

BARRIERS FEMALE SEX WORKERS FACE WHEN EXITING SEX WORK: THE
CASE OF NAIROBI CITY COUNTY

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DECLARATION

This project paper is my original work and has not been presented for examination at any other university.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family and friends for all the support they accorded me as I pursued my studies.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

CJRC	Crime and Justice Research Centre
FSW	Female Sex Worker
GOK	Government of Kenya
KII	Key Informant Interview
KIM	Kenya Institute of Management
NCBD	Nairobi Central Business District
NGO	Non-Governmental organization
NPI	New Partners initiative
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RE	Role exit Theory
RWJF	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
UCT	University of Cape Town

ABSTRACT

Sex work is a purely commercial transaction in which individuals make a living by having sex with different partners in exchange for money, drugs or other valuables. Though sex work is widely vilified, it remains an active and thriving market across the globe. Women of every education level and family background are involved in the sex trade. This is because it affords unskilled women one of the best opportunities to make a living wage. The profession is low skill, labour intensive, predominantly female, and well paid. The major reason women enter sex work is money. Other factors can include excitement, encouragement from other sex workers, a way to seek affection and freedom to work one's own hours to accommodate other responsibilities such as child care or studies.

The study investigated the barriers female sex workers face when exiting sex work. It focused on female sex workers based in Nairobi County. It was guided by three main objectives; that is assessing how financial instability, flexible working hours and camaraderie influenced the exit of sex workers from sex work.

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Semi structured and in-depth interviews were used as the principal data collection tools. The main findings of the study were that financial instability, camaraderie and flexible working hours all combine and interact, sometimes reinforcing each other to prevent exit of women from sex work.

The study recommends that there needs to be a deeper understanding of the variables surrounding gender issues in sex work by the policy makers and organizations that cater for sex workers. This is necessary to plan for appropriate interventions to improve the plight of women who want to exit sex work. Furthermore, the Ministry of Gender, Sports and Culture should institute appropriate policies and infrastructure to support the women who desire to exit sex work. Further research areas have also been highlighted.

1.0 CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Sex work is often referred to as the oldest profession in the world. It is defined as the practice of engaging in relatively indiscriminate sexual activity, in general with someone who is not a spouse or a friend, in exchange for immediate payment in money, drugs, or other valuables. What sex workers have to exchange for this income is the use of their bodies and time in a sexual service. It narrows sex work to a purely commercial transaction, in which the payer is called customer and the payee is the sex worker (Perkins, 1991). Sex workers may be female or male or transgender, and sex work may entail heterosexual or homosexual activity, but historically most sex workers have been women and most clients' men.

Perceptions of sex workers are based on culturally determined values that differ between societies (Jenkins, 2014). Sex work is mostly associated with women and young girls but there is also a significant sex market involving men and young boys. Kennedy, Klein, Bristowe, Cooper, and Yuille (2007) noted that women of every education level and family background are involved in the sex trade. Though sex work is widely vilified, it remains an active and thriving market across the globe.

The reasons for entering sex work are complex and can persist as reasons for remaining in the sex industry. The literature shows a combination of *'push'* and *'pull'* factors in entering sex work. Push factors – particularly for young street workers – can include abuse/previous sexual violence, breakdown in care giving, school exclusion, homelessness, mental ill health, drug and alcohol misuse, sexual curiosity and lack of money (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007). Despite the sexual drive, the main reason for sex work in all groups is money (Karkov, 2012).

Pull factors can include excitement, encouragement from other sex workers, a way to seek affection and freedom to work one's own hours to accommodate other responsibilities such as child care or studies (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007).

Edlund and Korn's study (as cited in Sociology of prostitution research, 2015) found that sex work affords unskilled women one of the best opportunities to make a living wage. The profession is low skill, labour intensive, predominantly female, and well paid. Money is by far the most important motivator for remaining in the sex industry. Other motivators include flexible working hours (Crime and Justice Research Centre [CJRC], 2015), learning new workplace skills, meeting a variety of people (Schwartz, 2011), camaraderie among sex workers (CJRC, 2015), a way out of poverty (Schwartz, 2011), chasing away loneliness and saving marriages (Schwartz, 2011). Other people remained in sex work because they enjoyed the sex (CJRC, 2015).

The three most common barriers to exit are worries about financial insecurity, reluctance to lose the flexible working hours available in the sex industry, and the camaraderie and sense of belonging that some sex workers describe (CJRC, 2015). Other barriers include drug addiction and inadequate housing, partners may want (or insist) on continuing involvement, sex work may have become an entrenched lifestyle, loss of social support networks to ease transition into 'normal' society, low education level, learning difficulties and a criminal record. It is however, important to note that many – but by no means all – sex workers want, in principle, to exit sex work (CJRC, 2015).

1.2 Statement of the problem

While there are economic benefits of sex work, there are many challenges that lead sex workers to desire to exit (Sociology of Prostitution Research, 2015). These include physical and sexual violence, substance abuse, low self-esteem, inequitable work environments experienced by some in the managed sector, risk of disease, exhausting working hours, poverty, degradation, and marginalization by society (Kennedy et al., 2007), lack of treatment for substance abuse and mental health problems, fewer opportunities to secure legal work that pays a living wage, fewer educational opportunities and a higher risk of re-entry due to lack of treatment, educational, and employment opportunities (Sociology of Prostitution Research, 2015).

Only a tiny percentage of all women in sex work are there because they choose it. More than ninety percent of those in it say that they want escape from sex work (Farley, 2010). Sex workers want to exit sex work but they encounter many barriers which prevent exiting. Economic factors are the biggest of all. Access to readily available money was something that sixty seven percent of participants in Christchurch, New Zealand, reported would make staying away from the industry a challenge (CJRC, 2015). Lack of other economic options will make it difficult to exit sex work. Silbert and Pine's study (as cited in Kennedy et al., 2007) found that twenty seven percent of the sex workers interviewed in San Francisco Bay Area started sex work to pay for drugs. Social circumstances such as drug addiction and inadequate housing (the incidence of homelessness (seventy five percent) among respondents and their desire to get out of sex work (eighty nine percent) reflect their lack of options for escape (Farley et al., 2003).

Many are reluctant to lose the flexible working hours which enable them accommodate other responsibilities like child care or studies (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007). Sex workers face coercion to remain in sex work from a pimp, partner or relative (Bindel et al., 2012). Sex work may have become an entrenched lifestyle associated with low self-esteem and feelings of social exclusion as many sex workers have lost the social support networks outside sex work that would ease transition into other sectors of society (CJRC, 2015).

Collegiality is something some sex workers might strongly miss if they exited sex work (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007). Sex work is much more lucrative than other types of work for which unskilled women are qualified (Sociology of Prostitution Research, 2015). This is due to low education level, learning difficulties and a criminal record.

The research literature and recorded practitioner experience strongly suggests that a wide range of issues usually needs to be addressed to achieve any reasonable chance of success in exiting (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007).

Why people want to exit the sex industry and how they go about it has been very much less well researched than why people enter and remain in the industry (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007). It is with this background that the researcher sought to examine barriers

that female sex workers in Nairobi Central Business District (NCBD) faced when exiting sex work.

1.3 Research questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions;

1. To what extent does financial instability deter women from exiting sex work?
2. Does reluctance to lose flexible working hours deter female sex workers from exiting sex work?
3. To what extent does camaraderie among female sex workers prevent exit from sex work?

1.4 Objectives of the study

1.4.1 General objective

The overall objective of the study was to explore barriers that FSWs in NCBD faced when exiting sex work.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

1. To determine whether financial instability deters FSWs from exiting sex work.
2. To verify whether flexible working hours prevent exit from sex work.
3. To determine whether camaraderie among sex workers is a barrier to exiting sex work.

1.5 Study Assumptions

1. Financial instability influences FSWs exit from sex work.
2. Flexible working hours are a barrier to exiting sex work.
3. Camaraderie among sex workers influences FSWs exit from sex work.

1.6 Justification of the study

The information obtained from the study justifies the need for appropriate interventions to improve the plight of women who want to exit sex work. The study is of importance in contributing information on gender issues in the sex industry and provides areas for further research on the relationship between economic self-sufficiency and sex work. In addition, the information generated from the study can be used by the advocates of

female economic rights to advocate for the creation and/or improvement of exit strategies for women in sex work that are holistic and tailored to individual vulnerabilities. The study helps in the provision of information that the government and other key organizations can use in the formulation of policies that may lead to women empowerment and economic self-sufficiency so that women can earn a living and support their families without having to turn to sex work for survival.

