

Gender Based Violence

Against Female Sex Workers and Hijras in Dhaka and Selected Brothel

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Gratitude to...

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Agenda

-  **Background**
-  **Methodology & Technical Approach**
-  **Prevalence of GBV among FSW and Hijra**
-  **Issues related to Disclosure and Legal Actions**
-  **Conclusion & Discussion**

Background

- ⚡ Gender Based Violence (GBV) can be physical, psychological, or sexual in nature. It occurs in the home as well as in public and private institutions, including the workplace
- ⚡ Gender-based violence undermines the health, dignity, security, and autonomy of its victims, yet it remains shrouded in a culture of silence
- ⚡ Violence is often viewed as a sign of the historically uneven power relationship between men and women in the society

Background...

According to WHO 2021

Gender based violence can:

- ⚡ have fatal outcomes like homicide or even suicide
- ⚡ lead to injuries and limited mobility
- ⚡ lead to unintended pregnancies, induced abortions, gynecological problems, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and even death

GBV has no social, economic, or national boundaries

- ✂ Violence against women – particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence – is a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights
- ✂ About 1 in 3 (30%) women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime



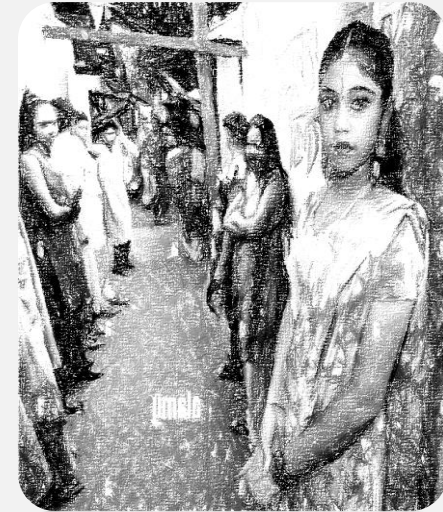
- ✂ In Bangladesh, 72.6% of ever married women experienced any forms of violence by their husband at least once in their lifetime, and 54.7% experienced violence during last 12 months
- ✂ Bangladesh reported highest incidence of GBV among women in South Asia

References:

(i) WHO, 2021. Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018. (ii) BBS 2016. Report on Violence Against Women (VAW) Survey 2015.

GBV among FSW and Hijra – the context

- ❌ Female Sex Workers (FSW) and Hijra (or Transgender), referred to as Key Populations (KPs) for HIV, generally face even higher levels of gender-based violence (GBV)
- ❌ Individuals who are members of multiple KP groups, such as Hijra sex workers, are excessively affected by GBV
- ❌ Existing evidence revealed that a reduction in physical or sexual violence among sex workers may help in achieving approximately 25% reduction in HIV infections among them
- ❌ Yet little is known in Bangladesh about the violence they face, its gender-based origins, and responses to GBV



References:

Decker et al. Estimating the impact of reducing violence against female sex workers on HIV epidemics in Kenya and Ukraine: a policy modeling exercise. *American Journal of Reproductive Immunology*, 2013; 69(Suppl 1):122–132



Methodology & Technical Approach

Various Forms of Violence

Five different types of GBV are measured as per UN and WHO guidelines:

Types of violence	Indicators
Physical violence	If slapped, punched, threw something which leads to injury, pushed or pulled hair, kicked, dragged, or beaten up, etc.
Sexual violence	Having sexual intercourse with against will or perform any unusual sexual behavior which seems defaming or disgraceful etc.
Emotional violence	If someone insult, humiliate in front of other people, do anything to scare , verbally threaten to hurt, etc.
Economic violence	If anyone refuses to give money/fees after sex work, or pressurized to give money or belongings, etc.
Controlling Behaviour	If someone try to restrict from the company of friends or peers, or restrict to go any places (such as bazar, health service center, park, parental house, etc.), or insist on knowing (with suspicious mind) what you are doing and where you are at all times, or often suspicious that you are unfaithful

Methodology

Assessment Location and Target Population

🚫 Female Sex Workers (FSW)

- Street based Female Sex Workers (SBFSW) were interviewed from Dhaka city
- Brothel based Female Sex Workers (BBFSW) were interviewed from Dowlatdia brothel

🚫 Hijra (Transgender)

- Hijra and hijra sex workers were interviewed from Dhaka city



Methodology...

