



## A Study On Life Satisfaction Among Female Sex Workers

### KEYWORDS

Female Sex Worker, Life satisfaction, Self esteem

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### ABSTRACT

Prostitution is currently a contentious issue in India. In India, prostitution itself is legal but related activities such as soliciting sex in a public place, kerb crawling, keeping a brothel, pimping and pandering are illegal. The number of prostitutes has doubled in the last decade. India has seen a growing mandate to legalize prostitution, to avoid exploitation of sex workers and their children by middlemen and in the wake of growing HIV/AIDS menace. As the result, we can see today so many agencies working with commercial Sex workers which encourage the use of condoms among them. A report says that 35.47 percent of them entre the trade before the age of 18years and most of the research indicates that the majority of sex workers enter this field due to lacking resources to support themselves or their children and this shows that many choose this profession out of necessity. Though being isolated from their relatives and carry a bad name in the society, they still feel satisfied as they can serve their family and children. The aim of this research is to study Socio demographic details and life satisfaction, Self esteem among Female Sex workers at Chennai. Data's are collected from Female Sex workers who are registered member in ICWO (Indian Community Welfare Organization) one of the agency at Chennai which works for Commercial sex workers.

### INTRODUCTION

In ancient India, sex and sexuality were not the taboo subjects they are today. The references to sex workers held in high esteem in the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata show the status and dignity they had in those days. Their role as entertainers and relaxation artists was well recognized and accepted. Nowadays, sex workers are exploited, harassed, physically beaten and otherwise abused by the police, gangsters and moralists in society simply because of their status as sex workers. Known sex workers are marginalized in the health system and frequently receive inadequate medical care. They are fined for carrying out their work, but the only way they can access money to pay off fines is through more sex work. They have no legal and political rights, making it impossible to make a legal case for physical or sexual violence experienced while at work.

### Statement of the problem

Street and off-street prostitution have very different effects on the surrounding community. Indoor prostitution has little, if any, negative impact on the environment and, if discreet, there is normally little public awareness of it. Street prostitution, by contrast, is associated with a host of problems, including disorderly conduct, sex in public places, discarding of condoms and syringes in public areas (public health hazards), customer harassment of women on the streets, increased noise and traffic. This result in Low self esteem of the commercial Sex Workers. But at the same time being the bread winner of the family these sex workers have Satisfaction in their Life. Though they choose a profession which is marginalized in our society, they feel satisfied as they were able to face the basic needs of their day to day life along with their family members.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Majority of the sex workers are uneducated. (B. Chaudhary & Das (2001)) Majority of the sex workers were poor, had low socio-economic background, often deserted by their husbands, with children and in to the profession to sustain their families. These sex workers have Children and they are much concerned about their future. This made them to fall in this

profession, though society may look them down upon, they feel that this is the only profession for them to earn quickly and take care of their family.

### Scope of the study

The present study was conducted among the Sex workers who registered their name in ICWO (Indian Community Welfare Organization) an NGO which works for Female Sex workers at Chennai. The present study focuses on to explore the socio-demographic details of the Sex Workers, the study also focus on the perceived Self esteem level and also their Life satisfaction. All the respondents in this study are Street sex Workers. Wherever sex worker or respondents is mentioned it is referred to Commercial Female Sex Worker.

### Review of Literature

The study, which was conducted among 250 sex workers for a period of nine months, by the Puducherry-based Society for Development Research and Training (SfDRT) Most of the commercial sex workers have children and were concerned about their future. Homes, which could take care of educational and nutritional needs for their children is an urgent need.

**Woodward et al., (2004)** in his study found that half of call girls and brothel workers felt that their work was a "major source of satisfaction" in their lives, while 7 out of 10 said they would "definitely choose" this work if they had it to do over again

**Scott and Weitzer (2000)** in their study says that Street prostitution, by contrast, is associated with a host of problems, including disorderly conduct, sex in public places, discarding of condoms and syringes in public areas (public health hazards), customer harassment of women on the streets, increased noise and traffic, and loss of business to merchants

### Objectives

- ◆ To describe the socio-demographic details of Female Sex Workers.
- ◆ To study the problems faced by them during encounter.
- ◆ To analyse the self esteem based on their profession
- ◆ To study the Life satisfaction of Female Sex Workers.

