



"Strive Harder and Don't Lose Hope": Sexual Exploitation of Male Youth in the Sex Trade in Manila

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Introduction to the context

This is the third paper in a series of papers submitted to IJSSP on vulnerability of sex workers in Southeast Asia; Miles *et al.* (2019) and Davis *et al.* (2019) demonstrate that sex work is vulnerable to physical, emotional and sexual violence irrespective of age, sexuality, and, in this paper, gender. The authors have also conducted research with sexually exploited young women in Cambodia (Miles and Alsiyao, 2019), young men in Cambodia (Miles and Davis, 2012; Miles and Blanch, 2011), Thailand (Davis *et al.*, 2017) and India (Miles and Thakur, 2013) and also with street children in the Philippines (Davis and Miles, 2019), Thailand (Davis *et al.*, 2020) and Cambodia (Davis *et al.*, 2020; Davis *et al.*, 2017; Davis *et al.*, 2020).

Sexual exploitation of children and young people has received much needed attention over the past decade in global literature, however much of the research and social policy generated around the topic have focused on the experiences of women and girls (Cockbain *et al.*, 2017) and have commonly failed to address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of boys and young men (Mitchell *et al.*, 2017; James, 2010; Macintire, 2005). This is in spite of the evidence for both short and long term physical and emotional consequences of the sexual abuse of boys and young men (Dube *et al.*, 2005; Holmes, 1998; Lisak, 1994). This lack of attention combined with social and cultural pressures to be the primary breadwinner leaves many young men in a desperate situation. This is reflected in the title, "Strive Harder and Don't Lose Hope", a direct quote from a young participant in this study.

In the Philippines, literature commonly identifies boys and young men as exploiters, pimps, and buyers of sex or as active and willing participants in sex work, and downplays their roles as victims or survivors of exploitation (Sanchez *et al.*, 2019; ECPAT Philippines, 2008). As in other parts of Southeast Asia, this is in part due to cultural norms and assumptions about gender and sexuality presume boys to be "tough" and able to protect themselves (Frederick, 2010; Sanchez *et al.*, 2019). If a young male is a victim, it is common for him to receive blame for failing to live up to his masculine expectations (Sanchez *et al.*, 2019; Watkins and Bentovim, 1992; Grubman-Black, 1990). In traditional settings, sex and sexuality, particularly between people of the same gender, is considered taboo, seldom discussed, and often little understood. Grubman-Black notes, "The very thought or image of a man "having sex" with a boy produces such extreme reactions that many people find it easier and less painful to ignore or deny it." In this environment, it is common for male victims to perceive abuse as a sign that they may be (or become) gay, especially if the boy did not forcibly resist his attacker or if he experienced sexual arousal from the experience (Watkins and Bentovim, 1992). Because of this stigma and the resulting fears of discrimination, boys are less likely to report instances of sexual abuse. Sexual violence against children is notably common in the Philippines - particularly among males - with a recent UNICEF study finding 24.7% of Filipino males and 18% of females aged 13-17 reporting experiences of some form of sexual

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3 violence. Further, 3.2% of children cite forced penetration (anal, oral, and/or vaginal) - which
4 was nearly twice as common among males (4.1% in comparison with 2.1%) (CWC and
5 UNICEF, 2016). (This is corroborated by similar findings in our previous research in India,
6 Cambodia and Thailand on boys and young men in the sex trade - Chiang Mai, Siem Reap,
7 Phnom Penh).
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10 Due to this general lack of information and awareness, healthcare systems are often
11 unprepared to handle cases of sexual violence against males and social welfare practitioners
12 often lack the training and sensitization needed to identify and care for male survivors (Von
13 Hohendorff *et al.*, 2017). This has been further complicated by cultural narratives that assume
14 that male victims are less impacted by victimization, that female-perpetration is insignificant
15 or nonexistent, that joke about male rape in prisons, and characterize males as sexually
16 insatiable (Stemple and Meyer, 2014; Graham, 2006; James, 2010).
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19 Males in the sex trade industry, including victims of sexual exploitation, are uniquely
20 vulnerable within this context as they less likely to be identified as vulnerable and more likely
21 to be ascribed agency (Dennis, 2008). Male Sex work in the Philippines takes a variety of
22 forms including: dance instruction, massage therapy, bar-based sex work, freelance
23 prostitution and child sexual exploitation (Tan, 2001: pp.244-245). While the demand for
24 male sex work is a reality, measuring the scope of the industry is difficult in that no official
25 size estimate statistics on male sex workers exist (WHO, 2001: p.26). In addition to this,
26 academic work on the male sex industry in the Philippines has been sparse, and comes largely
27 from non-Filipino researchers. Tan (2001) writes that much of the research available has
28 tended toward sensationalism, while paradoxically minimizing the anti-gay
29 stigma/discrimination that is commonly felt in the Philippines. He notes that most available
30 descriptions distort the real picture of male sex work, which has had serious implications in
31 the creation of adequate interventions and public policies for the people in this industry (Tan,
32 2001: p.241).
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37 The prevailing *bakla* ideology is said to shape the demand for male sex workers in the
38 Philippines. Since gay men (or *bakla*) are culturally understood to be biologically males with
39 the inner-being (lo'ob) of a woman, male sex workers must satisfy the demand for "real" or
40 "straight" men who are able to make bakla feel that they are truly women within this context
41 (Hernandez, 2002). These arrangements between *bakla* and "real men" have a long history in
42 the Philippines. In a series of qualitative interviews with older gay men in the Philippines.
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45 Tan describes the existence of numerous male brothels within Manila ghettos as early as the
46 1960's. These brothels, or "*casas*", are named with the same Spanish name that was used for
47 female brothels in existence at the same time. He describes these venues as "spartan". Clients
48 are said to have been provided with a wooden cot, a cheap hand towel and cooking lard for
49 lubricant. While these venues lasted for some time, Tan notes that most of them were
50 replaced by massage parlors, which had become popular by the 1970's (Tan, 2001: p.248).
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53 Similarly, it is important to note that males in the sex industry are are seldom perceived to be
54 vulnerable within these relationships. Because males are perceived to have a strong libido
55 which needs to be satisfied, "soft" sex work with bakla if often acceptable, as long as the
56 young male does not become *bakla* (or effeminate) himself (Tan, 2001: p.246). In fact,
57 because females are believed to have a virginity which needs to be protected, *bakla* are often
58 seen as a sexual outlet for a young, unmarried males' libido. Tan describes a phrase which is
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commonly used, *may mga* prostitute, at *may mga* substitute (“there are prostitutes, and then there are substitutes”).

