

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The findings and discussions of the study “HIV/AIDS Consciousness among Female Sex Workers in Silchar Town: A Sociological Study” have been summarised under objectives achieved, suggestions and conclusion. As mentioned in the first chapter the objectives of the study are

1. To know the perception of STI and HIV/AIDS among sex workers.
2. To study the hazardous health behavior among sex workers.
3. To study the STI and HIV/AIDS consciousness among Female Sex Workers.
4. To study role of government institutions and non-governmental organizations for prevention of HIV among female sex workers of Silchar town.

8.1 FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN SILCHAR TOWN: A SOCIO ECONOMIC PROFILE

Socio-economic and demographic profile of the respondents includes category of FSWs, age, religion, family background, income, occupation, educational background, marital status, linguistic background, caste, housing pattern, drinking water facility, electricity facility, sanitation facility and personal cleanliness of respondents have been assessed.

- ❖ Majority of female sex workers under study are brothel based female sex workers i.e. 80% followed by home based 3%, street based 16% and few are hotel based.

- ❖ Majority of the female sex workers under study are within the age group of 26 to 30 and 31 to 35 years.
- ❖ Majority of female sex workers are Hindus followed by Muslims and Christians including tribes.
- ❖ Majority of the female sex workers under study belong to poor family background. Most of the female sex workers are living in nuclear families and a few numbers of respondents are living in joint family.
- ❖ The majority of the female sex workers of Silchar town hail from villages of Barak valley and other neighboring states of North-East India. Some of them have come from abroad particularly from Bangladesh and Nepal.
- ❖ Literacy level of female sex workers under study is very poor. Majority of the female sex workers are illiterate i.e. 99% of brothel based followed by 50% street based, 42.85% home based and 66.66% are hotel based.
- ❖ The entire brothel based female sex workers i.e. 100% of them are engaged solely in the occupation of sex work however, some differences are observed among other categories of Female sex workers such as engaged in domestic servants and day labour.
- ❖ The majority of female sex workers income is ranging from 5,000 to less than 10,000. Out of total female sex workers in Silchar town 36% earn Rs. 5,000 to less than 10,000 followed by 28% earn Rs. 3,000 to less than 5,000, 19.6 % earn Rs. 10,000 and above, 11.2% earn Rs. 1,500 to less than 3,000 and only 5.2 % earns below Rs. 1,500 only.

- ❖ The majority of the female sex workers are unmarried. Out of total female sex workers in Silchar town 74.8% of them are unmarried followed by 11.2% are married, 8% are separated, 3.6% are widow and 2.4% are divorcee.
- ❖ The majority of the female sex workers living in Silchar town are Bengali i.e. 89% of them followed by 3.6% of them are Bhojpuri, 2.8% of them are Nepali, 2.4% of them are Manipuri and only 1.6% of them are Assamese.
- ❖ Majority of the female sex workers are belong to Scheduled Caste i.e. 44.4% of them followed by 18.8 % of them are Muslim Minority, 12% of them are belong to Other Backward Caste, 4.8% of them are belong to Schedule Tribe and only 1.6% of them are belong to General caste.
- ❖ The type of house where brothel based female sex workers are staying is pucca house made up of concrete or semi-pucca house made up of bricks and tins.
- ❖ The street based female sex workers are coming from far distant villages in the town and few of them stay in rented house. Those who are staying in their own house reported that their housing condition is worst.
- ❖ The housing condition of the home based female sex workers is very worst because houses are built adjacent to the bank of the river. When flood occur mostly the house situated near the bank of the river get more affected.
- ❖ Hotel based female sex workers are mostly coming from the nearby villages and go back to their village. So it is not possible to visit the houses of the hotel based sex workers.

