

# Male Sex Work in Slovenia<sup>1</sup>

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## **Purpose:**

The aim of this paper is to determine whether male sex work in Slovenia exists, if there are statistically significant differences in sexual orientation between male sex workers in Slovenia and men who do not engage in this type of work, and whether any factors (i.e. sexual orientation, dysfunctional family etc.) exist that can be used as predictive criteria for such behaviour.

## **Design/Methods/Approach:**

In the first part, we used a descriptive method and in the second an empirical method. We conducted an online survey which included male sex workers and men who do not engage in this type of work. We used descriptive statistics, a chi-square test, and factor and discriminant analyses. The data collected were analysed using the SPSS program. We discussed the research results with some respondents and Dr Iztok Šori, a researcher at the Slovenian Peace Institute – Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies.

## **Findings:**

Male sex work exists in Slovenia. Such workers generally define themselves as homosexual or bisexual. Among male sex workers and men who do not engage in this type of work, there are no significant differences in the socialisation process (in terms of a dysfunctional family background). In most cases, they come from functional families.

## **Research Limitations/Implications:**

The limitation of our research is the small sample size. It is therefore questionable whether the findings can be generalised from the sample to the entire population.

## **Practical Implications:**

Male sex work is clearly a part of Slovenian society. This should be taken into consideration while establishing policies and practices in the field of sex workers' protection and, in particular, with regard to destigmatising sex work in Slovenia.

## **Originality/Value:**

Dealing with the comparison of male sex workers and men who are not engaged in this type of work, our study is one of the first of its kind in Slovenia. It may be seen as a starting point for future empirical studies that deal only with male sex workers.

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**Keywords:** male sex work, sexual orientation, dysfunctional family, stigmatisation

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1 This research work started in the framework of a research project within the subject »Methodology of social science research and multivariate statistical methods« in the second year of postgraduate study at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security.

## Moško spolno delo v Sloveniji

### Namen prispevka:

Cilj prispevka je ugotoviti: ali moško spolno delo v Sloveniji obstaja, ali obstajajo statistično pomembne razlike v spolni usmerjenosti med moškimi spolnimi delavci v Sloveniji in moškimi, ki se s tovrstnim delom ne ukvarjajo, ter ali obstajajo dejavniki tveganja, ki ločujejo med preučevanima skupinama.

### Metode:

V prvem delu smo uporabili deskriptivno, v drugem delu pa empirično metodo. Izvedena je bila spletna anketa, sodelovali so tako moški spolni delavci kot moški, ki se s tem delom ne ukvarjajo. Uporabili smo opisno statistiko, hi-kvadrat test ter faktorsko in diskriminantno analizo. Vse analize smo izvedli s programom SPSS 22.0. O rezultatih raziskave smo prek elektronske pošte razpravljali z nekaterimi respondenti in raziskovalcem na Mirovnem inštitutu – Inštitutu za sodobne družbene in politične študije dr. Iztokom Šorijem.

### Ugotovitve:

Moško spolno delo je prisotno tudi v Sloveniji. Tovrstni delavci se po večini opredeljujejo kot geji ali biseksualci. Med moškimi spolnimi delavci in moškimi, ki se s tem delom ne ukvarjajo, ni bistvenih razlik v socializacijskem procesu (disfunkcionalnosti družin). V večini namreč oboji prihajajo iz urejenih družin.

### Omejitve/uporabnost raziskave:

Omejitev svojega dela vidimo predvsem v majhnosti vzorca. Sklep iz vzorca na populacijo je zato lahko vprašljiv.

### Praktična uporabnost:

Moško spolno delo je nesporno del tudi slovenske družbe, česar se je treba zavedati pri ustvarjanju politik in prakse na področju zaščite spolnih delavcev in predvsem v smeri destigmatizacije spolnega dela.

### Izvirnost/Pomembnost prispevka:

V Sloveniji še ni bilo raziskave, ki bi obravnavala primerjavo moških spolnih delavcev in moških, ki tovrstnega dela ne izvajajo. Prispevek je mogoče razumeti kot izhodišče za empirično študijo v prihodnosti, ki bi obravnavala zgolj moške spolne delavce.

**UDK: 343.544-055.1(497.4)**

**Ključne besede:** moško spolno delo, spolna usmerjenost, disfunkcionalna družina, stigmatizacija

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Adherents of radical feminism argue that prostitution is mainly a form of male dominance over women. It is often believed that women (prostitutes) are the sole providers of sexual services, yet this activity is also performed by men (Weitzer, 2005).

Weitzer (2005) therefore claims that sex work can be differentiated by gender (male and female sex work). For the men who perform this type of work, it is namely typical that they perform it only occasionally and that they stop the period of their work activity earlier than female sex workers. Male sex workers tend to be more mobile across types of such work. It is typical for male sex workers to start, for instance, as masseurs, then they become escorts and later on they advertise themselves and become call boys (Weitzer, 2005). Boyer (1989) adds that male sex workers are more frequently forced to define their sexual orientation than female sex workers. This refers to questions that demand they define themselves as homo-, hetero-, trans- or bi-sexual.

