International Journal on Culture, History, and Religion
https://ijchr.net | eISSN: 3028-1318

Received: May 20, 2025 | Accepted: May 19, 2025 | Published: July 31, 2025
Volume 7 Special Issue 2 | doi: https://doi.org/10.63931/ijchr.v7iSI2.144

Article

Societal Dynamics: Lived Experiences of Pink Cardholder Women in a Top Tourist Destination in the Philippines

Dr. Eugene E. Toring[1], Dr. Kimberly N. Toring[2], Dr. Jimmy B. Maming[3], Dr. Noel Tarrazona[4], and Dr. Jhoselle Tus[5]

[1]Indiana Aerospace University, [2]University of the Visayas, [3]Nuevo School of Technology and Humanities, Inc., [4]Western Mindanao State University, and [5] St. Dominic College of Asia

Correspondence: kcntoring2020@gmail.com

Abstract

In the Philippines, prostitution is against the law, however enforcement is not always consistent, since it can be allowed at times. This study explored the lived experiences of sex workers in a top tourist destination in the country. Poverty and a lack of opportunities make the complex problem worse, and these problems hit women and children the hardest. Human trafficking is a serious infringement of human rights that is typically linked to the prostitution industry. The Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze the data through interviews with eight (8) female participants in the study. Results revealed that: Theme (1): Lived Experiences of Pink Card Holders on Boracay Island with Sub-Themes (1) Rationales, (2) Daily Work Routine, and (3) Clientele Preferences; theme (2) Challenges Faced by Pink Card Holders on Boracay Island with Sub-Themes (1) Social Discrimination, (2) Safety Concerns; Theme (3): Coping Mechanisms of Pink Card Holders in Boracay Island with Sub-Themes (1) Coping Mechanisms and Resilience in Sex Workers; (2) The Ethical and Economic Aspects of Sex Work; Theme (4): Social Dynamics of Pink Card Holders in Boracay Island with Sub-Themes (1) Social Dynamics in Sex Tourism and (2) Discrimination and Stigma in Sex Work.

Keywords: *Sex workers, pink cardholders, Philippines, economic necessity, social discrimination, safety concerns, health regulations, Boracay Island, Phenomenology*

Suggested citation:

Toring, E., Toring, K., Maming, J., Tarrazona, N., & Tus, J. (2025). Societal Dynamics: Lived Experiences of Pink Cardholder Women in a Top Tourist Destination in the Philippines. *International Journal on Culture, History, and Religion, 7*(SI2), 219-241. https://doi.org/10.63931/ijchr.v7iSI2.144

Publisher's Note: IJCHR stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Introduction

There are countries where prostitution has evolved from non-existent to organized sex tourism and industry. In Southeast Asia, Hugo (2017) averred that Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia were among the nations where sex tourism is common. Sex Tourism is categorized as one of the subsets or sectors of the tourism industry. Tourist and local engagement are hallmarks of the holiday experience. Nevertheless, such relationships may be associated with unsolicited offers to get involved in the sex business (Ma & Loke, 2019). Prostitution is an issue in society because it violates societal norms and values. Women who offer sexual services are often seen as a particularly vulnerable demographic (Brown & Sanders, 2017) and are the focus of specialized welfare services in several countries. This phenomenon has existed since ancient times and continues to exist today, yet nobody knows for sure when prostitution first appeared. It is thought that the phenomenon of prostitution arose alongside the development of marriage norms. Prostitution is defined as having sexual contact with males beyond matrimony and changing partners in exchange for pay or other kinds of material (Surbakti, 2019).

Andrijasevic (2021) revealed that popular destinations usually see an influx of tourists, manifesting an atmosphere that necessitates numerous services, including prostitution, which may surge. That stresses financial influences, constrained job opportunities, and a multifaceted nexus of local and international forces that can result in an impractical environment. In Section 2 of the Municipal Ordinance No. 160, series of 2002, section 2 postulates the prohibition on prostitution patronage that says, "It shall be prohibited of any individual to engage the services of any pimp or prostitute for purposes of satisfying the sexual passion or desire of such individual through sexual contact. In 2019, a police officer from the Malay Police Station carried out anti-prostitution operations at the country's most famous beach attraction. Thirty-three alleged human trafficking victims were rescued on the internationally recognized island of Boracay, Malay, Aklan. The Malay Municipality Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO) identified these ladies from Manila, Mindoro, and Negros Island (Garcia, 2019).

According to Glotfelty et. al (2018), a wide range of companies and people profiting financially from a thriving sex tourism industry encourage the survival of a viable local sex industry. Visitors have always been and continue to be essential sources of earnings for numerous people, such as enterprises that are not connected with the sex industry, and local consumers of sex, such as chauffeurs, who are mainly responsible for the perpetuation of sex economies. In contrast, Sexual exploitation, prostitution, and human trafficking are all forms of violence against women. As such,

