



## Emotional Experience of Women Post-Rescue From Sex Trafficking in India

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### Abstract

Sex trafficking is a form of slavery, and it is a human right issue that keeps going despite being illegal. Since it persists, there is a need to look into it to understand the impact of the same on the female survivors. The present study aims to explore survivors' experiences before and during sex trafficking and to comprehend the emotional experiences of survivors post-rescue from sex trafficking. The participants were ten sex trafficking survivors, ages 18 to 24 years old. A phenomenological approach was used. The researcher utilized thematic analysis to identify themes within the data collected. Findings revealed that the main factors that contributed to the entrance of the participants in sex trafficking were poverty and broken family. The experience of life during sex trafficking was marked by rape and torture. Participants described life as unhappy, hard and as hell. The emotional experiences are mainly psychological distress such as feeling angry and sad because of the past. Survivors have feelings of guilt and fear. Lack of understanding is predominating in all participants. Survivors' experiences are not all negative. With rescue, they have got a better life. The positive emotions are happiness, faith in God, hope, new identity and value. They experience happiness because the new life is good. They have faith in God and have hope for a better future.

**Keywords:** Sex trafficking; Emotional experiences; Survivor; Sexual slavery.



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### 1. Introduction

Sex Trafficking is commercial sexual exploitation in which the victims are betrayed, coerced, kidnapped, for commercial gain (Jones, 2014). "Girls who should be in middle school are being sold, starved, locked up, and raped dozens of times per day. Being sold to a brothel in India is a death sentence: only one percent of sex slaves escape or get rescued" (Knisely, 2014). Unfortunately, the majority of the girls die in brothels where they are forced to work. Most of them, either commit suicide because they cannot bear the situation any longer, or become victims of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) due to the unprotected sexual encounter with clients, or are even murdered by the pimps if they disobey orders (Knisely, 2014).

Once trafficked, the victims become helpless (Ray, 2015). Traffickers or clients rape the victims many times a day, and they are vulnerable to psychological and physical abuse from the pimps and clients (Batstone, 2010). If they are to receive profits, it is a little amount, making it impossible for them to provide for their basic needs. All the money made out of prostitution goes to those involved in the crime (Jones, 2014).

#### 1.1. Sex Trafficking Has an Impact on the Individual and the Country

Sex trafficking is destroying many girls and young women (Schultz, 2012). To start with, when a woman is abducted and sold into the sex trade, if she resists performing a sexual act, her captor has her spirit broken (Rajan, 2013; Ray, 2015). Different forms used in forcing the victims to give into prostitution are rape, gang-rapes, isolation, starvation, solitary confinement, threatening the family members, violence to name a few (Rape crisis center response to victims of prostitution and trafficking, 2007; Ray, 2015).

Sinha (2012), reported that in the last ten years, India had lost three million girls children. The number of women in the country has already overtaken the numbers of men. From 2004 to 2006, India had only 882 girls per 1,000 boys. In this matter, India is losing only to China.

Moreover, the sex ratio in India is becoming worse day by day. The estimation is that India has around 930,000 missing girls each year (Prasad and Ramesh, 2007). The cause of it is that India gives more preference to male children, and this has led to female infanticide. This aspect of Indian culture, which does not give importance to females and children, make them unsafe, and therefore, vulnerable to sex trafficking (Ray, 2015).

Sex trafficking has a long-lasting impact on the survivors, leaving a lifelong scar (Yung, 2017). Those trapped in sexual slavery are deprived of their freedom and are subject to physical abuse, sexual exploitation and torture (Reed, 2015). They know a life much worse than death. They are like objects in the hands of those who control and exploit them and in the hands of those that purchase their sexual services (Jones, 2014). It impacts the family members and society that is left behind. Family members cry for their lost girls, and they have to live wondering how their beloved children are, and if they are safe or not, but they cannot even imagine what those girls undergo in their life in sexual slavery.

Da Silva *et al.* (2019), reported that the suffering of a sex-trafficked woman does not end after being rescued. Survivors feel alienated from society, and they need understanding, acceptance, and respect from people around them Da Silva *et al.* (2019). They feel they are in danger, and they need safety and protection (Bruijn, 2017; Da Silva *et al.*, 2019).

