

THE DANGER OF PROSTITUTION AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT: *The aim of the article was to determine the impact of prostitution as an extreme consequence of poverty on society. To emphasize the number of risks and dangerous activities which can be associated to this phenomenon. Prostitution is a controversial and complex phenomenon that affects various aspects of society, including health, the social and economic sphere and the moral level in society. The aim of the article is to identify the risks associated with prostitution, which threaten not only prostitutes, but also the general public. This article is a partial output of the project VEGA 1/0595/21 – Public administration interventions at the time of COVID-19 and their impact on the quality of life of citizens of selected communities.*

KEY WORDS: *danger, impact, prostitution, risks, society.*

INTRODUCTION

Prostitution as social-pathological phenomenon is generally considered to be one of the oldest social problems in history, which negatively affects society primarily from a social, but also health and economic aspect. The issue of prostitution has its origins in ancient times, its forms have changed over time, but even in the modern society of the 21st century, methods and measures that could eliminate this phenomenon from society have not been identified.

Prostitution is an actual and dangerous phenomenon even today. It is one of the issues that is continuously the center of attention for the general public - experts, media, politicians. These make their own, often contradictory, contributions, opinions on individual aspects of this controversial phenomenon.

Edlund and Korn (2002) define prostitution as a process of sexual intercourse for money or other value, while the number of sexual intercourses, after which a woman or a man would be considered a prostituted person is not specified. The perception of prostitution is mainly conditioned by values, which differ greatly in individual cultures. They differ so markedly that while in one culture, especially a liberal one, prostitution is perceived as a legitimate profession, in another culture, especially a conservative one, it is criminal (Jenkins 2023).

Economics perceives prostitution as a certain form of business activity, the subject of which is the exchange of sexual services for money. We can look at it like any other business and relationship between seller and buyer (Právne noviny 2017). Prostitution is an inseparable part of the entire economic system. In the economic field, prostitution belongs to the sphere of the black economy, this does not apply in countries where it is accepted as a legitimate activity.

In the Slovak legal system, the institution of prostitution is anchored only in a very lateral way. The Criminal Code defines prostitution as satisfying the sexual needs of another person through intercourse or other sexual intercourse with an adult for a reward.

Slovak legal norms do not prohibit prostitution, but neither do they specifically regulate or permit it (Hamacková 2016). However, they regulate other criminal acts that may be closely related to prostitution (sexual abuse, gross coercion, extortion, spreading of a dangerous contagious human disease...).

From the point of view of its impact on society, the phenomenon of prostitution must be seen not only as a phenomenon that has a negative effect on its actors, but also on society as a whole.

Despite the fact that there are prostitutes who are demonstrably satisfied with their way of life, especially according to the answers in various research, even these are constantly in some form of danger by performing such an activity. Undoubtedly, persons who engage in prostitution not of their own free will, but under pressure from other persons are especially at risk.

Both forced and voluntary prostitution are an inherent part of gender inequality, given that they objectify women, thereby affecting the position of women and men in society and the understanding of their mutual relations and sexuality. The company's task is to set standards for gender equality, to understand gender issues, and to instill in the public a message about the status of women and men (European Parliament 2014).

The consequences and risks of prostitution are serious both for prostitutes and for society. A wide spectrum of crimes and other forms of risks are connected with the issue of prostitution, of which basically anyone can be a victim.

The most dangerous activities that can be closely related to prostitution include:

- Murder - cases of murders of prostitutes are publicly known in Slovakia, some of these murders have not yet been solved. Especially abroad, murders, serial murders of prostitutes or murders motivated by sexual impulses are very common. According to NCSC Prostitution Death Statistics (2023), there were 204 prostitutes murdered per 100,000 people in America as of 2021.
- Violence (physical, sexual, psychological) - according to a study by Janis (2014), up to half of the 68 interviewed prostitutes were physically attacked by clients, while 2 of these person were knocked unconscious. Farley (2003) conducted research in which she tried to collect data from five countries of the world. Out of 478 people, 62% of prostitutes stated that they were raped while providing sexual services. Obtaining such information is not easy, especially because prostitutes do not want to report these acts. NCSC (2023) reports that according to third-party reports of witnessing assaults, every sex worker is physically assaulted

