

## Cinderella Complex & Self Sabotage: A Thematic Analysis of Women Dependency and Sabotaging Tendency

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Cinderella complex (psychological dependence syndrome) can be traced into the upbringing and rearing practices in Indian society, often resulting in internalization of the need to depend on others. Self-sabotage tendencies can be manifested by failing to take care of oneself and procrastinating on important responsibilities that impede them from achieving their goals. This research paper explores the dependency syndrome and sabotaging tendency among women residing in the northern belt (Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Rajasthan) of India. The study's goal was to identify the theme of self-sabotaging acts among women with Cinderella Complex and their causes.

**Methodology:** Qualitative analysis consisting of a series of semi-structured interviews for self-sabotaging tendencies was carried out.

**Result:** According to the study's findings, women with a strong Cinderella Complex have sabotaging tendencies. Women sabotage themselves because they don't have time to care for themselves or think critically about themselves, which hinders them from doing what they want to do. The influences on such actions come from within, from family, and from society. It has also been discovered that women destroy their relationships with their partners by having disagreements and having differing expectations from their partners.

**Conclusion:** This is an interesting complex that must be researched further in quantitative and qualitative studies.

**Keywords:** Cinderella complex, self-sabotage, relationships, women.

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### INTRODUCTION

Even after many years of independence, Indian women are yet not completely independent. They depend on male figures in their life, especially on their partner. They are dependent in some way on whom they think have better skills to do things that they don't have. The dependency comes from childhood roots, where women are taught to do those things, they are comfortable with and feel secure. Women are reared so that they are taught to be dependent since childhood, and this kind of dependence is not seen as healthy for today's society [1]. Some intriguing research has been undertaken to explain individual differences that may lead to self-sabotaging inclinations [2]. The literature gap shows the absence of conclusive evidence to define self-sabotage in women with dependency syndrome and determine which behaviours in Cinderella Complex women are indicative of self-sabotage.

According to previous literature, Self-sabotage is linked to self-doubt, misogyny, and verbal abuse [3]. The Cinderella concept is also linked to self-sabotage in romantic relationships [2]. Russianoff's hypothesis [4] states that women's emotional dependence on men is distinct. Women's reliance on men and the high level of intimate interaction between men and women affect their knowledge of gender stratification, leading them to construct gender inequality interpretations like males [5]. Women fear success and prefer to be dependent

on men. Psychological femininity or uneven sex roles, not real femininity, predisposes people to dread success, [6]. The present study aims to understand the experiences of self-sabotage and dependency among women in North India.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

The sampling was done in two stages. Stage one of the sampling was done using a random sampling technique in which 86 women aged between 25 and 40 were randomly selected for administration of the Cinderella Complex scale as screening. The females above 25 years of age, married and belonging to urban class were selected to administer the scale. The second stage of the sampling was done using purposive sampling techniques since the purpose of the research is to interview the women with high and moderate Cinderella Complex for self-sabotaging behaviours. In this stage, eight females with high Cinderella Complex were selected for an interview on self-sabotaging behaviour. The research design was a Phenomenological Research Design.

The ethical clearance was obtained from the university ethics committee. The tool used for the screening purpose in first phase was Cinderella Complex Scale [7] given by Sneha Saha and Taniskha Safri. In stage two of sampling, the interview was designed for self-sabotage. The semi-structured interview procedure investigated how high dependence syndrome women self-sabotage. The common themes from all the interviews were obtained using thematic analysis.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The current study is conducted to understand how women with the Cinderella Complex sabotage themselves. It was expected that a better understanding of the self-sabotaging behaviors exhibited by women with high and moderate Cinderella Complex would give an insight into recognizing factors that lead to self-sabotaging. Indian women with Cinderella Complex find many ways to sabotage themselves, and there are many underlying causes found for it in this study. The global themes that were found with this study are: (a) Self Sabotaging Behaviours, (b) underlying reasons for self-sabotage, and (c) self-sabotage in relationships.

The study's first objective was to find the self-sabotaging tendencies in women and the different ways through which women sabotage themselves. The global theme of *self-sabotaging behaviours and self-sabotage in relationships* and the organizing themes of *sabotaging behaviours towards self* and *sabotaging behaviours towards work* could be linked to the study's first objective aptly. The second objective of the study was to gain an insight into the relationship between women with Cinderella Complex and their self-sabotaging tendencies. The global theme of *underlying causes of self-sabotage* and organizing theme of *characteristics of self*, attempts to explain the second objective of the study.

The first global theme is labelled *Self-Sabotaging Behaviours* with organizing themes of *self-sabotaging behaviours towards self* and *self-sabotaging behaviour towards work*. Self-sabotaging behaviour towards self indicates the behaviour that women exhibit that prevents them from taking care of themselves, doing what they desire, and becoming a barrier for themselves. The *self-sabotaging behaviour towards work* indicates women's behaviours that stop them from doing what they are supposed to do.

