

## CHAPTER - IV

### PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Social work profession has a vital role to play in realizing our constitutional mandate for a just and equitable society. As an enabling and helping profession, solving problems and fostering development are its prime concerns. The first step in designing any effective intervention programmes - whether with preventive, curative, rehabilitative or developmental goals - is that of generation and/or retrieval of scientific information and analysis of such information.

Tudu (1982) quoting Max Silverstein (1977) explains the approach of professional social work thus:-

The focus of social work practice is on “the crucial life space where inner and outer confront each other”. Inner psychology refers to the concepts, ideas, upbringing, value, norms and principles born or acquired by a person; whereas outer reality is the stark of day to day confrontations of life.

Thus, a scientific inquiry in to both - the inner and outer realities - of the respondents becomes essential in social work research. The researcher kept this fact in mind while designing her research tool. The areas covered by the research tool for the study of life style of prostitutes covered all the important determinants

of life style described by Mane (1994) viz. Demographic, Individual and Societal factors; family related factors; cultural factors and mental / emotional factors.

They were :-

- A. Personal Information
- B. Family Background : Parental & Matrimonial
- C. Occupational History
- D. Religiosity
- E. Health Profile
- F. Clients / Customers
- G. Business Related Information
- H. Children of Respondents
- I. Occupational Adjustment
- J. Sex Typology
- K. Self Esteem
- L. Purpose in Life
- M. Occupational Stress
- N. Values
- O. Attitude Towards Customers
- P. Attitude Towards Brothel Keeper
- Q. Attitude Towards Law Implementing Machinery
- R. Coping Strategies in Times of Crisis

- S. Future Plans / Aspirations
- T. Rehabilitation Potential
- U. Special Observations by Researcher

The order of questions in the tool was designed keeping in mind the principles of tool designing and interviewing and also keeping in mind researcher's earlier experiences in the field.

For the purpose of data analysis and report presentation, however, researcher has reorganized and changed the sequence wherever necessary to facilitate logical interpretation of the data.

The tabulated data, thus, are described in following three chapters along with analysis and researcher's interpretations. The qualitative information concerning each topic is incorporated at respective place so as to give an over all picture of field realities.

This chapter describes the data analysis and interpretation on :-

- i) Personal profile of respondents.
- ii) Family profile of respondents.
- iii) Children of respondents.

As stated earlier, the main objective of the research is to evolve a social work intervention plan and to fill information gap and hence analysis focuses more on its utility value.

### **Personal Profile of Respondents :**

The variables covered under personal profile of respondents include the details regarding age, education, marital status and other demographic factors.

**Table - 1 : Age-wise Distribution of Respondents**

Sr. No.	Present Age in years	Frequency	Percent
1	20 and below	04	3.7
2	21 to 30	69	64.5
3	31 to 40	29	27.1
4	41 to 50	05	4.7
Total		107	100.0

The above table clearly shows a very high number of respondents (More than 91%) falling between twenty one and forty years of age. A few respondents are also there above the age of 41 years. The 3.7% of respondents below twenty years of age are all actually between fifteen and seventeen years of age i.e. minors.

It is an established fact that flesh trade is closely linked with youthhood and lust. Customers prefer younger respondents and only few respondents crossing their forties can survive the business competition. Hence the sudden fall is seen in the number of respondents beyond 40 years. Those under 20 years are small in number possibly because brothel keepers fear the legal implications of forcing minor girls in to prostitution which are much more strict. Usually minor girls are taught not to report their correct age, but in all such cases of doubtful nature,

researcher tried to elicit correct response by asking supplementary questions e.g. approximate age at which her menstruation started, whether she started in business before or after such period or the age difference between her siblings and herself.

**Table - 2 : Education-wise Distribution of Respondents**

Sr. No.	Education	Frequency	% Percent
1	Illiterate	92	86.0
2	Primary	12	11.2
3	Secondary	02	1.9
4	Higher Secondary	01	0.9
Total		107	100

Lack of education increases one's vulnerability for social and economic exploitation and leaves limited options for one's gainful employment through socially acceptable means.

The above table supports this fact. More than two thirds of the respondents were totally illiterate. Only 14 percent of respondents were literate; of whom majority's education was limited to primary level only. Sex workers operating through brothel occupy a lower rung as compared to other categories like call girls. Girls with higher education hardly operate through brothels.

