



“Role of Peer Support Networks on the Health Outcomes of Female Sex Workers: A Social Work Study”

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ABSTRACT

This Study investigates how peer support networks among female sex workers impact their health outcomes, serving as vital sources of mutual aid, emotional support, and practical guidance within the community. Despite growing through which peer support networks contribute to improving health outcomes among FSWs. This Study employs a descriptive research design with an in-depth interview and self-structured questionnaires of those who participated in peer support networks. The research explores various dimensions of peer support networks, including information sharing, emotional support, and access to resources and services. Peer-led intervention and empowerment process. By examining the experiences, perceptions, and outcomes reported by FSWs involved in peer support networks, this Study aims to provide valuable insights into how peer support networks facilitate health promotion, disease prevention, and overall well-being within this marginalized population. The findings of this Study have implications for social work practice and policy development. Moreover, the intervention design aimed to improve the health outcomes of FSWs and address the structural determinants of health disparities within these populations.

Keywords: FSWs, Peer Support Networks, Mutual Aid, Emotional Support, CBOs, Health Care Providers

1. Introduction:

The lives of female sex workers (FSWs) are often characterized by a complex interplay of socioeconomic marginalization, stigma, and precarious working conditions, which pose significant challenges to their health and well-being(Jorjoran Shushtari et al., 2022). In response to these challenges, peer support networks have emerged as crucial sources of mutual aid, emotional support, and practical guidance within the FSW community(McGowan et al., 2022). These networks provide a unique platform for FSWs to connect with peers who share similar experiences, offering invaluable resources and solidarity in navigating the multifaceted issues they encounter(McGowan et al., 2022).

The title of this Study, "Role of Peer Support Networks on the Health Outcomes of Female Sex Workers: A Social Work Study," encapsulates the central focus of our inquiry: to examine the impact of peer support networks on the health outcomes of FSWs and to elucidate the mechanisms through which these networks contribute to enhancing their well-being(Al-Mutawtah et al., 2023; Karver et al., 2022). Despite the growing recognition of the importance of peer support networks in the lives of FSWs, there still needs to be more empirical research that systematically investigates their role in shaping health trajectories within this population(Febres-Cordero et al., 2018; Platt et al., 2018).

To address this gap, our Study adopts a Descriptive research design, employing in-depth interviews and self-structured questionnaires with FSWs to explore the experiences, perceptions, and outcomes of FSWs involved in peer support networks.

Central to our investigation is an exploration of the various dimensions of peer support networks, including but not limited to information sharing, emotional support, access to resources and services, and the empowerment process facilitated by peer-led interventions(Benoit et al., 2017; Ngugi et al., 1996). By delving into these aspects, we seek to unravel how peer support networks contribute to health promotion, disease prevention, and overall well-being among FSWs.

The findings of our Study are anticipated to yield valuable insights that can inform social work practice, policy development, and the design of interventions aimed at improving the health outcomes of FSWs (Johnson et al., 2023). By shedding light on the mechanisms through which peer support networks operate and the factors that influence their effectiveness, we hope to contribute to the broader discourse on addressing health disparities and promoting social justice within marginalized populations (Goldenberg et al., 2021).

In the subsequent sections of this paper, we will delve into the methodological approach employed in our Study, detail the findings and analysis derived from our data collection efforts, and discuss the implications of our research for social work practice, policy development, and future research directions. Through this comprehensive examination, we aim to deepen our understanding of the pivotal role that peer support networks play in the lives of FSWs and advance efforts to foster resilience, empowerment, and health equity within this population.

2. The rationale of the Study:

The rationale for undertaking this Study is rooted in the urgent need to address the complex health disparities and socioeconomic challenges faced by female sex workers (FSWs) worldwide. FSWs constitute a highly marginalized and vulnerable population, confronting intersecting layers of stigma, discrimination, and structural inequalities that significantly impact their health and well-being. Within this context, peer support networks have emerged as a promising avenue for mitigating the adverse health outcomes experienced by FSWs and

Addressing Health Disparities: Female sex workers (FSWs) experience disproportionately high rates of HIV/AIDS, STIs, drug use disorders, mental health issues, and other adverse health outcomes compared to the general population. Despite efforts to enhance healthcare accessibility, FSWs often encounter systemic barriers hindering their ability to access appropriate care, such as social marginalization, criminalization, and violence. This project aims to contribute to developing tailored interventions to meet the unique healthcare needs of FSWs and reduce health disparities within this community by examining the role of peer support networks in enhancing health outcomes.