## 1.2. Effects of Sex Trafficking and Steps to Prevention

As stated by Gupta (2012), "sex trafficking is a billion dollar industry in India that is aided and abetted by entrenched attitudes of patriarchy, gender discrimination, and a lax legal system... girls as young as nine years old are raped by eight to ten men every night". In India, women are a subclass, and education for a girl is necessary to prevent sexually transmitted disease and child marriage (Brysk and Maskey, 2012). When girls gain an education, it makes their quality of life better. Because of lack of education, girls face "sexual, emotional and physical abuse" (Jadhav, 2014). In a few words, education for girls and women empower them, and therefore, they will be less vulnerable to sex trafficking.

According to (Matusek, 2016), "the lack of law enforcement and government intervention, along with complicity, has allowed sex trafficking to flourish." The government has to recognize sex trafficking as an undesirable activity and in turn; devise plans to protect the vulnerable population. The primary factors, which help the sex trafficking industry to grow, are gender inequality, cultural and socioeconomic factors (Brysk and Maskey, 2012; Matusek, 2016; Ray, 2015).

The theory of demand and supply can be applied to sex trafficking as well because girls and young women have been forced into prostitution because there is a demand (Hughes, 2006). The 'suppliers,' think that all sorts of efforts should be made, such as violence, abduction, treachery, kidnapping, and so on, to fulfill the demand (Mahat, 2011; Ray, 2015). Girls and women that belong to low-income families are at higher risk because traffickers lure them or their families with false promises (Deane, 2010; Mahat, 2011). Here, the root of the problem is not the criminal act only, but also, the clients are cold-blooded and pay to use innocent young women and small girls for the satisfaction of their sexual urges (Reed, 2015). To sell human being is a crime, and those who exploit innocent girls to satisfy their sexual urges are not considered criminals. The clients create demand. If there were no demand, there would be no need for supply (Hughes, 2006).

## 1.3. Rationale/Significance of the Study

There is a need of research not only to understand sex trafficking and its causes but also to know how the victims feel, how distressed they are emotionally, and how to help survivor to come out of the traumatic experience they went through. They will never forget the past, but they deserve a chance to look to the future full of hope and expectations.

## 1.4. Research Question

Sex trafficking is a horrific crime in the present days, where small girls as young as nine years old are commercialized into prostitution (Gupta, 2012). Their childhood is lost, and they go through endless nights of abuse and pain.

1. What are the emotional experiences of women post-rescue?

## 1.5. Aim and Specific Objectives

The current study aims to explore survivors' experiences before and during sex trafficking and to understand their emotional experiences post-rescue. The specific objectives are,

1. To explore survivors' experiences of life before sex trafficking
2. To explore survivors' experiences of life during sex trafficking
3. To comprehend the emotional experiences of women post-rescue

## 1.6. Method

The present study used qualitative data acquired through in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants rescued one to five years ago, and have been sex-tracked for at least one year.

### 1.6.1. Phenomenological Approach

This research study utilized a phenomenological approach, which emphasizes the study of the structures of consciousness and experiences (Patton, 2015). This approach aims to comprehend the experiences lived by women on post-rescue stage and the meanings these experiences have for them.

### 1.6.2. Operational Definitions

#### 1.6.2.1. Sex Trafficking

It is commercial sexual exploitation in which the victims are betrayed, coerced, kidnapped, for commercial gain (Jones, 2014).

### 1.6.2.2. Emotional Experience

It is a unique personal phenomenon (Buck, 2010). It refers to the feelings experienced by survivors post-rescue from the sex trade.

### 1.6.3. Participants

This study included ten participants, age between 18 to 24 years old. They are all emerging adults who have been sex-trafficked for at least one year and rescued between one to five years ago.

### 1.6.4. Data Collection Process

For the selection process of participants, the researcher used the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28). The scale consists of four domains that were used to assess "somatic symptoms, anxiety/insomnia, social dysfunction, and severe depression" (Goldberg, 1978). Two participants have shown symptoms of depression and other psychological disorder. The researcher psycho-educated them and then referred them to psychiatric treatment, and they have not participated in the present study.

The researcher made a telephone call to the directors of the aftercare homes briefing about the study and seeking permission to collect the data. The data were collected from each participant individually in a room with the door closed, making the participants feel comfortable in sharing their experiences unperturbed by others. The researcher explained the consent form to the participants, and then, they were asked to sign it. The investigator intended to use a voice recorder to facilitate the process so that the participants could get full attention, but the participants felt uncomfortable to record verbatim. Therefore, the researcher took interviews verbatim.

