

The unbiased truth of the prostitutes sociology essay



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Prostitution is the act and the practice of selling/performing sexual acts in exchange for money. It affects the safety of our neighborhoods, but also the quality of life and health of all the men and women who participate, without regards to their social class. Although prostitution is illegal in the United States, the activity is socially accepted in many other countries by millions of individuals. When individuals engage in sexual acts, as either the client or the prostitute, they put themselves at an extremely high risk of contracting AIDS and other STD's. Although Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies are working diligently to control the criminal and deviant act, the demand continues to rise. As a result of the increased demand of prostitution, the issue of legalization has permeated legislation and prompted plausible consideration by politicians in many states. Some argue that legalizing prostitution will minimize the spread of AID's and STD's, deter violence against women, and control sex trafficking. Yet many see the legalization as an invitation for the widespread of sexually transmitted diseases. In the researcher's experiment they will attempt make a connection about the general public's attitude towards prostitution and their correlation to variables such as age, gender, marital status, educational level, employment, social upbringing, and sexuality.

H1: Older males are more likely to favor legalizing prostitution.

H2: Males who use drugs and alcohol are more likely to be in favor of prostitution.

H3: Males with higher levels of educational level are more likely to favor legalized prostitution.

H4: Married males are more likely to favor legalized prostitution.

H5: Males who are employed are more likely to favor legalization.

By using gender as the control variable, the researchers intend establish a significant relationship between male's attitudes towards prostitution, and its legalization by taking a closer look at variables of political and religious affiliation, alcohol and drug use, age, marital status, education, employment and family ties, to name a few.

Theoretical Framework

Throughout the world, women participate in prostitution for various reasons. Some embrace prostitution because of low-socioeconomics, drug abuse and family disorganization, while others use it as a form of sexual control and dominance. According to the work of sociologist Emile Durkheim, who developed the theoretical perspective of structural functionalism, crime is necessary for a functional society. One function of crime, and other deviant behavior, is that it strengthens group solidarity to bring about social change. "The deviant individual violates the rule of conduct that the rest of the community holds in high regard and when these individuals come together to express their outrage over the offense, they develop a tighter bond of solidarity than existed earlier" (Erikson 66).

In recent years, there has been a controversial debate over legalizing prostitution. Various issues such as healthcare, civil rights, and public safety have been emphatically debated in congress and local governments.

Although structural functionalism, deals directly with some facets of crime, it does not fully explain the other social behaviors which are indirectly related. <https://assignbuster.com/the-unbiased-truth-of-the-prostitutes-sociology-essay/>

Three other theories that may explain these behaviors are the strain, conformity, and innovation theories.

Robert Merton's, strain theory, uses Durkheim's concept of anomie or hopelessness to explain the rationale behind most criminal behavior. Merton argues that when legitimate means of finding employment and/or assets are limited by society, social environment, or family structure imposed on the individual is what leads to crime. Some women are forced to enter a life of prostitution because they are unable to provide for themselves due to a lack of education, job skills, and resources. Consequently, a state of anomie occurs and the female chooses illegitimate means to achieve monetary goals. In Bombay, India, women participate in prostitution as a means of employment, in order to support their children, because of the pervasive poverty and gender discrimination (World Focus 10). Conformity occurs when individuals accept culturally defined goals as well as the means of achieving such goals. Innovation occurs when an individual accepts culturally defined goals but rejects the legitimate means of achieving them. Some women in the United States choose prostitution as a means to acquire culturally defined goals such as personal property, and real estate assets.

Social disorganization and family dysfunction may also cause women to take on a life of prostitution. Some family structures are infested with social dysfunction such as child abuse, spousal abuse, and drug or alcohol abuse. Functionalists categorize the family as a social institution that performs functions for society including, producing new members, regulating sexual behavior and procreation, socializing progeny, and providing physical and emotional care of family members. According to functionalists, the high
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number of divorces and rising number of single-parent households constitutes a breakdown of the family institution due to rapid social change and social disorganization; the breakdown in the family structure is correlated with the increase in crime, poverty, and substance abuse. Some women, who participate in prostitution, are products of a broken family structure. Seemingly, emotional and sexual abuse within a dysfunctional family structure may produce low-self esteem, anomie, and sexual deviance which can marginalize an individual from mainstream society however; symbolic interactionists have a different perspective on women who participate in prostitution. Symbolic interactionists such as founder Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead believed that society is viewed by symbols that define who and what we are. As a traditional gender role, females are conditioned to conduct themselves appropriately within society. This theory may explain why most women oppose the legalization of prostitution and why most men do not. However, some female college students may agree with legalized prostitution because of feministic ideology.