Harnessing Peer Support: Peer support networks offer a unique form of support grounded in shared experiences, mutual understanding, and solidarity. These networks provide FSWs with a safe space to access information, share resources, and seek emotional support without fear of judgment or stigma. By investigating how peer support networks operate within the FSW community, this Study aims to uncover how peer support can be harnessed to promote health and well-being, ultimately contributing to more effective and culturally responsive interventions.

Empowerment and Agency: Besides helpful advice, peer support networks are essential in enabling FSWs to take charge of their lives and stand up for their rights. Through joint efforts and peer-driven campaigns, FSWs can contest discrimination, request improved labour conditions, and obtain vital medical attention and legal assistance. This Study looks at the process of empowerment that peer support networks provide to illuminate how FSWs can overcome structural barriers to improve their health outcomes, express their rights, and develop resilience.

Informing Social Work Practice and Policy: Social workers, including FSWs, play a critical role in advocating for the rights and well-being of marginalized populations. By generating empirically grounded knowledge on the role of peer support networks in shaping health outcomes, this Study aims to inform the development of evidence-based social work interventions and policy initiatives that address the structural determinants of health disparities among FSWs. By incorporating the perspectives and experiences of FSWs themselves, this Study seeks to centre the voices of those most affected by policies and interventions, ultimately fostering more inclusive and responsive approaches to addressing health inequities.

This Study is motivated by a commitment to social justice, health equity, and human rights. It recognizes the importance of peer support networks as vehicles for promoting resilience, empowerment, and well-being among female sex workers. This Study endeavours to contribute to the broader movement towards creating more just, inclusive, and supportive environments for FSWs and marginalized populations through rigorous research inquiry and collaboration with community stakeholders.

3. Review of Literature

(Lazarus et al. 2012) The article investigates the impact of community-based peer support interventions on access to care and antiretroviral treatment (ART) among sex workers in Mysore, India, conducted in collaboration with Ashodaya Samithi, a community-based organization (CBO) led by sex workers. Through qualitative research, it examines the experiences of HIV-positive sex workers affiliated with Ashodaya Samithi, focusing on their organization called Ashraya. The Study highlights the pivotal role of community-based organizations like Ashodaya Samithi and Ashraya in improving access to care and ART, fostering social solidarity, and implementing structural interventions within the sex worker community. It underscores the importance of peer support networks in facilitating access to healthcare, fostering social cohesion, and empowering marginalized populations like female sex workers. Overall, the research provides empirical

evidence of how community-based peer support interventions positively influence health outcomes, addressing structural barriers and promoting health equity and social justice among female sex workers.

(Gesser 2022) The impact of peer support in easing the exit process for women participating in street-based sex trade and dealing with substance use difficulties is examined in the article "[Peers Give] You Hope that You Can Change Too': Peers' Helping Relationships for Women Exiting Street-based Sex Trade." There has been little research on the use of peer support in the context of the street-based sex trade, despite the benefits of this type of assistance being shown to be effective in aiding in the recovery from drug abuse and mental health disorders. The Study looks at the effects of peer support on 29 substance-using women who were previously active in street-based sex work to close this gap. The participants were drawn from five women with substance use disorder treatment programs located in a significant Northeastern American urban area. Comprehensive interviews.

(Johnson et al. 2023) The Study investigates the use of sex workers as peer researchers to evaluate sexual health outcomes and well-being in Western Australia. Seven out of eight peer researchers reflected on their experiences through interviews. The primary motivation for participation was giving sex workers a voice and facilitating change. Challenges included communication barriers for non-English-speaking participants and role conflict when encountering differing viewpoints. Support from the project team and peers enabled their role. Most were driven by hopes for legislative changes and support based on research findings. The Study suggests that involving peer researchers in research processes, including co-authorship and leadership roles, can enhance research impact and relevance.

(George et al. 2015) The Study examines the implementation of an HIV prevention intervention among female sex workers (FSWs) in India, comparing approaches led by a non-governmental organization (NGO) and the government. It highlights a shift in the role of peer outreach workers from "Social Change Agents" in a community-led structural intervention (CLSI) to "Peer Educators" in a targeted intervention (TI). In the CLSI, peer outreach workers addressed underlying structural factors contributing to HIV risk, while in the TI, they focused on providing information and access to health services. Key differences include assumptions about HIV risk factors, emphasis on collective mobilization, linkage between community mobilization and HIV prevention goals, and utilization of peer input. The Study underscores the implications of these findings for HIV prevention programming, emphasizing the importance of addressing structural vulnerabilities and empowering communities in effectively addressing HIV risk among FSWs.