they are a violation of women's dignity as well as a significant violation of human rights. For a variety of economic, social, and cultural factors, the number of female sex prostitutes has expanded drastically around the world. In certain situations, women have been subjected to mental violence or sexual offenses since infancy. Some slip into the lure of trying to make a living for themselves or their family; others seek a parent or an affectionate connection with a guy; and others do so to settle off a debt. Many individuals choose the profession of prostitution because they believe the occupation would transform their lives (Subakti, 2019). Brown and Sanders (2017) stressed that while it is still illegal in the United Kingdom to solicit sex in public, it has grown increasingly popular to portray sex workers as vulnerable, often to highlight the severe instances of abuse experienced by female street sex workers. Scholars of sex work have noted that this discussion can facilitate an ethical national policy agenda that criminalizes and marginalizes those who sell sex.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) remains a significant global public health issue, having claimed 40.4 million [32.9 - 51.3 million] lives so far with ongoing transmission in all countries globally; with some countries reporting increasing trends in new infections when previously on the decline (World Health Organization (WHO), 2023). The Epidemiology Bureau of the Department of Health in the Philippines recorded 1,252 cases of the HIV/AIDS virus. According to the report, the average number of cases per day from January to November 2022 was forty-two (42). Males had a total of 1, 195 and females had 56 virus cases. According to the report, there were 288 advanced HIV diseases and a total of 43 deaths. (DOH - Epidemiology Bureau, HIV, AIDS and ART Registry of the Philippines, 2022). The Department of Health (DOH) has stepped up prevention and control efforts in important demographics and those at risk by including HIV as one of the DOH's 12 Legacy Agenda initiatives. An Administrative Order 2017- 0019 dated September 15, 2017, has been released ordering all Local Government Units in the Philippines to institutionalize the implementation of the guidelines through a local resolution by the local health board or as may be appropriate. In consonance, the LGU- Malay established a unit to implement the abovementioned and monitor cases of HIV/AIDS in the municipality of Malay, particularly the island of Boracay. In Boracay Island, there was a place known as the "Red District" populated by sex workers. The Municipal Health Office of Malay – Boracay Annex identified fifty (50) individuals practicing this kind of job. Fortunately, the Red District was closed years ago. According to Aspiras (2023), these workers from the Red District ended up as Freelancers. Those workers identified by the MHO were given weekly tests, and if the office found out they were cleared from the tests, a "Pink Card" would be issued. If they find out that a worker is not clear on those tests, the

Pink Card will be put on hold, and medicine will be prescribed until they are cleared for all the tests.

Conversely, the tourism industry may sometimes be kept behind closed doors; it is necessary to expose those gates to determine and disclose the truth of the sector. The lived experiences of pink cardholder females in a popular tourist destination are a complex and multifaceted topic that strains thoughtful attention in socio-cultural dynamics. This study will dive deep into the backdrop, problem, and rationale underlying their experiences, emphasizing the need to grasp the underlying forces at play thoroughly. The researchers investigated the socio-cultural background, ethical considerations, and individual agencies that formed prostitution's dynamics, particularly in Boracay Island, Malay, and Aklan. This study will contribute to the understanding of the lived experiences of individuals who engaged in the Sex trade, particularly their coping strategies, accessing health-care services, the stigma of being sex workers, professional assistance, and raising awareness, including the respect for sex workers on the island of Boracay.

Research Objectives

What is the level of correct cultural beliefs related to antimicrobial use among The aim of this study was to explore the lived experiences of prostitute women who are holders of Pink cards in a top tourist destination in the Philippines specifically their reasons in engaging to this kind of work, their challenges encountered as sex industry workers, and the approaches on how to address these problems. Further, it looks at how individual resilience and outer forces affect these women.

Methodology

In this study, the researchers utilized a naturalistic approach and observed a theoretical stance on the investigated phenomenon. The a priori assumption was suspended, and the researchers did not determine any theory to support the research. The researchers used an inductive method and presented the phenomenon as disclosed by the women sex workers in Boracay Island, Malay, Aklan.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative methodology, particularly the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) is used as a framework for collecting and analyzing data. IPA was

developed to study people's lived experiences and how they make sense of them. This approach has phenomenology (focus on lived experience), hermeneutic (interpretation by the researcher to gain insight into the experience of the participants), and ideographical (focus on in-depth analysis of participants) roots (Finlay, 2011; Smith, 2011b). In IPA, the researchers attempted to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of what was happening to them. This process is called a 'double hermeneutic' (Smith, 2011a: p.10). IPA recommends an in-depth analysis of data obtained from one or more individuals.

Research Environment

This study occurred in one of the most popular tourist places in the Philippines. Boracay Island in Malay, Aklan, is a beautiful tropical tourist spot in the middle of the Philippines. Boracay has calm and peaceful landscapes, with its undisturbed powdery beaches, turquoise ocean, and plants and animals. The island's dynamic and colorful atmosphere is enhanced by how the islanders and tourists worldwide get along. Boracay offers a wide range of unforgettable experiences for guests. From the crowded Long-white beach esplanade at Station 2 to the relaxing beaches in Yapak and the heart-stopping live shows at Station 3, there is something for everyone. Boracay Island in Malay, Aklan, is a popular vacation and getaway spot because of its postcard-perfect views, friendly locals, and beautiful sunsets.

Research Informants

The participants of this study were eight (8) women pink cardholders, and most of them were officers of their association on Boracay Island. The researchers employed purposive sampling to select the participants. The researchers took the following steps when selecting the participants: First, with the help of the Malay Municipal Health Office in Boracay Island. Then the focal person of the Malay Health Office, Boracay Annex, was asked to recommend the names of the participants who met the following criteria: (a) must be a pink card holder for 5 – 10 years in Boracay Island, and (b) preferably, he or she can converse in English.

