

**"THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL NORMS ON HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS'
VIEWS ON FEMALE SEX WORKERS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY, IN
KARNATAKA"**

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Abstract

This exploratory study investigates the influence of cultural norms on higher education students' perceptions on female sex workers (FSWs) in Karnataka, India. Rooted in a context where societal values and cultural beliefs significantly shape attitudes towards marginalized groups, the research seeks to understand the interaction between these norms and students' views. Utilizing a descriptive research design, data was collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with undergraduate and postgraduate students across urban and rural educational institutions.

The findings reveal a spectrum of attitudes, ranging from empathy and support for FSWs' rights to deeply ingrained stigmas perpetuated by cultural narratives. Variations in perceptions based on gender, socio-economic background, and exposure to awareness initiatives are explored. The study underscores the critical role of education in challenging stereotypes and fostering an inclusive perspective.

By highlighting the socio-cultural factors that influence young adults' views, this research provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and social organizations to design targeted interventions that promote awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage informed discussions on the rights and dignity of FSWs.

Keywords: Female Sex Workers (FSWs), Higher Education Students, Social Stigma, Perceptions, Stigma and Awareness.

Introduction

The interplay between cultural norms and societal attitudes has long shaped public perceptions of marginalized groups, including female sex workers (FSWs). Despite their integral presence in social frameworks, FSWs often face stigma and discrimination, which perpetuate cycles of social exclusion. These perceptions are deeply rooted in cultural norms, moral judgments,(Ma & Loke, 2019) and gendered power dynamics. In regions like Karnataka, India, where traditional values and modern ideals coexist,(Panchanadeswaran et al., 2010) understanding how cultural norms influence attitudes toward FSWs becomes particularly significant,(Ersan et al., 2012) especially among higher education students who represent the next generation of thought leaders.

Higher education institutions are spaces where young adults encounter diverse perspectives, challenge preconceived notions,(Sankar D et al., 2024) and develop critical thinking. The views formed during this transformative phase can have a lasting impact on societal attitudes and policies. Yet, the perceptions of higher education students in Karnataka regarding FSWs remain underexplored, leaving a gap in understanding how deeply ingrained cultural norms shape their beliefs and attitudes.(Ernst et al., 2021) This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the influence of cultural norms on these students' views toward FSWs.

Karnataka, with its rich cultural heritage and socio-economic diversity,(Brooks et al., 2023) offers a unique context for exploring these dynamics. The state is home to various communities with distinct cultural norms that often dictate attitudes toward issues of morality, gender, and sexuality. While the legal framework in India provides limited recognition to sex work,(Ochako et al., 2018) societal attitudes remain predominantly negative, influenced by traditional values and religious doctrines. These cultural underpinnings frequently manifest in the form of stigma, perpetuating marginalization(Ryan, 2019)and impeding FSWs' access to basic rights and services.

At the same time, globalization, urbanization, and education have introduced modern ideologies and progressive values, (Nimble & Chinnasamy, 2020)particularly in urban centers and among the educated youth. This duality of tradition and modernity raises questions about how higher education students in Karnataka reconcile cultural norms with contemporary perspectives on

human rights,(Nimble & Chinnasamy, 2020) gender equality, and social justice. Their attitudes toward FSWs could reflect broader societal trends or indicate emerging shifts in thinking.

This study adopts an exploratory approach(De Jesus Moura et al., 2023) to examine how cultural norms influence the perceptions of higher education students in Karnataka toward FSWs. By focusing on this group, the study aims to uncover the factors that shape their views, including the role of family, education, peer influence, and exposure to media. Understanding these influences is critical for fostering empathy and reducing stigma, which are essential for promoting social inclusion and equitable treatment for FSWs.

The findings of this research have implications not only for academia but also for policy-making and advocacy(Almeida et al., 2016). Insights into students' attitudes can inform educational interventions, sensitization programs, and community engagement initiatives aimed at challenging stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive society. Additionally, the study contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of culture, gender, and sexuality, offering a nuanced perspective on how cultural norms influence societal attitudes in the Indian context.

In conclusion, by exploring the influence of cultural norms on the views of higher education students in Karnataka regarding FSWs, this study seeks to highlight the complexities of societal attitudes and contribute to the ongoing efforts toward social inclusion and human rights advocacy.