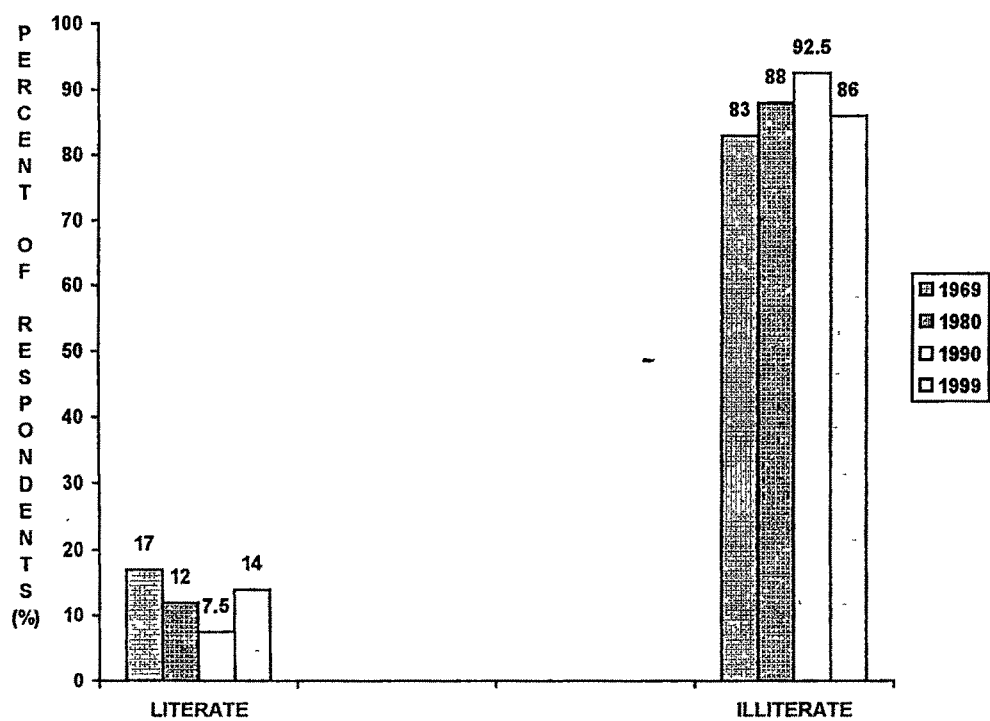
In present study also, the only single respondent with higher secondary education, plans to give up her status as a sex worker soon and has already moved up in the business hierarchy by starting her own brothel - by employing other girls (please see case study : Case of Meena).

Here, it would be interesting to note that comparing their literacy rate at present, it is higher (14%) than that noted during the sample study in 1980 (literate respondents 12%), 1990 (literate respondents 7.5%), but lower than one noted in 1969 (17.0%) (please see the figure).

**Graph :**

**Comparative Chart Showing Education Status of Responds**

**In years 1969, 1980, 1990 and 1999**



One of the reasons for high rate of illiteracy could be that most of the Nepali girls were illiterate. According to them, in the hilly area of Nepal, girls are not sent to schools because they have to walk long distances alone which is unsafe. Indian girls from remote villages too gave similar reasons for not attending schools.

**Table - 3 : Marital Status of Respondents**

Sr. No.	Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
1	Unmarried	57	53.2
2	Married	22	20.6
3	Widowed	11	10.3
4	Separated	09	8.4
5	Deserted/Divorced	08	7.5
Total		107	100

More than half of the respondents were unmarried. Rest of them, around 46.7% were married but were either widowed, deserted by husband, separated or faced marital maladjustment and were compelled to come to the sex markets in search of economic support. If we compare these figures with the earlier survey in 1990 (Mehta 1990) by the same researcher, the figures are surprisingly similar. In 1990 52.5% were unmarried and 47.5 married, deserted, widowed and divorced as against 53.3% unmarried and 46.7% others in the present study. Irrespective of

their marital status the common factor driving them to sex market was lack of support and poor employment opportunities.

**Table - 4 : Caste-wise Distribution of Respondents**

Sr. No.	Caste	Frequency	Percent
1	Brahmin	02	1.9
2	Rajput/Maratha	14	13.1
3	Jogin/Kolati	02	1.9
4	Other Scheduled Caste	11	10.3
5	Others	78	72.8
Total		107	100

Caste becomes an important factor in studying the social evil of prostitution. A woman's status in her family and in her community is largely determined by her community norms and customs. Also, dedicating young girls as devdasis has been an age-old custom in certain castes. Despite strict laws to prevent and discourage the devdasi system, its traces can be easily seen even today. As shown in the table, two respondents belonging to the Jogin-Kolati castes fall in this category. Surat being close to Maharashtra, some Maratha-Rajput and Patil girls are also found here.

The larger number falling in 'other castes' category comprises of respondents who can not be grouped in any of the earlier categories and also those following Muslim, Christian or Baudddha religions. The Nepali girls mainly came



from 'Tamang' community. Some also come from Kshatriya, Sherpa, Lama, Gurung Kami and Nevar communities.

**Table - 5 : Religion-wise Distribution of Respondents**

Sr. No.	Religion	Frequency	Percent
1	Hindu	75	70.2
2	Muslim	10	09.3
3	Christian	01	00.9
4	Bauddha	21	19.6
Total		107	100

Religion becomes the source of value patterns, knowing religion of respondents becomes necessary because social practices having religious sanction are followed even if they go against the formal, state imposed laws. Hindus and Bauddha together form a large majority of the respondents. The earlier researches in this field showed more or less the same trend.

As stated earlier, the 'Devdasi system' among Hindus in certain parts of the country has religious sanction. Large majority of Hindus in India together with peculiar traditions like 'Devdasi' and similar customs are reflected in the above table. Another reason for Hindu respondents forming majority (70.2%) could be because in India, Hindus form a larger number of the total population of the country.

