

**NEGOTIATING SAFER SEX PRACTICES
BY FEMALE SEX WORKERS INFECTED WITH STIs/HIV
IN HAIPHONG CITY, VIET NAM**



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M.A. (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE)

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ABSTRACT

Sex work is not accepted as a job in Vietnam. Illegal sex work causes sexual health problems for female sex workers. The study explores dominant social, political, and cultural discourses on sex work and female sex workers and how these discourses influence the gendered-self and sexual subjectivities of those who are infected with STIs/ HIV and how they have an impact on the ability of female sex workers to negotiate safer sex practices

This is a postmodern feminist qualitative ethnographic study in Haiphong over a period of four months. The data were collected through participant observation, secondary data review, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and narrative interviews with ten female sex workers infected with STIs/HIV

The findings show that the discourses on sex work in Vietnam are concentrated on the sex worker as a social evil, social deviant and immoral person. Female sex workers are portrayed as women who break human dignity and damage cultural tradition. Conversely, these women explained their gendered-self as women who fulfill their duty and dignity as independent and “good” women in their real social life. Their cyborg bodies display sexual desire so as to have sexual pleasure or forced sexual desire by faking an orgasm. Interviewed female sex workers are committed to using condoms with their clients/ boyfriends and husbands. Service based female sex workers successfully negotiate for vaginal-penile safe sex. The unsafe sex practices result from the discursive practices of masculinity and other socio-cultural determinants. Female sex workers infected with STIs/HIV carry feelings of guilt and responsibility for the health of themselves and clients to sustain public morality. The research emphasizes a need to advocate sexual rights for female sex workers. Intervention programs for safer sex need to be gender and culturally sensitive as well as promoting responsibility for safer sex among clients

KEY WORDS: DISCOURSE/ GENDERED-SELF/ SEXUAL SUBJECTIVITIES/ FEMALE
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