Symbolic interactionists believe that society, and the media, portray male and female gender roles as being disproportionate and discriminatory towards women (Mooney 07). There are gender distinctions and biases that interact with society and create a constant misconception which remains in our lifestyle. It is because of the change in marital roles that personal and sexual desires take the place of mutual commitment, monogamy, and longevity. Both males and females have different ideas and objectives which obstruct the ideology of marriage and inadvertently produce instability in the

relationship. Consequently, some married men look for sexual diversity and companionship outside the marriage (Henslin 07). Interestingly enough, most married men are more likely to favor legalized prostitution opposed to single men.

That last thing that will be discussed is the conflict perspective which hints that social inequality leads individuals to commit crimes as a means of economic survival. Others, who are angry and frustrated by their by their low position on the socioeconomic ladder, express their rage and frustration through crime. According to Marxist theorists, those in power define what is criminal and what is not. The laws are created to protect the “ruling class” which benefits those in power and penalizing those without. Most individuals who are arrested for prostitution come from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and dysfunctional family structures. Based on Conflict theory, there is a power struggle within the sub-culture of prostitution. The reality of sexually manipulating an individual promotes a sense of power and control which does not exist in mainstream society. This type of manipulation can be best explained by discussing sex traffickers who use violence as a method of coercing women into a life of prostitution. Those who are in favor of the legalization of prostitution believe that legalization will control the sex trade industry and protect the rights of women who do not wish to participate in sexual acts for money (Obeng 08).

Society has conflicting views regarding the advantages and disadvantages of prostitution but there are those that believe that the views are gender related. Perhaps the theoretical perspectives applied to our research will help understand gender diversity and attitudes while helping understand <https://assignbuster.com/the-unbiased-truth-of-the-prostitutes-sociology-essay/>

how traditional gender roles contribute to attitudes towards legalized prostitution. Structural functionalists believe that healthcare and education are necessary for the proper function of a well-organized society and are therefore primary variables in the attitudes of prostitution. From a micro-sociological perspective, we need to examine the epistemology of prostitution in American society and inadvertently, how it affects attitudes towards legalization. Furthermore, are Americans abreast on the benefits and pitfalls of legalized prostitution in other countries such as Denmark, Canada, France, Mexico, Israel, England and the Netherlands where violent crimes are reported lower than the United States (Liberator 04)? Quantitatively, we will examine the independent and intervening variables which manipulate attitudes towards legalized prostitution in the United States.

Literature Review

There have been many societies throughout the world that have been plagued by the act of prostitution but it was not until the 19th century that the act became a multi-national political issue. There has also been a threat to the prostitute's health and well-being through the use of violence inflicted by those that are in charge of the prostitute's job or career. Barbara Brents' and Kathryn Hausbeck's journal article " Violence and Legalized Brothel Prostitution in Nevada," discusses the use of violence by pimps, customers and brothel managers imposed on the prostitutes involved. The risk of violence can come in many forms that include violent force from a customer or pimp and also the spread of sexually transmitted infections as a form of bodily violence. This article took a sample of 40 prostitutes and interviewed

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them with the focus of violence in the brothel community. They also took this sample from 13 of the 26 brothels in Nevada. The interviews focused primarily on the attitudes of the prostitutes towards violence that may or may not occur within the brothel walls and also if there is enough evidence to support the overall decriminalization of prostitution in the United States. Politicians have been arguing the idea that all prostitutes have either been forced into or entered into prostitution on their own free will, and then they are still abused by those associated with the act. The first argument about prostitution came from the abolitionist feminist movement which argued that young innocent women were lured into the life of prostitution and are continually degraded and coerced into illicit behaviors that are not justified by their occupation. The article also goes into the safety concerns for prostitutes and the regulations and safety measures that are being utilized to cut down on violence among the brothels in Nevada. Although the article discusses the violence associated with prostitution, the general public might have their own opinions on how someone becomes a prostitute.

The second article that will be discussed is by Melissa Farley, "Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart: Prostitution Harms Women Even if Legalized or Decriminalized" that talks about the ways that Prostitution will always be legal. It was a study done in New Zealand that shows that ways that violence and prostitution will always coexist. This article also talks about the health concerns for prostitutes and their potential customers. It was concluded by the different surveys of prostituted women and the mortality rates of them that prostitute are 40 times higher than those of the general population. They also concluded that there is a higher risk for cervical cancer and

chronic hepatitis among them. They were able to interview an overwhelming number of Canadian prostitutes that said that they were all victims of some sort of trauma to the head in which a relatively high number were killed due to blunt force trauma brought on by hitting, kicking and having one's head slammed into objects such as car dashboards. The large numbers of chronic health problems are a result of prolonged torture and physical abuse. This journal article also administered a survey of those that were involved in the legalization process of Victoria, Australia and concluded that whenever prostitution was legalized, there was a huge increase in the amount of street and brothel prostitution. Lastly the article talks about the ways that prostitution can cause psychological harm to those that are involved in the illicit acts of prostitution.

