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**The Lived Experiences of Female Sex Workers in the Cape Town
Area: A Qualitative Study**

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Abstract

Female sex workers are a voiceless population, reflected in the literature (or lack thereof), where the population is portrayed merely as victims or in terms of statistics. Female sex workers trading in Cape Town are vulnerable to rape; violence, HIV prevalence and police brutality, yet these factors should not be definitive of who these women are in essence as it perpetuates a stereotype. The current study intended to argue that female sex workers lead full lives as they are also mothers, breadwinners, and sisters to one another, community leaders and partners in intimate relationships. The present study aimed to portray the lived experiences of sex workers in the Cape Town area by collecting data through semi structured qualitative interviews with 6 female sex workers. The data was analysed using thematic analysis, from which 5 themes emerged. The themes were sub-divided into roles that participants described, namely Sex Workers, Relationships, Community, Victims/Survivors and Individuals. The data was analysed within the context of a feminist theoretical paradigm.

The results concluded that the sample of the study (comprised of 6 female sex workers) lead rich, complex and proactive lives. Just as the samples relationships vary, so do their roles and how they view, act and portray themselves in different instances.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Sex work is one of the oldest professions to date. Testimonies of the industry can be found in the oldest human records (Clarkson, 1939) straight through history until the present day. Sex as a service and the occupation, can be found in the oldest human records, because there will always be a need for sex as a commodity in human society (Luiz & Roets, 2000).

South African law (Act 23 1957) prohibits sex for money in other words sex work as work (Gould & Fick, 2008). Numerous texts have been published requesting the decriminalisation of sex work in South Africa (Richter; Rhoda & van der Poll, 2010; Luiz & Roets, 2000) Sex work has been legalised in the following countries: the Netherlands, Germany, Iceland, Switzerland, Austria, Greece, Senegal, Denmark as well as the state of Nevada in the USA and various Australian states and has been decriminalised in New Zealand (Mossman, 2007).

Violence against sex workers is an indicator of the stigma and warped perception that remains attached to the profession (World Health Organization, 2005). The laws of the state concerning the decriminalisation, legality or prohibition of sex work are largely indicative of the trauma that sex workers will experience throughout the span of their careers. In countries where sex work is viewed as a criminal act, the practitioners of this occupation are left defenceless and unrepresented (Phrasisombath, Faxelid, Sychareun, & Thomsen, 2012). This population is at risk in terms of exposure to violence and abuse, where it is prohibited. Sex workers are criminalised and marginalised which suggests a link between the criminalisation of sex work and the high risk of exposure to violence.

A comparative study of five countries established that 75% of the sex worker population in South Africa reported being raped by clients, which is the highest prevalence of rape in all 5 countries (Farely, Baral, Kiremire & Sezgin, 1998). This exceptionally high statistic is not only an indicator of the vulnerability of sex workers located in this country, but also correlates with the dangerous levels of gender-based violence present in South Africa (Moffett, 2006).

In countries where sex work is prohibited as a profession, female sex workers struggle with cultural, social and legal complications when attempting to gain admission to the use of public services such as health facilities and police assistance (World Health Organization,

2005; Rahnama, 2005). “I would like to be able to sit down and say, ‘this is what I am’ and not have to worry about them putting on the gloves just to talk to you”(Phillips, MacIntosh & Benoit, p. 12) This quote is suggestive of how sex workers are treated by public health workers.

In a country such as South Africa, where a culture of violence exists and sex work is prohibited, sex workers are forced to work in a dangerous environment concerning their safety (Kalichman, *et al.*, 2005). Police brutality is also rife amongst sex workers, with half of the population stating they have been mistreated in some way by the police force (Massawe & Kueppers, 2010). According to a sex worker living in Cape Town, herself and many of her colleagues have been incarcerated for participating in sex work, where the only evidence the police had established to justify the arrest were packets of condoms found in their bags (Gould & Fick, 2008). Police are meant to protect the public, but evidently a number of them are perpetrators of brutality.

Female sex workers living in South Africa are doubly marginalised due to the fact that they not only fall into the group considered as the “subordinate” sex (Brown, Duby, & Bekker, 2012; Kalichman, *et al.*, 2005), but are working in a profession that is perceived by the masses as “unclean” due to insufficient knowledge about the lives of those working within the industry (Ackermann & de Klerk, 2002).

A victim blaming mentality exists concerning sex workers and many people regard sex workers as asking for it and putting themselves in these apparent dangerous situations where rape should be expected (Brown, Duby & Bekker, 2012). According to rape myths it is impossible for sex workers to be sexually violated and that women who wear provocative or revealing clothing are inviting sexual violation (Waterhouse, 2000).

The vast majority of the literature that exists focuses on the negative aspects of sex work such as HIV prevalence, physical and sexual violence, drug abuse. This includes titles like “Violence against sex workers and HIV prevention” (World Health Organization, 2005) rather than the fact that these women are viewed by some as liberated entrepreneurs who are standing up against societal norms and expectations. The literature may then perpetuate the stigma against sex workers by only describing the population through the focus of negative aspects of their profession, whilst neglecting all other aspects of their roles and characteristics as women. Therefore the current study will focus on the sex worker’s humanity and lived experiences, by giving a “human face” to sex workers.

Rationale

Female sex workers lead multi-faceted lives. They are bread winners, mothers, and partners in intimate relationships, community leaders and “sisters” to one another. The stigma attached to this industry causes them to be wholly defined by their profession and the public identifies with them according to this stereotype. This study will not only delve into experiences of working in the industry, but give sex workers a “human face” and a platform to voice their humanity. By doing so, the study hopes to destigmatise sex work, to decriminalise sex work, to demarginalise sex workers, and to advocate for equal access to services and freedom from discrimination.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of female sex workers trading in the Cape Town area?

Aims and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to illuminate the lived experiences of female sex workers, trading in the Cape Town area, this will happen through the following:

Shedding light on the lived experiences of sex workers, will allow academics, health practitioners, police workers, politicians and the general population to gain a greater understanding surrounding sex work. It might also possibly allow for sex workers rights to be advocated by government and nongovernmental organisations in terms of access to services and entitlement to basic human rights.

Conceptual Definitions

Lived experiences: First-hand accounts of the personal meanings on sex workers lives in the context of spiritual, geographical, social, intimate and community aspects of their lives and the meaning making thereof.

Female: People who identify themselves as women.

Sex: Sexual intercourse, anal sex, oral sex, sexual acts.

Cape Town Area: Areas geographically located within a 20km radius of Cape Town

Sisterhood: Women who are bound to one another in a collective sense, due to the fact that they experience what it is like to be women and sex workers.