### 1.6.5. Trustworthiness and Validity

The researcher conducted the interviews after making rapport with each of the participants. The researcher also wrote down verbatim accurately and carefully to get all the information without missing out any detail. The researcher also used self-reflection examining her assumptions and preconceptions, and how these could affect the research decisions. Furthermore, the researcher maintained a diary with her thoughts, reflections, and introspections, and also met the research supervisor regularly for reflections, and inputs were taken to improve the validity. Participants were allowed to give their inputs on the findings through the member check procedure. Lastly, the researcher discussed themes with peers, and feedback was taken.

### 1.6.6. Ethical Consideration

This study has got an institutional review board (IRB) approval by Christ (Deemed to be University). The study was on women post-rescue from sex trafficking, and therefore, the researcher has taken caution because of the physical and psychological harm associated with sex trafficking. The World Health Organization (WHO) released 'Ten Guiding Principles' for interviewing sex-trafficked women (Zimmerman and Watts, 2003). The researcher had all these guiding principles in her mind during each interview.

### 1.6.7. Demographic Information

The current study included data from ten participants who are sex trafficking survivors. Seven of them were from Nagpur, Maharashtra, and three were from Bengaluru, Karnataka, and spoke English as a second language. The interviews took place in the state of Karnataka, and Maharashtra between June 2018 and July 2018. All the participants were involved in the sex trafficking industry before the age of 18 years. Traffickers had forced seven participants into prostitution in a red-light area, two participants in a city brothel and one participant on streets under a pimp's supervision and control.

## 1.7. Analysis and Findings

The specific objectives were, to explore survivors' experiences of life before sex trafficking, to explore survivors' experiences of life during sex trafficking, and to comprehend the emotional experiences of survivors post-rescue from sex trafficking.

## 2. Early Experiences

According to the study findings by Yung (2017), sex trafficking survivors suffered trauma before the experience of being sex-trafficked. In this study, all the participants reported that they had a difficult life before entering sex trafficking.

### 2.1. Vulnerability

According to Matusek (2016), poverty contributes to the vulnerability of women because sex traffickers lure poor women with false promises of employment.

#### 2.1.1. Poverty

Women and girls from low-income families are at risk of being trafficked because traffickers target this vulnerable population (Deane, 2010). In the present study, all the participants lived in poverty before experiencing sex trafficking. It is evident in the following verbatim.

Because of poverty, I had one clothing, in that, I wear. When it was torn, then get another one. One clothes always. No shoes or chappals in my feet. Nothing, nothing. We were very poor. So, one man said he would bring me here to Nagpur. That man only he brought me here. That man said his sister was there and I will get food. So I came. He sold me to this red-light area. I was very small like 12 years old. (P 8, personal communication, July 07, 2018)

Participant P 8 lived in poverty, and when a stranger promised her that he would take her to a place where she would get food, she accepted immediately and went away with him, and she became a sex slave.

### 2.1.2. Broken Family

Ray (2015), said that broken families were found to be one of the leading causes of vulnerability among sex trafficking survivors. Some of the participants in this study came from a broken family. It is apparent in the following excerpt from a survivor. "My mother died when I was nine. My father set her on fire, and he left with another woman" (P 1, personal communication, June 04, 2018).

### 2.1.3. Difficult Childhood

Most of the participants in this study had a difficult childhood. Life was hard as they struggled to have their basic needs met. One of the participants saw her father putting kerosene on her mother and setting her on fire. Another participant said she was sexually abused with the consent of her mother. All those factors made the participants feel that childhood was difficult and therefore, contributed to their vulnerability. Given below are a few excerpts from survivors. "Life was hard. We are poor. No much food" (P 5, personal communication, July 05, 2018). "I was also abused many times. Hard childhood because of all this abuse and all" (P 9, personal communication, July 24, 2018).

### 2.1.4. Sexual Abuse

Matusek (2016), said that gender-based violence in India serves as a kind of psychological abuse and physical/sexual violence against the female. One of the participants in this study was living in an environment where prostitution happened, and she was sexually abused as a child. It has significantly contributed to her vulnerability to sex trafficking because the people, who should have protected her, were exploiting her instead. Given below is an excerpt from a survivor. "She (mother) did the dirty job to support us, and I was also abused many times" (P 9, personal communication, July 24, 2018).

