

Conclusion:

INTRODUCTION:

This chapter will conclude how the findings of this study in order to shed light on the treatment of female sex workers that have been victimised by consumers of their work and provide valuable insights for future research and practical applications. The overall aim of the study was to critically examine to what extent the negative stereotypes surrounding female sex workers can impact their status as victims of sexual violence. There were also three objectives met by the research, which were the following:

1. To identify the existing stereotypes surrounding women who work in the sex industry.
2. Consider the negative connotations associated with different stereotypes of sex workers when they are victimised.
3. Reflect on what is being done to address the negative stereotypes and propose recommendations on how the misconceptions of female sex work can be improved to provide equal treatment as victims.

MAIN FINDINGS:

. Our society still has deeply ingrained notions of sex work and the women who participate in it, sexual violence towards these women is prevalent in all aspects, whether this be physical or sexual abuse, harassment on the streets or abusive comments left to women who work online. Society sees women who take part in sex work as 'deviant' and there are many labels that are used to describe them, such as whore or hooker, potentially devastating words that have negative impacts on these women. The National Institution for Health Care Research (2024) conveys many of them to be 'junkies' or have issues with alcohol or other substances such as crack or heroin. They suggest that many of these women are stuck in the same cycle of 'work-score-use' and their addictions only reinforce their dependency on the job, participating to their health and social issues. Another damaging viewpoint is that female sex workers were victims of abuse within their childhood, this is a misconception that takes away focus from their personal choices and sense of self and belonging; it is important to recognise that each of these women have their reasoning and diverse experiences that led them to work within the sex industry. (Stoltz et al., 2007). Undeniably, society values these women as vulnerable and disordered, often seeking comfort from substances and male validation, from the questionnaire, it is clear that the participants answers align with this viewpoint as many admitted to their beliefs that female sex workers are filled with desperation and social disadvantage. It was also found from the data that many of the participants assumed that sex workers suffer not only from poor mental health, but STIs and STDs too, this a viewpoint that must be challenged as it is nothing more than an

unfair generalisation, like in any other profession there is a level of risk and these women are aware of the precautions they can take to minimise their encounters with infections and disease.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Safer community buildings – that do not take away their rights and exploit them (like brothels do)
2. Treat them with respect – they are human beings and should be treated the same as other victims of crime – they deserve justice and support.
3. More support for women who work on the streets – counselling sessions/ group meetings to see how their mental health is.
4. Help for these women that does not include trying to convince them to give up sex work – this only reinforces the negative self-image.

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Limitations:

There are some limitations, such as the lack of research on female sex workers and victimisation of sexual assault. This questionnaire linked to this study only had forty-one participants, the study was small and therefore could not represent much of the public perception on female sex workers as victims. Many of the questions remained optional, which meant that many participants left the question blank, presumably because of the controversy of the topic. As a result of these limitations, there are certain factors that impact the accuracy of the results, affecting the validity and generalisation of the study.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

There are many negative connotations based around sex work but the most destructive are the words 'whore/hooker', 'dirty', 'desperate' and 'full of infection'. Mental health is fragile and dehumanising words or phrases such as those listed are stigmatisation that these women are faced with nonstop and such language perpetuates the negative connotations and stereotypes, reinforcing the societal biases that should have been challenged previously to help tackle the violence, abuse and harassment that is ongoing for these women, (Balfour & Allen, 2014). Again, the connotations that all these women are addicted to drugs, alcohol or both is very much just a stereotype, there are many women working the streets that do not abuse substances, this is another generalisation that perpetrates stigma and leaves the public with a misunderstanding about the behaviours and personal choices of all sex workers. Pheterson (1990)

communicates that 'whore stigma' does nothing but renders female sex workers as deviant others and was brought about to silence them while denying them the standard social rights that other citizens enjoy. When female sex workers are victimised, they are left feeling misled and let down by authorities as they are rarely taken seriously enough, Stardust et al., (2021) has illustrated that often they are denied victim status based of their job and 'irresponsibility' as citizens, many of the stereotypes are illuded with the fear that these people are untrustworthy, and therefore they are blamed for their own vulnerability and labelled as liars. YouGov (2018) also demonstrates that the public assume that women with more sexual experience are less affected after victimisation, which is utterly absurd. The dismissal of the potential impact that sexual violence of any kind has upon another person is unacceptable, consent and boundaries are crucial during all encounters and this needs to be remembered. Every woman that has experienced sexual violence has been impacted in some shape or form and their trauma and responses should not be ignored or pushed aside.

(i will cut this down)