(Huschke 2019) The article examines Creative Space workshops, a model of risk-reduction workshops for sex workers in Soweto, South Africa, aiming to counteract the harmful health effects of criminalization and exclusion faced by sex workers. Drawing on Paulo Freire's work, the Study investigates the workshops' potential to empower sex workers and enhance their health and well-being. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 32 sex workers over a 20-month ethnographic study, the research explores the social and psychological effects of peer-led risk-reduction workshops, particularly their contribution to community empowerment. The findings suggest that peer-led workshops can create a "safe space" for sex workers and disseminate empowering knowledge, especially concerning health issues and rights. However, divisions among different groups of sex workers and between sex workers and non-sex workers undermine the workshops' potential benefits. The Study concludes that peer-led sex worker programs can be more empowering when they promote critical consciousness, foster solidarity, and engage in community action on shared issues such as institutionalized racism, livelihood insecurity, and housing access. Such actions are likely to have positive outcomes on health and well-being.

(Menger-Ogle et al. 2019) The Study investigates the effectiveness of a peer education intervention aimed at empowering and enhancing the psychosocial health of female sex workers (FSWs) in Nepal. Pilot-tested in Kathmandu, the intervention targeted occupational risks faced by FSWs, which could compromise their psychosocial well-being and ability to adopt protective behaviours. Results indicated that FSWs exposed to the peer education intervention demonstrated significantly higher levels of psychosocial health knowledge, perceived self-efficacy, access to resources, happiness, and job control than those not exposed. The findings suggest that peer education shows promise as a means to promote psychosocial health and empowerment among FSWs in Nepal.

(Menger-Ogle et al. 2019) The Study investigates the economic implications of peer outreach work in HIV prevention programs among female sex workers (FSWs) in South India. Despite the recognized contribution of peer outreach workers to successful HIV prevention outcomes, there is limited discussion about the economic aspects of their role. Using observational data, the Study reveals that peer outreach workers perceive their payment as inadequate compared to their workload, experience delays in compensation, and sometimes need to cover expenses out of pocket. These conditions lead to peer attrition and challenges in recruiting new peer workers. The inadequate and irregular compensation undermines peers' relationships with the FSW community, weakens the effectiveness of peer-mediated HIV prevention programs, and raises questions about the sustainability of using peers in such interventions. The findings highlight the importance of addressing economic concerns to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of peer-led HIV prevention efforts among FSWs.

(Olawore et al. 2020) The Study examines peer recruitment strategies for female sex workers (FSWs) not engaged in HIV prevention and treatment services in Côte d'Ivoire, leveraging programmatic data from the LINKAGES project. Enhanced peer outreach and traditional peer outreach approaches are compared in

reaching and providing community HIV testing to FSWs. Data from October 2017 to April 2018 show that the enhanced peer outreach approach reached 9,761 FSWs. Comparatively, women reached by enhanced peer outreach were more likely to have previously been tested for HIV, had a higher HIV case-finding rate, and showed a higher proportion of linkage to treatment and treatment initiation compared to routine outreach. Both groups exhibited high-risk behaviours for HIV acquisition. The findings suggest that the enhanced peer outreach approach was effective in reaching FSWs with demonstrated HIV acquisition risks who were not effectively engaged by routine outreach methods. Scaling up innovative strategies like enhanced peer outreach may optimize HIV prevention and treatment outcomes for key populations in Côte d'Ivoire within differentiated service models.

(Pradnyani et al. 2020) The Study investigates predictors of HIV testing among indirect female sex workers (IFSWs) in Denpasar, Bali. Data from a 2017 survey involving 200 IFSWs were analyzed. Results showed that 70% had accessed HIV testing in the last 6 months, with 56.5% lacking peer support related to HIV/AIDS and 63.5% reporting adequate access to information about HIV testing. Logistic regression analysis identified two significant predictors of HIV testing: adequate access to information about HIV testing and prevention (OR = 2.21; 95% CI: 1.15-4.30) and peer support (OR = 2.29; 95% CI: 1.21-4.34). The Study concludes that efforts to enhance the provision of information about HIV testing and prevention, as well as peer support related to HIV/AIDS, are necessary to increase HIV testing rates among IFSWs.