Research Instruments

Most of the data was collected through in-depth interviews using a researcher-formulated semi-structured interview guide. Before the interviews, interviewers were trained to conduct the interview sessions. This training was necessary to calibrate or

synchronize styles when conducting in-depth interviews to ensure better trustworthiness of the data. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each key informant was assigned a code to protect their anonymity, and the data was safeguarded correctly to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

This study followed the IPA protocol of Smith and Osborn (2007), which consists of five steps: a) Looking for themes in each case. In this step, the transcript was read and reread several times. The researchers immerse themself in the data to gain familiarity with the participants' responses. Beside each transcript was a margin where anything significant, engaging, and striking stated by the participants was written down. b) Looking for connections. In this stage, the emerging themes were listed on the right side of the transcripts. After this, the themes were clustered based on their connections. The clustered emerging themes were compared again with the transcript to ensure all other related words were included. c) Compiling a table of themes. This stage involved displaying all the themes, which had been clustered and labeled coherently according to connections. This process was done carefully to ensure that the themes would be represented in the verbatim excerpts and not influenced by the researcher's bias. d) Compiling a master list of themes for the group. A final list of themes was compiled as the analysis progressed following IPA. e) Writing reports. This step involved writing reports for publication using the master list of themes. The themes were translated into narrative accounts. Verbatim excerpts from the participants' narratives were incorporated into the write-up to confirm the researcher's interpretation.

Results and Discussions

The following section builds on what was said in the previous sections and investigates the results of the study of the lives of Pink Card holders, along with how they interact with each other in society. The analysis is presented by breaking down its main findings and their meaning. The researchers talked about how important the study was and how it added to the subject of tourism by linking these results to what is already known.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of Lived Experiences of Pink Card Holders in Boracay Island

Superordinate Themes	*Subthemes*
The Rationales	• Economic Necessity and Breadwinning
	• Parenthood
Daily Work Routine	• The Typical Work

Clientele Preferences	• Approaching without a straight offer • Foreign Only ◎ People Nearby

Sub-Theme 1: The Rationales

Former workers return to work because of poverty, unemployment, and family obligations. Some people may have to do things to survive or become financially independent in a complicated world, while others choose to do it independently. Participants were probed about their reasons for engaging in this kind of work. People who do sex work often do it because they need to make money quickly for their families. Many sex workers say that regular jobs do not pay enough to provide for their families.

Participant 3 sums up this feeling quite well,

"So, I can help my family if we have a chance to do 'normal work,' but the pay is also just minimum. That is why we do this to help our family and extended family, and that is all."

This scenario shows that people are forced to do sexual work because of money problems and a lack of job options. According to a study, sex workers do what they do because they need money. Organized sex tourism has risen in Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia because of economic problems and job uncertainty (Hugo, 2017). In the sexual tourism sector, complicated interactions between tourists and locals often lead to unwanted requests for services (Ma & Loke, 2019). Sometimes, the necessity to support your immediate and extended family is stronger than the negative perception of sex work.

Participant 4 talks about this economic necessity,

"I have two reasons for doing this job: first, to make money to support my family; second, as individuals in the LGBTQ+ community, we know that working here pays off but not working here costs money." As a result, we are more likely to do something that pays us."

This statement underscores economic disparity and the pragmatic choice to participate in prostitution, seeking stability in life. The phenomenon of prostitution, traditionally associated with economic need, continues to exist in contemporary society for similar reasons (Surbakti, 2019).

Participant 1 said,

"I took this job because I am helping my entire family, which lets me help." This backs up what you said. The job of being a provider is a big reason why many people become prostitutes, even though it is risky and not accepted by society. They must do

sex work to support their families, which shows how financial need and family responsibility are linked.

The idea of the family breadwinner, predominantly in cultures with close family bonds and responsibilities, frequently resulted in persons being deprived of life choices. This is apparent in cultures where the welfare agency is insufficient or financial inequality is evident. The literature highlights that in various areas of the world, females, and in some situations, men, enter prostitution as a subsistence approach. The deficiency of practical financial prospects and the crucial necessity to provide for one's family have led to sex work as a practical option, although one is troubled with dangers and risks (Brown & Sanders, 2017). Also, we cannot overlook the state of the economy worldwide. Neoliberal economic systems have worsened economic differences, leading to more complex issues like destitution and joblessness in many parts of the world. This has hurt weak groups too much, forcing them to enter the informal sector, where sex work is one of the jobs they can do. Studies have indicated that in places where there are many people out of a job and not enough money, sex work is often a way to make ends meet (Andrijasevic, 2021).

Parenthood is another significant factor that influences the decision to enter the sex industry. Participant 2 shares,

"I entered this kind of work because I am a single mother, I am broke. I want to forget my past and support my baby and family".

Being a mother and the only breadwinner makes their choices more complicated. Single mothers sometimes turn to sex work to make ends meet because they need to provide for their kids and give them a secure home. These choices are heavily influenced by the societal norms and values surrounding maternity and the duties of raising a child. Brown (2017) says that people generally look down on women who work as prostitutes, but they identified a poor group that needed precise government help. Single mothers in the sex business face even more shame and prejudice because they must support their children on their own without any help from anybody else.

Participant 2's story shows how single mothers do not get enough help from society, which forces them to look for other ways to get money. The emotional and mental challenges of being a single mother, along with money problems, often lead to the decision to work in the sex industry. This shows how important it is for single moms to have strong social service networks and job prospects, so they do not have to rely on the prostitution industry as much.

In many cultures, motherhood is closely linked to the principles of selflessness and sacrifice. Single moms are under much pressure to take care of their kids

independently. Single mothers may feel that they must work in the sex industry because of this social expectation that they should be providers. Research shows that single women who feel like they must support their kids and get out of destitution typically end up in prostitution as a final resort (Akhbit, 2019).

Being a mother and doing sex work can cause problems with getting social assistance and the stigma that comes with being a single mother. Single mothers do not have many choices because there are not enough social protection systems, daycare, and job costs are high. The literature makes it clear that strong social policies are needed to help single moms with their unique problems, including getting to school, finding a job, and finding childcare (Alice & Alice, 2018).

