

## Socio-Demographic and Health Conditions of the Commercial Sex Workers and their Children of Pune, India

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### Abstract:

*Sex work in India has been done from historical times. Children of sex workers face discrimination and challenges in accessing their basic rights. These children are standing on the lowest strata of the social ladder and their problems are grossly ignored. A community based cross-sectional study was conducted from 1 April 2012 to 15 August 2012 in Budhwar Peth, a well known red light area of Pune city. A well designed Questionnaire was employed to get the desirable information from the sampled individuals of children and women. Also, 292 children of sex workers enrolled in the institute of Janiv have also been taken into account. Findings suggested that the condition of the children of CSW is terrible as 60% of their parents are illiterate, 40% of their children have died from various types of diseases whereas 20% have died due to malnutrition. They were not found with significant permanent diseases but unfortunately majority of them do not consult doctors at all which is why 20 percent of their*

*children have died with malnutrition. About 65% of their children are in the age group of 0-10. The overall social, health and education situation of the CSW and their children need immediate attention.*

**Key words:** Prostitution, educational and health, diseases, malnutrition, society

## **Introduction:**

According to Kara certain market forces create a demand for a product; other market forces create a supply to meet that demand (Kara, 2009). The reach of the sex trade has been exacerbated by the recent phenomenon of globalization through increased economic integration, transnational migration, and international tourism (Brennan, 2004). Seven of every ten sex trafficking victims reported domestic violence including rape, beatings, and psychological abuse by their husbands, uncles, or fathers as the primary factor in their decision to accept work abroad in Moldova since the year 2000, (Kara,2009).

Millions of sex workers are employed through selling sex, dancing, stripping, pornography, and escort services (Farr, 2005). Annually, around 70% of the one to four million trafficking victims are pressed into sex work<sup>5</sup> (Global Fund for Women, 2008). Sex work in India is clandestine (Dandona et al., 2006). Almost every country worldwide has been incorporated into the sex trade as a source, transit, or destination site (Farr, 2005). Studies in India show that women either involve in sex work involuntarily, often due to economic reasons (Blanchard et al., 2005). A study of economically poor sex workers (Chattopadhyay et al.) suggests that illiteracy, failure of family support and lack of ability to fulfill their basic needs, were key factors for adopting prostitution. Many women resorted to sex work for payment as a means of survival (Jayasree A., 2004). Research on initiation into sex work usually makes a distinction between voluntary and involuntary prostitution

(UNESCO, 2002). Simons and Whitbeck (1991) confirm that exposure to early sexual abuse and destructive parenting result in women running away from home which in turn leads to increased participation in deviant activities, including prostitution. Lack of employment opportunities within the country is a major reason for women entering sex work in Russia (Aral et al., 2003).

Children of sex workers face discrimination and challenges in accessing their basic rights. They also have limited access to services. Often, they are not enrolled in school or they drop out because they experience social exclusion. In addition, the children tend to have underdeveloped psychosocial life skills and rarely see positive role models. These factors contribute to children following their parents into sex work. Girls are particularly vulnerable, and may be forced into this work. Compounding all these challenges is the chance that children whose mothers are HIV-positive may contract the virus during the birth process or while breastfeeding. The study was carried out to find out the awareness of sex commercial worker and their children as well as society regarding of offspring of sex-worker in Budhwar Peth of Pune city. The children of sex workers are not living a normal and healthy life in our society. They are also part of our society but society is not ready to accept these children they are facing many problems in their life, such as social, economical, political, cultural, educational etc.

## **Data base**

Children of CSWs constitute 5.3 million in number and between 5 and 18 years of age. They form 40 percent of the total population of CSW's in India (pal et al., 2011). A community based cross-sectional study was conducted from 1 April 2012 to 15 August 2012 in Budhwar Peth, a well known red light area of Pune city. A well designed Questionnaire was employed to

get the desirable information from the sampled individuals who included children and women. Questions focusing on the social aspects were asked to the children above 4 years of age. Also, the secondary data has been procured from the institute of 'Janiv'. The institute has been being run since 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1985 for the children of sex workers. For the present study, 292 children of sex workers enrolled in the institute have also been taken into account.