1.7 Scope and limitations of the study

The study limited its investigation to FSWs based in the NCBD, Nairobi County. The researcher specifically targeted female sex workers who had been in sex work for at least three years and were above eighteen years of age.

The study was limited to the willingness of the participants to engage in the study and also to give out information. Although respondents were engaged in the study, the study lacked the capacity to verify the authenticity of information given. Another limitation was that some participants actualized their right to withdraw from the study hence delaying the process and leading to the recruitment of other respondents hence leading to longer duration of fieldwork than originally anticipated.

1.8 Definition of terms

- Sex work** Refers to a business transaction in which a person receives payment in the form of money, drugs and other valuables in exchange for helping one or more people gain sexual gratification through various methods.
- Barrier** Female sex workers desire to exit from sex work; thus a barrier in this case refers to obstacles/challenges that female sex workers face which hinders them from exiting sex work.
- Exit** Refers to the process of leaving sex work.

2.0 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focused on the review of related literature. The review was done in line with the specific objectives. Also included in this chapter is the theoretical framework that guided the study.

2.2 Barriers to exiting sex work

Finding routes out of sex work can be a difficult and lengthy process, particularly given the disparate and complex needs of the women involved (Brent Council, 2010). Many forms of provision may be needed to ensure successful exiting. Suitable supported housing and access to drug treatment were most crucial to establishing the stability needed to enable sex workers to contemplate leaving sex work (Brent Council, 2010).

Various reasons have been put forward as barriers to FSWs exiting sex work. These barriers combine and interact, sometimes reinforcing each other, so that it is necessary to unravel the complex relationships between these obstacles and address them from a coordinated and holistic perspective.

2.2.1 Financial insecurity

The main reason women enter sex work is money (Karkov, 2012) thus; lack of other economic options will make it difficult to exit sex work. Many women enter sex work in times of financial vulnerability (Urban Justice Centre, 2005). Thus access to readily available money through sex work will act as a barrier from exiting. Sixty seven percent of survey participants in Christchurch, New Zealand, reported that access to readily available money would make staying away from the industry a challenge (CJRC, 2015).

Sex work can offer more money than 'square jobs'. The thrust of the evidence is that the money on offer is a compelling incentive to remain working (and the biggest draw for those who exit for some reason, but then return). Over ninety percent of all sex workers surveyed cited money as a reason for staying in the industry. Certainly, sex work can be remunerative: a study of two hundred and sixteen sex workers in Queensland aged eighteen or older showed an average weekly income of \$A1, 500 a week (Mayhew

&Mossman, 2007). This may also largely explain why job satisfaction is higher than is popularly believed.

In the Queensland study, two-thirds of brothel and sex workers said they would choose sex work again and felt the future held good prospects for them because of the money they earned (CJRC, 2015). Sex work also provides the best opportunity to make a living wage especially for the unskilled woman. This is because sex work is low skill and well paid (Sociology of prostitution research, 2015). By far the most significant reason for returning to sex work was a financial incentive. This factor also means that most sex workers will exit the profession when they find alternative means to financial security (CJRC, 2015).

2.2.2 Flexible working hours

Sex work gives female sex workers the freedom to work one's own hours to accommodate other responsibilities such as child care, studies and other work. As a job option, sex work was valued by more than eighty percent of the participants in Christchurch, New Zealand, because of its flexible working hours (CJRC, 2015). Many sex workers are reluctant to go for regular jobs as they will lose the flexible working hours (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007).

2.2.3 Camaraderie among sex workers

Sex work has become an entrenched lifestyle associated with low self-esteem and feelings of social exclusion as many sex workers have lost the social support networks outside the industry that would ease transition into other sectors of society (CJRC, 2015). For some sex workers, working in the sex industry thus; fulfills a social need, with street workers in particular reporting that they gain a sense of community in the sex industry that would otherwise be lacking in their lives (CJRC, 2015). More than forty percent of sex workers in a study conducted in Christchurch, New Zealand, reported that all their friends were in the industry and that sex workers were friendly and fun to be with (CJRC, 2015). Interviews with sex workers and others conducted by the Crime and Justice Research Centre to inform the review of the Prostitution Reform Act 2003 found that

collegiality is something some sex workers might strongly miss if they exited sex work as there is a high level of camaraderie among sex workers (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007).

2.2.4 Drug addiction

The causal relationship between sex work and drug misuse is not straightforward. On the one hand, some sex work starts to finance a drug habit, so the causal relationship appears to be drug misuse 'causing' sex work. On the other hand, the stresses associated with sex work may promote drug use as a means of managing the job. Silbert and Pine's study (as cited in Kennedy et al., 2007) found that twenty seven percent of the sex workers interviewed in San Francisco Bay Area started sex work to pay for drugs. Some women also turned to sex work to support their partners' drug habits. In cases where the couple had become addicted to drugs, the women reported starting to work on the streets in order to support their habits (Kennedy et al., 2007).

As many as ninety five percent of those involved in street-based sex work in London are believed to use heroin and/or crack (Home office, 2004). Most women reported that they had tried to leave sex work but failed to do so as a result of problematic drug use and a catalogue of historical and continuing vulnerabilities which acted as significant barriers (Home Office, 2004).

2.2.5 Housing

Homelessness and chaotic lifestyle lead some to seek 'refuge' in squats or crack houses, thereby adding to their vulnerability (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007). The incidence of homelessness (seventy five percent) among respondents and their desire to get out of prostitution (eighty nine percent) reflect their lack of options for escape (Farley et al., 2003). Australian studies have indicated that "young women in particular will exchange sex for shelter rather than become visibly homeless (Saphira& Oliver, 2002).

2.2.6 Education, training and employment

Women involved in sex work often found it difficult to find other forms of employment that paid as much as sex work especially since they lacked the education, skills and training required for other work. Low education levels as well as learning difficulties also acted as barriers for getting employment opportunities in other fields of work (Mayhew

& Mossman, 2007). Criminal histories related to theft, soliciting and drugs can also act as a barrier to the reintegration of sex workers into the non-sex workforce (Home Office, 2004).

2.2.7 Extreme social isolation

The lack of social support is an important concern, and sex workers often experience a feeling of being left out of society as a whole. This includes extreme social isolation from friends and family, neighbours, other sex workers, service providers, and certain mainstream institutions such as banks (Urban Justice Centre, 2005). Positive informal support from family was seen as one of the important factors in helping women exit sex work (University of Cape Town [UCT] Knowledge Co-op, 2011).

2.2.8 Psychological trauma and mental health issues

Farley (2004) noted that in nine countries (Canada, Germany, South Africa, Zambia, Turkey, United States, Colombia, Mexico and Thailand), across widely varying cultures, that two-thirds of 854 women in sex work had symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at a severity that was comparable to treatment-seeking combat veterans, battered women seeking shelter, rape survivors and refugees from state-organized torture. Women in sex work not only suffered from PTSD but depression, and bipolar disorder (Farley, 2004). PTSD is known to be especially severe when the stressor is planned and implemented as in war, rape, incest, battering, torture or sex work. The intensity of trauma-related symptoms was related to the intensity of involvement in sex work. Women who serviced more customers in sex work reported more severe physical symptoms (Farley, 2004).

2.2.9 Having experienced violence as a child

Because abuse and neglect of children may break their spirits and reduce their life chances, others will be able to abuse their vulnerability as adults in sex work. In most situations, coercive circumstances—including child sexual abuse, homelessness, sex discrimination, economic discrimination, and often racial discrimination—propel persons into sex work (Waltman, 2011). While clearly not all women who experience abuse enter sex work, research shows that the vast majority of women in sex work appear to have suffered sexual abuse as children (Kennedy et al., 2007).

2.2.10 Coercion to remain in sex work

This includes women who have been trafficked and women who experienced coercion either from a partner, pimp, relative or another person to remain in sex work. Interviews with both sex workers and professionals explored the complex issue of coercion and how it acts as a barrier to exiting. Many relationships between women in sex work and ‘coercive’ men are characterized by the ‘classic’ indicators of domestic violence, such as the use of threats and violence, including physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, as a way to exert and maintain power and control over the woman. Coercion is often closely linked with drug use, and accommodation problems (Bindel et al., 2012).

The restructuring of everyday life will be the key concern for those who want to help sex workers exit. Structural factors (such as access to work, housing and education) interplay with both relational factors (such as social support networks) and individual factors such as skills and resilience (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007). Exit programs therefore, need to be holistic and tailored to individual vulnerabilities.

