

FINANCIAL ASPECT OF WORKING IN PRIVATE SEX BUSINESS

Stanislav Ondrášek¹, Alena Kajanová¹

Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the financial aspect of working in private sex business. A qualitative research strategy, a biographical narrative interview, was used in the research. The research group was made up of women working in private sex business in the South Bohemian Region and Prague (N=37). The transcribed data were analysed using the Atlas.Ti programme. The results showed that private sex workers make various amounts of money, depending on the amount of customized and extra services provided. Sex workers provide a discount for regular customers. Their costs usually revolve around paying rent, running a household, buying clothes and accessories or paying debts. Sex workers often support their primary family, a partner, or friends. At the same time, they make efforts to save some money.

Keywords

Sex Workers, Sex Business, Financial Aspect, Income, Costs

I. Introduction

Many professionals deal with the sex business problematics, mainly because of its multidimensionality. Sex business affects social policy, due to the risk of transmission of sexually transmitted disease, as well as public health, law, and last but not least economic policy because of high tax evasions. It is also often a theme of politic discussions which deal with its regulation or legalisation. There is no uniform legislative provision in the Czech Republic that would define sex business.

Sex business is a part of the grey economics, therefore there is no general data on how many sex workers there are or how much tax-free money goes into this business annually. Generally, the data on private sex business is missing both in the Czech Republic and in other countries. Therefore, we have decided to contribute to inspecting this market with the aim to analyse the lifestyle of female sex workers and their self-reflection. This article presents partial results of a study dealing with the financial aspect of sex work, specifically focused on income and expenses of female sex workers.

II. Main text

Sex business in the Czech Republic

Sex business consists in provision of sexual services for money, other form of payment or return service (e.g. drugs) (McGuire, Gruter, 2003). Formerly, the term "prostitution" was used, but it became pejorative and therefore was replaced by the term "sex business" (Campbell, O'Neill, 2006). Sex business is a broader term as against prostitution, as it includes for example also pornography.

Commercialization of private sex work in the Czech Republic began mainly after the revolution when the country opened its borders and foreign customers came in. This increase developed primarily in the lines of sex work taking place along the roads or in nightclubs. Until then, the people working in this industry faced serious repressions and often harsh punishment from the communist regime. Current data show that sex work mainly takes place in private settings, which is caused by several reasons. Firstly, municipalities have since 2000 gained the right to regulate sex work on its territory

¹ University of South Bohemia in Ceske Budejovice, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, J. Boreckeho 1167/27, 370 11 Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic. E-mail: ondras00@zsf.jcu.cz, kajanova@zsf.jcu.cz.

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(Zákon č. 128/2000 Sb., o občích). Secondly, the private sex business offers more privacy both to the sex workers and to their customers, which is welcome by both sides (Ditmore, 2006).

Sex business hierarchy and private sex business

There are several criteria for sorting the different types of sex business. One is based on the place in which the act takes place - Weitzer (2010) divides sex business on outdoor, which includes street sex business, and indoor, which includes massage salons, bars, hotels and private settings. There is also a hierarchy, which places street sex business on low levels, and the escort services or call girls at the top (Lucas, 2005). A different place in the hierarchy also comes with different levels of risk (Weitzer, 2010), also, as described by Scott and Dedel (2006), the ones working on the streets have a lower social status than the ones working indoors. Another division is based on the person providing the service – male or female, heterosexual or homosexual (Flowers, 1998; Cunningham and Shah, 2016). Sex business also has a criminal side to it, from human trafficking (Di Nicola, Cauduro, Lombardi and Ruspini, 2009; Farley, 2003; Kempadoo, Sanghera and Pattanaik, 2015) to clients assaulting the sex workers (Farley and Barkan, 1998; Raphael and Shapiro, 2004).

Sex business in private setting takes place in apartments, both privately owned or rented. Some apartments are meant for work only, however, if the apartment is privately owned, the sex worker also inhabits it (Di Nicola, Cauduro, Lombardi and Ruspini, 2008). Sex workers advertise using printed or online platforms, yet the internet is increasingly more popular (Cunningham and Kendall, 2011; Farley, Franzblau and Kennedy, 2013; Rigg, 2010). An interesting fact is that even the private sex business has a place for a pimp, who is often represented by a life partner of the sex worker or the owner of the apartment (May, Harocopos and Hough, 2000).