## Discussion

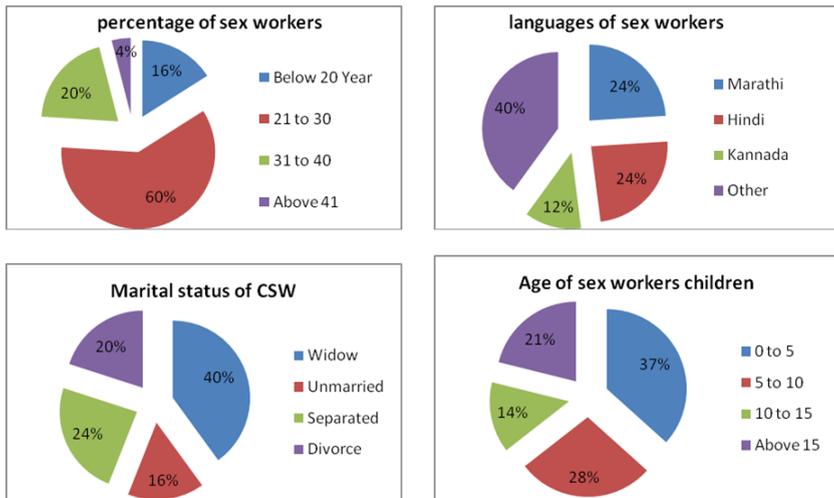
As a marginalized group, sex workers are normally expected to experience poorer health than comparable age groups of the general population (W. Rçssler et al., 2010). Current estimates indicate that between 3 and 10 million women participate in this market, a steep increase from the hundred thousand estimated as recently as 1989 (Arunachalam, Raj and Manisha Shah. 2008). There is a high probability that the daughter of a CSW will become a CSW when she grows up and the son will become a pimp. It shows us the state of affairs the children live in. It is evident that these children are standing on the lowest strata of the social ladder and their problems are grossly ignored.

**Table 1: Population attributes of the Commercial sex workers**

Age of sex workers		Language of sex workers		Marital status of sex workers		Age of sex workers children	
Age	Percentage	Language	Percentage	Marital Status	Percentage	Age	Percentage
Below 20	16	Marathi	24	Widow	40	0 to 5	33
21 to 30	60	Hindi	24	Unmarried	16	5 to 10	25
31 to 40	20	Kannada	12	Separated	24	10 to 15	13
Above 41	4	Other	40	Divorce	20	Above 15	19

Source: Field work conducted by the authors

**Fig. 1: Social attributes of the commercial sex workers**



It is observed in the study that 16 percent women are less than 20 years old, 60 percent women are between 21 to 30 years old, and 20 percent are between 31 to 40 years old. Only 4 percent of the women were found above 41 years of age (Table 1). The maximum women are seen in the class of 21 to 30 years. The number of CSW is observed decreasing after 30 years old class and, likewise, the number of CSW is less below 20 years old class. A study on ‘Children of Prostitutes and Children Dependent on Prostitutes in Rajasthan’ conducted by Hema Agrawal and Arvind Agrawal at Creative Youth Society, Jaipur in 1996. The study covered six districts of Rajasthan viz. Dholpur, Bharatpur, Dausa, Alwar, Baran and Sirohi, covering a sample of 261 prostitutes and 724 children. The study highlighted that the most of the prostitutes were belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes’ category. All the interviewed CSW don’t have the same mother tongue. They speak different languages. There have been found 3 major languages with which the CSW are familiar. They are Marathi, Hindi and Kannada. There are 24 percent of women speak Marathi, 24 women speak Hindi and 12 percent speak Kannada. The remaining 40 percent speak some other language. In

Indian culture, marriage is very important event in our life. However, in the life of CSW, marriage seems to be the dream that can never come true. Pursuant to the above marital data of CSW, the number of widow is 40 percent, separated are 24 percent, divorcee are 20 percent and unmarried are 16 percent. On the basis of the available data, all CSW seem to be helpless and destitute of support. On account of this, they are facing a lot of problem. As far as Children of the sex workers are concerned, 33 percent belong to age group of 0-5 age group, 24 percent belong to 5-10 age group whereas 13 percent belong to 10-15 age group. 19 percent of the children belong of age group above 15.