Sex work: The occupation of providing sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal), oral sex or sexual acts, which is remunerated financially.

Bread winner: The person who supports a home/family or friends financially through the income they receive from working.

Intimate partner: A partner of an intimate nature that a sex worker has outside of her work.

Police brutality: The abuse of power and violent behaviour amongst the police force.

Rape myths: Rationalisations surrounding rape, which are untrue and perpetuate rape.

Chapter 2

Literature review

Stigma and discrimination, societal perceptions and gender roles

Stigma is linked to what the masses consider socially detrimental and to what has been known to tarnish the social identity of the person who is being stigmatised (Tomura, 2009). Sex work has an exceptionally negative stigma attached to it, as many people find the profession immoral (Vanwesenbeeck, 2013).

Several women who participate in sex work consider themselves business women and many describe the profession as empowering (Caulfield, 2000), yet certain sex workers living in South Africa have reported considering the profession as “rape for money”, which is a statement indicating the disempowerment surrounding the occupation (Leggett, 2001).

In an ideal world, sex workers would have complete control concerning the decisions that affect their bodies. Sex workers are often asked by clients to engage in unprotected sex (Stadler & Delany, 2006) or pressured to perform sexual acts that the sex worker is not comfortable performing such as anal sex (Gould & Fick, 2008). If the sex worker denies the clients request, the client may choose to accept it and stay to do business with the sex worker regardless, take their business elsewhere or become forceful and violent towards the sex worker (El-Bassel, Witte, Wada, Gilbert, & Wallace, 2001).

Unfortunately sex trafficking (when a person is forced or misled into working within the sex work industry) still exists and many young girls fall victim to this. “In Africa, through the influence of slavery, practically all prostitutes were slaves.” (Clarkson, 1939, p. 296). A distinction needs to be made between sex trafficking and sex work. Sex work is adult consensual and the sex worker has made the decision to occupy the profession, sex slavery happens through intimidation and force (Kler, 2011). The trafficking of sex workers now happens through the objectification of women and sex workers, and sex workers are now “slaves” of public perceptions. A white male living in America stated that no matter which country you occupy or visit, the sale of sex and access to prostituted bodies is readily available. These women are viewed as bodies, not holistic individuals (Kler, 2011). Recent journal articles continue to use the words “prostitute and prostitution” rather than “sex workers” (Farley, Baral, Kiremire & Sezgin, 1998; Rhoda & van der Poll, 2010). It is

therefore not very surprising that sex workers continue to be ostracised to an excessive degree, if the language use of academic researchers' is reflective of public perception.

Due to the stigma attached to the profession, many sex workers consider themselves "two people". At home or in social situations they do not identify themselves as sex workers and at work they do not think about their roles as mothers or wives (Phillips, MacIntosh & Benoit). A female sex worker, who agreed to partake in a study surrounding the stigma attached to sex work, stated that: in social situations when asked what she did for a living she usually replied by "I don't feel like telling you" (Tomura, 2009). The majority of sex workers do this to protect themselves from the negative labels that people assign to their professions, not because they dislike their work or personally perceive it as immoral (Tomura, 2009).

According to female sex workers residing in Africa, the shame attached to the industry causes many not to disclose to their families in which line of work they practise. In cases where the truth is revealed, they are often rejected by loved ones (Phrasisombath, Faxelid, Sychareun & Thomsen, 2012). Sex workers fear entering non-paying relationships as their past experiences indicate that their future intimate partners will view them as damaged goods (Phillips, MacIntosh & Benoit).

Key factors that maintain the negative stigma attached to female sex workers are gender stereotypes and expectations. Women are often still expected to some degree to be virtuous and sexually submissive; sex work defies all these expectations (Hook, Mkhize, Kiguwa, Collins, Burman, & Parker, 2004). What many sex workers see as liberating (taking initiative to provide for themselves and their family), society views as going against social norms that are not meant to be broken (El-Bassel, Witte, Wada, Gilbert & Wallace, 2001).

Risks associated with sex work

In 2002 it was declared that South Africa has a notable problem concerning gender violence (Ackermann & de Klerk). These levels of violence against women have increased each year subsequent to that statement (Luseno & Wechsberg, 2009).

Women born in South Africa have a greater chance of being raped than learning how to read. There is a culture of rape that exists in this country and the prevalence of rape today is 4 times higher than it was 10 years ago (Rountree, 2012). Gang rape has claimed the lives of many women ranging from grandmothers aged 82 to most recently 17 year old Anene Booysen who was inhumanely raped by 8 men (Munusamy, 2013). Sex workers are

exceptionally vulnerable to rape, and outdoor or street sex workers are at greater risk of being raped than sex workers who work in brothels (Gould & Fick, 2008).

Women are more vulnerable in the instance of HIV infection than men and thus, the prevalence of HIV infection amongst females is greater in comparison to men. This is due to biological factors such as the larger mucosal area open to bacteria and diseases (Ackermann & de Klerk, 2002). Women in this country are faced with social factors that contribute to their vulnerability of becoming infected with HIV: the absence of command over their partners sexual experiences outside of the relationship, the extreme incidence of sexual violence and rape and the difficulties that women face surrounding consistent condom use (2002). These factors are perpetuated by the theme of patriarchy that remains predominant in our modern society (Hook, Mkhize, Kiguwa, Collins, Burman, & Parker, 2004)

Clients are known to occasionally invite sex workers to partake in alcohol consumption or the use of illegal drugs (Gould & Fick, 2008), which causes impulsive behaviour and impairs the decision making of the sex worker. It is the sex worker's decision whether or not to partake in these practises, but there are factors that play a role in the final decision such as higher pay and gaining or losing a client (Choudhury, 2010).

A correlation was found between sex workers admitting to maintaining a drug habit and larger numbers of clients to whom they rendered services per week (Leggett, 2001). Sex workers who abused substances were found to be more likely to participate in unprotected sex as their altered state of mind caused the sex worker to often make irrational decisions (Phrasisombath, Faxelid, Sychareun & Thomsen, 2012) which puts the sex worker at greater risk of becoming infected by HIV.

High rates of HIV/AIDS infection, exposure to violence, rape, substance abuse and rejection by family, friends and society (Rossler, Koch, Lauber, Altwegg, Ajdacic-Gross & Landolt, 2010; Farley, Baral, Kiremire & Sezgin, 1998) is a dangerous combination for the development of various mental health issues (Luseno & Wechsberg, 2009). These women are being denied access to primary health care, thus it is highly unlikely these women's mental health issues are being addressed.