Yet, Van der Poel (1992) does not agree with the arguments concerning gender-based differences in this line of work, stating that they are not sufficiently supported by evidence. Weitzer (2005), on the other hand, stands in contrast to Van der Poel (1992) by claiming that nearly all sex-work-related literature is divided into studies of men and women, with almost no systematic comparative view on men and women at the level of their work. Besides that, research studies that do not consider such comparisons reveal objective differences according to the type of work, with these differences representing the characteristics that can be found in studies of female sex work (West & de Villiers, 1993).

Up until the 1990s, the attention paid to sex work in literature was mainly given to female sex workers (Vanwesenbeeck, 2012), even though it is documented that the 'world's oldest profession' or line of work has also been carried out by men from Roman and Greek history and Victorian England until today (Bimbi, 2007). Several factors have contributed to the lack of legal and political discussions, knowledge and studies in connection with male sex workers. At the global level, the share of male sex workers is smaller than the share of female sex workers (Vanwesenbeeck, 2012). Leichtentritt and Davidson Arad (2005) claim that the information on the share of male sex workers is not valid because it is unknown whether this type of information reflects the reality or denial of this type of work. In addition, the men involved in this line of work are an elusive and vulnerable group of people. They purposefully eliminate themselves from discussions as they do not correspond to the 'ideal' image of sex work. Such an image is namely linked to the exploitation of women and violence against them, therefore men in this group do not 'fit' the stereotypical image of the female victim who needs to be rescued from sex work (Global Network of Sex Work Project [NSWP], 2014).

Another reason for the ignoring and stigmatising of male sex workers lies in the nature of their work. Generally speaking, they are seen as bisexually or homosexually oriented men (Koken, Bimbi, Parsons, & Halkitis, 2004), whereby we should take into consideration that in the middle of the 20th century homosexuality was still looked upon as a mental disease (Bimbi, 2007), and even today is still regarded as such in some parts of the world. Such men are pushed away from gay society as well as from the sex workers' community (Popov, 2008) and they are also discriminated against and persecuted by law enforcement authorities (NSWP, 2014). In this context, we can thus talk about double or multi-layered stigmatisation (sex workers and homosexuals) and about a deliberately overlooked phenomenon (Popov, 2008).

In society, male sex work is a taboo subject also because this type of worker faces additional social stigma. Consequently, and connected to this phenomenon, the adoption of legal acts often hinders male sex workers' access to healthcare and social services (Grimes, 2001). Also not to be overlooked are the theories of deviation which explain that male sex workers engage in this type of work due to inner or environmental pathologies (Koken et al., 2004). The claim that homosexual male sex workers are (were) the reason for the spread of the HIV infection (Vanwesenbeeck, 2012) is an additional factor showing that male sex work finds itself in a disadvantaged position compared to female sex work and has been pushed away into the remotest parts of the social bottom (Popov, 2008).

In Slovenia, women (Šori, 2005) as well as men are engaged in sex work (Pajnik & Kavčič, 2008). The indicators of active male sex work in Slovenia can be spotted in advertisements, magazines and newspapers, which also increase their revenue by advertising sexual offers. The advertising of such offers can also be found on various websites that advertise private contacts. In spite of these facts, male sex work has not been scientifically/professionally researched in Slovenia (Popov, 2008). The reasons for this may be found in the issues of anonymity and the lack of researchers' interest in male sex workers in contrast to female sex workers (Pajnik, 2008). Another reason for the lack of research in this field is that stigmatisation is contagious, meaning that part of the stigma can be transferred to the researchers too (Popov, 2008). Maybe the exact reasons no longer apply and we are able to overcome them. These are the reasons underpinning our research in which we compared the socio-psychological characteristics of male sex workers in comparison with men who do not perform this type of work. More specifically, we focused on the dysfunctionality of their (nuclear) families and on their sexual orientation.

The following three hypotheses arise from the above stated objectives:

Hypothesis 1: In Slovenia, male sex work exists.

Hypothesis 2: There are statistically significant differences in sexual orientation between male sex workers and men who do not perform this type of work.

Hypothesis 3: Standpoints on their (dysfunctional) families differ among sex workers and men who do not perform this type of work.

In respect of the contents, the hypotheses are based on the facts set out in the introductory section, whereas the wording of the hypotheses was dictated by the results of research performed by Earls and David (1989), Bar-Johnson and Weiss (2015), Abdullah Avais, Wassan, Chandio and Balouch (2014) and Minichiello et al. (2002). Within the framework of the discussion and interpretation, our research results will be compared with the results of this research and professional opinions. The results of our research were discussed by e-mail with Dr Iztok Šori, a researcher at Peace Institute – Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies, and some participants of our research. Dr Iztok Šori is interested in the connection between gender, migration and work, which he explores in the frame of various social fields (sex work, politics, private life). He has participated in several research projects focusing on gender equality, political representation and emancipation, prostitution, human trafficking, racism, populism, migration and lifestyles.

In the following chapters, we provide a comprehensive review of the literature on the factors that influence the decision to commence sex work. We also explore the history of scientific research of male sex work around the world and in Slovenia. In the Methods section, we describe the target population, the sample and the data collection. We also present how the questionnaire was designed as well as the content of its parts. As part of the Results, we try to determine once again whether male sex work in Slovenia exists. We explore whether statistically significant differences exist in sexual orientation among male sex workers and men not performing this type of work in Slovenia. We try to establish whether there are risk factors which distinguish male sex workers from men who do not perform this type of work. At the end in the Discussion section, we verify the posed hypotheses and place our results in the current context of research on male sex work. We conclude by discussing options to reduce the stigmatisation of male sex work in Slovenia.