- ❖ The majority of female sex workers living in Silchar town primarily use supply water and public hand pump for drinking and cooking purposes and also use river water for washing clothes, bathing etc.
- ❖ Street based and hotel based female sex workers generally use supply water and sometimes buy water bottle for drinking purposes because they stay whole day in the town and after their work is over they go back to their native village.
- ❖ The majority of the female sex workers are having electricity facility where as few of the street based female sex workers do not have electricity facilities at their home as their earning is low and cannot maintain the electric bill regularly.
- ❖ The condition of toilet used by the sex workers is very poor and unhygienic.
- ❖ There is no proper drainage system inside the brothel. Because of poor drainage system brothel area of Silchar town is logged with rain water during rainy season.
- ❖ Brothel is situated near by a market so the garbage of the market is also dumped in front of brothel. Entire brothel area seems to be a dumping place.
- ❖ Street based and hotel based female sex workers are floating and moving. They are coming from neighboring villages of Silchar town and a very few home based female sex workers reside in their own house.
- ❖ They are poor and their housing condition is very bad where they cannot maintain proper health and hygiene. Proper drainage system and clean latrines are not available in their rented houses.

- ❖ The most of the brothel based female sex workers maintain cleanliness but few of the sex workers cannot maintain cleanliness.
- ❖ Most of Street based female sex workers do not maintain proper cleanliness. Home based female sex workers are different they refresh themselves before meeting customer.
- ❖ Hotel based female sex workers maintain stylish dress up and cleanliness.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

8.2 HAZARDOUS HEALTH BEHAVIOUR OF FEMALE SEX WORKERS

- ❖ Majority of the female sex workers maintains hazardous life style. It is observed that female sex workers of Silchar town also face occupational stress. They cannot earn their livelihood safely. Occupational stress has a direct influence on health of female sex workers in Silchar town.
- ❖ Female sex workers of Silchar town also face a significant risk of violence at work, including rape attempt and other sexual assault, physical assault and so on.
- ❖ The highest stress is experienced on the part of street based female sex workers in Silchar town, where risk of arrest or violence serves to undermine sex workers' sense of control over their lives, including their health.
- ❖ Female sex workers of Silchar town face often public attack, working lonely in unsafe place, working at night and attending clients' home. Sometimes they have to take risk in getting their remuneration because many clients betray them of providing money.

- ❖ They are often refused by health service providers to provide health services in their need.
- ❖ Food and drinking habit of female sex workers in Silchar town is not favorable for good health.
- ❖ The female sex workers do not use condom regularly due to their negligence and other compulsions.
- ❖ Brothel based sex workers are less conscious for using condom.
- ❖ The majority of the street based female sex workers use condom sometimes. They are not able to decide whether to use condom or not because of several reasons.
- ❖ Street Based female sex workers generally do not have time in their hand to negotiate with the client for use of condom during sexual intercourse.
- ❖ Street based female sex workers solicit with their customer standing on public places like bus stand, cinema hall, heart of the town, near bank of the river.
- ❖ Street based female sex workers are always in fear of Stigma, discrimination and public and police attack.
- ❖ Out of total female sex workers 68.4% of them have got information for using condom from peers and NGOs followed by 17.2% of them have got information from peers, NGOs and Govt. hospital and 14.4% of them have got information from other sources.

- ❖ Out of total female sex workers of Silchar town 85.2% of them are having habit of consume alcohol regularly, 12.4% of them have habit of consume alcohol occasionally. Majority of them consume alcohol to get relief from stress and strain.
- ❖ Majority of them meet multiple partners for maintaining their livelihood. Multiple partner selection is high among brothel based sex workers than home based and hotel based sex workers.
- ❖ The majority of female sex workers (44.4%) are performing sexual act 10 times and above in a week followed by 33.2% of them are performing 5 to 9 times in a week, 10.4% of them perform 1 to 4 times in a week.
- ❖ Majority of sex workers are taking more client load than their capacity which hampers their health.
- ❖ The majority (51.2%) of the female sex workers involve in the profession of sex work for more than 6 to 10 years followed by 38% involve in the profession of sex work for more than 1 to 5 years and 10.8% involve in the profession of sex work for more than 11 years above.

8.3 HIV/AIDS CONSCIOUSNESS OF FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN SILCHAR TOWN

This chapter deals with HIV /AIDS and STI consciousness of female sex workers of Silchar town. Major findings of this chapter are as follows.

