

PEDTR 2019**18th International Scientific Conference “Problems of Enterprise Development:
Theory and Practice”****PROSTITUTION IN RUSSIA: DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES
AND TRENDS IN PROFESSIONALIZATION**

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Abstract

At present, Russia is increasingly raising the question of changing the approach to regulating prostitutional relations. Politicians and representatives of social movements speak out that the approach used in the country is not up to date and advocate the legalization of prostitution. Unfortunately, statements and legislative initiatives are not based on an understanding of the realities of the prostitution sphere, as well as scientific data. In this connection, a study was conducted that set out to determine the actual situation of prostitutes in Russian society. This article presents the results of a survey that allowed us to identify stratification groups of prostitutes, to give their social characteristics and the presence of discriminatory practices. Identify areas of interpenetration of prostitution and other sex industry activities. Particular attention was paid to the study of the existence of organizational structures and the professionalization of prostitutional relations. The data presented indicate that the prostitutional sphere of Russia is characterized by business features. At the same time, despite the awareness of the choice of prostitutional activity, only a part identify themselves with prostitutes. All report stigma and a high risk of violence. Many perceive prostitution as a temporary and forced type of activity, and not as a profession. The data obtained indicate the unpreparedness of Russian society and prostitutes themselves for the professionalization of prostitution.

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Keywords: Prostitution, sex industry, the legalization of prostitution, discriminatory practices, the professionalization of prostitution.



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1. Introduction

Over the past decades, opposing trends have been observed in society, affecting prostitution as a form of activity and prostitutes. On the one hand, the trends towards the global spread of neoliberalism have led to the fact that economic benefits have become predominant in addressing the issues of interaction between the state, society and private individuals (Gall, 2016). Thus, the size and scope of the commercial sexual economy, although difficult to determine, due to many reasons, including criminalization, the secrecy of transactional sexual exchanges and various types of sex services (Dewey, 2015, p. 389), makes one want to make the most of them to solve the problems of the state. A vivid example is the policy of the European Statistical Agency. Recognizing the market-oriented nature of prostitution, and not taking into account the moral assessment, as well as the aspect of legalization in the country, Eurostat began to take into account the income from prostitution in national accounts and balance sheets (Eurostat, 2018). His specialists are searching for methods for recording income from illegal economic activity in national accounts, including in the field of sex work (Bechev, 2018). On the other hand, more and more attention is being paid to the protection of human rights, and in particular the rights of women, which inevitably raises the issue of gender oppression. One considers prostitution as a type of professional activity, and as a result requires state protection. Another position, considers prostitution as a form of violence against women and a means of preserving male privileges (Dewey, Zheng, & Orchard, 2016). Despite the great diversity of ideological approaches to this issue, three main directions have been formed in the policy on regulating the sphere of sexual services: criminalization, legalization, decriminalization. Legalization is the recognition of prostitutional activity by the profession and the development of a control system and the conditions for protecting the economic and social interests of prostitutes (Holland, Switzerland, Turkey, etc.). Decriminalization of prostitution is a recognition of prostitution, but also the lack of control by the state (New Zealand and others). In the framework of criminalization, three main varieties are distinguished:

- A prohibitive strategy in which any activity related to the sale of sex is prohibited, but the purchase of sex may or may not be banned (USA, Russia, etc.);
- Abolitionist criminalization considers pimping, maintenance of brothels, involvement in prostitution, purchase of sex from minors as a crime, although access to sexual services is allowed (Belgium, India, etc.);
- Neo-abolitionism or criminalization of the client, in which the organization of prostitution or the purchase of sex is considered a crime (Sweden, Norway, Iceland).

The use of various approaches to the regulation of prostitutional relations in European countries sets the task of finding the optimal model that can resolve the contradictions associated with the existence of prostitution. So, at the European level, the question was raised about determining the most effective form of regulation of prostitutional relations, harmonization of legal norms and the exchange of best management practices in different jurisdictions (Crowhurst & Skilbrei, 2018). In Russia, they currently adhere to a criminalization policy. In accordance with Russian law, engaging in prostitution may lead to administrative liability in the form of a fine, and involvement and coercion of prostitution, organization of prostitution - to criminal prosecution. Based on the statements made by Russian politicians and the proposed bill on the legalization of prostitution, which, although it did not pass the first reading, we can

conclude that they are committed to neoliberal tendencies and the desire to use the means of the sex industry (Kuznetsova & Kovalevsky, 2014). The legalization of prostitution is also supported by representatives of Russian public organizations defending the interests of prostitutes. In this connection, it becomes urgent not only to familiarize oneself with the experience of foreign countries in resolving the problems of the functioning of prostitution, but also to study the situation that has developed in Russian society in the field of prostitution relations.