## **2 SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON MALE SEX WORK**

### **2.1 Scientific Research on Male Sex Work Across the World**

Scientific research on male sex work started between 1940 and 1970. The first studies of this kind were carried out in the United States and in the United Kingdom during the 1940s and 1950s. The early studies chiefly addressed the factors of the provision of male sex work, their typology, sexual identity and courses of treatment (Kaye, 2003). In both countries, homosexuals were treated as a problematic segment of the population. The discussion about homosexuality started, influencing the manner in which the studies on sex work were conducted (Bimbi, 2007). From the 1960s until the early 1970s, male sex work was presented in studies from the bio-psychological perspective. These studies were conducted by psychologists who focused on the search for the psychopathological traits of sex workers and researching their social environment. In this way, they uncovered the predisposing factors which were supposed to lead a person into sex work. These factors were connected to their personality traits, genetic make-up, learnt behaviour or socialisation processes at home or at school (Caukins & Coombs, 1976; Reiss, 1961). The majority of studies addressed male sex work in the context of bio-sociological positivist explanations (Browne & Minichiello, 1996). The male sex worker was presented as a »helpless victim, the result of personality deficits and a traumatic childhood, or of the bad economic conditions that lead into anxiety, sex work and hatred« (Davies & Feldman, 1997, p. 33).

Minichiello, Scott and Callander (2013, p. 266) state that male sex workers were labelled in the epidemiological literature as »reservoirs of disease and the vector of disease for the 'innocent' population of the 'heterosexual world'«. The rationale for this association was grounded in the notion that both prostitutes and homosexuals constituted 'risk groups'. In the early years of the HIV epidemic it was thought that the sexual networks of sex workers made them a risk for transmitting HIV to other populations. During this period, the role of alcohol and drugs was portrayed as occupying an inordinate level of importance in male sex

workers' lives (Browne & Minichiello, 1996). It should be emphasised that many studies from this period focused on outdoor sex workers. Today, much research questions the notion of male sex workers as vectors of disease transmission (Minichiello et al., 2013).

## 2.2 Scientific Research on Male Sex Work in Slovenia

While the question of offering efficient help and counselling to female sex workers has already been addressed abroad, in Slovenia such changes and thinking in this direction seem to appear with a time lag. This is connected to the traditional social structure and the former political ideological system. In the previous socialist society, prostitution was namely defined as an unacceptable form of sexuality (Zaviršek, 1993).

The first publications on this topic date back to the 1960s, to the study by Kobal and Bavcon (1969), the case of the socio-pathological treatment of prostitution. Their study dealt with female prostitution and in the introduction they mentioned the reason for that is the fact that male prostitution is only occasional or seasonal.

Over the next few decades, publications on prostitution were relatively rare and they only re-emerged in the 1990s, whereas the first research on human trafficking and prostitution emerged after the year 2000 (Pajnik, 2008). We can claim that in Slovenia criminology and criminal law studies on prostitution and on human trafficking have prevailed in scientific publications (Kanduč, 1998; Petrovec, 2000). Tratnik Volasko (1996) discussed some of the basic characteristics of prostitution in Slovenia and talked about prostitution from the legislative and monitoring points of view. She established that street prostitution in Slovenia does not exist. In this context, she established that male prostitution also exists in Slovenia and that homosexual prostitution encounters took place in the environment of the traditional meeting places of these groups, particularly around the bus and train stations, in gay clubs and via advertising. Similarly, in his discussion Petrovec (2000) also focused on the social aspects of prostitution.

In her work, Pajnik (2008) also writes about male sex work from the viewpoint of a unique or dualistic concept of prostitution. She argues that whereas unique concepts of prostitution draw attention to certain dimensions of prostitution, they do not address its diversity and inconsistency. She claims that such a concept is inappropriate because it excludes secondary phenomena in prostitution such as, for instance, prostitution of men who accept women as their clients, same-sex prostitution or transsexual prostitution.

Further on, when reviewing court documentation for the period between 2001-2005, Pajnik and Kavčič (2008) established that male sex workers did not appear in judicial processes, but in the evidence for two court cases they found the records of a massage agency and a real-estate agency that also offered male prostitution.

Pajnik and Šori (2014) analysed 44 websites of individual and organised providers (male and female) of sex work in Slovenia. They established that the visual materials found on the websites confirmed the characteristic differences between the sexes. The share of male sexual workers presented on these sites was

much smaller than the share of female sex workers. This especially holds true for websites which advertise nightclubs/bars, escort services or erotic massage.

We can conclude that it would be unjustified to assume that at the start of scientific research on prostitution in Slovenia male prostitution was not known. But we can assert that, in scientific research, male sex work was mentioned later than female sex work. Based on these findings, we may conclude that even at the beginning of scientific research prostitution was particularised (female and male) but, due to its rarity, the latter did not receive considerable attention in Slovenian literature. We have not come across any research that narrowly focused on empirical research of male sex work, as can be seen from the mentioned social or psychological dimensions of female sex work.