### 2.1.5. Deceived by Family Members

In a study by Rajan (2013), parents, older siblings, or members of their extended families initiated women's subsequent sale to traffickers. Family members deceived most of the participants in the current study initiating their entrance into the sex trade. Because of the financial difficulties the family was facing, some parents have sent their daughters away with traffickers knowing what was going to happen to them. Given below are a few excerpts from survivors. "Family circumstances... no money. So I became a sex slave when I was 16. My family put me in there because of money" (P 7, personal communication, July 06, 2018). "Father talked to mom, I was going to work. He put me into this. I knew later what I had to do" (P 6, personal communication, July 06, 2018).

### 2.1.6. Deceived by Strangers

Ray (2015), reported that women running away from home because of family violence or gender discrimination ended up being sex-trafficked by strangers who have approached them offering help. Strangers who offered help with food and employment deceived some of the participants in this study. Given below is an excerpt from a survivor. "A strange man deceived me. I trusted him, and he betrayed me. I thought he was good" (P 10, personal communication, July 24, 2018).

## 3. The Hard Life

Ray (2015), stated that sex-trafficked women experience violence daily. Violence starts from the time traffickers abduct the women, and it continues throughout the trafficking experience.

### 3.1. Physical Self

When a woman resists sex work, different methods of violence begin such as beaten, kept hungry, slapping, burning with cigarettes, being tied to a bed or pole for many days and kept isolated until they surrender (Ray, 2015).

#### 3.1.1. Sleeplessness

Levine (2017), found that some of the mental health problems victims of sex trafficking suffer are feelings of hopelessness and poor sleep. Participants reported that as they were forced to work throughout the night, they could not get good sleep at night. During the day the women were allowed to sleep, but because they had some chores in the place where they lived, they only had a few sleeping hours daily. It is clear is the following excerpt from a survivor. "We had to do sex with many men and they didn't allow us to sleep. We didn't get good sleep because of that" (P 1, personal communication, June 04, 2018).

### 3.1.2. Scarceness of Food

Perez (2016), found that some sex-trafficked girls are skinny. In this study, some of the participants said that, though they had long working hours daily, they faced scarceness of food. They also reported that girls are locked up without food or only having a small portion of food daily. It is clear in the following excerpts from survivors. "I didn't want to do this. They locked me... beat me... No food gave me. I had no choice. They are bad people" (P 5, personal communication, July 05, 2018). "I can't describe it. It was very bad. Till now they have small girls locked in small rooms like I was with no food or very little food" (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018).

### 3.1.3. Secluded life

According to Karandikar *et al.* (2016), survivors during sex trafficking do not have contact with anyone from society. Participants in the current study said that they were not allowed to have contact with anyone outside the brothel where they were forced to work. It is clear in the following excerpt from a survivor. "I can't describe it. It was very bad. Till now they have small girls locked in small rooms like I was, not going outside" (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018).

## 3.2. Psychological Self

According to Ray (2015), different kind of violence is utilized to initiate girls and women into the sex trade and to gain control throughout the sex trafficking situation. Violence takes sexual, physical, and psychological form. They are kept hungry, and traffickers threaten to murder them or harm their family members.

### 3.2.1. An Unhappy Life

Beuerlein (2014), reported that severe abuse, related to trauma severity, was found to predict a decrease in life satisfaction. The experience of life during sex trafficking, as described by the participants, was a miserable life marked by beating, torture, and betrayal. Some of the participants have reported that life was as bad as hell and not worthy of living. Given below is an excerpt from a survivor. "I lived that life. I can tell how painful, horrible and bad that was. I don't want to go to that place again. I don't want" (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018).

### 3.2.2. Betrayal

Sex trafficking victims suffer from endless nights of hopelessness, betrayal, and fear. They suffer in the hand of pimps and also in the hands of clients (George, 2012). In this study also, participants reported been betrayed and put into sexual exploitation, and betrayal continued throughout sex trafficking experience. Given below is an excerpt from a survivor. "I was betrayed many times by people, and I cannot describe it. It was awful" (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018).

