

**VOICES OF THE UNHEARD: LISTENING TO THE NARRATIVES OF  
FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN LAUR, NUEVA ECIJA**

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by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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7. Abstract:

### **7.1 Rationale/Background**

Sex workers, particularly women, face significant social stigma and are often silenced and marginalized. In countries like the Philippines, where traditional values prevail, acknowledging sex work as a legitimate profession is challenging. The taboo surrounding discussions about sex work further compounds the difficulty in understanding the realities faced by those in the industry. However, ignoring the issue does not negate the existence of thousands of individuals

engaged in sex work. This study aims to explore the trajectory of a sex worker's life, examining the factors that led them to this profession, their work routines, and the impact it has on their lives.

## **7.2 Summary**

This study intends to explore and listen to the narratives of Female Sex Workers with the following questions:

1. What are the driving factors that pushes women to engage in sex work?
2. What are the routines of a female sex worker?
3. How does female sex workers cope with the criticism of the society?
4. What are the physical and social effects of sex work to their lives?

This is a qualitative interview study. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with 5 female sex workers, focusing on their lived experiences. The researcher used a categorical-content analysis, which focuses on particular content themes within the narrative, to transcribe, analyze, and interpret the data collected for this study. To find a theme that corresponds to each transcription, the transcriptions are coded. This theme was used to build each narrative.

### **7.3 Major Findings**

Five female sex workers participated in this study, which explored why women enter sex work due to a lack of resources to meet basic needs. The findings showed that they choose sex work for higher income, supporting both luxury and necessities. The second theme focuses on sex workers' routines, schedules, and locations. They acquire clients through referrals, social media, and chance encounters, eventually obliging them to entertain. Regular visits to hospitals or health clinics are part of their routines to prioritize personal safety and well-being. The third theme examines how sex workers cope with discrimination. Despite experiencing unkind treatment due to their job, participants suggest ignoring it rather than engaging in disagreements. They choose to disregard the frequent occurrence of being shunned. The final theme explores the social and physiological impacts of sex work. In terms of their social lives, their job doesn't hinder their interactions. Family relationships are generally uncomplicated, as either the family is unaware or supportive of their employment. Friendship is not a concern, as they have friends in the same line of work, facilitating easy communication. Currently, they choose to avoid romantic relationships. Participants stress the importance of regular check-ups for maintaining their physical well-being.

## **7.4 Conclusions**

This study explores the driving factors behind sex work, the routines of sex workers, coping strategies for societal criticisms, and the impact on their social and physical lives. Financial need is a significant motivation for these women, who see sex work as a means to support themselves and their families. They face stigma but employ the tactic of ignoring judgments. Decriminalization is suggested to provide support and protect sex workers. The narratives of these women offer insights into social issues and the need for solutions. Discussions about sex work remain taboo, hindering progress and leaving these women marginalized and at risk. More than being saved, these women struggle to be heard.

## **7.5 Recommendation**

This study is based on a female sex worker's experiences but lacks representation of the broader population. Additional research is needed to better assist sex workers. The criminalization of sex work should be reviewed to protect these women from violence. Policymakers should understand the need for a comprehensive approach to address sex work. Future researchers should approach the topic with an open mind, ensure a safe research environment, and be emotionally prepared.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**ATIP Law:** Anti-Prostitution Law

**STD:** Sexually Transmitted Disease

**GNP:** Gross National Product

**FSW:** Female Sex Worker

**SCAP:** Supreme Command of Allied Powers

**GST:** General Strain Theory

**HIV:** Human Immunodeficiency Virus

**RHU:** Rural Health Unit

**MSWDO:** Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office

**NGO:** Non-Government Organization

**UNICEF:** United Nations Children's Fund

**AIDS:** Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

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