(McGowan et al. 2022) The Study investigates how social support within female sex worker (FSW) peer networks influences the uptake of peer-delivered HIV prevention interventions, specifically HIV self-testing (HIVST), in urban Uganda. Qualitative data from in-depth interviews with FSWs (n = 30) and focus group discussions with FSW peer educators (PEs, n = 5) were analyzed. Findings reveal that social support within FSW peer networks both motivates and discourages HIVST uptake. Positive experiences shared among peers, direct distribution of HIVST kits, and encouragement for linkage to care motivate uptake (informational, instrumental, and emotional support). Conversely, misinformation, limited kit availability leading to mistrust, and fear of social exclusion deter uptake. The Study emphasizes the importance of designing peer-delivered HIV prevention interventions based on social support dimensions within FSW peer networks to optimize intervention delivery and uptake.

(Karver et al. 2022) The Study explores the role of peer navigation and support in improving the quality of HIV treatment and care services for female sex workers (FSWs) in the Dominican Republic. Quantitative data from a cohort of 211 FSWs living with HIV, supplemented by qualitative data from in-depth interviews with a subsample of 20 participants, were analyzed. Results show that 41.2% of participants had contact with a peer navigator in the last 6 months. Qualitative findings reveal that peer navigation assists FSWs in linking HIV care after diagnosis, accessing comprehensive clinical care facilities, and enhancing agency in engaging with healthcare providers. Peer navigation is associated with experiencing more respectful treatment by clinic staff and greater satisfaction with overall HIV care services. The Study underscores the importance of fully integrating peer navigation into healthcare structures to improve the quality of HIV care and related outcomes for FSWs.

No study is conducted explicitly on the title of the review, "Role of Peer Support Networks on the Health Outcomes of Female Sex Workers: A Social Work Study." However, the review of existing literature highlights the significant impact of peer support networks on various aspects of female sex workers' health and well-being, indicating the importance of such a study to further explore and validate these findings within a social work framework.

4. Objective of the Study

- To understand the socioeconomic condition of the respondents
- To understand the peer support extended by female sex workers' health at Vijaya Mahila Sangha, emphasizing sharing info, emotional aid, and empowerment.
- To assess the impact of the KSAPS TI Project in improving health and providing social justice for marginalized female sex workers.

5. Research Methodology

The present Study conducted at Vijaya Mahila Sangha, KSAPS TI Project in Tumkur District, Madugiri Taluk, Puravara Hobli, aimed to explore the impact of peer support networks on the health outcomes of female sex workers (FSWs). Employing a Descriptive Research Design, the Study utilized in-depth interviews and self-structured questionnaires to gather detailed insights into the role of peer support networks. This approach facilitated the triangulation of findings, enabling a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Sampling Techniques

In the present Study, the researcher employed purposive sampling techniques, selecting 42 participants out of 57. This deliberate approach indicates that a significant portion of the population is included in the Study.

Given the qualitative nature of the research, the focus is on acquiring rich, nuanced data to explore the research thoroughly.

Questionnaire Validation:

The questionnaire underwent rigorous validation processes to ensure its reliability and validity. Utilizing SPSS, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed to assess internal consistency reliability, with values exceeding 0.7 indicating satisfactory reliability. Additionally, content validity was secured through consultations with social work and public health field experts, refining items for relevance and comprehensiveness. Construct validity was evaluated via Exploratory Factor Analysis, simplifying the factor structure for interpretability through Varimax rotation. Field experts, including social workers and public health professionals, provided invaluable feedback, confirming the questionnaire's relevance and comprehensiveness in capturing various dimensions of peer support networks' impact on the health outcomes of female sex workers.

Results and Discussion:

1. Demographic Information:

1. Age of the respondents

S L No	Age of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage
1	18-25	7	17%
2	26-35	25	59%
3	36-45	8	19%
4	46 and above	2	5%
	Total	42	100%

The age distribution of respondents reveals that the majority (59%) are aged 26-35, indicating a significant presence of mid-career female sex workers. Younger participation (18-25) is less represented (17%), possibly due to concerns about confidentiality or different

support networks. Older sex workers (36-45 and 46 and above) also participate, but to a lesser extent (19% and 5%, respectively), suggesting varying levels of engagement or accessibility.

