

Vulnerability for Deviant Behaviour among Women - A Critical Analysis

Dr. Suphala S Kotian¹, M. Shashidhar Kotian²

¹Research Professor, Department of Social Science and Humanities, Shrinivas University, Mangalore, India

²Professor, Department of Research, Shrinivas University, Mukka, India

Abstract: *Deviant behaviour among women is an indication of unjust social order. There may be several reasons for women to lead a life with behaviour, deviating from social norms, further getting into more social problems. With an aim to understand the reasons for women to lead a lifestyle, deviating from the social norms, the present research was undertaken. A case study with 10 respondents who were found to indulge in sex work, was studied and their case was analysed with descriptive statistics.*

Keywords: Deviant behaviour, Vulnerable women, social problem

1. Introduction

Unlike any other being in the universe, the ties that bind human group together is not merely biological needs, but also imperceptible social relationships. Social relationship is referred to characteristics among who share a set of common meaning of symbols, feelings of unity, and system of mutual obligations. In each social group, there follows a definite rights and responsibilities which results in each person's social status. These groups belong to specific social Institutions which is interrelated with uniform and formal manner of behaviour. Culture of each of these social groups differs with normative standards of conduct and social relationship and behaviour is therefore regulated by the social norms. In simple words, we could say that social norms refer to what should or should not say, do or think under given circumstances.

Deviant behaviour is the violation of certain stated norms of the group. National dictionary defines deviant behaviour as "differing from a norm or form of behaviour accepted standards of society".

Need to understand the deviant behaviour of women

Deviant behaviour in general is influenced by social as well as individual factors. Women with their deviant behaviour, may be affected in several way. It could be broadly classified into personal disorganisation, family disorganisation and community disorganisation. Personal disorganisation occurs when there is general impairment of personal efficiency due to the rejection from the society. They personally face mental conflict and physical strain due to several reasons. The family is also affected because of social ostracism, shame and stigma which leads to conflict in the family which may lead to the cause of broken family, a major social problem. Family disorganisation on a wider scope leads to social and moral hygiene problems among members of a community.

The study on the deviant behaviour of women will be particularly important in developing sociological theory and enquiry. There is a huge research gap, because the focus of research on deviant behaviour among women has been much away from the investigations. If we study the legal status of

prostitution in India, the law seems to be vague. We have ample history of this practice in India, where we have cultural practice of Devadasi system, where women used to contribute their entire life to the devotion of Lord Krishna. Here what we observe is that these women were respected till the advent of British rule in India. Then onwards, due to economic constraints, these women had to continue with their profession for the sake of monetary values. Nations like India, Canada, France etc, prostitution is legal with certain restriction and limitations. Hence, running a brothel, trafficking, soliciting, and pimping is punishable offence in India Under the Immoral traffic (prevention) act, of 1956¹. There are various sections under this act which specifies the legal aspects. Indian penal code, 1860, deals with kidnapping and child prostitution. We also come across, Constitution of India, which prohibits trafficking of human being or forced labour under the Article 23(1). With these restrictions, it is difficult for a common man to exactly tell if the act of prostitution is permitted or not because, receiving money in exchange of sex with consent is found to be legal. Hence with all this background information the present study was undertaken, to understand the various reasons for the women to continue with these activities. The Immoral Traffic (prevention) act, 1956 instead of checking on the immoral trafficking of human, is more focused on eliminating prostitution. Hence when this law is enforced, the life of sex worker is more vulnerable². Some of the countries have legalised prostitution which regularised the trade, and this may have more chances for sex workers to have respect in society. It may also reduce cases of rapes and trafficking because sex work will be considered as a work. Government will have check on minor girls getting into this profession and women will be more empowered. Opportunities could be provided with health care for them and prevent the sexually transmitted disease, promising a healthy and quality atmosphere for sex workers. The author would like to highlight that selling the dignity and esteem of a woman is not admirable. But understanding the reason for the sex worker to entire the profession, would help to frame strategies to empower them and help the Government to prevent women getting into this profession.

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Critical analysis of vulnerability of women with deviant behaviour in regard to the participant characteristics:

Vulnerability is the term, which can explain about a person who is at risk of being disadvantaged due to certain factors. Before we start to analyse about the factors of vulnerability of sex workers, let us see what makes women vulnerable in general. It is possible for a person to be vulnerable due to high risk in multiple areas. Firstly, vulnerability may be due to high level of physical needs. Due to high physical need expectation a situation will be created where a woman can be easily harmed or taken advantage of. The risk is higher among those women, who are either coerced, threatened, pressurised, or physically forced to sex trade. In the present research conducted by the researcher reveals that out of 10 respondents, three of them who were married reported that husband was the reason for them indulging as sex worker. *Respondent X*, reported that the husband was alcoholic who used to bring his friends home and forced her to unite with his friends in exchange of money. This act continued as it would incur income to the family. 2 respondents felt it was because of their father and another 2 of them reported it was because of their mother. One of them said that it was her own wish to get into this work.