Methodology

Structured interviews were conducted with 51 male masseurs from numerous massage services in four vicinities within the Metro-Manila area known to be key to the industry. The study drew male respondents from three major outlets of massage within the Metro-Manila area: massage establishments with only male masseurs (male-only establishments), massage establishments with both males and females (mixed-gender establishments), and independent (or freelance) masseurs. Vulnerabilities of these young men were assessed, particularly focusing on a number of areas including financial security, sexual health and history, experiences of violence, spiritual development and spirituality, and future plans.

All interviewers were provided with careful research and ethical training using UNIAP ethical guidelines (2008) to ensure that respondents were provided with respect and that culturally appropriate language was used before, during, and after the interview process. In order to maintain the privacy of the young men interviewed, all interview sessions were conducted as private dialogues between researcher and respondent. As a precaution, all interviews were held in public venues (i.e. restaurants, coffee shops) within close range of other members of the research team to ensure safety and accountability.

The masseurs involved in this study represent a broad diversity of males throughout the Metro-Manila area. These included: masseurs from establishments catering to men who have sex with men (MSM); Spas/Parlors for the general public with both male and female masseurs; and independent or freelance male masseurs who often advertise their services on the streets or in an online environment. In establishments catering to MSM, massage is often sexualized and is understood to potentially involve sexual exchange, spas/massage parlors do not assume sexual exchange however, it is commonly offered or requested by customers. Independent or freelance massage may or may not explicitly advertise sexual exchange however, it is assumed to commonly take place.

All survey interviews were conducted in the Tagalog language without the assistance of a translator. Interviewers sought to establish rapport with respondents prior to the survey, providing each respondent with information concerning: the research and its purpose; assurance of anonymity and confidentiality; information regarding the personal and sensitive nature of the interview questions; and their right to choose not to answer any question, stop the survey, and/or withdraw from the study at any time.

The research instrument was adapted for the Philippine cultural context from a similar survey developed by Jasmir Thakur and Glenn Miles in Mumbai, India. The survey was a combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions covering areas including: demographics; relationships; personal and family finances; issues of prejudice, stigma and discrimination; migration; sexual identity and personal sexual history; sexual health; substance abuse; sexual violence and abuse; income generation; dignity and future planning.

Descriptive analyses of the survey results were undertaken using SPSS 20.0 (SPSS, 2011). Thematic analysis was used to explore the responses to open-ended questions included in the

survey, with key features of this data coded and sorted in a systematic manner to reflect patterns in the data and inform themes and sub-themes relevant to the questions used in the survey (Boyatzis, 1998).

Limitations

While the data collection team attempted to gather a sampling of respondents that was representative of the male massage industry in the Metro-Manila area, field researchers were limited to interviewing only those respondents who were readily visible, self-identified as “masseurs”, and those who were willing and/or allowed to be interviewed. Therefore, it should be noted that the voices in this study are only representative of this group, and this group alone. Anecdotal conversations with various groups and organizations that work within various high-risk communities in Metro-Manila revealed the existence of groups of young boys who are known to provide massage and other sexual services to adults. While field researchers made attempts to follow these leads, key informants were unable to provide contact with these groups within the time frame available.

It should be noted that there is some difficulty in gathering accurate data on the ages of the boys and young men working in potentially exploitive fields such as these. Within the past few decades there has been increased vigilance and harsher legislation for child abuse and endangerment which can drive younger masseurs to go underground or to give false information about their ages.

Results

Demographics

The respondent's ages range from 18 to 37 years old, with a median age of 24 years. Over two-thirds (69%) fall within the United Nations definition of youth (15-24 years old). While all respondents were native to the Philippines, a large majority (73.5%) had migrated to the Metro-Manila area, predominantly from the poorer provincial areas in Luzon (45.1%), followed by Mindanao (13.7%), and Visayas (11.8%). Among those who had migrated to the Metro-Manila area, more than half (56%) have migrated within the past five years. Time since migration was diverse with the shortest amount of time since migration being a few weeks and the longest being 20 years, with a mean of 6.3 years.

TABLE 1: Place of Birth Among Migrants to Metro-Manila

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|-------------------------------|--------------|---|---------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Luzon (23 or 45.1%) | Pampanga | 5 | Mindanao (7 or 13.7%) | Zamboanga | 3 |
| | Tarlac | 5 | | "Mindanao" | 2 |
| | Batangas | 2 | | Ozamiz | 1 |
| | Camarines N. | 2 | | Zamboanga | 1 |
| | Cavite | 2 | Visayas (6 or 11.8%) | Negros Occidental | 2 |
| | Bulacan | 1 | | Samar | 2 |
| | Isabela | 1 | | Bacolod | 1 |
| | Laguna | 1 | | Capiz | 1 |
| | Mindoro | 1 | | | |

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|-------------|---|--------------------------|-----------|
| Nueva Ecija | 1 | Outside Metro Manila | 4 |
| | | Total Migrants | 38 |
| | | Total Respondents | 51 |

The majority of respondents (52%) had completed at least some high-school and more than one-third (39%) had completed at least some post-secondary education (college or technical school). Three respondents had not yet completed a primary-level education (elementary school).