### 3.2.3. Hopelessness

Egger (2017), stated that Sex-trafficked survivors exhibit psychological issues that decrease individual resilience and hope. Participants reported that although life in the sex industry was terrible, they had no hope to come out of that situation because they were locked up during the day and forced to stay with clients at night. They were kept continuously under guard, making it impossible to escape. If women try to escape and taken back, they will face the consequences where the criminals would employ different forms of torture on them. It is clear in the following excerpt from a survivor. "Life there was horrible, you know? They didn't allow us to go outside. I wanted to leave that place. But I didn't have hope to get out" (P 1, personal communication, June 06, 2018).

### 3.2.4. Powerlessness

Perez (2016), said that sex trafficking victims had internalized concept of objectification because, in sexual slavery, they had little or no control over their bodies. Victims were powerless in the hands of pimps and clients. It is clear in the following excerpt from a survivor. "A man was there waiting for me and when I came he, he tried to rape me. I fought and fought, kicked, screamed... He beat me badly and then raped me" (P 10, personal communication, July 24, 2018).

### 3.2.5. Rape

As reported by Ray (2015), rape starts when they abduct a woman or a girl. Traffickers themselves usually rape the victims and execute violence before the time they hand them over to brothel owners and pimps. As reported by the participants in this study, abuse and rape were part of their everyday life. Given below are a few excerpts from survivors. "Life in the red-light area was bad. When I came, I didn't know anything. I was raped and raped..." (P 8, personal communication, July 06, 2018). "Very much torture, beating, slapping face, rape... I was with clients every day. Even if I was sick I had to do the things" (P 7, personal communication, July 06, 2018).

### 3.2.6. Torture

In a study by Reed (2015), sex trafficking survivors described perpetrators, pimps, and traffickers as evil and masters of terror and torture. In this study, participant P 2 felt that she had a painful life because of what she had to endure. It is evident in the following verbatim.



I lived that life. I can tell how painful, horrible, and bad that was. I don't want to go to that place again. I don't want. I went through so much pain in my life. Then in that area so many abuses, I went through. Like rape, beating, shouting... I went through, like that. (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018)

Participants reported that they faced torture if they refused to do what clients wanted. Some forms of torture were burning with cigarettes, electric shock to name a few. They had no choice but to comply with what she was asked to do.

### 3.2.7. Set Free

Pandey *et al.* (2013), stated that rescuing sex-trafficked women via raid might not be an effective strategy because the women are reunited to their families and therefore re-exposed to the same danger that has contributed to their trafficking experience. In this study, most of the participants were rescued by NGOs and some with the police intervention. It is clear in the following excerpt from a survivor. "The police came. It was a police raid. They took us to the police station, and then they put me in a Catholic home" (P 1, personal communication, June 06, 2018). A client rescued one of the participants and helped her to go to an NGO, which took care of her needs. She refers to the client as a good man. That is ironic because he was among the ones who create the demand for sex trafficking. It is clear in the following excerpt from the survivor. "A client, a good man rescued me from the brothel. The client and I ran away from the brothel (P 7, personal communication, July 06, 2018).

## 4. Feelings Post-Rescue

Emotional experience is a unique personal phenomenon (Buck, 2010). It refers to the feelings experienced by survivors post-rescue from sex trafficking. The two categories used to describe these feelings are positive feelings and negative feelings. It means that survivors are feeling much better after being rescued, but they have sequels of their past within them, and they are struggling to come out of the trauma they went through.

### 4.1. Negative Feelings

Yung (2017), reported that the trauma suffered during sex trafficking has a lasting impact on survivors afterward. In the current study, all the participants reported that life got better after the rescue, but the experience of being sex-trafficked had an impact on them.

#### 4.1.1. Psychological Distress

Williams (2008), said that women on the post-trafficking stage have psychological and emotional reactions because of the impact of sexual exploitation on survivors' mental health. Participants in this study experience anger when remembering the past during sexual slavery. Because of the inability to express their feeling using words, crying brings some relief. The remembrance from the past makes them feel sad. Sadness is dominant in their emotions and feelings. Given below are some excerpts from survivors. "If I think much I cry, but I should not cry" (P 1, personal communication, June 06, 2018). "I have so much emotional pain in my heart" (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018).

#### 4.1.2. Fear

Hernandez (2014), reported that fear is a common feeling found in sex trafficking survivors. Participants have expressed their fear of falling into the hands of traffickers again. It is clear in the following excerpts from survivors. "I have very fear in my heart. Because of this, I thought my life is gone, like that. So, this is very challenging for me" (P 3, personal communication, July 03, 2018). "I feel protected at the NGO, but when I go outside, I have fear. The world is a dangerous place, especially for women" (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018).