- ⌘ A mixed-method approach comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used
- ⌘ A total of 951 FSWs and Hijras were interviewed:

KPs	District/City	Sample size (n)
SBFSW	Dhaka	368
BBFSW	Rajbari	304
TG or Hijra	Dhaka	279
Total		951

- ⌘ In addition, several in-depth case studies with the selected respondents were conducted to capture their experiences of GBV
- ⌘ The field data collection was conducted between 24 November 2021 and 7 December 2021

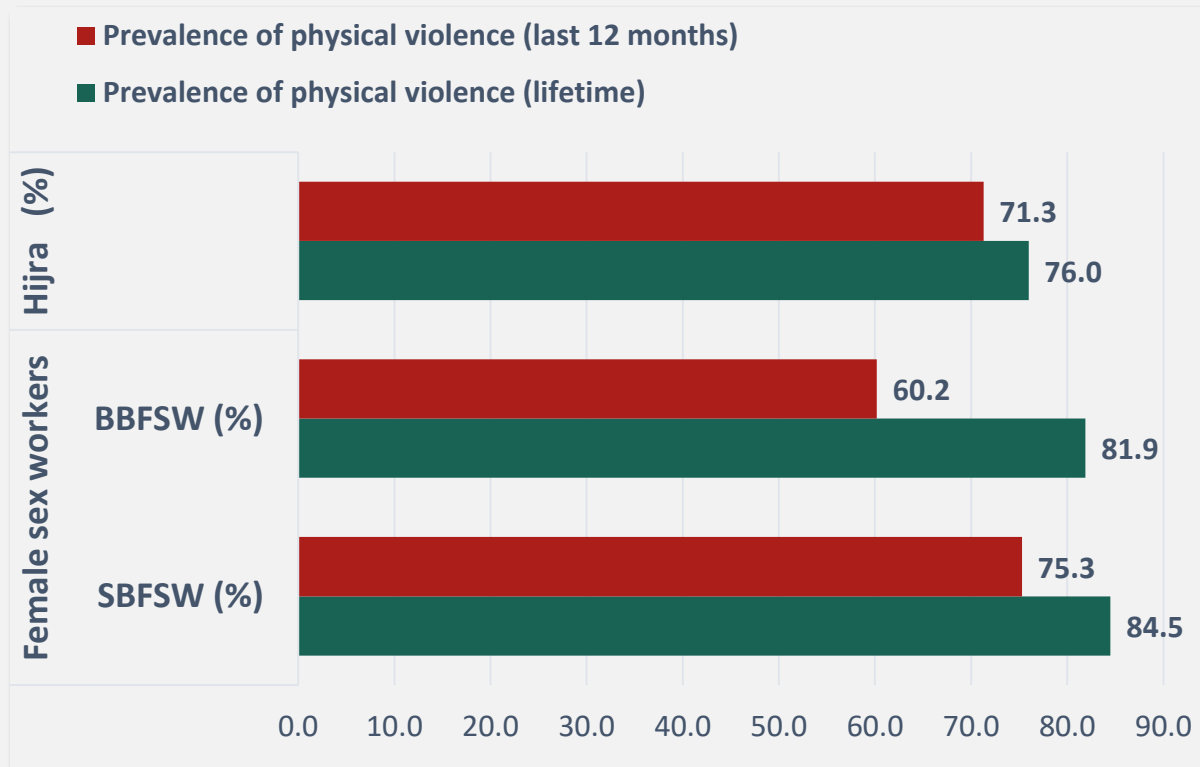


Prevalence of GBV

Among FSW and Hijra

Prevalence of Physical Violence

Prevalence of physical violence



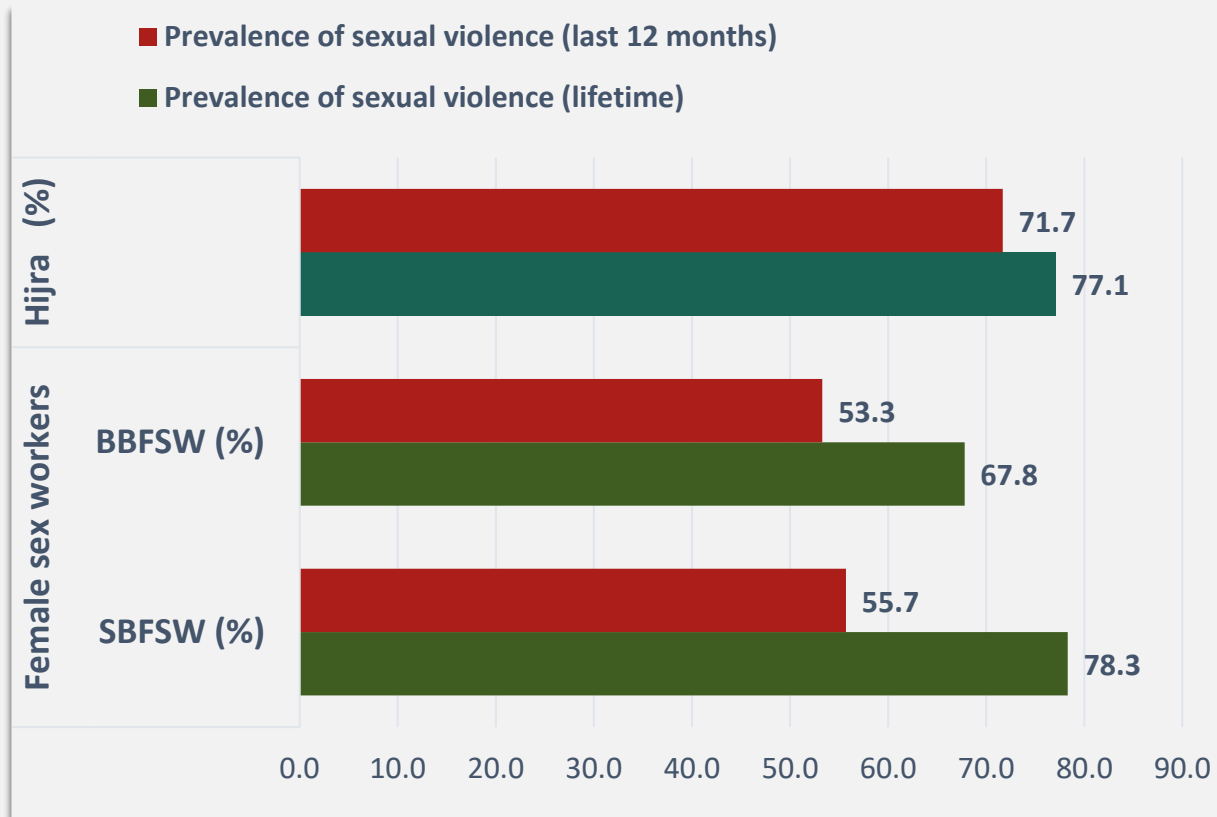
Major perpetrator of physical violence

Response	SBFSW (n=311)	BBFSW (n=249)	Hijra (n=189)
Client	78.1%	57.8%	36.0%
Police	52.7%	2.8%	55.6%
Local mastan	52.1%	5.6%	63.5%
Regular live-in partner/husband	30.2%	51.8%	30.2%
Community influential persons	16.4%	5.2%	39.7%
Ex-partner/husband	12.2%	25.7%	50.3%
Peers: other sex workers/hijra	7.4%	1.2%	49.7%

- ✘ Client, police and local mastans were the major perpetrator of physical violence for SBFSW
- ✘ For BBFSW, client and regular partner/husband were the major perpetrator
- ✘ Hijras usually faced physical violence from local mastans, police, ex-partners and other hijras

