

Study on  
STIGMA Status among Sex workers & Survivors of Human Trafficking Study  
In the status of Andhra Pradesh

2022



Study Conducted by:



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## STIGMA Status among Sex workers & Survivors of Human Trafficking Study

Study conducted by: HELP & VIMUKTHI

Study time: SEP & OCT 2022

Study covered Districts: 3 ( Bapatla, Palnadu, Guntur & NTR districts)

Study covered population: 172 (Bapatla- 31, Palnadu-15 , Guntur – 39, NTR dist – 87)

### Objective

Explore, understand and document experiences of stigma amongst Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Survivors of Human Trafficking.

### Methodology:

One-to-one In-depth interview with the survivors and sex workers using a structured questionnaire

### Major findings from the study

1. 88% survivors and sex workers are facing stigma. The members had mentioned about mostly 3 types of Stigma

A. “ As because we are in sex trade we can’t get ration cards”

“ There are no policies to support alternative livelihoods”

Institutional stigma, is more systemic, involving policies of government and private organizations that intentionally or unintentionally limit opportunities for survivors and sex workers.

B. “Community members speaks behind the back, always judge the survivors and sex workers.”

Public stigma involves the negative or discriminatory attitudes that others have about survivors and sex workers.

C. “ When the relatives blame I feel I am responsible for everything’, “often I feel aloof and responsible for my condition”

Self-stigma refers to the negative attitudes, including internalized shame, that people have about their own condition.

2. The major sources of stigma are immediate family members (parents and partners (37%)and Relatives (16%) and neighbours (27%)

3. 63% survivors and sexworkers don’t receive any support from family when they experience stigma

4. **The most unsupportive family members are parents and brothers.**
5. **When the participants face stigma they receive maximum support from friends and peers.**
  - a. A space to share and accepted unconditionally
  - b. Peers understands the hardship – the financial and emotional struggles
6. **Cooperation and trust of family members and support of peers are the 2 most desired expectations of the participants to combat stigma.**

#### **How do they feel when they get stigma?**

- 25% Feel Sad
- 11% Helpless
- 11% Survivors feel hate for self
- 9% Survivors feel blamed/guilty
- 8% Survivors feel Angry
- 8% Survivors overlook/ignore Stigma
- 7% Survivors are experiencing Suicidal tendency
- 6% Survivors feel excluded
- 6% Survivors, feel irritation
- 4 % Survivors, feel Vulnerable
- 3 % Survivors expressed other various issues like pain, etc
- 2 % Survivors, feel shame

#### **4 major supports the survivors are looking forward to combat stigma**

1. More awareness about sex work - Awareness about sex work and the difficulties faced by the sex workers
2. Financial support-More financial services to start alternative livelihood, then the person can start the life of her own choice. No other things are mentioned it seems incomplete.
3. Mental health care support- The participants sometime feels severely distressed and alone, they used to have suicidal thoughts, they need support to take care of their mental health
4. Acceptance from community-Understanding and accepting the sex workers as a part of the community

#### **Suggestions of the participant**

Responses of the survivors on the themes to be focused to design a programme to eliminate stigma

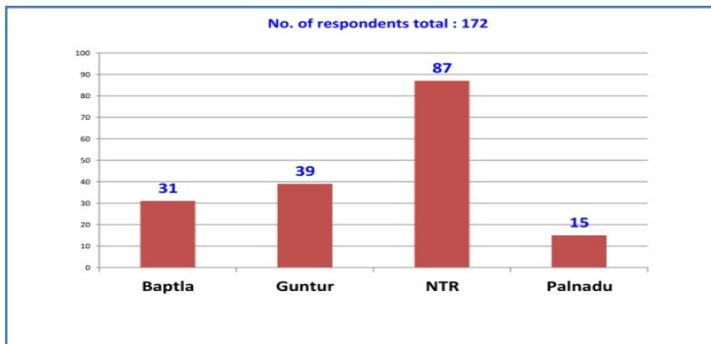
- 35% designing policies to ensure equal rights for survivors of trafficking & Sex workers
- 27% increasing accountability of the Govt Stake holders
- 19% more financial services to start alternative livelihoods
- 8% sensitizing the Community members and building Awareness
- 8% access to mental health care services
- 3% Training of Govt stakeholders to be Trauma informed

