

# *Labor market for sex workers: stigma and occupational choice*

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# TITLE OF CHAPTER: LABOR MARKET FOR SEX WORKERS: STIGMA AND OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE

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## Abstract

This chapter provides a survey of literature on sex work. Long standing debates on sex work range across disciplines with questions on how to name the profession, how to regulate it and whether the profession should be criminalized. Much of the debates have philosophical roots on questions of morality of the occupation and objectification of the body and underlies empirical and policy research in sex work. The question of morality, especially in the context of purchased sex as opposed to 'free' sex or sex within marriage has been amply discussed in the literature with questions arising because of the binary distinction between purchasable sex and sex within marriage. These moral standpoints often influence the legislative frameworks within which sex work is located with different countries following prohibitionist, regulatory or abolitionist frameworks on the profession. Research from different countries across the world suggests that the market for sex work differs both in developed and developing countries according to how the trade is regulated and that various factors affect labour market outcomes for sex workers. Notably, how stigmatized the trade is affects the agency of sex workers, thereby affecting their earnings and how susceptible they are to violence in the trade.

## Introduction

This chapter presents a survey of the literature on sex work focusing on, but not restricted to, the context of developing countries. In this review we specifically look at the literature in social science of sex work, largely focusing on-though not restricted to- development economics and other social sciences, including interdisciplinary studies in social sciences. There exists a rich literature on sex work in the social sciences studying various dimensions including violence, immigration, and sex tourism, identity and rights, drug abuse, HIV risks, and regulatory concerns. This chapter presents the major theoretical and empirical debates on the sex industry through the lens of stigma which allows to understand entry and exit into sex work, as well as the most important issues connected to sex work (from violence to the occupational outcomes for sex workers,

market segmentation, migration and trafficking, well being of sex workers as well as regulatory policy frameworks). Sex work is a challenging area of research not just because of the complexities already mentioned, but also because there are very significant data challenges: by definition, when an activity is stigmatised or placed outright outside the scope of legality very little representative data can be found and most of the research relies on either ad hoc surveys of sex workers and their clients, or information that is only partially mapping onto the phenomenon such as surveys of sexual attitudes that report paying for sex, crime surveys that report the incidence of crimes associated with sex work (trafficking, profiting from sexual exploitation, soliciting, kerb-crawling etc), or more general attitudinal surveys that measure the views held by the public with respect to prostitution. This in turn means that empirical methods need to be always mindful of both sample selection, that panel methods are rarely available and thus identification is problematic, and finally that external validity is quite difficult to prove. We have seen an increase in studies within the purview of social science of sex work that use experimental (eg. Ghosal, Jana, Mani, Mitra, & Roy, 2020) or quasi-experimental methods (Cunningham & Shah, 2018; Rao, Gupta, Lokshin, & Jana, 2003) to deal with the issue of identification. However, such studies are quite limited, especially in the developing country context, as the cost of running field experiments/RCTs is reasonably high when the occupation is stigmatised and the population is largely invisible. Equally, while quasi experimental methods are common in the public health literature on sex work, they haven't caught on the same extent in the social sciences literature, possibly because many variables of interest to the social scientist including earning compensation, migration and entry, well being etc cannot be captured easily in such studies without compromising on the issue of internal validity. While the institutions of developed and developing countries make some difference to the labour market outcomes and well being of sex workers, it is also important to note that there are a lot of commonalities across the world, irrespective of how developed the country is. Construction of masculinity on the demand side and lack of alternative labour market options in the supply side play crucial roles in how the market for sexual services is operated worldwide. Additionally, stigma associated with deviant sexual behaviour- a crucial factor in determining labour market outcomes including price of the service as well as entry and exit in both the demand and supply side- is universal and is not determined according to whether the sex worker operates in a developed or developing country framework. Furthermore, both the demand and supply side of sex work is global with both the sex worker and clients migrating locally, nationally and internationally between developed and developing countries to be part of the market for sexual services (whether voluntary or trafficked). What makes more of a difference, however, is the legislative framework within which the market for sex work operates. The legislative framework affects how stigmatised the trade is, what sort of regulatory framework the sex worker can access to in case of violence, and hence their bargaining power. These legislative frameworks are often determined by the opposing moral and philosophical positions on sexual services, which are described in section 1. As we note in section 2, the legislative frameworks vary across the world, both within developed and developing countries. Thus our approach in this chapter is to first focus on the differences associated with legislative frameworks both within developed and developing countries. Following this, we go on to discuss the labour market characteristics of sex work in section 3. While we largely focus on developing countries when we discuss the labour market characteristics, we also compare with developed countries when relevant.

## Main Text

### **1. Prostitution or sex work? Debates on sex work as an occupation.**

One of the longest standing debates in the literature on sex work is around the very name of the profession. This debate reflects the wide variety of views on how to regulate sex work, and whether the profession, or aspects of the profession should be criminalized. The terms 'prostitute' and 'prostitution' is typically aligned with abolitionist perspectives that see the sale of sex as entailing women's exploitation and objectification, both by those who manage and create the opportunity for the sexual transaction as well as by those clients who make the purchase and maintain the demand. The language of 'sex workers' and 'sex work' has typically been preferred by those who emphasise women's agency in entering into commercial sex transactions (albeit under conditions of constraint) and who call for the regulation of the sale of sex as akin to the sale of non-sexual labour or services. The shift in terminology from prostitution to sex work came about in the 1970s onwards marks an important phase in the politics surrounding sex work. This shift may be traced to the political mobilization of sex workers in Europe and North America on questions of sexual expressions and the claims of sex work as constituting work. The term 'sex work' was introduced by the sex worker turned activist Carol Leigh and reflected a beginning of a movement to recognize sex workers as political subjects with agency (Leigh, 1997). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) endorsed this term in 1998 in a report by Lin Lean Lim on the sex sector in south East Asia (Lim & International Labour Office., 1998; Raymond, 2004). The ILO however takes the stand that children in commercial sexual service do not comprise sex workers as there is an underlying element of consent in the term 'sex work' which is applicable only for adults (Lim & International Labour Office., 1998).