Muslims are the minority community and Muslim religion is relatively more open to widow remarriage and remarriage of divorced women. Since Muslim women have more than one option open to them, their resorting to prostitution for livelihood or due to social compulsions would be naturally less. Similarly, strong religious support system in the form of missionary welfare institutions in case of Christians perhaps do not compel Christian dependent women to take up prostitution, and hence these minority communities remained in minority for the present study as well.

It must be noted that not a single case of a respondent belonging to Parsi community is noted by the researcher.

**Table - 6 : Mother Tongue of Respondents**

Sr. No.	Mother Tongue	Frequency	Percent
1	Gujarati	04	3.9
2	Marathi	23	21.5
3	Telugu	06	5.6
4	Tamil	01	0.9
5	Nepali	62	57.9
6	Hindi	01	0.9
7	Urdu	01	0.9
8	Bengali	03	2.8
9	Udiya	01	0.9
10	Others	05	4.7
Total		107	100

Mother tongue gives a clue as to where the person originally hails from. With reference to the present study, knowing the mother tongue helps in understanding the respondent's background which in turn can help in planning any prevention or rehabilitation programme. As shown in the table, more than half of the respondents spoke different versions of Nepali language. Their number is bigger than the total of the rest of the respondents. Marathi speaking respondents constituted the second largest group forming more than one fifth of the total number where as Telugu speaking group formed little above five percent of them.

If the number of first two groups are compared with the data of earlier research conducted a decade back, (Mehta, 1990) one can easily notice a significant rise in the number of Nepali girls i.e. from 7.5% in 1990 to 57.9% in 1999. Conversely, the number of Marathi speaking respondents has considerably declined from 67.5% in 1990 to 21.5% in 1999.

Thus the flow of Nepali girls has clearly increased over a decade. Some elderly Marathi gharawalis even voiced their anger towards this trend as it threatened their business. According to them, the Nepali girls get more business as clients are attracted by their fair skin, and their peculiar features do not give away their correct age i.e. they looked younger for a long time.

**Knowledge of Other Language :**

Although there was only one Hindi speaking respondent, almost all the respondents knew Hindi. The common language used for business purpose was Hindi and hence even illiterate respondents could converse freely in Hindi. The three respondents who had studied up to Secondary and Higher Secondary School level also could understand and read English - though not very fluently. Though Surat is located in Gujarat, hardly few respondents expressed their need to know Gujarati as knowledge of Hindi served the purpose.

**Table - 7 : Native Place of Respondents**

Sr. No.	Native Place	Frequency	Percent
1	Maharashtra	27	25.2
2	Gujarat	03	02.8
3	West Bengal	05	4.7
4	Andhra Pradesh	06	5.6
5	Nepal	58	54.2
6	Others	08	7.5
Total		107	100

The above table shows where the respondents came from. Most of them reported their native as the place where they lived their family life before coming to the flesh trade. Some of them explained that their parents/grand parents had actually migrated from their original native place e.g. some Nepali speaking girls

reported West Bengal as their native as their parents had shifted from Nepal to West Bengal for many years.

**Table - 8 : Holding of Ration Card by Respondents**

Sr. No.	Whether holds Ration Card	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	16	15.0
2	No	91	85.0
Total		107	100

Holding of ration card is not only a proof of domicile but it also gives an idea as to whether respondents are a part of the country's mainstream. It also gives a hint about the civic status of the person - giving her an access to many of the welfare facilities provided by the state.

The above table shows that 85% of respondents did not have their name entered in the ration card nor did they hold ration card independently. Rest of the respondents also did not have ration card in Surat but they had their names entered in the family ration card back in their home towns. In case of respondents not having Indian Nationality, and who had migrated to India through irregular means there is no question of holding a ration card. But for legitimate Indian citizen respondents not having a ration card clearly means deprivation of opportunity to get their daily needs at subsidised rates, thus - adding to their economic crisis.

**Table - 9 : Registration on Voters' List**

Sr. No.	Whether Registered on Voter's List	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	12	11.2
2	No	95	88.8
Total		107	100

In a democracy, having one's name on the voter's list becomes the beginning of the empowerment process. It not only gives a person an opportunity to participate in the country's governance but also strengthens capacity to fight against injustice by forming a pressure group.

As shown in the above table, only about one tenth of the respondents were registered with voters list. Even if we deduct non Indian and minor respondents from the total population, a significant number of them, though eligible as voters were not registered as voters.

On the other hand, the shocking information revealed by some of the respondents was that though they were not officially registered voters, many of them were compelled to vote for a certain political party in someone else's name. The local community leaders - described by some as antisocial elements - had connections with political parties. In return of their co-operation for such bogus voting through the respondents, the whole network of fleshtrade was guaranteed a political shelter.

**Census Registration :**

Sex workers in brothels of red-light area form a floating population. They keep shifting to places within the area and at times even to other cities or states. All of the respondents refused of their inclusion in the census. However, researcher came to know from other sources that there are at least two attempts of such survey in recent years. One, a brothel-wise survey was conducted by the local police station following a case filed by the sex workers in Gujarat High Court. The second house to house survey was by the I.C.D.S. functionaries. Researcher could obtain a copy of data gathered by the police authorities which showed total respondents living in brothel houses.