This distribution highlights potential differences in experiences and needs across different age groups. It indicates that mid-career sex workers are more actively engaged in sex work, while older participants may face additional barriers to participation, such as health issues or social stigma. Understanding these demographics can help tailor interventions to address better the diverse needs of female sex workers across age groups.

2. Year of engaged in sex work

S L No	Year of engaged in Sex Work	Frequency	Percentage
1	Less than 1 year	8	20%
2	1-5 years	22	52%
3	6-10 years	9	22%
4	More than 10 years	3	7%
	Total	42	100%

The data reveals a diverse range of experience levels among respondents in sex work. A substantial portion (20%) are newcomers, likely entering the profession recently due to economic necessity or limited alternatives. The majority (52%) have been engaged for 1-5 years, indicating a significant presence of individuals in the early to moderate stages of their involvement. A notable proportion (22%) has 6-10 years of experience, suggesting established members within the sex work community. A smaller minority (7%) comprises long-term participants with over 10 years of experience, likely offering unique insights into the profession's challenges and changes. This variation underscores different needs and perspectives influenced by their tenure. Understanding these levels is crucial for organizations like Vijaya Mahila Sangha to tailor support services effectively across different career stages.

3. Language of respondents

S L No	Primary Language	Frequency	Percentage
1	Kannada	38	90%
2	Telugu	4	10%
3	English	0	0%
4	Others	0	0%
	Total	42	100%

The data on respondents' primary languages reveals a significant preference for Kannada, with 90% of participants indicating it as their primary language. This dominance suggests that most respondents are likely from the local Kannada-speaking community, which could reflect the geographical context of the study area. The relatively small percentages for Telugu are 10%, no one responded to English, and other languages indicate a limited representation of linguistic diversity within the sample. The absence of respondents selecting English or other languages as their primary language might suggest potential language barriers or homogeneity within the community regarding the language spoken. Understanding the primary language spoken by participants is crucial for effective communication, ensuring that support services, interventions, and research findings are accessible and comprehensible to the target population. In this context, efforts to provide information, support, and resources in Kannada would likely be most effective in meeting the needs of the majority of respondents and fostering meaningful engagement with initiatives.

II. Involvement in Peer Support Networks:

1. Frequently participate in peer support network activities

S L No	Frequently participate in peer support network activities.	Frequency	Percentage
1	Daily	15	36%
2	Weekly	23	54%
3	Monthly	0	0%
4	Rarely	4	10%
	Total	42	100%

The data on the frequency of peer support network activities indicates that most respondents (54%) engage in these activities weekly, suggesting consistent involvement in peer support networks within the community. Additionally, a significant portion (36%) reports participating daily, highlighting a strong and frequent connection to peer support resources. However, no respondents indicated monthly participation, suggesting that such structured activities are not shared or may be less accessible within the community. A smaller proportion (10%) reports rare participation, indicating that some individuals engage less frequently in peer support activities, possibly due to various reasons such as personal preferences, scheduling constraints, or limited awareness of available resources. Understanding the frequency of participation in peer support activities is crucial for assessing the engagement and utilization of support networks among the target population and informing strategies to enhance accessibility, outreach, and effectiveness of peer support initiatives within organizations.

2. Type of support received from Peer networks

S L No	Type of support received from Peer networks	Frequency	Percentage
1	Condom Supply	9	21%
2	Health check-up	2	5%
3	Information sharing, social and emotional support	1	2%
4	All of the above	30	42%
	Total	42	100%

The data on types of support received from peer networks indicates that a significant proportion of respondents (42%) report receiving all of the listed support types, including condom supply, health check-ups, and information sharing/social and emotional support. This suggests that most participants benefit from comprehensive support services provided by their peer networks, encompassing practical resources like condoms and health check-ups, as well as intangible forms of support such as information sharing and emotional assistance. Additionally, 21% of respondents specifically mention receiving condom supply, highlighting the importance of access to safe sex resources within the peer support framework. However, only a tiny percentage (5%) report receiving health check-ups, suggesting potential gaps in healthcare provision within the peer support context that may need to be addressed. Moreover, a minimal portion (2%) mentions receiving information sharing and social/emotional support, indicating the presence of these crucial elements but potentially requiring more emphasis or promotion. Understanding the types of support received from peer networks is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of existing support systems and identifying areas for improvement, ensuring that the diverse needs of female sex workers are adequately addressed within the organization.