Over half of respondents (54%) live with immediate family members, which includes parents or siblings and, for some, a wife/live-in partner. In addition to this, 17.6% of respondents cite that they live with workmates, most of these come from male-only massage establishments, where masseurs would often live at the massage establishment itself. This greatly differed from a similar study conducted with male masseurs in Siem Reap (Miles and Davis, 2012) in which only 37% of respondents lived with immediate family members, and very few were married or had live-in partners.

A majority of respondents (67%) cite that their families were aware of their work as masseurs. Additionally, 27.5% of respondents cite that their families were not only aware of their work but were also instrumental in bringing the respondent into the massage industry in the first place. In our previous study conducted in Mumbai, 61% of respondents stated that no one knew of their work as masseurs (Miles and Thakur, 2013).

Stigma/Discrimination

While the study did not directly ask about experiences of stigma or discrimination due to working as masseurs, a number of respondents indicated that they had kept their work secrets from their families and housemates. In order to understand experiences of stigma, we consider stated negative impacts on intimate, personal relationships, the extent to which masseurs share their profession with housemates and members of their family, as well as the physical and verbal violence they experience within their communities. More than a third (35.3%) of respondents felt that their work as a masseur negatively impacted their intimate, personal relationships with two citing “a little” impact (3.9%), seven citing “moderate” impact (13.7%), and nine citing “heavy” impact (17.6%). The majority of masseurs shared the nature of their work with housemates (70.5%) with the lowest rate of disclosure among independent masseurs and highest rates of disclosure among masseurs working in mixed-gender spas or parlors. Among those who did not share the nature of their work with housemates, fear of shame, loss of respect, or other negative social repercussions are observed.

Masseurs less commonly share the nature of their work with family members. Overall, 64.7% of masseurs cite that they have family members aware of their work as masseurs. Masseurs working independently are least likely to share the nature of their work (46.1%) with family members, followed by those working in mixed-gender establishments (56.5%). Masseurs in spa/parlours with male and female staff were most likely to have families aware of their work (93.3%). Reasons for not disclosing their work as masseurs commonly centered around

shame, stigma, and fears of experiencing violence from family members. One masseur from a male establishment cites, “This is dirty work. I don’t want the shame.”

Sexual Exploitation and Violence

Respondents cite first entering into massage work between the ages of 16 and 29 with a mean age of 20.4. The majority of respondents (68%) started work as a masseur between the ages of 18 and 21 and four (8%) say that they started before the age of 18. Nearly 75% cite they had entered the massage industry through someone they personally knew. More than a third (34%) cite that a friend brought them into the industry, and 40% cite recruitment by a family member. In comparison to previous research in Cambodia, masseurs’ families seem to be much more involved in the recruitment process in the Philippine context (Miles and Blanch, 2011; Miles and Davis, 2012). Nearly half of the respondents (45.5%) cite coming into the industry because they perceived it to be an “easy” source of income, while 33% indicated that they chose the field because they had no other options.