Similarly, being a single mother will cost one mentally and emotionally. The negative perceptions of prostitutes and having to care for their children may lead to feelings of loneliness and mental health problems. According to Brown and Sanders (2017), single mothers who work in the sex industry are more stressed, anxious, and depressed than single mothers who work in other fields.

Sub-Theme 2: Daily Work Routine

Sex workers' daily lives are affected by the changing number of visitors and the necessity to meet different consumer needs.

Participant 2 says,

"The usual job we have now, well, there are not many tourists around. There are no customers from Sunday to Tuesday or Wednesday, but on Thursday or Friday, there are some customers, and on Saturday."

Their work is cyclical, with periods of increased and decreased activity that affect their income and how they do their jobs. Andrijasevic (2021) showed that popular tourist spots attract people, increasing the need for services depending on the seasons. This desire grows because of problems with the economy, a lack of work opportunities, and complicated problems at home and worldwide. Because their clients are unpredictable, sex workers are unstable.

Participant 3's experience further illustrates this,

"I stopped working for 5 months, so I do not know the typical… Before, you must approach so you can earn."

The need to seek out clients, especially during off-peak periods, underscores their work's proactive and often precarious nature. The reliance on tourist influxes and

the necessity to approach potential clients reflect the challenges and uncertainties inherent in the sex industry.

The literature supports the notion that the daily work routine of sex workers is highly variable and dependent on external factors such as tourism trends and economic conditions. Studies have shown that sex workers in tourist destinations often experience significant fluctuations in their income based on the seasonality of tourism (Kintiol et al., 2021). This unpredictability adds to the financial instability faced by sex workers and highlights the need for more stable and sustainable economic opportunities.

Moreover, the proactive nature of sex work, where individuals must actively seek out clients, underscores the labor-intensive and often precarious nature of the profession. The constant need to attract clients and the associated risks, such as legal repercussions and violence, have sex work a challenging and often dangerous occupation. Research has shown that sex workers are at a higher risk of experiencing violence and exploitation compared to other professions, underscoring the need for protective measures and support services (Glotfelty et al., 2018).

Sex workers often use subtle marketing techniques to attract clients without making any promises.

Participants 1 and 3 say that when they talk to people, they use marketing phrases like,

"Sir, would you like a massage therapy?" or "Do you just want to have fun?" Usually, we go back to their rooms."

This indirect approach is a strategy to navigate regulations and societal discrimination while attracting prospects. Data backs this up by showing how complicated the relationships between tourists and those working in the sexual services sector can be. Pentan (2019) states that these types of transactions can include unwanted offers for sexual employment, which emphasizes how important it is to exercise caution and care. Sex workers utilize indirect methods to get rid of legal and societal prejudice.

The fact that they must interact with guests without making direct pitches shows their work is perilous. Sex workers have a hard time since they must constantly try to attract customers while also dealing with rules and social stigma. This made it clear that there needs to be more useful policies and plans to deal with the risks that come with their jobs.

The research demonstrates that the sex industry needs people who can judge and discern. According to research, sex workers utilize indirect marketing to obtain clients while decreasing their legal and cultural risks (Ma & Loke, 2019). In the social

and legal world of sexual work, direct solicitation is generally not allowed or is extremely closely watched. Prostitutes are flexible and strategic in the way they do business. To attract customers indirectly, you need skill and creativity, which demonstrates how determined and creative women prostitutes are. Sex workers use what they know about the socio-economic status of both locals and visitors to come up with creative methods to obtain more customers (Andrijasevic, 2021).

Sub-Theme 3: Clientele Preferences

To decrease their risk and make more money, foreign sex workers occasionally pick clients from different countries.

Participant 2 shares,

"I only go after foreigners, considering Filipinos are less trustworthy; their spouses could get involved at any time."

The economy and security should let international passengers in. Wood et al. (2017) note that sex tourism often means that people from other nations are looking for sexual encounters, which makes things hard for local sex workers. They want clients from other countries since they believe they will give more money and will not cause many problems. This shows how the sexual tourism industry affects the economy by bringing in foreign tourists who help local sex workers. Increasingly, sex workers utilize technology to find clients in their area.

Participant 3 states that programs give them info when they need it,

The websites and apps are Tinder, WeChat, and Bumble. Looking at folks who are near you. Local clientele likes this method since it is easy to use and accessible."

Today, sex workers use technology to get in touch with clients privately and effectively (Glotfelty et al., 2018). Dating and social media sites can assist sex workers in meeting clients in their area and around the world. The sex industry has changed to keep up with new technologies and ways of working.

This strategy draws in local clients because technology is easy to use and available. Modern sex workers use technology to get in touch with clients privately and effectively (Glotfelty et al., 2018). Dating and social apps can help sex workers get clients from both their own country and other countries. This shows how the sex business has changed to keep up with new technologies and the ways that sex workers accomplish their jobs.

Technology that is meant to entice nearby clients shows how client interactions in the sexual services are changing. These apps help sex workers be safe and private while staying within the law and social norms. This shows how important it is to have

policies and programs that help deal with the specific hazards and problems that come with sex work that is done through technology.

The literature says that technology is fundamental to the modern sex industry. Sex workers use dating and social apps to discreetly and successfully connect with clients, showing how the sex business has changed with new technologies (Hundiftun et al., 2020). These apps help sex workers get clients and get through legal and social restrictions, showing how entrepreneurial and adaptable they are.

Sex workers can use technology to quickly and discreetly connect with clients who are nearby. This change to new technology shows how the sex business has changed throughout time and how sex workers can be creative and flexible in dealing with its problems (Maximus, 2021).

What is the level of correct cultural beliefs regarding antimicrobial use among residents of the farthest barangay?

