

## Psychosocial Interventions with Women

Rowena Sait<sup>1</sup>

Sowmya Warriar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Post Graduate Students (MA Psychology), Maniben Nanavati Women's College, Mumbai.

E-mail – rsait30@gmail.com

---

Missionaries of charity or St. Teresa's home as it is popularly known, Santacruz (West), is a facility for destitute women managed by the nuns of missionaries of charity institute. This facility houses approximately 60 women across all age groups. The nuns here also provide shelter and primary health care services to unmarried women through the duration of their pregnancy.

As students of Masters in Psychology (Clinical) from Maniben Nanavati Women's College (S.N.D.T University) we were given the opportunity to assist the nuns with psychological welfare of the women residing at the facility.

We have been visiting the facility twice a week since 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014 and assisting the nuns as per their requirements.

### **Population**

Most of the women residing here are usually found on the road, some abandoned by their family while others have come here by their own free will or were brought in by the authorities. The facility houses a geriatric population, middle aged population as well as some individuals with diagnosed psychiatric conditions and psychical ailments. Some women have been residing here for over two decades.

Missionaries of charity have several such homes across India that share the responsibility for the medical care and well being of the women. At times they have moved from one home to the other to either keep them closer to their hometown or for medical attention.

### **Experiences**

The institute looks after the physical and mental health of those residing with them. They have a consulting physician, psychiatrist, dietician and physiotherapist. They conduct regular checkups, the women are also regularly sent to hospitals in the vicinity for other checkups as per their medical needs.

The women in the facility are divided into four wards. Each ward has its own attendant. They each have a schedule set up for meditation, prayer, meals, medication, recreation and sleep. Household chores are divided equally among the women.

In the initial weeks we spent time getting to know the women on a one on one basis and tried to build a rapport in order to increase our familiarity with

them. During this we realized that not all the women communicate and interact with one another in the group. In order to help increase the interaction among them we planned group activities for the next few sessions wherein included our batch mates.

In order to help the women increase their communication and interaction with one another we each had individual sessions with the women post which we would end the session by engaging them in a group activity. We had three such sessions.

Through these one on one sessions the clients reported instances and important details about themselves prior to their admission to the facility. This information was helpful when we filled out the individual case histories for each of them at the request of the nuns for their records. For a few weeks we assisted the nuns with their administrative work, during this time we helped them arrange previous and current medical records, case histories as well as other important documents.

For Christmas we, along with some of our batch mates and other students helped the nuns with putting up decorations for the upcoming week of festivities. January onwards we were assigned specific clients who required a little more assistance than the others. We began these sessions with rapport building and psychometric assessment as and when required. Clients were cooperative and comfortable during these sessions. Counselling sessions were also conducted on a regular basis. Occasionally we were asked to speak to the pregnant women and their families to help them cope with their present situation. Techniques such as person centered therapy, art therapy and play therapy were used, to which the clients responded very well.

### **Progress**

In the four months that we have been visiting the facility, we have observed some progress in most clients:

- Increased alertness and concentration when given tasks that must be completed.
- An increased interest towards household chores and other activities that are organized by the nuns.
- Better and more effective communication among some of the clients.
- Increased self confidence (they participated in a dance show that was held at St. Andrew's Auditorium).
- Tendency to help each other in times of need.

### **Therapist perspective**

As a therapist and psychologist too, working with these women helped us gain immense experience in working with women mostly with psychological and psychosocial problems and helped us grow as human beings as well.