

A comparative evaluation among the children of female sex workers and non-sex workers: personality dimensions

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ABSTRACT

The present study is a comparative study among the children of female sex workers and children of non sex workers (control group) in respect of their personality dimensions. 10 children of sex workers and 10 children of non sex workers were assessed on Children Apperception test and Somatic Ink block series to fulfil the aims of the study. The results reveal Problems in interpersonal relationship, loose interpersonal bond, Aggression towards parents. Poor self-image, impulsivity, Craving for congenial home environment, parental love and affection, Insecurity in the children of sex workers. Children of sex workers are more emotionally impoverished than normal children. Sibling rivalry, Separation anxiety and magic and fantasy thinking is higher in the children of sex workers.

Keywords: Female Sex Worker, Children Personality, Children of Sex Workers, Self-Image, Aggression, Personality

Prostitution, entitled as the ‘world’s oldest profession’, may be defined as a business or practice of engaging in sexual relations in exchange for payment or other benefit. It is prevailing from ancient times and it is sometimes defined as commercial sex. The life of sex workers and their children are mystified in a society where they are stigmatized and socially isolated from the so-called mainstream society. The tag of the ‘child of a sex worker’ has dire effect on the socio – psychological growth, healthy growth and development of the personality of the child. Sometimes it is seen that as these children face more difficulties in life, they develop better survival skills and reflexive capability than overprotected children. In addition, children, who are born in such areas, grow up watching their mothers being exploited may eventually fall prey to these types of exploitation. According to a study conducted by Jaiprakash Institute of Social Change (JPISC) a large number of children of sex workers drop out of secondary education embarrassed by their family situation or because of lack of funds. For girls, there is the added pressure to follow their mother’s footsteps to earn a living. In some cases, abuse from outside world and poor intermingling with peers within the school and outside school hours also make the children quit school. Also, children coming from different backgrounds feel reluctant to mingle with the children

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of sex workers. According to the survey conducted by Durbar Mahila samittee for the children of sex workers, things remain fine up to the primary level as queries from young children on family backgrounds are limited. Problems arise in the class V to VII phase as students get more curious and have enough information to ask intrusive questions. This often leads to humiliation and a psychological inadequacy among children from the red-light areas as friends start avoiding or ostracising them once the truth comes out. According to a study by Beard and his colleagues (2010), from the centre of global health and development, looked at all possible negative outcomes faced by children of drug users and sex workers, including cognitive developmental delays, neglect, sexual abuse, early sexual debut, low school enrolment and psychological issues. The review suggests that this vulnerability can be ameliorated by potential sources of resilience connected to social networks, parents' physical and mental health, parent child bonding, education and other environmental factors. According to a report submitted by UNICEF, the children coming from other backgrounds often do not sufficiently mingle with children from the places like sonagachi. According to an annual report of DWCD & SW, Government of west Bengal (2005-2006), children of sex workers are in greater risk of HIV and other exploitation. Children often face ostracism and condemnation due to the profession of their mother.

So, the overall analysis reveals the studies regarding the personality of the children of sex workers are limited in number. Therefore, the present study aims to assess the personality pattern of the children of sex workers.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and study design

The sample comprised of two groups, i.e. the children of female sex workers (study group) and children of non-female sex workers (control group). A total of 20 subjects were selected. The study group consisted of 10 children of sex workers, and the control group comprised of 10 children hailing from normal families, were selected within the age range of 8-12 years with lower socio-economic status, Indian and without any psychiatric complain according to the mental Status Examination.

The participants were assessed through Children's Apperceptive Test (C.A. T) and Somatic Inkblot Series-II (SIS-II). For both the groups; rapport was established with the children prior to the administration of the tests. Each child was administered the two projective tests on separate days one at a time by the test administrators by following the respective standard method of administration. After the data collection from both the groups, the data of the two tests were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed.