3. How peer support networks helped in accessing healthcare services

S L No	How peer support networks helped in accessing healthcare services	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes, significantly	22	52%
2	Yes, to some extent	17	41%
3	No, not really	3	7%
4	Not applicable	0	0%
	Total	42	100%

The data on how peer support networks have helped in accessing healthcare services indicates that a majority of respondents (52%) report that peer support networks have significantly aided them in accessing healthcare services, highlighting the importance of these networks in facilitating healthcare access for female sex workers. Additionally, 41% of respondents mention that peer support has helped to some extent in accessing healthcare services, further underscoring the positive impact of peer networks. However, a small proportion (7%) indicates that peer support networks have not helped access healthcare services, suggesting potential areas for improvement in the support mechanisms provided. Overall, these findings emphasize the crucial role of peer support networks in bridging gaps in healthcare access and advocating for the health needs of female sex workers within the community, underscoring the significance of continued support and resources provided by organizations.

III. Perceptions and Experiences:

1. How do you perceive the impact of peer support networks on your overall well-being?

S L No	The impact of peer support networks on overall well-being	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very positive	12	29%
2	Somewhat positive	24	57%
3	Neutral	4	9%
4	Negative	2	5%
	Total	42	100%

The data on the perception of the impact of peer support networks on overall well-being indicates a generally positive sentiment among respondents, the majority reporting either a very positive (29%) or somewhat positive (57%) impact. This indicates that peer support networks play an essential role in enhancing the overall well-being of female sex workers, contributing positively to their emotional, social, and possibly physical health. However, more minor respondents express neutral (9%) or negative (5%) perceptions, indicating that peer support networks may not have a significant impact or even pose challenges for some individuals. These findings explain the importance of further understanding the factors contributing to varying perceptions of peer support networks among female sex workers, as well as identifying strategies to maximize their positive impact on overall well-being. The data highlights the value of peer support networks as a vital resource for promoting the well-being and resilience of female sex workers within the community, emphasizing the need for continued support and investment in such initiatives within the organization.

2. Have peer support networks empowered you to advocate for your rights?

S L No	The peer support networks empowered by advocates for female sex worker rights	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes, definitely	20	48%
2	Yes, to some extent	22	52%
3	No, not really	0	0%
4	Not sure	0	0%
	Total	42	100%

The data on the empowerment of peer support networks in advocating for the rights of female sex workers indicates a positive trend, with a significant majority of respondents (48%) affirming that these networks have empowered them to advocate for their rights. Additionally, a considerable portion (52%) report that peer support networks have empowered them to some extent in this regard. The absence of responses indicating "No, not really" or "Not sure" suggests a high level of confidence and clarity among respondents regarding the empowering role of peer support networks in advocating for their rights. These findings underscore the critical role of peer support networks in fostering empowerment and agency among female sex workers, enabling them to assert their rights and demand social justice within their communities. This data highlights the effectiveness

of initiatives like the Vijaya Mahila Sangha in providing a platform for collective advocacy and empowerment, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of advancing the rights and well-being of female sex workers.

3. Comfortable feeling while sharing personal experiences with peer support networks

S L No	Comfortable feeling while sharing personal experiences with peer support networks	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very comfortable	16	39%
2	Comfortable	21	50%
3	Somewhat comfortable	4	9%
4	Not comfortable	1	2%
	Total	42	100%

The above table shows that most respondents expressed a high degree of comfort with sharing personal experiences within peer support networks, which is generally favourable. More specifically, 39% of participants say they feel extremely at ease, and 50% say they feel at ease discussing personal experiences on social networks. Furthermore, fewer respondents (9%) feel somewhat at ease, indicating a modest degree of comfort when discussing personal narratives. A negligible proportion (2%) of participants indicate uneasiness, suggesting that peer support networks offer a secure and encouraging space for individuals to share their life stories. These results highlight the value of peer support networks as forums for female sex workers to build trust, empathy, and camaraderie while communicating honestly and openly about delicate subjects. The high degrees of comfort expressed imply that these networks are crucial in eradicating social barriers, lessening feelings of loneliness, and fostering emotional health within the community.

