

Women in private sex business from the perspective of relationship level

(overview essay)

Stanislav Ondrášek, Alena Kajanová, Zuzana Řimnáčová

Abstract: *The main goal of the article consists in describing the relationship level of women in private sex business. The research set consisted of 36 women working in private sex business in the South Bohemian Region and in Prague. The study made use of the technique of biographic-narrative interview. The acquired data were analysed in the Atlas.ti program and then links between individual categories and codes were searched with the help of the anchored theory method. The result shows that the relationship level, or the social network of the respondents, respectively, is very narrow. Financial support to the primary family, the partner or a friend is frequent. The financial support may be consequently reflected in whether the respective person does or does not tolerate the work in sex business.*

Keywords: *sex business, relationships, social network*

1 Introduction

The definitions of sex business differ by authors or institutions. So we can find a concept of sex business as “manifestation of violence against women” and a concept of sex business as sexual work (Ditmore, 2006). We can explain sex business in general as a provision of different forms of sexual services for money or other payment (Chmelík et al., 2003).

We can divide sex business in three ways, i.e. by its form, by the way of its provision and by the environment of its provision. The forms of sex business include female, male or child prostitution (we speak of prostitution from the perspective of the character of this form). The ways of provision include contact and contactless sex, as the Rozkoš bez rizika organization states. That organization divides sex business into contact and contactless forms. Contact sex business includes sex as such or acting in porn movies, while contactless sex business includes phone sex or

sex chat (Kutálková et al. 2016). The last method of division divides sex business by environment. Chmelík et al. (2003) names street or road, club, hotel and private sex business, as well as escort services. Sex business is hierarchized; women working in private sex business fall into higher class, while women providing sexual services in the street fall into so called scum (Zikmundová, Weiss, 2004).

Private sex business is provided in hired or own flats. Often there are several women in such a flat; they cooperate and share the rent (Sanders, 2005). The customer base of private sex business is relatively regular; the first contact is often established by advertising on internet portals or press. Private sex business brings more privacy both to the client and to the women providing sexual services; therefore the demand for such form is high (Ditmore, 2006). The age of women in that form most frequently ranges from twenty to forty years; there are women of different education and background. (Sochůrek, 2009)

We deal with this topic as private sex business and the relationship level of sexual workers are insufficiently processed, but in fact the relationship level is one of very important areas in sex business.

The article is aimed at describing the relationship level of women in private sex business. The article deals with the relationships of women in private sex business with their primary family, their partner, their pimp and their colleagues.

2 Theoretical foundation

The directing influence of the family on future life of the person and on possible starting of a procreation family is indisputable. The child often behaves according to the parents' model, as the parent is a loving person on one hand and an authority on the other hand. The absence of one or both parent models constitutes a considerable disadvantage and deprivation to the child. If the parent is present in the family, but does not fulfil his or her role sufficiently, a subdeprivation occurs – for example if the father is alcoholic. (Langmeier, Matějček, 2011)

Single-parent families are considered a risk-loaded environment for incidence of delinquent behaviour of the children, primarily due to reduced parent supervision (Sampson, Laub 1993; Kierkus, Baer 2002; Demuth, Brown 2004). Hirschi (2002) considers the type of family with one foster parent an even more risk-loaded family. Wikström, Butterworth (2006) agree with that.

Studies suggest the existence of specific family-related factors that may be risk-loaded for entry in sex business. They include the non-functionality of the family in which the women have experienced physical or sexual abuse or other form of violence, do not have good relationships with their primary family or do not communicate with them at all, and the family does not fulfil the primary functions in general (James, 1980; Earls, David, 1990; Petrocchi et al., 2016). That is opposed by a study carried out by

Rozkoš bez rizika; the study suggests that sexual workers are not predisposed for work in sex business by complicated childhood or by sexual desire (Malinová, 2016). One of the motives to start prostitution is also the effort to escape the parents or the husband (McCaghy and Hou, 1994). Family dissatisfaction and unstable family background, as well as the effort to repay the husband's or the family's debts play a great role. The study by Malakouti et al. (2016) confirms it by stating that more than one half of the women in question had bad relationships in the family and bad economic situation in the family.