The use of this term met with substantial amount of opposition from radical feminists arguing that commercial exchange of sexual services is objectification of a woman's body and soul. For example Barry (1997) argues that normalized sexual objectification is a precondition for institutionalised sex work. Her opposition to institutionalised provision of sexual services is with the argument that sex work objectifies the individual even when it is not a violation of will or consent (which rape or sexual harassment are), and hence the harm is in the act in itself even when it is consensual. Similarly, Dworkin (1993) also argues that sex work is intrinsically abusive, even when it is not violent and MacKinnon (1993) argues that commercial sexual services is a violation of civil rights as it takes away the individual's security, freedom, ownership of self and makes the individual a "legal nonperson". All these authors also emphasise on the gendered and hierarchical nature of transaction that is involved in sex work. Barry argues that institutionalised sex work is gendered in that the buyer of the service is almost exclusively male who purchases a sense of power and control rather than just sex. Dworkin argues that male dominance as a political system requires that the male sexual urge is always provided for and to this end a "pool of women" needs always be available. Poverty amongst women is a necessary condition for the readiness of this pool, but not sufficient. The additional requirement, according to Dworkin, is that the woman's sexuality is given a value- the only thing of value that a woman has, and therefore, the only thing that she can sell. On the other hand, feminists arguing for 'sex work' highlight the 'occupation' aspect of it. They argue that rather than criminalizing sex workers on the sexual aspect of it, the labour aspect needs to be emphasized and concerns should be on protecting sex workers like all workers from exploitation and all women from discrimination (Sutherland, 2004). Other terms used in the literature include 'commercial sex worker' (for instance Parrado, et al., 2004) and 'women in prostitution/prostituted women' (Holsopple, 1999).

This debate has philosophical roots on questions of morality of the occupation and objectification of the body and underlies empirical and policy research in sex work. The question of morality, especially in the context of purchased sex as opposed to 'free' sex or sex within marriage has been amply discussed in philosophy. According to many philosophers the question arises because of the binary distinction between purchasable sex and sex within marriage. Primoratz (1993), in particular, argues that the moralistic contention arises because sexual relationship within marriage is procreative while paid sex is necessarily not procreative

from the male client's point of view. He maintains that the social functionality, and hence the acceptability of sexual relationship is in the fact that it is potentially procreative. The social significance of sex is lost when it is institutionally not procreative. Beauvoir (1949), on the other hand, argues that in spite of the moral separation between the institutions of marriage and sex work, there exists overlaps between the lives of women in wedlock and those in sex work as women in sex work provide the comparative yardstick against which 'good/chaste women' in wedlock are defined.

The morality debate on sex work has had a prominent literature in the feminist philosophical literature with feminist scholars taking positions on the moral question on sex work according to their view on sexuality (Overall, 1992). Shaver (1994) argued that the moral position on sex work is of three kinds- overt moral fervor of the Victorian crusaders, covert moralism of regulators and legislators who believe sex work (especially street-based sex work) is a nuisance, and the principled moralism of contemporary radical feminism. This principled moral position of feminists often reflects arguments on victimization, exploitation, and objectification of the body and self. Barry (1996) for example criticizes sex work in terms of vulnerability to exploitation and argues that "... prostitution [is] the most extreme and most crystallized form of all sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation is a political condition, the foundation of woman's subordination and the vase from which discrimination against women is constructed and enacted" (11). Similarly, Farley (2004) argues that sex work is bad for society and women solely because of evidence of physical, emotional and social harms. Overall (1992) who also takes a moral position against sex work however argues that risk of abuse, though often a part of the occupation, isn't an essential element of the trade. Furthermore, she argues that the question of coercion and choice isn't a simple equation of yes and no, especially when involving economic coercion as a result of poverty and lack of opportunity. Overall's moral opposition to the trade is in regard to the fact that patriarchal conditions render female sexuality being sold primarily and often exclusively for male consumption. Though other options-male or female sexuality for male or female consumption- are possible, patriarchy renders that they are very rare.

Another aspect of the debate on the question of morality and sex work is in the context of objectification of the body. Pateman (1983) argues that the sale of sexual services cannot be separated from the body and hence from the self. Nussbaum (2001) takes a different moral position arguing that every occupation requires some use of the body. Sex work as an occupation has its peculiarity but isn't innately different from any other profession in that sense.

The question of morality in sex work formed the foundational basis to a long standing debate between feminist scholars on the question of abolitionism. The debate on sex work can be broadly categorized between three groups of scholars: the radical feminist critique of sex work, the pro-sex defenders of sex work, and a group that situates itself in between (Bernstein, 1999; Sutherland, 2004). The radical feminist position is that sex work is by definition an act of objectification and abuse of human rights (Raymond, 2003) and an imposition of power of men over women (Mackinnon, 1989). A client, when he purchases sex, isn't purchasing a disembodied service - he is purchasing the control/use of a woman (Pateman, 1988). For the radical feminists, sexuality is a social construct of male power and the notion of 'consent' is a ruse to perpetuate patriarchal power relations. Pro-sex defenders of sex work on the other hand argue that sexual commerce provides and promotes sexual non-conformism. Califia (1994) for example has argued that since the construction of relationships is around an 'ideal' partner, it is not easy for people who do not fit this category of 'idealness' to find sexual gratification. Hence there should be no moral issue in approaching a market place to seek sexual gratification.

This theoretical debate between the supporters and opponents of abolition of sex work has found its bearing on empirical research on sex work, especially on the question of migration and sex work, as well as on policy outcomes. Wagenaar and Altink (2012) argue that policy on sex work is often emotionally charged and

resistant to facts as it is affected by moral positions and ideological biases of the policy makers. The theoretical basis for abolitionism underlies the literature that sees migration for sex work as victimhood and equates migration of sex work with trafficking. This stream of literature contends that migration as part of the sex industry is equivalent to slave trade (Orsini-Jones and Gatullo, 2000) especially in the case for poor women with low skill levels (Phizacklea 1996) whose migration accentuates the women's loss of power to represent their interest to seek economic alternatives (Lazridis, 2001). Other discussions on migration in sex work are in line with the arguments made by pro-sex scholars who see migration for sex work as an emancipatory option, which in spite of the risks involved provides the possibility of greater independence (Van Blerk, 2008; Nishigaya, 2002). A third stream of literature contends that sex work lies in the "grey zone" between absolute coercion and absolute consent (Kempadoo, Sanghera, & Pattanaik, 2016), and that sex workers negotiate between different extreme situations (Sanders & Campbell, 2007). Sex workers face a continuum of choice and coercion, at different points of their lives and conditions are heterogeneous in different types of sex work. For example, Busza (2004) contends that a sex worker who may have been trafficked into the trade may choose to stay in the trade through freewill.

## **2. Legislative and regulatory frameworks on sex work.**

The moral and philosophical debate on sex work has reflected on legislative policies on sex work. The literature on law and sex work categorizes three broad legal systems that regulate sex work around the world: 1) prohibitionist (a system that seeks to criminalise pimps and madams and often the sex workers and may or may not criminalise the client), 2) Regulatory (a system that seeks to regulate sex work through legalisation) and 3) Abolitionist (where the sex worker is not criminalised but the client is criminalised). This section summarizes the evidence of the effect of different regulatory frameworks across the world. In this section we discuss both developed and developing country legislative frameworks to indicate that the difference in labour market characteristics of sex work depends more on the legal framework, and less on whether the country is a developed country or a developing country.