Table 2: Age Entering Massage and Age at Interview

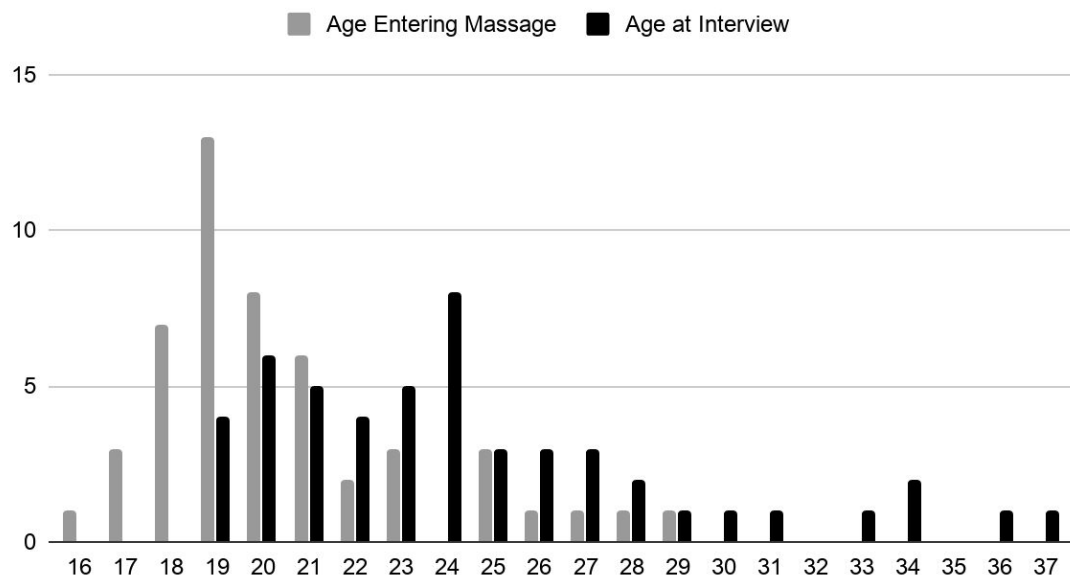


Table 2: Ages Respondents Began Massage Work

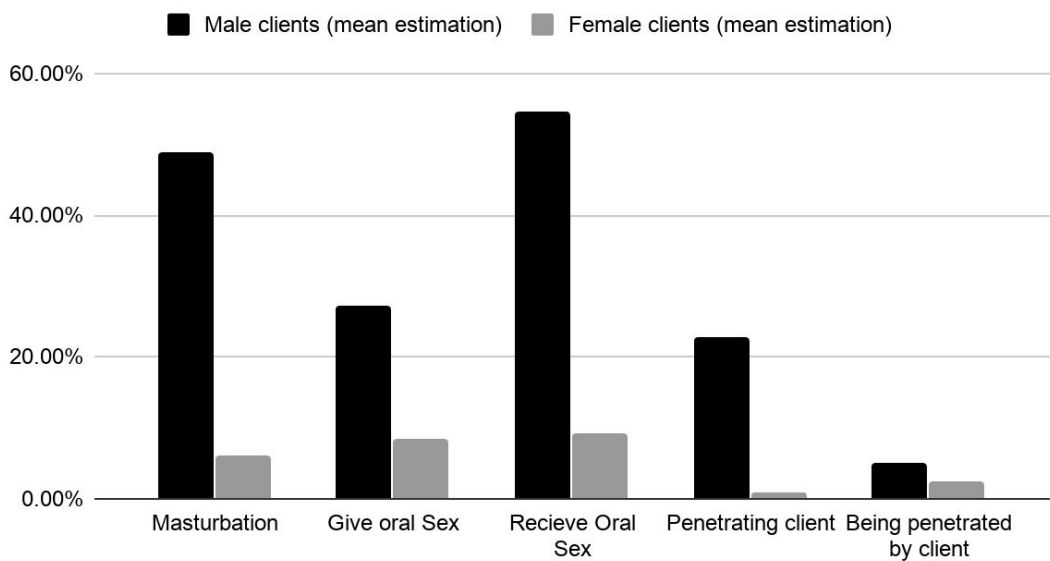
The majority of respondents (80%) identify as “heterosexual” or men who prefer having sex with women, while 18% identified as bisexual. Only 2% identify as “homosexual” or men preferring to have sex with other men. The researchers felt these questions to be especially relevant in the Philippine context due to the increased stigmas men who have sex with men may experience. Further, sexuality data was believed to bring clarity to an unhelpful assumption that gay males inherently desire and enjoy sex with males clients as these assumptions have been used as a means of discounting the vulnerabilities of men who have sex with other men and minimising the exploitive elements of their experiences.

The number of clients that respondents reported seeing for massage services ranged from 1 to 15 clients per day, with an average of 3 to 4 (3.34) clients per day. Eight respondents declined to answer questions regarding sexual services. On average, respondents indicated meeting with 3 to 4 clients for sex within the past week, the maximum being 20 clients met for sex and

the minimum having met with no clients for sex. Regarding the genders of the clients, respondents indicated that their clients for whom they provided sexual services were predominantly male, however, numerous respondents indicated that females would, on occasion, require sexual services as well.

Types of Sexual Experiences: Respondents were then asked about what kinds of sexual services they were usually required to perform with their clients, both male and female (See table 3). The majority of masseurs (82%) indicate at least somewhat regular sexual exchanges with male clients and nearly one-fourth (24%) with their female clients. Among male clients, 45% are estimated to require manual stimulation from the masseur, 27% are estimated to perform oral sex on the masseur and 55% require the massuer to perform oral on them. Further, 23% are estimated to require the masseur to penetrate them and 5% require the masseur to be penetrated. Among female clients, 6% are estimated to require manual stimulation from the masseur, 8% are estimated to perform oral sex on the masseur and 9% require the massuer to perform oral on them. Further, 16% are estimated to require the masseur to penetrate them and 3% require the masseur to be penetrated (with digits or objects).

Table 3: Sexual Services Provided to Customers (past week)



Experiences of violence: More than one third of masseurs in this study, or 38% of respondents, indicate instances in which they had been forced or coerced to have sex against their wishes. Of this group, 44% (eight) state that this has happened “sometimes” (1-5 times), 33% of this group (six) indicated being forced to have sex “occasionally” (6-10 times) and two state that this has happened “very often” (11-15 times). One in six respondents (18% or 9 people) cite other experiences of physical violence from clients. In addition to violence from Clients, six masseurs (12%) cite facing violence from the police, nearly all of whom (five of the six) were working as freelance masseurs. A fifth of masseurs (22%) cite violence from other masseurs in the industry, largely reported among freelance masseurs and to a lesser extent among those working in male-only and mixed-gender establishments. Discussions during interviews indicated that there is a significant amount of competition among freelance masseurs for getting a client. Whereas masseurs working in massage establishments are often

chosen by the client, freelance masseurs often rely on marketing themselves to clients on the street.

Previous research conducted in Mumbai, India (Miles and Thakur, 2013) found significantly high instances of violence among males in the massage industry. In particular, the study reports that nearly 100% of masseurs interviewed in Mumbai had faced violence by police, 47% by gangs, 42% by clients, and nearly 100% had faced violence by members of the community (Miles and Thakur, 2013).

Frequency of Substance Use: Forty-two percent of respondents or 21 people indicated illegal drug usage within the past three months. Respondents citing drug usage were then asked what types of drugs they had used within the past 3 months. The most commonly cited drug was Crack-Cocaine (*Shabu*), followed by Marijuana, and then traditional Cocaine. Nearly one-third or 31% of respondents admit to using alcohol during sex with clients. Research suggests a link between drug use and sexual abuse, including manifestations of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), increased anxiety, depression, sexual promiscuity, or increased rates of suicide (Paolucci *et al.*, 2001). In this context, substances can be used as a coping mechanism or “emotional avoidance” to numb emotional pain associated with traumatic experiences (Polusny and Follette, 1995 cited in Lalor and McElvaney, 2010: p.13).

Alternative employment: Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their likelihood to take alternative employment offering 6,500 php per month. This number was calculated to be the average monthly income for an unskilled worker in the Metro-Manila area and is approximately 1,000 php less than the mean income earned by the masseurs in this study. Slightly more than half of respondents (53.1%) cite that they would ‘definitely’ be interested in taking an alternative job if it were made available to them, 22.4% cited that they might be interested and nearly one-fourth, or 24.5%, stated that they would not be interested in such an offer. The number of male masseurs in the Philippines who would “definitely” take an alternative career is slightly higher than those in previous studies. In Phnom Penh only 37.8% would “definitely” take an alternative career, while 47% state the same in both Siem Reap and Mumbai, India.

Skills Desired: Interviewers asked what other job skills that respondents would like to learn. This was an open-ended question and respondents could answer however they chose. The largest number of respondents, nearly one-fourth, indicate a desire to become an electronics technician. Following this, 17.6% indicated that he would like to become an auto mechanic. Cooking/Baking skills were desired by 14.7% of respondents or 5 people, as well as another 14.7% who desired to learn how to weld. Some of the lesser-mentioned skills included driving (mentioned by 8.8% of respondents), food services (mentioned by 5.9% of respondents), and one respondent mentions a desire to become a police officer.