Criminalisation of sex work and police brutality

According to Richter (2013), the criminalisation of sex work only heightens the prevalence of exploitation, illness and cruelty amongst sex workers. Sex work is a criminalised industry in South Africa, thus sex workers are viewed as criminals and become prisoners of the society they live in (Phillips, MacIntosh & Benoit), as they are constantly ostracised, denied access to health care and police protection, and harassed by the general public (World Health Organization, 2005; Rahnama, 2005).

Police brutality is not a contemporary problem that South Africa is facing; this particular behaviour has been entrenched since Apartheid, until the present day in our post-Apartheid society (Malala, 2013). In the year 2003 the amendment to section 49 came into operation, thereby allowing the police force to make use of fatal force when detaining a suspect. Within a year of this amendment being put into practise, deaths resulting by the hands of the police force had intensified by 23% (Bruce, 2005).

Sex workers in South Africa have reported that 50% of their group have testified to being raped or abused by the police (Massawe & Kueppers, 2010). It is not uncommon for female sex workers to be detained by authorities and forced to provide unpaid and unprotected sex to avoid being imprisoned (World Health Organization, 2005).

The criminalisation of sex work only empowers police to harass sex workers (Luiz & Roets, 2000). They are forced to be silent when the need arises to report instances of abuse by the police, due to the criminalisation of their work (Luiz & Roets, 2000).

Current literature on sex work

A clear contradiction exists between the aims of empowering female sex workers (in the current study) and the bulk of this literature review. The reason for this is distinct; there is a gap in the literature exploring the lives of female sex workers in a holistic manner.

A considerable amount of the research on sex work takes a quantitative approach (Jewkes, Morrell, Sikweyiya, Dunkle & Penn-Kekana, 2012) and in this instance sex workers are not given a platform to voice their experiences. The qualitative research that does exist on the subject of sex workers focuses mainly on sexually transmitted diseases/infections and the legalisation of sex work (Rhoda & van der Poll, 2010; Luiz & Roets, 2000) rather than individual and idiosyncratic themes concerning sex workers.

The purpose of this study is to give a voice to a silenced population that has been robbed of their human rights and to empower this population group as a whole.

Theoretical Framework

The current study will be approached through a liberal feminist framework, where the subjugation of women is discussed within a patriarchal society. The key prospect of feminist research is that it will be beneficial to women (Given, 2008); the current study hopes to unpack the lived experiences of female experiences which inform the reader of other dimension which are not necessarily pathological generate major positive changes in the lives of female sex workers (refer to the rationale and aims of the current study).

Liberal feminism attempts to gain understanding, through the experiences of women rather than analysing women through a particular theory (Child, 2009) and this study is attempting to do the equivalent.

This framework will be used to protect the welfare of the population. Just as women are marginalised, so too are female sex workers. Liberal Feminism brings justice to a state of oppression, this happens by advocating for each individual woman to attain equal rights to men in our current system of living. This advocacy for equality focuses mainly on education and job opportunities (Given, 2008).

On the grounds of all the above mentioned; a liberal feminist framework seems to be the best suited framework for the current study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Design

These are the components that will form part of the current study's research design:

Qualitative field of research

There is no hypothesis, the outcomes of this study are not in any manner predictable and the information being collected will analyse a social phenomenon through the idiosyncratic perspectives of the group of participants (Babbie, 2008).

Semi structured qualitative interviews

The interviews will consist of 15 open-ended questions, which will explore the themes of sex workers lived experiences. These interviews will examine the themes in-depth and explore the themes rather than using a set of standardised questions (Babbie, 2008). The information will be subjective to each individual. The data collection will be naturalistic (unassuming), holistic (all inclusive of context) and inductive in nature as the questions will be open ended (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

Exploratory Study

This approach is "content driven" rather than "hypothesis driven"; the study does not make a specific prediction (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011)

The purpose of this approach will be to explore the lived experiences of sex worker's, which makes it an exploratory study. There exists very little literature regarding this topic and much remains to explore (Babbie, 2008).

Location of the study

SWEAT has given consent for the researcher to conduct research within the organisation. All participants are employees or members of the organisation SWEAT (Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce). The organisation functions on a feminist paradigm and advocates for the decriminalisation of sex work, equal access to human rights and health care. All interviews will take place at SWEAT, which is situated in Observatory. At SWEAT there are

counsellors and peer-supporters who are readily available, should the sudden need arise for immediate counselling.

Sampling and Participants

The sampling used in the current study will be purposive as it will be investigating the lived experiences of a specific population. This falls into the category of non-probability sampling as the study is seeking out information from a particular group, not the general population, which is not random (Babbie, 2008).

The population of this study will consist of female sex workers, who reside and work in the Cape Town area and form part of the organisation SWEAT. This study contains no restrictions regarding socio-economic status or race, however only female participants over the age of 18 will be asked to participate.

Data Collection Tools

An interview schedule (check appendix A)

- Semi structured
- The questions will be open-ended

Instruments:

- Pseudo name stickers (false names to uphold confidentiality)
- A voice recorder

Research Procedure

This proposal will be presented to the ethics committee, where it will either be accepted or rejected.

Upon acceptance, it will be examined by the ethics committee of an NGO, namely SWEAT (Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce) who will then either accept or reject the proposal.

In the outcome of acceptance, a sample of 6 female sex workers will be allocated to the study. The participants will partake in individual interviews lasting for an estimation of an hour each.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

This type of analysis attempts to describe the underlying themes behind the words expressed, not the number of words. According to Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2011) thematic analysis is a detailed approach to qualitative study and the reliability is greater than that of narrative analysis, as it does not analyse words alone, but the themes on which these words rest. Thematic analysis is interpretive, rather than deductive and studies a phenomena of personal human experiences (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2011).

The reason for choosing this theory is that the current study seeks to understand the lived experiences of female sex workers, which cannot be quantified and needs to be analysed broadly to acknowledge these women and their entire human experience. It is necessary to take a qualitative stance as feminism fights the objectification of women and if the study is conducted in a manner that places the participants “into a box” or marks them a statistic, it will only further perpetuate the objectification of female sex workers. Thematic analysis will aid the current study in articulating the humanity of the participants.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness offers qualitative research studies the means by which they can prove the value of their project. Trustworthiness can confirm that transferability, dependability and credibility are present within the study (Given, 2008). There were three dimensions, which I always attempted to adhere to at my utmost best, namely integrity, honesty; regarding my own feelings and while analysing the results (Lee, Park, Lee, & Yu, 2008).

Each interview consisted of the same questions and the questions were asked in the same manner with every participant. Constantly keeping in mind the central reasons for conducting this study (to help in the process of giving female sex workers a voice), allowed me to be reminded that this study was not a platform to give myself a voice, but rather the sample.