As for the relationships between sexual workers and their male partners, they frequently miss emotional contents and focus rather on the use of finances or sex (Rochelle, 2011). Nabila (2004) found out that women working in sex business very often experience violence from their intimate partner. Jewkes et al. (2012) brought an interesting study result with respect to attached couples' experience with sex business. 42 % men, although they had a relationship, practised sex with a sexual worker either for money or for other benefits; 44 % experienced sex with a one-off partner.

Pimps constitute another group of persons entering the relationship level of the women working in sex business. The pimp is the person who is most frequently present in street or road sex business (Williamson, Cluse-Tolar, 2002). A woman who provides sex services and has a pimp supports the pimp with her income, giving him up to 2/3 or even all of her income. The woman is often completely dependent on the pimp, either because he withholds all her documents, or because he gives her a "shot" as a reward, if the woman is drug addicted (La Strada, 2006). At the beginning of the relationship, the pimp treats the woman kindly and nicely, but after some time he may behave rudely or even violently. We can learn that fact for example in the study by Marcus et al. (2004) that took place in New York; they found out that 5 % pimps admit their violent approach to the prostitutes. That is confirmed by their further survey carried out among prostitutes, in which about 2 % sexual workers reported a relationship with a violent pimp. The remaining pimps are aware of their unstable work and of the limits they should not exceed in order to maintain their income. In private sex business, the pimp is often the lessor of the flat or the partner who sponges off the woman (May, Harocopos, Hough, 2000). The woman may not always perceive the relationship with the pimp negatively. The sexual worker may find her "family", as well as the feeling of safety and protection in the pimp (Ernstman-Mongard, 1996).

3 Methods

The study made use of qualitative research strategy. The interview, specifically biographic-narrative interview was chosen as the technique. The research set consisted of 36 women from the South Bohemian Region and from Prague, who work in private sex business and advertise their services for example in the Naprivat.cz, Agamaseznamka.cz and Eroticke-privaty.cz internet portals. The women's age ranged

from 21 years – 50 years and their average age was 27 years. The respondents who were willing to get involved in the study were familiarized with the goal and the utilization of the interview. As the narrative interview imperatively needs the verbatim wording of the story, all interviews were recorded on a voice recorder with the respondents' informed consent, then they were verbatim transcribed and analyzed by the Atlas.ti program, with the help of the anchored theory method. The study was focused on the life style of women in private sex business; however, for the purpose of this article, we have focused only on a part of the results concerning the relationship level of the women in question. Specifically, we analyzed the information on their relationships with their family and their partner, and we further examined their relationships with their colleagues and with their pimp, if any.

4 Results

The data analysis helped us to identify four main groups of persons with whom the respondents maintained relationships. The relationships with the primary family, with the partner, with the colleagues and with friends. The interconnection of the relationship categories with codes is graphically represented in diagram 1; they are commented and analyzed in more detail in the text below.