2. Problem Statement

The stated goal of legalizing prostitution in Russia is due to positive expectations. Since legalization as a policy model for regulating prostitution relations uses its own tools to combat discriminatory practices, it develops an ideology for treating prostitution as a professional activity, where prostitutes are considered as free agents of market relations, and creates conditions for the protection of their economic and social interests. The popularity of this approach among statesmen and supporters of liberal feminism is due to the following:

- The tripartite benefit of sex workers, their clients and the state;
- Risk reduction and stigmatization for prostitutes;
- Providing freedom of choice for sexual needs and for sex workers;
- Privacy (Lin, 1998).

At first glance, due to the difficulties in the Russian economy, the existence of a fairly developed sex industry and an increase in the number of prostitutes, legalization can solve certain problems, especially considering that the sex business is characterized by a high cash turnover (Horning & Marcus, 2017). At the same time, the following questions arise: is the setting of this task timely, is Russian society ready to adopt precisely the model of legalizing prostitution, and above all, representatives of sex work themselves. One of the problems that prevent the development of an optimal proposal for regulating prostitution through a particular model is the lack of information about the real situation of prostitutes in Russian society, the presence or absence of discriminatory practices, and their level of professionalization.

3. Research Questions

At this time in Russia, the sex industry is quite developed, many elements of which are not prohibited by law, and it can be assumed that global trends are characteristic of Russian prostitution. Prostitution is subject to the law of supply and demand. Its existence is associated with the manifestation of many negative trends, such as increased discrimination and stigmatization (Benoit, Jansson, Smith, & Flagg, 2018). In this connection, we pose the following questions: What are the ways and reasons for entering the sphere of prostitution? What problems do prostitutes face? Do prostitutes face stigma and how do they try to overcome it? How homogeneous in their characteristics is the social group of prostitutes? Do prostitutes perceive their type of activity as a profession? Are there any trends towards professionalization? What are the areas of interpenetration of prostitution and other components of the sex industry? Are there organizational structures in the prostitution field?

4. Purpose of the Study

The implementation of the legalization model is directly related to the professionalization of prostitution, which should lead to the formation of the concept of prostitution in society as a type of professional activity worthy of the same respect as other income-generating professions. Also, professionalization at the personal level, when its indicators are the following components:

- The process of special training of an individual, the development of the rules and standards of the profession;
- Identification of oneself with a specific professional group and awareness of oneself as a professional;
- Determination of status through professional activities;
- The implementation of individual labor resources in the course of labor activity.

Based on the problem described above and focusing on signs of professionalization, we set ourselves the goal of considering prostitution as a component of the Russian sex industry, determining the presence or absence of discriminatory practices and elements of professionalization.

5. Research Methods

Many authors note that one of the methodological problems in the study of prostitution is the lack of information on the size of the general population and its structure, which makes it impossible to form a representative sample and conduct a quantitative analysis (Moser, 2005). In this case, it is recommended to use a qualitative methodology - in-depth interviews, focus group surveys, ethnographic observation (Frank, 2015), where an in-depth analysis of a specific population group or problem can provide a large amount of detailed information. In this connection, during the study, we used the method of probabilistic selection of time-location clusters (time-location sampling) with the involvement of all available respondents that meet the necessary criteria. At the first stage, by analyzing the content of the Internet, interviewing representatives, to one degree or another, interacting with the sex industry, we identified the locations of prostitutes and the provision of sex services, as well as obtain certain agreements on conducting a directed interview in these places with elements structured interviews (Semi-structured interviews). The study was held in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Leningrad region, Samara region from 2015 to 2018. The interview was conducted on the basis of anonymity, all data was recorded under digital codes. The sample size was 264 people. The sample included women who provide sexual services from the age of 18 years. Processing of the obtained data was carried out through discursive analysis and similarity analysis of semantic indicators.