### **2.3 Typology of Male Sex Workers**

Caukins and Coombs (1976) claim that a hierarchy exists in the field of male sex work. The lowest level is represented by street sex workers who receive the lowest payment for their sexual services. These are followed by sex workers in bars and call boys. Male sex workers are, generally speaking, classified according to their place of work and, consequently, the type of services they provide as: street sex workers; prostitutes (gigolos); bar dancers, erotic dancers; escorts; theatre actors; models and erotic masseurs (Browne & Minichiello, 1996). Lucas (2004), in addition, also puts peer sex workers in this typology. With the development of technology, we have also witnessed male escorts who advertise their sexual services online (Parsons, Bimbi, & Halkitis, 2001). Generally speaking, research studies focus predominantly on street sex workers, the ones working in bars, and call boys, even though the majority of male sex workers work through agencies or by means of their own advertising. Little attention has been paid to other groups of sex workers such as masseurs, gigolos and models (Browne & Minichiello, 1996).

### **2.4 Some Factors of Male Sex Work**

In this section, we discuss, with the help of a literature overview, some dilemmas concerning non-typical segments of male sex work. We address the questions of sexual orientation and sociological factors; more specifically, the dysfunctionality of families of birth. We also discuss some other (hedonic) factors associated with this type of work.

#### **2.4.1 Sexual Orientation as a Factor of Commencing Male Sex Work**

Boyer (1989) claims that homosexual orientation is one of the factors of engaging in sex work. Such work namely provides an identity and a way of conduct that meets the cultural image of homosexuality. Kong (2014) notes that male sexual workers report they can reveal their gay identity through their work. In their contact with their clients they can be utterly relaxed and freely show that they like to engage in sexual acts with same-sex partners.

An Australian study (Minichiello et al., 2002) showed that half the sample (n=185) of male sex workers identified themselves as gay, and 31% as bisexual. Similar results were shown by a study in Prague which included men who advertised their sexual services online (n=20), and male sex workers in gay bars and clubs (n=20). With regard to men who advertised their sexual services online, it was established that most defined themselves as homosexual or bisexual, whereas male sex workers in bars primarily defined themselves as heterosexual (Bar-Johnson & Weiss, 2015). In some countries, for instance in Mexico, homosexual identity is still stigmatised in society. Because male sex workers there deny or hide their homosexual orientation, they are, generally speaking, not stigmatised (Mednoza, 2014).

We may therefore conclude that social bias against homosexuality influences how male sex workers define their sexual orientation. We believe that this still reflects the influence of the social oppression of homosexuality throughout history. We can, however, assume that homosexuality is becoming less and less of a social taboo, whose strength of influence also depends on geographical area (urban/rural areas) and social class. Yet this assumption needs to be empirically proven.

#### **2.4.2 Sociological Factors of Male Sex Workers**

Timpson, Ross, Williams and Atkinson (2007) support the opinion that male sex workers often have a number of problems. These include escaping from home, and early school leaving, which leads to a lack of educational, social and employment skills. They also note it is typical that such men live(d) in dysfunctional families or are homeless.

Based on a study of 50 male sex workers, Earls and David (1989) established that 60% of them reported they were sexually abused in childhood. The findings of Earls and David (1989) suggest that such children are up to eight times more likely to become involved in male sex street work than those who are not victims of childhood sexual abuse (Wilson & Widom, 2010).

A study of male sex workers in Larkana (n=37) by Abdullah Avais et al., (2014) shows that 84% of the respondents reported sexual abuse in their childhood; 86% of them reported physical abuse, and 78% of them emotional abuse. Lankenau, Clatts, Welle, Goldsamt and Gwadz (2005) claim that young boys probably would not have become male sex workers had they only been given family support in their childhood and if they had not lived in dysfunctional families.

A study conducted in Prague revealed differences among male sex workers in bars and clubs (n=20) and male online sex workers (n=20). The results show that male online sex workers more frequently grew up with both of their parents than sex workers in bar and clubs. The latter were less likely to have had a happy childhood and less likely to have good relationships with their parents than male online sex workers (Bar-Johnson & Weiss, 2015).

On the other hand (Earls & David, 1989), male sex workers were presented as mentally stable individuals who performed sex work as a professional choice out of rational/economic reasons. Male sex workers are namely no less educated and there is no higher probability of them having grown up in a dysfunctional



family than men who do not engage in this type of work. Their findings also suggest that childhood abuse has a smaller impact on their becoming involved in sex work than, for instance, factors like financial benefits, sexual orientation (homosexuality) and early sexual experience.

Such contradictory descriptions can emerge from different groups of male sex workers being included in studies and on which particular (theoretical) premises the studies were based. Namely, the studies which show male sex work as »deviant« and »punishable« in comparison with the studies that treat this kind of work as a personal choice make contradictory findings. For example, among street sex workers it can come to a cyclic relationship between motivation for starting this type of work, poverty, drug addiction and homelessness. On the other hand, male escorts who enjoy the lifestyle of the middle social and economic class can engage in sex work to support their desire for a more luxurious lifestyle (Browne & Minichiello, 1996). Moreover, certain studies (Abdullah Avais et al., 2014; Bar-Johnson & Weiss, 2015; Earls & David, 1989) are based on small and non-representative samples (the snowball sampling method), rendering their conclusions about this segment of the population questionable. Browne and Minichiello (1996) explain that even though certain male sex workers can fit the negative stereotypes, these cannot be generalised to all men who engage in male sex work. Such representations tend to overlook a broader structural understanding of prostitution and worsen the cultural and political standing of male sex workers (Browne & Minichiello, 1996).