1. The leaders emphasize a lot on Govt. level changes and have a belief that a top down approach can bring positive change. Designing and implementing policies to ensure equal rights, accountability of the Govt. duty bearers on non-discriminative approach.
2. The leaders have a strong belief that when they will be able to find alternative sustainable livelihood it will bring positive changes to combat stigma.

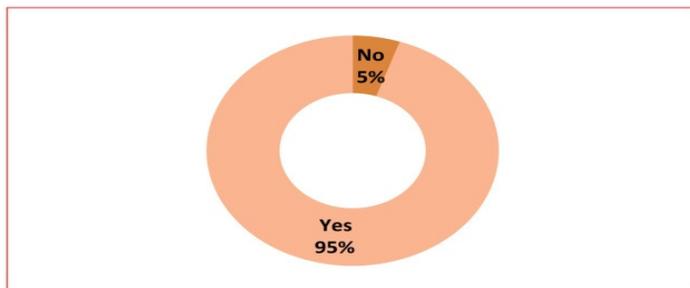
### The way forward decided by vimukthi members

1. VIMUKTHI Members have decided to take back the research findings to the research participants.
2. The members have decided to build collaterals in telegu to speak about mental health and stigma.
3. The members have also decided that they are going to share the study findings with some important state level duty bearers
4. The VIMUKTI MEMEBERS HAVE ALSO DECIDED TO SHARE THIS STUDY FINDINGS WITH ILFAT TEAM, THEIR LEARNINGS AND EXPERIENCES.

### District wise Data collection



### Do you know what stigma is?



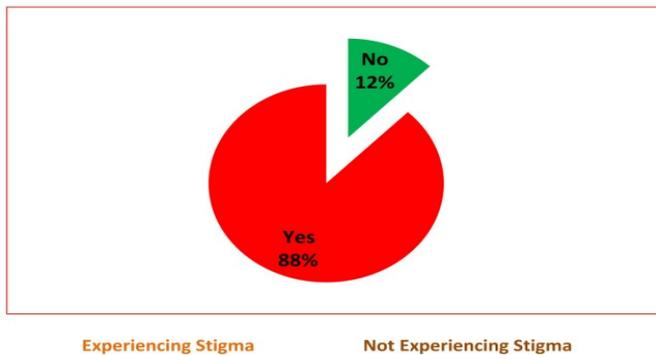
## Do you know what stigma ?

--“Stigma”or “Kalankam” as stated by the Survivors is the kind of blemish/spot, given by the people who are to some extent powerful,