Discussion

Trajectory into massage work

The respondents' trajectories into sex work seem to be largely driven by economic factors resulting from poverty and expectations to provide for the needs of extended family members, including aging parents and tuition fees of younger siblings. A significant majority of respondents (73.5%) cite migration into the Metro-Manila area, largely from poorer provincial areas throughout Luzon. In comparison to other similar studies the researchers had conducted in the region, education levels among respondents in the Philippines were comparatively high, with the majority of respondents having completed at least a high school level education and a few having completed some college level courses. Nearly half of respondents say they entered into massage because it was a means of 'easy money', a lack of profitable job options and needs for vocational training seem to play a notable role in respondents choosing work in the massage industry as opposed to other job options. Given the majority of masseurs who cite responsibilities for supporting aging parents, school age siblings, wives, and in some instances, children, massage provides a lucrative and profitable source of income. A key issue seems to be their ability to earn meaningful income in the Philippine job market with the education that they have. This is compounded by findings that more than half of respondents would leave massage for a job that could offer 6,500 php (~\$128USD) per month—which is slightly lower than minimum wage at the time the research was conducted.

In our experience few jobs (including service jobs) are available in the Philippines without at least some college credit, this often places low-income Filipinos in a precarious situation. Even among those who are able to attain a service-industry job, with minimum wages across the archipelago ranging from P290 (US\$5.70) to P537 (US\$10.61)¹ for a full day of work. While the Philippine Government provides technical training for low-income Filipinos through the TESDA program, this did not seem to be widely available to everyone at the time the research was conducted. Within the research sample, only one respondent (working in a spa) had accessed TESDA training courses. Further research would be helpful to explore potential barriers to accessing such government services.

While the overall majority of respondents came into the massage trade through family members (40%) or through friends (34%), there are notable differences in recruitment methods across masseurs working in different industries. Most unique are independent masseurs (n=13) who largely come into massage through friends or through previous work in the sex industry. A number of respondents from this group indicate learning massage informally through sex work and found that they are able to gain more clients by offering massage (often in addition to) sex work. Respondents from MSM-oriented establishments and Spas/massage parlours indicate similar forms of recruitment with the majority entering through family and, to a lesser extent, through friends.

Some differences are notable between masseurs working in different types of massage. Masseurs from male-only establishments are more likely to have recently migrated from provincial areas and cite coming into massage due to the perception that they could make more money. Despite this, only six masseurs from male only establishments (26%) indicate receiving any regular wages with 16 (70%) citing that their income is dependent entirely upon tips from customers. Among masseurs in mixed-gender establishments, only three cite depending solely upon tips, with the majority earning wages or a combination of wages and tips. Independent masseurs are more difficult to categorize. While the majority indicate

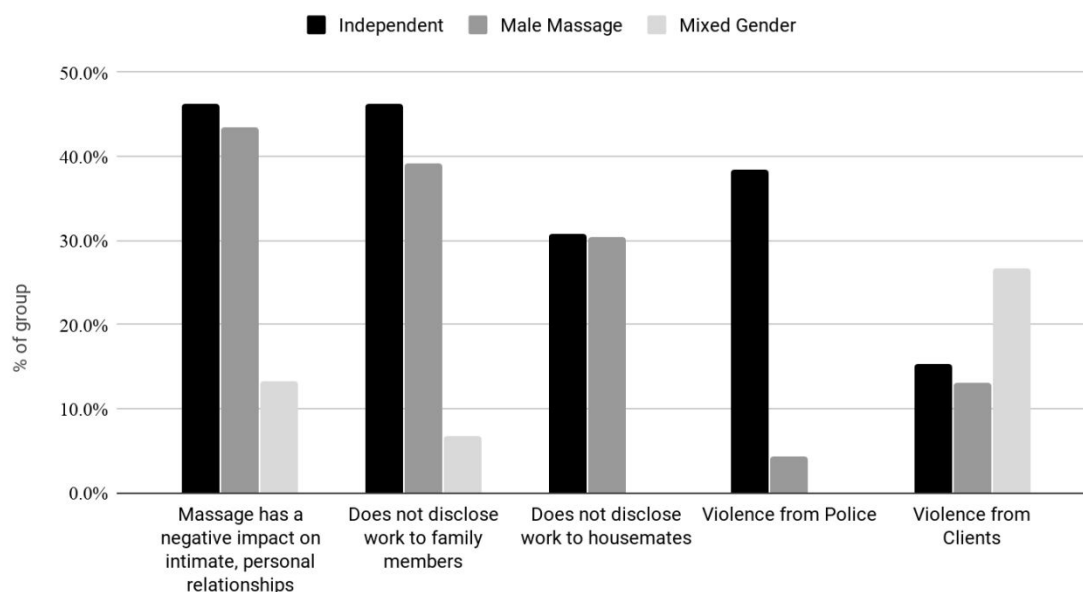
¹ <https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/minimum-wages-in-asean-how-are-they-calculated/>

having set rates for their services, these rates are often negotiated and re-negotiated depending on the services provided and a number indicate not receiving payment or, in one instance, being robbed by clients.

Stigma and its impacts

We assess stigma by looking at a number of factors, including respondent's understanding of impact to their personal relationships, their willingness to disclose their work to the people close to them, and experiences of verbal, physical, or emotional violence tied to their work (See table 4). While more than a third (35.3%) of respondents cite massage has a negative impact on their intimate, personal relationships, there is notably higher disclosed impact among those working as independent masseurs (46.2%) and those male establishments (43.5%), in comparison with those working in mixed-gender spas/parlors (13.3%). Among those working independently and those in male establishments, "shame" and "family troubles" were commonly mentioned as negative impacts resulting from their work. A number of masseurs in these outlets describe jealousy and lack of trust from their wives, as well as general fears of shame from their families and broader community. Overall, about a third of respondents hid the nature of their work from their housemates (29.5%) and family members (35.3%). Among these groups, independent masseurs most commonly hid the nature of their work, with some keeping their work secret from their spouses and close friends, in some cases mentioning fears of verbal and physical violence from people close to them, if they were to find out.