Rationale of the Study

The perceptions and attitudes toward female sex workers (FSWs) are intensely entrenched in cultural, moral, and socio-economic contexts. These perceptions often lead to stigma, discrimination, and marginalization, which hold back the rights and well-being of FSWs. In the Indian context, and chiefly in Karnataka, cultural norms appreciably shape community and person attitudes toward marginalized groups, including FSWs. Understanding how these norms influence the views of higher education students is essential, as this demographic represent a dangerous segment of society poised to shape future social narratives, policies, and advocacy efforts.

Higher education students live in a unique position in society. They are at a transitional phase of life, where exposure to new ideas and critical thinking challenges traditional beliefs and fosters the potential for attitudinal change. Their perceptions of marginalized groups, including FSWs,

are not only deep of broader societal values but also indicative of emerging trends that can shape public dialogue and policy. However, limited research has focused on understanding how cultural norms sway this group's views on FSWs. This study addresses that gap, providing insights into the socio-cultural underpinnings of these perceptions.

In Karnataka, cultural norms are varied and often dichotomous. On one hand, customary values rooted in religion, family, and community strongly influence attitudes toward gender roles and morality. On the other hand, modern education, urbanization, and globalization are introducing progressive values that emphasize human rights, gender equality, and social justice. Higher education institutions are at the crossroads of these traditional and modern influences, making them perfect settings to explore the impact of cultural norms on students' perceptions.

The rationale for this study is grounded in several critical considerations:

- **Addressing Social Stigma and Marginalization:** FSWs often face multiple layers of stigma due to their profession, which is socially and morally fated in many communities. Understanding the roots of such stigma among cultured youth can help identify strategies to challenge and change these attitudes.
- **Empowering Future Change-Makers:** Higher education students are potential leaders, policymakers, and influencers. Shaping their attitudes toward marginalized groups society through evidence-based interventions can lead to long-term societal change.
- **Fostering Inclusive Education:** Educational institutions play a crucial role in fostering inclusivity and empathy. Insights from this study can inform the design of sensitization programs, workshops, and curricula aimed at addressing biases and promoting social justice.
- **Contributing to Policy and Advocacy:** The study's findings can inform policies aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination against FSWs. By understanding how cultural norms shape attitudes, policymakers can develop targeted interventions to promote human rights and social inclusion.
- **Filling Research Gaps:** While global literature on stigma toward FSWs exists, studies focusing on the influence of cultural norms on the perceptions of Indian youth, particularly in Karnataka, are scarce. This research contributes to a nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

In conclusion, this study is a critical step toward understanding the complex relationship between cultural norms and societal attitudes. By focusing on the views of higher education students, it aims to foster empathy, reduce stigma, and contribute to the broader goals of social justice and inclusion for FSWs in Karnataka.

Review of Literature

(Chen et al., 2022) A study published in the *Central European Journal of Public Health* explored the knowledge and awareness of human papillomavirus (HPV) among 239 brothel-based female sex workers (FSWs) in Turkey. Using face-to-face interviews, the research collected demographic and behavioral data, revealing that most participants were over 30 years old, had only primary education, and engaged in a high frequency of sexual contacts. Alarming, 75.7% of participants scored poorly on knowledge assessments, with only 23% having heard of HPV and even fewer understanding its association with cervical cancer or the significance of screening. The average awareness score was critically low, highlighting a widespread lack of understanding about HPV risks and preventive measures. The study concluded that limited awareness among FSWs reflects systemic deficiencies in sexual health education, as low education levels alone did not significantly predict knowledge scores. The authors call for targeted public health interventions, including educational campaigns for FSWs and young adults, to improve HPV awareness, promote vaccination, and encourage regular cervical cancer screening. These efforts are crucial to reducing the incidence of cervical cancer and addressing the health vulnerabilities of high-risk groups in Turkey. (Roberts et al., 2010) This study explores the involvement of UK university students in the sex industry, motivated largely by financial pressures due to rising higher education costs. A sample of 200 students from various universities was surveyed about their financial situations, psychological well-being, attitudes toward sex work, and participation in or use of sexual services. Results showed approximately 6% of respondents were active in the sex industry, engaging in activities like erotic dancing, stripping, or escorting. Both male and female students also reported purchasing sexual services. Notably, the study found minimal links between involvement in the sex industry and prior psychological adversity. It highlights the financial strain of higher education as a key driver of student participation in sex work, with significant implications for understanding this trend and