**Table 2: Education facilities in Budhwar Peth**

Education of sex workers		Education facilities		Private coaching classes		Proportion of children drop out	
Education	Percentage	Education facilities	Percentage	Private Coaching Classes	Percentage	Children left school	Percentage
Illiterate	60	Private	12	Yes	36	Yes	24
Primary	40	Government	28	No	64	No	76
		Private + Government	60	Total	100	Total	100

Education in its broadest sense of development is the most crucial input for empowering people with skills and knowledge and giving them access to productive employment in future (Planning Commission: Education Division, 2009: 3). Education helps to overcome the social barriers and enhance earning potential and productivity of the people through acquisition of skills and play a dominant role in influencing the quality of human resources as it helps in conveying ideas, thoughts and events over time and space (Mushtaquim M., Ahmad A. & Ali M.Z., 2006: 101). Out of the surveyed population, 60 percent of the women are illiterate whereas 40 women have taken only primary education (Table 2). None of the women has crossed primary education. In keeping with the above data, we can say that maximum CSW are mostly illiterate and this study serves to be essential to signify the

educational situation of CSW. If the government will provide good education facilities and job for the women in prostitution, the number of CSW can be decreased. It was also found out that 36 percent of the children of the CSW have access to private coaching classes but at the same time 24 percent of the children have left school.

**Table 3: Socio-educational characteristic of the children of CSW**

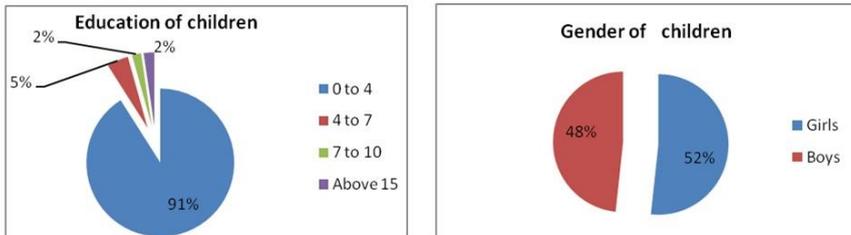
Children admitted in different Institutes		Education of children		Institutes of children		Gender of children	
Age	No. of children	Class	Number of children	Institute	Number of children	Gender	No. of children
00 to 05	213	0 to 4	272	K.G. (Balwadi)	180	Girls	151
05 to 10	57	4 to 7	14	Anaupcharik Varg	69	Boys	141
10 to 15	15	7 to 10	6	Abhyaas Varg	43	Total	292
Above 15	7	Total	292	Total	292		
Total	292						

Source: Institute of Janiv

A study on 'Rehabilitation of Children of Prostitutes and Devadasis' by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (1991) estimated that there were about 20 Lakh prostitutes in India in 817 red light areas, with more than 5 million children whose father's identity was not known to the mothers. The data collected from the institute of Janiv depicts that 151 out of the 292 children are girls. . There are several reasons of the equality in the number of girls and boys. Most of the sex workers are less educated and there has not been any social awareness amongst them. The rudimentary reason of the equal number of girls is that the sex workers treat their girls as their successors in the sex work. It has been observed that the maximum number of children comes under 0-5 age group (213), while the minimum number of children has been found in the age group of Above 15 (7). It has been also observed that there is an inverse relationship between the number of children of sex workers and their age. Age groups of 5-10 encompass 57 children. On a whole, it has

also been noticed that the maximum children are able to take elementary education only. The number of children taking secondary education is zero. 6 children were found in class 7-10.

**Fig. 2: Educational and gender inequality among the children of commercial sex workers**



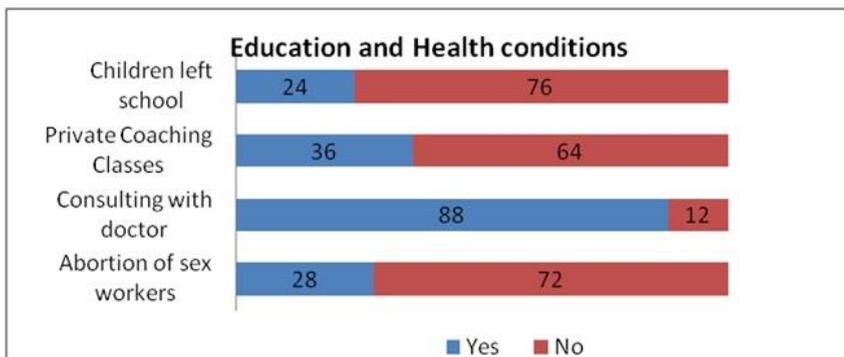
The social and economic environment is the rationale behind the less education of the children of CSW. There happen to have been many institutes which are run for the development of sex workers and their children. In spite of their great endeavour to strive for the well being of sex worker, they have not yet attained to the complete success, due to a number of barriers in the development process of sex workers. The available data for the present research work has been procured from the institute of 'Janiv'. The institute runs three activities viz K.G., 'Anaupcharik Varg' and 'Abhyas Varg'. The number of children of CSW has been divided in keeping with the above three activities. 180 children have been observed learning in K.G. 69 children are enrolled in Anaupcharic Varg whereas 43 children enrolled in Abhyas Varg.

