



A Study of Locus of Control and Resilience among Female Commercial Sex Workers in Aizawl

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Abstract

Women involved in both street-level and off-street sex work which is very disproportionate to health including high rates of violence, poor sexual health, and vulnerabilities to HIV and STIs compared to the general population. The study aimed to investigate the difference between Female Commercial Sex workers with a General Female on Locus of Control and Resilience using (i) The Resilience Scale (Wagnild & Young, 1993) and (ii) The Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966) on 120 samples of equal matched samples. The finding highlighted that the Female Commercial Sex workers scored lower on Resilience and Internal Locus of Control than General Female; and Resilience and Locus of control has a significant negative relationship among the samples. Also, the study highlighted that Commercial sex work has an effect on Locus of Control and Resilience. The finding of the study brings to light the psychological functions of the Female sex workers and portrayed the need for psychological intervention for changing their belief of the sources of their resilience leading to psychological wellbeing.

Keywords: *Female Commercial Sex Worker, Locus of Control, Resilience.*

Introduction

Female sex workers participated in both street-level and off-street sex workforces, which is highly disproportionate to physical and mental health, as well as social inequities such as high rates of crime, poor reproductive health, and vulnerability to HIV and STIs. Psychological distress is high among women working in the sex industry, face disproportionate health and social inequities, including high rates of harassment, poor sexual health, and HIV and STI vulnerabilities.

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Female Commercial Sex Workers (FCSW)

Carol Leigh, a sex worker activist, invented the word "sex worker" in 1978, which gained a lot of traction, including scholarly journals. FCSWs have been stereotyped as lazy or unethical women who sell their bodies for fast cash (Zheng, 2009), resulting in heavy stigmatization and a requirement of revealing their profession (Hong, 2008). FCSWs don't get much sympathy for their ordeals of aggression and brutality (Sanders, 2004). Sex work is thought to be the world's oldest occupation, motivated by economic and psychological distresses rather than a desire for physical pleasure (Baruah, 2019). Individuals employed in the sex industry have been referred to as "sex workers" (Brode, 2004), "prostitutes," "street-walkers," and "hookers" in previous literature (Gandy & Deisher, 1970; Benjamin & Masters, 1964). Sex work, according to Weatherall and Priestley (2001), is classified as one or more services in which sex is exchanged for money or goods.

Locus of Control

One of the most important factors in stress management and the increase or decrease in negative emotions, especially in the workplace, with numerous occupational implications, is locus of control (Sabrain et al., 2014). Locus of control is the personal characteristic that buffers stresses (Cohen & Edwards, 1989). Internal control locus play a defensive function by manipulating stressful scenario assessments and coping mechanisms to mitigate the events' negative effects (Glass & Singer, 1972). Internals can also use more efficient coping mechanisms (Anderson, 1977), reducing psychological symptomatology as a result of the incidents. In Iran, Sabrain, Omidiyar, Gharizadeh, and Bazrafshan (2014) found that locus of control is one of the most important factors influencing stress management and the increase or decrease of negative emotions, especially in the workplace, with numerous occupational implications.

When confronted with stressful activities, externals appear to report more negative moods. Internals have better coping skills and experience less tension (Arsenault, Dolan, & Ameringen, 1991). Pilisuk and Montgomery (1993) discovered that an external control locus was associated with a higher number of stress-related somatic symptoms than an internal control site. Numerous studies have shown that having a good internal locus of control is linked to better physical and mental health, as well as a higher quality of life (Maltby et al., 2007).

So far, little attention has been paid to the role of locus of control in the relationship between workplace bullying and psychological burden (Moreno-Jiménez et al., 2007; Rai & Agarwal, 2018). Help-seeking and positive thinking, as well as lower levels of job stress in general, have been linked to internal locus of influence (Gianakos, 2002).

Resilience

“The process of adapting well in the face of hardship, trauma, disaster, threats, or even major causes of stress such as family and relationship issues, severe health problems, or occupational and financial stressors” according to the definition of resilience (APA, 2014). “A collection of characteristics representing general resourcefulness and sturdiness of

character, as well as versatility of functioning in response to different environmental circumstances,” according to the definition of resilience (Block & Block 1980). Perry (2002) defined resilience as the ability to cope with stressors without significant negative interference in their functioning. Resilience is understood as a continuous 'process' that manifests itself in response to life events and individual personality profiles (Cloninger & Zohar, 2011; Dyrbye & Shanafelt, 2012). It is “the human capacity to adapt in the face of disaster, trauma, adversity, deprivation, and continuing serious life stressors,” according to Newman (2005). When people are exposed to traumatic or stressful conditions, such as those faced by street-based female sex workers, some may experience psychological distress, while others may be able to respond positively and function competently. Resilience is the term used to describe such positive changes (Yuen et al., 2013). In psychology, resiliency-focused study and practice aid conceptualizations of human functioning (Lopez & Edwards, 2008), which is directly related to the capacity to rebound from traumatic life events (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Resilience has been found to play role in promoting and enhancing individuals, well-being by various researchers (Kimberly, Christopher & Kulig, 2000). Sex work may be a full time, part-time or occasionally and difficult to estimate but more important is to know psychological burden to be able to frame the preventive or intervention strategies.