Euchner and Knill (2015) have attempted to characterise the evolution of regulation of prostitution in Western Europe since the 1960s, and noted that whilst until the late 1990s national rules converged on the paradigm that they define of 'permission without recognition' (prohibition of brothels and profit oriented third party activity but allowing activity in flats and on streets), a marked change has since occurred with countries diverging substantially. Germany, the Netherlands and Greece have moved towards acknowledging prostitution as a regular job on one side, and Sweden, Norway and Finland have hardened their stance instead moving to abolitionism, the aim to eradicate prostitution which is considered tantamount to a form of violence. In the first group of countries, the consideration of sex work as legitimate labour has led to shifting bans on outdoor and indoor prostitution subject to compliance with regulations (Netherlands since 2000, Germany since 2002). Sex workers are entitled to a number of employment related protections under the law, and local authorities required to ensure that brothels are suitably licensed and operating in accordance with relevant health and safety requirements. The abolitionist model, conversely, seeks to prohibit prostitution, facilitate exit and punish clients and has applied in varying degrees in the United States and, more recently, Sweden, Norway and Finland. In Sweden it is an offence, punishable by a fine or imprisonment for up to six months, to obtain a casual sexual relationship for payment. Both outdoor and indoor prostitution are prohibited, although only the clients will be criminalised. As a result, the spotlight shines squarely on the purchaser of commercial sex, and on criminalising his role (it is thought to be always a he, though both

women and couples purchase sex) in creating demand for the sex industry. A key rationale behind this is that prostitution is a central manifestation of male violence against women, which in turn means that those who sell sex should not themselves be punished, since they are victims rather than criminals. True gender equality, it is argued, is attainable only when men are no longer permitted to buy, sell and exploit women in prostitution, and the Swedish government has coupled this legislative initiative with a number of outreach programmes designed to assist women who wish to leave the industry. Intermediate options continue to exist, as exemplified by the approach of decriminalisation adopted for example in New Zealand, which since 2003 has decriminalised a range of offences that were related to selling sex such as soliciting, brothel-keeping, procuring intercourse. Brothels in NZ are not subjected to any specific state licensing system, but are governed by the usual employment and health regulations that apply to other businesses. Soliciting has been decriminalised and there are no legal impediments to recruiting clients in public bars or hotels. In passing these reforms, the New Zealand Government emphasised that its aim was not to legitimise prostitution but to offer to those who worked in the industry an improved level of protection and eradicate the barriers to exiting prostitution, such as may be created by a criminal conviction.

The effects of the different regulatory regimes on the extent of the market and the welfare of those involved have been widely studied, although the lack of reliable data is often mentioned as a significant obstacle. It has for example been argued that women working in toleration zones or regulated brothels (in the Netherlands or Germany, for example) are less marginalised and better off (both personally and financially) than outside (Euchner and Knill, 2015). However, it has also been observed that many sex workers in Germany remain unregistered - often for tax reasons - and that experience in the Netherlands suggests that the transition to a license-based regime has had negative side-effects: in particular, establishing regulatory systems and policing toleration zones has imposed hefty demands on state agencies and it has been suggested that the most vulnerable women (e.g. those with irregular migration status or drug addictions) have been pushed into illegal sectors where there is no protection. There have been problems in finding a suitable location for toleration zones, and it has been argued that many clients - preferring to remain anonymous - will be reluctant to frequent more visible areas, creating inevitable demand for unregulated arenas. While offering the benefits associated with the reduction of sex work stigma and the greater visibility of sex workers (which is thought to render them less vulnerable to abuse), it has been argued that decriminalisation may offer the added advantage of limiting state intrusion into the private lives of sex workers, and permitting them greater flexibility in their working practices (Della Giusta, 2010).

No agreement exists on the consequences of decriminalisation on demand (New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2008 suggests demand has fallen; Farley, 2010 suggests it has increased but cannot provide supporting evidence). Similarly, supporters of the abolitionist approach cite its impact on demand, arguing that there has been a marked decline in the number of prostitutes working on Swedish streets, but there is also evidence that online prostitution has increased enormously and that there has been cross-border displacement too. One of the risks of abolitionism is that it may simply force relocation to less visible sites in which sex workers may be at increased risk of abuse, or drawn into a more competitive market in which they have to cut prices or offer riskier services to secure the business of a decreasing client base, and controversy rages over which effect has been prevalent in Sweden and neighbouring countries, as reported in The Home Affairs Committee Prostitution Enquiry Report published in July 2016.

The UK has moved from a relatively permissive regime under the Wolfenden Committee Report in the late 1950s, according to which prostitution itself was not illegal, although many of the activities that facilitate or flow from both its street and off-street manifestations (including soliciting, kerb-crawling,



controlling prostitution for gain, etc.) were criminalised, to a much harder line of aiming to crack down on prostitution with the Policing and Crime Act of 2009. As discussed in Della Giusta and Munro (2008) and Della Giusta (2009), the regulatory framework within which prostitution takes place in England and Wales has undergone significant changes in recent years and taken a decisively abolitionist turn, as the Swedish approach became popular with British policy makers. In 2004 the government conducted the Paying the Price consultation and the resulting legislation sought to introduce a markedly more negative stance towards the industry and clients in particular, and a view of sex workers as essentially victims. The Home Office prostitution Strategy for England and Wales (2006) contained as a key element 'tackling demand', which was seen alongside 'reducing supply' as crucial to eradicating street prostitution and challenging the view that street prostitution is inevitable. The Strategy formally endorsed measures such as prosecutions under the kerb crawling legislation, local media campaigns including 'naming and shaming' and 'kerb crawler re-education programs'. The Strategy also gave room to the implementation, in several parts of the country, of a raft of prosecution for kerb crawling offences, under the Sexual Offences Act 1985. The Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 strengthened the previous regulation and made the offence arrestable, giving the courts the power to disqualify drivers. Similarly, in October 2007, the policing Minister in Northern Ireland announced that kerb crawling would be introduced into law as a specific offence. In Scotland, the Prostitution (Public Places) Scotland Act 2007 came into force in October 2007; it criminalised 'loitering or soliciting in any public place for the purpose of obtaining the services of someone engaged in prostitution.' (Sanders and Campbell, 2008). Finally, the Policing and Crime Act of 2009 includes a number of provisions including criminalization of soliciting and making it illegal to pay for services from a prostitute whom a third person has subjected to force, threats, coercion or deception to perform those services, irrespective of whether the customer knew or could have known about this exploitation and of the country where the sexual services are provided. Campaigning is now calling for paying for sex to be made a crime. The policy emphasises the harms that are deemed to be inherent in prostitution and insists that those who sell sex should be seen primarily as victims – unless and until they fall foul of this categorisation by refusing assistance to 'exit' and opting instead (whether by choice or circumstance) to continue to sell sex. In addition, it is based on the abolitionist conviction that reduction of women's involvement in sex work can be achieved by stricter enforcement of kerb-crawling laws that target clients.