Table 4: Stigma Indicators Across Outlets of Massage



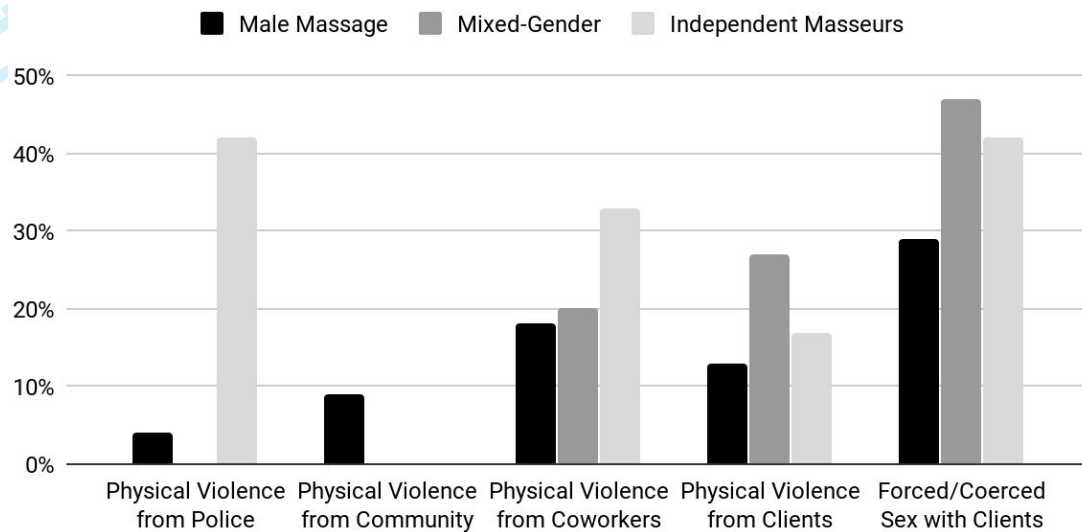
While violence is described by masseurs in all three outlets of massage work, notable differences are observed (see table 5). Violence from police and community members is largely experienced by independent masseurs and those working in male establishments. Among independent masseurs this includes one instance of imprisonment for their work on the streets. Violence from clients and employers is more commonly seen among masseurs working in mixed-gender establishments and tends to involve verbal abuse from employers and sexual aggression from clients. While independent masseurs were less likely to disclose violence from clients, the violence they describe seems to be significantly more explicit. One

independent masseur describes his client demanding more sex and then becoming verbally/physically violent when the masseur was unable to maintain an erection.

Overall, only six respondents describe experiencing violence from police within the past six months, five of whom work independently and one of whom works in a male establishment. Community violence is cited by only two respondents, both from male establishments. A key consideration here are the differences in masseurs understandings of violence. Anecdotal evidence from this study, as well as evidence from our previous work in this field, suggests that independent masseurs and those in male only establishments experience significantly more violence as a normal part of their work. Due to this 'normalization', it is likely that masseurs in these areas of work may experience violence regularly, but be less likely to label it as violence as it is a routine experience within their daily work.

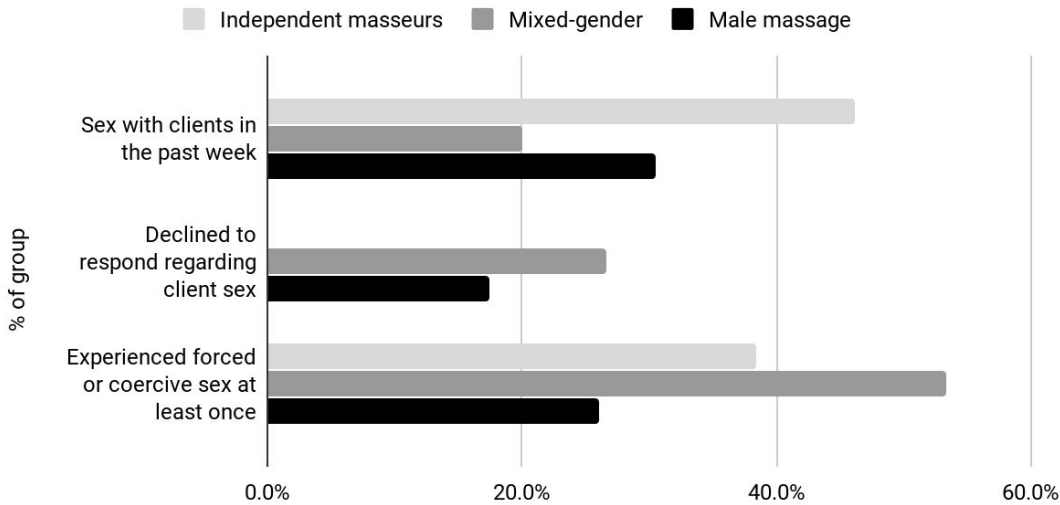
While respondents coming from mixed gender establishments were less likely to meet their customer for sex, they were also significantly more likely to report instances of being forced to have sex against their wishes. Nearly half of respondents from mixed gender establishments (47%) report instances of being forced or coerced to have sex with a client against their wishes compared to the 29% in male only establishments who report the same. These findings are consistent with similar research conducted in Siem Reap, Cambodia (Miles and Davis, 2012). While the reasons for these disparities are unclear and more research is needed, there are a number of potential possibilities for these differences. It is possible that clients going to mixed gender massage establishments have more shame and incongruity about their sexual behaviors than those going to the more overtly sexual male-only establishments. Further research is needed on the clients seeking sexual service in mixed gender establishments, sexualality, marital status, and feelings of guilt/shame associated with same-sex sexual activity. Some of this discrepancy between frequency of sexual services and instances of forced/coerced sex may be due to the fact males working in male only establishments are more tolerant (or expectant) of violence or coercion from clients (since sexual activity is assumed to be a part of their work). Similarly, it is possible that violence and/or sexually aggressive behavior is not expected by males working in mixed gender establishments, seeing as they are assumed to provide 'just massage, and sexual activity between masseur and client may be covert and cannot be assumed to be available.

