)	Mean Differ. (I-II)	Sig.
Composite Abuse Psychological	Female sex worker	Homemaker	7.91	.01
	Female sex worker	Working Women	17.57	.01

	Home Maker	Working Women	9.66	.01
Composite Abuse Physical	Female sex worker	Homemaker	2.00	.01
	Female sex worker	Working Women	5.10	.01
	Home Maker	Working Women	3.10	.01
Composite Abuse Sexual	Female sex worker	Homemaker	7.77	.01
	Female sex worker	Working Women	18.64	.01
	Home Maker	Working Women	10.87	.01
Composite Abuse Financial	Female sex worker	Homemaker	0.67	.01
	Female sex worker	Working Women	2.21	.01
	Home Maker	Working Women	1.54	.01
Composite Abuse Object of Threat	Female sex worker	Homemaker	0.66	.01
	Female sex worker	Working Women	2.47	.01
	Home Maker	Working Women	1.81	.01

$P<0.01$

Table 5 presents the significance of the difference in the mean scores of the three female groups in the domain of Composite Abuse which were found to vary significantly across different groups of females.

Analysis of the above table, of the across three groups of female multiple mean comparisons shows that significant differences were observed between different groups of females at 0.01 level.

In the above Table, Different groups were compared i.e., female sex workers, homemakers, and working women based on mean differences, and the results were interpreted below. While comparing female sex workers, homemakers, and working women on composite abuse psychological, it was seen that female sex workers have a higher mean than a homemaker and working women which is significant at 0.01 level. It tells that female sex workers are mentally harassed daily and their psychological health is not well because of the work profession. On the other hand, variable composite abuse physical also shows a higher mean of female sex workers which is significant at 0.01 level which clearly states that sex workers are also physically abused from time to time. They are not treated gently by the customers. Mean on female sex workers was also found higher and significant at 0.01 level on the variable composite abuse sexual. Not only is the physical abuse seen but they are also sexually abused by the customers. Overall female sex workers are mentally, physically, and sexually harassed which led to bad health consequences. Customers consider their sex toys because of this female sex workers have to face such kinds of issues.

The mean of working women was found lower in all three domains which shows that no such kind of abusive behaviour was shown by their partners and they are quite satisfied with their lives and living them to the fullest. The mean of a female sex worker was higher on the variable composite abuse financial in comparison to homemaker and working women which was found significant at 0.01 level. Financially, a female sex worker is not stable and there is continuous pressure in their mind to earn more money sometimes they have to face such kinds of problems in which they are not paid for their work and are financially abused. But on the other hand, working women are financially satisfied because they are earning sufficient money to fulfil their wishes.

On composite abuse- the object of threat means of a female sex worker is found higher than homemaker and working women which is significant at 0.01 level. A female sex worker has fear in their mind that someday someone is going to hurt them badly and sometimes they are threatened by customers not to tell the wrongdoing to anyone. Female

sex worker is always in trouble because of their work profile because they are not considered a part of society and everyone looks at them with keen eyes. Thus, analysis of composite abuse of female sex workers, homemakers, and working women revealed that three groups of females significantly differ in all the five dimensions (Psychological, Physical, Sexual, Financial, and Object of Threat). Based on this finding, the first hypothesis was accepted. All three groups of females show significant differences in the variable of abuse. Studies provided evidence/support for a high level of physical, psychological, sexual, and financial abuses experienced by female sex workers (Barnard, 1993; Farley et al., 1998; Church, 2001; Sanders et al., 2012) and some other studies concluded that housewives experienced or became more victim of abuses in comparison to working women (Ulbarri et al., 2014; Krantz & Moreo, 2005; Coker 2000; Hegarty, 1998). There was a dearth of comparative studies of abuses experienced by female sex workers, working women, and homemaker women.

Table 6 The score on the dimensions of the unconditional self-acceptance of the respondents of the three groups

Variables	SS (Between Groups)	SS (Within Groups)	SS (Total)	df	MS	F
Unconditional Self-Acceptance	184268.04	30455.59	214723.63	2	92134.02	898.48

P<0.01

On the dimension of unconditional self-acceptance, the F value (898.48) is significant at a 0.01 level which clearly states that a significant difference exists among female sex workers, homemakers, and working women.

Table 7 Post Hoc Table results of a female sex worker, homemaker, and working woman on all the tested variables.

Dependent Variable	(I)GROUP	(J)GROUP	Mean Diff. (I-J)	Sig.
Unconditional Self-Acceptance	Female Sex Worker	Home Maker	-38.82	.01
	Female Sex Worker	Working Women	-59.83	.01
	Home Maker	Working Women	-21.01	.01

P<0.01

While comparing all the groups on unconditional self-acceptance, it was observed that working women are higher on self-acceptance than the other two groups. Working women are independent and free women while female sex workers are dependent and helpless. Working women have a realization that they have committed some mistakes in their life but they accept it as a challenge and try to overcome it female sex workers are still fighting with the painful memories which they have in their minds. After analyzing the result, it is found that all three groups of women show significant differences from each other on the variable of unconditional self-acceptance. Based on the results, the fifth hypothesis of the current research was accepted. Sex workers feel unworthy, powerless, and helpless and scores low on self-acceptance & self-esteem variables (Bolognini, 1996; Campbell, 2000; Kramer, 2004; Deacon, 2006; Fife and Wright, 2000; Hasnain et al., 2011). Working women achieved higher scores on self-esteem, self-acceptance, and self-fulfilment variables and report higher life satisfaction than housewives (Treas et al., 2011; Soomro et al., 2013).

Conclusion:

This research will help to better understand the female sex workers regarding the abuse and self-acceptance faced by them. The majority of girls in India enter into this field before they reached the age of consent. They are facing stigma, isolation, and discrimination from society. People did not consider them a part of society. Sometimes female sex workers feel detached from society because other people see their work as immoral as a result, they develop an inferiority complex. Working women are independent and free women while female sex workers are considered dependent and helpless and are still fighting with the painful memories which they have in their minds

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