**Table 3: Health and Medical facilities of the CSW**

Disease of sex worker children		Distribution of died children		Abortion of sex workers		Consultation with doctor	
Type of disease	Percentage	Age	Percentage	Abortion	Percentage	Consulting with doctor	Percentage
Temporary	96	0 to 1	96	Yes	28	Yes	88
Permanent	4	2 to 3	4	No	72	No	12

The life of CSW and their children is very difficult and excruciating. They are facing various problems as regards health, education, society, etc. Of women presenting for antenatal care in urban areas in April 1995, 2.3 percent were HIV positive (Ungchusak et al, 1995). The CSW don't have any facility regarded to their own health. Even in the period of their pregnancy, they don't have any sustenance and their health doesn't get well consequently. In the prostitution, abortion is indispensable, for the work of prostitution is related to the sexual activity and there are maximum probabilities of pregnancy. Accordingly, abortion seems to be normal thing for the CSW. 28 percent of the women have had abortions. They prefer to beget children. Thus, the maximum women don't seem to have done abortion and, therefore, the number of CSW's children appears to be increasing day by day. Lapinski-Lafaive and Simpson (2004) believes that CSWs have a variety of concerns including; contracting of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS, asthma, high blood pressure, and dying or getting killed on the streets. Similarly, their children are also facing many problems and many of them die in the delivery period or in infancy.

**Fig. 3: Educational and health conditions of the commercial sex workers**



In accordance with the obtained data, 96 percent CSW have appraised that their children have temporary disease whereas 4 percent CSW has informed that her child has permanent disease. It was also found that 96 percent of the deaths of the infants occur at the age of below 1.

**Table 4: Reasons of death and available medical facility in CSW**

Reasons for Deaths of sex worker's children		Availability of Medical facility	
Reason of death	Percentage	Medical Facilities	Percentage
Disease	40	Private	8
Accident	20	Government	12
Malnutrition	20	Private + Government	80
Other	20		

**Table 5: Family planning operations and quality of medical facilities**

Quality of medical facilities		Family planning operations		
Quality of medical facilities	Percentage	Family Operation	Planning	Percentage
Good	84	Yes		12
Bad	16	No		88

Various reasons have been noticed in the death of CSW's children. According to the data, 40 percent children have been noticed to have died of disease, 20 percent died in accident, 20 percent due to malnutrition and 20 percent by reason of some other cause. 80 percent of the CSW utilize government and private hospitals/ medical centers. Out of the total surveyed CSW 12 percent prefer government medical centre whereas 8 percent prefer private medical facility. Most of the population was satisfied with the current quality of medical facility (84 percent) but 88 percent of the samples haven't done family planning operation (table 5).

**Table 6: Institutions providing Assistance to CSW**

S. No.	Children development aid	Percentage
1	Government	12
2	N.G.O.	44
3	Government+N.G.O.	12
4	None	32

A number of agencies are providing assistance for the betterment of CSW. The NGO are trying their best to raise the levels of development in the CSW. They assist 44 percent of the total CSW whereas government cover only 12 percent of the CSW. It is also evident that 12 percent of the population was getting assistance from both government as well as NGO where as 32 percent of the population are still to be reached by the government and NGO (table 6).

## **Conclusion**

Prostitution work has been done from historical times in India. Commercial sex workers and their children face social, economical and education problem in their lives. The findings of the study reveal that most of the CSW are widows followed by separated. Unmarried CSW account for only 16% of the total sampled population. The CSW's are not confined to a particular community. Most of them are illiterate and are trying their best to educate their children so that their children will not suffer what they have suffered. They were not found with significant permanent diseases but unfortunately majority of them do not consult doctors at all which is why 20 percent of their children have died with malnutrition. Diseases have also taken a big toll of their children. Also majority of them haven't done family planning operations. The study showed that the CSW call for an immediate interventions primarily targetting education and health. Awareness about AIDS/ HIV which is common among sex workers can be created through education which would help in eradication of the menace. There is a probability that a girl child of a sex worker may follow her mother.

Therefore, education can prove to be an important parameter for their better future. Similarly, efforts have to make to improve their health conditions.

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