- ❖ Majority of the female sex workers have heard about HIV. Out of total female sex workers living in Silchar town 76% have heard about HIV but 24% who have not heard about HIV.
- ❖ The majority of the female sex workers who have heard about HIV 51% of them have gathered knowledge from the source of friends, radio television's, news paper government hospital and NGOs and rest 49% have gathered knowledge from the source of friends, radio television's and news paper.
- ❖ The majority of the female sex workers have heard about HIV but only 40% of female sex workers have knowledge that HIV is a virus that causes AIDS and rest 60% have do not have adequate knowledge on HIV.
- ❖ Majority of the female sex workers of Silchar town who have heard about HIV among them 33% answered properly how HIV spreads followed by 20% answered partially correct and 47% answered incorrectly.
- ❖ The majority of the respondents who heard about HIV among them only 40% of female sex workers answered properly how HIV do not spread followed by 17% answered partially correct and 43% answered incorrectly.
- ❖ The majority of the respondents who heard about HIV among them only 17% of them have knowledge about the symptoms of HIV who gave correct answer followed by 23% gave partially correct answer and 60% of them could not answer.
- ❖ The study reveals that out of total 250 female sex workers in the Silchar town majority (72%) of them have heard about AIDS whereas 22.8% have not heard about AIDS.

- ❖ The majority of the female sex workers who heard about AIDS among them 26% replied ADIS is a killer disease 55% replied AIDS is a deadly Virus and only 19% of them replied correctly that AIDS is a end stage of HIV infection when the breakdown of the-immune system leads to several disease and eventual death.
- ❖ Key information on HIV/AIDs is not known to all female sex workers. The majority of the female sex workers who have heard about AIDS 48.4% of them have key information on seriousness of HIV/AIDs followed by 4.4% of them have key information regarding prevention and control of HIV/AIDs, 18.8% of them have key information on knowledge of ART and 28.4% of them have key information regarding HIV testing and counseling.
- ❖ Out of 250 female sex workers of Silchar town 63.2% are worried of being infected with HIV or contracting AIDS. The rest 16.8% and 20% are not worried and never thought of being infected with HIV or contacting AIDS.
- ❖ The majority of the respondents who are worried of being infected with HIV or contacting AIDs about 44% of them who do not know the remedial measures for prevention and control of the disease.
- ❖ Out of total 250 female sex workers living in Silchar town 68% have knowledge on prevention of HIV and 32% are not having knowledge about prevention of HIV.
- ❖ The majority of the female sex workers who have knowledge on prevention of HIV they too have lots of misconception regarding prevention method of HIV/AIDs.

- ❖ Out of total female sex workers of Silchar 45.6% of them replied HIV spread through general contact with infected person.
- ❖ Out of total respondents 72.4% of them have not gone for HIV testing and counseling and 27.6% of them have gone for HIV testing and counseling.
- ❖ Out of total female sex workers who have gone for HIV testing and counseling among them 28% gone for HIV testing and counseling before six month, 21% went before one year and 51% went before two years and above.
- ❖ Out of total respondents who went for HIV testing and counseling among them 65% replied that they prefer NGO and Govt. hospital for HIV testing and counseling whereas 35% replied they prefer private hospital and clinics for HIV testing and counseling.
- ❖ The study represents that out of total female sex workers 69.2% of them are aware of treatment services of HIV/AIDS whereas 30.8% of them are not aware about treatment services of HIV/AIDS.
- ❖ Out of total female sex workers in Silchar town 43.6% of them have heard about ART (Anti retro viral therapy) whereas 56.4% of them have not heard about ART.
- ❖ Respondents who have knowledge on ART 67% of them have gathered knowledge from Govt. hospital & NGOs, 15% of them have gathered knowledge from the source of Govt. hospital, NGOs, neighbours, friends & newspapers whereas 18% of them have gathered knowledge on ART from above all sources.

- ❖ Out of total female sex workers living in Silchar town among them no one has full knowledge on sexually transmitted infections followed by 90.4% of them have partial knowledge on sexually transmission infections and 9.6% of them do not know STI.
- ❖ Out of total female sex workers in under study 70.4% of them have sexually transmitted infections in last three months, only 23.2% of them have no sexually transmitted infections and 6.4% can't say whether they have STI or not . Therefore it is clear from the above data that majority of the female sex workers is having sexually transmitted infections.
- ❖ The respondents who have STI problem, 4% of them went to Govt. hospital, 7% of them went to NGO clinic, 31% of them went to Mobile STI clinic of NGO, 11% went to private clinics and 47% of them who negligence or sometimes do not allowed to going for treatment.
- ❖ It is observed that only 15.5% of brothel based female sex workers went for RPR test in Mobile Medical Unit others did not attend

8.4 FEMALE SEX WORKERS OF SILCHAR TOWN: CONSCIOUSNESS FROM BELOW

- ❖ The study reveals that Sex workers hail from poor family background.
- ❖ Illiteracy, early marriage, discrimination, trafficking, violence, poverty, migration and other socio-economic and family situation are responsible for women to become a sex worker.