addressing its underlying causes. The research underscores the need for further investigation into the nuanced perceptions and contexts of such work among students. (Ma & Loke, 2019) This study investigates the knowledge, attitudes, and willingness of nursing students in Hong Kong to care for sex workers, focusing on comparisons between general and mental health nursing students. A 2019 cross-sectional survey of 317 undergraduate students revealed low overall knowledge about sex workers, with polarized attitudes. Positive attitudes and support for the human rights of sex workers were significantly linked to students' willingness to provide care. Final-year students displayed more positive attitudes than first-year students, and a perceived need for education about sex workers correlated with improved attitudes and care willingness. The study underscores the importance of integrating non-judgmental care for marginalized groups into nursing curricula. Despite its limited generalizability due to a single-university sample and potential selection bias, the findings emphasize the need for reform in nursing education to address health inequities and prepare students for equitable and compassionate care of diverse populations. (Haeger & Deil-Amen, 2010) This study explores the experiences of female college students working in the sex industry, focusing on their motivations, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Based on interviews with students employed in strip clubs or pornography, the research identifies financial benefits and flexible schedules as key motivators for choosing sex work. Participants downplayed the risks of violence, citing stigma and the resulting cognitive dissonance between their identities as students and sex workers as the primary challenges. To manage these difficulties, the women used coping strategies such as distancing themselves from industry norms, justifying their choices, emphasizing positive aspects of their lives, using substances for avoidance, or exiting the industry altogether. The study underscores the need for faculty and staff to provide support that helps student sex workers develop healthier coping strategies, access resources, and maintain their educational goals, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and understanding campus environment. (Roberts et al., 2010) This study examines student awareness, attitudes, and willingness to participate in the sex industry, based on a survey of 315 undergraduates at a London university. Results showed widespread awareness of student involvement in sex work, with many viewing it as a reasonable response to financial pressures. Financial necessity emerged as the primary motivator, with 16.5% of respondents indicating a willingness to engage in sex work to fund their education, and

11% specifically considering escort work. The study highlights the influence of student debt, the normalization of sexual consumption, and how supply routes into sex work increasingly involve individuals from more privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. A model analyzing willingness to engage in sex work explained over a quarter of the variance, emphasizing the significant impact of financial stress. These findings call for further exploration into the intersection of education funding, economic pressures, and the growing visibility of sex work among students.

Research Methodology

Objectives of the study

1. To Assess how cultural norms shape the views of Respondents about Female Sex Workers (FSWs)
2. To Explore how education can help reduce stigma and promote inclusive attitudes toward Female Sex Workers(FSWs)
3. To assess the prejudices related to sickness and sin held by respondents towards female sex workers.

This study employs a Mixed Approach, descriptive and Explorative Research Design was adopted, incorporating quantitative techniques to examine the influence of cultural norms on higher education students' perceptions on Female Sex Workers (FSWs). The research aims to describe existing perceptions and explore cultural, educational, and socio-economic factors shaping these attitudes. Geographically, the study focuses on educational institutions in Tumkur, targeting undergraduate and postgraduate students. A stratified random sampling technique is used to ensure representation across urban and rural contexts, genders, and socio-economic groups. Quantitative data will be collected from approximately 401 respondents using structured questionnaires, including demographic details, Likert-scale questions to assess stigma levels, and sections analyzing cultural norms and exposure to awareness initiatives.

Data analysis will utilize descriptive statistics to summarize demographic trends and general attitudes, providing a thorough understanding of the findings. Ethical considerations are paramount, with measures to obtain informed consent, maintain participant anonymity, and handle the sensitive topic of sex work with cultural respect and sensitivity. Acknowledged limitations include the potential for social desirability bias and the limited generalizability of

results beyond the Karnataka context. Despite these limitations, the methodology offers a robust framework for understanding the prevalence of attitudes and the cultural factors influencing them, delivering actionable insights to educators, policymakers, and social workers aiming to promote empathy and inclusivity toward FSWs.