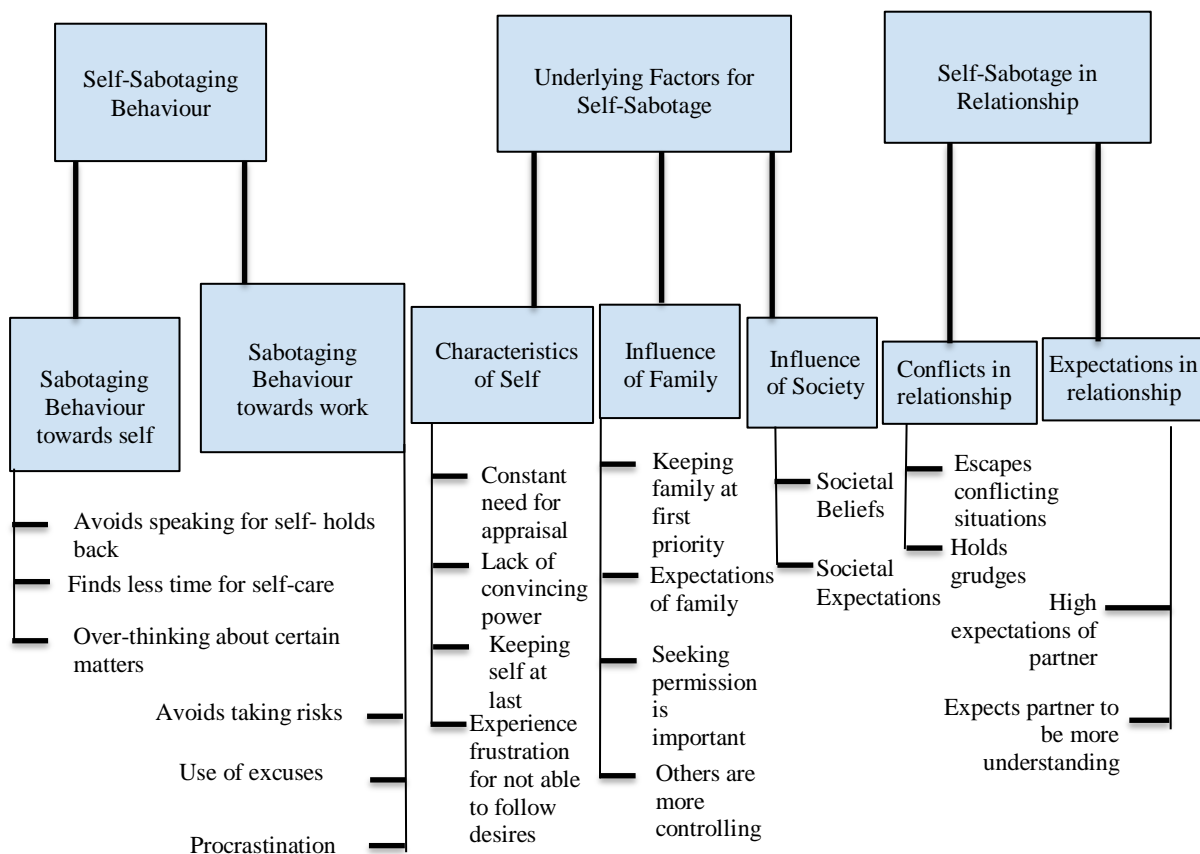
The result was an expected outcome based on the book *In Her Power: Reclaiming Your Authentic Self and The SeXX Factor: Breaking the Codes that Sabotage Personal and Professional Lives* [8]. Women are still ambivalent towards their desires due to which they engage in self-sabotaging behaviours, and this can be evidenced as *"the carrying forth of ingrained attitudes of self-devaluation, even self-disdain, in women continues"* [3].

Excerpt from the interviews indicate the way women exhibit self-sabotaging behaviours.

*"Even if I had to go to my parent's place and the family denies then you can't go there... used to console me, I kill my desires by thinking that leave it what will I do with this also, and that there should not be any sort of tension or quarrel at home due to me. I suppress myself somewhere or the other and stop myself."* – DB.

Another global theme that was devised is underlying factors for self-sabotage, which refers to the causes for exhibiting self-sabotaging behaviors. The organizing themes for this are characteristics of self, self-sabotaging

due to family, and self-sabotaging due to society's influence. Characteristics of self, refer to the women's characteristics due to which they sabotage themselves. Self-sabotaging due to family refers to the family as one of the influences that lead women to sabotage themselves. Family influences and shapes women's beliefs and behavior to lead to self-sabotage. Self-sabotaging due to society's influences leads to the societal roles and expectations imposed on women. Women with Cinderella Complex tend to show the need for appreciation as they have lost self-esteem [9].



**Figure 1: Result: Flow Chart for global themes, organizing themes and sub-themes**

Excerpt from the interviews indicates how women's characteristics become the reason for self-sabotaging.