The motivation to do sex work differ, but mostly the reason is money (Benson and Matthews, 1995; Hughes and de Compostela, 2004; Vanwesenbeeck, 2013). Female sex workers are often also single parents who have outstanding debt (Poláková, 2016). Prices differ based on the services provided, however, generally the higher the hierarchy level, the more expensive will the sex worker be. Poláková (2016) also notes that while in the street business the price is usually for the act done, in the private section the price is for an hour. The amount the customer pays is often different from the money a worker receives. In the club business, the worker often must submit up to half of the money gained to the club owner or gets the money at the end of their shift (Poláková, 2008). Some club owners take all the workers money, so they practically work for free (Sandy, 2009).

Sex business from the perspective of legislation and its impacts on economic policy

The approach of different countries to sex work varies and for example Lenderová (2002) divides it into the following types: abolition approach, regularization approach and repressive approach. In the regularization approach, the government legalizes the sex business, but the persons entering sex business must submit to regulation and inspection (Havelková, Bellak-Hančilová, 2014). Lenderová (2002) divides the states applying repressive approach into two groups; the first group consists of states where sex business is illegal and sexual workers are criminalized as well (e.g. the USA). The second group consists of states where the provision of commercial sexual services is decriminalized while the clients are criminally prosecuted (Dodillet and Östergren, 2011; Lenderová, 2002), the approach sometimes referred to as the "Swedish model" (Kilvington, Day and Ward, 2001). In the Czech Republic, the approach could be described as abolitionist, it is basically legal, illegal are the counterparts such as human trafficking or pimping. Šídová a kol. (2013) states that this approach is important in the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, informing about safe sex and offering re-socializing activities. There is also the matter of regulation and tax collection. According to an estimate made by Weiss et al. (2010), which states that the Czech Republic loses about CZK 9 million a year from tax-free sex workers' income, which is circa 0,2% of GDP. Poláková (2016) states that, according to the statistics from 2013, total earnings in sex business reach "only" about CZK 3.5 billion per year. Therefore, for several years now, the possibility of a law that would regulate sex business and which would bring its taxation (Rozkoš bez rizika, 2015) is being discussed. In countries such as the Netherlands, since 2000, the law has de facto legalized sex business. The change in the law was

a way to improve the fight against trafficking in human beings, to regulate the exploitation of sex workers, and also to improve the protection of the position of sex workers who, if they want to work in sex business, must become self-employed or employed by the sex of the enterprise (Daalder, 2007). A significant factor is also the fact that municipalities gained the right to create their own policy on prostitution (Daalder, 2015). There is still a need to mention the approach sometimes referred to as the "Swedish model". The aim of this approach is to decriminalize the provision of sexual services and criminal punishment for organizing sex business and, above all, criminalizing clients (Dodillet and Östergren, 2011; Kilvington, Day and Ward, 2001).

III. Methods

Data collection methods and techniques

A qualitative design was chosen for the research. The data collection was carried out using the polling method and biographical narrative interview techniques in the period from 2016 to 2017. The biographical narrative interview is a specific form of in-depth non-patterned interview. The narrative interview assumes that there are subjective significance structures that will come out during free narration, not during targeted questioning. The respondents are encouraged to freely tell a story with them acting as the main characters. The interviewer encourages them to go on narrating and intervene only minimally in the interview (Mayring, 2002).