### 2.4.3 Hedonic Factors for Commencing Male Sex Work

One theory about the factors that lead to male sex work is the socio-cognitive theory by Bandura (1978). This theory offers a broader view of how to explain male sex work without pathological assumptions (Smith, Grov, Seal, & McCall, 2013). Whereas in the USA (Smith et al., 2013) only 10% of the participants (n=38) perform sex work for material benefits (e.g. clothing, electronic devices, cars), in both Dublin and San Francisco a large majority i.e. 93% of the participants (n=23) stated financial profit as the primary reason for engaging in this type of work with which they are otherwise supposed to finance the purchase of drugs (Mc Cabe et al., 2014). This is similar to the findings of the mentioned research in Prague (Bar-Johnson & Weiss, 2015) in which 90% of the participants (n=20) reported their main reason for engaging in this type of work was a financial crisis. In Prague, men start this type of work also due to compassion for their families (to provide money for their families, to save their families from material and financial deprivation), out of a search for loving partnership relationships, the need for security or socialising, the desire to make their partner jealous or by way of seeking revenge on him (McCajor Hall, 2007). The reasons for entering into male sex work also include gaining higher self-esteem (Kong, 2014), the lack of (well-paying) jobs and the pressure of family members (United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, 2007).

Financial gains are therefore the only feature that describes the male sex worker as a worker who is subject to the same rights as workers in other professions. In this way, sex work is equal to any other type of work and not a

consequence of (traumatic) childhood experience (Browne & Minichiello, 1996). Therefore, we can talk about a crime-preventing effect of sex work. Criminal acts such as thefts can thereby be prevented (Kaye, 2003). This finding is related to a comment by one participant in the research conducted by Kuhar and Pajnik (in press): “OK, I would not kill for money, but I would steal”.

### 3 METHODS

In our research, we conducted an online survey and used snowball sampling. In order to analyse the data required to verify the hypotheses, univariate, bivariate and two multivariate statistical methods were used. In checking the first hypothesis, only frequencies were calculated, while in the second hypothesis a chi-square test was employed. In order to verify the third hypothesis, factor and discriminant analyses were carried out.

#### 3.1 Description of the Population, Sampling and Data Collection

The target population included all male sex workers and men who do not engage in this type of work. Spatially, our studied population refers to Slovenia while the time period for the data collection was December 2017. The sample consisted of 53 individuals who answered the entire questionnaire, and of 20 individuals who interrupted their participation and answered only part of the questionnaire. Data were collected via an e-survey. The questionnaire was published using the online tool 1KA. Contacts with prospective respondents were made from 10 August 2017; future respondents were informed of the survey and invited to participate. In the ‘pre-phase’ of the research, it remained an open question whether anyone would be willing to cooperate, and if the response would be sufficient to successfully carry out the research. On the ‘public chatroom’ on the website “*avature.net*”, we gave an incentive to complete an online anonymous survey to respondents who are men who considered themselves as male sex workers. Due to the lack of response, male portal users who were promoting sexual services online were invited to a ‘private chat’. They were informed of our goals and we exchanged email addresses with the interested prospective research participants. They were subsequently asked to forward our enquiries to their acquaintances. The data were collected between 1 and 18 December 2017. A web link to the survey was sent to the previously informed participants from the “*avature.net*” website. Many of the men who were initially interested in co-operating had changed their mind. Due to the insufficient sample, the link to the survey was repeatedly forwarded to the ‘public chatroom’ on the portal and to ‘private chats’ with men who advertised sexual services on the “*erodate.com*” website. Since the selection of units for the sample was not probabilistic, and therefore each population unit did not have the same probability of selection, the sample is not random. Therefore, the results obtained cannot be generalised to the population without reservation. The sample was collected through the non-probability method of snowball sampling. On the websites we visited, we also found men who had not engaged in sex work so these respondents were also obtained from the aforementioned websites.

### 3.2 Description of the Sample

Our sample consisted of 73 respondents, 33 (45.2%) of whom reported that they performed male sex work, and of 40 respondents (54.8%) who did not perform this type of work (see Table 1). Table 2 shows that the majority, that is 39 respondents, who perform male sex work (57.5%), reported having completed secondary school, and a minority reported holding a master’s degree (12.5%). The majority (49%) of men who were not engaged in such work reported having completed secondary school, and a minority (12%) reported having a master’s degree. The age of the participants was not important for our study so the participants were not asked about it. The respondents (homosexual male sex workers) also were not asked whether they offer their services to homo- or bi-sexual men or women as well. In addition, their clientele were not included in our sample. Namely, this was not the subject of our research.