It is, however, difficult to ascertain their exact number as many of them move from one city to another, depending on their demand trends.

**Family Background :**

Probing in to the family background of sex workers becomes necessary so as to trace back the factors which led a woman to join this socially shunned and stigmatised profession.

The researcher has made an attempt to study all the family related aspects in depth to determine whether their family circumstances have led the respondents to take up flesh trade. Preparing the family profile also would help to know if

taking up flesh trade is found more common among women of a certain social or economic class.

**Table - 10: Type of Parental Family**

Sr. No.	Family Type	Frequency	Percent
1	Nuclear	87	81.3
2	Joint	20	18.7
Total		107	100

The table reveals that less than one fifth of the respondents came from joint families and 81.3% i.e. majority came from nuclear families. This possibly reflects the present trend of breaking up of joint family system. Caring for the weaker member becomes difficult in nuclear family system. A destitute child or a widow is easily absorbed and provided for in the larger family set up. The members of nuclear families become more vulnerable economically as well as socially.

**Table - 11 : Sibling Order of Respondents**

Sr. No.	Sibling Order	Frequency	Percent
1	First	77	72.0
2	Middle	20	18.4
3	Last	10	9.3
Total		107	100



The childhood experiences of a person depends on a great deal on her sibling order. Treatment by parents and expectations of parents may vary from child to child in the same family. Responsibility of the eldest child towards younger siblings may become an important determinant in her educational achievement, social status, economic position and family responsibility.

The above table seems to support this belief. More than seventy percent of respondents have reported that they were the first child of their parents. These, of course, included a few who were the first and the only child of their parents. The youngest child (excluding the cases of the only child) formed the smallest group and constituted less than one tenth of the total respondents.

**Table - 12 : Family Size of Respondents**

Sr. No.	No. of Family Members	Frequency	Percent
1	1 - 4	78	72.9
2	5 - 8	26	24.3
3	9 and more	03	2.8
Total		107	100

As seen in the table more than 70% of respondents came from relatively smaller families having four or less than four members. Less than one fourth of the respondents came from families having five to eight members. Only three respondents out of all had larger families having nine or more members.

**Table - 13: Ownership of Immovable Property by the Families of Respondents**

Sr. No.	Family Property	Frequency	Percent
1	Owned Immovable Property	56	52.3
2	Did not Own Immovable Property	51	47.7
Total		107	100

Ownership of immovable property is one of the indicator of economic status of a person. Having a piece of land or self owned house gives both economic as well as social security to the family.

As shown in the table, about 47% of respondent's families did not own any immovable property.

Of those respondents whose families did own such property, nearly half owned only 'kachcha' house or single room hutment. Very small number owned pucca house or land and some also owned a shop.

An average middle class person usually has some self acquired or inherited property. The fact that nearly half of the respondents had no family property and one fourth of them had only kachcha hut means that most of the respondents came from lower economic groups.

**Table - 14 : Respondents Age at Marriage**

Sr. No.	Age at Marriage in Years	Frequency	Percent
1	11 - 15	25	23.4
2	16 - 20	14	13.1
3	21 - 25	08	7.5
4	NA / NR	60	56.0
Total		107	100

Maturity is an essential factor in marital adjustment. Marital maladjustment makes a woman socially and economically vulnerable. Researcher, therefore, tried to probe in to the age at which the respondents got married. There were 54% of respondents who were married and could respond about their age at marriage.

Out of these, only few respondents said that they got married after they crossed twenty years of age. A large number of respondents got married at 15 years of age or below 15 years.

About 16% of respondents said that the marriage was not as per their liking and 10.3% said that they did not give consent for such marriage. It is obvious that their marriages did not work out.

**Table - 15 : Respondents' Relations with Family Members**

Sr.No.	Relation	<u>Husband</u>		<u>In-laws</u>	
		Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
1	Cordial	-	-	-	-
2	Fair	-	-	-	-
3	Indifferent	1	00.9	2	1.9
4	Poor	32	29.9	18	16.8
5	No Response	06	05.6	30	28.0
6	Not Applicable (U.M / Widow)	68	63.5	57	53.2
Total		107	*100	107	*100

\* (rounded off)

Out of the all married respondents, none said that their relations were cordial or even fair with their husband or in-laws. Some did not want to say any thing in response - which, according to the researcher, indicated a feeling of hatred. Almost all the married respondents attributed the reason for their being in flesh trade to the unhealthy behaviour of and ill treatment by husband or in-laws.

However, their relations were relatively better with their parents and siblings as is evident from the following table.

**Table - 16 : Respondents Relations with Parental Family**

Relation	<u>Parents</u>		<u>Siblings</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Cordial	29	27.1	27	25.2
Fair	07	6.5	10	9.3
Indifferent	09	8.4	09	8.4
Poor	11	10.3	10	9.3
NR/NA	51	47.5	51	47.5
Total	107	100	107	100

About one fourth of the respondents had maintained cordial relations with their parents and siblings. In other words, their relations with members of families were not strained inspite of their having accepted flesh trade. This, however, does not mean that their family members knew that respondents were earning through sex work.

