

Woundedness of Sex Workers in the Light of St. Augustine's Theology of Grace: Basis for a Psycho-Spiritual Formation Program on Inner Healing

Reynold B. Navares

Abstract: *This creative qualitative-exploratory study deals with the free lance sex-workers directly involved in prostitution. It is anchored in St. Augustine's theology of grace. The study aims to unveil the sex-workers various subjective experiences of Woundedness and the movement of grace within them which were identified by various indicators. The respondents are five female and five male sex-workers. This seek to a.) Explore the Woundedness of sex-workers b.) Identify the indicators of grace in the light of St. Augustine's theology of grace, and 3.) Propose a psycho-spiritual formation program for inner-healing. Study shows that sex-workers were born in adverse life experiences that led them to the flesh trade. But despite of it, they are aware that there is somebody who unconditionally loves them, who understands, who provides and answers prayers that results to the perception that they have to change opportunity comes. The study further was able to formulate a psycho-spiritual formation program on inner-healing that may remediate the sex-workers plight to inner freedom coming from their responses. They are to be helped, hence this study.*

Keywords: St. Augustine Grace Transformation Woundedness Inner-healing

1. Introduction

This qualitative research deals with sex-workers, persons who are involved in the trade of the flesh, both male and female in the light of St. Augustine's theology of grace. They are said to be a social scourge, that kind of lifestyle which usually involves women, but also men, children and the adolescents (CCC 2355). They are considered demeaned in society because of the type of work they are in, and are neglected members of the Church since there are few, or even rare missionaries who are reaching out to them to the path of grace that would lead them to inner transformation and a change of heart.

In line with the biblical anthropology, man is the highest and most loved creature of GOD created in His image and likeness (Genesis 3:26), thus good and perfect in the original state. St. Augustine avers that human nature was in the beginning created blameless and without any defect (Nature and Grace 3.3). Man was in harmony with GOD not until his fall by the enticement of the serpent which separated man from GOD (Genesis 3). Fallen nature and brokenness in all things came as a consequence. This is explicitly inscribed in St. Augustine's Confessions as he revealed his fallen nature, brokenness and subjective experiences.

As participators in this apostolate in leading the sex-workers to an awareness of their need of GOD and the necessity for a change of life, one must have a new way of looking at them, looking at them as persons with dignity only imprisoned in themselves by sin and ignorance. They are to translate the message of GOD's love, mercy, compassion and become channels of God's grace, and to propose a psycho-spiritual formation program for inner-healing...hence, the significance of this study.

General objectives:

The goal of this study is to determine and identify Woundedness and indicators of Grace among sex-workers in

the light of St. Augustine's theology of grace. Specifically, this study will

- 1) Explore the Woundedness of sex-workers
- 2) Identify the indicators of Grace in the light of St. Augustine's theology of grace
- 3) Propose a psycho-spiritual program for inner-healing

2. Literature Survey

St. Augustine (354 C.E-430 C.E) is a perfect model of man. He portrays the weakness of man by giving in to his fleshly desire not until he was moved by grace in which he dynamically responded and rose to sanctity. After conversion, he became a priest and then a bishop in which he wrote his Confessions, an autobiographical book which is a product of retrospection of his past life. He reveals the sexual weakness of man which he mirrors in himself where others find the opportunity to enter as prostitutes to gratify sexual longings for money. They are the sex-workers.

Sex-workers trade the "self" for sexual gratification in exchange for money. They ride in the universal human weakness in the parlance of immoral sex. St. Augustine says that sexual passion sometimes does not just affect the body. At times it takes control of the whole man, both physically and emotionally. It causes the most erotic pleasure which at the peak of its ecstasy practically paralyses all power of deliberation (City of God 14.16).

Man becomes irrational, loses his way from identifying good and evil. St. Augustine firmly believes that the act of coitus is not evil in itself. It becomes wrong because it is performed in improper circumstances or immoderate passion (City of God 14.18). Sex act in itself is man's participation in the preservation of the human race but must be in sacramental marriage.

St. Augustine's book the Confessions is a rich spiritual document that reveals the real nature of man as both

biological and psychological. St. Augustine said that I wish to bring back to mind my past foulness and the carnal corruption of my soul (Confessions 2.1.1). It simply shows that he wants to reveal his experiences to us before being called to a life of grace. He is tied to the urgings of his fleshly desires and thus blinded and lost his moral judgment.