The respondents were asked one basic question, specifically: *Tell me what your normal day looks like.* And then an additional question: *What would your normal day look like if you practised a completely different job?*

Research set

The research group was represented by women (N=37) who work in the private sex business in the South Bohemian Region (N=19) and in Prague (N=18) (Czech Republic) and were addressed through internet advertising and snowball sampling. Also the clients of the sex sex workers use internet advertising, for example the sites: www.naprivat.cz, www.iprivaty.cz. The number of respondents was determined by saturation, which means by the point when the data analysis started showing repetition of codes. The high number of respondents was given by their great variability. The respondents' reported average age² was 27 years, the lowest age was 18 years and the highest age was 55 years. Prior to the start of the interview, all respondents were presented with a research plan. Afterward, with their consent, the interviews were recorded. As the topic is very sensitive, we put great stress on the ethical aspect of the study. All study participants were anonymized, they were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and they were provided with the opportunity to correct the transcribed interviews (however, none of the respondents made use of that option).

Data analysis

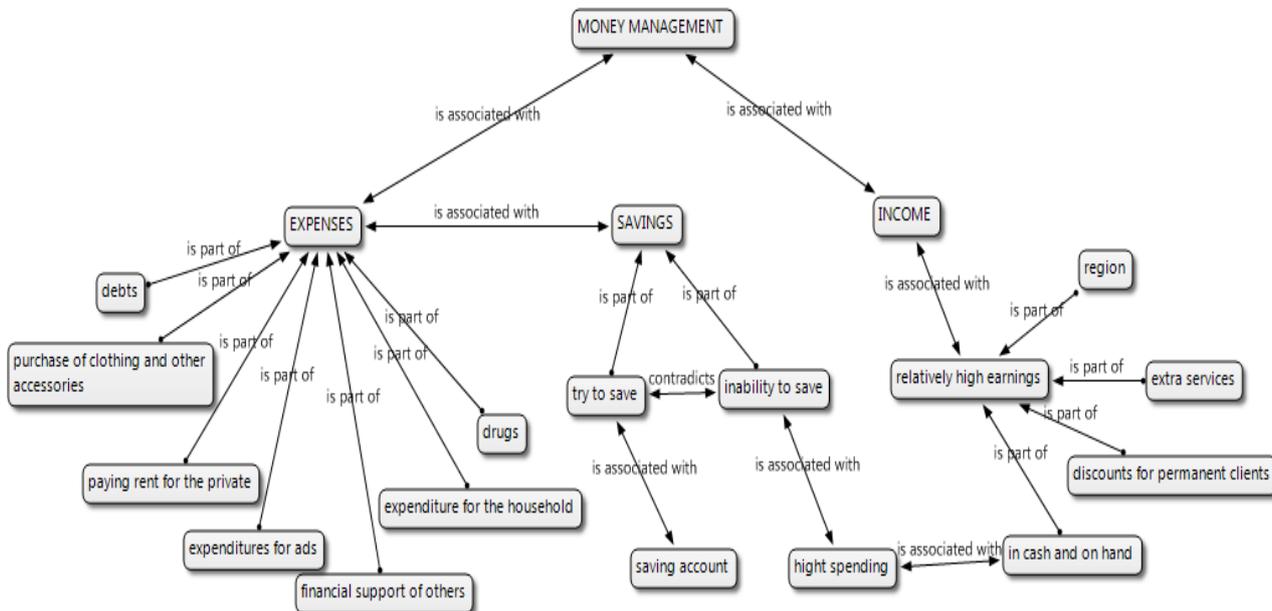
Prior to analysing the data, the interviews were first transcribed word for word. The data analysis itself took place in the Atlas.Ti program using the anchored theory method. The method of grounded theory is aimed at developing a theory without hypotheses prepared in advance, in cases of researching a new phenomenon or perspective, which has not been described and lacks theoretical foundations. The authors of grounded theory are B. Laser and A. Strauss, 1967 (Hendl, 2012). It is a plastic tool for data analysis, which allows working with the outputs of different techniques (Miovský, 2006). A graphical representation of the data took place in the program through networking.

² We intentionally put "reported age", as the sex business workers often deliberately report a lower age.

IV. Results

In terms of data analysis, the following categories were identified for the economic situation - money management: income, expenses and savings/savings accounts. The categories and individual codes are shown in Diagram 1, below.