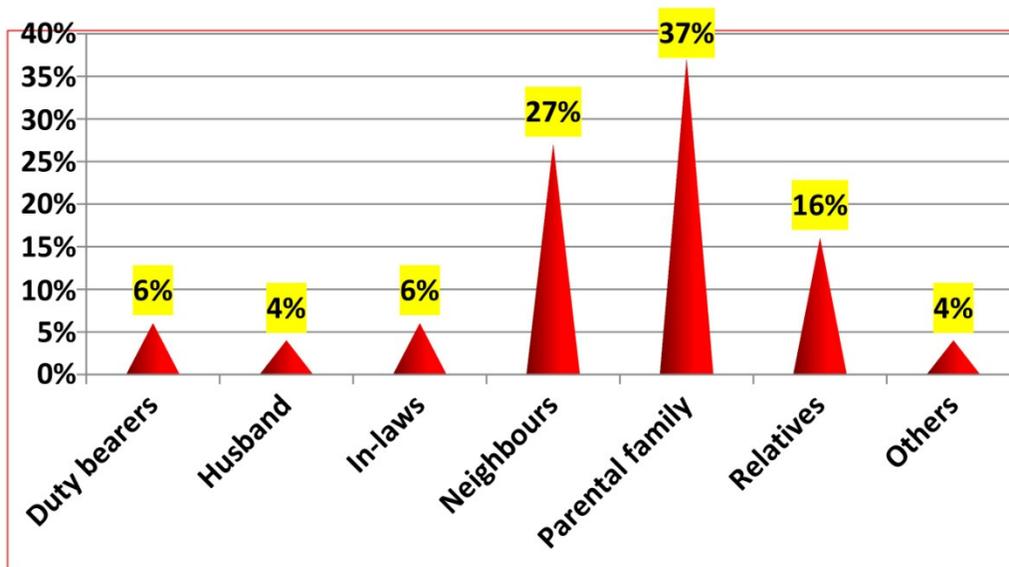
who are their kin and also by the outsiders, include neighbours, other people of their villages, Duty Bearers. They become completely broken, harassed at the time of facing stigma from different sources as stated below.

1. 163 survivors out of 172 says they know about the stigma

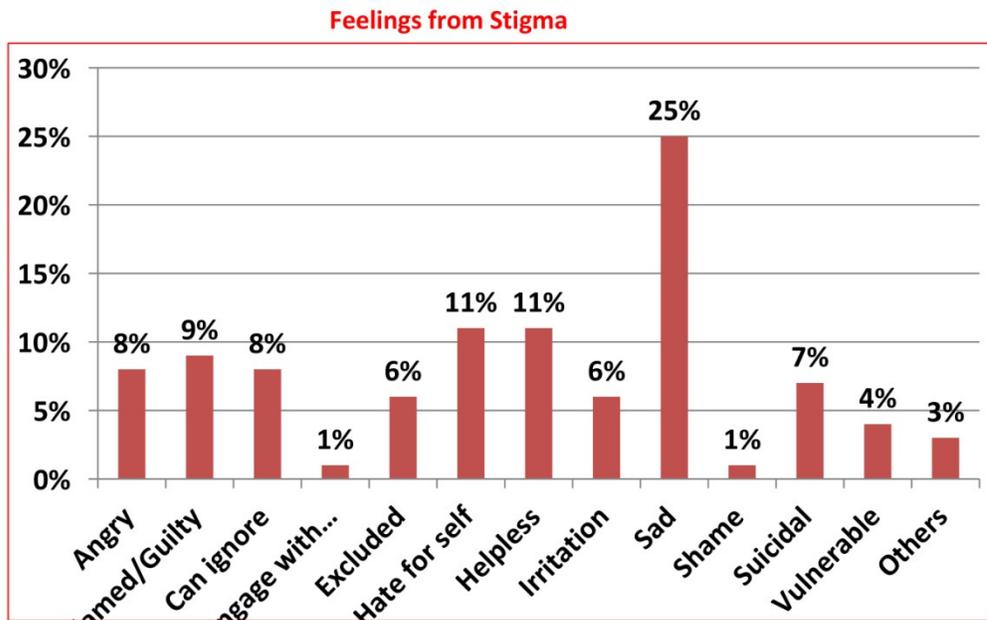
## Do you face stigma ?