Objectives of the Study

The present study is designed to study the following objectives:

- To examine the level of Locus of Control and Resilience between the groups (Female Commercial Sex Worker and General Female).
- To study the relationship between the Locus of Control and Resilience among the dependent variables.
- To examine the independent effect of ‘Commercial Sex Work’ on Locus of Control and Resilience.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are framed to meet the objectives of the study:

- It was expected that there will a significantly different level of Locus of Control and Resilience between the two groups (Female Commercial Sex Workers and General Female).
- It was expected that there will be a significant relationship between the Resilience and Locus of Control.
- It was expected that there will be an independent effect of ‘Commercial Sex Work’ on Locus of Control and Resilience.

Methodology

Sample

One hundred and twenty adult female comprising of 60 Female Commercial Sex workers (who has been in sex industry more than 1year to 4 years) and 60 General Female working in private/ NGOs (who has been working in the organization more than 1year to 4

years) operating in Aizawl serve as samples, age ranging from 18 years to 34 years. Female Commercial Sex Workers were drawn from the list of registered home/centres run by Government or registered NGOs in Aizawl City, and the general samples were selected to match the Female Commercial Sex Workers on socio-demographic profiles. Random sampling procedure was followed as far as possible.

Psychological Tools

1. *Rotter's Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966)*: J. B. Rotter's Internal External Locus of Control Scale is a measure of personal belief. It consists of 29 items. The force choice that is inclusive of 6 filler items, intended to make more ambiguous, for the purpose of the test. Rotter's I-E Locus of Control questionnaire helps to identify how certain important events in our society affect different people. Each item consists of pair of alternatives, lettered A or B. The individual has to select one statement from each pair, which they strongly believe in or can relate to.
2. *Resilience Scale (RS; Gail M. Wagnild and Heather M. Young, 1993)*: The Resilience Scale (RS), developed by Wagnild and Young (1993), is a 25-item self-report questionnaire to identify the degree of individual resilience. The items of RS were selected to reflect five interrelated components of resilience: *equanimity* (a balanced perspective of one's life and experiences); *perseverance* (the act of persistence despite adversity or discouragement); *self-reliance* (a belief in oneself and one's abilities); *meaningfulness* (the realization that life has a purpose); and *existential aloneness* (the realization that each person's life path is unique). The respondents are asked to state the degree to which they agree or disagree with each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). All items are positively scored. The possible total scores thus range from 25 to 175 with higher scores reflecting higher resilience.

Procedures

Socio demographic profile was first framed to tap all important information about the participants or caretakers, and psychological tools to be used were prepared. Required permission and consent were obtained from the authority and participants. Sample selection and identification was done by employing the socio-demographic profile and random sampling procedure was followed as far as possible. The administration of the selected psychological scales on the selected samples by following the American Psychological Association (APA) code of ethics and the prescribed instruction of the manual shall be followed. The response sheet were carefully checked to detect any missing or incomplete answer before leaving the administration setting, and collected for further analysis.

Design of the Study

The study aimed to compare the Female Commercial Sex Worker and General Female on the selected dependent variables - the locus of control (Internal and External) and resilience. It is a comparative design in nature.

Results

The raw data was screened for outliers and missing data. The scale used were checked for its normality, homogeneity and reliability to know its applicability in the targeted population. The results of the reliability coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) and Levene's test for homogeneity of variance on Locus of Control and Resilience over the two level of analyses (Female Commercial Sex Worker and General Female) are presented in Table 1. Results vide Table 1 revealed the reliability of Locus of Control ($\alpha = .620$) and Resilience ($\alpha = .933$), and analysis of homogeneity of variance showed non-significance (LoC = .28; Resilience = .31). This indicated that the assumptions of homogeneity of variance have been met.