Most developing countries have a prohibitionist system with some exceptions. Some countries where sex work is legal but regulated include Senegal, Mexico, Turkey and Bangladesh. The levels of regulation in all these countries are varied, and many have a historical legacy of the colonial past, and the regulations are with the view of controlling sexuality and confining sexually transmitted diseases rather than ensuring safe and stigma-free working conditions for sex workers. For example, Senegal, which upholding a historical legacy of colonial France that sought to regulate sex work at home and in the colonies, is the only country in Sub-Saharan Africa with a legal framework that regulates commercial sex work. Women in Senegal may sell sex provided that they are registered in a government clinic. They are required to undergo medical screening and attend monthly education systems. Research on the regulations in Senegal suggests contradictory realities. There is consistent evidence that the system of decriminalisation has contributed to the low and stable HIV prevalence in the country (Chersich et al., 2013; Meda et al., 1999) though some studies suggest low condom usage among registered sex workers (Wang et al., 2007). Authors like Foley (2016) argue that while the registration process situates women within a narrative of responsible sex and gives women access to medical care, it also stigmatizes sex workers as the regulations were 'medicalization of deviance' and characterization

of sex workers as ‘vectors of diseases’. Similarly Ito, Lépine, & Treibich(2018) have found that on the one hand registration has positive effect on sex workers’ health outcome but reduces well-being. They argue that this is because the registration process is stigmatised in Senegal and registered sex workers are likely to engage in more sex acts, in riskier sex acts, have less support from their peers and are more likely to experience violence from clients and police officers.

In Mexico sex work is legal under Federal Law and the different states enact their own laws. Some cities have created ‘tolerance zones’ that allow regulated sex work. Medical literature suggests that the Mexican regulatory framework has positive effect on the health of sex workers with increased condom usage(Sirotin, Strathdee, Lozada, Abramovitz, et al., 2010), and higher likelihood of HIV testing and lower drug usage (Sirotin, Strathdee, Lozada, Nguyen, et al., 2010) Like in the case of Senegal however, regulatory framework in Mexico also has contentions especially because the system if tolerance zone legalizes some forms of sex work while criminalizing others (Kelly, 2008). Kelly, in her anthropological study of the government regulated sex work zone called ‘zona Galactica’ argues that creation of such zones effectively serve as zones of surveillance and confinement of sex workers, and perpetuate entrenched social orders where women who sell sexual services are stigmatized while men enact cultural privileges that allow them to purchase sex. Kelly therefore calls for a system of decriminalization rather than the current regulatory framework. Similarly, Turkey also has a system of registration of sex workers whereby single, Turkish women over the age of 18 may register to work in a state licensed brothel. The legal framework on sex work in Turkey was a consequence of policies in its formative years that viewed sexually transmitted diseases as a threat to the population and therefore closely monitored and regulated brothels in a medicalised system (Evered & Evered, 2013). Special identity cards are issued that identify such women as sex workers and many sex workers avoid registration because of the stigma associated (Simsek, Kisa, & Dziegielewski, 2003). Furthermore, because of its less stringent visa rules, Turkey also attracts a sizable population of female migrants from Eastern Europe who work as sex workers. However, only women with Turkish citizenship are legally allowed to work as sex workers, implying that the migrant sex workers’ illegal status exposes them to greater risks of violence and harassment (Gülçür & İlkaracan, 2002)

In the recent years there has been significant amount of advocacy by various sex workers’ collectives around the world for a more rights based legislative system. In South Africa for example, where the policy on sex work is of total criminalisation, a strong civil society support for decriminalisation. The decriminalisation movement is led by the Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce, a cape town based organisation that works on issues of health and human rights for sex workers(Arnott, 2006). SWEAT’s position of decriminalisation of sexual services is based on the understanding that regulations that seek to control sex workers in matters of personal and public health lead to oppression of sex workers (Mgbako & Smith, 2011). In India, the movement for decriminalization of sex work is led by a collective named Durbar Mahila Samawaya Committee (Durbar). What started out as an STD/HIV intervention programme that facilitated peer education on sexual health on sex work, ended up with a collective of over 60,000 sex workers (Nag, 2005) whose advocacy and activism includes counselling services, educational programmes, self-regulatory boards to ensure that no trafficked sex workers work in the brothels. Durbar takes a position of decriminalisation with the view that sex work is an occupation and criminalisation of the the client and rehabilitation of the sex worker is disempowering for the worker (Durbar Mahila Samanvaya Committee, 1998).

Table 1:Regulatory framework for developing countries where sex work is not expressedly illegal

Country	Key Legal Provisions	Restrictions
Senegal	Legal for individuals over 21 to	Illegal to solicit publicly or run

	sell sex if they are registered with police and submit regular medical tests	brothels
Mexico	In some states, including Mexico City, some brothels are sanctioned and sex workers are required to register and carry identity cards to prove they have undergone recent medical examination.	Operating a brothel and soliciting is illegal in many states of Mexico.
Turkey	Women are entitled to register as sex workers, and brothels and strip clubs can be licensed and registered. Registered sex workers pay taxes and social security	Sex workers are penalised for sex work related activities outside of registered brothels. Non registered sex workers can be arrested and forcibly registered
Bangladesh	A woman can register as a sex worker if she pays a fee and submits an affidavit stating that she is unable to find alternative work and is entering voluntarily.	Keeping brothels, living on earnings of sex workers, procuring a woman or child for the purpose of sex work are criminalised. No law expressly makes buying or selling sex illegal.
Tunisia	Sex workers above the age of 18, unmarried and certified as mentally capable and free from "infectious and septic" diseases can be registered and can work in their private residences or tolerated brothels	Solicitation is illegal.
Venezuela	Buying and selling sex is not illegal and brothels are permitted as long as women working are adults and undergo regular medical tests	Promotion of sex work and procuring women for sex work is illegal
Ecuador	No law criminalises sex work or brokering. Brothels and individual sex workers need to acquire licenses.	Soliciting on the street and other informal sites can be prosecuted.
Peru	Women above the age of 18 years can register as sex workers as long as they are free from HIVs and STIs	Operating a brothel without license or selling sex without registration is illegal.
Bolivia	Sex work is legal in permitted brothels by licensed sex workers. Sex workers are required to undergo health checks regularly.	