Reflexivity

It was acknowledged that possible differences may have existed concerning the researcher and participants such as race, financial class and level of education. It had to be understood by the researcher that all participants were active role players in the study and without the insight of participants there would have been no study (The British Psychological Society, 2010).

Language barriers may have affected the outcome of the study as the researcher is fluent in only English and Afrikaans.

There needed to be awareness around:

- feelings
- opinions
- and biases of the researcher and how this could have made an impact on the current study.

All of the above mentioned factors were diarised, as they influenced the results of the study.

Ethical considerations

The ethical criteria are as follows:

The participants were treated with respect and recognised as active role-players in the research development. The human rights and dignity of each participant were respected and upheld.

There was no form of deception in the study at any time, disclosure was being complete.

The current study was not aimed to only aid the researcher, but created awareness around, added value to and benefitted the lives of female sex workers trading in the Cape Town area.

The interviews that took place were administered in a safe environment, through an organisation that advocates the rights of adult sex workers. It was an obligation to ensure that the proposal was first approved by the ethics committee of the organisation.

Pseudo names were used whilst the interviews were conducted with the participants and thus the identity of each individual was protected.

A consent form was drafted that stated the purpose of the study and what will be done with the information once the study is completed. The participants were also informed of their rights regarding the interviewing process, so to protect them from any form of exploitation.

The participants were provided with the contact number of the MGI counselling unit, had the participant felt the need to speak about their feelings around what was discussed during the interview or if any negative feelings arose prior to the interview.

There was a debriefing before each participant left the interview, where any questions or feelings that arose surrounding the interview could have been discussed.

Transport money and refreshments were provided for the participants, as they all had to travel from their homes to participate in this study.

At all times the participants during the research, the participants' wellbeing was positioned as the highest priority.

(The British Psychological Society, 2010)

Chapter 4

4.1 Participant Information

The 6 female sex workers who participated in the study's ages ranged from 26 to 52 years of age. The study's sample were all currently working as sex workers and employed by the organisation SWEAT.

4.2 Results

Table 1: Tabulated themes

Themes	Sub Themes		
1. Sex Worker	1.1) Providers	1.2) Relationship with Clients/ Providing a Service	1.3) The Picture of Life without Sex Work
2. Relationships	2.1) Intimate Partners	2.2) Mothers	2.3) Sisters
3. Community	3.1) Peer Supporters and Educators	3.2) SWEAT/ Social Support System	
4. Victims/Survivors	4.1) Domestic Violence	4.2) Police Brutality	4.3) Stigmatisation and Discrimination
5. Individuals	5.1) Interests & Hobbies	5.2) Education and Empowerment	

1. Sex Worker

The occupation of being a sex worker was a prerequisite that all 6 of the participants had to meet in order to participate in this study. The role of a sex worker can vary depending on themselves and the client. This occupation can be very demanding and does overlap into all other aspects of the sample's lives and touches on all the respective roles they fulfil.

1.1 Providers

Sex work allowed financial independence for each participant (all 6 of them), thereby enabling them to not only provide for themselves, but others in the process.

Linda: Joh I take all of my children, when I go home I go to buy clothes, shoes and I buy food and my house was, warm and I told myself I'm a sex worker, I will never change.

Zanele: Now I'm a professional sex worker and I'm proud of it now, because you know that time umm I was lost and I had nobody, nobody was there for me, not even the government, not even social workers, not even a committee, not even you know?

Zanele: We have electricity, we have everything, microwave, TV, DVD, 2 bedrooms

* Brenda: Ja, I also opened an educational policy for my grandkids, so now I put little bit of money per month for them

Researcher: That's wonderful, so this line of work has helped you to be able to provide for your family?

Brenda: Ja and my house where I stay, I've got very beautiful furniture

The quote below describes how Zandi supports her sibling financially where her father has failed to do so.

Zandi: So I is the one I'm giving support to her all the time because my father also he is a heavy drinker. He doesn't give her money, whatever. It's me who's giving her money for school. Yes, so that's why I told myself that since I didn't go to school to finish my school she must finish the school.

These quotes indicate how the participants are not only in the sex work industry for their own financial gain, but due to the circumstance that they are often financially responsible for others.

1.2 Relationships with Clients/ Providing a service

Like any service, sex work exists to benefit the service provider and the client. Sex work has proved to be not only the act of sex, but a healing service where clients are able to satisfy or fulfil a need that sexual partners or various others may not be able to (this can be due to a variety of reasons ranging from emotional factors to physical disabilities). Two out of the 6 participants described relationships with clients (starting out as professional) evolved into intimate partners. This was usually the exception and in all other cases the sample defined relationship with clients as strictly occupational (this does not however mean that their relationships were not meaningful).

*Roxy: ...but and, and just to think about it he was married and his wife knew about us, because she was semi paralysed.

Researcher: Oh ok

Roxy: and he was very active, sexually active

Researcher: Ja

Roxy: so that is where I came in

* Linda: When we finish, this client gives me 300, on top of that 300 it was 50 rand and then he told me "you must put this 300 separate, you mustn't tell those girls this amount of money because I used to buy them the 50 rand" so I see you the first customer to me. Oh I was so happy, I think about my children, tomorrow when I'm go home the first thing I'm thinking it was the coke and meat.

Linda stated that this man was her first client ever and the fact that he advised her to hide the extra 300 rand he gave to her could be viewed sincere and genuine concern.

Researcher: mmm

Linda: because it was a long time to having even a glass of drink, even cheaper drink

Researcher: ja

Linda: and I, I thought, I'm thinking and the client were make up and down, wanted me. That night I was have a good client

1.3 Life without Sex Work

While some of the participants discussed how they experienced life before sex work, others illustrated what life may have been like, had they not entered this line of work.

*Zanele: because if I didn't join, I've wouldn't been a sex worker where would I've been today?

Researcher: ja

Zanele: I would have been maybe dead from HIV, you see?

Researcher: mmm

Zanele: or I would have been that rubbish girl that no one ever wanted to see in the community

Rose: That is why I say we call sex working a job because if I didn't do sex work maybe I will now been walking around getting mad because of stress, what will my children eat. Like the other woman, it's a big woman, she's from Bloemfontein. I-I find her there in-in-in Green Point at the toilets, she stay outside. She's not working, she live with her children outside, you see?

2. Relationships

2.1 Intimate Partners

Female sex workers and their intimate relationships can become very complicated due to the nature of this work (jealousy and secrets are dominant problems). These factors do not however put a halt on the participants finding intimate partners and being part of a meaningful intimate relationship.

Roxy: I'm not and it's very difficult when you are sex worker to be in an intimate relationship, because if you are not upfront with your partner, boyfriend or if before he becomes your husband, it can be a big problem.