2.3 Theoretical framework

This study was guided by the role exit (RE) theory which was developed by Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, a sociology professor based at the University of Houston, in 1988. According to the theory, a role is a social process that occurs over time ((Baker, Dalla and Williamson, 2010) and exiting a role is comprised of four major stages: the first stage is known as first doubts. First doubts stem from one’s dissatisfaction with one’s current role. These doubts, which usually rise gradually from an unconscious to a conscious level, prompt potential exiters to weigh the pros and cons of remaining in or leaving their current roles.

Several factors may cause or at least influence first doubts, including changes in the organization with which they are affiliated, burnout, relationship changes, and gradual or sudden life events. First doubts lead to cuing behavior wherein potential exiters seek input from others in their environment. Negative reactions may stifle the doubting process or may stimulate the exiter to seek others who would support her or his doubts. On the other hand, positive reactions from other people strengthen an exiter’s doubts and

lead to the second stage in the exiting process. There are also variables that may affect the duration of first doubts, including degree of awareness of other options, degree of control over the exit, and individual versus group exiting (Baker et al., 2010).

The second stage, seeking alternatives, can also vary in length of time. Potential exiters again weigh the costs and rewards of staying or leaving their current role. Some people, limited by the number of viable alternatives, may feel trapped in their current role. During this stage, people continue their cuing behavior, and both positive and negative social supports are important in encouraging or retarding the exit process, respectively. Potential exiters engage in anticipatory socialization and role rehearsal and begin to identify with the values, norms, attitudes, and expectations of the people in the group they wish to join. They also may imagine playing the new role or may actually try it out (e.g., transsexuals who both imagined what it would be like to be a person of the opposite sex and who “were required to cross-dress for a specific period of time” before undergoing sex-change surgery (Baker et al., 2010).

Turning point, the third stage in the RE theory, can be a gradual process or, more commonly, an abrupt one that results from a specific event (or a culmination of events), an either/or situation (e.g., alcoholics), time-related factors (e.g., age), or events that provide justification for exiting. Turning points serve three basic functions: they allow exiters to announce their decision to others, reduce their cognitive dissonance (psychological conflict resulting from incongruous beliefs and attitudes held simultaneously), and help them mobilize both emotional and social resources to complete the exiting process. After they leave, exiters may experience feelings of being in a vacuum “between the past that no longer existed and the unknown future”. However, their adjustment and movement out of the vacuum are easier and proceed more rapidly if, while in their previous role, they have built bridges with the new group (Baker et al., 2010).

The final stage is creating the ex-role. This role is filled with tension as exiters emotionally distance themselves from the old role and try to establish themselves in the

new one. However, their former “role identification has to be taken into account and incorporated into a future identity”. In other words, the identity of an exiter “rests not on one’s current role but on who one was in the past”. Therefore, exiters again engage in cuing behavior and society’s reactions can affect the ease of the transition. For example, physicians may be viewed negatively by society for leaving the medical profession, whereas sex workers might be applauded for leaving their former roles. Along the same line is what is called “role residual” or “hangover identity”—specific aspects of the previous role that remain with the individual even after she or he has exited. Although some people may be able to progress through each stage in a linear fashion, others may reverse their decisions and return to a previous role (Baker et al., 2010).

The RE theory was relevant to the study as it provided an acceptable explanation of the behavior of women leaving sex work. It showcased the various stages FSWs went through in their attempt to exit sex work. It also acknowledged that although there was a pattern to the leaving process and a series of predictable stages, people had reversed their decisions and returned to their former role.

The study focused on three stages of the role exit theory, namely, first doubts, seeking alternatives and turning point. Under the first doubt stage, the researcher investigated the following: whether the FSWs felt dissatisfaction with their role; the factors/motivators that caused or influenced their first doubts and their awareness of other options to sex work. Under the seeking alternatives stage, the researcher assessed whether the FSWs had weighed the costs and rewards of staying or leaving sex work and what informal or formal social support (either positive or negative) they had encountered which had encouraged or retarded their exit. Under the turning point stage, the researcher investigated the barriers the FSWs had encountered that had prevented them from exiting sex work.

3.0 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section describes the research methodology that was used in the study. These include the research design, research site, study population, sample population, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data processing and analysis and ethical considerations.

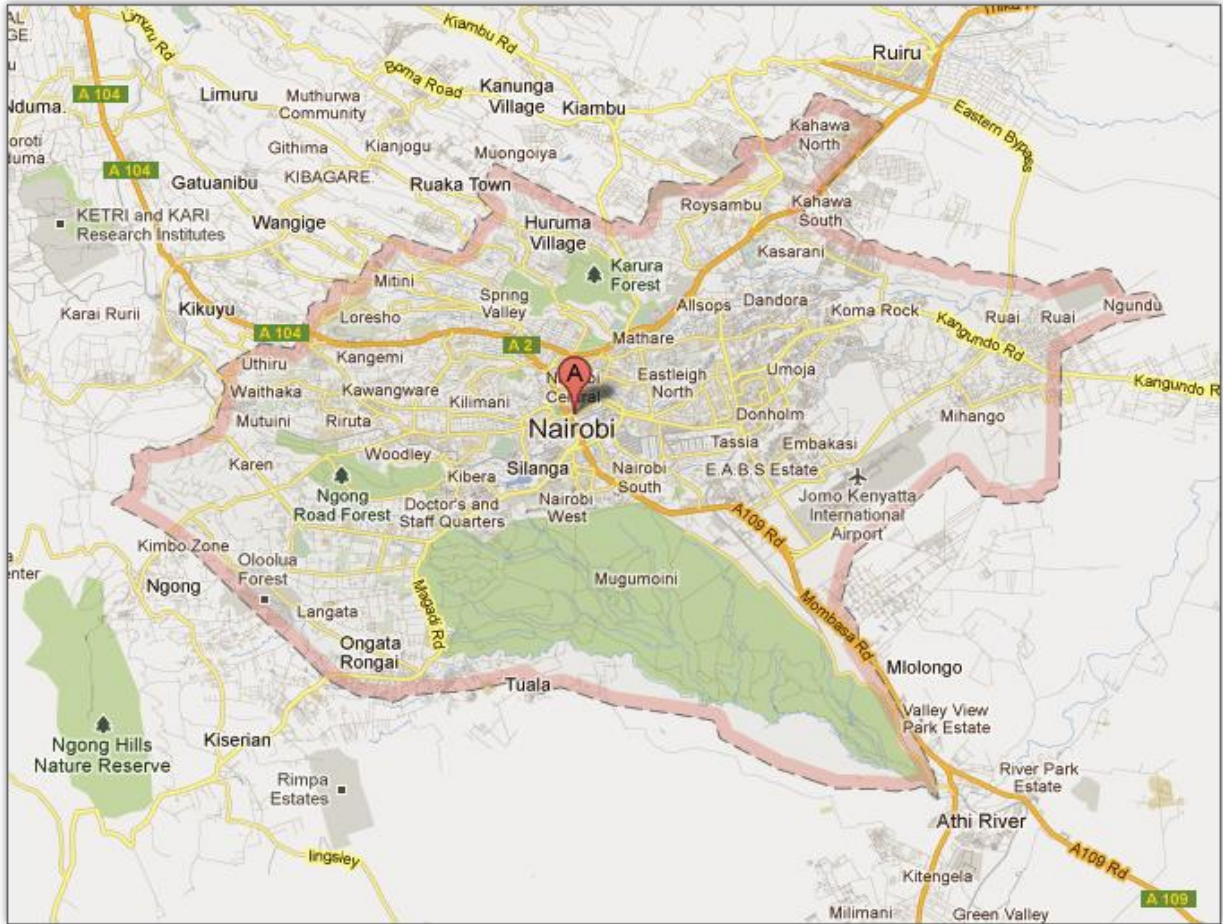
3.2 Research site

The study was done in Nairobi City County (Map 3.1). Kenya's capital city, Nairobi, is the most dynamic city, also known as the "green city in the sun" for many reasons. It is Kenya's largest city with a population of nearly four million (Kenya Information Guide, 2015). According to Johnstone (2004) Nairobi covers an area of 694.85 sq Km and is 1600 to 1850 m above sea level. It is divided into the 17 constituencies and 85 county assembly wards.

A study by Kimani et al. (2013) identified one hundred and thirty seven hotspots in Nairobi that are frequented by sex workers. These included 71 bars (51.8%), 47 street-based venues (34.3%), 10 hotels (7.3%), 5 sex dens (3.6%), and 4 (2.9%) strip clubs.