### 3. Labour Market and Wage returns

#### 3.1 Entry in the trade- trafficking, voluntary and hereditary

Various institutional factors including the unique legislative frameworks around sex work affect the supply and demand sides of the sex market. Historically, a lot of consideration has been given to the close relationship between trafficking and sex work (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). While there is evidence suggesting that one of the most common modes of entering sex work is trafficking, it is not the only mode. The proportion of women trafficked in the trade has varied in samples according to context. For example, Hickle & Roe-Sepowitz (2017) found about a third of their sample (of 161) trafficked in the trade (for United States), George & Sabarwa (2012) found about half (in their sample of 1137 in the case of Andhra Pradesh) while for Hui (2017) it was about a quarter (in a sample of 247 for New Delhi and Kolkata in India). While most qualitative and quantitative studies especially relating to sex work in developing countries acknowledge the existence of trafficking in the trade, the need for a more nuanced understanding of entry has been discussed. For example, in his study of the sex industry in Tijuana, Mexico, Zhang (2011) notes that the social process associated with entry into the trade is far more complex than that put forward by the anti-trafficking literature. While there was some evidence of pimps using some coercive methods to recruit women from rural Mexico, there was no systematic evidence of collaboration with criminal organisations or foreign traffickers, and yet there was no shortage of women who were ready to join the industry. Similarly, in her study of brothels in Kolkata and Delhi in India, Hui (2017) found that though some sex workers were trafficked into the trade and may work under conditions of bonded labour for a period of their working life, that period was usually finite and sex workers continued to work in the industry (often in the same brothel) even after the end of the bondage period.

Societal and community networks also play an integral part in the way the market for sex work is organised. The importance of social networks at the time of entry into the trade has been documented by McCarthy & Hagan (1995) who identify what they call 'criminal capital' or networks of association that provide individuals with tutelage relationships that are essential for early acceptance in the trade. Social networks are also critical to commercial success (Rocha, Liljeros, & Holme, 2010) and for a successful and smooth exit from the trade (Hedin & Månsson, 2004). The role of social and community networks has also been noted to be essential for empowerment of sex workers especially in the control and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (Chattopadhyay & McKaig, 2004; Cornish & Ghosh, 2007).

Caste and tribal network entries are particularly common in South Asia where customary religious and tribal sex work is prevalent. These constitute women of particular castes or tribes following traditional practices of providing sexual services. In South India, religious sex work is widespread where by young girls of particular castes like Devdasis, Jogini, Naili, Murali and Theradiyan are dedicated to temples (Joffres et al., 2008). Upon reaching puberty they become servants of the temple, practice dance and other artistic pursuits while providing sexual services to priests and patrons of the temple (Blanchard et al., 2005; O'Neil et al., 2004). This is a system that originated around the 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD and historically women involved in this trade were educated, were not stigmatized because of their profession and were often owners of land and material wealth (Orchard, 2007). The conditions of the contemporary religious sex worker are markedly different with the women being associated with a low caste status. These sex workers get initiated in the trade at a reasonably young age (Blanchard et al. find the average age of entry to be of 15.7 for sex workers in the religious

tradition in comparison to 21.8 for all other sex workers in the same location) and are home based while living in their natal community(Orchard, 2007).

The system of religious sex work in South India is often compared to tribal communities of entertainers and sex workers in Northern India like Nat and Bedia (Agrawal, 2008; O'Neil et al., 2004). These communities, now categorised as low castes or untouchables in the Indian caste hierarchy, were historically travelling entertainers who would perform as dancers, jugglers and perform other athletic displays. Currently however, the communities rely on female sex work for economic survival. In the Bedia communities in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the sexual labour is strictly provided by unmarried daughters, resulting in women born into Bedia families remaining unmarried in order to provide for their natal families. Though theoretically the woman makes the choice between joining the trade or getting married, the decision is usually made within the first two years of her life by her parents. This decision is usually made based on the economic considerations of the family, and once such a decision is made, the girl is socialised with view of her joining the trade. In both cases of religious sex work in South India and the tribal sex work in North India, the first client associated with the loss of virginity pays a significantly large sum of money for the service (Agrawal, 2008; O'Neil et al., 2004).

### 3.2 Earnings differential in the market for sex work- theoretical literature

Pricing and labour market outcomes for sex work has garnered significant amount of attention amongst economists because of the unique characteristic of sex work that on average sex workers have higher earnings in comparison to other gendered occupations that employ similar individuals in terms of socio-economic backgrounds, levels of education. There are three main explanations for this earnings differential: the opportunity cost of foregoing marriage, a compensation for stigma associated with the trade and the compensation for being in a risky trade. The argument that sex workers were compensated for foregoing marriage was initiated by Edlund & Korn(2009) who contend that a woman can't be both a sex worker and wife. From the client's perspective, sex work is strictly non-reproductive sexual services (while sex within a monogamous marriage is reproductive). The difference between sex work and marriage isn't the nature of the service in itself, as according to the authors, women in marriage also provide paid sexual services, but the access to paternity to children as a consequence of the sexual transaction.

The marriage market argument put forward by Edlund and Korn does implicitly also recognise social stigma and reputation costs for the sex workers. However, the trade-off between sex work and marriage isn't a consequence of the stigma cost of the occupation. It is the compensation for the fact that children born to the sex worker has no access to paternity. The marriage market argument does not necessarily hold for erotic services that do not result in reproduction including non-vaginal sex and pornography. It would also not hold in cases where sex workers have easy access to contraception. Indeed, the hypothesis was been refuted by various authors especially in the case of developing countries where sex workers have often been found to be in marriages in spite of their profession (Arunachalam & Shah, 2008; Robinson & Yeh, 2011).

An alternative argument put forward for earnings differential between sex work and other occupations and within sex work is that of a risk premium. For example, Arunachalam & Shah(2008) have argued that sex workers earn a hazard pay, similar to other risky occupations like police work. A third main argument for the earnings premium is that the sex workers are earning a compensation for the loss of reputation that is associated with the trade. The literature largely agrees that sex work is stigmatized and the stigma aspect of the trade enhances the risks associated with the trade as society draws a binary between the 'whore/bad woman' and 'Madonna/good woman' (Cornish, 2006; McCarthy, Benoit, & Jansson, 2014; Scambler, 2007). The stigma compensation argument was put forward by Della Giusta, Di Tommaso, & Strom(2008) who

model the reputation costs of being in sex work for both the sex worker and the clients. The authors argue, through supply and demand analysis, that reputation loss of the client has a negative effect on equilibrium price of transactions while that of sex worker has positive effect on price. The stigma compensation argument was found to hold in the case of India where women in sex work were found to have an earnings premium over comparable women in a non-stigmatized but gendered occupation of domestic work, and within sex work, women who were stigmatized by their family for being in the trade also earned a premium over those who weren't (Hui & Kambhampati, 2019). The stigma argument is often seen to be the underlying rationale for the marriage and risky professions argument. For example, Peracca, Knodel, & Saengtienchai(1998) argue that sex workers are relatively free to marry in the context of Thailand, where there is a relative lack of severe or lasting social stigma on transactional sex.