Prevalence of Sexual Violence

Prevalence of sexual violence



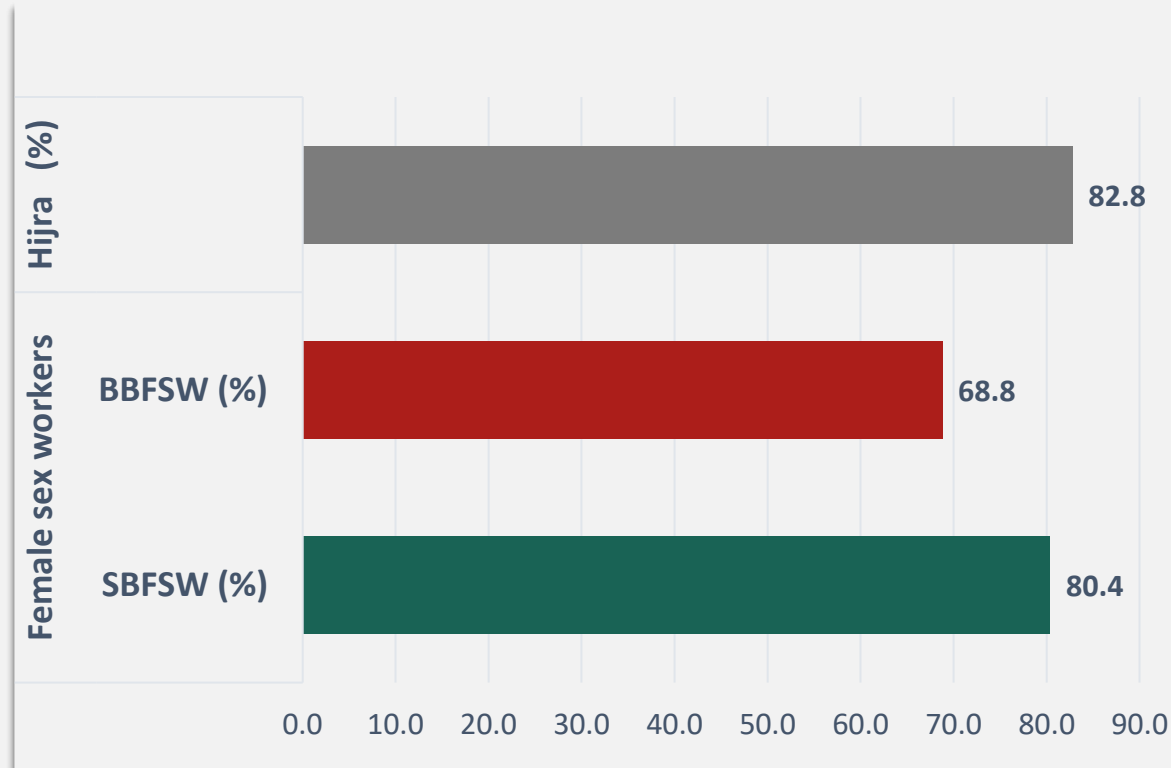
Perpetrator of sexual violence

Response	SBFSW (n=311)	BBFSW (n=249)	Hijra (n=115)
Client	76.7%	74.3%	46.5%
Local Mastan	52.1%	11.2%	67.4%
Police	47.2%	1.9%	51.2%
Regular live-in partner/husband	24.3%	45.6%	27.4%
Community people	18.8%	4.9%	15.8%
Community influential persons	17.4%	7.3%	41.9%
Ex-partner/husband	11.8%	29.1%	54.4%

- ✘ Client, local mastan and police were the major perpetrator of sexual violence for SBFSW
- ✘ For BBFSW, client and regular partner/husband were the major perpetrator
- ✘ Hijras usually experienced sexual violence from local mastans, ex-partner, police, client and community influential persons

Prevalence of Physical or Sexual Violence

Prevalence of any form of physical and/or sexual violence (last 12 months)