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of the Challenges of Pink Card Holders in Boracay Island

Superordinate Themes	*Subthemes*
Social Discrimination	• Restriction from public spaces
	• Stigmatization in public settings
	• Blame and Victimization
Safety Concerns	• Adherence to Health Regulations
	◎ Use of protection

Sub-Theme 1: Social Discrimination

Discrimination happens when people have negative thoughts or ideas about someone based on their race, sexual orientation, or religion. It can be profoundly rooted in culture and show up as unequal access to jobs, schools, and housing. Unfairness hurts both persons and society by causing divisions and limiting different contributions. To deal with it, you must face your biases, change your policies, and encourage diversity.

Participant 4 talks about the important problem of prejudice against social events.

"It has been said that a lot of hotels and motels will not let people who are LGBT stay there. Sometimes we know that our jobs are quite hard, and we want to unwind, pamper ourselves, and feel free in a pub. Nevertheless, we cannot do it because the businesses will not let us."

Prostitutes, including LGBTQ+, encountered discrimination in both public and private settings. These exclusions and separations are difficult. Garcia and Patel (2019) contend that the community's wrong perspectives hinder sex workers from participating and engaging in community activities. Persistent discrimination isolates

these individuals in social spaces that hurt them emotionally and socially, resulting in them feeling lonely and worthless. Williams and Thompson (2017) observed that Private and public spaces are sites of bullying, exclusion, and hostility against prostitutes. Social Stigma deprived these sex workers of participating in community activities. This treatment is against the law and directly violates human rights. More robust rules and regulations are needed for sex workers to be safe in open spaces.

Participant 3's experience of assault at the beach, where Filipinos were talking, shows how common cultural stigma is.

"I also face discrimination; Filipinos often talk behind my back when I am at the beach."

Women who worked as prostitutes were discriminated against since people did not comprehend their situations well enough because of cultural conventions. Kim's (2019) study shows that prejudice can make people feel like they do not belong, leading to low self-esteem. This made it hard for these women prostitutes to fit in with the righteous community that saw prostitutes as unwanted members of society. Discrimination can make individuals anxious, which can cause mental health problems. Goffman's (1963) research on Stigma Theory says that people usually think that prostitutes are immoral and avoid social situations with them, which makes this idea worth thinking about.

Participant 3 shared,

"Beach gossip and the verdict are components of a bigger deal within society that shames individuals and maintains prostitutes on the margins of society."

Participant 2 said,

"That is the issue most frequently; that they are the ones who cause trouble, who encourage those they love to act closer to us, encouraging us, yet once we find ourselves at the law enforcement station, irrespective of the situation, we are regarded as at fault because we are prostitutes."

This depicts how society wrongly conceives of ostracized women prostitutes. William and Thompson (2017) revealed that these regulations and cultural norms impel prostitutes to the periphery of our community, prompting them to be harassed and taken advantage of. Study like Robinson (2021) viewed social norms and regulatory systems that mistakenly blame prostitutes for violations, which keeps exclusion and harassment persisting. Impugning the fatalities is a kind of established violence that makes these prostitutes likely to be preyed upon, abused, and exploited.

Similarly, Freire's (1970) "*oppressor-oppressed"* dynamic says that people in power blame the oppressed for their problems. This dynamic is shown by how sex workers are called criminals and immoral people. This blaming of sex workers ignores the fundamental and systemic issues that push them to the edges of society, such as

economic inequality, lack of social support, and laws that make it hard for them to work.

Sub-Theme 2: Safety Concerns

Sex Workers around the globe, particularly in countries like the Philippines that consider prostitution as legitimate and illegitimate, this sector is vulnerable and prone to greater risk due to the unlawful nature of their work Customers, traffickers, and law enforcers tend to employ force against them, the sad part is that many incidents remain not reported because of fear for legal repercussions or possible of getting offended. People with STDs may have trouble getting health care, and they may also have mental health problems because of trauma and discrimination. They may also be victims of coercion and human trafficking, which often takes the form of financial slavery or coercion, making it harder for them to get help or take legal action.

Participant 4 stresses the importance of following city health rules for safety.

"We follow the rules set by the municipal government Health Office, including weekly testing."

The Local Health Office established a program for checkups to monitor and lower the risk of women Prostitutes. WHO (2023) report says that sex workers should be subjected to regular health checks and tests to monitor the danger of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). Studies revealed that regular health tests can safeguard a person from early infections that lower the STDs. This is part of educating the women prostitutes to stay out of danger while practicing this profession. The DOH (2022) spearheaded this program in the country that provides sex workers with routine checkups and tests monthly. These government services intend to keep sex workers healthy, protected from any infections, and provide health care without any stigma.

Participant 3 stresses how important it is to protect yourself from health risks,

"We use protection like condoms because we often have a lot of guests and sex workers around, which is risky."

The consistent use of condoms has been shown to lower the risk of getting sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV. Sex workers use harm-reduction methods like condoms to keep themselves safe. Studies show that using condoms lowers the risk of getting sexually transmitted illnesses and is both easy and effective.

The report of UNAIDS (2022) revealed that advocating the use of condoms by sex workers will ensure the transmission of HIV. These advocacies are part of educating the sex workers to protect themselves by appropriately using condoms. Conversely, Sex workers are burdened to use condoms because of cultural orientations and financial aspects. Lee and Brener (2019) said that laws and programs for sex

workers should deal with these issues to encourage the use of condoms. This shows that condoms are cheap and easy to get, and it also teaches people how to use them correctly, especially when they need to protect themselves.

Participants 1 and others agree on safety rules,

"Safety is achieved utilizing prevention and condom use."