### 3.3 Earnings differential in the market for sex work- empirical literature

There is also a large variation in prices of the service, and consequently in some cases, the earnings that sex workers take home. Various factors have been accounted for this variation including risky behaviour and unprotected sex premium, premium associated with attractiveness of the sex worker, race preference and age. The risky behaviour hypothesis is amongst the most commonly argued reasoning for price differential, both in developed and developing countries. The compensation for risky behaviour in terms of not using condoms has been observed for various country including Mexico where sex workers using unprotected sex were found to be earning a price premium (De La Torre, Havenner, Adams, & Ng, 2010) that was estimated to be about 23 percent (Gertler, Shah, & Bertozzi, 2005a). Similarly, price premium of 33 percent was estimated for Ecuador (Arunachalam & Shah, 2013) and 42.9 percent for Zimbabwe (Elmes et al., 2014). Using a natural experiment from Kolkata, India where some sex workers were randomly selected into programmes promoting health of sex workers and safe sex practices, Rao, Gupta, Lokshin, & Jana (2003) found a 66 and 79 percent loss in average prices charged by sex workers using condoms. These they argue, results in strong disincentives against practicing safe sex and is of crucial concern for effective interventions among sex workers.

Personal characteristics including age and beauty have been noted to play a role in the determination of price of services in sex work. Various authors have found a negative relationship between age and prices (Logan, 2010; Rao et al., 2003). Indonesian data reveals a 'flat-decreasing-flat' relationship between age of sex workers and price of sexual services with prices being stable for women in the late teens and early twenties, then falling drastically from early twenties to early thirties and then stabilizing after that (Sohn, 2016).The literature overwhelmingly finds that sex workers earn a 'beauty' premium within the trade (Arunachalam & Shah, 2012; Chang & Weng, 2012; Cunningham, 2018; Gertler, Shah, & Bertozzi, 2005b; Islam & Smyth, 2012). Gertler, Shah, & Bertozzi(2005) model attractiveness as a proxy for bargaining power and using data for Mexico, find that sex workers earned a 23 percent premium for unprotected sex, and the premium went up to 46 percent if the sex worker was considered attractive. Cunningham(2018) finds that in the US underweight sex workers earned 84 percent more and overweight sex workers earned 70 percent less a week in comparison to comparable normal BMI sex workers because of higher or lower client visit, different prices of individual services, differences in session length and differences in client types. Similarly, using a 140 respondent survey Chang & Weng, (2012) found that obese sex workers paid a price penalty over normal weight sex workers. Using crude measures of beauty, Islam & Smyth (2012) find that there is a beauty premium for commercial sex in Bangladesh, but that premium is within the bounds of beauty premium in occupations that do not involve sex work. Even though there seems to be agreement regarding the role of beauty in the pricing of sexual services, the definition and measurement of beauty in the literature is often crude and subjective. Chang & Weng (2012) and Cunningham(2018) use weight as a proxy for attractiveness while Islam & Smyth

(2012) and Arunacham & Shah(2012) use enumerator's ranking of beauty in a linear scale as the measure for beauty. One major concern with the beauty premium argument is that it usually doesn't take into account the social constructs that play a role in representing feminine beauty and how these representations are culturally and temporally defined.

#### 4. Well-being of sex workers

There exists a rich body of work in both qualitative as well as quantitative social sciences that looks at well-being of sex workers. In this section we will discuss three major areas that the literature focuses: vulnerability to violence in trade, mobility and overall wellbeing. Institutional frameworks and stigma affect sex workers' well-being in various ways, especially by restricting their fallback options and their ability to access outside and network support.

##### 4.1 Violence in the Occupation

One major implication of stigmatization of sex work and deviant sexual behaviour is that sex workers are significantly vulnerable to violence before, during, and after their entry in the trade. As mentioned earlier, entry into sex work is also often (though not always) coercive especially in the case when the sex worker is trafficked in the trade. Emotional, sexual and physical violence have also been documented to be precursors to the entry in the trade. Research from around the world has found that sex workers were likely to have been exposed to different forms of abuse before joining the trade (Hickle & Roe-Sepowitz, 2017; Hui & Kambhampati, 2019; Potterat, Rothenberg, Muth, Darrow, & Phillips-Plummer, 1998; Roe-Sepowitz, 2012) and the exposure to past violence or trafficking makes sex workers more vulnerable to physical and sexual violence and of HIV (George & Sabarwal, 2012; Silverman et al., 2011).

The vulnerability to violence is enhanced by the stigma that is attached to the occupation. While the literature demonstrates that women in other gendered informal sector occupations also face systematic abuse, society is largely sympathetic to individuals who face such violence while sex workers are deemed 'bad' women (or 'perverted' men, in case of male sexual workers) and hence 'deserving' of the violence they faced. Hence accessing health care and legal aid in case of abuse is more difficult for sex workers (Lazarus et al., 2012; Niang et al., 2003; Nyblade et al., 2017; Okal et al., 2009; Scorgie et al., 2013).

##### 4.2 Mobility

Mobility is one of the most commonly discussed issues related to sex work in the social-sciences literature, both in the context of developing as well as developed countries. Sex work and mobility are closely linked in two seemingly paradoxical ways. On the one hand, migration is a very intrinsic part of the trade. Of the growing population of women who migrate for work, an overwhelming proportion find employment in the informal sector (Chen, 2001) including sex work. In this sense sex workers are mobile in the macro sense, both within developing and between developed and developing countries. This migration may be voluntary or trafficked. Goldenberg et al.(2014) noted in their study of sex workers in Tijuana and San Diego that migrant sex workers may be that of *coerced and deceptive migration, deportation as forced migration, voluntary mobility and migration to a risk environment*. Migration for sex work may have both pull factors like better economic conditions, social networks, better work conditions while push factors include displacement associated with criminalisation as well as stigma (Amram et al., 2019). However, equally, lack of micro-level mobility amongst sex workers, especially those who have been trafficked, is another defining factor of the trade. Qualitative literature on sex trade indicates restrictions to mobility of sex workers both in developing and developed countries. Surveillance of brothels by intermediaries like pimps or madams are the most frequently cited reasons for restriction of mobility both within the developed country context like in Nevada (Breits & Hausbeck, 2005) and Western Europe (Siegel, 2012) as well as in developing countries (Brady, Biradavolu, &

Blankenship, 2015; Kotiswaran, 2011). Restriction to mobility may also be a consequence of legislative framework or law enforcement, especially in locations where sex work is criminalized or stigmatized. Solanki & Gangoli (1996) argue that the law regulating sex work in India (PITA, 1956) makes sex workers susceptible to police harassment because of restrictions on soliciting. They cite the case of a particular sex worker who was arrested for 'loitering' and was raped in police custody and a case of incitement of girls into prostitution was charged on her. Similarly, Hwang, (2017) notes that freelance sex workers in urban Philippines face restricted freedom because they have been identified by the government as vulnerable migrants who are in need of the state's protection from trafficking. Thus a macro mobile population is characterized by severely restricted mobility in the micro level. Both these features have implications to their well being.