The researcher tried to probe whether respondent's occupation is known to their relations and if so, whether respondents themselves revealed this fact to them.

**Table - 17: Awareness of Family Regarding Respondents' Nature of Occupation**

Sr. No.	Whether Aware	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	33	30.8
2	No	66	61.7
3	NA / NR	08	07.5
Total		107	100

Majority of respondent's families were ignorant about their involvement in flesh trade. Some respondents chose not to respond to this question where as some others were destitutes. However, less than one third of the respondents said that their families knew about their occupation correctly.

Out of thirty three such families, twenty four were shared this fact by the respondents themselves. In one case the family knew about respondent's occupation because she was sent in to flesh trade by her own family. Whereas in eight cases, families learnt about respondent's nature of work accidentally. In other words, despite respondent's efforts to hide their nature of work, their families learnt about it through other sources e.g. through other sex workers from the same village or fellow village men visiting the red-light area.

**Table - 18 : Family Dependence on Respondent**

Sr. No.	Family Dependence	Frequency	Percent
1	Dependent	17	15.9
2	Not Dependent	90	84.1
Total		107	100

Many a times, women are compelled to accept flesh trade not only to support their own selves but also to support their family members - aged parents, ailing husband or younger siblings.

Amongst the respondents of the present study, about 16% were such whose families were fully dependent on their income. From the rest of the respondents, some frequently supplemented their family income in times of need e.g. to buy food grains, paying school fee or paying for the treatment of sick family members. However, these were occasional assistance offered by the respondents but not on regular basis.

**Table - 19 : Family Dependence and Self Esteem**

Sr. No.	Dependence of Family	<u>Self Esteem Level</u>		Total	Percent
		Low	High		
1	Yes	03 (2.8)	14 (13.1)	17	15.9
2	No	49 (45.8)	41 (38.3)	90	84.1
Total		52 (48.6%)	55 (51.4%)	107	100

The above table shows the association between self esteem level of respondents and dependence of family members on respondents' income. Out of the 15.9% of respondents who were the main earning members of their families, 13.1% i.e. a big majority showed high level of self esteem. Conversely, out of the

84.1% of respondents who did not support their families and used their earning for their own use only, majority i.e. 45.8% them showed lower level of self esteem.

The possible explanation of this finding is that those who had accepted sex trade to support their family viz. aged parents, ailing husband or younger siblings had a concrete justification to their having accepted flesh trade. The fact that without their economic support, their families could not have survived, boosted up their selfworth. It glorified their sacrifice. But for those, who had accepted flesh trade to support their own self and none others there was no feeling of sacrifice or pride which could justify their ‘immoral’ source of earning and hence possibly majority showed relatively lower level of self esteem. It thus, supports the hypothesis “Higher the family dependency on sex worker, higher her self esteem”.

**Table - 20 : Respondents’ Visiting Their Families**

Sr. No.	Whether visited Families	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	45	42.1
2	No	62	57.9
Total		107	100

Whether respondents had kept alive their contacts with their family members or not matters a lot in deciding their social acceptance among their own people. Psychologically also, having some contacts with their past lives and social surroundings may provide them a breathing space whenever they feel depressed or

suffocated in their routine life. As shown in the above table, though majority of them did not make personal visits to their families, a significant number of respondents i.e. 42.1% - said they did visit their hometown to meet their parents, siblings or children.

**Table - 21 : Frequency of Visits to Family**

Sr. No.	Frequency of Visits	Frequency	Percent
1	Regularly	17	15.9
2	Sometimes	28	26.2
3	Rarely	20	18.6
4	Never	42	39.3
Total		107	100

It was interesting to note that about 16% of respondents visited their families frequently i.e. at least once in twelve months. More than one fourth of them said they pay occasional visits to their hometown but the frequency of visits was irregular, usually less than once a year. Rest of them said they hardly or never visited their families after having accepted flesh trade.

Almost all those respondents who visited their families regularly were those whose families were dependent on them. It is obvious that since respondents provided livelihood for the families, they were well accepted in their families.



**Table - 22 : Family Contacts Through Correspondence**

Sr. No.	Contacts through Correspondence	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	16	15
2	No	91	85
Total		107	100

Whether respondents maintained contacts with their families through correspondence was responded negatively by a high majority of 85%. According to the respondents, they did not want to reveal their place of stay to their family members as their family members might turn up unexpectedly at any time. Many of the respondents had hidden their real occupation by saying that they worked in factories or as house maids. They feared that their whereabouts could easily be traced back if they wrote to home and hence avoided writing letters at home. Even those whose families were aware of their occupation preferred to keep their families from visiting them in the red-light area as it was 'a dirty place' and hence preferred to keep contacts through personal visits to their hometowns rather than disclosing their exact address to their families.

**Table - 23 : Visits By Family Members**

Sr. No.	Visits by Family Members	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	09	8.4
2	No	98	91.6
Total		107	100

The above table supports the finding of previous two tables. Less than 10% of respondents were visited by their family members. More than 91 percent respondents were never visited by their family members either because they had no live contact with the respondents or because respondents had not revealed their whereabouts to their families. Those who were visited by their relations were mostly the persons escorting the children of respondents living in their respective home towns or coming with a request for money in times of emergency.