*"The only problem is they don't; I don't have that ability to make them understand this is what I want, this is why I want, this is how I will do it, I don't have that ability to make them understand. . . . I've tried thousand times, but I cannot, I cannot make them understand, maybe I don't know how to explain, how to tell them or put my feelings into my words I cannot."* – SS

With the need for appreciation, not being able to convince others, and doubting their abilities, they tend to engage in self-sabotaging behaviours of holding back from action [10].

*The influence of family* on women with Cinderella Complex leads them to sabotage themselves by considering the family as a priority, and expectations of family and considers it important to seek permission from family for doing things. Prioritization is one reason women tend to self-sabotage. They are more at risk of poor health from their roles and role feelings than men are [11]. The women's responsibility toward family has a strong influence on career decisions in Indian females [12].

Some excerpts from the interviews indicate the influence of family that leads women to self-sabotage.

*"I decide my priorities based on my family; my family is a most important thing for me, both families my in-laws or my mother father side. . . . If we become something in life, that is for our family only. Our success is for our family only. If we do anything wrong, also that to affect our family, that is why my priority is always my family."* - KC.

*Self-sabotaging due to society's influence* refers to self-sabotaging behaviours due to the way society imposes its beliefs and expectations on women and the environment in which women are raised in. Society believes in

women's traditional roles and expects them to follow them because they are ambivalent about women's success due to the long-held societal belief that women are better suited for caring duties rather than the difficult business of leadership. [11]. Women who begin to experience personal and professional growth frequently encounter feelings of doubt and discomfort that their upbringing, society, culture, and education did not prepare them for [13]. Society and family's influence are the extrinsic factors that directly impact women including cultural traditions [14].

Excerpt from the interviews indicate the influence of society on women's behaviour that leads them to sabotage themselves.

*"Family also works according to society; it does not matter how family thinks when it comes to pressure, which is the main reason we cannot do what we want. At that point, we pull us back as we feel that parents would not be happy."* - KC.

The third global theme devised is *self-sabotage in a relationship* which refers to the behaviours exhibited by women with Cinderella Complex, which leads to letting oneself away from having a healthy relationship with their partners. The organizing themes are *conflicts in relationships* and *expectations in a relationship*. *Conflicts in the relationship* refer to how engaging or not engaging in conflicts affects the relationship. *Expectations in a relationship* refer to the partner's expectations of each other in the relationship.

From the current study, it is often found that women tend to escape from conflicting situations as they feel that they will not handle them, and it will make them think more and more about the conflicting situations. Their self-sabotaging behaviour of avoiding disagreements results in unsolved difficulties and may hold grudges for a longer period of time, since self-defeating behaviour may also leave customers unprepared to cope with relationship challenges [2].

Excerpt from the interviews indicate self-sabotage in relationships which exhibits in the form of conflicts with partners.

*"I tend to avoid fights firstly. I would speak up less on things and move out from that place. I am the kind of that person that is my nature I tend to avoid fights with, I am not able to fight, I don't have that power to fight and argue, and so I just keep quiet, which I find is an easy option, because arguing is not something I could do, so better stay quite."* - DD.

Partners' higher expectations from women and women expecting an understanding partner also led to self-sabotaging behaviours. Women often find themselves doing things as expected and lack an understanding partner, which leaves them emotionally drained [2].

Excerpt from the interviews indicates self-sabotage in relationships which shows different levels of expectations between partners.

*"My partner has each and every type of expectation from me like I should give my most of the time to family, that I should be very good to those who come our home...I, I should be good at every level."* -DB.

The current study has focused on finding the restricting behaviours and causes for it exhibited by women with dependency syndrome to gain insight that even after the evolution of the women's rights movement, gender equality, and feminism, many women are not in an equal position as men. With this research, many factors are ruled out and can be worked upon to help women grow independently and stop self-sabotaging behaviours by identifying them. This will help women to empower in the struggle for equality in all areas of society and development.

## CONCLUSION

Most of the research done on self-sabotaging behaviours is done in the field of academics and sports. The phenomenon of self-sabotage is not studied much in different contexts, like solely in women. Many women in our society are yet unable to have a life beyond home and cannot stand independently in life. Thus, the current study attempts to understand the self-sabotaging behaviours that women with Cinderella Complex exhibit. Although many women are pursuing education and are in the workforce, many women are not entirely independent and even stop doing what they want. The study was an attempt to find out various sabotaging behaviours, reasons behind it and individual characteristics who exhibits it. It is essential to understand such behaviours and their causes to be worked upon, and women also get to live life being independent. Overall, when seen from a broader context, self-sabotage is seen as being used to defeat oneself and protect oneself and not step out of the comfort zone. As in women's case, they protect themselves from

family and society as some family members or people might not like when women go with their will and do not comply with their set of beliefs. Women are not ready to change their lives and accept their lives because they are not prepared enough to take risks and do what they want to do. Future studies need to be conducted to develop theories about self-sabotage in the context of women and their life.

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