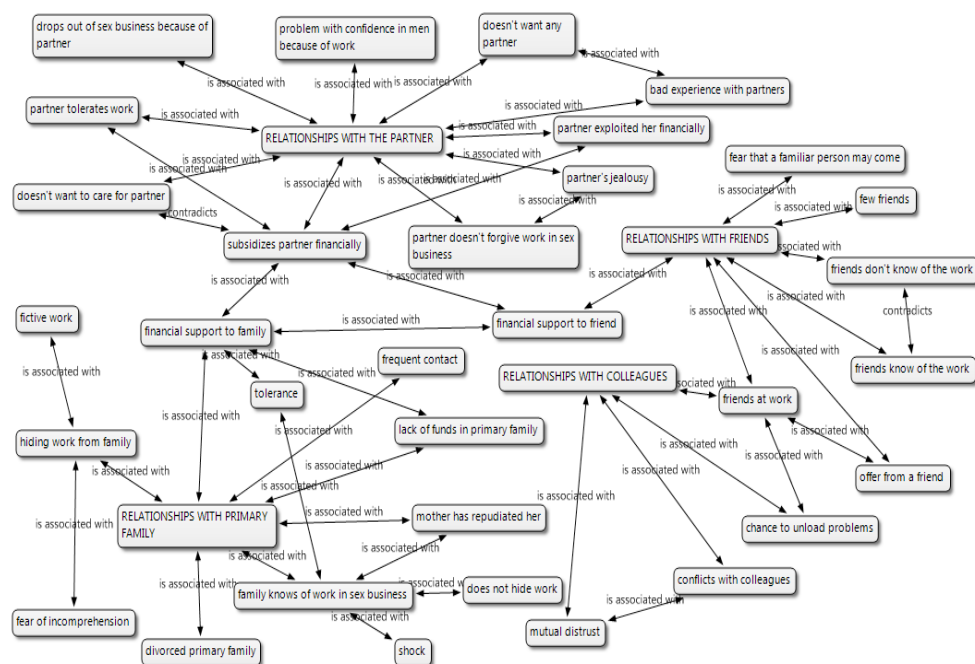


Diagram 1: Relationship level

5 Relationships with primary family

The family background of the respondents was varied, from divorced to two-parent family. As for the relationships with the primary family, we identified two contrary positions in essence. The first position is based on the fact that the women have informed their family of their work: *„I am angry to be such a chatterbox; so my mum knows it, my grandma knows it, my friend knows it; a lot of people suspect it and a lot of people know it about me.“* (IN2, 23 years), and the family either tolerated the respondent's work: *„My family knows it, my mum knows it, my children know it, and my mum finally said: „if only I were younger“* (IN5, 50 years) or rejected it: *„my mum learned about it ... she never told me personally that she knows it, but she send messages to everybody, telling them not to talk to me because I work as a whore“* (IN10, 25 years). But the motive for tolerance often consists in the fact that the women working in sex business financially support their family: *„Clothing, jewels, cars, a lot of the luxury at the beginning; as I was modest, I paid it and gave money to my parents“* (IN6, 30 years).

The second position is connected with hiding the work in sex business from the family. Such decision is primarily motivated by fear of incomprehension. *„Well, of course they don't know it; if they knew that they have brought up their girl for this business, they probably wouldn't like it. (laughter).“* (IN17, 24 years). That's why the respondents speak of different false works, from masseur to cosmetician to bartender when talking to their family.

6 Relationships with the partner

Similar to the relationship with the primary family, the respondents had completely different experience with partner relationships. When the study was carried out, some of them reported to have a partner and some of them not. The respondents having a partner unanimously said that their partner was informed of their work and tolerated it. The tolerance may be influenced by the fact that, similar to the family, the partners have financial profit from the sex business. The respondents also agree that most men consider it unacceptable to harmonize the partner coexistence and the respondent's work:

T: What about, why did you break up, because of your work?

IN4 (28 years): Well, it was because of my work; at the beginning, it is ideal, isn't it, everybody says he doesn't mind, but with the time they start not liking my being with other guys ... they start being jealous.”

A great part of respondents do not have a partner at present and they do not want any. The motive consists in changed attitude and confidence in men in connection with their work: *„I have, well, problems with confidence... I trust hardly anybody.*

Because the men are bastards and I know what they do, I just know that married men come to us“ (IN1, 43 years), or: „Noo, I am sick of guys, I couldn’t stand someone bothering me at a disco or something like that, no no“ (IN13, 31 years).

Some respondents consider a partner for the future in connection with starting a family and leaving sex business: *„But it is clear that one day I will reach the age to wish children and a family. So then I would leave this business; but I would consider leaving it now too, if our relationship was serious“ (IN10, 25 years).*

7 Relationships with colleagues

Another group of persons spoken about by the respondents in connection with the relationship level includes their colleagues. Some respondents reported good and friendly relationships connected with mutual support. The colleagues were often the only persons to discuss their work with, to complain about the customers, etc. Thus the colleagues became friends: *„We don’t quarrel, but I have often seen that the group changes much“ (IN1, 43 years), „I have friends from the private flat; they know it, of course...“ (IN2, 23 years).* On the other hand, there were also relationships that could be termed as conflicting. The conflicts most frequently resulted from daily disputes of the operation of the flat, e.g. cleaning, management of common property (washing powder, towels, etc.). It further must be taken into consideration that they are competitors, and that may lead to conflicts too. *„For example rows with the girls in the flat, or something like that; it sometimes wrecks my nerves“ (IN8, 36 years).*