**Table - 24 : Respondent's Participation in Family Functions**

Sr. No.	Whether Participates	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	10	9.3
2	No	97	90.7
Total		107	100

One's status and acceptance in the family can be determined by whether his/her presence is considered essential in any social or religious functions like marriages etc. celebrated by that family. The above table shows that less than 10% of respondents were invited to and participated in such family functions. A high majority of respondents were deprived of such opportunities either because they had no contacts with their families or were not informed about such events. In other words, they were deprived of the opportunities to socialise and enjoy such celebrations which even the poor most house wives cherish.



**8. Young Sexworker Mother with Her Child**  
(Source : Mehta 1990)

### **Children of Respondents :**

In a writ petition by Gaurav Jain presented before the Supreme Court of India, Justice K. Ramaswamy and Justice Wadhwa, through an order constituting a binding precedent, held that “to rescue and rehabilitate the children of the fallen women living in the red-light area, the Minister of Welfare, Government of India will constitute a committee consisting of the secretary in charge of department of Women and Child Development as the chair person, to make an in-depth study in to their problems and evolve such suitable schemes as are appropriate” (9.7.1997).

One of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee set up by a Court order dated 2.5.1990 was to remove child prostitutes and children of prostitutes from red-light area by broadening the interpretation of definition ‘Neglected Juvenile’ under the J.J. Act, 1986. It also suggested using three ‘C’s - counselling, cajoling and coercion - of fallen women to part with their child.

The ‘state programme of action for the child in Gujarat’ published by the government of Gujarat, 1994 states, “Regarding the children of prostitutes and child prostitutes no systematic and comprehensive assessment of the problem has been made so far” (Mehta, 1998).

The plan of action for implementing the world declaration on the survival, protection and development of children in 1990 contains special provision for

children in especially difficult circumstances - which includes child workers or youth trapped in the bondage of prostitution and sexual abuse.

Describing the plight of children in red-light area, Patkar (1991) writes, "Born with the stigma of being illegitimate, these children seem to be always shunned by the society. They grow almost on the streets, exposed to every possible vice and in an environment which comprises pimps, brothel keepers, corrupt petty policeman, procurers, boot leggers, alcoholics, drug peddlers, drug addicts, shady customers - all of whom go to make their normal environment, which to an outsider is most non-conducive for a child to grow".

The children in the red-light area under the present study were no exception to this.

Before presenting the quantitative data, researcher would like to mention a few glimpses of what she saw and observed during her visits to the red-light area of Surat. In her earlier visits for the present study, researcher was happy to note that an Ahmedabad based NGO (GAP) had initiated some work with the children in the area. As learnt from informal sources, most child beneficiaries of the NGO run service programme belonged to normal families i.e. other than sex workers in the locality. Response from sex workers to this effort was poor possibly because of a rumour that once their children are identified as sex workers' children, they would be forced to give away their custody to the state.

Few months later, the NGO suspended its work but an 'Aanganwadi' was started under the I.C.D.S. scheme by Surat Municipal Corporation. The child beneficiaries were a mixed group of children of normal and sex worker mothers. The Aanganwadi worker - an elderly lady seemed to have good acceptance among sex workers. She not only introduced the researcher to the sex worker mothers but also helped researcher in approaching the senior brothel keepers of the area. Citing the typical example of an ignorant and neglecting sex worker mother, she showed a child - about five years old, who suffered from a serious burn injury on his thighs. According to the Aanganwadi worker, for several days, the mother simply neglected the child - it was only after worker's insistence that the mother took him to a medical practitioner and got him treated !

A similar non-caring attitude of a sex worker was noted by the researcher during her data collection. When she came to the researcher for interview, she was accompanied by her two small children. The children's nose was constantly running and they had absolutely no clothes on. While talking to the researcher, the lady very casually lifted two used bottles of cold drinks lying around and poured whatever little was left over in the bottles in to younger child's mouth ! That was morning time when the Aanganwadi was working. The researcher asked her if the child was hungry and she had no money to buy him milk or food, why did not she

send him to aanganwadi so that the child can get atleast free snacks there. The researcher also asked her if she did not have enough clothes for the child and whether that was the reason for not sending him to the balwadi. The mother plainly refused and said that she did have clothes for the child but the boy ran out of home and she did not feel that making him wear clothes or sending him to balwadi was necessary. That is the way he was used to roam around while she was at work. Later, it was learnt that the child was an offspring of her unhappy relationship with her husband and perhaps she was displacing her anger and frustration on her husband on to the child.

Researcher also came across positive experiences where a Nepali sex worker very proudly shared that she had kept a 'tuition-master' to teach English to her girl child. She was determined to send her daughter to a good English medium residential school and the coaching was specially to prepare her daughter for the entrance interview ! Similarly one respondent had specially rented a room in a place outside the red-light area as she did not want her child to suffer from the ill effects of 'immoral and dirty environment and get him labelled as a "whore's child".