Zandi: Yes, I do and then I've got my partner now we are happy, she's a lesbian also

Brenda: He said I'm afraid to say can we go out for business, because I don't want business with you, I want to be more than a client; I want you to be my girlfriend. So I was shocked

After asking Brenda how many years she had been in a relationship with her intimate partner, she replied by saying:

*Brenda: maybe 29 years, 29 years we are together

Researcher: wow, that's longer than most marriages ever last.

Brenda: (laughing) that's what we always say to one another, we always says to to him in his heart we are married we don't really need a piece of paper to state that we are married. At the moment he's not well and he's not a young man also. When I met him he was 56 and now he's 85. He's an old man also

Here Rose describes her belated partner of 4years.

Rose: He was like my husband, that man. And he was not like after sex because he was sugar diabetic and when he passed away he was 72 years old.

Rose: I'm very sad, he didn't want me to be on the road but you know this sex working the quick money because you know he doesn't come every day, every day to me he come like Friday, Saturday. Friday, Saturday I know he will come and Sunday morning he will come and bring me food and money.

2.2 Mothers

All of the participants regularly described the relationships they had with their children as positive. The participants firmly stated or suggested that their children were the most important individuals in their lives.

Zandi: Then I go to the clinic and then in the clinic I told the nurses that I don't want to do an abortion, because it's my first child and then so I keep my baby and then I work for my baby as a sex worker and she grew up under that money.

Brenda: My son's a white man's child, from my work, he's the product of my work and umm he studied himself. I managed to send him to schools, he finished his matric, he did IT, he did courses

Brenda: My work was actually to help my son start to become somebody one day... I wanted him to know that, to me he is a very important person

Rose: I'm a mother of 5 girls, 2 of my daughters are married

* Researcher: Every time I mention your children you get very emotional, it just shows how much you love them.

Zandi: Yes (crying).

Table 2: Indicating the participant’s number of children and whether or not they make use of childcare

Participant	Number of Biological Children	Made/Make use of childcare
Brenda	1	Yes
Zanele	1	Yes
Rose	5	Yes
Linda	5	Yes
Zandi	2	Yes
Roxy	0	NA

Irrespective of the fact that Roxy was not a biological mother, she did fulfil the mother/maternal role.

* Researcher: Ok and would you say you are a mother figure to them?

Roxy: Yes especially the one who has been adopted into the family, the girl. The other one is for my cousin. The eldest daughter, I’m like her grandmother to him, because I’ll, I’ll, I’ll pay for his haircut to go to the barber, if he hasn’t got kimbies... That is where my motherly duties are coming in.

2.3 Sisters

The female sex workers who were interviewed share a very deep emotional connection. The mutual understanding and shared experience of being a female and a sex worker seemed to be factors that bound the sample together strongly. All 6 of the participants described depending on one another in some way and being able to openly speak about their careers (alleviating a share of the loneliness, which connected to the occupation).

Roxy: Our relationship is very, my relationship is very good with, with colleagues... nobody can come between us, because we stick with one another... we depend and defend one another also.

Brenda: Yes, that’s why maybe we are connected, because we know one another even if I never ever see you before, but once I look at that girl I see it’s a sex worker and when I go and speak to her she will agree yes, yes I am”

Linda: Yes, uh my colleagues looks like uh social worker to me like if I'm upset I just share with them, I take them like my family, my sister and they comfort me, give me good advice and then I feel free after that.

Brenda: We've been friends for years, she even stayed at my house now we've met here again, no we are all friends, we are like family, we love one another.

3. Community

The participants are all formal and informal peer supporters and received training in this area. There are many dualities in this profession where the participants described themselves as respected members of the community they live in, but also still ostracised by the general population and those working in the public sector (government clinics).

3.1 Peer Supporters and Educators

Roxy: I was able to travel and uh, I'm a good ambassador to other sex workers

Rose: Ja. Then we helping women about that and we teaching the womens to use condom how to use it because we go and demonstrate and show them and then we do, we do have a, like, going out to do a demonstrating project only to show them or when we go, do our testing on the road we show them how to...

3.2 SWEAT as a Social Support System

NGO's exist to provide services that the government is unable to deliver. SWEAT fills a void in the system concerning the sex worker community; it is a protective factor amongst sex workers. This organisation has its own culture, which all of the participants have somehow presented throughout the interviewing process.

*Researcher: What advice do you have for other sex workers and people who want to become sex workers? Any advice for them?

Linda: I advice that sex workers when I'm doing outreach must come at SWEAT to share, more special... for sex workers who have abused must say which client, which skollie, whatever they must come here and have a home, because if you are a sex worker who don't know your right you look like an empty vessel and I'm also advised they must make sure, they must go to the clinic or we have our

own mobile clinic. They can come to me, to us, we have a referral letter if we see the case is over to us, they must go to clinic whatever. In our mobile clinic we have uh, family planning

*Researcher: Ok that's great, I suppose teaching others empowers you as a person?

Roxy: Ja, that is what SWEAT, that's why I don't even want to go on leave (laughing)

Brenda: Uh to be part of SWEAT, I'm the person who also likes to help the next person, so if maybe I'm at home I will walk around and if I see the, the sex workers I always mention to them about "Don't forget to use your condoms", do learn to know more about your rights, what must you do if you get caught by the police, how must you use the condom to protect yourself from HIV, TB, STD's is the things I always speak about to the other sex workers if I'm around at home and uh also refer them to SWEAT if they've got any problems or if they must come here to be educated, what to do when they are getting in situations there's police, maybe being robbed by clients

Brenda: We go out to the parliamentarians to lobby there, to help us decriminalise the sex work, we go out to the communities so that they must know that we are people like any other person, we, we, we have got the rights just like any other person so we need it to be decriminalised

4. Victims/Survivors

All of the 6 participants are survivors of trauma and throughout the interviews it became apparent that there was a profound sense of strength and will to persevere in life.

Roxy: I've been beaten up; I've been assaulted by girls and pimps but never from clients, only held up by gunpoint, but then I told that man "If you want to have sex with me without a condom, you can rather kill me, because then you are raping me when I'm killed, but surely not when I'm alive"

Rose: This man the things he was doing, the way he was talking to me it's like I'm nothing on this earth I'm just you know like a bitch or a whore or something.

4.1 Domestic Violence

Five out of the six participants described being victims of domestic violence within their intimate relationships. Three of the participants were subjected to this abuse during their marriages. Two participants stated that the domestic violence they experienced was the central reason why they chose separation/divorce.

Linda: My husband started to do wrong things, show me wrong things and chase me out of the house.

Rose: I grew up with my husband, we go to school together

Rose: Till one day he put, pour a petrol, take a petrol from the garage, pour me with the petrol must burn you.