- at least once a month. Street and road workers face a greater risk of rape, physical harm or other forms of violence and threats than indoor workers.
- Human trafficking, also called white meat trade, turns a human being into an object for exploitation for profit, the essence of this process is usually luring people under the pretext of a better future, while according to the Slovak Catholic Charity (2023) 700,000 to 2 million people in the world become victims of trafficking annually of people. Forced prostitution does not always have to figure behind trafficking, although it is the most common form of trafficking and enrichment of people, but it also includes involuntary organ harvesting, domestic slavery and many other activities in the performance of which people are abused. This form of sexual abuse represents a serious violation of human rights and is one of the most used forms of financial enrichment of organized criminal groups (Szabanová 2014). Due to the fact that, in most cases, human trafficking is carried out by large and hierarchically structured criminal groups, the detection of these acts is also difficult due to the various new ways of committing them (Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic 2022).
 - Robberies and muggings, the victim of which can be not only the prostitute, but also the clients themselves in the streets, but also in apartments, bars or other premises. As Nnatu (2018) explains, there is an assumption that sex workers may have a larger amount of money with them, making them constantly at risk from a robber. Hamacková (2016) also draws attention to prostitute offenders, especially in the form of residential prostitution, when the client can be deceived under the false pretext of sexual intercourse, with the purpose of robbing him.
 - The use of narcotic and psychotropic substances negatively affects society not only in connection with prostitution, but also from a general aspect. Since drug addiction itself is considered a socio-pathological phenomenon, just like prostitution, these phenomena are in many cases directly influenced and intertwined. The combination of these social problems complicates prostitutes' chances of re-inclusion in society. People who practice prostitution are under the threat of drug use as a consequence of their activity, and on the contrary, drug users may become prostitutes in order to be able to finance their addiction. There

is a link between drug use and increased sexual desire and activity. According to surveys in Australia and Canada, the rate of use of drugs and other addictive substances by prostitutes is very high (European Parliament 2014).

- The spread of sexually transmitted diseases significantly affects the health of the population (Švecová 2016). People providing sexual services are potentially a group at high risk of contracting HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases. The clients themselves are also at high risk of infection and consequently can be a kind of bridge for the transmission of these diseases to the wider society through contact with other person, as some of the clients only have contact with prostitutes, but there are many clients who use these services additionally, in addition to their life or occasional partners (Platteau et al. 2022).

As a result, society as a whole finds itself in a situation of general threat to health (European Parliament 2014). Platteau et al. (2022) referring to the results of research in Belgium draw attention to the implementation of control tests for sexually transmitted venereal diseases in clients. They state that of the 334 clients interviewed, 42% of them never underwent these tests, 15% of clients were tested only after risky sexual intercourse, 13% of clients took the test less than once a year and 30% of clients were tested at least once a year. This is an alarming fact, that 52% of the clients in the research stated that they were in a partnership.

In particular, the incidence of syphilis and gonorrhoea has significantly increased in Slovakia over the past 20 years, and Slovak society also records an increasing trend in cases of HIV disease (Švecová 2016). Michna (2016) estimates that in every day a million people infected with sexually transmitted diseases will increase in society every day.

The aforementioned illegal activities are only a minimal indicator of the enormous impact prostitution has on society. Any illegal activity, or criminal act carried out with a sexual motive or seeking profit on other person, negatively affects the moral and ethical level of society as a whole.

The general public should not be indifferent to these activities, especially because of the adolescent youth, who should clearly perceive the moral principles that society demonstrates and understand what is allowed and what is strictly prohibited in society. These activities should always be exposed, investigated and the culprits adequately punished so that the rest of society is deterred from similar

actions. We emphasize that any activity causing the endangerment of the lives of others, the degradation of a human being, significantly affects the quality of life in a given society.

METHODS

We were also interested in the issue of prostitution in empirical research, which was carried out from March 23, 2023 to April 15, 2023. The main goal of the research was to determine the impact of prostitution on society and to map the view of the wider public on the issue of prostitution and phenomena related to it. To conduct empirical research, we applied an electronic questionnaire. The research sample of our empirical research was 225 respondents - 150 women (66.7%) and 75 men (33.3%).

