

# Exploring the Invisible Vulnerability and Stigma of Male Sex Workers

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**Abstract:** *Since the beginning of time, prostitution has existed in our civilization. The oldest and the most traditional job is prostitution, according to history. Earlier writings and mythology also refer to it. Celestial demigods, which include Menaka, Rambha, Urvashi, & Thilothamma, who engage in high - class prostitution, are depicted in Indian mythology as being prostitutes. With impressive musical and dance abilities, they are the epitome of feminine appeal. Having multiple sex relationships, especially for financial gain, is prostitution. Major prostitution hotspots may be found all over India, making it a fairly common activity. In addition to traditional prostitution rings, one can also locate prostitutes in places like brothels, massage parlors, online travel agencies, clubs, and pubs. Now, unlike in the past, anyone can become a prostitute. Additionally, men and transgender people have entered the market for selling their physiques for cash. The number of men who engage in prostitution is growing; some do so out of necessity for money, while others are 'forced' into it. As implied by the phrase "forced," men are coerced into prostitution against their will and forced to engage in sexual activity with women, men, as well as transgender people. The reality of male sex labor, both forced and consensual, is frequently overlooked in discussions about gender rights and challenges. These young males are often forced into prostitution without resorting to physical force; instead, non - violent methods are employed. The majority of men engage in prostitution freely, mainly to make money. Some are prepared to work as homosexual prostitutes when offered a job online. These individuals are attracted to the West by the prospect of a better future, and as a result, they frequently take out loans with excessive interest rates. It is practically hard for them to repay the debt because they must labor for an inadequate salary when they arrive. The brothel operators have forced men to comply by seizing passports and threatening to reveal the men's families. Sex workers are not merely passive beneficiaries of the trade; they frequently have many identities, including that of siblings, parents, sisters, and brothers, and they often live in families. Additionally, it has been observed that sex workers frequently work outside brothels. Men forced into the sex industry frequently suffer since there is no standardized effort to safeguard or rehabilitate them. Most are engaged in the male sexual trade at night while working in different daily roles. Their daily lives continue while the circumstance keeps happening over and over again. Men who sold sex in nations where sexual minorities have been prosecuted or decriminalized instead of legalized found this to be particularly relevant. These results demonstrate the necessity for suitable sex worker support designed to handle the particular problems faced by male sex workers. Since it is still a taboo subject, it is an intriguing research topic and is thus explored in my study. In order to identify potential gaps in literature, help define new research possibilities, and direct the development of public health policy, this article aims to identify and integrate these emergent discoveries. It will explore several recent developments in the male labor market. Notably, globalization and technology have changed the environment in which the male sex business functions and helped to normalize male - sex employment.*

**Keywords:** Prostitution, Male Sex Workers, Forced Prostitution, Gender Rights, Globalization, Sex Workers, Sex Labor

## 1. Introduction

Male sex labor is a complicated and sometimes taboo facet of society that merits careful analysis. Male sex workers have several hidden dangers that are routinely disregarded. A significant factor in maintaining these vulnerabilities is societal stigma. Male sex workers are particularly vulnerable to financial instability because many of them enter the industry because there are few other employment options or they are experiencing financial hardship, which exposes them to financial risks and instability and makes them more susceptible to exploitation and violence. The experiences of male sex workers are frequently disregarded by society, which frequently links sex work with women. They are cut off from vital support systems due to this stigma, which further increases their marginalization.

For the sake of developing empathy and the welfare of this disenfranchised group, it is essential to comprehend the hidden vulnerabilities and stigma associated with male sex labor. The first steps in resolving these problems and assisting male sex workers are initiatives targeted at lowering stigma, expanding access to healthcare, and offering other career possibilities. Our culture has tolerated prostitution. History tells us that prostitution is the oldest and most traditional profession. It is also mentioned in earlier texts and mythology.

## 2. Literature Reviews

### 1) "Male Sex Work and Society" by Victor Minichiello and John Scott

The book offers a useful social prism through which to view the complex facets of this sometimes-undervalued profession. It explores the experiences, difficulties, and social dynamics of male sex workers via interviews and research, offering light on their lives, client relationships, and legal circumstances. With a worldwide perspective, it contributes to the larger conversation on sex work by providing insights into the particular problems male sex workers experience and the nuanced cultural perceptions of their line of work. It's an important tool for anyone looking to learn more about this topic.

### 2) "Male Sex Work and Society in India: The Politics of Sex and Poverty" by Rohit K. Dasgupta

It is a groundbreaking piece that examines how male sex labor, poverty, and sexuality interact in the setting of India. The book conducts extensive research to provide readers a deeper knowledge of the lives of male sex workers while stressing the socioeconomic variables that influence their decision to participate in this industry. It clarifies the difficulties individuals have in a culture that has complicated attitudes on poverty and sexuality. The work of Dasgupta

provides crucial insights into the struggles of male sex workers in India for social recognition and rights.

### 3) *"Prostitution and Sex Work" by Melissa Hope Ditmore*

It is an extensive anthology that offers a thorough analysis of sex work across the world. It addresses the difficulties associated with sex labor, including its legal, social, and health implications, drawing on the contributions of diverse researchers. The book offers a wide variety of viewpoints, including policy disputes, the real - world experiences of sex workers, and how laws affect their daily lives. It's an invaluable tool for comprehending the complex nature of sex work and how it intersects with concerns about human rights, public health, and social justice, making it must reading for scholars, policymakers, and activists in the sector.

#### **Research Problem / Question**

This research deals with the questions below:

- What are the male sex workers' hidden vulnerabilities and stigmatization experiences?
- how do these things influence their well - being and ability to seek support services?