Table 1: Reliability (Chronbach's alpha) and Homogeneity (Levene's test) of the scales

Scales	Reliability	Levene's statistics	
		F	Sig.
Locus of control	.620	.251	.31
Resilience	.933	.221	.28

Table 2: Mean, SD, Skewness and Kurtosis for Locus of Control and Resilience

ITEMS	FCSW		NORMAL	
	LOC	RES	LOC	RES
Mean	14.11	104.52	11.86	136.16
SD	2.37	18.02	2.92	12.15
Skewness	-.203	.916	-.086	-.180
Std. Error of Skewness	.212	.212	.212	.212
Kurtosis	-.326	.340	-.132	-.007
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.422	.422	.422	.422

Note: Loc-Locus of Control, RES- Resilience

The results of the values of Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis on Locus of Control and Resilience among the Female Commercial Sex Worker and General Female are presented in Table 2. Female Commercial Sex Worker depicted higher mean scores ($M = 13.76$) on Locus of Control than General Female ($M = 11.54$) which indicates that Female Commercial Sex Worker showed externalize control than General Female. The analysis of Skewness and Kurtosis of the variable showed that the variables were normally distributed.

Pearson Correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between Locus of Control and Resilience. Table 3 revealed a significant negative correlation between Locus of Control and Resilience ($r = -.304$).

Table 3: Showing the significant relationship (Pearson Correlation) between dependent variables for the samples

SCALES	LOC	RES
LOC	1	-.304**
RES	-.304**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Note: Loc-Locus of Control, RES- Resilience

The results in table 4 showed the independent and interaction effect of ‘Commercial Sex Work’ on Locus of Control and Resilience. Commercial sex industry also have a significant effect on locus of Control among the samples with 15% effect; and on Resilience with an effect size of 51%.

Table 4: Independent and interaction effect of ‘Commercial sex work’, on the Locus of Control and Resilience.

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	F Ratio	Sig	Eta Sq
Commercial Sex Work	Locus of Control	46.23	.000	.15
	Resilience	275.34	.000	.51

Summary and Conclusion

An overview of the results of the levels of Locus of Control showed that there is a significant difference on Locus of Control that FCSWs scored higher than General Female which indicates that FCSWs have higher externalized control and feel that they are helpless because they perceive that outcomes in life are outside their own control (Keenan and McBain, 1979). Results also revealed that there is a significant difference on Resilience that FCSWs scored lower than general female which means that FCSWs have lower ability to bounce back to hard situations. These finding is consistent with the results of previous studies that showed lower overall quality of life, emotional health and resilience among female sex workers (Wong, Holroyd, Gray, & Ling, 2006). Also, result of the Pearson correlation indicates that there is a significant negative correlation between Resilience and Locus of Control i.e., Locus of Control increased with a decrease in resilience and vice versa. Evidence in exposure to trauma, greater Internal Locus of Control has been positively associated with the ability to resiliently adapt to situations (Frazier, Keenan, Anders, Perera, Shallcross, & Hintz, 2011). Perceptions of internal locus of control are often associated with resilience, as the more internal control an individual perceives over his or her life, the more he or she will approach adverse situations in a determined, calm, and mentally healthy manner (Grob et al., 1995; Leontopoulou, 2006). Commercial sex works have significant independent effect on

Resilience and Locus of Control among the samples which is in line with the third hypothesis. Psychologists have noted the importance of social support as an aspect of resilience (McClure, Chavez, Agars, Peacock, & Matosian, 2008), and therefore social support is an important part of a resilience lens through which to view the sex work industry.

The overall findings may explain that FCSWs and General females were having different psychological functions as the outcomes of their stressful situation of selling their bodies for quick money (Zheng, 2009), stigmatization and make them disclose their occupation (Hong, 2008) which driven by the economic and psychological distresses (Baruah, 2019); and their personality faculties of the locus of control.

Women need the ability to form stable, emotionally safe relationships, as well as access to social services, economic assistance, and/or jobs, regardless of why they choose to leave (Dalla, 2006). Positive social relationships play an important role in facilitating and supporting the exiting process, according to research on the sex trade industry (Dalla, Xia, & Kennedy, 2003). Although accessing female sex workers in other settings is difficult, a wider recruitment strategy might have provided additional information. Conducting a follow-up study with a group of professionals who work with female sex workers in a variety of settings to study more about their struggles and perceived needs in terms of resources could help with psychological adjustment.

Limitations

The study has limitations that the sample size were not big enough to represent the targeted population, more systematic and comprehensive theoretical and empirical examination is required regarding the trustworthiness of the FCSWs which is needed to be explored. The findings suggest the need for further researches to explore the determinants of the Commercial sex works behaviour including their parent's contributions who are being the most significant persons in their life long.

Significance of the Study

Based on the findings that the study highlighted the level of resilience much lower in resilience and attitude toward reason of their life (Locus of Control) also different which can explain the stressful situation of the FCSWs and their psychological functions which need urgent attention for designing a psychological intervention.

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Declaration: *This is a bonafide research data and taken out from the Ph D research work of the main author, and not published anywhere in any form of publications.*

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