Another study by Odek et al. (2014) identified a total of 10,670 active FSW spots through mapping exercise in Kenya, with about a quarter (24%) of these being in Nairobi City alone. Of the 2,539 active FSW spots identified in Nairobi, 21 per cent were located within Starehe Sub-county (25%), which encompasses the Central Business District, while 14 per cent each were located in Embakasi (14%) Kasarani (13.7%) Sub-counties, both large and densely populated residential areas. The estimated population of FSWs in all the towns mapped was 103,298 (range 77,878 to 128,717). Out of which 27,620 FSWs are in Nairobi City County.

Nairobi is Kenya's principal economic, administrative and cultural center and one of the largest and fastest growing cities in Africa. It is a regional hub for air, road and rail travel. It is East Africa's most important commercial, manufacturing, financial and tourist center.



MAP 3.1: Map of Nairobi City County

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2011

3.3 Research design

The researcher used the descriptive research design. Using this design, the researcher was able to describe the present state of affairs as it exists for the FSWs. It helped the researcher to analyze the data in more depth and to present it in a way that it can be understood. This was done through narratives by FSWs and interviewing of programme managers and gender officers. This design gave the researcher an opportunity to extract pertinent information as it enabled one to probe further on key issues that came up.

3.4 Study population

The study targeted FSWs who were above eighteen years of age and involved in sex work for more than three years and whose base of operation were the night clubs in NCBD. Narratives were used to gather data from the sex workers. The study also targeted three programme managers in Nairobi who work with Full Circle Trust, an organization that helps FSWs exit sex work as well as two Gender officers from the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services. A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data from the programme managers and gender officers.

3.5 Sample population

The target population for a survey is the entire set of units for which the survey data are to be used to make inferences. The target population defines those units for which the findings of the survey are meant to generalize (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). The unit of analysis for the study was women above eighteen years of age involved in sex work for at least three years and whose base of operation was the NCBD. The sample size was chosen through purposive sampling. Here the researcher used her judgment to select participants she thought were representative of the population she was interested in studying. This was because the boundaries of the population of female sex workers were unknown i.e. there was no sampling frame or complete list of sex workers to allow the selection of a probabilistic sample of sex workers and non-sex workers. The sample size was fifty FSWs as that is what was manageable to the researcher with the resources available. The researcher also targeted five key informants i.e. two gender officers and three programme managers from Full Circle Trust.

3.6 Sampling Procedure

The researcher used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique. It is where the researcher uses their own judgment to identify respondents for the study. This method was used because there was no sampling frame or complete list of sex workers to allow the selection of a probabilistic sample of sex workers and non-sex workers. This method was used in selecting the female sex workers and the key informants for the study. The FSWs targeted were women aged eighteen and above and involved in sex work for at least three years and based within the NCBD. The key informants for the study were three

programme managers from Full Circle and two gender officers from the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services as they may have had specialized knowledge about the topic the researcher wished to understand.

3.7 Data Collection Methods

3.7.1 Secondary sources of data

Secondary data was reviewed from relevant periodicals, journal articles, published books, internet, newspapers, dissertations, government documents including policy documents and the constitution before the study.

3.7.2 Narratives

Data was collected using narrative analysis, which, centers on the study of stories or accounts – usually of individuals, but also of groups, societies, and cultures. Narratives or stories occur when one or more speakers engage in sharing and recounting an experience or event. Narrative analysis takes the story as the investigative focus (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation [RWJF], 2008). The researcher used narratives to study the experiences of FSWs embracing stories of life and exploring the learned significance of those experiences i.e. how FSWs represented themselves and their worlds to themselves and to others.

The narratives focused on the lives of individual sex workers as told through their own stories. The emphasis was on the story, typically both what and how it was narrated. The researcher used semi-structured interviews and acted primarily as an attentive listener. Data was in the form of field notes, storytelling, interview transcripts as well as the researcher's own observation. Information that was gathered through the narratives included level of education, number of years in sex work, attempts made at exiting, challenges faced when attempting exit, any initiatives they were aware of that help women exit sex work and suggestions they thought would ease exit from sex work.

3.7.3 Key Informant Interviews

The researcher used key informant interviews (KII) to gather information from five individuals; three programme managers who work with Full Circle Trust, an organization that helps FSWs exit sex work, in Nairobi and two gender officers from the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture

and Social Services. Key informant interviews were useful among informants as they had access to detailed information on the subject under study. The researcher used a key informant guide, to interview the programme managers whose work entailed helping FSWs exit sex work (Appendix 3) and the gender officers (Appendix 4) who may have had specialized knowledge about the topic the researcher wished to understand having worked and interacted with FSWs exiting sex work at various levels.

These interviews included semi-structured, open-ended questions that were intended to elicit views and opinions from the respondents. From the programme managers, the researcher sought to find out the challenges faced in helping FSWs exit sex work, successful initiatives and incorporation of successful exiters as mentors into the programs. From the gender officers, the researcher sought to find out challenges FSWs face when exiting sex work, government initiatives in helping FSWs exit and the success rate of those initiatives. Information from key informant interviews was used to complement the data provided by the female sex workers involved in the study. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants during key informant interviews.

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis

Qualitative data was analyzed thematically using descriptive approach. The qualitative data applied concept analysis where the researcher analyzed the information collected under various themes comprehensively. The presentation of data was also complemented by the researcher's own interpretation which addressed the implications of the observed trends in summarized data.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues arise from the types of problems a social scientist investigates and methods used to obtain valid and reliable data. These issues are mainly concerned with the conduct of a researcher in any study. Ethical considerations are codes of conduct or guidelines on how a researcher should conduct herself/himself from the beginning to the end of the study.

The researcher ensured informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity of the study respondents. According to Piper and Simons (2005), informed consent implies that those interviewed or observed should give their permission in full knowledge of the purpose of the

research and the consequences for them taking part. The researcher sought the respondent's informed consent to engage them in interviews. There was a consent explanation form to inform the informants of the objectives and the purpose of the study and any other concern before the exercise began. Written consent was sought from all informants. They were informed of their right to disqualify themselves from the study at any stage of the data collection process. The researcher maintained confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewees. The researcher used pseudo names to protect the identity of the respondents when quoting verbatim. All data collected was kept strictly confidential. Data collected was kept in safe and secure storage.

The researcher sought authority of undertaking the research from the National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation at the Ministry of Education, who are responsible for granting research permits to researchers.

This final outcome will be shared with the wider scientific community via publications and where possible, feedback sessions with the programme managers and gender officers will be organized. The project paper from the exercise will also be available for public reading at the University of Nairobi library and posted in the University repository.

4.0 CHAPTER 4: BARRIERS FEMALE SEX WORKERS FACE WHEN EXITING SEX WORK IN NAIROBI COUNTY

4.1 Introduction

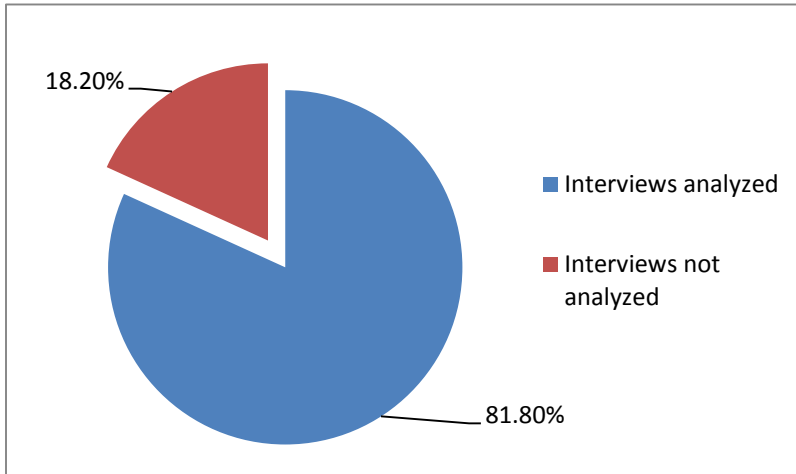
This chapter reports the findings of the study, their implications and comparison with past researches in the form of a discussion. The findings are arranged along the lines of the specific objectives as set out in chapter one. Findings are presented in form of frequency tables, bar graphs and pie charts as well as verbatim quotes to amplify the voices of specific key informants. The chapter is divided into subsections where basic demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age are highlighted. This is followed by results based on each of the specific objectives.