**Table 1:**  
Descriptive statistics\*

Which statement applies to you?	Frequency	Percentage
I perform male sex work	33	45.2
I do not perform male sex work	40	54.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Descriptive statistics of the sample: Which statement applies to you?*

**Table 2:**  
Descriptive statistics of the sample:  
Education

Which statement applies to you?		Education	Frequency	Percentage
I perform male sex work	Valid	Secondary school	16	48.5
		Undergraduate	6	18.2
		Master’s degree	4	12.1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>78.8</b>
I do not perform male sex work	Valid	Secondary school	23	57.5
		Undergraduate	4	10.0
		Master’s degree	5	12.5
		<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>80.0</b>

### 3.3 Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 15 questions that measure 43 variables. The aspects included in the questionnaire were determined based on the theoretical premises of the problem. The first set of questions, comprising 16 variables, related to the dysfunctionality of the family of birth. The variables were measured on a five-level Likert scale (1 – I strongly disagree, 2 – I disagree, 3 – I partly agree, partly disagree, 4 – I agree, 5 – I strongly agree). The questions were compiled with the help of the research by Earls and David (1989) in combination with the surveys conducted in Larkana (Abdullah Avais et al., 2014) and Prague (Bar-Johnson & Weiss, 2015).

The second set of questions relates to drug and alcohol addiction and includes four variables. These were also measured on a five-level scale (1 – I am not addicted at all, 2 – I am not addicted, 3 – I am partially addicted, partially not addicted, 4 – I am addicted, 5 – I am severely addicted). The third set contained

questions on the frequency of consuming drugs and alcohol. All four variables of this set were also measured on a five-level scale (1 – never, 2 – less than once a week, 3 – once a week, 4 – more than once a week, 5 – daily). The questions in the second and third sets were compiled by combining the studies by Minichiello et al. (2002) and Bar-Johnson and Weiss (2015).

The last three sets of questions contain eight variables, all of which were measured on a five-level Likert scale of agreement (1 – I strongly disagree, 2 – I disagree, 3 – I partly agree, partly disagree, 4 – I agree, 5 – I strongly agree). With regard to the contents, the questions referred to financial stability, early sexual experience and the educational process. This part of the questions was summarised according to the study by Earls and David (1989). In order to gain a better insight into the content, we finally asked five open questions about the perception of stigmatisation and the rights of male sex workers in Slovenia. We translated certain parts of questionnaires from foreign studies. The variables were determined by not including the entire dimension from particular studies. Certain statements reflected the characteristics of male sex workers in Australia, Larkana and the Netherlands, where, in our opinion, the characteristics of sex work differ from those in Slovenia.

For the reliability test, we used Cronbach’s coefficient  $\alpha$ , which measures the reliability of the questionnaire based on the correlations between the variables (Šifrer & Bren, 2011). The questionnaire’s reliability was tested for the set “Dysfunctionality of the Family”, which included “General Dysfunctionality” and “Abuse in the Family”. Coefficient  $\alpha$  for the set “General Dysfunctionality”, which contains six variables, is 0.871. The “Abuse in the Family” set contains two variables, and Cronbach’s alpha is 0.821.

All analyses of the collected data were carried out using the IBM SPSS Statistics version 22 SW package.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows that most respondents who reported performing sex work were bisexual (52%). The majority of respondents who did not perform sex work, however, defined themselves as heterosexual (85%).

Which statement applies to you? / Sexual orientation		Frequency	Percentage
I perform male sex work	Homosexual	4	12.1
	Heterosexual	12	36.4
	Bisexual	17	51.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>
I do not perform male sex work	Homosexual	1	2.5
	Heterosexual	34	85
	Bisexual	5	12.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3:**  
Descriptive statistics – sexual orientation

From the set of questions relating to dysfunctionality of the family, we found that all of the variables (measured on a five-level scale from 1 – I strongly disagree to 5 – I strongly agree) had an average value of less than three. Men who reported performing male sex work had the highest average (2.62), which is still quite low, and in response to the statement “There were often quarrels in the family” they most often answered with “I disagree”. The variable “There was heroin in the family” had the lowest average (1.37). The most frequent answer to the majority of the variables was “I strongly disagree”. In the sample of men who were not engaged in sex work, the variable with the highest average (2.06) was the variable “Tobacco was often present in the family”, whereas the lowest average (1.06) was seen for the variables: “Heroin was often present in the family”, “Cocaine was often present in the family”, and “I was a victim of drug problems in my family”. In response to all of the variables, the respondents most frequently indicated “I strongly disagree”.

Table 4 shows that the data on drug and alcohol addiction show that all variables have an average value of less than two or equalling two. Men who perform sex work state more often that they are addicted to the listed substances than men who do not engage in such work. Both men who perform sex work, and men who do not perform this type of work, reported they were most addicted to tobacco, and least addicted to heroin. The difference between the studied samples is that the men who do not perform this type of work have a more unified opinion on addiction to heroin than the men who perform such work.

**Table 4:**  
Descriptive statistics\*

Assess your addiction to these substances		Alcohol	Tobacco	Marijuana	Cocaine	Heroin
I perform male sex work	N	27	27	27	27	27
	Average	1.70	2.00	1.56	1.44	1.37
	Standard deviation	.775	1.330	.974	.801	.884
I do not perform male sex work	N	33	33	34	33	33
	Average	1.48	1.64	1.56	1.06	1.00
	Standard deviation	.566	1.168	1.260	.348	.000

*Descriptive statistics – addiction to substances (variables were measured on a five-level scale (1 – I am not addicted at all, 2 – I am not addicted, 3 – I am partially addicted, partially not addicted, 4 – I am addicted, 5 – I am severely addicted))*

Men who perform sex work more often stated they are addicted to the listed substances than men not engaging in this type of work. Both men who perform sex work and men who do not perform such work reported they were most addicted to tobacco, and least addicted to heroin. The difference between the studied samples is that the men who do not perform this type of work have a more unified opinion on addiction to heroin than the men who perform such work.

