



# A Study on the Problems faced by Female Sex Workers in Kerala

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## Abstract

Sex workers are always considered to be a vulnerable group. Sex workers are group of people who earn money through sexual services to meet up their means of support. Women in sex work always have to face difficult situations while earning their livelihood. This group of people faces lots of violence's from different areas. Descriptive method of study is used in the present research. The sampling method used in this study was non-probability sampling. Female sex workers of the age group between 20 – 40 years were included in the study.

**Key Terms: violence, sex workers, acceptance, rights**

## Introduction

Women in sex work always have to face difficult situations while earning their livelihood. This group of people faces lots of violence's from different areas. The main reason for their vulnerability or marginalization is that their services have been denied from social acceptance. Lack of social acceptance led to violation of their human and fundamental rights like Right to life, right to dignity, right to equality, right to equal protection of law etc. Stigmas attached to sex work expose them to face violence from their family members and partner. This violence will force sex workersto pack up their profession, which will affect their livelihood. Another main reasonfor the marginalized existence is that providing sexual services, the sole means of livelihood for the community, have been denied social sanction. There is no governmental interventions happened to support female sex workers.

## Review of Literature

**Sahni, Rohini, and Shankar, V. Kalyan (2013)** in their study stated that, almost half of the women who were currently in sex work were involved in other occupations prior to their entry into sex work. It showed that women who came to sex work relatively in their working lives had experienced other forms of paid work prior to sex work as income from sex work was reported higher than other occupations. The study pointed out that due to interchangeability of the occupations by sex workers it is not easy to compartmentalize women's work into different groups. The study also discloses that poverty is the main factor that pushes girls/women into the sex work.

**Saggurti, Niranjana et al. (2012)** have conducted a study on "Indicators of Mobility, Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities and HIV Risk Behaviours among Mobile Female Sex Workers in India" claimed that the incidents of physical violence and alcohol consumption before sex are higher the degree of mobility among the female sex workers. The study data also emphasizes that the respondents under the study were at a higher risk due to increased inconsistent condom use, violence and migration. Due to stigma, labelling, disapproval and discriminatory treatment given to sex workers they kept on changing their sex work venues as a result it was extremely hard to reach for prevention programmes.

### Research Methodology

General objective of the study was -To study the problems faced by female sex workers.

Specific objectives include:

1. To learn about the various factors that led female sex workers to enter into the profession.
2. To study about the various aspects of violence faced by the female sex workers.
3. To know about the livelihood issues experienced by female sex workers.
4. To examine the distinct type of coping mechanisms adopted by sex workers to overcome these problems.

Pilot study is a small-scale replica and a rehearsal of the main study. It is concerned with administrative and organisational problems related to the whole study and the respondents. The researcher went to pilot study at an organisation working for the welfare of FSWs at Kozhikode district. At the agency researcher got 8 respondents for the study. Pilot study is a small-scale preliminary study conducted to evaluate feasibility, duration, cost, adverse events and improve upon the study design prior performance of a full-scale research project. After the pilot study research concluded that, this study is relevant and feasible in the current situation of FSWs. A research design is the procedure for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies. The research is quantitative research with probability research design. Quantitative research design is aimed at discovering how many people think, act or feel in a specific way. Descriptive method of study is used in the research. Descriptive research is a type of research that is used to describe the characteristics of a population. It collects data that are used to answer a wide range of what, when, and how questions pertaining to a particular population or group. The universe consists of all survey elements that qualify for inclusion in the research study. The precise definition of the universe for a particular study is set by the research question, which specifies who or what is of interest. The universe may be individuals, groups of people, organizations, or even objects. Female sex workers in Kerala were the universe of the study. One female sex worker of Kerala is the unit of the study.

## Inclusion criteria and Exclusion criteria

- Female sex workers from Kozhikode, Ernakulam and Kottayam were included in study.
- Female sex workers of the age group between 20 – 40 were included in the study.
- Male and transgender sex workers were excluded from the study.
- Female sex workers who reside outside Kozhikode, Ernakulam and Kottayam were excluded from the study
- Female sex workers below the age of 20 and above the age of 40 were excluded from the study.

The sampling method used in this study was non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is defined as a sampling technique in which the researcher selects samples based on the subjective judgment of the researcher rather than random selection. Non-probability sampling is a sampling method in which not all members of the population have an equal chance of participating in the study, unlike probability sampling. Each member of the population has a known chance of being selected. In non-probability sampling, the researcher used Snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling helps researchers find a sample when they are difficult to locate. Researchers use this technique when the sample size is small and not easily available. This sampling system works like the referral program

## Tools and Techniques

Self-prepared questionnaire was used as the tool used for data collection.

