

**Gender-based-violence and community fear: deterrents to market participation in people with learning disabilities.**

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This working paper reports on a research study with adults with Down's Syndrome, their parent and carers and key organisations working in the learning disability community. The study explores experiences of marketplace inclusion and exclusion, this working paper specifically considers findings which emerged regarding women's experiences of gender-based violence in the marketplace and the fear that such experiences induce with the wider learning disability community. It considers how consumers cope with these experiences and how carers and support organisations are responding to these marketplace dangers.

Meer and Combrink (2015) discuss how learning disabilities can be among the most complex and least understood of all disabilities and that associated negative attitudes surrounding them mean that women with learning disabilities are disproportionately subject to gender-based violence. While evidence on prevalence rates remains scant there is a recognition that women with learning disabilities have an intersectionality that is particularly vulnerable to violence and sexual violence and that their opportunity to report such violence is often reduced (ibid). While many instances of such violence occur within the home or by known perpetrators, women with learning disabilities are at greater risk of stranger violence or bias victimization and such attacks are more likely to be carried out in public places (Daiz-Fais et al, 2023) often in the market domain.

Consumer theory hasn't yet really grappled with the effects of violence on consumers and their marketplace participation. Stephens et al's (2005) consideration of domestic violence was more focused on consequences for extended-self and possession than marketplace participation. Other have considered the symbolic violence consumers may experience from the marketplace itself rather than from other consumers or actors (Martin et al, 2021). However, Khan (2023) writing in social geography has begun to grapple with these

issues, considering how Taliban violence is restricting the participation of women in women's markets and changing the affective nature of that marketplace and we can draw up these ideas within our discipline.

So, this working paper reports on ethnographic interviews with 10 adults with Down's Syndrome and specifically on the stranger perpetrated gender-based violence which two of the women had experienced. It reflects on how certain aspects of marketplace access leave people with learning disabilities in more vulnerable positions. In particular it reflects on how reliance on public transport to access marketplace resources presents a particular risk point. It considers how fear spreads within small communities like the learning disability community such that not only experiences of violence, but community narratives of violence can act as deterrents to marketplace participation. It also draws upon the perspectives of parent and carers and their needs for safe market spaces that adults with learning disabilities can access independently. Finally, it considers the work of support organisations altering and reclaiming the marketplace for women with learning disabilities at risk of bias-violence and their peers of all genders within the learning disability community who have had their marketplace participation limited as a result of community fear.

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