

Commercialization of sex



Commercialization of sex Customer inserts His/her name Customer inserts course grade Institution Outline I. A brief history of commercial sex II. The legal debate: To legalize or not? III. Society's view on commercial sex * Proponents of commercial sex * Opponents of commercial sex IV. The pros and cons of commercial sex ABSTRACT In the past, sex was used mostly for reproduction. There has been an emerging trend where sex is used for none reproductive purposes. The use of sex for none reproductive purposes associated with monetary gains has come to be commonly known as commercial sex.

Other people refer to it as prostitution. The aim of this proposal is to explore the various issues of commercial sex including history, society's view on commercial sex, advantages, and disadvantages of commercial sex.

Commercial sex is very wide field and cannot be sufficiently covered in one academic proposal. This proposal has limited itself to the aspect of female commercial sex workers (FCSWs), while briefly mentioning men who have sex with men (MSM). The proposal has been developed with secondary material mostly from journal articles and books.

Key words: commercial sex, commercial sex workers (CSWs), Men who have sex with men (MSM), unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) Commercialization of sex A brief history of commercial sex Commercial sex, also known as, prostitution is one of the oldest professions in the world. The Bible in the Old Testament has a record of prostitution in the story of Judah and Tamar (Gen: 38). According to Ellis (1936), the universal description of commercial sex as the act or practice of engaging in sexual intercourse for money is insufficient.

Ellis (1936) is of the opinion that even women who get married to gain a home and a livelihood exchange their body for monetary gain. For the purpose of this proposal, commercial sex refers to the act of rendering, from the consumer's perspective, non reproductive sex against some form of compensation and in most cases monetary gain. In the past, society used sex for purposes of reproduction and companionship. A new trend is emerging where sex is viewed as a source of income. The Bible in the Old Testament records Judah asking Tamar “ All right, how much do you charge? ” Paying for sex is therefore an old practice as shown from this example.

According to Blerk (2007), there is proof of movement of girls and women into urban areas or other sites of demand usually on a temporarily basis with the intention to engage in commercial sex. Blerk (2007) also asserts that in the early days, highly regarded women submitted to the roles of commercial sex workers and consequently traveled with the Emperor's camp to offer sexual services. He adds that in Ethiopia in the nineteenth century, female commercial sex workers (FCSWs) used to travel to the coastal towns on numerous occasions to seek clients for their commercial sex services highly demand by the sailors.

An outstanding characteristic of commercial sex is its negative reputation. Society disapproves of prostitutes and this reduces the likelihood of a woman who has been identified as a prostitute getting a spouse. Her ability to go down the aisle is greatly reduced when the society discovers that she is a commercial sex worker. Because the act of denying a person the chance to marry is a costly affair, each and every item that identifies a woman as a

commercial sex worker is usually the foundation of stigmatization against these women.

For example in ancient times, prostitutes in the Roman Empire were required to put on unique clothing that obviously singled them out, a practice that was later practiced in medieval Europe. Despite some elements of the society looking at commercial sex as immoral and corrupt, some people have considered it to be always a necessary immorality. In this regard, commercial sex has been compared to sewerage system that helps keep the palace clean. From the ancient times, men of all ages and status have engaged in a form of commercial sex. They considered it necessary even if they did not approve of it.

This is clearly seen in the case of Judah and Tamar in the Bible. The legal debate: To legalize or not? In places such as Scotland and England, buying of sex among consenting adults is legal. Commercial sex is considered a leisure activity that may take various forms, such as such as lap and poll dance as long as this is done with discretion away from the public eyes (Paton, Roberts, and Cusick, 2009). The establishment-based commercial sex sector in these countries has employees protected by the law and patrons to these places include a wide variety of individuals.