## Sources of stigma? Because of whom



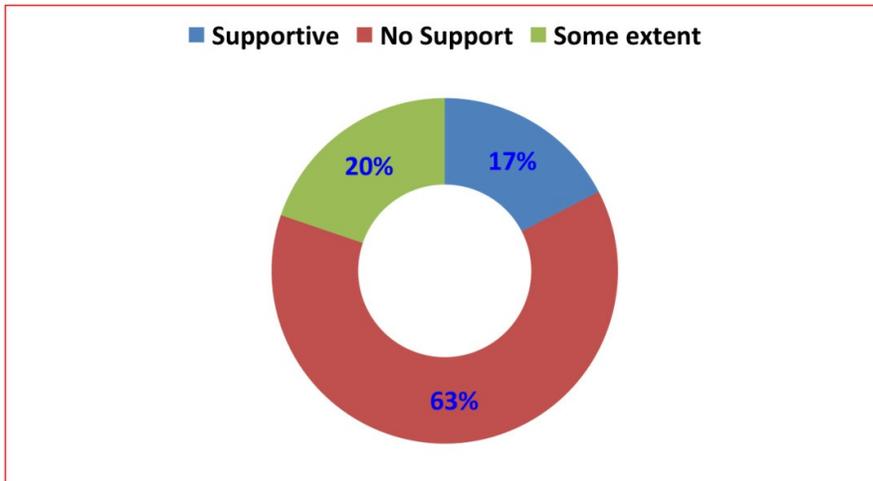
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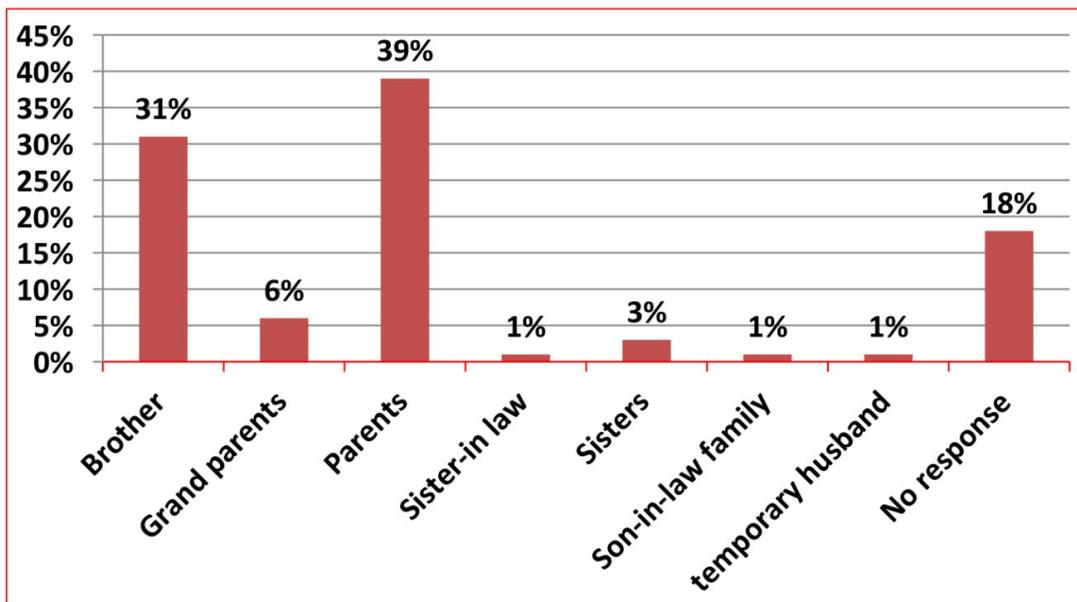
## When you get stigma from different sources, what is the stance of your family?



**When you get stigma from different sources, what is the stance of your family?**

1. 108 Survivors said Parental families team up and stigmatise
2. 30 Survivors said received supported from Parental family team
3. 34 Survivors said some extent (partly) some times parental family members supported and some times keep silent