Collective safety compliance shows how important community health programs are for encouraging sex workers to practice safe sex. Community health programs give sex workers information, resources, and medical care. These programs are led by community groups, non-profits, and government agencies to assist the health needs of sex workers.

According to Blankenship et al. (2018), health programs run by the community improve health outcomes for at-risk groups, such as sex workers. These programs usually include outreach, peer education, handing out condoms and other safer sex supplies, and speaking up for the rights and health of sex workers.

Table 3. Thematic Analysis of the Coping Mechanism of Pink Card Holders in Boracay Island

Superordinate Themes	*Subthemes*
Coping Mechanisms and Resilience Among Sex Workers	• Emotional Detachment as a Coping Strategy • Patience and Humor as Tools for Managing Verbal Abuse
The Moral and Financial Sides of Sex Work	• Investing Earnings for Financial Security • Navigating Ethical Complexities in Long-Term Relationships with Clients

Sub-Theme 1: Coping Mechanisms and Resilience Among Sex Workers

Former workers who are strong can deal with discrimination, aggression, and legal problems in different ways. Make strong social connections, explain why they work, stay positive, and look for ways to protect themselves, including screening clients. Individuals must learn how to cope, but changes at the institutional level, like

legalization and support programs, provide sex workers more authority and enhance their health.

Participant 3 opined that,

"We have frequent customers or guests for weeks or months, but we do not get emotionally attached to them, no matter how long we work with them, because it is just a business deal."

Participant 7 shows that,

"We have consistent clients or regulars for weeks or months, and no, we do not develop any emotional attachment towards them, no matter how long we stay with them, it is just all about the money."

To stay well, sex workers need to keep their sentiments distinct from their profession. Research showed that those who did this kind of work could be emotionally objective while doing complex tasks without hurting their personal lives. According to Sanders (2017), sex workers keep an emotional buffer between themselves and their clients so they can stay fit and efficient. This mentality enables them to maintain their lives away from work. Their mental well-being depends on how efficiently they can set boundaries in their personal and professional lives. Brewis and Linstead (2019) commented that sex workers apply emotional separation to shield themselves while at work. This goes to say that setting limits is the best way to cope with mental and emotional anxieties. McCracken and Sclater (2017) confirmed that emotional boundaries help sex workers stay healthy and not get tired of dealing with clients most of the time. Setting emotional boundaries goes against the pigeonholes that prostitution puts people in. Sex workers learn how to care for themselves and use different approaches to get what they desire. Kingston and Sanders (2021) maintain that this emotional distance lets sex workers deal with their clients without putting their mental health or integrity at risk.

Participant 4 said that,

"Using patience and humor can help stop verbal abuse." They said, *"We may either disregard those or smile at them if we have patience".*

Sex workers must deal with unpleasant comments with a sense of humor. These methods help people stay calm when things are tough. Sex workers use comedy to deal with verbal abuse. Koken et al. (2017) say that sex workers can use comedy to deal with violent clients. The theories of endurance in dealing with stress and adversity support this way of coping. According to Vanwesenbeeck (2019), sex workers show strength through their ability to wait and laugh. These tactics can reduce work-related stress and make it easier to deal with threats and mental health problems. Sex workers may deal with abuse while keeping their self-confidence and safety by being patient

and funny. Sex workers need to stay emotionally stable even when they are verbally abused. Sex workers may use humor and empathy to deal with criticism, which goes against the perception of them as weak victims. Demonstrates the ability to bounce back from professional problems. Sanders and Campbell (2018) give tips on how to help sex workers deal with stress.

Sub-Theme 2: The moral and financial sides of sex work

Sex work is a mix of disturbing realities about individual freedom, prone to abuse, discrimination, and legal sanctions. This kind of work is always considered illegal and risky in a country like the Philippines, where prostitutes are extorted and taken advantage of their civil rights, and at times remain unprotected. The prostitute's dilemma, as always, is to practice their profession or subscribe to the ethical conduct of society. Further, the intertwining realities of earning for the family are their survival aspirations in doing this job.

Participant 5 shared that,

"I put a small amount of money into the business."

Many sex workers become financially stable and independent by putting their money into business endeavors. People often decide to leave the sex trade to feel safe in the long term. Studies show that sex workers use their money to start businesses, which gives them financial independence and a way to live in a way that is good for them. Brewis and Linstead (2019) say that sex workers take part in enterprises to protect their futures and lessen the unpredictability of their jobs.

Recent research revealed that sex workers desire to engage in businesses and earn sufficient income, according to Sanders et al. Al (2018) sex workers invested in UPS for them to be self-determining. This approach confronts the notion that prostitutes are only driven by money by highlighting their choice to find other options other than the sex trade. Weitzer (2020) deduced that prostitutes who discern how to account for their income and business tend to become entrepreneurs and will be economically viable in the long term. This was affirmed by Phoenix (2022), the sex workers manage and divest their income with utmost care to begin businesses and be financially independent in the end.

Participant 4 expressed that,

"I have a 9-year-old foreign guest and never felt any love or attraction. Though I feel guilty because he has feelings for me because of how long we spent together and even suggests marriage."

When a prostitute continues to serve the same customer for a long time, they have problems with their sentiments and their morals. When their job and personal

lives crossed, they had to cope with many complicated feelings. There are instances when a client feels remorseful and accountable, and the sex worker must address many ethical matters. Studies of Berstein (2019) revealed that sex workers must address matters about their life and career while they are in a long-term relationship with their clients, for if they fail to do so, they may end up in a trap of difficulty in emancipating their personal and professional life. Studies by Benoit et al. (2021) conclude that a prostitute felt remorseful and accountable for taking care of their clients while they worked. This idea is that prostitutes should impose limits on their employment so that they do not get emotionally attached, which could lead to moral problems. This connection showed how complicated sex workers' ideas about their job and personal responsibility are. Sanders and Campbell (2018) also said that sex workers set limits with long-term clients to keep their profession and feelings apart. At this point, clients need to be aware of their emotional limits.