Cusick et al. (2009) in their study observed that in Britain prostitution remained legal. However, they noted that the law did not allow soliciting of commercial sex in public places. In Britain and most of the European Union members, it is within the law for grown-ups to engage in commercial sex either as sellers or buyers provided that they do these activities in a

secluded place away from the public scrutiny. They may perform their commercial sex activities in private places, through an agency, or in a brothel. According to Lin et al. 2010), commercial sex is against the law in the People's Republic of China. Nevertheless, there are scores of female commercial sex workers (FCSWs) who sell sex at lawfully licensed amusement places, such as nightclubs, saunas, discos, and massage parlors. According to Chiao et al. (2007), commercial sex is illegal in the Philippines. However, for the establishment-based female commercial sex workers (FCSWs), it is a government requirement that they present themselves at local communal sanitation clinics for record purposes and undergo periodic check up appointments.

According to Lin et al. (2010), the end of the debate on the legality of commercial sex is not about to end soon. The most ironic thing about the debate of the commercial sex is that it has tended to condone the buying of commercial sex buy the male clients while frowning at the sellers of the commercial sex services. Starting from the biblical time, the society has tended to be more sympathetic to the people who purchase sex. In the case of Judah and Tamar (Gen: 38), Judah is not even afraid to send his friend Hirah to deliver the payment (goat) to the commercial sex worker (Tamar).

Hirah acceptance to corroborate with his friend shows that the society could easily allow the male buyers to carry on with their wayward ways while looking the other side. On the other hand, a seller of the commercial sex services was harshly judged sometimes even to the point of death. In the same example of Judah and Tamar, the seller (Tamar) is almost killed. In fact on learning that Tamar is pregnant, Judah orders for her execution through

burning. It is only after learning that he is the father of the baby that Tamar is carrying that he “forgives” her.

Even then apart from Judah accepting that he was in the wrong for not providing his youngest son to Tamar as had been previously agreed, the bible does not show as any more concern and care directed to Tamar. It can thus be said that in the early times, society tended to partially legalize commercial sex. Society's view on commercial sex Proponents of commercial sex A study by Lin et al. (2010) reflects that a majority of people in China whether active on commercial sex or not, were open minded and liberal in their views and attitudes toward commercial sex.

The participants in the study did not perceive paying for commercial sex as dishonorable. Others even perceived commercial sex as a normal activity in the society and part of the human nature. Some of the study subjects were personally convinced that commercial sex was of benefit to the society as it helped the society to reduce occurrences of sexual offences. The study by Lin et al. (2010) found that despite commercial sex being against the law and attracting heavy penalty, many people in the mainstream China saw it as an acceptable behavior.

Even for those study subjects who stated none engagement in commercial sex, there was still acknowledgement that they may engage in commercial sex under favorable conditions. In a country such as China that previously held comparatively conformist views toward sex, attitudes toward sexuality is changing with the introduction of Open Door policies, economic reforms, industrialization, and the exposure to Western cultures. According to Wilska

and Rasanen (2007), categorizing people, and especially women into consumable objects is characteristic of what people usually think of as commercialization of sex.

They further assert that apart from the increase in the conventional forms of commercial sex such as prostitution and pornography, the exploitation of sex and female bodies as images in media and marketing communication for purposes of advertisement has increased exponentially. Opponents of commercial sex Wilska and Rasanen (2007), indicate that the issue of commercial sex has always been surrounded by controversy for many decades. They argue that many parts of the world including the Western countries have experienced stringent rules and even moments in which commercial sex was entirely suppressed.

Although there are people who single-mindedly resist commercial sex, there are those who think that commercial sex activities should be regarded as normal cultural occurrence. Irrespective of the vast opposition to commercial sex sometimes witnessed in many parts of the world, commercial sex is here to stay. As Wilska and Rasanen (2007) say, commercial sex services may as well be regarded as an ageless trend, which will always be available as long as there is demand for them.

Wilska and Rasanen (2007) assert that young people have unambiguous views regarding the function of commercialized sex in the social order and in the day-to-day life. There is a high possibility that sexual characteristics strongly affect opinions on certain issues, while age and other socio-demographic characteristics may be more influential factors in certain

issues. Naturally, the answers to these questions must be regarded as primarily empirical. In Dubai, the commercial sex workers both high-income and low-wage sex workers are largely invisible in writing and in discussions.