#### 4.1.3. Guilt

Typically survivors have a feeling of guilt as a result of trauma (Hernandez, 2014). Survivors have feelings of guilt and shame because of what happened to them. It is clear in the following excerpt. "I'm still carrying my past, like that. I feel guilty because I belonged that life" (P 10, personal communication, July 24, 2018). Participants feel guilt because of what happened to them in the past. Even after the rescue, they are unable to put the past behind and live the new life.

#### 4.1.4. Isolation

Williams (2008), studied sex trafficking survivors and found that isolation and loneliness are some feelings that survivors experience. Participants in this study feel isolated and suffer in silence. It may be because, during the trafficking situation, traffickers isolated the victims from friends and families. It is clear in the following excerpt from a survivor. "I cannot express, like, cry in front of anyone. I cry alone. I will become silent. I am not going to tell. I will stay in a room. I will not tell" (P 4, personal communication, July 04, 2018).

#### 4.1.5. Lack of Understanding

Litam (2017), said that survivors mainly need support and understanding. In this study, all the participants expressed that in general, people do not understand them because of what happened to them in the past. They suffered a lot in the past, and they want 'understanding' from people. It is evident in the following excerpt from a

survivor. "Sometimes I felt bad, but God! It is a big struggle, and we are human beings. People don't understand me because of background" (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018).

#### 4.1.6. Shame

Eldridge (2017), said that shame is one of the barriers to live a normal life when leaving sex trafficking. Participants reported that their lives got better after the rescue, but they are ashamed because of the past. It is clear in the following excerpt. "I was with clients every day. Even if I was sick I had to do things. I am happy now, but ashamed because of that" (P 7, personal communication, July 03, 2018). All the participants reported that they conceal their past to avoid shame and rejection because they feel people will not understand them and what they have endured.

#### 4.1.7. Trust Issue

Litam (2017), reported that sex trafficking survivors have difficulty in trusting people again. In the present study, all the participants shared a common opinion that they do not, and cannot trust anyone. It may be because they were betrayed many times, and often by people who should have protected them. Given below are some excerpts from survivors. "So many time, my trust was broken. So I started trusting only in God" (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018). "I don't express my feelings. I keep it to myself only. Sometimes, when I am sad I cry. I do not trust anybody" (P 9, personal communication, July 24, 2018).

#### 4.1.8. Unacceptance

Sex trafficking survivors are likely to face humiliation and rejection by their communities and family members that repudiate their moral (Simkhada, 2008). Participant P 7 feels unaccepted because of her past. It is clear in the following verbatim.

When I compare my life before in the red-light area, and now, now it's better. I got my life back. I belong to this background and when people know they aren't accepting us. They see us as dirty girls, you know? Sometimes I feel sad because of the past, but I'm happy now. (P 7, personal communication, July 06, 2018)

Participants are very conscious of their past and think that people see them as dirty women. As per the above verbatim, even though she is rescued and got her life back, she cannot change the fact that she was a sex worker, and in consequence, this makes her feel unaccepted.

### 4.2. Positive Feelings

Although negative feelings are dominant in all participants, they also experience positive feelings.

#### 4.2.1. Happiness

Jones (2014), conducted a study on sex trafficking survivors, and the findings revealed that the new life for a survivor is mostly positive compared to the old life in sexual slavery. All the participants in this study reported that life got better after the rescue. Given below are some excerpts from survivors on how they are happy with the new life. "Most of the day I feel happy. I am lucky. I am free" (P 1, personal communication, June 04, 2018). "Happiness has come because I am in a better place now. For us, the new life is good, but the past is sad" (P 4, personal communication, July 04, 2018).

#### 4.2.2. Faith in God

McCarthy (2017), studied factors to consider when helping sex trafficking survivors, and spirituality was found to be essential as it brings hope, provide a nurturing, supportive, and helpful community for the survivors. In this study, almost all of the participants mentioned God during the interview. It is evident in the following verbatim.

Before I did not know God and this is the big thing. It is like a big challenge for me. Whenever I feel sad I can go to Him, to God. I can talk to Him, like that. And if I am sad, He knows my pain. He knows everything. (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018)

God became an essential part of the life of the participants. They have confidence in God and feel that God understands them well. Some of the participants said that, what they do not feel comfortable in sharing with people, they would do with God because they know God will understand them.