8 Relationships with friends

The last group of persons reflected in the relationship level of women in private sex business includes friends. The respondents stated that before joining sex business, they had more friends than at present: *„Yes, they know it, but I must say I have few of them; not because I do what I do, but I actually have only the closest ones... I keep people far from me.“ (IN23, 27 years).* The motive may consist in the fact that the women often hide their work in sex business from their friends. Similar to the primary family, the motive for hiding consists in fear of incomprehension.

On the other hand, they have at least one friend who knows about their work: *„My best friends whom I know since my childhood know it“ (IN9, 26 years).* Such person is an important person from outside the sex business or a person who mediated their work in sex business and is thus their colleague: *„A friend of mine offered it to me and I went into it because I didn’t have money and I didn’t want to work as a confectioner; then I even lived with her, with the friend“ (IN4, 28 years), „I was offered this work by a friend whom I have known a long time“ (IN6, 30 years).*

9 Discussion

The data analysis brought quite interesting information, differing from existing studies. The first difference consists in the fact that our respondents come from very variable types of families, evaluated by the respondents as completely functional. Frequent support to the family is also interesting; it does not constitute the actual motive of joining sex business, but it may be an impulse to continue in it. For example Oso Casas (2010) states that in sex business, the difference between love and exploitation is often vague and some emotional relationships do not support the differentiation. The woman may continue in sex business for example because of family love and requests for gifts or because of sending money to the family.

A considerable part of the interviews concerned friends and colleagues, which are two groups usually not dealt with in literature, even though they may constitute key groups in the relationship level of women in private sex business, as for example Malinová et al. (2016) state; their study shows that the relationships with colleagues in private sex business are very important for the women to feel satisfied at their workplace. Female friends often constitute the first contact with sex business, which corresponds to the study carried out by May, Harocopos, Hough (2000) and stating that friends even encourage the women to join sex business. At the same time, the friend becomes the closest person to which the woman may unload her concerns related to work. That is shown by a study carried out by the Rozkoš bez rizika organization (Rozkoš bez rizika, 2014).

The question whether the respondents have a manager who arranges offers for them or supervises them was answered negatively by all respondents. That may be caused by the fact that pimps are not found in private sex business as often as in other forms (May, Harocopos, Hough, 2000). Although pimps were not directly found in the study, the role of pimp is sometimes assumed by the partner who does not offer the woman directly, but profits from sex business and tolerates it.

The narrow relationship network of women working in different forms of sex business is described by multiple authors. The most frequently stated motive is fear of disclosure of source of livelihood and consequent stigmatization (Heumann, 2010). Women in private sex business, unlike other forms of sex business, do not have contact with other helping institutions, e.g. social work.

10 Conclusion

Women in private sex business maintain relationships with their primary family and with the partner. The existing relationships are motivating to work in sex business and to continue in it. From our perspective, it is important to deal with the relationships of those women and not to omit them. The relationship level is bad in general,

and the general social network of the respondents is narrow. That may be caused by the fact that the respondent has told her close persons about her work and they have not accepted it, or by the fact that the respondent intentionally maintains a narrow social network, in order to have a greater chance to hide her work in sex business.

Acknowledgements

The article is an output of the GAJU No. 029/2016/S project – Life style of women in private sex business and their (self-)reflection.

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(reviewed twice)

Mgr. Stanislav Ondrášek, doc. PhDr. Bc. Alena Kajanová, Ph.D., Mgr. Zuzana Řimnáčová
 Institute of Social and Special-paedagogical Sciences
 Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice
 Jírovčova 24, 370 04
 České Budějovice
 Czech Republic
 email: ondras00@zsf.jcu.cz, kajanova@zsf.jcu.cz, rimnaz00@zsf.jcu.cz