#### **Hypothesis**

The exploration of the hidden vulnerabilities and stigma of male sex workers may make assumptions about their experiences, their motivations for working in the industry, and how society views them as a whole. These assumptions may be made without taking into account the unique characteristics of each individual or their varied backgrounds.

### **3. Methodology**

A research paper is worked upon by following two research methods; the Doctrinal and the Non - Doctrinal method.

Making a research paper by using the doctrinal method means that the paper has been conducted by using, reading, and analyzing already existing works that are available to the common public or are otherwise available with special access. In contrast, the non - doctrinal method is a method wherein a researcher collects the required data by going on ground - zero and conducting experiments/surveys and collecting primary data sources.

This paper is, however, been conducted using the doctrinal method of research as this paper has been completed by analyzing and studying different kinds of judgments, cases, articles, book sections, and newspapers.

### **4. Data Analysis**

The process through which people or organizations directly or indirectly offer commodities or services connected to sexuality is referred to as sex work. The majority of the material now available on the topic of selling sex has a strong emphasis on the experiences, clients, workplace relationships, and knowledge of the why, how, where, when, and how much of their labor is compensated for by female sellers. Cisgender guys who work in the sex industry have long been ignored and understudied since it is frequently seen as a "feminine" profession. The heteronormative worldview that maintains that sex work reifies patriarchal ideals where cisgender males

use their institutional authority to sexually abuse cisgender women is the foundation of the feminist criticisms of the sex industry that are most frequently mentioned. The absence of male sellers in sex job literature is a result of these constrictive ideas about sex customers and vendors. Male sex workers' (MSWs) lives are currently being critically examined in cross - disciplinary qualitative research.

Due to gender stereotypes around sexuality and the selling of sexual services, female sex work is sometimes seen as being more of a public problem than male sex work. Male sex employment continues to be largely ignored while being prevalent in most communities as a result of this posture. By serving a clientele that is gender diverse, Logan claims that MSWs are placed in an invisible position. Current theory and conceptualization founded on the experiences of female sex workers cannot necessarily be extended to MSWs because their clients are more likely to be cisgender men. Some of the heteronormative presumptions that women's bodies are commodities are challenged by the engagement of cisgender males in the sex industry.

In the past, male sex work has been associated with ideas of sodomy and/or same - gender desire and has been stigmatized for reasons unrelated to those that apply to female sex work. While literature on female sex work focused on feminine sexuality and societal power, male sex work was connected with effeminate conduct and an emerging language surrounding same - gender desire. The notion of male sex labor changed as the body of literature grew.

In India, prostitution is not a recent phenomenon. With time, it has been progressively expanding. This is a vocation that requires little effort and offers a fair salary. The scope of prostitution in our nation is enormous.

However, prostitution was first recognized and established for women many years ago. Some women have and still do turn to prostitution as a means of support, while others are coerced into it. The situation is comparable to the expanding idea of male prostitution. Few men enter this area in order to improve their financial situations; others are compelled to do so; and some do it only for fun, enjoyment, to satisfy their passion, and to make easy money.

A significant milestone in the prostitution industry was the recent Supreme Court of India announcement that prostitution was a legitimate profession and that sex workers have a right to dignity and constitutional protections. After this verdict, there was a significant increase in male prostitution. Before the verdict, however, there was also a decent proportion of males who engaged in prostitution, but it was not hidden or silent. The number of male prostitutes expanded when it was recognized as a legitimate trade, and it gradually and steadily became a matter of controversy, similar to that of female prostitution. Male prostitution is also subject to a number of problems, including contact with HIV/AIDS, reputational damage if discovered, threats to one's life and property, risk to one's life and property, and many others. Male prostitutes are sometimes known to offer themselves to male customers in areas without any female clients. This comment might be regarded as a result of rising male prostitute desire, dealer pressure, or greed or need for money. Another significant

factor contributing to the rise of male prostitutes in India is the rise in trafficking instances.

Due to the lack of a defined legal definition of the punishment for prostitution in India, it is not technically unlawful to engage in prostitution. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956 does, however, have several prostitution - related offenses that are punished, including operating brothels, solicitation, trafficking, and pimping. In India, taking money in exchange for sex with consent is not unlawful, thus if a guy is discovered receiving money for running a brothel, he will be punished according to the law. However, if he is caught receiving money in exchange for sex with consent without consent, he will not be punished.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that the world of sex work is defined by strongly embedded gender stereotypes and prejudices that traditionally have disenfranchised male sex workers (MSWs). The overwhelming emphasis on female sex work in study and debate has contributed to the marginalization of MSWs and their particular difficulties. In order to fully understand and assist male sex workers, gender norms and heteronormative beliefs have reinforced the idea that sex work is primarily a "feminine" career. Like many other nations, India has seen the sex industry grow throughout time, with both male and female sex workers entering the field for a variety of reasons. The Indian Supreme Court's recent approval of prostitution as a recognized profession was a major turning point that raised awareness of both female and male sex labor. The multiplicity of problems that sex workers confront, including health concerns, threats to their safety, and the effects of trafficking, have also been brought to light by this acknowledgment.

It is more difficult to solve the problems encountered by sex workers in India since there is no clear legal definition of what constitutes prostitution's punishment. In order to combat social stereotypes that support discrimination and stigma against MSWs, it is imperative to develop a rights - based strategy that promotes the wellbeing and dignity of all sex workers, regardless of their gender. We may strive toward more inclusive legislation and support structures that defend the rights of all people engaging in sex work by understanding the range of experiences within the sex work sector.

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