6. Findings

Given the level of income, the assessment and perception of society, the risks associated with coercion and violence, we identified the following stratification groups involved in prostitution:

1. The top layer. Representatives of elite escort services agencies and modeling agencies;
2. The upper layer. Representatives of the sex industry bordering prostitutional areas (dancers in strip clubs, strippers, consumators);

3. The middle layer. "Independents", employees of intimate salons and "massage" salons;
4. The bottom layer. "Bath", street prostitutes working with a pimp, and individually;
5. The lower layer. "Shoulder", drug-addicted street or train prostitutes.

The characteristic of the upper layer. Elite escort agencies or modeling agencies in Russia are located in St. Petersburg and Moscow. They attract job seekers from all over the country and the post-Soviet space. They are faced with stringent requirements not only for external data, but also for knowledge of foreign languages, for physical preparation, the ability to dance, sing, and have a conversation. Girls who provide escort services, at the same time, appear on the catwalks, in fashion magazines, in commercials. The more famous the model, the higher the rank of the event in which she participated, the higher her fee as an accompanying person. Those who want to get here are blinded by the brilliance of spotlights, camera flashes and a beautiful life, and few of them realize the real consequences of what is happening. The survey revealed two main ways of attracting: in a hidden form - through modeling agencies, beauty contests and in an open - right to the escort service agencies. Many girls noted that during the passage of castings, they quite often came across a proposal to have sex in order to enter the modeling business. Pretenders are selected not only according to the standard of catwalk models (thin and high), but also low, chubby, focusing not on high fashion, but on a variety of male tastes. The first few months of the agency are preparing girls for further activities. In addition to choreography, speech etiquette, portfolio formation, all models are prepared for the fact that without intimate services you cannot make the right people for a career. In the process of training, the girls were differentiated into groups according to external data, abilities, knowledge of the language and an adequate reaction to intimate services. The girls noted that their model work consisted of two parts - the official daytime and informal nighttime, and the more successful the nighttime, the more interesting offers they received: participation in the shows of famous fashion designers, shooting in fashion magazines. And the more famous the model, the higher its nightly fees. In order to stay in this business, to survive in the situation in which they are caught, girls consciously go on sexual relations with customers, not always assessing the risk. From the interview: "God was merciful to me ... but one of ours fell. She was sent as a gift (a girl jumping out of a cake) ... He watched as his four guards raped her. Then he paid her \$ 10,000 ..." (21 years old).

Representatives of this group considered the provision of sexual services as an integral part of the modeling business, career advancement, or as a means of achieving any goals (to save money for your business, travel, lead a beautiful lifestyle, find a rich life partner, etc.), and not as a professional activity.

Characteristic of the "upper layer". To the next category, we included representatives of the sex industry who are borderline with prostitution - dancers in strip clubs, strippers, and consumators. In this group, incomes are lower, the atmosphere itself predisposes to prostitution, the level of coercion is not high. A modern strip club for the sake of income uses all possible ways to attract customers, where they are not limited to classical striptease. In a special menu you can order separately, not only a private dance, but also an erotic massage, a visit to a shower or a jacuzzi with a dancer, dismissal of a dancer, waitress or administrator, dessert on a dancer's naked body, etc. The dancers have different attitudes towards the "special" menu and intimate services - each of them determines the limits of what is permitted. An interview among 20 strip bar workers showed a certain peculiarity - the longer the girl is in this

environment, the easier it is for sex services. Although not everyone crosses moral limits, the reason why girls come to this business alone is material need, the low level of offered wages for alternative types of employment, or the inability to get a job. All girls note that, working in the field of striptease, even if they refuse to provide intimate services or services on a special menu, they are at risk. In any case, male visitors perceive them as available. The girls said that they had problems meeting outside the club, when they made obscene offers, and when they refused, insults were expressed. One of the girls after work was beaten and raped for refusing one client on a special menu.

The characteristic of the "middle layer". We included "individuals", workers of massage and sex salons in this group. Interviews with women showed that in this stratification group, the main reason for their prostitution is the need for cash. Many of them are visitors, moreover, from small towns and villages or from neighboring countries. These are women who have difficulty finding a new place of residence, lack family work and support, and sometimes there is a need to help relatives. These are women with children who have remained without the support of a man, or with a drinking, husband who does not earn anything. Some of them have experienced violence in their lives. Everyone clearly realizes that they are engaged in prostitution, even if they are considered as a temporary activity. Of the 68 women surveyed, 56 were going to stop this type of activity over time, 11 women - to leave the salon and engage in independent, without the involvement of intermediaries, the provision of sexual services. All noted that in their activities there is a high risk of violence, especially if a woman travels to the client's territory, and women working individually at their own risk are quite high. In attracting to prostitution in this group, prostitute friends, salon management representatives participate, some prostitutes responded to job advertisements. A survey of those who are prostitutes or related to this area has shown that the violent recruitment method, often practiced in the 90s, is not used now. Internet technologies are actively used to attract customers. Massage or intimate salons, as a rule, are characterized by the presence of an organizational structure with a clear distribution of functions.