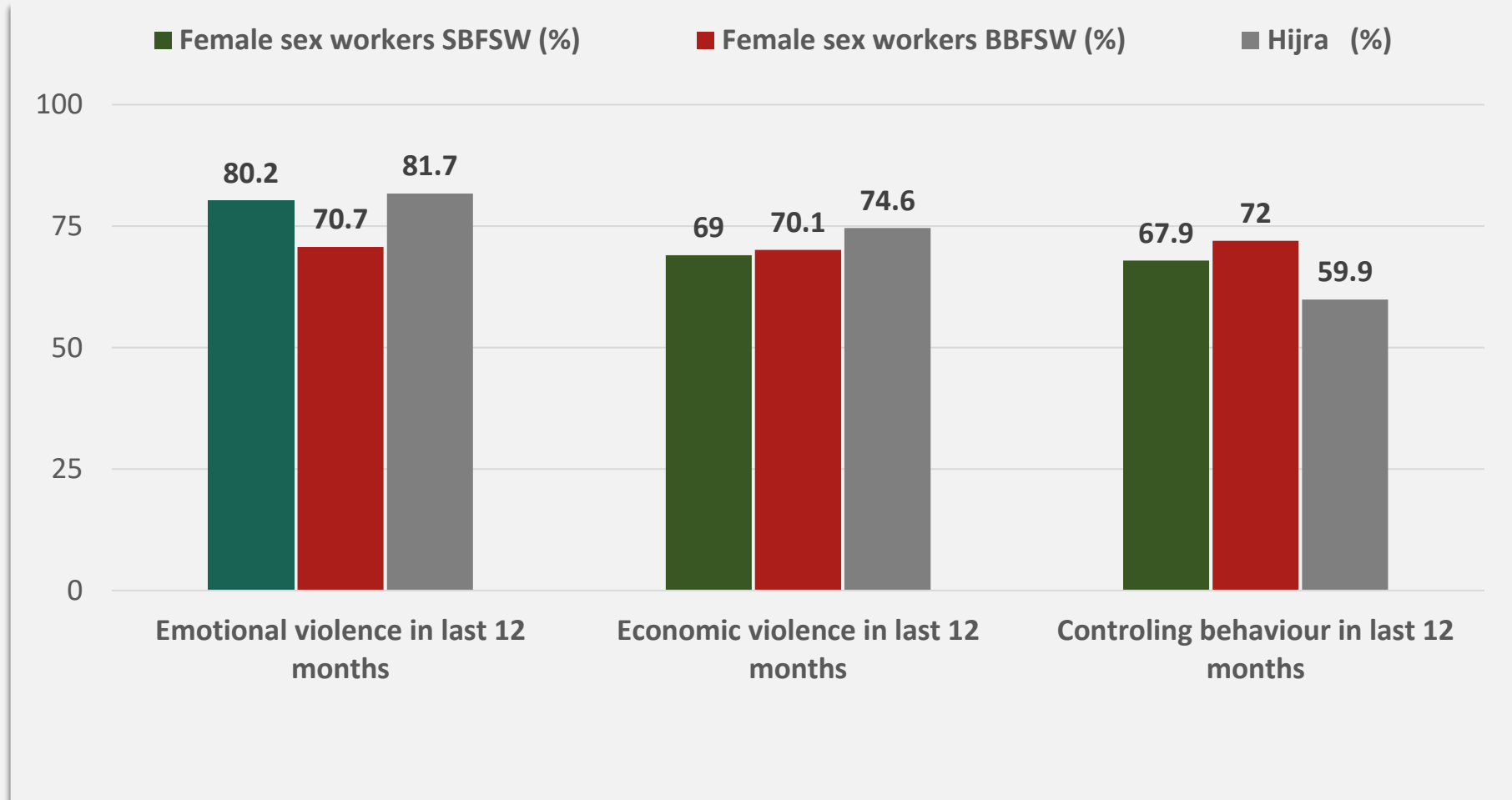


Factors influencing physical or sexual violence

- ✂ The young SBFSW with more client loads, and reported consistent condom use were more likely to experience GBV
- ✂ Along with the above indicators, the BBFSWs who were young, uneducated and negotiate fees with clients were more likely to experience GBV
- ✂ The Hijras who were aged 20+ years and reported higher monthly income (of Tk. 10,000) had higher likelihood of experiencing GBV

Prevalence of GBV

Prevalence of Emotional, Economic Violence and Controlling Behaviour in last 12 months



MAJOR PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE

🚫 **For SBFSW: Clients, police, local mastan**

🚫 **For BBFSW: Clients, regular/live-in partners**

🚫 **For Hijra: Local mastan, police, ex-partners, peers, clients**

Incidence of Violence...

A street based sex worker said:

"One day I visited a mazar but I got robbed and lost all my belongings. A few men came to help me, but they had bad intentions. They took me to a quiet place, beaten me, and tried to rape me. When they couldn't do it, they handed me over to the police saying that I am a thief."

Koli (26 years old), a BBFSW said:

"Once I was brutally beaten by the Sorderni as I refused my client to do sex as he wanted. The Sordarni dragged me out from my room pulling my hair and kicked on my stomach, tied my hand, slapped me nonstop. After a while I fainted. I was locked in my room for 2 days..."

