

**COMMODIFICATION OF PLEASURE:
A STUDY OF MALE MIGRANT SEX WORKER
IN HANOI, VIETNAM**

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ARAYAN TRANGARN, Ph.D. ; PHILIP GUEST, Ph.D.**ABSTRACT**

Some recent studies show that male sex work in Hanoi is currently thriving. Along with local men, migrants have become an important source of supply for this market. These include not only gay men but also straight men that come to Hanoi from other cities and provinces. A number of them depend on sex work as their main source of income. The postmodern perspective on sexuality and narrative analysis method are used to discover the fluidity of sexual subjectivities and various types of sexual practices and partnerships that Vietnamese migrant male sex workers (MSWs) encounter in their every day lives. Nine migrant MSWs and four key informants are interviewed. The ethnographic approach is applied to this study, combining with snowball technique to extend the number of participants. Interviews were formed by the narrations of male sex workers about their life histories, and the researcher played the role of listener and kept the stories told in common way as everyday conversation. Narrative analysis has been done case by case with the facilitation of the qualitative software Nvivo 2.0.

The findings of the research give insights to the business of male sex work, which is notorious for the vulnerability of migrant lives, poor living conditions, leading them to the sex work market in Hanoi. Among the sex work life, the fluidity of sexual subjectivities is shown under the change of sexual and gender orientation to adapt to issues of “Economics of desire”. Moreover, selling sex is not only for sex per se but also for love, gratitude, understanding, and regular financial support. Various types of sexual practices and partner ships are also found in this research. Male sex workers report that they experience many types of sexual practices, safe, unsafe, coercive, consent sex, and especially, porn movies are preferred to enhance their sexual desire. Clients of MSW are diverse and include local male, female clients, and male foreigners.

It is also worrying for MSWs because a number of them still lack understanding of how to protect themselves from HIV and STI risks. The study also finds out that mental health among MSWs is a big problem that they have to face. Many of them seem to have dilemma while they look at their current job and future.

Finally, recommendations have been proposed on sexual rights, sexual health education, and further research on sexuality, especially sexuality of MSW in Hanoi.

**KEY WORDS: MALE SEX WORKER/ MIGRANT/ POSTMODERNISM/
SEXUAL SUBJECTIVITY**

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