A questionnaire is a research instrument that consists of a set of questions or other types of prompts that aims to collect information from a respondent. Interview was the technique used for data collection. The Interview is a face-to-face interpersonal communication in which a candidate is asked questions to assess his capability for the recruitment, promotion or the expected situation. Data was collected from primary sources and secondary sources. Primary data: It was collected from 80 respondents.

Secondary data: Secondary data was collected from journals, articles and websites.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis was done by SPSS software version 2.0. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is a software program used by researchers in various disciplines for quantitative analysis of complex data. This introductory level SPSS workshop introduces SPSS environment, basic data preparation and management, descriptive statistics, and common statistical analysis.

## Findings of the Study

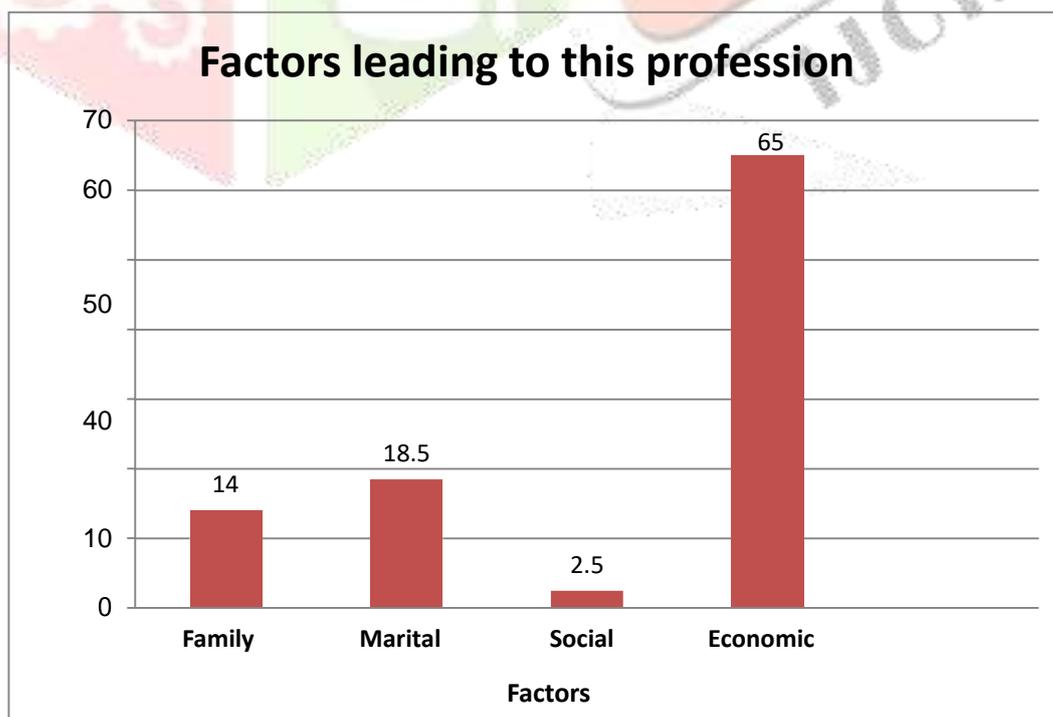
- Majority of the respondents belongs to the age group above 40 (40%).
- Majority of the respondents have done their education up to high school level (47.5%).
- Majority of the respondents were from nuclear family (78.8%).
- More than half of the respondents' family consists of less than 5 members (76.3%).
- Majority of the respondents faces economic issues which led them to enter into this profession (65%).
- Majority of the respondents come to this profession by their own self-interest (40%).
- Majority of the respondents' main economic factor which led them to enter into this profession

is to support their family (43.8%).

- Majority of the respondents were forced to use alcohol by their clients (72.5%).
- All the respondents were aware of Sexually Transmitted Infections (100%).
- Majority of the respondents has not been denied from accessing government institutions and schemes (65%).
- Most of the respondents receive legal supports (51.3%).
- Majority of the respondents lives in a rented home (65%).
- Majority of the respondent's main income source is this profession (68.8%).
- Majority of respondents get support from Non-Governmental Organisation during the time of any crisis (35%).
- Majority of the respondents utilizes the services provided by the Non-Governmental Organisation (61.3%).
- Majority of the respondents wish to leave their profession (56%).

## SUGGESTIONS

- **Decriminalization of sex work**
- **Avoid discrimination against sex workers**
  - **Accessibility in health care setting**
  - **Rehabilitation centers for sex workers**
  - **Community empowerment**
  - **Avoid violence against sex workers**



## Conclusion

Sex workers make a lot of compromise to extent a financial support to the children and family. Given a choice between being destitute on the streets and lulling hungry children to sleep every night or working as a sex worker and expanding the opportunities for their children, these women choose the latter. Government should arrange livelihood programmes and savings would break their need to seek sex work as the only alternate means of sustenance.

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