Table 5: Experiences of Violence Across Outlets of Massage (past three months)



Experiences of verbal or physical violence within the past three months varied greatly between different outlets of the massage industry. Respondents coming from mixed gender establishments reported the highest rates of violence from their clients and no violence from police or community members. This corresponds with their data of forced/coerced sex and surrounding qualitative data which indicate instances of sexual advances as well as verbal and physical violence when sexual advances are refused. Respondents from male-only establishments report few instances of verbal or physical violence - the highest rates of violence are reported to come from their fellow co-workers with 18% of respondents indicating violence within the past three months. Although the number of participants who are independent are small, nearly half of masseurs who work independently report experiences of violence from police and one-third report violence from co-workers. This largely seems to be due to independent masseurs having a much stronger association with sex work than respondents coming from other venues of massage. Some recall instances of arrest and detainment for sex work. One younger respondent disclosed great fear and trauma from a one-year imprisonment for selling sex.

Table 6: Experiences of Forced/Coerced Sex and Frequency of Sex with Clients



Additionally, comparative figures in this study are very similar to data found in previous research in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The Siem Reap study drew a sampling from masseurs working in both mixed-gender establishments and male-only establishments. It found that male masseurs working in mixed-gender massage establishments report higher instances of violence, lower incomes, younger ages, less education, and were 22% more likely to report instances of being forced to have sex against their wishes in comparison with those masseurs working in male-only establishments. This may be a significant trend which deserves further exploration in future research.

It is possible that some of the confusion between force/coercion and consent stems from the fact that oftentimes respondents would agree to have sex because they would receive money or some other form of benefit in exchange for their compliance in sex. This is particularly relevant when we take into account that, at least two of these first sexual experiences (both labeled as consensual) were had with teachers - people in positions of authority over the respondents. These two respondents indicate being 12 and 13 years old at the time of this experience. Similar instances such as these were also found in previous studies conducted in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap among males and transgender males in the sex industry (Miles and Blanch, 2011; Miles and Davis, 2012; Davis and Miles, 2018). Numerous respondents throughout these studies report respondent consenting to sex at very young ages and state that they did so because they owed it to someone or because they would get something in return. While, by international definition, these may not be considered consensual sex acts, respondents in these studies commonly had labeled these experiences to be consensual in nature.

This ambiguity between coercion and consent stands as a limitation to the present study and should inform the development of future studies as well. In studies to come, it may be more useful to ask respondents to describe their first sexual experiences qualitatively, in addition to only stating whether it was coerced or consensual. This could be done by asking “how did this first experience make you feel?” or “when you think about your feelings at the time of this experience, what words come to mind?”

Sexuality is another consideration in understanding potential stigmas faced by respondents. While the majority of respondents identified as heterosexual, many of whom had wives and children in the provinces, there is still considerable anti-gay stigma faced by those who regularly engage in sex with men, as well as among who identify as homosexual. Identification as homosexual among respondents in the Philippines is notably lower (2% homosexual, 80% heterosexual, 18% bisexual) in contrast to research conducted in Cambodia where 16% in Phnom Penh identified as homosexual (58% heterosexual and 21% as bisexual) and 40% in Siem Reap identified as homosexual (47% heterosexual, 11% bisexual). Similarly, a slight majority of masseurs Mumbai cite a preference to have sex with the same gender (with 45% preferring the opposite gender). Anecdotal evidence suggests a prioritization of sexual health services among gay male populations, often by NGOs catering to gay male clientele. Due to stigmas surrounding sexuality and potential fears of being labeled as gay, it is possible that straight-identifying masseurs may be less likely to seek sexual health services from organizations catered to gay men.

Sexuality and Commodification of Sex

The two most common reasons that respondents cite for entering the massage industry were that they perceived that they had no other options for employment and that the massage industry was believed to be a source of 'easy' income. Looking at the respondents' incomes, it is apparent that some are able to make a significant amount of money through massage. However, it is also important to point out that income within the massage industry is greatly dependent upon receiving tips to supplement a meager hourly wage, if an hourly wage exists at all. Half of the respondents interviewed indicate that tips are their only form of income, and that they receive no additional wages for their services.

While it is true that some respondents reported significant earnings, half of all respondents reported earnings of less than 5000PHP a month (~125USD) on average, which is about 1000PHP below the average wage of an unskilled worker in Metro Manila. For those coming from mixed gender establishments, 64% reported earnings less than 4000PHP (~100USD) a month on average, which is about 2000PHP below that of an average unskilled worker in Metro Manila. While there seems to be a common perception of "easy money", it is notable that the earnings of most are not greater than what could be earned by anyone else in any other career.

Respondents admitted that they had been required to provide masturbation (hand jobs) for slightly less than half (49%) of their male clients and only 6% of their female clients. In terms of penetrative sexual intercourse, respondents indicated that they were required to penetrate 23% of their male clients and 18% of their female clients. Respondents were also asked about experiences of having group sex in which one masseur would be asked to have sex with multiple clients at the same time. More than one-third or 34% of respondents cite instances of having experiences such as this within the past three months. All of these sex services increase risk of sexual infections and sexual violence.

It is also notable that only one respondent in this study identified as a "man who likes to have sex with other men" and 18% identified as a "man who likes to have sex with both genders". These numbers are significantly lower than what was found in similar studies in Thailand and Cambodia. In Cambodia, 38% of respondents in Siem Reap (18 people) and 45% of respondents in Phnom Penh (7 people) indicated that they preferred other males for sex. In

Chiang mai, Thailand, 20% of male entertainment workers (10 people) stated that they preferred sex with other males.