The pros and cons of commercial sex According to Lin et al. (2010), commercial sex practices in the People's Republic of China puts commercial sex workers and their clients at high risk of being infected or infecting others with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV. Another disadvantage of commercial sex is that it reduces the chances of female sexual commercial workers (FSCWs) getting married. This is because of the stigma that is usually associated with commercial sex and that women who engage in these activities are viewed as evil and lacking in socially acceptable behaviour (Korn and Edlund, 2002).

On the other hand, Korn and Edlund (2002), (2002) assert that commercial sex is a business that involves billions of dollars with a workforce of millions of women internationally. To validate their opinion, they used findings from a recent study undertaken by the International Labour Office in which it was estimated that in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, the female population of between 0.25 % and 1.5 % work as prostitutes. They continue to say that the commercial sex trade accounts for between 0.2 and 0.14 of gross domestic product (GDP) in these countries. The attractiveness of commercial sex as a business venture is that although it is low-skill, it fetches unusually high income. Korn & Edlund (2002), assert that income even in the least paid type of commercial sex worker (either streetwalking) may be several times more than the income of full-time professionals with

similar skills. They further add that in Sweden in 1998, the earnings from commercial sex sector was as high as 1, 750 United States dollars (U.

S. \$ 1, 700) per day. They continue to say that women of Arab origin were capable of making up to \$ 2, 000 per night in the Gulf States as commercial sex workers. Similarly, they noted that a Latvian commercial sex worker alleged she made an average of \$5, 000 per month which translated to 20 times the average wage. The high income that accrues from the commercial sex industry and the ability of even low-skilled people to engage in it and reap benefits has continued to attract a large volume of commercial sex workers.

Governments in many developed nations have realized that the business offers great employment opportunities and have moved from a conservative approach toward a more liberal approach in the handling of commercial sex. Consequently, governments in many parts of the world have legalized commercial sex and many others are in the process of legalizing it. The licensed commercial sex establishments such brothels, nightclubs, and discos, remits high tax returns to the governments and also pay hefty license fees to the governments so as to get operating licenses.

The legalization of commercial sex has resulted in the increase of a different category of commercial sex workers known as men who have sex with men (MSM). This group of CSWs has a high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) (Cheng et al. , 2009). Baloch (2009) asserts that the MSM are at high risk of contacting sexually transmitted diseases when engaging in unprotected anal intercourse (UAI)

than CSWs who engage in unprotected vaginal sex. According to Wilska and Rasanen (2007), the stigmatization and social regulation of commercial sex often leave women more open to exploitation and abuse.

Society in general disapproves of commercial sex and people who engage in the act will more usually than not find themselves sidelined from the mainstream society. Many famous people have lost their respectability and social standing on mere allegations of involvement in commercial sex activities. Most of the elective leadership in the society requires that a person be of impeccable character. Any blemish on a person's character particularly on issues to do with commercial sex will result in a person losing his or her elective post.

In recent times, commercial sex has boosted the tourism industry of many countries. This has resulted into a new breed of tourists who love, " Sun, sex, and sand " and have been frequenting famous coastal towns in the search of sexual adventures, thus resulting in a boom in the tourism industry. In this way commercial sex whether legal or illegal has been able to earn a high foreign exchange to different nations. McQuiston et al. (2004) asserts that commercial sex can directly or indirectly contribute to the growth of a country's economy through use of sex toys, condoms, and other related items.

Cheng et al. (2009) suggest that people who engage in commercial sex risk the danger of being not only marginalized in the society but may also suffer deep emotional wounds. Because commercial sex results in high incomes at the same time requiring low levels of skills, the participants may not see the

need of capacity building or skills improvement. This lack of skill development may result in stagnation of growth as the commercial sex workers may become nonproductive members of the society, especially when they stop working in the commercial sex sector.

