



## THE LIVES AND CHALLENGES OF MALE SEX WORKERS IN HONG KONG



### BACKGROUND



While sex work has long been part of Hong Kong's underground economy, the experiences of men who sell sexual services remain largely invisible in public discourse and policy-making. Unlike female sex workers who receive relatively more attention from researchers and support organizations, MSWs in Hong Kong operate in a particularly marginalized space. Many are young migrants from mainland China or Southeast Asia, LGBTQ+ individuals, or low-income locals pushed into the trade by Hong Kong's crushing living costs. They conduct business discreetly through dating apps, massage parlors, and underground networks, constantly balancing the need for income with the risks of police harassment, client violence, and social ostracization.

(Lau et al., 2009)

### MAIN CHALLENGES



#### **Criminalization & Policing: Legal Barriers**

Sex work is technically legal in Hong Kong but often has a lot of restrictions.

The consequence are:

- Fear in reporting of crimes(e.g., theft, assault)
- Increased violence in the workplace (clients or pimps abusing legal vulnerability)

(Lee, 2008)

#### **Stigma & Discrimination: Social Exclusion and Double Marginalization**

MSW challenges traditional masculinity norms as many of them are LGBTQ+, compounding discrimination toward homosexuality.

- Isolation from family and mainstream employment
- Internalized shame, leading to mental health problem (depression, anxiety)

(Kong, 2009)

#### **Healthy & Safety Risk**

MSWs endure heightened physical and psychological vulnerabilities. Limited access to sexual health resources increases STI transmission risks, compounded by clients refusing condom use. )

- No legal protections for occupational safety (e.g., routine health checks, safe workspaces).
- Mental health neglect: Anxiety over arrest, financial instability, and societal rejection

(Wong et al., 2012)

### REAL LIFE CASE

#### **Case 1:**

When MSW declined a client's request to use drugs, the client became irate and began arguing with him. Although he wanted to call the police, he was worried that he would also be prosecuted with a crime.

#### **Case 2:**

Many of the MSW hide their occupation from their family, friends, or children in order to combat their concern of social exclusion. They also stated that it is stressful to conceal oneself in order to be a "socially accepted" individual.

(Siegel et al., 2022)

#### **Case 3:**

Many of the MSW don't know where they can receive health services, and they often express questions about where they might receive PrEP.

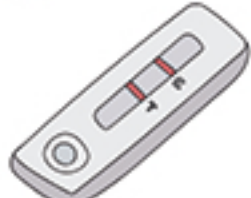
## SEX WORK IS WORK

### WHAT MIDNIGHT BLUE HAS DONE SO FAR



#### **Community Outreach & Health Related Service**

Weekly outreach to distribute free condoms and lubricant, also provide free and anonymous rapid testing services including HIV, syphilis and Hepatitis C.



#### **Legal Assistance**

24-hour hotline available for legal support and consultancy services, educating community people about the laws and legal processes that affect their line of employment in order to ensure that they are aware of their rights.



#### **Public Education**

Organizing occasional talks and sharing sessions by sex workers, different kinds of workshops. Also published “午夜男喃” which contains of 8 MSW's oral history and story.



### SOLUTIONS

Improving conditions for MSWs requires government, NGOs, healthcare providers, and the public to work together

- Decriminalization to reduce harm
- Anti-Discrimination Policies
- Health access without stigma
- Economic alternatives for sustainable exits
- Public education to combat prejudice



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