This phenomenon of having nearly no respondents identifying as a “male who like to have sex with other males” (MSM) could be attributed to the way in which gender and sexuality is understood within the Philippines context. Within this understanding, being a “real” man requires that one is attracted to women, does not act feminine, or have sexual or overly intimate relations with other men (Hernandez and Imperial, 2009: p.27). In addition to this, Tan (2001) describes the abiding cultural assumption that if MSM are not careful they will become bakla themselves (256), a denotation which is culturally understood to be a kind of androgynous mix of male and female—someone who essentially has the body of a man, but the spirit of a woman (Garcia, 1). Under these assumptions, it is possible that masculine, male sex workers resent the label 'bakla' because of its feminine connotations and are thus more likely to identify as “straight” in that, these are culturally (and linguistically) “real men”.

Recommendations for Social Policy and Future Research

To the owner's and/or managers of Massage Establishments: there should be an acknowledgment that sex work can and often does take place among employees, whether inside or outside of the establishment, and there is a need for provision of appropriate information for both the personal safety and sexual health of employees. This seems to be particularly true for masseurs working with mixed gender massage establishments, where sexual services are not assumed to take place. Community Health workers should be assigned to doing outreach to these venues for prevention and treatment of STIs.

To the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment and NGOs providing vocational training and livelihood projects. There is a need for both Government and Non-Government Organizations to take on and train youth/young adults coming from challenging social backgrounds and to lobby socially responsible businesses as an alternative to sex work. In addition to this, it may be helpful to more actively advertise (and perhaps subsidize) existing vocational training programs (such as TESDA in Manila) and Alternative Learning programs (such as the Alternative Learning System, or ALS). A broader promotion of these existing programs could potentially help migrating provincial workers who may not be aware of what educational opportunities might exist for them. In addition to this, free or low-cost vocational and life skills training programs provided by NGO's and/or local churches would be greatly beneficial for young men working in the sex industry. In Mumbai, India *Samabhavana* were able to get their participants into a Government accredited vocational training in car mechanics which provided a legitimate alternative with a reasonable salary. *Samabhavana* made a point of finding work opportunities on completion of the nine month training which is another indication of success. In Cambodia Hard Places Community have facilitated training and employment in tourism support, hairdressing and hospitality, cooking and waiting skills in their own restaurant. Respondents in this study indicated having a diverse range of vocational interests. While it would be ideal for NGO's to refer their clients to training for alternative careers, it may also be useful for some to allow these young men a level of choice in their own future work.

Department of Education / Department of Social Welfare and Development: It may be significant that two respondents in this study indicated that their first sexual experiences were with school teachers. More research is needed on sexual abuse of boys by teachers. While more information is needed on the prevalence of such instances anecdotal conversations seem to indicate an ability for young male students in some settings to “buy grades” with sexual favors. It is important that teachers receive training in child safeguarding in classrooms and that the strictest measures are applied to teachers in school and vocational training institutes who are found to be sexual abusers of children under their care.

Department of Social Welfare and Development / Social-welfare related NGOs: There is a need for the creation of educational resources for the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation that consider boys and are not focused only on girls. For example, the resources at www.goodtouchbadtouchflipchart.org available in Tagalog and many other Asian languages and training developed by the Stairway Foundation www.stairwayfoundation.org, an international NGO that has many years experience working with boys. There is a need for better advocacy and vigilance for children within their communities. It is important for parents and other adults to understand that boys can be at risk of abuse as well as girls and that they are in need of protection. Additionally, there is a strong need for the development of safe and non-condemning places for children and young adults to discuss sex and sexuality. Youth clubs and Churches should introduce education about sex, appropriate loving relationships, sexual abuse, and the dangers of pornography (e.g. www.asianyouthagainstporn.org) .

To the Philippine Department of Justice and Philippine National Police (PNP): The Department of Justice should work with the PNP and DSWD to develop more progressive legislation on prostitution, including the decriminalization of selling sex, and explore the criminalization of purchasing sex especially that involving children and sexual violence. It is important that these groups work together to ensure that the most vulnerable people in Philippine society indeed any and all societies are protected by the law, while the buyers and those exploiting others are prosecuted. This requires the creation of better-informed laws and legal procedures, including the proper enforcement of existing laws by police. In addition to this, it is important that all police officers should receive adequate training and education, correcting any homophobic behavior and treating all prostitutes with dignity and respect - both men and women alike.

To the donor and research community and NGOs working with vulnerable people groups: It is important to understand that men in the sex industry are more than vessels of HIV, which is where the majority of research is conducted, but are real people with real needs. It is important that our understanding of human vulnerability moves beyond simplistic gender dichotomies in which females are vulnerable and males resilient, females are victims and males’ perpetrators and agents of their own lives, females are fragile, while men are merely at risk of STIs.

Conclusion

This research seeks to provide a basis for understanding the vulnerability of young males working in sexually exploitive careers in Metro-Manila to make them more visible and to

start addressing their needs. While girls have long been viewed as victims, boys are victimized as well. For example, in the Philippines there are numerous studies on women and girls compared to a handful that even mention men or boys. Even when studies talk about the sexual exploitation of ‘children’ they often really mean girls. In the current donor climate, it is more difficult to get funding for boys’ projects and research looking at the needs of males. It is vital that churches, NGOs and Government groups adopt a holistic and balanced understanding of human vulnerability. Rather than approaching issues of human trafficking and sexual exploitation from a gender-based perspective, it may be more helpful to approach such subjects as a human issue, encompassing males, females and even the variety of identities in between. It is important that we understand males and females as human beings with hopes and desires and vulnerabilities and needs that require a thorough understanding in order to serve them appropriately, meeting their actual needs, rather than just their perceived needs. We can only achieve this by listening to them. Without the development of such a balanced understanding, significant groups of vulnerable persons are at risk to remain hidden in plain sight.

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