Considering the extensiveness of the conducted research, for the purposes of this article, we focused only on the results that present the issue of the impact of prostitution or are closely related to it.

RESULTS

Respondents were asked 19 questions in the field of prostitution. We present the results of the answers to those questions that directly concern the impact of prostitution on society and the respondent’s opinions on some facts related to the phenomenon of prostitution.

Table 1: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the statements?

Statement	I totally agree	I rather agree	I rather disagree	I totally disagree
Providing sexual services for money is risky, especially in case of unprotected intercourse.	184	36	3	2
Prostitution is inherently linked to the transmission and spread of dangerous venereal diseases.	156	53	14	2
Prostitutes are exposed to the danger of physical violence when providing sexual services.	148	67	10	0
The issue of prostitution negatively affects the quality of life in society.	132	80	11	2

Statement	I totally agree	I rather agree	I rather disagree	I totally disagree
Many crimes are associated with prostitution.	106	90	24	5
People providing sexual services have a greater need for sexual intercourse than other people.	32	82	91	20
Providing sexual services causes many problems in the world.	83	97	39	6
The provision of sexual services should be legalized.	28	67	60	70
The provision of sexual services should be prohibited.	70	67	62	26
Providing sexual services does not harm anyone.	19	29	84	93
People providing sexual services are victims of pimps.	57	135	28	5
The main reason for the provision of sexual services is men's interest in purchasing sexual services.	57	129	1	8
The use of sexual services can damage a marriage/partner relationship.	151	63	8	3
Sex is a legitimate commodity, such as car that can be bought.	17	43	89	76
People providing sexual services have freely decided to enter the world of sex business.	20	84	103	18
People providing sexual services are almost always forced to do so.	24	104	88	9
If a person wants to stop providing sexual services, it is difficult to leave the world of sex business.	59	128	31	7
Everyone can contribute to ending the provision of sexual services.	57	103	53	12
The scope of the prostitution issue is difficult to identify.	103	103	12	7

Source: own processing according to respondents' answers

The statements to which the respondents expressed their attitudes were conceived with the intention to capture as best as possible all aspects and problems related to the issue of prostitution and to gain a deeper understanding

of the perception of prostitution by the research sample. We emphasize the fact that, according to the results shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents, in addition to the negative impact of prostitution on the health of its actors, are also aware of its impact on interpersonal relationships, especially in the case of partnerships and marriages, as well as its significant impact on the quality of life in society. We note that, according to the research sample, it is difficult to identify the extent of the problem of prostitution, which can also have a significant impact on public opinion in this area. Considering the respondents answers, it is obvious that the research sample considers prostitutes as victims of pimps who are forced to provide sexual services and the decision to enter the world of prostitution was almost never a voluntary decision of these people. We perceive agreement in the opinions of the respondents on the issue of leaving the world of prostitution, in which 83.1% of respondents agree with the statement that leaving the world of prostitution is difficult for prostitutes. 71.1% of respondents believe that each of us can help prostitutes stop providing sexual services.

Question 1: In your opinion, how often do prostitutes experience violence, threats and harassment while providing sexual services?

On the issue of violence against prostitutes, the respondents' answers are evaluated very positively by us. The fact that 86.7% of respondents are aware that prostitutes are in almost constant danger to life and health when providing sexual services indicates sufficient awareness of the research sample about the harm of prostitution, especially to the prostitutes themselves. We are also pleased with the indicator according to which none of the respondents stated that violence is never committed against prostitutes. 30 respondents think that violence is committed against prostitutes only less often.

Table 2: In your opinion, what type of violence is most often perpetrated on prostitutes?