A 30 years old Hijra sex worker Nupur stated:

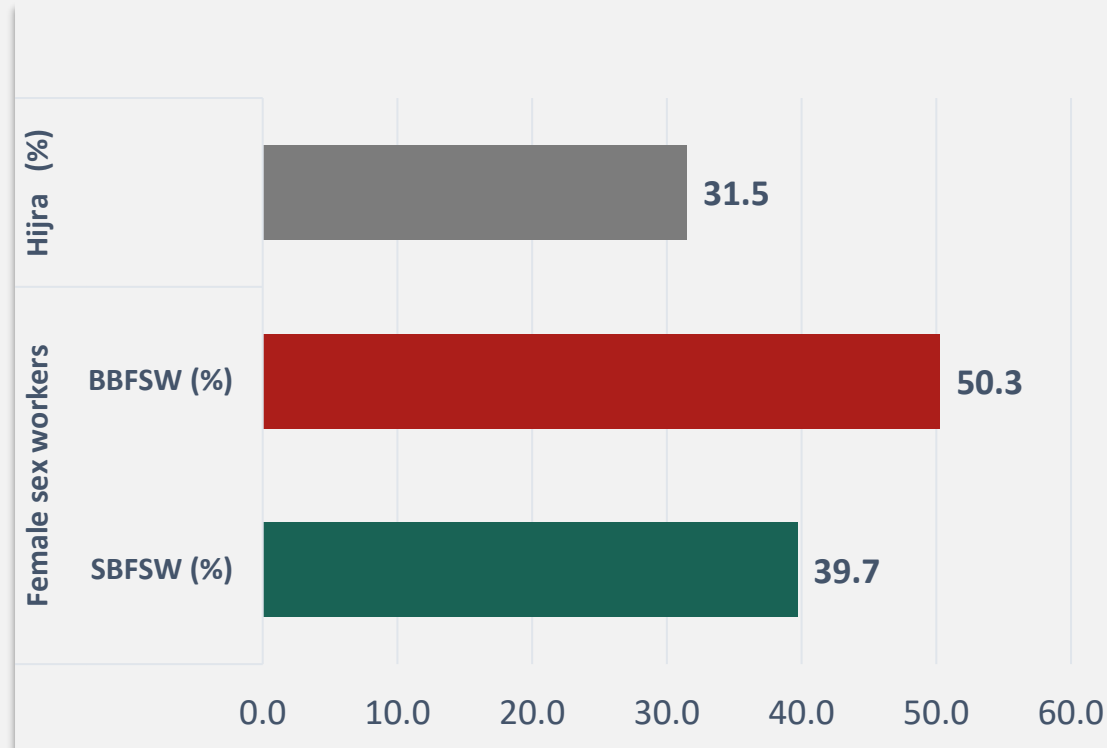
"The police don't let us stand on the road. They beat us inhumanly with their big sticks, they kick us with their hard boot and sometimes they also take our money. If we go to our Hijra gurus they also beat us saying that it is our problem, we should learn how to deal with the situation."



Disclosure and Legal Action

Disclosure of event of violence

Disclosure of the event of violence

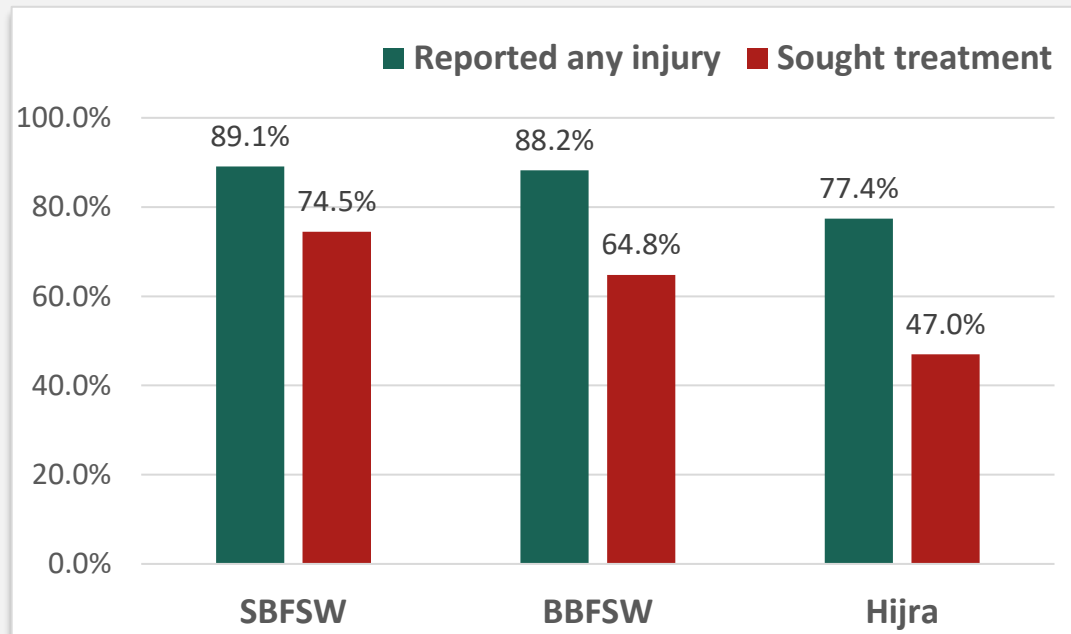


To whom disclosed...