The quantitative data gathered by the researcher is as follows:

**Table-25:Distribution of Respondents according to Number of Living Children**

Sr. No.	No. of child	Frequency	Percent
1	0	76	71.1
2	1	19	17.8
3	2	07	6.5
4	3	04	3.7
5	4	00	0.0
6	5	01	0.9
Total		107	100

Out of 107 respondents, 31 respondents had living children. Many respondents expressed their desire to have children. Total number of children, as reported by these respondents was 50. There were seven respondents who said that they had conceived but could / did not give birth because of miscarriage, abortion or still birth.

**Table - 26 : Break-up of the number of children according to their sex.**

Sr. No.	Sex	Frequency	Percent
1	Male	26	52.0
2	Female	24	48.0
Total		50	100

Out of the total fifty children born to 31 respondents, 26 were male children and 24 were female children.



**Table - 27 : Distribution of Respondents according to whether their children were immunised or not**

Sr. No.	Whether children immunised	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	28	26.2
2	No	03	2.7
3	N.A	76	71.1
Total		107	100

Prioritywise, health issues top the list in the process of child care. Timely immunization of children ensures their protection against known diseases. It was heartening to note that out of 31 respondents 28 said that they had got the immunization done. 3 respondents, however, said that they were not aware about the importance of immunization and hence did not do it. The 28 respondents who got their children immunized included some who had delivered their child not in a clinic but at home with the help of traditional 'dais'. It shows that the information and awareness regarding immunization programme is wide spread even in remote rural areas. As far as the small kids living with the respondents were concerned, even the aanganwadi worker had played a major role in making sex worker mothers aware about the need for immunization.

**Table - 28 : Education of Respondents' Children**

Sr. No.	Children's Current Education	Frequency	Percent
1	School	13	12.1
2	College	05	04.7
3	N.A.	89	83.2
Total		107	100

As the table shows, 13 respondent's children studied in school at present either in Surat or in their hometowns. Five respondents sent their children for college education. All the children going for higher education did so at respondent's hometowns. In otherwords, children of respondents who were living away from them and of respondents who enjoyed family support could progress better in education. The respondents in the third (N.A.) category included three types of respondents viz. respondents who did not have children, respondents who had children of very small (non school going) age and respondents who had children of school going age but respondents were not sending them to school.

**Table -29 : Distribution of Respondents according to their Children's place of stay**

Sr. No.	Children stay with	Frequency	Percent
1	Respondents	14	13.1
2	Respondent's parents/family	14	13.1
3	Others	03	2.8
4	N.A.	76	71.0
Total		107	100

About 13.1% of respondent's children stayed with the respondents and an equal number kept their children with their parents or relations at their hometown. Three respondents had managed to make alternative arrangement for their children

e.g. giving the children away for foster care to a trusted friend or putting the child in an 'aashram-shala' i.e. residential school, requesting a neighbour to baby sit etc.

It was obvious that the children who stayed with respondents in or around the red-light area constituted the most vulnerable group and deserved special care and attention.

**Table - 30 : Children's Stay During Respondent's Work Hours**

Sr. No.	Children's Stay	Frequency	Percent
1	Loiter on streets	04	3.7
2	At school / with baby-sitter	05	4.7
3	In brothel	08	7.5
4	In home town	14	13.1
5	Not Applicable	76	71.0
Total		107	100

As seen in the previous table 14 respondent's children lived with them in the red-light area and three others had made temporary arrangement like keeping their child with a neighbour or a foster parent. In all, 17 respondent's children lived in Surat with them. Except for the respondents who sent their children to school or left them with baby sitters, other's children loitered on street outside or stayed in brothel while respondents attended their customers. It must be noted that the working hours for the red-light area under study were during day time. It is obvious that children were wide awake when the business was on. Even the school going children witnessed what went on there during nonschool hours or

during vacation. Researcher could observe several teenage boys in the brothel houses and many more kids around. Use of filthy language and bad words was noted quite often. It was also observed that teenage school going boys were conscious of their surroundings and felt quite uncomfortable and even angry at the presence of an 'outsider' (i.e. researcher) perhaps because outsiders made them conscious of their 'inferior' status.

Little older children were seen running errands for their mothers, other sex workers in the brothel or for the brothel keeper - e.g. fetching tea, 'thanda' i.e. cold drinks/soda and eatables from outside etc. Some children were seen taking care of their younger siblings or other small kids in the brothel.

Researcher also tried to inquire whether children knew and understood about their mother's profession and also how they felt about it. The respondents shared that little older i.e. teenage children very well understood the nature of their work and accepted that as a part of their life. At the same time, they also were aware that their's was not a 'normal' life and that they were not a part of the mainstream of society. Respondents also said that children in their own ways expressed displeasure about their place of stay, lack of recreation facilities, food and clothing. Younger kids, however, were unable to notice or understand their deprivations and hence looked more in tune with the realities of their life.

**Table - 31: Respondents' Perception about people's Attitude towards their Children**

Sr. No.	Attitude	Self		Colleagues		Gharwali		Customers		Pimps	
		Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%
1	Positive	75	70.1	75	70.1	26	24.3	14	13.1	10	9.3
2	Negative	32	29.9	32	29.9	81	75.7	93	86.9	97	90.7
Total		107	(100)	107	(100)	107	(100)	107	(100)	107	(100)

Having children around (or even at their hometown) meant a great emotional support to the respondents. In spite of increasing their liability, they showed their emotional bond with the children and all their hopes and emotional security were anchored to their children. For respondents not having children of their own, too, presence of children of other inmates broke the monotony of their routine life. children's innocent and selfless relationship was perhaps their only exposure to the positive side of life.