Zandi: Our relationship is good than the one I was got before because she was, she was too much like a man because she wanted to beat me all that stuff and then so I didn't want that

4.2 Police Brutality

Linda: I am also a victim the police were doing very funny things, one them they steal my cell phone and my gold chain, uh 2006 they were beated us, take us inside of the shop, we buying something to eat with my friend, they wait there, arrest us in front of the management and push us, putting us pepper spray, we go to the cells and they take a hosepipe and make the blanket to be wet, so we just sitted there, we couldn't sleep with the blanket, because the blanket is wet .

Zandi: I wish the police they can have the hearts for the sex workers

Brenda: We are being harassed by the police; we are called ugly names, things that we are not. So that's what I don't like from this government, for making us something we are not, criminals.

In the quote below Rose describes a horrific trauma perpetrated by a policeman after she had trusted him and accepted a lift.

Rose: Ja, and then he go in the mortuary with a, the door of the mortuary... he just open and then put the bag there next to the door and then take the gun out and then put on the desk then I was now finished then I said this is a mortuary I know then he say "You know what? I'm here to look for someone." ... he just start hugging me, holding me like a girl, I mean a girlfriend and then when we walk he start kissing me in the neck then now I say oh this is now something you can you can feel when something now is going on

Researcher: Like a dangerous situation?

Rose: Ja, and then I see the gun is there on the desk and when we walk he left the gun there because he did close the door now we walked and then he opened the shelves with the dead people he said come man don't worry these people are sleeping just so easy, come look I've look one person and then

his scars they are not, they didn't clean the person then I say but why I want to cry when I'm scared, I cry and then I shake, then I don't want to show this person because I was thinking that he is looking for an empty shelf. Maybe he will shoot me and then put me in there in my heart I was just thinking that and then I walked and then he's kissing me. He kiss me, he kiss me, he even licked my hand and then, you know, the way I like to cry I-I-I was just saying God if this man want to sex me and then I think he will never even use a condom in my mind he can do anything but please don't kill me only for my children.

Rose: Ja, then we go, we go and then we come back. When we come back now I see this guy now he's serious, he start opening the-the-the shirt there's no name tag remember. I don't know who is this person I say "God please don't-don't kill me" when we get on the desk he push the gun because my eyes are just on the gun and then he push the gun to the side... and then he take the condom out of his own pocket then he then he sex me there he sex me I think he was already drunk because he sexed me for a, for a while he sexed me I say God do anything I just leave this man to do anything when he finished I start crying I cry, but I don't scream. I cry he say "no baby is not nice you didn't love me, you didn't like this? I will see you next time you know"...I was so heartbroken I didn't know what to do and when I get home I start crying then I sit at home. I nearly died but I can't tell to that I was raped same time I say joh I was emotionally I don't know how I then they and then I cry they say mummy keep quiet and then the small ones they are watching then they don't understand nothing. I say no they ask that mummy "why is mummy crying?" and then I cry joh I-I-I_I can't, I...(crying)

4.3 Stigmatisation

All of the participants had kept their sex work a secret from someone whom they knew at some stage. Due to the negative perceptions, stigma and criminalisation of sex work, sex workers are forced to live dual lives and withhold a central part of themselves from others.

Linda: and I never told them I'm doing sex work, because I think they going to be sad

Brenda: I know also at church you are, you are always wondering if nobody saw me there in that corner and so you... I don't know, but I do like the people that goes to church, but I'm very shy to speak to them.

* Linda: She was very sick, I was looking after my mother. She was the only person I told about my life

Researcher: Oh, so was your mom the only one that you had a career in sex work?

Linda: No, only my mother

*Researcher: (Laughing) Umm, okay and do your children know that you're a sex worker?

Zandi: No, no, she doesn't, they don't know but they are still young and I don't think that im going to tell them because my life is sorted now at least I've got a job because I come here you see

The criminalisation of sex work allows public officials to oppress and abuse those in this line of work.

The criminalisation of sex work allows public officials to oppress and abuse those in this line of work.

Roxy: because our girls get exploited a lot by the clinics, which they tell us when we do outreaches. I've been also publicly exploited

Roxy: I'm in 11th avenue, the clinic is also there, it just took that little walk, went to the clinic, asked for the condoms by the reception. He went to fetch the condoms, he came past me, past the security, in front of the patients and handed me the condoms and told the security in front of everybody, I'm going to do prostitution now...

Rose: I say how can I go to the police station because the police they are arresting us

*Researcher: What changes or measures would you improve your safety with? What would you change or do to improve your safety?

Brenda: My safety

Researcher: mmm, that can be violence safety, health safety, both

Brenda: To not to stigmatise the sex workers when they go to the clinics

Even though participants described or alluded to being treated badly on various occasions by public health practitioners, statements were made which proved they were visiting clinics despite the persecution.

Zandi: and I was lucky, when I always go to the clinic I'm still negative

5. Individuals

The negative stigma attached to sex work has caused many people not to view sex workers as individuals who lead full lives, but women who are only a product of their work. Each participant had at least one activity that they enjoyed doing when not working.

5.1 *Interests and Hobbies*

Zandi: I love cooking, reading, telling stories. Umm I like to play Netball

Roxy: I love singing in church in the choir

Linda: I'm a sangoma

Brenda: Yes I love going to church, I love listening to the pastor preaching, sometimes I'm down and I go to church and they preach and maybe they talk of the prostitute that was in the Bible at that time so the it's a thing I like to listen to and they make me feel better...

Zanele: Ja, I like to go to the field and watch soccer

Rose: Oh, I like shopping. Oh, I like shopping, I like beautiful stuff.

5.2 *Education and Empowerment*

All 6 of the participants described the education they received through SWEAT as empowering and suggested it as a major part of their personal growth.

Zanele: I can speak English now, I couldn't speak English you know, I'm well educated, I've got a lot of certificates, you know?... I've got counselling, I can do a pre-test now, I can you know. Got lot of education now that I didn't know that time you know

Roxy: I became a peer educator since 2003 from the US aid then I, I continue the other HIV training, which was now more renewed, because of research and then I went for the drug abuse, substance abuse and then I went for trauma counselling which I also did my practical at the police station

Rose: At SWEAT. SWEAT, I didn't even know the computer they train us they let-let's say even English I couldn't speak nice English. I was like an Afrikaans but now they take us to the Abbots school in Woodstock and then they pay for us there and then...

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Criminalisation, Sexual Morality and the Law

The criminalisation of sex work in South Africa is meant to protect society, but the question may be raised: What is this law protecting the citizens of South Africa from?