IV. Feedback on Peer Support Programs:

1. Peer support programs adequately address the specific needs of female sex workers

S L No	Peer support programs adequately address the specific needs of female sex workers	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes, completely	26	62%
2	Yes, to some extent	13	31%
3	No, not really	3	7%
4	Unsure	0	0%
	Total	42	100%

The data on how effectively peer support programs meet the unique needs of female sex workers indicates overwhelmingly positive feedback from respondents. Most participants hold a favourable view, with 62% expressing that these programs fully address their needs. Additionally, 31% feel that peer support programs partially fulfil their requirements, highlighting their overall benefit. Only a tiny minority, 7% of respondents, express concerns about the adequacy of these programs in meeting their specific needs. However, the absence of ambiguity or doubt in responses suggests a strong consensus among participants regarding the effectiveness of peer support programs. These findings underscore the vital role of initiatives like the Vijaya Mahila Sangha in providing tailored assistance, resources, and advocacy for female sex workers, ultimately contributing to their empowerment, well-being, and integration within the community.

2. How the peer support programs improved to serve the needs of female sex workers better

S L No	How the peer support programs improved to serve the needs of female sex workers better	Frequency	Percentage
1	Increase resources and funding	1	2%
2	Expand outreach efforts	2	5%
3	Provide additional training for peer educators	39	93%
4	Others	42	100%
	Total	42	100%

The data on how peer support programs can be improved to serve the needs of female sex workers better highlights a clear preference among respondents for providing additional training for peer educators, with a vast majority (93%) expressing this suggestion. This indicates a recognition of the critical role played by peer educators in delivering practical support and resources to female sex workers within the community. Additionally, a smaller proportion of respondents (5%) advocate for expanding outreach efforts, suggesting a need for broader awareness and accessibility of peer support programs. Interestingly, only a minimal percentage (2%) mentions increasing resources and funding as a potential improvement area, indicating that respondents prioritize enhancing the quality and effectiveness of support services through improved training

rather than solely focusing on financial considerations. The absence of responses under "Others" suggests a high degree of specificity and clarity in the suggested improvement areas identified by respondents. These findings underscore the importance of investing in training and capacity-building initiatives for peer educators within organizations like the Vijaya Mahila Sangha to ensure that peer support programs effectively meet the evolving needs of female sex workers and promote their empowerment and well-being within the community.

V. Overall Satisfaction and Impact:

1. Satisfaction Status of support received from peer networks

S L No	Satisfaction Status of support received from peer networks	Frequency	Percentage
1	1 (Very Dissatisfied)	0	0%
2	2(Dissatisfied)	7	17%
3	3 (Neutral)	11	26%
4	4(Satisfied)	15	36%
5	5(Very Satisfied)	9	21%
	Total	42	100%

The data on satisfaction with the support received from peer networks indicates varying levels of satisfaction among respondents, with a notable portion expressing positive sentiments. Most respondents report being satisfied (36%) or delighted (21%), representing 57% of the sample. This suggests that a significant proportion of participants find the support provided by peer networks satisfactory or highly beneficial. Additionally, 26% express a neutral stance, indicating a lack of strong feelings towards the support received. However, a smaller percentage of respondents (17%) expressed dissatisfaction or were very dissatisfied with the support, suggesting areas where improvements may be needed better to meet the needs and expectations of female sex workers. Overall, while a considerable portion of respondents appears to derive satisfaction from the support received from peer networks, there are still opportunities to enhance the quality and effectiveness of these support systems to ensure that they adequately address the diverse needs and preferences of female sex workers within the community.

2. How peer support networks influenced health outcome

S L No	How peer support networks influenced health outcome	Frequency	Percentage
1	Positively	28	67%
2	Negatively	14	33%
3	No Significant impact	0	0%
4	Unsure	0	0%
	Total	42	100%

The data on how peer support networks have influenced health outcomes among female sex workers reveals a mixed perception among respondents. A significant majority (67%) report a positive influence of peer support networks on their health outcomes, indicating that these networks are beneficial in improving or maintaining their overall health and well-being. However, a notable portion (33%) expresses a negative influence, suggesting that peer support networks may not have led to desired health improvements or may have even posed challenges for some individuals. The absence of responses indicating no significant impact or uncertainty suggests a substantial degree of conviction among respondents regarding the influence of peer support networks on their health outcomes. These findings highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of the relationship between peer support networks and health outcomes among female sex workers, underscoring the importance of further research and tailored interventions to maximize the positive impact of peer support initiatives on the health and well-being of this population.

6. Social work Implications

Several social work implications can be drawn to better support female sex workers and address their diverse needs:

Tailored Interventions: The demographic information reveals varying levels of engagement and accessibility across different age groups of female sex workers. Social work interventions should be tailored to address each age group's specific needs and experiences, considering factors such as confidentiality concerns, support networks, and accessibility barriers. This may involve age-appropriate outreach strategies, support services, and advocacy efforts.