For others i.e. for the brothel keepers and pimps children just meant additional economic burden and for customers children were either non existent entities or ones creating disturbance in their paid enjoyment.

The above table very clearly shows respondent's readings about different people's attitude towards their children. More than 70% of respondents said that they and their colleagues had a positive attitude towards children whereas only 24.3% said that their gharawali's attitude was positive. Around 13% of them said

that customers had a positive attitude towards their children and only 9.3% of them felt that ‘dalals’ or pimps showed positive attitude towards respondent’s children.

It was equally important to know what kind of treatment respondent’s children received from persons who were not a part of the flesh trade network. Their outer social environment consisted of neighbourhood families, school or balwadi teachers, their classmates, peer group from normal families and worker of play centre.

**Table - 32 : Respondent’s Perception About ‘Significant Others’ Treatment to their Children**

Sr. No.	Others		<u>Treatment</u>			Total
			Accepted	Indifferent	Rejected	
1	Neighbourhood (%)	F %	66 (61.7)	34 (31.8)	7 (6.5)	107 = 100
2	School/Balwadi teachers (%)	F %	81 (75.7)	18 (16.8)	8 (7.5)	107 = 100
3	Classmates (%)	F %	69 (64.5)	30 (28.0)	8 (7.5)	107 = 100
4	Peers (%)	F %	75 (70.1)	16 (15.0)	16 (15.0)	107 = 100
5	Govt./NGO (%)	F %	83 (77.6)	08 (7.5)	16 (15.0)	107 = 100

The attitude of significant others towards respondent’s children is important from several angles. Firstly, the impact of childhood or primary socialization

moulds the personality of a child. If the child is treated well by others, he is likely to develop healthy personality. Negative attitude of society, on the other hand is likely to foster unhealthy personality traits. Secondly, the attitude of people around matters a lot in determining the scope of rehabilitation of both - the respondents and their children. It is obvious that better acceptance among community people would facilitate the process of rehabilitation and reintegration of respondent's and their children in to the mainstream of the society.

The above table shows significant other's treatment to the children as perceived by the respondents. The first category consisted of neighbourhood or community people other than those in flesh trade. More than 60% of respondents said that their neighbours accepted their children and allowed them to mingle with neighbours' own children. Around one third of respondents said neighbours showed indifference towards their children and only 6.5% of respondents felt that children of prostitutes were rejected by the neighbours.

As far as the school or balwadi teachers were concerned more than 75% felt that their attitude was positive, 16.8% felt that teachers showed indifference and 7.5% felt that their children were rejected by the teachers.

The children classmates attitude was found positive by 64.5% of respondents, indifferent by 28% of respondents and 7.5% respondents said that their children's classmates rejected them as they were children of 'bad mothers'.

Peers of respondents were found to be accepting them by 70% of respondents whereas equal number (15% each) of respondents felt that peers showed indifference or rejection towards their children.

The government and NGO functionaries mainly consisted of the health functionaries or volunteers of NGO. 77.6% of respondents felt that these functionaries showed acceptance, 7.5% of them felt they were indifferent to respondent's children whereas 15% of them felt that their children were neglected and rejected by the government / voluntary functionaries.

On the whole, the table shows a positive picture. Majority of 'significant others' showed acceptance for respondents children. Out of the five categories, school teachers, balwadi teachers, other government and NGO functionaries seemed to demonstrate positive behaviour towards respondents children which, in turn, can be interpreted as their concern for these children and their willingness to help them.

**Table - 33 : Respondents' willingness to Institutionalise their Children**

Sr. No.	Whether Willing	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	18	16.8
2	No	08	7.5
3	Partly willing	02	1.9
4	Not Applicable	79	73.8
Total		107	100



As stated in the beginning of this section, children of prostitutes, especially in the red-light area - are covered under the definition of 'neglected children' under the Juvenile Justice Act and the National Advisory Committee has clearly recommended to remove the children from the unhealthy social and moral environment - if need be, even by coercing the sex worker mothers to part with their children.

The researcher tried to know whether the respondents were ready to put their children in a residential school, hostel or an institution. The question did not apply to 73.8% respondents as either they had no children or the children were now adult and socially settled, or were too small. 16.8% of respondents agreed that their children needed better social environment and showed willingness to institutionalise their children. 7.5% of respondents flatly refused the possibility of parting with their children where as 2 out of 107 respondents showed partial willingness by putting forward some conditions e.g. the institution should be in the same city where they lived or they should be allowed to meet their children as and when they wanted.

It is felt that respondents' fear that their children would be snatched away by government agencies need to be handled with due care and sensitivity. Respondents need to be convinced that their children's better future is ultimately

for their own benefit and as mothers, they can be given sufficient voice while deciding the rehabilitation plans for their children.

Having seen the individual demographic and social factors about the respondents, the next chapter describes the work life related factors of respondents' life.