A clear distinction needs to be made between sexual morality and the law. Beliefs surrounding sex could be described as idiosyncratic, while the law is meant to be impartial and objective. Many people view sex work as immoral and that is their right, however is it fair to criminalise a profession due to sexual morality? The idea of criminalising infidelity, orgies and sex before marriage may be seen as Ludacris to most of society. Many people do not agree with these behaviours and various religions do not condone the behaviour, but the activities do not justify imprisonment (none of them are illegal in South Africa). Sex workers are continually incarcerated by police for selling sex and while it is a criminalised profession, the question of what are the valid and objective reasons for its criminalised status can be debated.

Two consenting adults partaking in a business transaction that involves sex is considered as criminal in the year 2013. Sex workers are forced to live dual lives, because of the fear that of being not only stigmatised, but incarcerated.

South Africa has a history surrounding oppressing certain groups. During Apartheid these groups were people who were described as “non-white” (Bowman, Duncan, & Sonn, 2010). The female sex worker sample described a phenomenon of a similar nature as those who were persecuted in Apartheid. Female sex workers described a fear of the police, which was common amongst black people during Apartheid. Just as black people were called and given derogatory names, so do the group of female sex workers describe being labelled as “whores” and “sluts”. It can be deduced that this oppressive language continues to be used as the consequences of the use of these words are minimal as the work is criminalised and the sex workers are not protected.

All of the participants agreed that sex work would be a safer profession if it were to be decriminalised and carried on to vocalise their negative feelings towards the current law. The criminalisation of sex work has not put a halt to the profession or clients seeking out the service. Sex is a commodity that has thrived throughout history (Clarkson, 1939) and it will likely carry on existing for many years into the future regardless of the legal status.

5.2 Marginalisation

The data gathered in the current study displayed what could be described as a “Quadruple Marginalisation”: Race (Apartheid), class (poverty or being disadvantaged), gender (female), and occupation (criminalised) were the four levels of marginalisation which the participants seem to be exposed to.

South Africa has a history of profound racial oppression that dictated all citizens’ lives by going as far as enforcing laws like the Group Areas Act (the geographical separation of races), Bantu Education Act (creating sub-standard education for “non-whites”, which attempted to avert black empowerment) and the Immorality Amendment Act which tried to stop whites and “non-whites” from having sexual relations (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010). Of the 6 participants; 5 were black and 1 was coloured, which made them all historically racially disadvantaged. Apartheid and the history of tyranny, has rippled into 2013 where black South Africans still feel the sting of financial disempowerment.

All of the participants expressed being “poor” or struggling at some stage in their lives. This is the only form of marginalisation which occurred on a continuum, with some expressing their struggle with poverty as severe as not having food to eat or shelter and others not being able to complete matric due to a lack of money for school fees.

The above mentioned factors make it a difficult task to picture optimistic possibilities for the participants’ lives, but still all of the female sex workers have survived and described leading meaningful lives.

5.3 Patriarchy

Patriarchy has been the universal oppressor of women for centuries. The female sex workers who were interviewed described abuse at the hands of men in powerful positions such as husbands, policemen and in some cases clients and pimps.

Women are born into a patriarchal world, where they are subjected to stereotypes (which patriarchy propagates). South African women are an “at risk” population with reference to gender violence, rape and HIV infections, as it is almost policy for the man to choose whether or not protection will be used (this was illustrated in Rose’s story where she feared the policeman would not use a condom (Ackermann & de Klerk, 2002). Women are much less sexually emancipated than men, due to the fact that men fall into the gender where it is permitted to act unrestrained. When a woman embarks in this behaviour she is often labelled as promiscuous. This attitude has been; and continues to be widely accepted as gender roles and ideologies are socialised into all humans, especially women. It was found that the sample of female sex workers could be in some way victim to this stereotype. Nevertheless choosing a career that requires decision making regarding condom use, contraceptives and enforcing rules regarding business can be viewed as liberating as the women are taking control of their bodies. Despite the negative perceptions attached to the participant’s careers, they continue to work in this line and govern how they choose to do business.

South Africa has been given the title “Rape Capital of the World” (Naidu-Hoffmeester & Kamal, 2013), therefore it is not surprising that female sex workers are such a profoundly defenceless population. This area is so highly publicised and South Africans are constantly exposed to facts pertaining to rape and gender violence, yet there is still a victim blaming culture and sex workers are at the most susceptible to this problem. In 2006 Helen Moffet wrote an article titled ‘These Women, They Force Us to Rape Them’: Rape as Narrative of Social Control in Post-Apartheid South Africa, which is suggestive of the victim blaming attitudes many South African’s hold. On April 13th 2013 a sex worker named Nokuphila Kumalo was raped and murdered in Woodstock (Otto, 2013), this is not an uncommon occurrence and often rapes are not reported as the police brush it off. A common belief and rape myth that many people believe is that sex workers cannot be raped (Rape Crisis, 2013), this is indicative of how ignorant people are on the subject of sex. This ignorance maintains the violence against sex workers, as the perpetrators are often not held accountable due to the fact that sex workers are viewed so negatively.

5.4 Duality of the Profession

Duality is a prominent part of sex work, as they are constantly facing the tension of finding themselves on both opposing ends of a continuum. Sex work is selling sex, not the sale of a body. There is a duality of their perceptions of sex work and that of which society holds.

While the sample viewed sex work as an acceptable career, much of society disagrees and the conflict arose of whether the participant should be open regarding their careers or not.

A tension exists between the two polarised roles of victims and survivors, which are in fact very closely linked to one another. Many studies have focused on sex workers as victims and vulnerable, but the women who were interviewed displayed overwhelming strength. The sample attested to being a victim (physical abuse, emotional abuse, intimidation etc.) and affirmed the fact that they are survivors, by discussing their empowering roles, such as entrepreneurs (adding value to not only their family's lives, but to the South African economy).

The sample sells sex; and while some may view this as a disempowering profession, a stance can be taken of a sex worker having autonomy and control of their body's. Sex work is a career where a woman to be transported to situations where their personal safety has been compromised (rape, victims of police brutality etc.), but also a career that assisted them in feeling more safe (being able to provide adequate shelter, a sisterhood where female sex workers "have each other's backs").

5.5 Conclusion

As a qualitative researcher it must be taken into consideration that the conclusions of the study are a product of not only the data gathered from interviews, but the researchers own ideas, beliefs, historical background, culture etc. The fact that the researcher was a feminist caused her to choose the framework which the researcher worked from and perhaps also the stance taken regarding the decriminalisation of sex work.