Data Collection and interpretation

1. Age of the respondents

S L No	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1	Below 18	15	3.7%
2	18-21	149	37.2%
3	22-25	206	51.4%
4	Above 25	25	6.2%
Total		401	100%

The age distribution of respondents in the study reveals that a majority (51.4%) fall within the 22-25 age group, followed by 37.2% in the 18-21 age bracket. These two groups together account for 88.6% of the participants, highlighting that the study predominantly captures the perspectives of young adults in their late teens to mid-twenties. This demographic is significant as these individuals are at a crucial stage in higher education, where exposure to new ideas and critical thinking challenges traditional beliefs and shapes attitudes toward societal issues, including female sex workers (FSWs). A smaller proportion (3.7%) comprises respondents below 18, likely representing early entrants to higher education, while 6.2% are above 25, potentially advanced learners or individuals returning to education after a gap.

This age distribution underscores the study's focus on understanding the views of students in a transformative phase of their intellectual and social development. By including a diverse range of ages, the study captures a broad spectrum of perspectives, from younger students possibly influenced more strongly by family and community norms to older students who may bring additional life experiences and exposure to progressive ideologies. This demographic insight is crucial for analyzing how cultural norms influence perceptions of marginalized groups and provides a foundation for designing targeted educational and advocacy programs to promote awareness and empathy among this key segment of society.

2. Education Level of the Respondents

S L No	Education level	Frequency	Percentage
1	Post Graduate	305	76.1%
2	Undergraduate	95	23.7%
Total		401	100%

The table indicates that the majority of respondents (76.1%) are postgraduate students, while a smaller proportion (23.7%) are undergraduates. This distribution highlights that the study predominantly reflects the perceptions of students engaged in advanced academic pursuits. Postgraduate students, with their greater exposure to specialized knowledge, critical thinking, and diverse perspectives, are likely to offer more nuanced views on societal issues, including female sex workers (FSWs). Their educational background positions them as a vital demographic for exploring the influence of cultural norms on attitudes toward marginalized groups.

Undergraduate respondents, though fewer in number, contribute an essential perspective by representing those earlier in their academic journey. Their views may be more reflective of broader societal influences and less shaped by academic exposure compared to their postgraduate counterparts. This balance between educational levels provides a comprehensive understanding of how cultural norms influence perceptions across different stages of higher education, enriching the study's insights and enhancing its relevance for designing interventions to foster inclusivity and reduce stigma.

3. Gender of the Respondents

S L No	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	315	78.6%
2	Female	84	20.9%
3	Transgender	1	0.2%
Total		401	100%

The gender distribution of respondents indicates that a significant majority (78.6%) are male, followed by females at 20.9%, with a very small representation (0.2%) of transgender individuals. This imbalance reflects a predominantly male perspective in the study, which could influence the findings, especially on topics like female sex workers (FSWs), where gendered

attitudes and societal norms play a critical role. The relatively lower participation of females and transgender individuals highlights the need for increased representation in future studies to capture more diverse viewpoints.

Despite the limited representation of females and transgender respondents, their inclusion is crucial as it brings alternative perspectives shaped by distinct lived experiences and societal expectations. Female respondents may offer insights grounded in their understanding of gendered discrimination, while the transgender participant provides a unique viewpoint often overlooked in discussions about marginalized groups. This gender distribution offers valuable insights but underscores the importance of fostering gender inclusivity in research to ensure a more holistic understanding of cultural influences on perceptions.

4. Respondents' Belief That Cultural Norms Shape People's Perceptions of FSWs

S L No	Respondents believe that cultural norms shape people's perceptions of FSWs	Frequency	Percentage
1	Not at all	120	29.9%
2	Somewhat	120	29.9%
3	Mediatory	105	26.2%
4	Significantly	55	13.7%
Total		401	100%

The table reveals a diverse range of beliefs among respondents regarding the influence of cultural norms on perceptions of female sex workers (FSWs). A significant proportion of respondents (29.9%) believe that cultural norms do not shape perceptions at all, while an equal percentage (29.9%) view the influence as somewhat impactful. This highlights a divided opinion, with nearly 60% of respondents expressing skepticism or limited agreement about the role of cultural norms in shaping attitudes toward FSWs.