4.2 Basic Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Response Analysis

During data collection, the researcher conducted fifty five interviews. Programme managers and gender officers constituted five of the interviews while the remaining fifty interviews were conducted on the female sex workers. Ten of the sex workers were uncooperative and were not open to giving intimate details of their involvement in sex work. Thus, the researcher analyzed information from forty sex workers. This gives an 81.8% response rate as illustrated in figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: Response rate

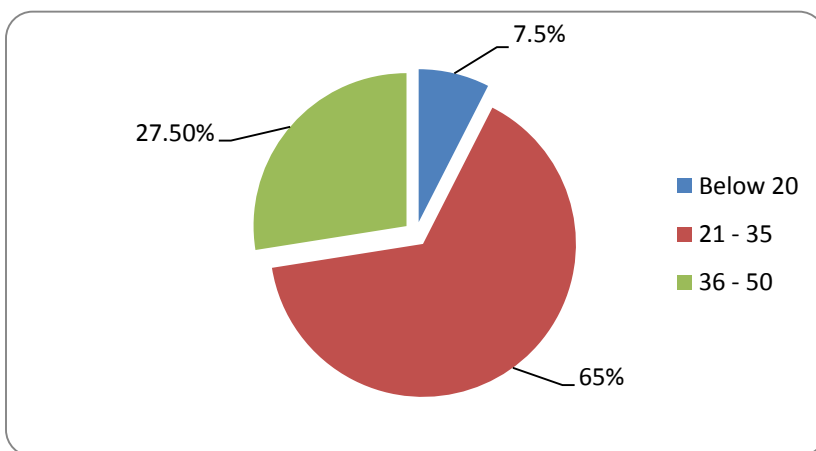


Source: Primary data

Age of the respondents

Majority of the respondents (65%) were aged between 21 to 35 years followed closely by women aged between 36 and 50 years who represented 27.5% of the respondents. Those below 20 years of age were represented by 7.5% as illustrated in the figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2: Age of the respondents

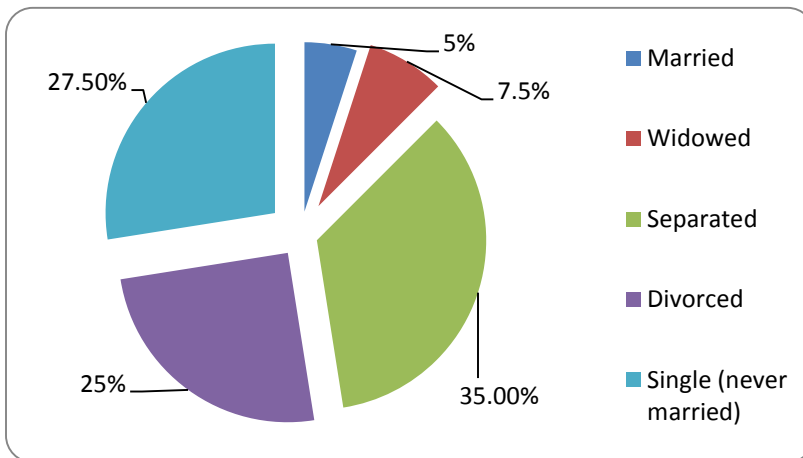


Source: primary data

Marital status of the respondents

In this study, 5% of the women interviewed were married, 27.5% single (never married), 7.5% of the women were widowed, 35% were separated, and 25% were divorced. Marital status of respondent is illustrated in the figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3: Marital status of the respondents

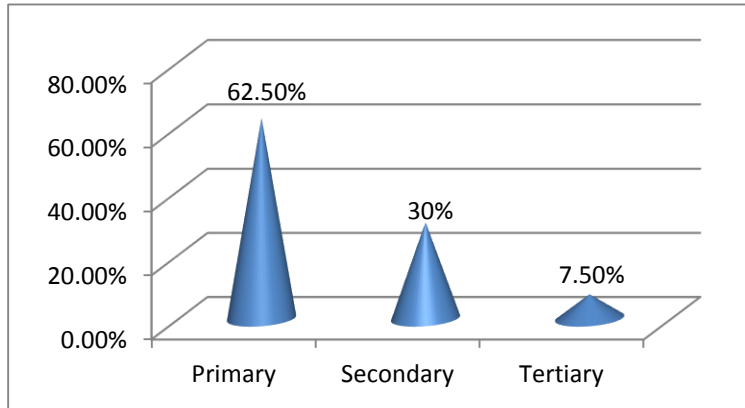


Source: Primary data

Highest level of formal education attained

Most of the respondents had attained primary education as represented by 62.5%, 30% had attained secondary education and 7.5% had attained tertiary education. Figure 4.4 below shows the education levels.

Figure 4.4 Highest level of formal education

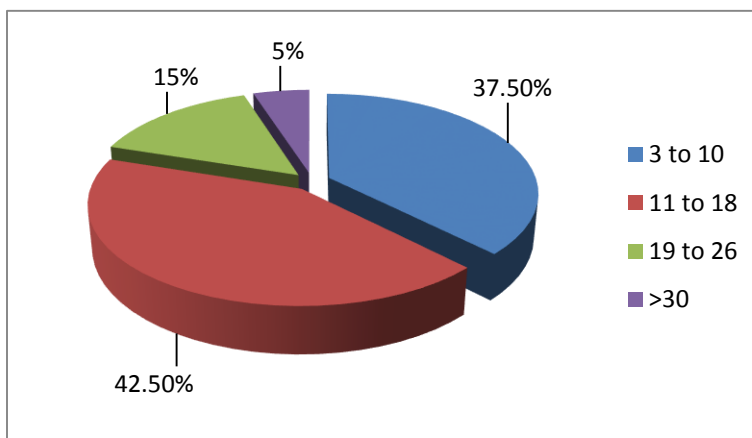


Source: Primary Data

Number of years involved in sex work.

Majority of the respondents (42.5%) had been involved in sex work for between 11 to 18 years, followed by 37.5% who had been in sex work for 3 to 10 years. Those who had been involved for 19 to 26 years were 15% and those involved in sex work for over 30 years were represented by 5%. This is demonstrated by figure 4.5 below.

Figure 4.5 Number of years involved in sex work

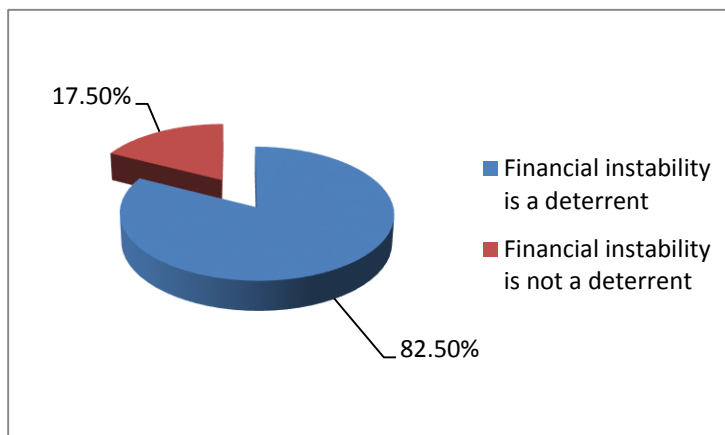


Source: Primary data

4.3 Financial instability as an obstacle to exiting sex work

The majority (82.5%) of sex workers felt that financial instability deters them from exiting sex work while 17.5% felt it was not a deterrent. This is shown in figure 4.6 below.

Figure 4.6: Financial instability as a deterrent to sex work exit



Source: Primary data

Financial instability ranked highly as a major reason for sex workers to continue plying the trade. According to Joyce, her five children were a burden to provide for and so she turned to sex work *“Kama siwatoi wa mine singeingia hii kazi ya tao. Hao ni mzigo tangu niachane na mzee wangu”* (If it were not for my children, I wouldn’t have gotten into this town work. It has been a burden since we separated with my husband).

“Without education or good connections it is hard to find a well-paying job, so when my friend introduced me to sex work, I saw the money she earned and she lived comfortably and I longed for such. I come from a huge family and I am the only bread winner. I want to leave this life but if I do how will we eat, dress and live?” That is how Nancy found herself in sex work and why she has remained on the job.

Celine is a student at one of the colleges in town. She is the third born in a family of five and is the first in her family to go to college. Her parents are peasant farmers upcountry

and so she began sex work to cater for her school fees and basic needs. She narrated her story thus *“My poor parents only managed to get me bus fare to Nairobi. I am only doing sex work to cater for my school fees and basic needs. Once I finish school and get a job, I will leave this shameful work. If you can call it work, that is”*.