According to St. Augustine, they clouded and darkened my soul, so that I would not distinguish the calm light of chaste love from the fog of lust. Both kinds of affection burned confusedly within me swept my feeble youth over the crags of desire and plunged me into a whirlpool of shameful deeds...I have been defeated by the clanging chains of my mortality, the penalty of my pride of soul. I was split out and tossed about my fornications. I flowed out and boiled over in them (Confessions 2.2.2).

This describes the real weakness of man for sexual pleasure is enslaving. St. Augustine described it as sexual gratification which fettered me like a tight-drawn chain, and from the enslavement to worldly affairs (Confessions 8.6.13) being imprisoned to the self. He further admitted that the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. He further said that he was aligned with both, but more with the desires...it becomes a habit and it becomes fiercer (Confessions 8.11.1).

Sexual pleasure in itself is enslaving where the sex-workers enter into this human weakness with the desire to earn money...thus prostitution.

GOD comes to our rescue, and St. Augustine says that human nature in the beginning created blameless and without any defect but human nature, in which each of us is born of Adam, now needs a physician because he is not in good health...it came from original sin which was committed by free choice. And thus a nature subject to punishment is part of the punishment that is completely just...but GOD who is rich in mercy, on account of the great love with which he loved us, even we are dead by sins, brought us to life with Christ by whose grace we have been saved (Ephesians 2:3-5)(Nature and Grace 3.3).

GOD continuously calls man back to Himself in million of ways through grace. St. Augustine shed light that GOD gave

man two distinct free gifts, that which he bestowed in creating human nature and that he continues to give acts of grace which assist the sinner to avoid or resist evil. He believed that grace act to counter the damage sin has done to human nature, by cooperating with the good which remains in his created nature, so as to make a person completely good again. We therefore need to respond in once one feel moved into His love and thus, participate in the Divine life.

Sex-workers in whatever reasons why they are there, needs to be helped. As baptized Christians, we are invited to participate in bringing them to the life with GOD.

3. Research Design

The researcher employed the qualitative-exploratory research method for it is a type of scientific research which consist of an investigation that seeks to answer a question, systematically uses a pre-defined set of procedures to answer the question, collects evidence, produce findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (George, 2013). It explores the world of the sex-workers and the researcher exhaustively employed observation and interview. Buhler avers that it is the only way of documenting their statement (Flick, 2009) and to take into consideration the sensitivity of the moral issues of the respondents.

Sample size

Creswell suggests five (5) to twenty five (25) participants (Creswell, 1998). Morse (1998) on the other hand suggests only six (6) participants. The researcher decided for ten (10) participants for the researcher is satisfied as to the saturation of needed datum of the research.

Participants of the study:

Participants of the study are ten sex-workers, five of whom are male and five female sex-workers frequenting the Bacolod Public Plaza where they offer themselves for sex in exchange for money. Their age bracket is between 20 to 40 years old. According to Eric-Erikson they are young adult who struggle to form a relationship and gain the capacity or intimate love or they feel isolated (D. Myers; 1998).

Matrix 1: Demographic Profile of Sex-Workers

Name of Participants	Age	Sex	Civil Status	Children	Educational Attainment
Saturn	39 years old	Male	Separated	2	Secondary level
Mars	39 years old	Male	Single	0	Secondary level
Jupiter	31 years old	Male	Single	0	Secondary level
Pluto	31 years old	Male	Single	0	Secondary level
Earth	30 years old	Male	Single	0	Elementary level
Santan	40 years old	Female	Separated	2	Secondary level
Sampaguita	23 years old	Female	Separated	2 mos. Pregnant	College level
Calachuchi	38 years old	Female	Separated	1	Secondary level
Bougainvillea	37 years old	Female	Single	1	Elementary level
Daisy	20 years old	Female	Single	0	College level

Data show that two (2) sex-workers reached the college level, six (6) secondary level and two (2) elementary level and four (4) are separated.

4. Methodology

Observation was employed by the researcher in order to explore and understand the phenomena as a way to acquire

needed data. The researcher was sensitive in discerning what information is relevant and significant in the research process. The researcher opts to use the unstructured observation and the semi-structured interview method since it is open and flexible. The researcher observes using his senses and is not restricted by an observation guide. The researcher does not impose structure on the situation but instead attempts to provide an analysis of the true complexities found in the situation (Ardales; 2008). Covert observation is applied in which the observed persons are not informed that they are being observed (Flick; 2009). This kind of observation is practiced in open and public places. It is then recorded in the field notes after each engagement.

Semi-structured interview was likewise used with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena (Steinar, K; 2009). It also includes open-ended question and paraphrasing of the question with the same meaning to suite the participant's level of understanding. Interview is a way to identify, understand and describe their commonality called essence (Fraenkl & Wallen; 2006). Face to face interview have the highest response rate and permit the longest questionnaires (Neuman; 2012).