Diagram 1 Money Management



Source: GAJU 029/2016/S

Income

Revenues or the earnings of sex workers are very different. Monthly income ranges from CZK 7,000 to a sum exceeding CZK 50,000: "per month, 50, 60 thousand, there is no curve as if there are seasons or something, so on average I can get like fifty, sixty" (IN1, 26 years). The amount of earnings is reflected in the price of the sexual services provided, which is usually counted per hour, as well as the number of clients and the number of days worked.

The price for the sexual services provided varies from worker to worker. The most frequent amount that the sex worker reported was from CZK 1,000 to CZK 2,000 per hour: "yeah, I charge a thousand per hour" (IN1, 26 years), and the price varies regionally, as evidenced, for example, by a female sex worker from České Budějovice (South Bohemia): "well, a thousand is sometimes too much for the Budějovice people, so I get about 800" (IN2, 23 years). On the other hand, a sex worker from Prague has an hourly tax set at around CZK 1,500 - CZK 2,000.

Sex workers have special prices for additional services, or for so-called extra services, such as oral or anal sex, but also kissing: "... oral sex is about 400-500" (IN2, 23 years) "... prices are strictly set, but then there are prices for extras (kissing, licking, oral sex without..."(IN18, 24 years). Sometimes, sexual services include sexual intercourse without a condom for which sex workers charge the most.

However, the overall price can also be affected by discounts, which are reserved especially for the permanent clientele. These discounts can also be a response to the client's lack of finances: "Some are coming specifically to see me, so if they are short, they give me what they have, like five hundred." (IN2, 23 years). The payment for the sexual services provided does not always have to be in the form of money. In some cases, we can also see that clients provide sex workers with wellness stays, holidays in resorts, but there can also be an exchange of goods in the form of repairs to home-made items or the import of such common things as eggs.

Expenses

Sex workers, who do not provide sexual services in their own apartments, pay rent. There are also apartments where the landlord rents the flat primarily to sex workers, and the amounts they require for rent are many times higher: "... I'm only there in the afternoon and I pay about ten a month for one room" (IN30, 22 years), "when I started, I found an add on amateurs that she was renting a room for it (providing sexual services), so I thought why not, but the lady wanted 1200 a day" (IN29, 35 years).

The personal expenses of sex workers are various. The ones most frequently mentioned are the expenses associated with the purchase of clothes: "I like fashion and spending money I earn for nice clothes, especially to always please me. I like a reward ... " (IN34, 25 years). Another item high on the imaginary list is cosmetics, shoes and accessories, especially handbags. The personal debt of sex workers also reflects debt problems: "I was finished with it, but I just cannot do it in the normal world, and only troubles and debts, so I returned to it again" (IN18, 24 years). Sometimes a sex worker is already insolvent, and the income from sex business is the only way to properly repay the debt. This is also related to the fact that debt represents the motivation to enter the sex business. In one interview, the expenses also included drugs. The analysis also showed that a female worker financially supports both her partner/husband and the primary family or her friends. Some have a family, husband, and children, and income from sex business finances the whole household. An interesting and logical result is spending on the advertising of the sexual services offered.

Savings

Although the respondents have relatively high income, they often have problem with saving money. In terms of savings and savings accounts, there are significant differences between sex workers. On the one hand, there are workers who try to save: "I have a normal savings account and like put money in." (IN1, 26 years), "I'm saving myself, sometimes I go on a vacation." (IN4, 28 years), some also created a savings account. Research has also shown that some sex workers want to quit the business and save their money now, because they are aware of the instability of the industry, and are also aware that when they quit they will likely get a lower income job: "I always have a lot of money, so I won't quit yet, but I prefer to keep my money on the side, because as I say with that I want to quit and I know that in my new job I will not come to such money right away, so as not to end up where I came from" (IN11, 21 years), "I'm saving money, yeah, I'm thinking ahead. Today it works but tomorrow may not." (IN17, 24 years). However, the return from sex business to a normal job is very difficult, and thus becomes rather a wish than reality. A great part of the respondents could not find any answer to the question what job they would be ready to perform. The work in sex business is specific by its regime and relatively free decision-making; therefore the women are not able to imagine a normal workday. Or their idea of a normal job is distorted. "*Well, 8 or 12 hours at a workplace with a boss who keeps scolding people for working too little*" (IN30, 22 years).