Susan on the other hand, was given one thousand shillings after she had sex with a friend’s brother and it dawned on her that this could be a way for her to earn money and so began her journey into sex work. Her reason for remaining was not financial instability as she owns a salon in town which is doing very well, she told me. According to Eunice, sex work saved her from a life of poverty. *“Nikona plot mbili Dandora. Moja nimejenga nyumba yangu na ingine nimejenga haoza kurent. Hiini possible juu ya hii kazi ya tao”* (I have bought two plots in Dandora. On one, I have constructed my house where I live and on the other one, I have rental houses all because of this sex work). She does not understand how financial instability can prevent one from exiting sex work since it’s through sex work that she has made a comfortable life for herself.

Judith does not consider financial instability as a deterrent to sex work exit. She narrated her story thus *“I enjoy having sex with different men. The plus side is that I get paid good money for it. I can leave sex work when I want”*.

The results from this study are in support of the research that Karkov did in 2012 that found out that the main reason women entered sex work and remained is money. By far the most significant reason sex workers returned to sex work even after exit was a financial incentive. The results also support the CJRC (2015) report that noted that most sex workers would exit the profession when they found alternative means to financial security. In as much as there are women who have made good fortune out of prostitution, it appears that allure of the easy money has acted as a spark that has glued them to the profession. This would imply that offering them alternative sources of income may not be as easy as envisaged.

According to the programme managers, financial instability also ranked highest among the barriers female sex workers faced when exiting sex work. As Lona revealed, *“leaving*

sex work was like leaving a ready income. There was now no steady flow of income which brought about uncertainty of the future as the sex workers pondered how to provide a good life for their children without turning to sex work”.

Jane, a gender officer from the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, believes that sex work is a choice and thus sex workers do not need any support to exit. To Jane, *“they were home wreckers and deserved everything that came to them”*. Agnes also a gender officer was honest enough to let me know that the government did not have any programs in place to support women exiting sex work. *“haosi priority kwetu, kuna wamama wengi wanajitafutia bila kufanya umalaya” (These women are not our priority since there are so many women who are struggling to make ends meet without being prostitutes). There are mama mboga, house girls and tea girls and so on”*

According to them, they have no concern for sex workers and felt that they should get a life instead of breaking homes. Jane and Agnes believes that sex work is a choice, thus, sex workers could leave sex work at will and did not foresee a future where sex workers would need assistance to exit sex work.

4.3.1 Attempted exit

Many sex workers (65%) had attempted to exit the trade but always went back as the everyday financial pressures such as rent, food, school fees and clothing took top priority. *“Hii Maisha ni hard. Lazima mtu ajitafutie”* (life is difficult and one must fend for themselves) lamented Sofia as she sipped a cold pilsner ice.

“I have tried exiting sex work thrice and returned. The demands of life are too many. My mother has diabetes and her medication is expensive. Add onto that school fees for my two children in college, rent, food et cetera. Only sex work can give me the money I need to sustain all this” (Noted Claris).

The remaining 35% were not interested in exiting sex work as they enjoyed the thrill of having multiple sexual partners as well as the perks of the job. Take Judy for instance who has several plots in Thika and Syokimau through sex work. She asked me, *“Why*

would I ever want to leave sex work? I am investing for my future now”. Kate could afford to take her three children to private school and lived in a decent place because of the returns of sex work.

Catherine boasted of how she had travelled to different countries because of sex work with expatriates. *“I have gone to Dubai, South Africa and Nigeria with my expatriate clients. All this is because of sex work. These white men are very generous. I have no desire to leave sex work any time soon”*.

Table 4.1 below demonstrates this.

Table 4.1 Number of women who have attempted exiting sex work

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	26	65%
No	14	35%
Total	40	100%

Source: Primary data

4.3.2 Barriers sex workers face in exiting

Table 4.2 Barriers female sex workers face

Response	Number	Percentage
Violence	25	62.5%
Drug addiction	5	12.5%
Lack of education/skills	10	25%
Total	40	100%

Source: Primary data

Although only twenty six sex workers, out of a sample of forty had attempted to exit sex work, all the sex workers were interviewed on what they thought were barriers that hampered exiting sex work. The data found that although some of sex workers claimed not to have attempted exiting sex work they had done so though they were not

consciously aware of it. What they said and the information on the ground were not in tandem.

Rose started taking bhang and drinking alcohol to cope with the stresses of sex work. *“This work is difficult you cannot do it sober. You must numb yourself”*. This was found to be the case among 12.5% of the respondents interviewed. Anita was introduced to sex work by her then boyfriend so as to cater for their drug use/addiction. She was still hooked to drugs. She narrated her story thus: *“I smoke bhang and do cocaine at least two out of five days in a week. I have tried exiting sex work but always go back to get quick cash when I need a fix”*.

Lack of education/skills was given as a barrier by 25% of the respondents. The farthest the majority had reached with their education is primary school thus many aren't literate which presented a huge obstacle in terms of getting better employment. Since they did not have access to better paying jobs they stuck to what they knew would guarantee them money at the end of the day. Take Rose for instance, who was educated up to class six and worked as a waitress. *“One of my clients came for lunch at a restaurant where I worked as a waitress. He complained to my boss that he was hiring hookers and I was let go. Now sex work gives me my daily bread”*.

Marita who was educated up to class two, sold vegetables and fruits at a make shift stall in Mukuru Kwa Njenga slum where she lived but also indulged in sex work to make ends meet. *“I sell vegetables and fruits at Mukuru Kwa Njenga but I indulge in sex work which brings in the bulk of money I need”*. *With my little education I cannot secure good employment that pays as much as sex work”*.

Lastly is violence, where 62.5% of the respondents had suffered at least one form of violence, be it rape, physical violence or verbal abuse. Winnie looked at me with a lifeless stare as she told me how she was picked up by a “client/ Jon” after agreeing on a price only for the “client” to take her to a house where she was gang raped and later left in a forest somewhere in Ngong'. Celine narrated her story thus *“I have been raped seven*

times. These are the dangers of this work. I don't even bother to report to the police anymore because nothing is done".

According to Edna most if not all sex workers have encountered rape and physical violence at the hands of a client. *"Some clients are notorious for beating us up after sex because they do not want to pay. Others drug you and rape you. Because we have nowhere to turn to, we must pick ourselves up and move on. You just pretend it did not happen otherwise when you think about it you will just go mad"*

The respondents also faced harassment from city council workers (*Kanjo*) as well as policemen who were notorious for demanding a share of the spoils/ bribe or sometimes, sexual favours so as not to arrest them. Julia narrated her story thus *"City council workers and policemen demand sex not to arrest us. Many times I have preferred to exchange sex for my freedom rather than give them my hard earned money"*.

"The first couple of weeks in sex work were horrible for me. The policemen would arrest me and demand all the money I had made. I always complied given that I was new in the trade until my colleague told me to pretend business was bad and instead offer sex in place of money in order not to be arrested" (Noted Rachel).

In spite of all these troubles, these women still made their way back to the streets as here they were guaranteed a shilling for a good meal, rent and the likes. The barriers sex workers face is demonstrated in table 4.2 above.

4.3.3 Support services

Table 4.3 Awareness of support services offered

Respondents	Number	Percentage
Aware of support services	15	37.5%
Unaware of support services	25	62.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Primary data

Only 37.5% of the respondents interviewed had an idea on initiatives that helped women exit sex work. Margaret told me of NPI *“Hiyo NGO ya NPI hututembelea na kutupe amafunzo ya kujikinga na virusi, cds na wanatibu magonjwa yani STD’s. Hao pekee ndio nimeskia tu wanatushughulikia”* (an NGO called NPI goes round giving sex workers health education, testing for HIV and gives out condoms. This is the only NGO that has bothered to help us). Martha told me of a church that helped women exit sex work. *“There is a church here in Nairobi that helps people like us leave and have a normal life. They come to the clubs throughout the year and I heard they give money though I don’t know how true that is”*.

Table 4.3 above demonstrates awareness of support services by sex workers.

The Full Circle Trust offered various support services. These focused majorly on empowering the sex workers through counselling services, life skills training and financially so that they can have an alternative to sex work. Jewellery and soap making, tailoring, baking and cooking classes are some of the skills sex workers were equipped with to earn a living. These were also the organization’s most successful support initiatives to help sex workers exit sex work.

Table 4.4 below shows support/successful initiatives offered by Full Circle Trust.