Measures

- 1. Information schedule:** An Information Schedule was specially prepared for this work with a view to elicit the following information: name, age, sex, education level, number of siblings, history of any physical or psychiatric illness, nature and frequency of emotions experienced like happiness, sadness and rage.
- 2. Somatic Inkblot Series-II:** Developed by Cassell and Dubey (2003), a self-administered projective test of personality which consists of an (A) series and a (B) series, each with 31 images for a combination of 62 images.
- 3. The Children's Apperception Test (CAT):** Bellak and Bellak, 1949, was used to measure the psychosexual conflicts accompanying different stages of children's development. Examples of these conflicts include relationship issues, sibling rivalry, and aggression. Today CAT is most often used as an assessment technique in clinical evaluation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An overall analysis of **SIS-II** reveals a noticeable difference among the children of two groups. Greater number of total number of responses, Human responses, and movement responses, of control group than study group is indicative of comparatively lesser imaginative capacities, dynamicity and functional intelligence of the children of sex workers which may be due to the fact that as the children of sex workers grow in more unhealthy and deficient environment, they do not get required exposure to different perspective and also grow in social isolation and are cut off from main stream which hinders their imaginative capacity, intelligence, dynamicity, and the ability to form interpersonal bond. Lesser number of Animal response in study group than control group indicates that the control group children are more regressive and immature. This may be due to the fact that children of sex workers have faced an adultery environment and have seen their mothers engaging in sex works perhaps made them more matured. Such adultery environment brings many difficulties in their life and makes them to develop more survival skills and reflective capacity; on the contrary children from normal families are overprotected from all the oddities of life and have less maturity (Jayshree, 1997). The result also reveals that greater number of typical responses were given by the children of control group whereas greater number of most typical responses were given by study group. Typical responses in control group suggests that these children have more healthy perception of their environment, i.e., they possess greater wellbeing than children of sex workers may due to presence of early exposure to sex and adultery, absence of father figure or having inactive or punitive fathers in case of study group children. These factors altogether exert great influence on perceptual framework through which they perceive and interpret the external world which has been found to be not so healthy in comparison to control group. On the other hand children of sex workers were more able to see most typical responses may be because of the fact that as these children are a part of the marginalized and stigmatized group of society, they constantly have an inner urge or need to become a part of mainstream, and thus trying to conform relentlessly and keep up the demands of main stream endlessly. In contrast to this since children of control group do not have such compelling needs to conform as their identity is not threatened and develop their own independent identity. The study also reveals greater number of atypical responses in the children of sex workers which can be attributed to less exposure to healthy environment and vague surroundings of children of sex workers. Along with this, pathological responses are also found to be more in study group children including depression and hostility which can be due to that they live in such an environment where they do not get enough attention from their family members mostly mothers due to their profession so they do not get enough opportunity to form secure attachment. This underlying depression becomes a seed for hostility and aggression when they came to the fore front. Sometimes this anger is also directed towards the mainstream society because they are always battling the constant desire to be a part of the society which has rejected and separated them.

After analysing the stories of **CAT**, various themes have been found which suggests that dynamics of personality of children of sex workers differ significantly from the children of study group and they are more prone to pathology. Greater number of study group children were found to have poor self-image with greater insecurity. Children of control group perceive their mother to be nurturing, less discriminating, less aggressive and less punitive where as children of study group perceived their mothers as non-nurturing, more discriminative, highly aggressive, and punitive which can be attributed to the unavailability of mother's care. Since mothers of study group are involved in sex work profession that

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makes them prone to greater aggression at work place with inadequate ways of channelizing those negative emotions which are mostly displaced on their children. This may be the reason behind the perception of children of sex workers towards their mothers as aggressive and punitive unlike the children of non sex workers. Results also reveals that children of control group perceived more affinity towards their father even though they perceived their fathers to be more authoritative, on the other hand children of sex workers perceived their fathers as less loving and supportive. The main reason behind the authoritative perception of fathers in control is that they see their fathers as the head of the family and the main earning member of the family whereas it's just opposite in case of children of study group. The children of sex workers have greater aggression towards their parents, and such perception and experiences further lead to the development of weak interpersonal bond. This is may be due to the unavailability of both the parents, lack of exposure to socially accepted relationship, extreme exposure to tangible and commercial relationship makes them more confused and leads to the development of weak interpersonal bond. Sibling rivalry is also seen higher in the children of sex workers which could be explained by the fact that they get unequal amount of attention, love and care from their parents specially from their mothers. Separation anxiety was found to be more in the children of sex workers. According to the Theory of attachment by Bowlby, infancy is considered to a critical period for forming a strong attachment bond and secured childhood. Sex workers and their children do not get ample opportunity or time to form the secure attachment which in turn develops a feeling of insecurity in the children of sex workers which eventually gets more thickened by the negligence of the society. The children of study group were found to have a greater need of affiliation and power than the children of control group, results also reveals more emotional impoverishment and depression in the children of sex workers. Various studies have shown that faulty attachment leads to depression in growing children or in later life. These children are constantly looked down by the society at large, that may inculcate a feeling of rejection, hopelessness and depression in them. The result also reveals a greater craving for congenial home environment and parental love in the children of study group, they tend to have a high tendency of magical and fantasy thinking and are more impulsive than the children of control group. Since they are very well aware of the fact that they are segregated from the society, it is always their dream to get accepted and to live a life like the other children of the main stream society.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded by stating that problems in interpersonal relationship, loose interpersonal bond with parents is dominant in the children of sex workers. The children of study group are more emotionally deprived and more impulsive, they perceived their environment as threatening, hostile and non-supportive. Sibling rivalry and separation anxiety is high in the children of study group. Results indicated higher score for magical and fantasy thinking in the children of study group. On the other hand, the children of control group possess healthy perception of the environment and have a healthy and secure base of attachment with their caregivers. They perceive their mothers to be more nurturing, less discriminating, less aggressive and punitive and fathers as more authoritative, demanding and strict.

Limitations

The study would have been more fruitful if larger sample could be used so as to able to generalize the results obtained in the study.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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