The researcher employed eclectic method in interviewing with the participants. Therapeutic approach were used for it aims at change through emotional personal interaction...and change sought are not primarily conceptual but emotional and personal (Kvale, S. & Brinkman, S; 2009). The researcher aimed at this will be an encounter and at the same time a way to evangelize the participants creatively, indirect approach. Roger's client-centered interview method likewise was used for it is closed to the psychoanalytic interview practice (Kvale, S, & Brinkman, S; 2009) for there are interview questions that touches on the past experiences of respondents for it can influence current behaviour.

Proper eye contact was done in order to convey a message to the participants as to the sincerity of the interviewer. It should not be prolonged for more than ten seconds for it signals aggressiveness and should have frequent breaks for it sends a message that he is listened to (Cormier, S & Hackney, H; 2009). Body gestures and voice intonation by the participants as well as facial expressions were noted for it is a way for people to communicate information about their emotional state (Knapp & Hall; 2009). Facial expressions can reveal discomfort and when the researcher notice it, questions asked were paraphrased with the same meaning is done. Verbal and non-verbal cues are referred to as leakages for they communicate messages the client deliberately intent to have communicated. They are referred to as affective leakage and it is important to account for inferences (Cormier, S., & Hackney, H.; 2005). The researcher is fully aware that a participant message includes both verbal and non-verbal elements.

Ethical consideration in an interview was observed. Implied consent was employed by the researcher to consider the sensitivity of the subject of the research undertaken. It replaced signed consent. The researcher explained the nature of the interview and affirmative responses and completed

interviews serve the purpose of implying consent in the absence of a signed consent. The benefit of this particular style of informed consent is the elimination of any record of the subject's names. This procedure is particularly helpful when interviewing people who might refuse to take part in the study (Beig; 2001). Pseudo-names was used to safeguard confidentiality and strict anonymity is assured to protect the privacy of the participants identity after the information is gathered (Neuman; 2012).

The researcher opted for a one major interview encounter and follow-up informal interview on selected participants for the researcher is satisfied with the information extracted. Glasser and Strauss (1967) do not recommend a specific number of interview or observation but say that the researcher should continue until a state of theoretical saturation is achieved. Responses are audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Triangulation method was employed. Triangulation is used to name the combination of different methods, study groups and local settings, and different theoretical perspective in dealing with a phenomena, a strategy for promoting the quality of qualitative research (Flick, U, 2009).

Interview guide was presented to the experts for comments to know whether they will have the capacity to extract data on Woundedness and indicators of Grace.

Data analysis:

Content analysis was utilized in order to analyze interview responses. The methodological procedure includes three phases. In content analysis the material is paraphrased, which means that relevant passages are paraphrased, which means that less relevant passages and paraphrases with the same meaning are shaped and similar paraphrases are bundled and summarized. This is a combination of reducing the material by skipping statements included in the generalization in the sense of summarizing the material on a higher level of abstraction (Mayring; 1983). Themes were identified and inferences are given analysis.

The researcher actively listened to the interview recorded in the cellphone voice recorder several times and put into writing participants responses as close as possible. Then the textual notes were analyzed and paraphrased without missing its meaning for clarity. The tone of message which are similar are grouped together labeled as the first reduction. Noted similar phrases was further grouped together and summarized and this is labeled as the second reduction.

5. Results and Discussion

Matrix II

Identified Woundedness

Kinds of Woundedness	Percentage of Occurrence	Explanation
Poverty	100%	All of the participants are in prostitution due to economic reasons

Emotional pain	100%	Separation from loved one and various negative life experiences are buried in their unconsciousness and now becomes	Awareness of being dirty	30%	They are feeling uncomfortable and bad which can be a wake-up call that they have to do something to change.
Dislike the work	90%	They are forcing themselves to be in such Immoral act just to earn money.	Being ashamed	20%	Feeling shame can be a kind of guilt since where they are in this morally and socially un-acceptable trade.
Family conflict	70%	Relational problems becomes a reason for them to be in prostitution	Positive envy	10%	They admitted that they don't have a decent work in order to survive unlike others who have dignified work and a motivation for them to find one.
Feels dirty	20%	They are feeling unhygienic for they do not know who their partners are	Helpless	10%	They self-accept that on their own they cannot improve or change the situation of their lives, hence they need God
Physical violence	20%	They experienced physical hurt from their significant others which lead them to separation and to prostitution for financial support.	How they look at God		
Does not like to be sexually molested	10%	Shows that she feels uncomfortable when sexually engaged but give in to it for money	God who answers prayers	50%	They feel and believed that despite of the sinful situation they are in still God listens to them by answering their prayers.
Family discrimination	10%	Not supported to have an education unlike his other brothers who were sent to school	Merciful God	30%	They believed that God is mercy that understands them since they are but victims of circumstances.
Does not like her family to know her prostitution	10%	She wants to hide her shadow and lives in fear because of the shame it would result if her family discover it.	God who provides	20%	They can feel and experience God's provision in their daily needs.
Sexual molestation from others and from her own father when she was a child	10%	Tearfully admitted that she was molested by significant others and by her own father and lost her innocence	God who helps	20%	They also believe that God will aid them in crisis situation
			God who cares	10%	That they are convinced that God will not leave them alone in whatever situation they will be since He understands their difficulties.