Table 4.4 Support initiatives/ Successful initiatives offered by Full Circle

Responses	
1.	Skills training
2	Counselling
3	Life skills training

Source: Primary data

The following were suggested initiatives that sex workers felt would be helpful in exiting sex work.

Table 4.5 Helpful initiatives to exit sex work

Initiatives	Number	Percentage
Economic alternatives	20	50%
Skills training/education	20	50%
Total	40	100%

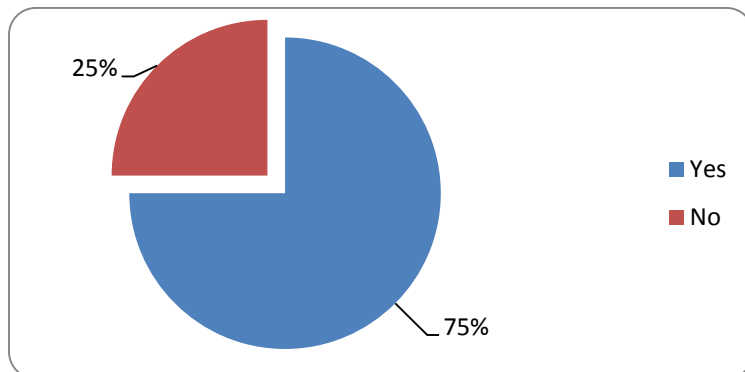
Source: Primary data

Half of the respondents felt that economic alternatives to sex work would be pertinent in exiting sex work while the other 50% felt that skills training/education would go a long way in exiting. Anne believed that she is destined for more. *“Does it mean that now I am not educated and have no skills I am only good for sex work? I am ready to work and leave this shameful lifestyle behind me”*.

4.4 Influence of flexible working hours on exiting sex work

In this study, 25% of the sex workers interviewed said they enjoyed the flexibility that sex work offers and viewed the flexibility as an obstacle to exiting sex work. The remaining 75% want out of sex work and flexible working hours were not seen as an obstacle to exiting. This is demonstrated in figure 4.7 below.

Figure 4.7 Flexible working hours as a deterrent to exiting sex work



Source: Primary data

Tandi, had a regular nine to five job and only indulged in sex work occasionally after work (mostly with expatriates) and she enjoyed the 'returns' from sex work. *"I work as secretary by day and indulge in a bit of sex work with "wazungus" who pay good money, mostly during the weekends but if a client wants my services during the week that can also be arranged"*. To her, sex work was a choice and she did it to earn an extra shilling. However, she admitted that the flexibility of sex work would deter her from exiting. *"I like my side hustle the flexible hours allow me to have a day job, go to school (she is studying accounts at KIM) and dine in fancy places"*.

Abby worked as a barmaid but also indulged in sex work. She narrated her story thus *"I work as a barmaid and indulge in a bit of sex work. My clients are mostly men who frequent the club I work at. This is because of the flexible work hours of sex work"*.

Janis on the other hand said: *"I want to get out of this life and get a decent job where I will not be looked down upon and spend time with my children. The flexible working hours are not worth my life"*. June also does not care much for the flexible working hours. She said: *"I miss my children who I had to send up country to live with their grandmother because I do not have time to raise them. During the day, they are in school and in the evening when they come home I am preparing to go to town to look for money through sex work. I can give up the flexible working hours to be with my children"*.

Programme managers believed that flexible working hours would prevent sex workers from exiting sex work as they enabled women to distribute their duties such as child care, education or training and doing side-business. According to Lola, *"most of the women they had worked with indulged in sex work in the evening but during the day they worked either at a restaurant as a waitress, sold vegetables or ran a day care centre within the neighbourhood they lived"*.

4.4.1 Challenges of working with sex workers

The key informants observed that they face certain challenges in their work with the female sex workers. Among the challenges encountered include:

- Their manipulative tendencies

- Lack of commitment in the rehabilitation process
- Lack of adequate resources to fully accomplish their tasks
- Lack of government support

All three program officers stated the above as challenges they encountered in their work with sex workers. Lisa narrated thus: *“sex workers spent a lot of time concocting stories to manipulate the staff into giving them money. Others demand to be given money so that they can exit sex work”*. Another challenge was lack of commitment from the sex workers. A complete cycle of sex worker rehabilitation lasts eighteen months. Those women who were not able to commit to the complete cycle of exiting sex work ended up dropping out of the program.

Lack of resources to fully cater for the running of the program as well as capacity building and providing for the needs of the women exiting sex work was another challenge. *“The program is faith based and all our funding comes from the church”* (Noted Lisa).

Lastly, there was lack of governmental support in helping sex workers exit sex work. Lona described it thus: *“Alcoholics have rehabilitation centres all over Kenya that are government sponsored why can't they have safe houses for women who want to exit sex work?”*

The organization has only three full time and two part time staff members and they are therefore, very thin on the ground and are unable to fully manage the needs of the many clients that require their services.

4.4.2 Plugging in

The concept of plugging in as informed by the key informants involves the ways in which to mitigate the sex worker's plight and get them out of the streets if possible. The key informants noted the following as some of the ways that authorities and other stakeholders could apply in assisting the female sex workers:

- Awareness and prevention

- Enacting punitive laws
- Provision of education and life skills
- Construction of safe houses

There were various ways suggested for the government and other institutions to plug in. These included but were not limited to prevention where the government and other organizations could plug in to create awareness on what drove young girls and women into sex work and put in place preventative measures. For example establishment of more tertiary colleges/ institutions for those who did not make it to college/university, social/ life skills training to keep children occupied in their free time especially in the slum areas and improvement on the quality of education provided in the public schools.

Other ways included the government putting in place punitive measures for those who were caught buying sex from sex workers. Finally, the government could come up with rehabilitation centres/safe houses for the sex workers in the same way they have had rehabilitation centres for alcoholics.

4.4.3 Incorporation of sex workers

The key informants noted that there are activities that have incorporated sex workers.

These activities included:

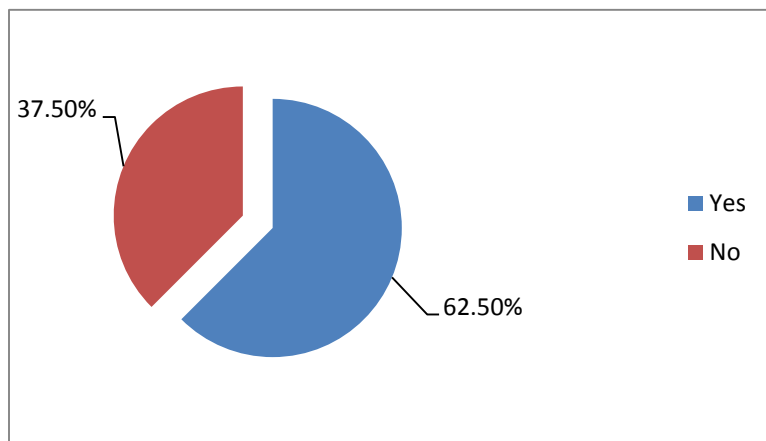
- Skill training
- Life coaching.

Women who had successfully exited sex work were incorporated into Full Circle Trust's services such as facilitating skills training (such as baking, soap making, jewellery making et cetera), facilitating life skills training (such as communication, conflict resolution and self-esteem) and life coaching where they shared their story of exiting sex work to encourage other women to follow suit.

4.5 Influence of camaraderie as an obstacle to exiting sex work

Majority (62.5%) of sex workers interviewed felt that camaraderie among sex workers would be a barrier to exiting sex work while 37.5% felt camaraderie was not a barrier. Figure 4.8 below demonstrates that.

Figure 4.8 Camaraderie as an obstacle to exiting sex work



Source: Primary data

Majority of the women (62.5%) had suffered extreme social isolation. They had been disowned / chased away by family and friends upon finding out of their involvement in sex work. Linnet narrated how her landlord kicked her out of her apartment at 2 am after finding out how she earned a living. *“Alinifukuza kama mbwa akinitusi vibaya na saa hizo nilikuwa na client. Quinta, a fellow sex worker housed me for the night”* (My landlord evicted me as he insulted me. I had to seek refuge at another sex worker’s house).

Grace and Prisca, who were neighbours and sex workers met while on the job. Watching them you would think they had been lifelong friends. Grace helped out Prisca when a client/Jon became violent and beat her up after a transaction. Grace and other sex workers took her to hospital and catered for her medical expenses; since then they had remained friends.