**Research Hypothesis**

- ◆ There is a significant difference among respondents based on number of clients they attend a day and Self Esteem
- ◆ There is a significant difference among respondents based on number of clients they attend a day and Life Satisfaction

**Methodology**

As the population is finite, the researcher has used probability sampling method for selecting study subjects. The researcher has used simple random sampling method for collecting the sample size.. The research sample size is 65.

**Tools for data collection**

- The researcher used self-administered questionnaire to collect data regarding the socio – demographic factors of the respondents
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) to study the Self esteem of the Sex Workers
- Life Satisfaction Questionnaire (LISAT-9)The scale is a ten item Likert scale with items answered on a four point scale- from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

**Independent variable**

The independent variables used by the researcher for the study are

**Information about the respondents**

Age (20-29yrs, 30-39yrs, 40-49yrs), type of family(joint, nuclear), Education (Primary, Secondary, Higher secondary) Marital status(Married,unmarried,Dirvoce,Widow),no of Children(0,1-2,3-5,more than 5)

**Details about Profession**

Period in Profession(2yrs , 5yrs,10yrs, more than 10yrs ),age enter into this profession(15-20yrs,21-25yrs,26yrs and above) , clients attend a day(2 ,3 ,5,more than 5),Usage of condoms (Yes ,No)Reason for Choosing this profession (Economical problem ,Pleasure seeking)

**Family details**

Family members aware of profession(Yes ,No) ,Children residing at( At home,Hostel ,relatives house) husband's occupation(no husband ,Don't Know ,Driver ,Coolie)Husband's income(1000-4000 ,4001-8000,above 8000) Husband alcoholic(Yes,No)

**Problems faced during Encounter**

Able to socialize freely ( Yes,No) ,Discriminated anywhere(Yes,No),suicidal tendency(Yes,No)physical any physical harassment during the encounter(Yes, No), Drug Addiction(Yes ,No)How become addicted to substance abuse (Self,compulsion of customers)

**Dependent Variable**

**1 The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale(1965)**, a widely used self-reportinstrument for evaluating individual self-esteem, was investigated using item response theory.

**Scoring:** Analysis Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are reverse scored. Give "Strongly Disagree" 1 point, "Disagree" 2 points, "Agree" 3 points, and "Strongly Agree" 4 points. Sum scores for all ten items. Keep scores on a continuous scale. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem.

**2. Life Satisfaction Questionnaire 9 (LISAT-9)**

Scoring: Items are rated on an ordinal scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfying) to 6 (very satisfying). Summing of the scores is not recommended; Rather, it is more appropriate to take the mean score

**Data Analysis**

**Table 1:**

**CROSS TABLE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WITH WHOM THEY ARE STAYING AND MARITAL STATUS**

Marital Status	Person they stay with								Total	
	Husband		Single		Parents		Others		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Married	32	49.2	0	0	9	13.8	0	0	41	63.1
Unmarried	0	0	15	23.07	1	1.5	2	3.1	16	24.6
Widow	0	0	0	0	4	6.1	2	3.1	6	9.2
Divorce	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	6.1	2	3.1
	32	49.2%	15	23.07	14	21.5	8	12.3	65	100

From the above table it is understood that among( 63.1%) respondents 49.2% are staying with their husband and among unmarried(24.6%) respondents 23.07% are staying alone and 3.1% of widow and 6.1 % of the divorce are staying with person who doesn't belong to their family.

**Table 2:**

**Cross table Distribution of Respondents children and Marital Status**

Marital Status	No of children						Total	
	0		1-2		3-5		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Married	3	4.61	21	32.3	17	26.15	41	63.1
Unmarried	4	6.1	8	12.3	4	6.15	16	24.6
Widow	0	0	3	4.61	3	4.61	6	9.2
Divorce	0	0	1	1.53	1	1.53	2	3.1
	7	10.7	33	50.7	25	38.46	65	100

Among married respondents 32.3% of the respondents have 2 children's and among unmarried 12.3% of the respondents have 2 children and 6.15 % of the respondents are having 3-5 children.