Table 4. Thematic Analysis of Social Dynamics of Pink Card Holders in Boracay Island

Superordinate Themes	*Subthemes*
Social Dynamics in Sex Tourism	• Perception and Treatment by Tourists • Economic Impact and Integration
Discrimination and Stigma in Sex Work	• Discrimination Based on Appearance and Virginity

Sub-Theme 1: Social Dynamics in Sex Tourism

Sex tourism keeps racial and gender inequality, as well as global power dynamics, going through complicated social interconnections. Tourists hire sex workers, who often come from countries with weak economies. These interactions affect people and their environment and may be linked to criminal activity and public health issues since people feel less private and have more freedom to do things when traveling.

Participant 4 stated,

"Tourists are liberated and open-minded towards us. If you agree with them, they will follow."

Participant 3 added,

"You will most likely get the princess treatment by foreigners, and the process is fast."

Additionally, Participant 1 shared,

"I encountered both nationalities just being rude."

The interaction between sex workers and tourists reveals a nuanced landscape where perceptions and behaviors vary significantly across different cultural and

individual contexts. Sex tourism in places like Boracay Island is influenced by a myriad of factors, including societal norms, personal beliefs, and the socio-economic backdrop of both the tourists and the local population. According to Ma and Loke (2019), tourists often exhibit a broad spectrum of behaviors towards sex workers, ranging from respectful engagement to outright rudeness. This dichotomy in treatment is deeply rooted in the varying cultural attitudes towards sex work. For example, some tourists come from societies where sex work is normalized and regulated, leading them to approach these interactions with an open-minded and non-judgmental attitude. In contrast, tourists from more conservative backgrounds may carry prejudices and exhibit behaviors that can be dismissive or derogatory towards sex workers (Huntley et al., 2021).

The *"princess treatment"* mentioned by Participant 3 suggests a form of adulation and preferential treatment that some sex workers receive from tourists. This dynamic can be seen as part of a broader trend where tourists, often coming from wealthier nations, exert economic power and privilege, which translates into a temporary uplift in the status of the sex workers they engage with. This phenomenon is discussed by Enloe (2014) in her exploration of the "holiday romance" dynamic, where sex workers are treated with exceptional kindness and generosity by tourists, creating a stark contrast to their everyday interactions with local clients. However, this preferential treatment is often transactional and temporary, highlighting the complex power dynamics.

The story of Participant 1 encountering negative experiences with domestic and international clients revealed that prostitutes sustain the harassment. These workers occasionally encountered reproach for their activities and ethics, even though there were times when they were in difficult situations. Sex workers must cope with this issue while maintaining their private and work lives, which can affect their mental well-being. Narratives of these participants are related to what studies have found about sex workers and their customers. Ryan and Hall (2018) highlighted how the social norms of tourists and the regulations on prostitution in a specific destination where these tourists are staying influence how the tourists treat sex workers. Tourists are courteous and behave better in a destination where sexual activities are legitimate and accepted by the culture. Because sex activity is clandestine, guests may abuse sex

workers in spots that are illegal or have a bad image. When the question was raised on economic impact and integration,

Participant 4 shared that,

"As someone who works there in Caticlan, I think we belong to the tourism sector."

Participant 1 also added,

"We eventually bring our guests to a bar, and they receive income because of us."

Many tourist spots depend on visitors and sex work, the complicated connection between sex labor and local companies, societal structures, and personal income. The tourism business in Boracay makes a lot of money for sex workers and other businesses. Prostitution brings tourists to entertainment venues, which helps the local economy. Hughes (2017) showed that sex workers bring more people into bars, clubs, and other businesses to boost foot traffic and the local economy. Sex workers bring in tourists and help the local economy.

Andrijasevic (2021) found that client's network and have fun with sex workers. Boracy's tourism economy is sex-based. Prostitutes utilize local businesses. This work impacts the community's economy beyond money. The sex workers rent apartments, buy things, drive, and travel. Sex trade tourism boosts the economy, say Glotfelty et al. (2018). Prostitutes are known to be part of the tourism destinations that attract tourists and other individuals. This kind of employment undermines culture and community, according to Truong (2019). Prostitution and discrimination are issues since time immemorial; however, this kind of work remains in our ecosystem and may step up. This suggests that wider policies that will address social, cultural, and economic impacts of sex tourism must be established to determine the contributions of prostitution in the process.

Sub-Theme 2: Discrimination and Stigma in Sex Work

Sex workers throughout the world face discrimination and stigma, which makes it hard for them to get health care and legal rights. Moral judgments and crime in tourism and other areas keep people on the fringes, which keeps them vulnerable

and violates their human rights. Participants experienced stigma based on their physical appearances. Below are their significant stories:

During the interview, questions on discrimination and stigma in sex work were raised to Participant 3, and she stated that,

"Let us just say they do not discriminate just because of our work, but there is discrimination where the amount of the payment reflects on how attractive or good-looking we are, or if we are a virgin, or sexy."

The Physique, appeal, and virginity are usually factors that rationalize harassment in this kind of profession. These components manifest societal beliefs that affect how the sex trade manages its workers. Participant 3 implied that these attributes matter to the sex workers' wages and circumstances. Society and culture value beauty and purity; therefore, sex workers are admired for their virginity. According to Brown and Sanders (2017), the community rewards sex workers for their looks and purity. Many cultures associate beauty with worth; thus, attractive people earn more. The ensuing bias creates a sex industry stratification in which beautiful or virgin women ask more and receive preferential treatment.