All of Mildred's friends were the sex workers she worked with; some were her neighbours. Her family ostracised her when they found out that she was a sex worker. *"baba yangu aliniambia niko na mashetani niende nikaombewe kisha akanitumia ujumbe nisiwahirudi home. Kwake nishakufa. Sinamarafiki wengine isipokuwa madame watao"* (My father insulted me. To him I am as good as dead. The only friends I have are my fellow sex workers).

According to Agnes sex workers were fun to be with. *"There is never a dull moment with sex workers. We drink, talk and laugh about life's issues and all the crazy and weird clients we have all slept with"*.

For Josephine, there is no camaraderie amongst sex workers. *"There are no true friends in sex work. We are only acquaintances because of the nature of our work. If I leave sex work, I will not miss any of them"*.

According to the programme managers, *"sex workers faced rejection and ridicule from other sex workers when they attempted to exit sex work. Sex workers would also miss the strong support system that existed amongst them. Thus quitting sex work was equated to quitting a community. There was also the fear of starting life all over again alone and thus many succumbed to the pressure to remain in sex work"*.

Generally, sex workers have already been rejected by their families and friends who are themselves not in the trade. In other words, their world revolves around fellow sex workers and they feel that their isolation may be too much in the event that they are also rejected by their comrades. On whether they could become members of new groups such as the churches or other social groupings, they noted that they have already been heavily branded as sinners and social misfits and it will take longer and too much persuasion to fit into any other groups.

However, there are also those who lived double lives where their being sex workers was not the most prominent job. These have been able to camouflage and are not as exposed as the professionals who have faced total rejection from families.

5.0 CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section has the summary of findings, the conclusions based on the study and the sets of recommendations emanating from the findings.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Financial instability as a deterrent to exiting sex work

Majority of respondents (82.5%) said they find financial instability a barrier to exiting sex work. Many of them entered sex work at a time of financial vulnerability and they report that the readily available income would deter them from leaving the industry. Because of poor education and lack of skills, sex work then affords the respondents one of the best opportunities to make a living wage. Though some of them said that they would leave sex work when alternative means to financial security became available to them, this does not really seem to be fitting the situation given that there are those who are already very financially stable but are still in the trade.

5.2.2 Flexible working hours as a barrier to exiting sex work

Sex work gives female sex workers the freedom to work one's own hours to accommodate other responsibilities such as child care, studies and other work. At 75%, majority of respondents wanted out of sex work and did not view flexible working hours as an obstacle to their exit. They were willing to lose the flexible working hours to get a "decent" job where they did not feel looked down upon. Only 25% of respondents valued the flexible working hours and saw them as a barrier to exiting sex work.

The problem of the flexible working hours as a deterrent to quitting is with the fact that besides the other jobs that they do, they can still be in the sex trade without

compromising their other roles. This also enhances camouflage in which the sex worker may pass as a professional secretary or waitress in a restaurant.

5.2.3 Camaraderie as a deterrent to exiting sex work

There is a high level of camaraderie among sex workers. Majority of respondents (62.5%) reported that they have gained a sense of community in the sex industry and this would be a challenge to their exiting sex work. They reported social exclusion from their family, friends and other sectors of society once they found out they were sex workers.

This fear of isolation based on communal rejection makes most of sex workers feel that since they need to be part of a community of people who understand and appreciate them, then they have to hang on. There is a general fear of the unknown based on the moral perfecting and condemnation of the sex workers by society.

5.3 Conclusion

Although women are no longer tied to the home, and, to some extent enjoy equal access to education and employment, the result has not been a universal capacity for women to avoid poverty or dependence upon others. The feminisation of poverty, has led to more single female-headed households managing childcare and part-time work, meaning that the choice to engage in sex-work can “make sense” for some women.

Indeed there are many routes into sex work. Many begin with the intention of leaving once their perceived immediate needs are met. Unfortunately; this is never the case. Many find themselves stranded with the hustle and bustle of life. Given that sex work has been viewed as one of the oldest professions, it has been noted to serve those who engage in it and there have been stories of those people who have economically advanced through the trade. Just like in the research, a number of women reported that they are landlords who have bought and constructed rental houses using proceeds from the trade. This encourages other women to venture into the trade and regard it as just another opportunity to make ends meet.

This research has found that there is a need for formal exiting services to help women leave the trade. Women have expressed the need for both formal and informal forms of support to do so. Many sex workers desire to exit sex work but lack of alternatives to financial security will keep them in sex work longer. Findings from this research suggest that much more can be done to improve the lives of these women and assist their exit from sex work despite lack of available resources and initiatives at a societal and governmental level.

Given the lucrateness of the trade in some quarters, interventions must be individually driven since assuming that it is poverty that drives women to the trade is a little bit simplistic. There are women who over the years have become addicted and do not know of any other trade that they can be involved in apart from sex work. Others have normalised the trade to a level that they do not see anything wrong with it.

The other societal problem that requires addressing is the general feeling of helplessness, hopelessness and the limited economic opportunities available to most women. The economic situation is not creating enough job opportunities to absorb the growing population. This accompanied by the limited educational opportunities that women have, makes the sex trade an appealing alternative. The research hopes that interventions from government and other agencies will increase the funding to ensure that the women are taken care of and every assistance accorded to them as they struggle to quit the demeaning trade.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the research findings;

1. Building capacity of young girls and women through skills training or vocational training is pertinent in helping them find alternatives to financial security other than sex work.
2. Governmental support is key in the exit of women from sex work. This can be through provision of policies, safe houses, healthcare, skills training or vocational training.
3. There is need for a general change in the judgmental attitude that alienates the women and makes them feel vulnerable and abused.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

The researcher suggests that further studies should be done on the following topical issues:

- Influence of illiteracy in driving women into sex work.
- Does criminalization of sex work increase rate of violence toward sex workers

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONSENT FORM

Introduction

My name is Elizabeth Gakaria, a postgraduate student in the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies at the University of Nairobi. I am conducting a study among Female sex workers on Barriers female sex workers face when from exiting sex work in Nairobi County.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the current state of female sex workers and the challenges they face as they attempt to exit sex work.

Procedure

On voluntarily agreeing to take part in the study, an interview will be conducted by a research assistant. The research assistant will clarify any questions you do not understand.

Your name will not appear anywhere. The information you will give will be confidential and will only be accessible to the interviewer and the principal investigator.

The data collection will take 20-30 minutes.

Benefits of the study

The findings of this study will provide information on the current situation of female sex workers as they attempt to exit sex work. This information may help advice policy makers leading to improved policy formulation and implementation.

Risks

There are no risks involved in this research activity.

Rights

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You will not be compelled or paid to answer any questions. You reserve the right to withdraw from the research activity at any time. You have the right to ask any question and seek clarity about the study.

Contacts

For any enquiries, please contact:

Elizabeth Gakaria (principal investigator) on 0724 344659

For further enquiries, please contact:

Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies/University of Nairobi – Ethics and Research Committee, the Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation, P.O. Box 30623, 00100 Nairobi, Telephone: 020310571/0202241349

INFORMED CONSENT

The study topic, objectives and purpose have been explained to me and I have understood them. I understand that this exercise is voluntary and that I do not have to answer questions that I am not comfortable with. I have also understood that I can withdraw from the study anytime during the interview.

I have not been promised any material gain to be included in this study. I therefore voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX 2: NARRATIVE GUIDE FOR FEMALE SEX WORKERS

1. Have you ever attempted to exit sex work and if so what was your experience?
2. In your opinion what would you say are barriers women attempting to exit sex work face?
3. Are you aware of any initiatives that support/ help women who want to exit sex work?
4. In your opinion, what support services/ initiatives would be useful in helping women exit sex work?

APPENDIX 3: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE I

1. In your opinion, what are some barriers/ challenges that women attempting to exit sex work face?
2. What are some of the challenges you have faced while working with women attempting to exit sex work?
3. Kindly name some of the support services your organization offers to women exiting sex work.
4. What are some of the successful initiatives used by your organization in helping women exit sex work?
5. Do you incorporate women who have successfully exited sex work into your program (s) to help other women exit sex work?
6. In your opinion, what areas do you feel other organizations/ institutions can plug in to make the process of women exiting sex work smoother/ easier?

APPENDIX 4: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE II

1. In your opinion, what are some of the challenges that women face that lead them to indulge in sex work?
2. What initiatives has the Government (GoK) put in place to help FSWs exit sex work?
3. What are the success rates of those initiatives?
4. In your opinion what more can be done to smoothen the exit of FSWs from sex work?