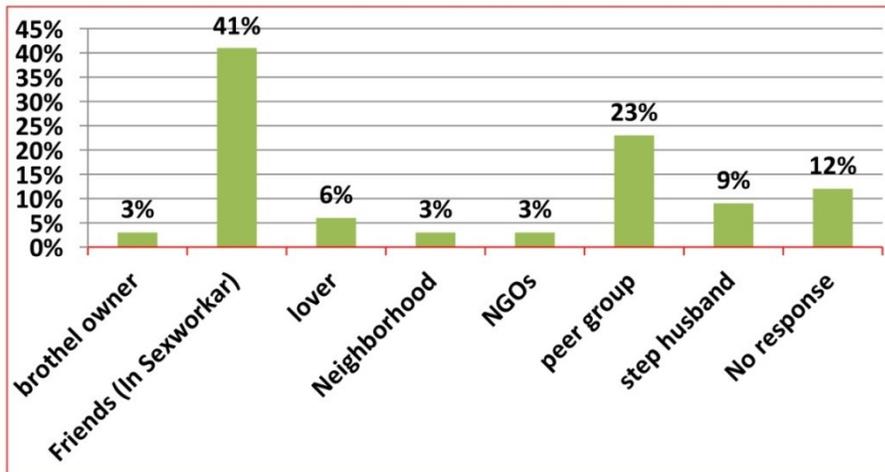
**When you get stigma from different sources, which members do not support you in your family?**



## When you get stigma from different sources, which members do not support you in your family?

1. 39% Survivors said parental families team up and stigmatise
2. 31% Survivors said Brothers stigmatise
3. 18% Survivors said we have no family ... long back our families have abandoned us. Now we don't have a family system and no relations with us... we are living alone.
4. 6% Survivors said, Grand Parents stand by them when relatives stigmatise
5. 3% Survivors reported Family members as being silent when they are stigmatised by Sisters
6. 1% Survivors are empathized with by husband but not supported during stigma experience
7. 1% Survivors said Son- In-laws team up and stigmatise
8. 1% Survivors said sister - In-laws team up and stigmatise

## Who is support to you other than family

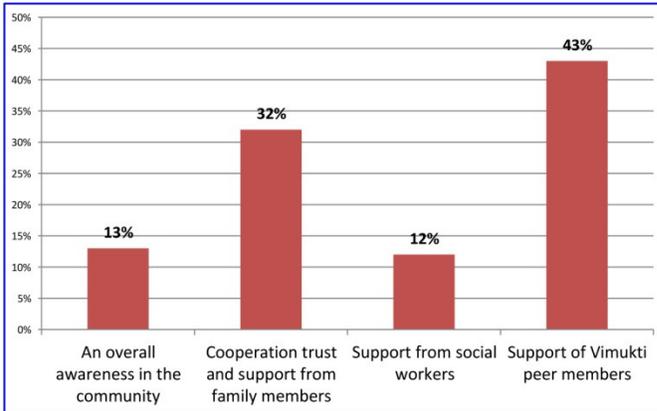


## Who is support to you other than family

1. 41% Survivors said our Friends supported us when we were stigmatized
2. 23% Survivors expressed that their Peer (who are in sex-work) group have supported during we faced stigma
3. 12% survivors stated that no body were there to support them
4. 9% Survivors said their Temporary Husbands have supported them
5. 6% Survivors expressed that their Lovers supported them
6. 3% Survivors told that their Neighbors' have supported when they are facing stigma

7. 3% Survivors revealed that Local NGOs who are working with them have supported them while they faced stigma
8. 3% survivors stated that their Brothel Owners have supported them when they are facing stigma

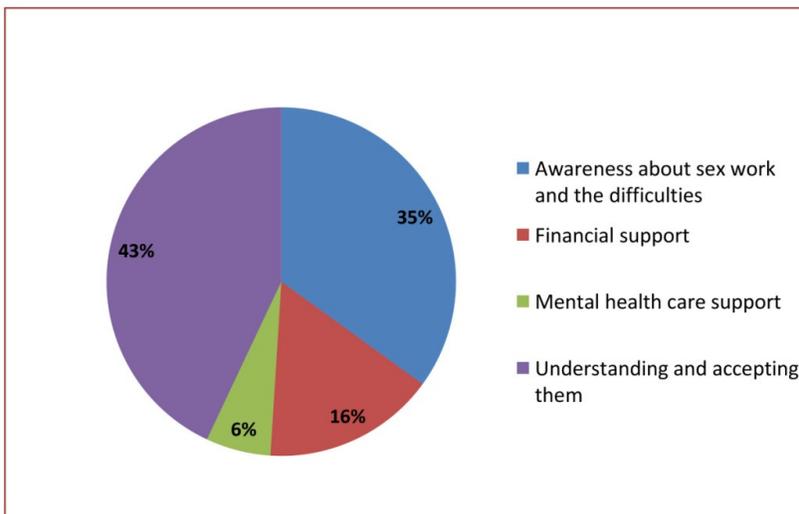
### What are expectations at this situation