Woundedness are various adverse life experiences which leaves a scar in the innermost being. Data shows that the expressed Woundedness of the sex-workers are poverty and emotional pain ranks first followed by they dislike to work, family conflict, feels dirty, physical violence, does not like to be sexually molested, family discrimination, does not like her family to know about her prostitution and was sexually molested when she was a child.

Grace is God's gratuitous gift given to man and it works within in order to move persons to be good and avoid evil. The following indicators were identified as revealed by the participants.

Matrix III

Identified Movement of Grace	Percentage of Occurrence	Explanation
Believes that God loves them	100%	Despite the fact that they are in such sinful situation still they believed that God loves and understands them for they are but victims of circumstances.
Renewal of the self	100%	That they want to have a changed lifestyle opportunity comes
Not to stay in this kind of work	100%	All of them desires not to stay in this kind of work for they know the health hazards it will bring them.
Acceptance of poor self-image	30%	They feel low of themselves as prostitutes. It can be God's way of letting them realize of their need of God working in them that will move them to eventually change.

Data revealed the following indicators of grace: Believes that God loves them, renewal of self, and not to stay in this kind of work rank first, followed by acceptance of poor self-image, awareness of being dirty, being ashamed, positive envy, and helpless. On how they look at God, rank first is God answers prayers, followed by merciful God, God who provides, God who helps, God who cares and God who gives comfort.

Not to say in this kind of work is a direct acceptance by the sex-workers that they are in a dishonourable state and therefore must renew the self and to find a source of decent work in order to live. The acceptance of having poor self-image and awareness of being dirty is a kind of self-knowledge that will allow them to reflect about their state and may come to find out ways on how to improve the self and finally positive self envy for it will ultimately move the sex-workers to struggle in order to somehow attain something good to become persons with dignity equal to that of others.

God answer prayers, who provides, who helps are the actual encounter of the sex-workers and understanding that God is mercy is the actual understanding of the sex-workers that allows them to discover God in their lives.

St. Augustine avers that human nature was in the beginning created blameless and without any defect, in which each one of us is born of Adam, now needs a physician, because he is not in good health. (Nature and Grace 3.3). It revealed that by Adam's sin contaminated all. Man is helpless and he needs a physician that is Christ to be well again. All that is in man-his life, senses and faculties were badly distorted. We need God's action to remedy his condition since man cannot do it in himself. Ephesians states that we were, nonetheless, by nature children of anger, just as others. But

God is rich in mercy, on account of the great love which he loved us, even when we are dead by sins; brought us to life with Christ, by whose grace we have been saved (Nature and Grace 4.4). Christ, is God's remedy to men in order for us to be reconciled with Him...an incomprehensible expression of His steadfast love. It points to us that the fullness of God's gift to us is Christ without which neither infants nor adults can be saved is not a recompense of our merits, but a free gift. This is the reason it is called grace (Nature and Grace 4.4).

God's love and mercy cannot be fathomed by human understanding. St. Augustine highlights various indicators of grace which are: Faith infused the moment one receives baptism, but like a seed, it needs to germinate watered by God. St. Augustine avers that the very will to believe is God's gift (The Spirit and the Letter 33, 57). Mere fact of believing is a movement of grace. Confidence in the provision of God is another one and St. Augustine reflected upon Psalm 23.1, the book of David says the Lord is my guide, and I shall lack nothing. This points to God's provision in various ways in our life for he cares for us, supplying our need in this temporal life.