Characterization of the "bottom layer" prostitutes of the bottom and lower stratification layers face an even higher risk of violence. Clients of "bath houses" or street prostitutes are most often representatives of the lower strata of criminal structures who have recently left prison, labor migrants from Central Asian countries and the Caucasus. In this group, the highest risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, since customers very often refuse to use protective equipment, women themselves rarely turn to doctors for a medical examination. These women came into prostitution, mainly from problem families, where parents are alcoholics or drug addicts. 9% of women have been abused since childhood. 14% had a sexual debut before the age of 15. At the moment, they have no sources of income, other than engaging in prostitution, since there is no education and special skills. Only two out of 65 girls surveyed who are engaged in street prostitution are from wealthy families, but they were involved in drug addiction. And their current occupation is due to the need to purchase another drug dose.

Characteristic of the lower layer. It is believed that prostitution is a phenomenon associated only with urban life. It is assumed that the traditional type of culture, strict social control in rural areas is contrary to sexual licentiousness, but Russian reality refutes this opinion. Due to the extremely unfavorable situation, a new type of prostitutes appeared in the villages, called "humeral" in the common people. Lack of work, poverty drives the young and energetic to the cities, and those who are not able are

looking for opportunities to survive and feed their children in the villages. Women go to the tracks, usually of federal importance. Offering "truckers" sex services, they drive a few kilometers to the next settlement, and then they return with another client. Earnings for a prostitute with a good combination of circumstances is 200-400 rubles, but they are even glad of such an amount. From hopelessness, women put themselves at risk of both physical violence and various types of diseases. They see no other way out of the situation, but they perceive this occupation as a temporary, forced measure.

A survey of 264 women providing sex services revealed certain trends. Table 01 presents the main social characteristics.

Table 01. Social characteristics of prostitutes in % (N=246)

	All layers	Top layer	Upper layer	Middle layer	Bottom layer	Lower layer
The level of education						
Below the average	2	-	-	-	-	14
Average	28	8	6	41	48	29
Specialized secondary	34	-	35	28	43	48
Incomplete higher	25	37	44	25	7	6
Higher	11	55	15	6	-	3
Marital status						
Single	51	88	71	44	35	28
Married	14	4	8	18	15	24
Divorced	35	8	21	38	50	48
Dependent load						
Children	42	8	19	50	58	66
Parents / grandparents	2	-	-	6	-	-
Children and older relatives	6	-	3	-	5	29
Not	51	92	78	44	37	5

Source: authors.

The vast majority of those involved in the provision of sex services have secondary or specialized secondary education (62%). Moreover, a lower level of education is characteristic of the lower layers in the stratification structure that we have identified. In the lower layer, 40% do not even have a secondary education. 49% of women experience a dependent load. The main reasons for entering prostitution were the financial problems of women. All of the reasons mentioned by them on the basis of discursive analysis, we grouped using the similarity method into several groups (Table 02).

Table 02. Examples of semantic indicators of the reasons for resorting to prostitution in%

1	Survival of the woman herself and her family	58
	«you need to pay for something with your studies»; «there is nothing to feed the children»; «my peasant has a miserable salary»; «my brother and I wanted to eat»; «I alone have a family»; «you need to feed your family with something»; «my salary is not enough even for utilities».	
2	Employment problems	33
	«it is impossible to get a job by education»; «I was fired from my previous job»; «I could not find another job»; «I can't do anything else».	

3	The pursuit of an easy beautiful life	16
	«I didn't want to get dirty, but to live in the capital, I needed something»; «easy income, which is steeper than the salary of parents»; «a dishwasher or a cleaning lady, I won't earn so much»; «I like to have fun in nightclubs, and then also buy chic clothes».	
4	Terms of employment and career advancement	8
	«for the sake of success, it will not lose me»; «for a chic future»;	
5	Drug and alcohol addiction	20
	«I would be enough for a dose»; «a bottle is what else is needed»	

Source: authors.

