

MOTIVATIONS TO USE SUBSTANCES BY FEMALE SEX WORKERS

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Female sex workers (FSWs) face high stress, stigma, and insecurity. Many use substances to cope, yet Sri Lankan evidence about why they use is limited. This quantitative cross-sectional study surveyed 60 FSWs in Colombo using a structured questionnaire (demographics, sex-work profile, substance patterns, motivations, health concerns, impacts). Descriptive statistics summarized responses. Heroin and alcohol were the most used substances; 40% used daily. Most respondents agreed they used substances to cope with stress (80%), escape problems (76%), relax after work (72%), gain confidence with clients (66%), and improve performance (60%). 50% reported strong financial strain; 63% anxiety/depression symptoms; 40% health issues. 80% said substances were needed or sometimes needed to do sex work. Findings indicate primarily coping and work-related motivations. Programs should offer stress-management, trauma-informed counseling, lowthreshold harm-reduction, and practical social/economic support.

Keywords: *female sex workers; substance use; coping; motivations; Colombo; harm reduction*