According to Harrington (2005), commercial sex has also increased the levels of human trafficking as commercial sex agencies engaged in trafficking of humans for commercial sex work abroad. Many of these victims are lured into foreign lands on promises of decent employment opportunities only for them to end up as sex slaves in some of the commercial sex establishments. These victims are usually at the mercies of their cruel employers who confiscate their passports on arrival. The victims cannot afford to run away and if they succeed, they automatically become illegal immigrants without a proper means of survival.

They cannot get a work permit and therefore end up engaging in activities such as commercial sex on the streets and other low life jobs. In most cases these people will always end up in jails unless, they find good human right organizations that will defend their cases and help them get their travel documents back, acquire work permits, or get immigrant status. In the case of peacekeeping, military rules, and policies governing troops on foreign soils play a great role on the life and character of commercial sex workers near foreign military bases (Harrington, 2005).

Harrington (2005) asserts that peacekeeping technical personnel are composed of a majority of military people who have a history of tolerating commercial sex as essential while showing little compassion for the well-

being of the commercial sex worker concerned. As a result, foreign policy in times of both tranquility and conflict can be used as a resource of information about methods that leaders struggle to guard, correct sexual access to female bodies, or both of these which in normal circumstances should belong to men on nationalized or ethnicized terms.

According to (Harrington 2005), the commercial sex industry is usually associated on violence against women. In most cases, women and girl immigrants who are heavily indebted have been imprisoned in these commercial sex establishments, enslaved through working without wages, raped, and beaten. Apart from the beatings, the commercial sex workers are usually abused verbally and physically by the hyper-masculine groups such as the military and the police. The military and police personnel in the peacekeeping areas can connect well with each other as equal men.

This kind of bond is not desirable as far as commercial sex is concerned. Because the combined group of military-police personnel has a large combined wealth at their disposal, they can visit strip joints, brothels, and bars where they orally and physically humiliate women and girls jointly. The military and the police deployed on peacekeeping missions have tended to enjoy some form of legal protection or diplomatic immunity and so they go about their businesses without fear. The immunity is enhanced by the power accorded to them that in most cases matches or surpasses those of the local police force.

When they are reported concerning abuses on commercial sex workers, the investigations as usually quashed and the military or police involved sent

home immediately. The commercial sex workers seldom get justice for the wrongs perpetuated against them. Many investigations concerning peacekeeping troops have been stopped midway with reason to believe that powerful people up to the level of UN headquarters are involved. People who insisted on carrying on with investigations were sometimes relieved off their duties under unclear circumstances. References Baloch, M. G (2009). Male Sex with Male: A Study of Commercial Sex Workers in Larkana, Pakistan, regarding Their Knowledge about HIV/AIDS & STIs and Sexual Behavior. " Journal of US-China Medical Science, 6(10): 13-24 Blerk, V. (2007). " AIDS, mobility and commercial sex in Ethiopia: Implications for policy. " AIDS Care, 19(1): 79-86 Cheng et al. (2009). " Psychosocial Factors in Association with Condom Use During Commercial Sex Among Migrant Male Sex Workers Living in Shenzhen, Mainland China Who Serve Cross-Border Hong Kong Male Clients. " AIDS Behav , 13: 939-948 Chiao et al. (2006). The Relationship Between HIV/Sexually Transmitted Infection Risk and Alcohol Use During Commercial Sex Episodes: Results From the Study of Female Commercial Sex Workers in the Philippines. " Substance Use & Misuse, 41: 1509-1533 Cusick et al. (2009). " Higher and further education institution policies on student and staff involvement in commercial sex. " Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management 31(2): 185-195 Ellis, H (1936). Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol 4, New York: Random House. Harrington, C. (2005). " PEACEKEEPING AND ANTI-TRAFFICKING PROGRAMMES IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA AND KOSOVO. International Feminist Journal of Politics, 7(2): 175-206 Korn, E. & Eliud, L. (2002). " A Theory of Prostitution. " Journal of Political Economy, vol. 110(1): 181-214 Lin et al. (2010). " Entertainment Venue Visiting and Commercial Sex in China. " International Journal of Sexual

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