## 4.2 Performing Male Sex Work and Sexual Orientation

We were interested in whether in Slovenia there are statistically significant differences in sexual orientation between male sex workers and men who do not perform this type of work. We set the following null and alternative hypotheses:

$H_0$ : Sexual orientation is not related to male sex work.

$H_1$ : Sexual orientation is related to male sex work.

Since both variables were measured at a nominal level, a chi-square test was performed. We had to combine the variables "bisexual" and "homosexual" as the expected frequencies were less than 5 (Brvar, 2007). The value of Pearson coefficient was 18.353 at one degree of freedom. The p-value was 0.000; therefore, the null hypothesis stating that sexual orientation is not related to male sex work was rejected, and we accepted the alternative one, namely that there is a relationship between those variables.

### 4.3 Different Types of Family Dysfunctionality

We were interested in whether male sex workers live(d) in more dysfunctional families than men who did not engage in this type of work. We checked the assumption with a discriminant analysis. Prior to that, we were interested in whether the variables can be reduced to factors that will reflect all the characteristics of these variables. We must point out a breach of the assumption about the sample size (Bren, 2017).

The calculation of asymmetry and kurtosis showed that values exceeded the limits of -3 and 3 for the variables: "Cocaine was often present in the family", "Heroin was often present in the family", "Tobacco was often present in the family", "Marijuana was often present in the family", "I was a victim of drug problems in my family", "I was a victim of alcohol problems in my family", and "I was a victim of sexual abuse". Therefore, these variables were excluded from further analysis. There was no multicollinearity among the variables (the value of the determinant was 0.005). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of the sample's suitability was 0.807 and the p-value of Bartlett's test was 0.000. The sample suitability was therefore optimal and the correlation matrix was not the identity, meaning we were justified in performing a factor analysis (Šifrer & Bren, 2011).

With the principal axis factoring method, two factors were extracted (initial eigenvalues above 1) and with the Oblimin with the Kaiser normalisation rotation method we tried to optimise the factor analysis results. The first factor explained about 50% of the total variance, and the second almost 10%. The total explained variance of both factors was approximately 60%.

The first factor ("*General Dysfunctionality*") included the variables: "There were often quarrels in the family", "I had an unhappy childhood", "Alcohol was often present in the family", "When growing up, I at times quarrelled with my family members so seriously that I left home", "I was a victim of violence among my parents" and "I grew up in a one-parent family". The variables "When growing up, I was a victim of physical abuse", and "When growing up, I was a victim of emotional abuse" composed the second factor ("*Abuse in the family*"). We excluded the variable "Generally speaking, the atmosphere at home was unpleasant" from further analysis because it did not correspond to any of the factors.

As a follow-up, we conducted discriminant analysis. In comparison with the men who did not engage in this type of work, male sex workers had higher mean values for both composite variables, but also higher standard deviations.

We applied the discriminant analysis to verify whether the differences between the two groups are statistically significant. We set the null hypothesis on the equality of the averages of the factors' means for both groups : , and the alternative hypothesis that the averages are different (Šifrer & Bren, 2011). For the factor "General Dysfunctionalit", the p-value was 0.001, and for the factor "Abuse in the Family" it was 0.048. The null hypothesis on the equality of the averages for the factors was therefore rejected.

The value of Wilks' lambda was 0.829 with the statistically significant feature of the discriminant function of 0.006. We obtained one discriminant function, which was a linear combination of factors and statistically significantly differentiated between the groups. The factor "Abuse in the family" had a smaller weight than the factor "General dysfunctionality", so the latter differentiated the two groups more distinctly from each other. In total, 67.2% of the participants were properly classified, namely 48% of those who perform male sex work, and 81.8% of those who did not perform this type of work.

## 5 DISCUSSION

In the present research we tried to compare some socio-psychological characteristics of men performing as male sex workers and men who do not engage in this type of work.

In the empirical part, we analysed the collected data using descriptive and multivariate statistics. We tried to determine once again whether male sex work in Slovenia exists. We explored whether there are any statistically significant differences in sexual orientation among male sex workers and men who do not perform such work in Slovenia. We attempted to establish whether there risk factors exist which differentiate male sex workers from men who do not perform this type of work. According to the results of these analyses and the issues we addressed in our research, we can namely adopt a targeted approach to reduce the stigmatisation of male sex workers and to address the question of potential support and counselling. In this part, we explain the results and locate them in the current context of the research on male sex work.

Based on frequencies from the descriptive statistics of the sample, the first hypothesis about the existence of male sex work in Slovenia cannot be rejected. Namely, 33 respondents who reported they performed male sex work completed the questionnaire. On the other hand, we have to note that we obtained our data from various online forums where people frequently register themselves using a false identity. Online we can find a lot of pretending and misleading, including by men who claim to be escorts for female clients, as many of them would wish to be escorts for women and thus pretend to be so but, in reality, they do not have any clients. In this context, instead of the term "male sex workers" the term "men offering sexual services online" is more appropriate since we cannot be certain that in this case we are actually dealing with male sex workers (I. Šori, personal communication, November 24, 2017). The question of whom our research actually investigates therefore remains open.