#### 4.2.3. Hope

According to Egger (2017), sex-trafficked survivors exhibit psychological issues that decrease hope. After being rescued, participants feel that they can accomplish something in life. They have a dream to get educated, get a job, and live life with dignity. With the rescue came hope for a better future, and they are eager to explore the new life that they have got as free individuals. Given below are some excerpts from survivors on hope. "I am getting an education and help from this NGO. So I have hope for the future" (P 3, personal communication, July 03, 2018). "My future will be good. I have faith things will be fine" (P 1, personal communication, June 04, 2018).

#### 4.2.4. Identity

According to Dahal *et al.* (2015), the creation of a new identity for survivors, other than a sex trafficking survivor is of great importance for successful reintegration. In this study, almost all the participants feel they have got Identity after the rescue. It is evident in the following verbatim.

If I go in front of people, they are not going to say I belong to, like this background. I got an identity, like that. Everyone knows my name. Also, they know I have a quality, you know? Wherever I go, I am a blessed child and I can do everything, like that. So many things changed in my life. Now I feel like I got an identity. Best thing I got Identity. (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018)

During sex trafficking situation, the victims were objects in the hands of those who exploited them. Participants are grateful for the new life, which gave them a new identity. It makes them feel happy and self-fulfilled as individuals.

#### **4.2.5. Value**

Tan (2012), reported that sex trafficking survivors believe that they have lost their value. In this study, participants feel they have value and can accomplish something in life. They believe they are good people who are worthy of good things. It is evident in the following excerpt from a survivor. "When I came here I found that I could do many things. I have value. Like people value me" (P 2, personal communication, July 03, 2018).

### **4.3. Negative Case Analysis**

#### **4.3.1. A Desire to Forget the Past**

A participant expressed a sincere desire to forget the past because the memories are too painful for her to bear. She wants to move on with the new life but is unable to do it. While all the other participants said they lie about their past in order to be accepted by others, this particular participant struggles trying to forget what had happened to her. Lying about her past is not essential; she wants to forget everything about her life in sexual slavery. It is evident in the following excerpt from the survivor. "I need to forget the past and live my life. I want to forget what happened to me. Why did these things happen to me?" (P 1, personal communication, June 04, 2018).

## **5. Summary and Conclusion**

### **5.1. Major Findings**

According to participants, the main factors that contributed to their entrance in sex trafficking were poverty and broken family. Participants reported having a difficult childhood because of poverty and even sexual abuse and rejection.

Rape and torture were part of their everyday life. Participants described life during sex trafficking as unhappy, hard, and as hell. Participants also reported that they had less food every day, and because of the working hours, they could not get good sleep. They wanted to leave that life but had no hope because contact with the outside world was limited and controlled by pimps and brothel owners.

The emotional experiences of survivors are mainly psychological distress, such as feeling angry and sad because of the past. Survivors also have feelings of guilt and fear. Lack of understanding is predominating in all of them. They do not feel accepted by their family members, community, and society at large. Almost all the participants reported concealing their past to fit into society. Survivors' experiences are not all negative. With rescue, they have got a better life. The positive emotions are happiness, faith in God, hope, new Identity, and value. They are happy because the new life is good. They have faith in God and have hope for a better future.

### **5.2. Limitations of the Study**

One limitation was the researcher's inability to communicate in Hindi. Having this limitation in mind, only participants who spoke English as a second language participated in this study. Additionally, the researcher was someone from another culture, and this may have influenced the participants' response.

### **5.3. Implications of this Study**

Findings from this study offer an opportunity for comprehension and growth in the development of mental interventions for this population. Additionally, it helps any individual to have a better understanding of survivors' emotional experiences.

### **5.4. Scope for Future Research**

It would be interesting to examine the attitudes held by family members towards the sex trafficking survivors.

### **5.5. Conclusion**

The emotional experiences are mainly psychological distress such as feeling angry and sad because of the past. Survivors have feelings of guilt and fear. Lack of understanding is predominating in all participants. Survivors' experiences are not all negative. With rescue, they have got a better life. The positive emotions are happiness, faith in God, hope, new identity and value. They experience happiness because a new life is good. They have faith in God and have hope for a better future.

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