- 🚫 FSWs usually disclose the event of violence to friends and peers
- 🚫 Hijras disclose their experience of GBV to their Guru, friends and peers

Injury from violence

Experience of any injury from violence and treatment seeking behaviour

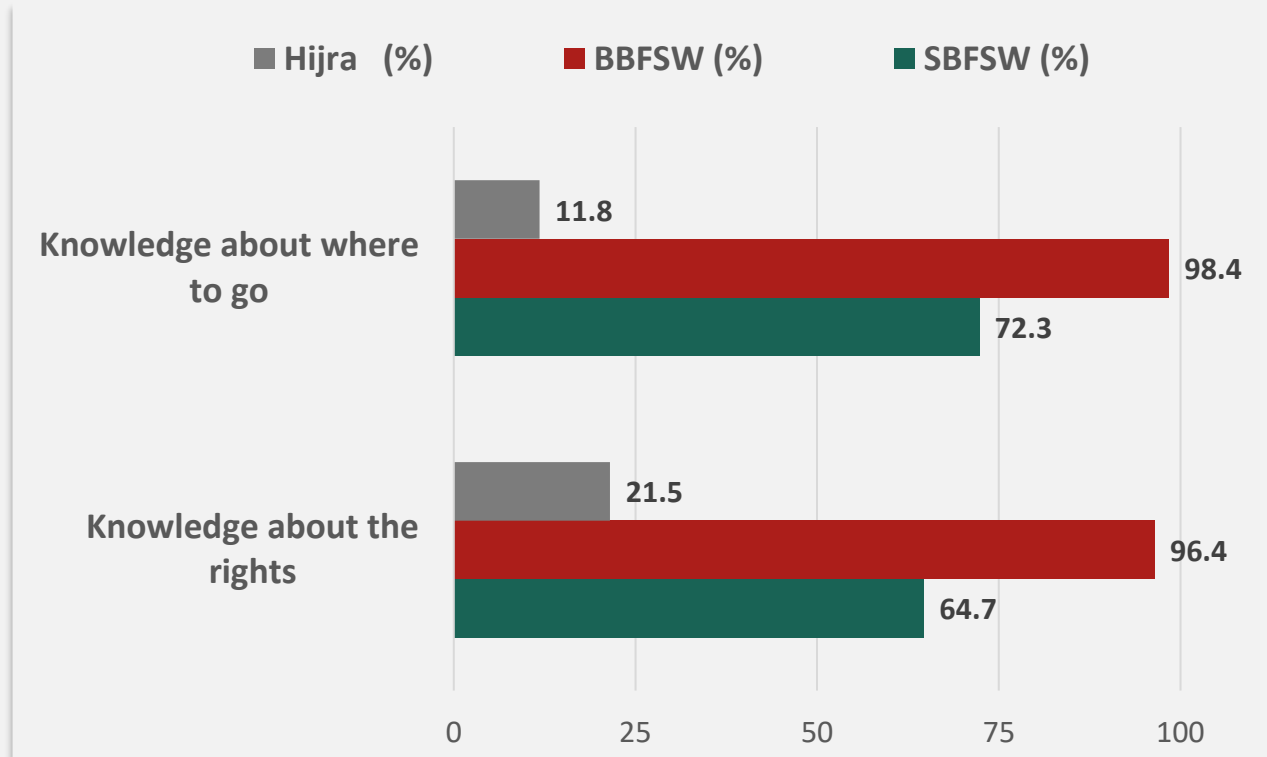


A Hijra sex worker Mouri (34 years old) shared a very heart touching experience of violence of one of her best friends. She said:

"Once one of my friends who was also a Hijra was stabbed by some local mastans; the mastans had sex with her, and afterwards refused to pay. When she demanded money, they got angry, broke the bottle of alcohol they were drinking and stabbed her with the broken bottle. Although she was taken to the hospital, she already had lost a lot of blood, and the pieces of broken glasses went deep inside which caused internal bleeding. So, she passed away. It still makes me cry when I remember her."