On the other hand, sex workers say that saving money is hard for them: "But I spend a lot and I do not have the money to waste. Girls just start making money and start spending a lot more ... Someday you earn at least 5,000 a day, and the next day you do not have it anymore, because you drink through it or leave it in machines" (IN16, 36 years).

The high spending can be caused by sex workers getting paid in cash, which is harder to keep: "I cannot get money in my hands, I was never able to save and with being financially independent I just buy anything I like" (IN20, 34 years). At the same time, for some sex workers, the high spending can be associated with the euphoria of quickly earned money: "Well, you know, at first it was terrible, almost euphoric, here I paid three thousand for rent and suddenly I had 15, 20,000 left." (IN14, 30 years).

V. Discussion

The price for sexual services and the resulting earnings of the sex worker are influenced by a number of factors. The service price and the final earnings are influenced by many factors. First, it depends on the region where the sex worker runs their business, which is also mentioned by Poláková (2016) or Moffatt (2005). Another factor may be the number of regular clients and the number of new ones – there are online discussions rating the services, the most notorious in the Czech Republic being Nornik.net (Ondrášek, Řimnáčová and Kajanová, 2018). The sex worker's willingness to provide risk practices, but also her appearance play an important role in determining the price for the service (Chang and Weng, 2012).

Expert literature points out a high incidence of abuse of habit-forming substances among sex business workers (Boyer et al., 2017). Expenses linked with drug abuse were scarce in our research. The issue of drug abuse in the sex business was analysed by many professionals, and the result showed that they often depend on the form of sex business, with the highest incidence in street form of sex business (compare Jeal and Salisbury, 2007; Norton-Hawk, 2003; Roxburgh, Degenhardt, Copeland and Larance, 2008).

The expenses often contain high amounts spent on paying debts, which are often the motivation to begin the sex work. Indebted sex workers are mentioned regularly by e.g. Chowdhury (2013), McCaghy and Hou (1994). They most frequently include debts incurred in preceding partner relationships in which the women stood security for their ex-partners or debts incurred by their own fault (Malinová, 2013).

The results showed that saving money is quite common amongst the sex workers. On one hand, there are workers who save parts of their earned money, which is also confirmed by Slívová (2013), who also says that some of the women invest the money into themselves e.g. for education. On the other hand are workers who do not save anything and spend all their income at once (Meis, 2002), which was also confirmed by our research.

The average earnings reported by the respondents in the study are higher than in other sex business forms. On the other hand, it must be pointed out that the women also incur higher expenses related to the operation of the private flat.

Sex workers have a lot of fears and problems related to the return to legal labour market. The first motive consists in getting used to the high earnings available in sex business, which might not be equivalent in a normal job (Šídová, 2013). Due to the high earnings, they have lost the idea of the value of money. Another motive consists in the fact that most private sex workers manage their working hours themselves; therefore some of them could experience problems with having a boss when returning to the legal labour market. Last but not least, Šídová (2013) states that a problem may also consist in the curriculum submitted when applying for a job; it may show a gap of several years because of the sex business activities. Due to a long lasting activities outside the legal labour market, the sex workers may also have lost common working habits, which, as Buchtová (2002) states, may make the return difficult in general.

IV. Conclusion

Generally, the income of sex workers is quite high. The prices are different for each specialised or extra service provided and vary by the discounts for regular customers. The spending of private sex workers varies, however, there are articles which repeated throughout our research, such as rent, buying clothes and other accessories. Sex workers often support their partner/husband, family or friends. The results also showed that sex workers are trying to save money. Because of the growth of this industry, it is important to research this specific form. At present, there is no sufficient legislation support concerning the area of sex business in the Czech Republic. Therefore sex business is neither legal nor illegal. Such a legal vacuum contributes to the development of economic evasions and criminal threats. The situation could be solved, to a great degree, by the currently discussed act on

sex business, which would benefit both the economic area and the sex workers, as the private sex business is relatively risk-loaded, invisible, and therefore actually uncontrollable.

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