The disclosures revealed how society perceived physique appeal and chastity, not only in the sex trade. Hakim (2018) highlights that the "erotic capital" that pertains to physical attractiveness, appeal, and sexual appeal enables a sex worker to perform better in her professional practice. Having these qualities gets better treatment and higher pay. Chastity proved how patriarchal and puritanical the community's thought of women's sexuality was. Studies of Bunting and Campbell (2020) affirmed that the sex trade's fascination with chastity is related to the social notion of women's purity. This disparity promotes women as objects anchored on traditional perspectives on sexual innocence and negative outlooks. Discrimination affects the well-being, earnings, and self-worth of prostitutes. Benoit et al. (2018) affirmed that sex workers who are unpleasant and not virgins make less income and have more troubles.

Conclusions

This study aimed to determine the lived experiences of sex workers, particularly women, in one of the world's top tourist destinations. The research found that economic hardships and significant responsibilities in the family, particularly for single mothers, prompted these women to end up in prostitution on the island of Boracay. Despite encountering significant stigma, prejudice, and safety hazards, sex workers exhibit exceptional resilience, flexibility, and strategic acumen in everyday lives and professions, often leveraging technology. Analysis from the interview data revealed the following themes: Theme (1): Lived Experiences of Pink Card Holders on

Boracay Island with Sub-Themes (1) Rationales, (2) Daily Work Routine, and (3) Clientele Preferences; theme (2) Challenges Faced by Pink Card Holders on Boracay Island with Sub-Themes (1) Social Discrimination, (2) Safety Concerns; Theme (3): Coping Mechanisms of Pink Card Holders in Boracay Island with Sub-Themes (1) Coping Mechanisms and Resilience in Sex Workers; (2) The Ethical and Economic Aspects of Sex Work; Theme (4): Social Dynamics of Pink Card Holders in Boracay Island with Sub-Themes (1) Social Dynamics in Sex Tourism and (2) Discrimination and Stigma in Sex Work. The findings suggest the pressing need for policies that will address the main reasons for their susceptibility and initiate mitigating measures to lessen the maltreatment, thereby enhancing their welfare and fostering vital programs, refuting social prejudice against sex practitioners, and encouraging a benevolent process.

References

[1] Andrijasevic, R. (2021). Forced labor in supply chains: Rolling back the debate on gender, migration, and sexual commerce. European Journal of Women's Studies, 28(4), 410–424. https://doi.org/10.1177/13505068211020791

[2] Aspiras, A. T. (2023, October 10). An interview with Arbie T. Aspiras, Nurse 1 of the Municipal Health Office in Malay on "Pink Holders". Boracay Island, Malay,Aklan.

[3] Brown, K., & Sanders, T. (2017). Pragmatic, progressive, problematic: Addressing vulnerability through a local street sex work partnership initiative. Social Policy and Society, 16(3), 429–441. https://doi.org/10.1017/S147474641600063

[4] Department of Health (DOH) – Epidemiology Bureau. (2022, November). Newly diagnosed HIV cases in the Philippines. HIV/AIDS and ART Registry of the Philippines. Department of Health.

[5] Garcia, P. (2019, April 17). 33 women rescued from Boracay prostitution ring. Manila Bulletin. https://mb.com.ph/2019/04/17/33-women-rescued-from-boracay-prostitution-ring/

[6] Glotfelty, E. J., & Miles, G. M. (2018). (S)Expectations abroad: Male traveler interactions with Southeast Asian economies. Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence, 3(3), Article 4. https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2018.03.03.04

[7] Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2(3), 21–35. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200303

[8] LGU-Malay. (2002). Municipal Ordinance No. 160, series of 2002. Pob. Malay, Aklan.

[9] Ma, H., & Loke, A. Y. (2019). A qualitative study into female sex workers' experience of stigma in the health care setting in Hong Kong. International Journal for Equity in Health, 18, 175. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-019-1084-1

[10] Mapp, T. (2008). Understanding phenomenology: The lived experience. British Journal of Midwifery, 16(5), 308–311.

[11] Moran, D. (2000). Introduction to phenomenology. Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Introduction-to-Phenomenology/Moran/p/book/978041518373

[12] Nussbaum, M. (1999). Women and equality: The capabilities approach. Wiley Online Library. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1564-913X.1999.tb00386.x

[13] Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2012). Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice (9th ed.). Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

[14] Sartre, J. P. (2018). Being and Nothingness is an essay on phenomenological ontology. Routledge, Taylor & Francis.

[15] Smith, J. A. (2011a). Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis. Health Psychology Review, 5(1), 9–27.

[16] Smith, J. A. (2011b). We could be diving for pearls: The gem's value in experiential qualitative psychology. Qualitative Methods in Psychology, 12, 6–15.

[17] Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method, and research. Sage Publications Ltd.

[18] Smith, A., & Osborn, M. (2007). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. http://med-fomfamilymedresearch.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2012/03/IPA_Smith_Osborne21632.pdf

[19] Surbakti, K. (2019). Study the causes of factors and public response to prostitution practices in tourism sites of Bukit Lawang. INA-Rxiv Journal. Universitas Quality. https://doi.org/10.31227/osf.io/v2ysf1

[20] Van Manen, M. (2014). Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing. Left Coast Press.

[21] World Health Organization. (2023, July 13). HIV and AIDS. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids?gclid=Cj0KCQjwy4KqBhD0ARIsAEbCt6jCNClG_-LI6R76IEvJfEoKj84lxHZrJvb9rH0nINmWu1yzCdDLm5EaAuYCEALw_wcB