During data collection there were various factors that could have interfered with the final results, such as sex, race, class, age, language and culture. While I could relate to the participants and their experiences of being a woman living in a male dominated society, I would not be able to ever completely fathom their full lived experiences as I have never experienced poverty. I do not speak an African language and do not understand what it was like to be a black female who lived and worked during Apartheid and what the experience of a black or coloured female is like in South Africa's Post-Apartheid society.

Despite all these factors which impacted the process of data collection and analysis, the researcher experienced the participants as very forthcoming, open and willing to add to the study. The results of the current study led the researcher to draw the following conclusions:

1. The criminalisation of the sample's profession has made it difficult for them to live an open life, as the fear of societal stigma and incarceration is a central problem.
2. Despite the number of hardships each of the sex workers who had been interviewed experience on a constant basis in this occupation, they have refused to allow it to define them as "victims".
3. The female sex workers who were interviewed lead lives, which are opulent in roles. Their careers do play a part in how they fulfil these roles (as all careers do), but do not dominate their human experience and make their lives less meaningful.

5.5 Limitations and Recommendations

A limitation would be the select sample of 6 female sex workers who participated in this study were all employees of SWEAT and exceptionally empowered and educated. It is very likely that the sample was not completely indicative of the norm, or average female sex worker, therefore it cannot be generalised to the larger population. It would be in the interest of all female sex workers to undertake research focusing on the broader population, using a much larger sample so findings can be more generalizable.

The primary recommendation would be to decriminalise sex work, as the following state of affairs is not conducive to South Africans on the whole and only sanctions the violation of a population's human rights. Sex work needs to become a greater priority of politicians and government. The government needs to focus on funding organisations, like SWEAT that conduct research surrounding sex work and psycho-educate sex workers so that they don't have to be such a vulnerable population.

It is a necessity that future studies focus on doing a thorough needs assessment of the population and what would empower the population (this should not be limited to only discussing the decriminalisation of sex work).

After conducting this research, it is clear that the larger part of society has always been and still holds various misconceptions surrounding sex work. The media, patriarchy and lack of awareness surrounding sex work are at the heart of this profound problem. Therefore it is vital that advocacy and lobbying needs to take place on a nationwide scale to challenge the oppressive and reductionist assumptions surrounding sex work and sex workers lives.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

Hello, I am Shelley Ann Vickerman and I am currently in my Fourth year studying BPsych at Midrand Graduate Institute. This study requires females over the age of 18 years currently working in the sex work industry to discuss their lived experiences as mothers, intimate partners, community leaders and “sisters”. This study is being undertaken in the hopes that it will benefit the sex worker community.

After a person has read this study they should view sex workers as complete individuals who are not defined by people’s perceptions of sex work. It is hoped that the final outcome of the current study will contribute to the destigmatizing and decriminalising of sex work, and the demarginalising of sex workers, and advocate for equal access to services and freedom from discrimination.

This study will be used for the purposes of a fourth year dissertation and a presentation, but no identifiable details of the participants will be released.

You have been chosen to participate in this study, due to the fact that you are a member of SWEAT and you have met the requirements to form part of this study.

Your participation is voluntary and you are not being forced to partake in this study. You may decline to partake in this study and if you do decide to partake in this study you may leave the study at any time. You will not be penalised or prejudiced against in any way as your wellbeing is of the greatest priority.

None of your personal details will be identifiable to the public and pseudo-names (false names) will be used during the interviews, which will be recorded.

The interview will last around 60 minutes. I will ask 15 open-ended questions that I hope you will answer as openly as you feel possible. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, I just ask that you will think about the question and answer them to the best of your ability.

If any question upsets you in any way, we may stop and discuss how you are feeling. There are counsellors at the Midrand Graduate Institute Unit who are willing and available to assist

you if those feelings or thoughts continue to upset you prior to the interview. The contact number of this unit is 021 914 8001

Potentially, I would like to come back once the study is completed to discuss and inform you and the organisation SWEAT of the findings.

If you have any complaints regarding this study, you may contact the ethics committee of the Midrand Graduate Institute at 021 914 8000.

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding the lived experiences of sex workers. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced to do so. I may terminate the interview at any time and this decision will have no negative consequences.

I understand the purpose of this study and what is expected of my participation.

I have received the contact number of Midrand Graduate Institute, should I feel the need to speak about any problems that may arise during the interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the interview and all personal identifying information will remain confidential.

Signature of participant

Date

Additional consent to audio recording:

In addition to the above, I hereby agree to the audio recording of this interview for the purpose of data capture. I am aware that no personally identifiable information or recording concerning me will be released in any way. I recognise that these recordings will be kept safe from misuse and destroyed once data capture and analysis is complete.

Signature of participant

Date

Appendix B: Interview schedule

Part one:

This section of the interview will focus on building rapport with the participant

- The participant will firstly be thanked for participating in the study, as they are taking time out of their daily lives
- Briefing the participant about the nature and aims of the study, as well as their rights as a participant. Telling the participant more about myself (I am a 23 year old, fourth year student, currently studying at MGI. I have a great interest in sex workers, which is the motivation behind choosing this area of study)
- Issuing the consent and ethics form
- Collection of information regarding the demographics of the participant: age, marital status, dependents
- The opening question will ask the participant to tell me something about themselves (this is a very open-ended question and the participant may choose any response)

Part two:

These questions will be directed towards the current study

- What made you decide to enter this particular industry? (Financial, peer pressure, lack of other opportunities, supply/demand, friends etc.) How long have you been a sex worker?
- Do you have any children? If yes how many and could you tell me about them?
- Do you make use of childcare? If yes where?
- Are you currently in an intimate relationship? Tell me about your partner and the relationship (length of your relationship, does your partner know about your occupation? Could you tell me a little about how your work affects your relationship if at all?
- How is your relationship with your family (parents, siblings, uncles and aunts, grandparents etc.?) Do they know about your career as a sex worker?

- Are you friends with any of your colleagues and how do they impact your life and help you (analysing the theme of sisterhood and women having a kindred spirit)?
- What role do you feel you play in your community (this can range from being part of a club, church or political movement, advocating for a need that has not been met in the community to helping your neighbours with food or money when they are in need)? How do you think others in your community perceive you? (think of you)
- How has sex work changed your life financially, what has it allowed you to do with your earnings?
- Can you tell me what you enjoy doing in your free time?
- Are there any ways in which this line of work empowers you?
- How has your working as a sex worker given you opportunities, can we discuss what opportunities they are?

Section three will revolve around empowering the participant, by giving them the chance to articulate what advice they would give to fellow sex workers and what they feel needs to happen in order to improve their working conditions.

- What advice do you have for fellow sex workers or sex workers entering this line of work?
- What changes or measures would improve your working conditions and safety?
- How does the current law impact on your life and your family? Does your partner and children know about your profession?