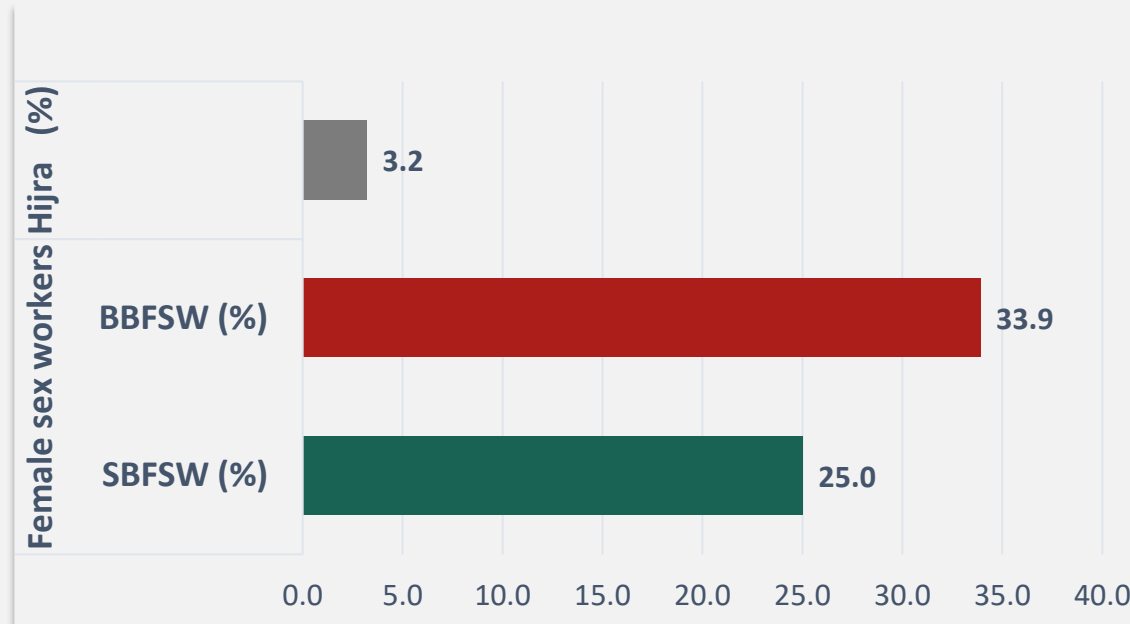
Legal Actions

Knowledge about the rights to take legal actions



Legal Actions...

Taking legal actions



Reasons for not taking any legal action

- ⚡ Fear of disclosure of their nature of work
- ⚡ Fear of police
- ⚡ Fear of death threats from the person who tortured them
- ⚡ Scarcity of money
- ⚡ Don't know where to go



Conclusion

Conclusion!

- ⚡ The prevalence of GBV among the FSWs and Hijras in the last 12 months was very high
- ⚡ Almost all the FSW and Hijra interviewed faced violence in any form (physical, sexual, emotional, economic, controlling behaviour) during their lifetime
- ⚡ The knowledge on the rights to take legal actions against violence was too low among the Hijras
- ⚡ Thus, the decision-makers and the other stakeholders need to recognize that the most marginalized people including female sex workers and Hijras require specific interventions and support
- ⚡ Without addressing the GBV that the members of KPs experience, an effective response to HIV will remain out of reach

Conclusion!

- ⚡ A support mechanism should be developed within and beyond the HIV prevention program so that the KPs feel comfortable to share their experience of GBV with high level of trust and confidentiality
- ⚡ The survivors of violence should be linked with the healthcare services through establishing referral linkage by the DICs and should be informed on the government helplines
- ⚡ The KPs should be educated regarding their rights to take legal actions against the perpetrator and the victims of GBV should be linked with agencies that provide legal support against the violence
- ⚡ The members of the law enforcement agencies should be regularly sensitized to protect the KPs from GBV

Report on
Gender Based Violence Against Female Sex Workers and
Transgenders (Hijra) During COVID-19 Pandemic:
In Dhaka and Selected Brothel



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Declaration:

To maintain confidentiality and security, real names of the study respondents are not used. All the names used in the case studies and verbatims are pseudonymous.

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Thanks...