Type of violence	Always	Very often	Often	Less often	Never
Hit	41	100	60	22	2
The kick	31	73	57	55	9
Ignition	2	20	38	83	82
Confinement in a room/restriction of personal freedom	14	54	99	45	13
Robbing	15	77	76	49	8

Type of violence	Always	Very often	Often	Less often	Never
Strangulation	21	69	69	58	8
Rape	42	105	46	29	3
Unwanted touching	59	85	57	22	2
Threatening with a weapon	16	30	68	91	20
Spitting	44	66	70	36	9

Source: own processing according to respondents' answers

The results of the research showed that prostitutes are always at risk of beatings, unwanted touches and rape when providing sexual services. According to the respondents, prostitutes are often threatened with spitting, kicking, restriction of personal freedom, robbery and strangulation. Almost 51% of respondents believe that clients often threaten prostitutes with a weapon, especially if their demands are not met. 26.7% of respondents believe that prostitutes are often at risk of arson.

Question 2: Who do you think should be prosecuted for prostitution?

Given the agreement of the respondents in Table 1 to the statement that the main reason for the provision of sexual services is men's interest in buying sexual services, we assumed that the respondents would mostly indicate the possibility of punishing only clients, or clients and pimps. The possibility of prosecuting only the client was indicated by one respondent, and the possibility of prosecuting both the client and the pimp was indicated by 26 respondents, which constitutes 11.6% of the research sample. In 91 cases, the most mentioned option was punishing all actors – prostitutes, clients, pimps. According to 6 respondents, only prostitutes should be prosecuted, and 53 respondents advocate the prosecution of only pimps. According to 14 respondents, no one should be punished for prostitution and its practice, and 34 respondents do not know who should be prosecuted.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the article was to determine the impact of prostitution on society. The conducted research demonstrated agreement on the issue of the negative impact of prostitution on society, which manifests itself at several

of its levels, as evidenced by the results of the research, the attitudes and opinions of the research sample.

The levels of negative impact of prostitution on society are also discussed by Miller et al. (2019), which, based on personal interviews with prostitutes, defines the impact of prostitution mainly on the criminal, social and health levels, not only from physical, but also mental health. The research carried out has shown the significant danger that prostitution and its practice entail. These statements are confirmed not only by the answers of our respondents, but also by research dealing with violence related to prostitution, which has shown that more than half of the interviewed prostitutes have experienced some form of violence while providing sexual services (Farley et al. 2003).

The results of the research of Soukop et al. (2012), in which 1,036 respondents participated, point to the following facts regarding the solution to prostitution:

- 45% of respondents would completely prohibit and prosecute prostitution and its practice, and according to them, prostitutes and clients should be punished - the respondents' opinion on the prosecution of pimps is not known to us from the results of this research,
- legalization of prostitution by law and its implementation on the basis of a standard trade license is desired by 27% of the research sample,
- keeping the current situation, which does not criminalize prostitution itself, but the phenomena related to it are criminalized, is advocated by 18% of respondents,
- in the research, 10% of the respondents could not express their position, while in our research, more than 27% of the respondents chose this option.

We perceive the contribution of the article mainly in emphasizing the need to solve the issue of prostitution. We consider it socially beneficial to draw attention to the existence of this phenomenon, its negative effects, and to emphasize the necessity of eliminating this phenomenon and the dangers associated with it.

CONCLUSION

We conclude that, based on the knowledge known to us, it is essential that society, especially competent persons and entities, pay more attention to the elimination of the negative effects and risks that prostitution brings to society.

We believe that the majority of society, which does not take an interest in the issue on its own initiative, does not perceive the issue of prostitution in its entirety and does not realize what involuntary prostitutes experience. We are convinced that if society paid more attention to the issue of prostitution, individuals would be more careful and attentive in helping prostitutes.

Based on the above-mentioned observations, we primarily recommend for practice:

- collection of data enabling the most accurate determination of the extent and seriousness of prostitution in the territory of the Slovak Republic,
- change in the legislation of the Slovak Republic in the issue of prostitution and phenomena related to it,
- spreading awareness about the threats associated with prostitution and sexual exploitation through information campaigns on social networks and in the media,
- consider the possibility of prosecuting clients of prostitutes in order to reduce the demand for sexual services,
- financially support third sector organizations dealing with help for prostitutes,
- to establish an independent state institution responsible for helping and solving the problem of prostitution,
- to strive for the creation of a unified system for the prevention and solution of prostitution in cooperation with EU member states.

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