Hope and the reliance on the mercy of God is another indicator of grace. It is a clear indicator that one must acknowledge his nothingness that everything is dependent on God's mercy and compassion. St. Augustine tells the wounded man that you have great comfort of God's glory accompanying you. That is to say, on account of your miserably weak condition, the mercy of God follows behind you. But first, in order to show you the route to eternal life...it attracts you while you are a slave of sin...so you have the hope and the glory, not in yourself but in the mercy of God (Sermons 366.7). It shows that in whatever condition man is, though he wandered too far away from the embrace of God, he is continually invited to return to the path of life which is grace expressing the merciful love of God to us. Connected to this after one has the hope and longing for the mercy of God must have the willingness to show mercy towards others. St. Augustine's reflection on the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:25) pictures that in the bounty of food at the table he failed to share it with the beggar Lazarus waiting even the scrap of food to be fall from his table. They both died and the rich man found himself in hell and Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham enjoying eternal bliss. St. Augustine concluded that the reason the rich man is refused mercy in his pain is that while he lived he neglected to show mercy. The reason the rich man pleads in his torment is ignored is that he ignored the poor man's pleas on earth (Sermons 367.2).

Forgiveness is an act of the "will" and not a feeling. It is hard to forgive because man's will is darkened by sin. St. Augustine emphasizes that you ought to forgive, because God too forgives (Sermons 114.2). We must be imitators of Christ (Sermons 114), who taught us forgiveness. He further said that I want you to be forgiving, because I've caught you begging pardon. You asked, forgive, just as you too will be asking to be forgiven yourself (Sermons 114.5).

Self-acceptance and acknowledgement of the difficult situations one is in, is an admission of one's limitation is an

act of humility and a sign of grace. In one of his sermons, he shared that the Lord suffers, his precious blood is shed, the sinner is redeemed, grace is granted to the one who sins and says wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of his death? The grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 7:24-25). That's what the pool was like, you see, one to step down into, not to step up. I suppose there could also be such pool, so constructed that you stepped up to it. But why was this one so made that you had to step down into it? Because Lord's passion demands the humble person. You must step down humbly, you mustn't be proud if you want to be healed. (Sermons 125.6).

The pool that St. Augustine mentioned is the one used in adult baptism in the olden times. Baptism is done through immersion. It is a way of being bathed to become clean from the tarnish of original sin that caused man's "woundedness" is washed away and healing comes. Baptism is an act of humility in itself since one submits himself to God.

Good works is also an act of grace. St. Augustine avers these two things I have heard: that power belongs to God and to you Lord, belongs mercy; you repay all according to their works (Psalm 62:12-13)...those who believe and entrust themselves to God to be forgiven all their sins and to be healed from all their wounds and to be enkindled and enlightened by warmth and light will have good works as a result of grace (The Spirit and the Letter 33, 58).

Worth mentioning is aging. It is through this one that one becomes aware that his life is ending and serves as a wake up call that he needs to finally change for the good...St. Augustine counsels us that you never had nor will have such days in this life. In this life your days are fading away like smoke (Psalm 102.3). As days go by the self seem to become more diaphanous. As days grow in length they become fewer. The ascending course of our days has led to their vanishing away (Sermons 216.4). These are some indicators of grace...and preparation to receive grace is already a work of grace (CCC 2001).

6. Recommendations and Conclusion

In view of the above findings, the following recommendations were presented

- 1) That the Church in the Philippines, specifically the Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) will revisit their mission of evangelization and to seriously consider the apostolate to the sex-workers.
- 2) To invite spiritually matured, formed layman to the apostolate.
- 3) To form lay missionaries to the sex-workers to be prepared spiritually-emotionally-psychologically in the rescue mission.
- 4) That Lay missionaries should be properly instructed on how to conduct spiritual counselling
- 5) To encourage Psychotherapist, Psychiatrist as well as Psychologist and Guidance Counsellor to be trained spiritually to be dynamically involved in the apostolate as a direct participation in evangelization.

- 6) To come up with a psycho-spiritual laden formation module both to the future missionaries formation and a separate module to be used in the sex-workers.
- 7) Not to discriminate sex-workers but relate to them with caution and compassion knowing that they are the most neglected segment in society, and be an instrument of leading them back to the path of grace.

7. Conclusion

The love, mercy and compassion of God embraces all men and He desires that all must come to His Fatherly embrace. One segment of the Church or society in general is the existence of sex-workers, male and female who are in the trade of the flesh. They are so much degraded as to the kind of undertaking they are in. It is a fact that they are the neglected ones since it is a reality that none or if not few are directly engage in such rescue mission that will lead them to change of life. It also cannot be denied that this is a serious and hard apostolate since deep spirituality and preparation is needed for one to venture in such missionary work. This study is an eye-opener that we have to do something in order to reach out to them, to bring them to a life with God.

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Author Profile

Reynold B. Navares, Ph.D is Theology Professor, University of San Agustin, Iloilo City, Philippines