During the interviews with the girls, we asked to describe the problems that they might face in connection with prostitution, and also asked us to assess possible risks, based on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means a complete lack of risk, 7 - a very high level of risk (Table 03). The data obtained show that in the lower layers there is a very high level of risk (6.4; 6.5). Insecurity is also felt by women in the upper layer (5.6), they, being outside the club, fall under the influence of the stigma “accessibility for anyone” assigned to them. A slight decrease in the perception of risk is observed in the middle layer (4.8), which is probably due to the illusion of protection by the organization of which they are a part.

Table 03. Characterization of stratification levels of prostitutes (N=246)

Stratification level	Number of respondents (people)	Payment per hour (median value)	Reason for prostitution			Subjective risk assessment (on a scale of 1-7) (points)
			the need for cash to survive (%)	additional income (%)	condition of retention / career advancement	
Top layers	24	500 \$	-	29	71	4,3
Upper layer	72	3000 rubles	32	64	4	5,6
The middle layer	68	1500 rubles	66	34	-	4,8
The bottom layer	65	750 rubles	78	22	-	6,4
Lower layer	35	300 rubles	100	-	-	6,5
Total	264		58	34	8	

Source: authors.

Thus, the studies showed the following:

The stratification groups highlighted by us involved in prostitution show that each of them is designed for a certain level of income and client status. A characteristic feature of modern prostitution is the diversification of offers, the breadth of the price range, so that everyone can find options for intimate services in accordance with purchasing power.

Prostitution is closely intertwined with other types of sex industry activities, pornography, cosumization, striptease, webcasting of sex images that are not prohibited by law in Russia. Many representatives of these activities also entered into prostitudinal relations.

Elements of the organizational structure focused on the provision of sexual services are present in most stratification groups, except for the "lower layer". The highest level of organization is characteristic of the middle and lower layer.

Assistance in mastering the “art” of providing sexual services was absent in the “organizational structures”. Although, according to the girls, at the first stage they needed it. Only in the upper class, for girls, they organized special training, but this concerned only model business and etiquette. As a rule, prostitutes of all groups noted that they had to adapt themselves or focus on the advice of colleagues, girlfriends. Independently engaged in prostitution, in addition to a certain skill in providing sexual services, they also mastered elements of marketing and promoting their services, especially on the Internet.

The Internet has begun to play a significant role in the sex industry. It acts as the main advertising channel. Today they use catalog sites, webcam platforms, multi-service platforms for adults, dating sites with the paid advertising function, the agency’s website, and the sites of individual prostitutes. Through feedback sites, forums, social networks, email, prostitutes come into contact with customers, exchange information (for example, about insolvent or dangerous clients).

All stratification groups have a high level of risk of violence. 69% of women said they were abused by clients, pimps. Many women were reluctant to use protective equipment.

All 100% of the women surveyed at least once had to have sex without a condom. At the same time, the level of coercion to prostitution is low, women choose this type of activity on their own, and if I want, I can get out of it.

Lack of cash is the main reason that prompted women to engage in prostitution (92% of the respondents), with 58% citing a lack of funds for survival, and 34% - the need for additional income. The desire to lead a beautiful lifestyle at the expense of income from prostitution was expressed by 16%. 8% noted that the provision of sexual services for a monetary reward is part of career advancement or a means of achieving any additional goals.

13% of prostitutes said that subject to the possibility of choosing another type of activity with the same income, they would remain in the provision of sexual services. Despite the fact that many consciously choose this type of activity, there is no need to talk about freedom of choice. Inability to get a job, dysfunctional families, poverty, drug abuse, low level of education are direct or indirect reasons for joining the ranks of prostitutes

As a rule, women seek to keep secret the type of their activity from relatives and friends, fearing condemnation, the impossibility of finding a job, and the provision of sexual services, trying to emotionally disconnect.

7. Conclusion

In our study, we did not pretend to justify the adoption of a particular model of regulation of prostitutional relations in Russia, but sought to identify the presence of certain trends. As a result, we came to the conclusion that, at the moment, prostitution is closely intertwined with other types of sex industry activities and has all the features characteristic of business. Despite engaging in prostitution, many women do not identify as professional sex workers. They are at risk of violence and discrimination, only in connection with their presence in the sex industry. At the moment, one cannot talk about the possibility of the professionalization of prostitutional activity, the existing norms of sexual behavior in Russia do not allow prostitution as a profession for society and prostitutes themselves.

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