### What are your expectations at this situation?

1. **43%** survivors have expected support from VIMUKTHI peer members
2. **32%** Survivors expected Cooperation, trust, and support from family members
3. **12%** wanted support from their Social Workers to do meetings to sensitise their families
4. **13% are** in want of support for overall awareness in the community for understanding Trafficking and issues of survivors/sex workers and stop stigmatizing.

### What are the support do you want from the people around you?



## 4 major supports the survivors are looking forward to combat stigma



1. More awareness about sex work  
- Awareness about sex work and the difficulties faced by the sex workers

2. Financial support-More financial services to start alternative livelihood, then the person can start the life of her own choice. No other things are mentioned it seems incomplete.

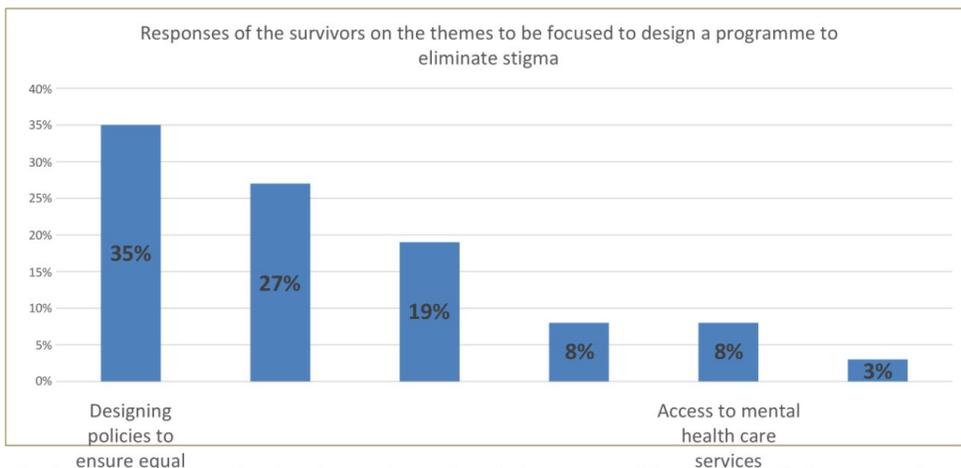


3. Mental health care support- The participants sometime feels severely distressed and alone, they used to have suicidal thoughts, they need support to take care of their mental health

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## Suggestions of the participants



1. The leaders emphasis a lot on Govt. level changes and have a belief that a top down approach can bring positive change. Designing and implementing policies to ensure equal rights, accountability of the Govt. duty bearers on non discriminative approach.
2. The leaders have a strong belief that when they will be able to find alternative sustainable livelihood it will bring positive changes to combat stigma.

### **Experience of Vimukthi members as co researchers**

1. The Vimukti members felt lots of resonance with the experience of survivors. They felt the narrations and experiences of the participants are same as theirs.
2. The vimukti members felt triggered when the participants shared their experiences of trauma and stigma. Some of them felt numb and lack of words also during the conversations.
3. The members has experienced a lot of empathy among themselves while interacting with the participants. They have extended support to the research participants to share their experiences. They have connected the emotions with their lived experiences.
4. Vimukthi members have also shared their interest and energy in doing community surveys and have requested for pictorial questionnaires so that they can do this work more effectively.

### **The way forward decided by Vimukthi**

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