- ❖ Many of the sex workers choose this occupation considering future of self, their children and parents.
- ❖ Sex workers are confronted with multiple constraints to maintain their occupation. They always hide their identity of sex worker in their family and society. Not a single sex worker is enjoying the work freely.
- ❖ Their situation is such that they cannot think of HIV and AIDs before coming to the occupation of sex work. After coming to this occupation many of them get infected with STIs but again their situation does not permit them to visit freely to health centre for curing the disease.
- ❖ They can maintain themselves and their family till they have the ability to attract and satisfy clients. Old age of sex worker is very pathetic.

8.5 MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Female sex workers of Silchar town hail from poor family background
2. Poor socio-economic and family situation compel sex workers to choose this occupation.
3. Life of female sex workers is full of risks and hazards. They cannot maintain a healthy life due to several compulsions.
4. Health behavior of female sex workers is unfavorable to maintain good health.
5. Alcohol consumption and smoking tobacco cause serious health problems.
6. HIV/AIDs consciousness is very poor among female sex workers.

7. They do not have adequate knowledge on HIV/AIDs as well as on other STIs.
8. Most of female sex workers are not aware of sustainable and correct use of condom to prevent HIV/AIDs and STIs.
9. They do not have knowledge of prevention and control of HIV/AIDs rather they are having misconceptions and myth about HIV/AIDs.
10. Majority of sex workers do not have knowledge on government provision for prevention and control of HIV/AIDs.
11. Government health facilities are not properly percolating down towards female sex workers.
12. NGO initiatives are not sufficient to save all sex workers from deadly disease like HIV/AIDs
13. Sex workers hesitate to visit government and private hospitals for regular health check up.
14. Alternative means of livelihood is not available to sex workers to alter their occupation.
15. Rehabilitation facility for female sex workers is not available in Cachar district for providing a healthy and peaceful life to the female sex workers of silchar town.

8.6 CONCLUSION

To draw conclusion we can say that there is need for comprehensive initiative and remedial measure which will create positive mechanism of HIV/AIDS consciousness among the Female Sex Workers. HIV/AIDS consciousness is essential for sustainable health seeking behavior of female sex workers in Silchar Town. The Female sex workers are gradually getting knowledge on HIV-AIDS but they require comprehensive knowledge on HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections. They are impressively engaged in alcoholism and maintain high risk behavior remaining in extremely unhealthy condition. Because of stigma and fear of public female Sex workers usually suppress their disease especially STI and do not discuss also with their friends for fear of losing their customers. They are not much aware of the government provision for treatment and care for HIV and AIDS patients. NGOs are working with sex workers but this is not sufficient to make all sex workers conscious for HIV and AIDS.

8.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is lack of knowledge among female sex workers. Sex education is very essential for them, education about HIV/AIDS prevention will help the female sex workers to understand, accept and cope with the diagnosis and prevention of serious health problems. This education should be a continuous and ongoing process. There should be frequent free medical camp in the brothel area for treating and counseling regularly.
2. Their consciousness, behavior change communication and condom promotion will help in prevention of STIs.

3. There should be a link between female sex workers and ICTCS, ART centre and TI NGOs to diagnose the STI cases early.
4. A long term health care facility is to be started in the heart of the brothel (red light areas) of Silchar after prior consultation with female sex workers for providing them all health care facilities.
5. A DIC (Drop in Centre) should be made inside the brothel comprising of clinical, counseling and testing facilities.
6. It is more essential to provide vocational training for alternative source of income generation because during old age, they do not get clients and their physical condition also does not permit them to continue their profession.
7. There is a need for regular campaign and awareness on HIV and other disease among female sex workers.
8. Study on MSM (Men Sex with Men) Community is also important who are also present in the town and there is possibility of HIV and other infection among them.