**Table-3:Cross table Distribution of Respondents age when they enter the profession and Marital Status when they enter the Profession**

Marital status when they enter the profession	Age while they entered into the profession						Total	
	15-20		21-25		26 and above		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Married	10	15.38	23	35.38	20	30.7	53	63.1
Unmarried	10	15.38	2	3.07	0	0	12	24.6
	20	30.7	25	38.46	20	30.7	65	100

35.38% of the respondents were married when they enter the profession and they were between 21-25yrs. It is also clear that 30.7% of the respondents entered this field when they were between 15-20 yrs and 15.38% of the respondents of that age group were married at that time and the same percentage of respondents from that age group were unmarried when they enter the profession at the same age.

**Table-4:Distribution of Respondents based on suicide Attempts**

S.No	Suicide Attempt	No Of Respondents	%
1	Yes	21	32.3
2	No	44	67.7
	Total	65	100

From the above table it was clearly understood that 32.3% of the respondents have attempted Suicide

**Table-5: Distribution of Respondents based on their experience of Physical and Psychological Harassments during Encounter**

S.No	Physical and Psychological Harassment during encounter	No Of Respondents	%
1	Yes	40	61.5
2	No	25	38.5
Total		65	100

From the above table it is understood that majority of the respondents (61.5%) has reported Physical and Psychological harassment during encounter

**Table-6: Distribution of Respondents based on their Addiction to Substance Abuse**

S.No	Addicted to substance abuse	No Of Respondents	%
1	Yes	34	52.3
2	No	31	47.7
Total		65	100

The above table shows that more than half of the respondents (52.3%) are addicted to substance abuse.

**Table-7: One way Analysis of variance among the respondents based on number of Clients they attend a Day and their perceived level of Self Esteem and Life Satisfaction**

S.No	Self Esteem	SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig Level
1.	Between Groups G1(n-25) G2(n-24) G3(n-16)	29.098	2	14.549	2.025	p=.141 Not Significant
2	Within Groups	445.456	62	7.185		
S.No	Life Satisfaction	SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig Level
1	Between Groups G1(n-25) G2(n-24) G3(n-16)	800.728	2	400.364	5.278	p=.008 Significant
2	Within groups	4703.21	62	75.858		

(G1=Two Clients,G2=five Clients,G3=more than five clients)

There is no significant difference in mean Self Esteem scores among respondents based on Number of Clients they attend a Day and also there is a significant difference in mean Life Satisfaction scores among respondents based on Number of Clients they attend a Day .

**Discussion**

Majority (63%)of the respondents were married, but only 49.2% were residing with their husbands. Among widows and divorcee 3.1% and 6.1% are staying with persons who doesn't belong to their family. Among married 44.6% and 16.9% of respondents husbands are coolie and drivers respectively probably this contributes due to low social support, poverty and family burden. Low levels of education are also common and have not completed secondary education The study also says that the female sex workers were in the age group of 15 to 55 and the majority of them were between the ages of 31-35. Majority of the sex workers were poor, had low socio-economic background, often deserted by their husbands, with children and in to the profession to sustain their families.152.3% of the respondents have alcohol use and drug use . Reasons for drinking included stress from family responsibilities, the economic burden of paying for schooling, as well as the depression associated with sex work (.Kumar MS 2003). 61.5% of the respondents report that they undergo Physical and Psychological Harrassment during encounter.(Ronald Weitzer, George (2005) in their study says that Victimization and exploitation are highest among street prostitutes and among those who have been trafficked into prostitution, but other workers are much less vulnerable to violence, exercise more control over their work, and derive at least some psychological or physical rewards from what they do.Among24.6% of unmarried 18.46 % of the respondents has children.30.7 % of the respondents entered this profession when they were between age group 15-20 yrs and half of them were married at that time.

**Conclusion**

Sex workers are legally marginalized by a system which has in essence criminalized prostitution. Those who engage in sex work often find themselves entangled in a debt trap.Although we need more research on street sex workers, the studies reviewed here provide strong evidence that they face physical and Psychological harassment. Livelihood programmes and savings would break their need to seek sex work as the only alternate means of sustenance.This may break the low self esteem among sex Workers.It is also identified that most of the commercial sex workers have children and were concerned about their future.There was an urgent need to have more homes, which could take care of educational and nutritional needs for their children.The study also recommended de-addiction centres as majority of them either depend on alcohol or drugs to overcome stress and relieve pain. There is little attention for their specific health needs, especially regarding their sexual health, and physical and mental traumas due to violence.

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