Remaining two of them said that they got into this behaviour as they were forced because they were physically abused in the past, and they could not escape the situation and due to the past stigma, they had no scope for any other type of earning. This also could be interpreted as the economic vulnerability of the respondents as we could find that 6 out of 10 respondents had 7-9 dependents, 2 of them had 4-6 dependents and another 2 of them had less than three dependents.

Hence vulnerability is seen among the respondents in all the areas, i.e. social, physical, and economic. Now the burning issue is why these women are vulnerable and enter the sex trade when so much of scope for generating income is available. The researcher analysed their demographic profile, family conditions, and economic conditions as during the research these respondents lived with their family.

To understand the reason for women to engage themselves in deviant behaviour i.e., prostitution, few variables like were taken into consideration. In-depth information was collected to analyse each of the case.

Most of the respondents were found in the age group of 26 to 30 years (50%). Majority of these respondents were in the age group of 26-30 years (50%) and 30% of them were in the age group of 18- 25 years. Among the total respondents, 3 of them were married. So, age is one the criteria, as generally accepted. This age group where majority of them entered the sex trade, is at the time when the social and economic responsibility was at the peak.

Another aspect to be considered was the education level of these women. The study showed that 4 of the respondents were illiterate. Only one of them had degree level of education and two others studied upto high school level. When the education of the spouse was analysed, all the three spouses were found to be illiterate. Majority of the

respondent's father (N=4) and mothers (N=9) were also illiterate. One of the fathers had degree level of education. Education brings awareness, however, among the 10 respondents one of them was graduate, who was burdened with family responsibilities.

When analysing the type of occupation, the data showed that respondents were not engaged in any type of paid work. They had income through the sex work in which they were occupied. Occupation of the respondent's parents showed that 50% of the fathers and 20% of the mothers were working for daily wages, others were unemployed. Economic vulnerability is the highlighting area here. This marked the inattention to their basic needs during growing age.

2. Discussion

Empirical data is required to identify the vulnerability of the girls who are at risk so that strategies could be identified to prevent them in entering the sex trade or exploitation. To address these needs, case analysis of 10 women currently engaging in sex work was studied in depth. The present data, although only few cases were considered for the study, clearly shows the reasons behind the deviant behaviour is the economic condition. The society in which the respondents resided had followed few norms which had clear cut division of normal and deviant behaviour. All the respondents who were studied knew that their behaviour was deviating from the norms of the society and it would have an effect on their social and physical health. Lack of Awareness is not the cause because out of 10 respondents one of them had degree level of education and other two of them had high school education. The in-depth discussion with the respondents these respondents revealed that they are indulged in sex work because they were in need to more money, for the expenses of self and family. In a study conducted by Katherine H A Footer et.al. also reported that 36% of the women indulged in sex trade was to get the basic necessities like food, housing and 17% of them to support their children or family³. More number of dependents was also the cause, and this was easy method to earn income. The main question here we need to analyse is, were these acts preventable? Is it the failure of the State to ensure human rights to the women in its jurisdiction? Since the present study collected information from the informal settings and all the respondents engaged in sex work occasionally there was little scope for legal redress, access to health and any other benefits, and safety regulations. They are not included in adequate labour clauses either. The major challenge they are facing is the stigma and social restrictions to themselves as well as to the family which they are supporting. These types of women do not need rehabilitation centres, but an act on empowering them economically is what is expected. We need to also to work on the environmental vulnerability of young women who were pressurised to engage in sex trade. Physical abuse in childhood is also one of the primary risk for entry as sex worker as age progresses. In the present study, this factor was the cause of two out of ten respondents to engage in sex work as they had no other option for earning income due to social stigma. This was also seen in their a study conducted in North America where the author reported that experiences

of childhood abuse and subsequent running away in adolescence have long been considered primary risk for underage entry risks for underage entry into sex work⁴.

The present article illustrates that the family dysfunctions like broken family, lack of attention, economic necessities is a pathway leading to sex trade among women. Environmental vulnerability plays a major role in causing vulnerability among them. However, the study limits to only a small sample and hence further research could be conducted to find the in-depth information of the influence of family for the deviant behaviour of women in the society.

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