#### 4.3 Overall well being

There is a growing literature in social sciences including economics that investigates well being of sex workers from a holistic framework, while considering multiple dimensions of happiness and wellbeing. One approach to overall well being is using the capabilities framework put forward by Sen (1985). This approach focuses on the idea that well-being encompasses being a "full human being" involving dignity, equality with respect to employment, bodily safety and integrity, basic nutrition, healthcare, education and political voice (Nussbaum, 2000). Di Tommaso, Shima, Strøm, & Bettio, (2009) used the capabilities approach to investigate well-being deprivation amongst women in Balkan region who were trafficked into sex work. Using data from the Counter Trafficking Module database, the authors estimate unobserved well-being deprivation as determined by mobility, access to medical care and abuse. They find that all these indicators have similar effect on latent wellbeing. Also using the capabilities framework Hui (2017) analyses the determinants of bargaining power and wellbeing of sex workers in India. Well being in this study is defined in terms of freedom or the "capacity to do or be" and the determinants of freedom in this study include decision making, mobility, agency and retained earnings. This study finds that institutional factors like caste and involvement with NGOs as well as occupational factors like years spent in the industry and whether or not individual lives in brothels have significant effect on bargaining power and well-being. Ghosal et al., (2020) found that psychological intervention in the form of training programme aimed at reshaping sex workers' impaired self image significantly improved their self image in the short term as well as savings and health behaviour in the middle term.

## 4. Technology and sex work

The process in which sex workers negotiate their agency and vulnerability to violence has gone through a paradigm change in the recent years with the increased use of information technology in the trade. Evidence from around the world suggests that increased use of technology implies that sex workers have more information and therefore better strategies in screening out violent and undesirable clients, and lower dependence on intermediaries to expand clientele. Equally, some evidence especially from developing countries suggest that the use of information technology results in further segmentation of the market resulting in sex workers using information technology operating in isolation and thus unable to access support from sex workers collectives and unions. This section examines empirical evidence on the use of technology in the expansion of the industry and its implication on agency of sex workers.

An example of how the effects of technology on the sex market are mediated by agency in developed countries is shown in the work of Cunningham and Todd (2011) who focus on the role of Craigslist in the USA. They find that existing street-based sex workers have used this to supply their clients in less risky ways by moving indoors and using internet and using profiling. This is however accompanied by a growth in the overall prostitution market, as opposed to simple displacement of the off-line, street-focused market. By



surveying sex workers, they find that most sex workers who solicit online engage in lower-risk behaviors than traditional street-based workers; however, workers close to the margin for migration from outdoor work bring riskier business and sexual practices with them as they enter the off-street-sector.

In a developing country context instead Mathews (2017) has studied Asian Cam Models who perform various sexual acts in front of a camera to entertain paying clients, carrying out participant-observation of and interviews with Cam models over five years, principally using the ACM site AsianPlaymates. In the Philippines, mobility across different segments of the market for sexual services is low - Mathews argues - despite the fact that earnings differentials can be large between, say, street walkers, masseuses, bar girls and Ca(Kotiswaran, 2011)m models. One of the reasons for low mobility, the argument goes, is that choice of type of sex work is or becomes a matter of identity. Because they sell virtual sex, Cam models do not think of themselves as prostitutes. They perform behind a screen, whereas prostitution entails physical contact. Technology helps them build a self-image of sexual performer in opposition to an image as sex-worker. And this very identity makes them reluctant to move to other segments of sex work such as massage parlours where they could earn more, suggesting again a trading of stigma for earnings on their part.

#### 5. Methodological Issues associated with empirical research on sex work

Table 2 provides a snapshot of different research methods used in sex work research for developing countries. As mentioned before, quantitative research on sex work is fraught with problems associated with identification. First, the occupation of sex work is characteristically invisible in developing countries(Kotiswaran, 2011). The criminal nature of the trade as well as the stigma associated with the trade implies that individuals who are sex workers may not be forthcoming regarding the true nature of their occupation. Additionally, since sex workers are often migrant workers who may stay in the trade for only a short period or may only be involved in the occupation part time to supplement income from other occupations. The invisible nature of the trade implies that getting a true estimation of the representative sex work population is difficult. This implies that there are very few large scale secondary data sources available, and even when they are, these sources may rely on police data on trafficking or arrests (see for example the study by Di Tommaso et al., 2009), thereby frequently not representing the true population of sex workers.

Social science research on sex work is often additionally faced with the problem of omitted variable bias and sample selection problem. Studies that use primary data often rely on NGOs and charities that have work with sex work community, thereby some locations with strong charity networks get overrepresented in sex work literature, and sex workers who aren't represented by such NGOs and charities often get left out. This is particularly problematic when doing research relating to well-being of sex workers, as sex workers who are involved with charity networks may already be better off in comparison to other sex workers. Similarly, soliciting honest responses from sex workers may be difficult as sex workers often work under the coercive supervision of pimps and brothel owners and maybe worried about their safety. Similarly, sex workers may be unable to give full consent and true response to researchers when they know that the researchers are involved with NGOs and charities because they may fear that the benefits that they receive from the charities may disappear if they don't play ball. Some of the problems associated with identification can be dealt with through the use of natural experiments and field experiments. However, setting up of field experiments usually also require close links with NGOs working in the area, which means that the biases associated with links with NGOs cannot be avoided.

