



## Title of the Paper What Makes Me Safe?

Poonam Sharma<sup>a</sup>

*<sup>a</sup>Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai*

### Introduction

Prostitution is one of the oldest professions of the world practiced since the birth of the organized society in almost all the countries (K., Jaishankar, 2008). In India, first reference to prostitution comes from Vedas. The Devdasi system of dedicating unmarried young girls to gods in Hindu temples was an established custom in India by 300 AD (Sinha, K., 2008). Today, the commercial sex industry is a multibillion dollar market. Factors that heighten sex workers' HIV vulnerability include limited access to health, social and legal services; sexual exploitation and trafficking; harmful, or a lack of, protective legislation and policies; gender-related differences and inequalities; limited access to information and prevention means; stigmatization and marginalization; exposure to lifestyle-associated risks such as violence, mobility and substance abuse.

Present paper investigates the effect of levels of self esteem and body image perception on frequency of condom use as always, sometimes and never on the female sex workers (FSWs) who were aware of HIV prevention and had knowledge of all four modes of transmission.

Based on the review of literature, models and theoretical framework following hypothesis have been formulated for the present research:

Self esteem

1. Sex workers adopting safe HIV/AIDS prevention practices (always using condom) would be higher on self esteem than the ones adopting unsafe (never using condom) and inconsistent (sometimes using condom) adoption of prevention practices.

Body Image perception

2. Sex workers adopting safe (always using condom) HIV/AIDS prevention practices would be higher on body image perception than the ones adopting unsafe (never using condom) and inconsistent (sometimes using condoms) prevention practices.

### Methodology

To achieve the aim 1308 Sex workers were contacted through purposive sampling. Out of these 1308 sex workers 1000 met the research criterion. Three groups were formed on the basis of the frequency of condom use. Each group consisted of 100 FSWs. Levels of self esteem and body image perceptions were measured by using standardised tests.

### Results

Mean and ANOVA was used for statistical analysis. Group always using condom (M= 27.3) had high self esteem followed by which never used condom (M=20.4). The lowest level of self esteem was observed for the inconsistent condom use (M=8.26). Body image perception of the group which always used condom (M=26.12) was better than the inconsistent condom use (M= 14.79).

### Results

Based on the research investigation the results supported the proposed hypothesis that "Sex workers adopting safe HIV/AIDS prevention practices (always using condom) were higher on self esteem than the ones adopting unsafe (never using condom) and inconsistent (sometimes using condom) adoption of prevention practices"

Based on the research investigation the results partially supported the proposed hypothesis that "Sex workers adopting safe (always using condom) HIV/AIDS prevention practices were higher on body image perception than the ones adopting unsafe (never using condom) and inconsistent (sometimes using condoms) prevention practices." As the results of multiple comparison (Scheffe's, post hoc test) revealed that the differences in body image as function of adoption of safe and unsafe prevention practice is non-significant.

### Conclusion

The findings are beneficial to the public health agencies for planning and implementing prevention programmes aiming psychological empowerment of sex workers. In spite of the limited scope of the present research, it provides a small but significant step to understand the psychology of female sex worker which may facilitate or hinder the adoption of safe sex practice among them. The study has wider implications for the HIV prevention programmes as compared to the limitations. The findings may be extremely beneficial to the public health agencies to plan and implement their prevention programmes aimed at sex workers through the findings of the study to psychologically empower them