Comprehensive Support Services: The data on types of support received from peer networks underscores the importance of comprehensive support services for female sex workers, including practical resources like

condoms and health check-ups, as well as social and emotional support. Social workers should advocate for and facilitate access to these resources, ensuring that female sex workers receive holistic support to address their diverse needs.

Language Accessibility: Understanding the primary language spoken by female sex workers is crucial for effective communication and engagement. Social workers should provide information, support, and resources in languages accessible and comprehensible to the target population, such as Kannada, in this context. Efforts to provide language-specific services can enhance accessibility and foster meaningful engagement with initiatives.

Strengthening Peer Support Networks: Peer support networks play a vital role in facilitating healthcare access, advocating for rights, and promoting overall well-being among female sex workers. Social workers should support strengthening these networks by providing training for peer educators, expanding outreach efforts, and creating safe spaces for sharing personal experiences. Empowering female sex workers to support each other can enhance resilience, reduce isolation, and promote community cohesion.

Addressing Barriers to Healthcare Access: While peer support networks have positively influenced healthcare access for many female sex workers, there are still individuals who face barriers to accessing healthcare services. Social workers should identify and address these barriers, including stigma, discrimination, lack of awareness, or limited healthcare infrastructure. Collaborative efforts with healthcare providers and community organizations can improve access to essential healthcare services for female sex workers.

Continuous Improvement of Support Programs: The feedback provided by female sex workers highlights the importance of continuously improving peer support programs to meet their needs better. Social workers should listen to the voices of the community and actively involve female sex workers in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of support programs. This participatory approach can ensure that programs are responsive, relevant, and effective in addressing the evolving needs of female sex workers.

Overall, social work interventions should be informed by a deep understanding of the experiences, challenges, and strengths of female sex workers, with a focus on promoting empowerment, resilience, and well-being within the community. By addressing systemic barriers, advocating for rights, and fostering supportive environments, social workers can contribute to creating more inclusive and equitable societies for female sex workers.

7. Reformations or suggestion

Based on the result of the Study and interpretation, there are some suggestions for interventions and strategies to support female sex workers better:

Tailored Support Services: Develop and implement support services tailored to the specific needs and experiences of female sex workers across different age groups. This could include age-appropriate outreach programs, support groups, and counselling services that address the unique challenges faced by younger, mid-career, and older sex workers.

Comprehensive Health Services: Expand access to comprehensive health services for female sex workers, including sexual and reproductive health services, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, and mental health support. Collaborate with healthcare providers and community organizations to address barriers to healthcare access and promote culturally sensitive care.

Peer Support Networks: Strengthen peer support networks by providing training and capacity-building opportunities for peer educators, expanding outreach efforts to reach marginalized groups, and creating safe spaces for sharing experiences and accessing support. Empower female sex workers to advocate for their rights and address systemic issues impacting their well-being.

Community Engagement: Involving female sex workers in the design, implementation, and evaluation of support programs can foster community engagement and collaboration. This participatory approach can ensure that interventions are responsive to the community's needs and priorities, promote ownership and sustainability, and foster trust and mutual respect.

Addressing Stigma and Discrimination: Implement anti-stigma campaigns and initiatives to challenge negative attitudes and discriminatory practices towards female sex workers. Advocate for policies and legislation that protect the rights and dignity of sex workers, including decriminalization and access to legal protections.

Continuous Improvement: Continuously evaluate and improve support programs based on feedback from female sex workers, monitoring outcomes and adapting interventions to address emerging needs and challenges. Foster a culture of learning and innovation within organizations to ensure that interventions remain effective and responsive to the evolving context.

By implementing these suggestions, social workers and organizations can better support female sex workers, promote their health and well-being, and advocate for their rights within the community and society at large.

Conclusion

This Study underscores the varied requirements and encounters of female sex workers, stressing the significance of customized support services, language accessibility, and all-encompassing healthcare. In addition to being essential for resolving systemic issues and empowering sex workers, peer support networks

also play a critical role in promoting a supportive atmosphere by fighting prejudice and stigma. Support programs must be evaluated and improved frequently to maintain their efficacy and applicability. Social workers and organizations may better help female sex workers, improve their well-being, and fight for their rights in the community and society by encouraging teamwork, innovation, and advocacy. This research advances our knowledge of the difficulties encountered by female sex workers and offers insightful information for creating focused interventions that will raise the calibre of their work.

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