Table 2: Summaries and Methodological Considerations in Some Recent Quantitative Studies on Sex Workers in Developing Countries

Source	Context	Study Method	Sample size	Time Period	Dependent variables of interest
De La Torre et al., (2010)	Ciudad Juarez, Mexico	Interviews	429	January 2004-March 2006	Earnings differential because of condom usage
Gertler et al., (2005a)	Morelos and Michoacan, Mexico	Socioeconomic survey	1029	Summer 2001	Earnings differential because of condom usage
Arunachalam & Shah, (2008)	Ecuador and Mexico	Observational study using interviews and comparison with secondary data	3000 from Ecuador and 1100 from Mexico	Cross sectional	Dependent variable: Earnings premium of sex workers, marital status of sex workers
Robinson & Yeh, (2011)	Busia, Western Kenya	Panel dataset constructed from self-reported diaries	192	Round 1: October 2005-December 2005 Round 2: July 2006-October 2006	Dependent variable of interest: risk premium from unprotected sex
Rao et al.(2003)	Kolkata, India	Natural experiment (nonsystematic placement of sex workers in a safe sex programme)	608	Program initiation: 1992 Data collection for research: 1993	Risk premium from unprotected sex
Sohn (2016)	Indonesia	Secondary data, cross sectional analysis	8560	2002-2004	Effect of age on prices
Hui & Kambhampati (2019)	Kolkata and New Delhi, India	Secondary data, comparison with domestic work	247 sex workers and 274 domestic workers	2012	Effect of sigma on earnings
Di Tommaso et al.(2009)	Balkan region	Secondary data, cross sectional analysis	4559	2000	Indicators of well being
Ghosal et al. (2020)	Kolkata, India	Randomized Field	467 baseline	Baseline survey	Dependent variables: Self reported

Experiment	survey, 437 in follow up survey	February-April 2012, follow up survey January- February 2013	psychological variables (proxies of self image, happiness, aspiration, decision making), future oriented economic behaviour (saving product choice), health seeking behaviour.  Intervention: training program attempting to reshape sex workers self image through discussion, verbal persuasion and role playing
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## Summary

This review presents studies of sex work (whether focussing on demand, supply, prices or working conditions) are inextricably linked with the theme of stigma and the ability of individual sex workers to resist it through their agency (determined by their own characteristics as well as those of the industry they operate in). Agency of course is also determining the alternative possible earning opportunities for those who are already in the trade, and cannot be presumed to be homogeneous as is often the case in policy debates that have become polarized between assumption of complete lack of agency (abolitionist) or absolute self-determination (part of the sex workers movements). Entry in the sex trade invariably implies that the individual is stigmatized by society as a result, though the process of stigmatization may have started before the point of entry (as in the case where individual faced sexual abuse before entry in the trade). The level of stigmatization depends on the constructions of sexual norms and regulatory frameworks on sex work. The career progression of the sex worker however depends on their agency and how they can negotiate with this stigma. Also, the segmentation of the market also via technology reflects the sorting of both sex workers and clients according to how stigma-averse they are. To study this complex field, therefore, tools from across the social and medical sciences as well as the humanities are all needed, and an open mind highly recommended.

Some stylized facts relating to scholarship on market for sex work

- 1) Sex work scholarship is multidisciplinary. Academic literature on sex work ranges from works in medical sociology and public health (Evered & Evered, 2013; O'Neil et al., 2004; Sirotin, Strathdee, Lozada, Nguyen, et al., 2010), political science (Hubbard, Matthews, & Scoular, 2008; Sanders & Campbell, 2007), economics (Arunachalam & Shah, 2012; Della Giusta et al., 2008; Edlund & Korn, 2009; Farmer & Horowitz, 2013) and philosophy (Nussbaum, 2000; Pateman, 2009).
- 2) Sex work literature has historically deemed sex workers are deviant (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). In the last four decades the philosophical debate is between those who believe that sex workers are victims, those who argue that sex workers are individuals with agency in charge of their sexuality and financial status. A third stream of literature contends that sex workers operate within a spectrum of coercion and consent (Kempadoo et al., 2016) and constantly negotiate their bargaining power and agency within institutional constraints and stigma (Sanders & Campbell, 2007). This is reflected in the policy discussion on sex work with three main paradigms of legal legislation on sex work- the prohibitory framework (sex worker and client are criminalised), the abolitionist framework (the client is criminalised) and the regulatory framework (sex work is legal with regulations). These differences exist in scholarship and legal frameworks of the market for sexual services both developed and developing countries.
- 3) Sex workers are mobile at the macro level both between and within developed and developing countries and are restricted in the micro level. This is true for both sex workers who are trafficked as well as those who migrate and engage in the trade voluntarily. Given the global yet unfree nature of the trade, differentiating between developed and developing countries is not an useful categorization. Additionally, though the nature of stigma may be different, sex workers are universally stigmatized, whether in a developed country or a developing country. The stigma is a function of the social norms around sexuality and the construction of masculinity as well as the legal framework on the sex work.
- 4) Theoretical economics literature on sex work concentrates primarily on the earnings differential within sex work and between sex work and other similar gendered, labour intensive occupations requiring low levels of skill. Three contending arguments in the literature 1) sex workers earn more because they trade off marriage for being in the trade, 2) sex workers earn a 'violence premium' and 3) sex workers earn a 'stigma premium'. All the three explanations are universal in both developed and

developing countries, and the theoretical literature doesn't distinguish between them. Quantitative empirical literature has tested all three of these hypothesis for developed and developing country contexts. The violence premium and stigma premium arguments have held more ground in the empirical literature, and the marriage premium argument has mostly not been valid empirically.

- 5) While there exists a rich empirical literature on sex work, there are various methodological challenges associated with identification in quantitative studies on sex work. Because of the invisible and transitory nature of the trade, getting a representative sample is close to impossible. Furthermore, the strong presence of intermediaries and the usually illegal status of the trade deems data collection difficult, especially relating to questions that are sensitive in nature (around violence, earnings etc). Most studies rely on data collected by NGOs or the police, which are heavily biased towards individuals who have access to such institutions, or have been arrested by police thereby raising the issue of eliciting true responses to questions that may make them vulnerable. One way of getting around issues of validity and identification is to use a mix of quantitative and qualitative ethnographic methods.

## Cross-References

[List with titles of other chapters in this Handbook that deal with a related topic ...]

- Gender on the labor market
- Women's empowerment (domestic violence) and employment
- Morality and anti-social behavior at work
- Precarious Work and Gender
- Economics of sex work and policy considerations

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[**Index-terms:** Keywords that will be used for generating the index at the end of this Handbook. In WORD, kindly mark by **highlighting** or **underlining** the accordant words in the text. **Word range of Entry:** approx. 5000-15000 words (plus abstract and figures), kindly avoid footnotes. **Illustrations:** Please number illustrations consecutively (1, 2, 3...) within your chapter. Provide captions and, if necessary, acknowledgments/references in the captions. **Do not embed** illustrations in this WORD document. Please upload them as original files with name of file/number of illustration (corresponding to the legend of illustrations).]