On the other hand, 26.2% of respondents believe cultural norms have a mediatory role, and 13.7% consider the influence significant. These groups acknowledge the critical role that cultural norms play in defining societal attitudes, reflecting an understanding of the deeper socio-cultural

dynamics that perpetuate stigma and bias. This distribution underscores the varied perspectives among higher education students, influenced by factors such as their educational background, personal experiences, and exposure to awareness programs. The findings point to the importance of targeted educational interventions to foster a deeper understanding of how cultural norms influence societal attitudes toward marginalized groups.

5. Respondents' Opinions on Whether Education Can Reduce Stigma Toward FSWs

S L No	Opinion of the respondents towards education can reduce stigma towards FSW	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly disagree	45	11.2%
2	Disagree	110	27.4%
3	Neutral	85	21.2%
4	Agree	140	34.9%
5	Strongly agree	20	5.0%
Total		401	100%

The table illustrates varied opinions among respondents regarding the role of education in reducing stigma toward female sex workers (FSWs). A notable portion (34.9%) agree that education can play a significant role in reducing stigma, while 5.0% strongly agree, collectively making up 39.9% of the respondents. This suggests that nearly two-fifths of the participants recognize education as a potential tool for challenging stereotypes and fostering inclusive attitudes.

Conversely, a combined 38.6% of respondents either disagree (27.4%) or strongly disagree (11.2%) with this notion, reflecting skepticism about the effectiveness of education in addressing deeply entrenched cultural biases. Additionally, 21.2% of respondents remain neutral, indicating uncertainty or a lack of strong opinions on the subject. These findings highlight the need for more awareness and sensitization initiatives within educational institutions to emphasize the transformative potential of education in combating stigma and promoting social justice for marginalized groups like FSWs.

6. Respondents' Opinions on Whether Education Can Reduce Stigma Toward FSWs

S L No	Opinion of the respondents towards education can reduce stigma towards FSW	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly disagree	20	5.0%
2	Disagree	40	10.0%
3	Neutral	110	27.4%
4	Agree	145	36.2%
5	Strongly agree	85	21.2%
Total		401	100%

The table indicates that a majority of respondents (57.4%) agree (36.2%) or strongly agree (21.2%) that education has the potential to reduce stigma toward female sex workers (FSWs). This suggests that more than half of the participants recognize education as a critical tool for fostering awareness, challenging stereotypes, and promoting empathy toward marginalized groups.

On the other hand, 15.0% of respondents either disagree (10.0%) or strongly disagree (5.0%) with this idea, reflecting skepticism about the impact of education in overcoming entrenched societal biases. Additionally, 27.4% of respondents are neutral, indicating a significant portion of participants who are uncertain or undecided about education's role in reducing stigma. These findings highlight the importance of integrating sensitization programs into educational curricula to further explore and address these varied perceptions, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and equitable societal outlook.

7. Educational Initiatives to Promote Inclusive Attitudes Toward FSWs

S L No	Educational Initiatives to Promote Inclusive Attitudes Toward FSWs	Frequency	Percentage
1	Awareness campaigning	127	31.7%
2	Inclusion Topic on Academic Curriculum	88	21.9%
3	Media based education	85	21.2%
4	Workshops and seminar	75	18.7%
5	Other	25	6.2%
Total		401	100%

The table highlights respondents' views on the types of educational initiatives that can foster inclusive attitudes toward female sex workers (FSWs). The most favored initiative is awareness campaigning, with 31.7% of respondents identifying it as the most impactful method. This preference indicates a belief in the power of direct community engagement and public awareness programs to challenge stigmas and promote understanding.

Other suggested initiatives include the inclusion of topics on FSWs in the academic curriculum (21.9%) and media-based education (21.2%), reflecting the value respondents place on formal and informal learning platforms. Workshops and seminars were supported by 18.7% of participants, underscoring their importance as interactive spaces for discussion and sensitization. A smaller proportion (6.2%) proposed other methods, suggesting some diversity in opinion. These findings suggest that a multifaceted approach combining awareness campaigns, academic integration, and media engagement can be effective in reducing stigma and fostering empathy toward FSWs.