We can not reject the second hypothesis: Among male sex workers and men who do not engage in this type of work there are statistically significant differences in sexual orientation. The chi-square test was statistically significant. At a 0.05 level of risk, we can say there are statistically significant differences in sexual orientation between male sex workers in Slovenia and men who do not engage in such work. (Non)-performance of male sex work is therefore linked to sexual orientation. These results are consistent with research results showing that the majority of male sex workers are homosexual or bisexual (Ballester Arnal, Salmerón Sánchez, Gil Llarío, & Giménez García, 2014; Grimes, 2001; Koken et al., 2004). However, in the questionnaire we did not ask questions about what type of sex work they performed. We believe that sexual orientation affects the type of sex work a person performs. For example, an erotic dancer or an erotic masseur are, in our opinion, more likely to define themselves as heterosexual than a street sex worker. The assumption has yet to be empirically proven and Dr Izток Šori (personal communication, November 24, 2017) claims that discussing different forms of sex work together is methodologically appropriate and in line with most of the literature in this field.

The third hypothesis, which refers to the differences in birth families' dysfunctions among men who perform sex work and those who do not cannot be rejected. The discriminant analysis showed that the differences between the two groups are large enough to conclude that the views on their (dysfunctional) families do differ. Therefore, we may conclude that those respondents who performed male sex work live(d) in more dysfunctional families than men who did not perform this type of work. However, their families are not dysfunctional as already follows from the descriptive statistics, which show that all respondents come from relatively functional families. These results coincide with similar research results by Bar-Johnson and Weiss (2015), and Earls and David (1989). Kuhar and Pajnik (in press) claim that circumstances in explaining male sex work refer to male sex workers' families that faced social, economic and legal insecurity. One of our participants commented on the results as follows: "Well yeah... I know a lot of individuals who prostitute themselves... their dad a drunk and a junkie ... but I also know a lady doctor who is a prostitute and has no problems at home".

Due to the limitations of our research, great care should be taken when interpreting and making conclusions. It therefore makes more sense to discuss the issues raised by our research. One of the possibilities of interpreting the question of the lack of a connection between the dysfunctionality of the family and engagement in male sex work may relate to a comment made by one participant: "This is essentially not work, it is a passion that also represents a source of income". Obviously, psychological factors are not as important as, for instance, economic factors. In society, the general belief prevails that only a person with whom 'something is wrong' might become engaged in sex work (I. Šori, personal communication, February 17, 2018). It is underpinned by the findings that the starting of sex work occurs at the crossroads of poor socio-economic circumstances as a trigger and career decision-making (Kuhar & Pajnik, in press). Our research shows that, in contrast with the general social opinion, sex workers are far more 'normal'. This is also illustrated by the descriptive statistics: the respondents on



average did not report addiction to alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, cocaine or heroin. These findings, however, contradict the opinion of Ballester Arnal et al. (2014) who claim that the majority of male sex workers are addicted to prohibited substances (especially cocaine) and alcohol. Bar-Johnson and Weiss (2015) consider there is a greater likelihood of alcohol and drug abuse among sex workers working in bars and clubs compared to workers who advertise their services online. Yet Earls and David (1989) argue that alcohol and drug consumption among male sex workers is higher than among men who do not engage in this type of work.

Dr Iztok Šori (personal communication, November 24, 2017) claims that comparing male sex workers and males who do not engage such work is not necessary; moreover, it is not methodologically appropriate. Thus, our research can also be understood as additional stigmatisation of sex workers and sex work, although this was not our purpose. However, we still believe that our results can help with the destigmatising of sex workers and their work. One respondent commented: "There is a lot of this going on and it's still a taboo topic". All of the respondents in Kuhar and Pajnik (in press) also see their work as highly stigmatised. We think the solution to this is to raise people's awareness so they begin to realise that male sex work also exists and not just the female version. The feelings of acceptance of male sex workers could lead to the point where registration of their profession and adequate activities would become a reality, allowing conditions to be created that protect male sex workers. Similarly, the results of Kuhar and Pajnik (in press) show that this stigmatisation largely informs, defines and frames sex work in Slovenia. The tripartite decriminalisation (of male and female sex workers) in New Zealand has had a positive effect on improving the human rights of people performing this type of work and has also improved their relations with the police (Armstrong, 2016). It may be seen as an example of good practice so we believe that Slovenia could be inspired by their model. In this way, we would recommend training for police officers in order to eliminate stereotypes, stigmatisation and ensure consistent treatment in the event of violence. Inspiration for this may be drawn from the same example of the New Zealand model as the results of their survey show the positive effects a professional attitude of the police can have when police officers are properly informed and educated about male sex work (Armstrong, 2016). We found there is a shortage of organisations in Slovenia that work actively to reduce the stigmatisation of sex workers. Therefore, it is a good idea to consider setting up organisations, initiatives and programmes that provide information, help and support to sex workers without (secondary) stigmatisation.

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