

The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**MEN SELLING SEX IN CAIRO AND ALEXANDRIA
PERSPECTIVES ON MALE SEX WORK
AND AIDS IN EGYPT**

A thesis submitted to

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology & Egyptology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Masters of Arts

In Sociology-Anthropology

By **SOUAD ORHAN HUSSEIN HAMADA**

Under the supervision of **Dr. HELEN RIZZO**

May 2008

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Most of all, I am greatly indebted to the respondents and interviewees who availed their time and revealed useful and personal information about their life experiences and their hardships and expanded our understanding of the situations of male sex workers in Egypt and the necessity to intervene on their behalf as part of responding to AIDS in the country .

ABSTRACT

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A qualitative approach was used to study the etiology of male sex work in Egypt and report on issues related to sexual identity, sociodemographic characteristics, and work and HIV contexts of male sex workers. Seven male sex workers aged between 17 and 37 were interviewed in Cairo and Alexandria.

This preliminary, exploratory study suggests the existence of a strong relationship between childhood sexual abuse and later involvement in sex work. Other secondary factors driving some youth into sex work include poverty, inadequate salaries, unemployment, low education levels and other types of childhood maltreatment including physical, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect. In this study, sex workers mainly identified themselves following the "feminine vs. masculine" pattern where sexuality is defined according to the domination by or reception of the penis in the sex act. Only one identified himself as 'gay'. Different modalities of sex work were reported ranging between street sex work and arrangement of sex through friends and regular clients by mobile phones. However, most informants refused to consider sex work an occupation and preferred to call it a "source of income". As for HIV risks, nearly all informants underestimated their vulnerability to HIV. Although all reported condom use, most of them were inconsistent on it and attributed it to particular types of partners and sexual acts.

The study fairly confirms that the subjective meanings male sex workers relate to the act of having sex, their typologies of clients and the way they interact with clients are all issues that inform their safer sex behaviours. It emphasizes the strong need for programmes to address the vulnerability of Egyptian male sex workers to sexual health, financial and psychological problems, and homophobia. Such programmes can be tailored as part of wider interventions targeting men who have sex with men in general.

Key Words: Male Sex Workers, Sexual Identity, HIV, AIDS, risk, Egypt

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
HIV	Human Immuno Deficiency Virus
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
VCT	Voluntary Counseling and Testing