8. Perceptions of Illnesses as Moral Failings or Sins in Cultural Context

S L No	Perceptions of Illnesses as Moral Failings or Sins in Cultural Context	Frequency	Percentage
1	Not at all	90	22.4%
2	Somewhat	95	23.7%
3	Mediatory	135	33.7%
4	Significantly	80	20.0%
Total		401	100%

The table reveals diverse opinions about the role of higher education institutions in fostering understanding and empathy toward female sex workers (FSWs). A significant proportion (33.7%) believes that these institutions should play a mediatory role, suggesting that many respondents see higher education as an important but not the sole avenue for addressing stigma and promoting awareness. Additionally, 20.0% of respondents advocate for a significant role, highlighting the importance of academia in driving social change and challenging stereotypes.

However, a combined 46.1% of respondents are either skeptical or neutral about the role of higher education institutions, with 22.4% believing they should not have any role at all and 23.7% suggesting only a limited contribution. These findings underscore the need to better communicate the potential of educational institutions as platforms for critical thinking,

inclusivity, and advocacy. Initiatives like sensitization workshops, curriculum integration, and community outreach can bridge this gap, empowering students to engage with marginalized groups and fostering a culture of empathy and understanding.

9. In your cultural context, how often are illnesses perceived as a result of moral failings or sins?

S L No	In your cultural context, how often are illnesses perceived as a result of moral failings or sins?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Always	16	4.0%
2	Never	61	15.2%
3	Often	40	10.0%
4	Rarely	70	17.5%
5	Sometime	213	53.1%
Total		401	100%

The table highlights diverse perceptions of illnesses being attributed to moral failings or sins within the cultural context. A majority (53.1%) of respondents believe this association occurs "sometimes," reflecting a conditional but significant influence of traditional beliefs. Meanwhile, 17.5% said "rarely," and 14.0% (combining "always" and "often") strongly associate illnesses with moral failings, indicating the persistence of deeply ingrained stigmas. On the other hand, 15.2% reject this belief entirely, showcasing a growing inclination toward rational or modern scientific perspectives, likely influenced by education and awareness.

These findings underscore a duality between traditional and modern worldviews, highlighting the need for nuanced approaches to address stigma. The conditional acceptance of this belief suggests an opportunity to reshape societal attitudes through education, dialogue, and awareness campaigns. As illnesses often parallel societal perceptions of marginalized groups like FSWs, understanding and challenging these cultural norms can foster empathy, reduce stigma, and promote inclusive and equitable attitudes.

10. Perceptions of Illnesses as Moral Failings or Sins in Cultural Context

S L No	Perceptions of Illnesses as Moral Failings or Sins in Cultural Context	Frequency	Percentage
1	Highly prevalent	43	10.7%
2	Moderately prevalent	117	29.2%

3	Not prevalent at all	85	21.2%
4	Somewhat prevalent	115	28.7%
Total		401	100%

The table indicates that cultural perceptions linking illnesses to moral failings or sins are prevalent to varying degrees. A majority of respondents (53.1%) believe that such associations occur sometimes, reflecting a moderate but significant influence of cultural or traditional beliefs in shaping these perceptions. Additionally, 17.5% of respondents think this perception is rare, and 10.0% believe it is often present, indicating that these views, while not dominant, are persistent in certain contexts.

On the other hand, 15.2% of respondents assert that illnesses are never linked to moral failings or sins, and a small fraction (4.0%) believe such perceptions are always present. These findings suggest that while progress has been made in promoting scientific understanding of health issues, cultural and religious narratives still influence how illnesses are perceived. This underscores the need for community education initiatives to reduce stigma and promote evidence-based health awareness.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant influence of cultural norms on higher education students' perceptions of female sex workers (FSWs) in Karnataka. It reveals that deeply ingrained societal beliefs often perpetuate stigma, marginalization, and discriminatory attitudes toward FSWs. However, the findings also underscore the potential of education to serve as a transformative tool in challenging stereotypes and fostering empathy.

The study emphasizes the role of higher education institutions in promoting inclusivity through awareness campaigns, curriculum integration, and sensitization programs. While many respondents acknowledge the importance of education in reducing stigma, a notable segment remains neutral or skeptical, indicating the need for more targeted interventions. By addressing these gaps and leveraging media, policy frameworks, and collaborative efforts, this research advocates for a more inclusive and equitable societal approach toward FSWs, contributing to the broader goals of social justice and human rights.

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