

An Ethnographic Study on How Namibian Sex Workers Experience Their Violation of Rights

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Abstract : By co-constructing personal narratives of sex workers in Namibia this paper represents how sex workers experience their violation of rights in Namibia. It is written from an emic (as an advisor for a sex worker-led organization named Rights not Rescue Trust) and an etic (as an ethnographer) point of view, in collaboration with the staff of the organization Rights not Rescue Trust. This organization represents circa 3000 members. The paper describes the current deplorable situation of sex workers in Namibia, encompassing the stigma and discrimination they face, their struggle to have their work decriminalized and their urge to advocate for human rights and the end of violations. Based on a triangular research design (ethnography, narratives, literature study, human rights' training and counseling sessions) the authors show that sex workers, particularly LGBTI sex workers, are extremely vulnerable to emotional, physical, and sexual violence in Namibia. The main perpetrators of violence turn out to be not only clients and intimate partners but also law enforcement officers and health care workers who are supposed to protect and support sex workers. The sex workers' narratives voice their disgraceful circumstances regarding how their rights are violated. It also highlights their importance to fight for their rights and access to health care, legal services and education in order to improve the sexual reproductive health of sex workers.

Keywords : HIV/aids, LGBTI, methodological innovative, sex work

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