Many countries outside of the United States, most commonly Germany and the Netherlands, decriminalized prostitution in the 1980's, however, it remains illegal in 49 out of 50 states here in the U. S. In the article " Ten Reasons for Not Legalizing Prostitution and a Legal Response to the Demand for Prostitution," Janice Raymond looks at why prostitution is not tolerated here in the United States. Among the ten reasons are:

1. Legalization would increase the sex industry
2. Legalization would no longer protect the women involved
3. Legalization will increase the demand for the act and encourage men to buy women, and make the act socially acceptable
4. Legalization will not promote the health of women.

These four above stated reasons most certainly pertain to our intended research project in that they focus on why women are and should not be involved in prostitution, as well as how most men view prostitution. The details of these reasons more specifically detail why some women engage in the act.

Steven P. Sawyer and Michael E. Metz, both from St. Paul Minnesota conducted a study in 2008 implementing the use of Attitudes towards Prostitution Scale. This study was conducted to rate the individual attitudes toward prostitution of men charged with purchasing sex from prostitutes. 1,001 men from Oregon, California, Nevada, and Minnesota who have been charged with soliciting prostitution were involved in this study. These men were asked a series of question in order to rate their attitude toward prostitution. The survey featured questions such as “ There is nothing wrong with prostitution,” “ Women are prostitutes because they want to be. It is their choice,” and “ It would be okay if my daughter grew up to be a prostitute.” The men were asked to answer these questions with responses of strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. Once the surveys were completed, the results of the questions were combined to create an overall score which would inform the researcher of one’s beliefs and willingness to engage in prostitution. Unfortunately, after all of the surveys were compiled, there were no definitive conclusions reached.

A study conducted in 2005, by Thomas Holt, Kristie Blevins, and Joseph Kuhns called “ Examining the Displacement Practices of Johns with On-line Data,” was performed to examine how Johns use displacement when interacting with prostitutes and law enforcement and how on-line forums <https://assignbuster.com/the-unbiased-truth-of-the-prostitutes-sociology-essay/>

assist in this practice. This study focused on 10 US cities that have high prostitution arrest data available, these cities are Elizabeth, New Jersey; Atlanta, Georgia; Hartford, Connecticut; Inglewood, California; Dayton, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; Fort Worth, Texas; Memphis, Tennessee; Baltimore, Maryland; and Las Vegas, Nevada. The researchers for this article found an online forum dealing with prostitution that catered to all of these cities. The researchers then read posts on the forum and examined how displacement practices were used by the Johns. They found that spatial, temporal, and tactical displacement was all used by the Johns when there was a presence of law enforcement. Spatial displacement was used when Johns recognized police presence in an area and suggested that others should go elsewhere to engage in the acts. Temporal displacement was used when Johns noticed a higher police presence at certain times of the day and recommended coming back at different times. Tactical displacement was used when Johns posted about different ways to pay for sex, posting about massage parlors and strip clubs that others may want to use. The study found that the most common use of displacement practices found on the forums was that of spatial displacement and found that the internet has provided Johns with a social network in which they can communicate and interact with each other to minimize the chance of getting caught and maximize successful interactions with prostitutes. The article goes on to suggest that police interaction and over watch of such online forums has been beneficial in counteracting the effect of such networking thus resulting in the conclusion that no matter what, Johns will find a way of communicating and engaging in prostitution even when the threats of punishment from cops are around.

In Inna Alikhadzhieva's journal article "Public Opinion about Prostitution and Measures to Prevent It," a regional study was conducted to measure the legalization of prostitution. The main purpose was to discern the magnitude and social danger of the phenomenon of prostitution. 'The decline in the standard of living of a substantial portion of the population, unemployment, and people's sense of not being protected under the law have led to the loss of moral psychological guidelines and to involvement in the sex business' (Inna). The article examines the close relationship between economic deprivation in Russia and how it associates poverty or economic status with the engagement in prostitution. The survey also tried to measure why someone would engage in prostitution and the circumstances that would have to occur to support prevention of it within the region as per the parents of children that were surveyed to volunteer information on what they would do to prevent their children from being sexually exploited. The results showed that most would engage in illegal activity to keep children from being exploited.

Steven Sawyer, Michael Metz, Jeffrey Hinds, and Roberta Brucker Jr. conducted research on males to measure attitudes on prostitution. The primary objective of the article, "Attitudes Towards Prostitution Among Males: A Consumers' Report," was to probe the attitudes and beliefs about prostitution among men who use prostitutes in order to better understand these men and gain some guidance for both social policy as well as more effective treatment interventions. The study intended to probe the underlying attitudes and beliefs about prostitution of men who use prostitutes, to better understand why men engage in this illegal activity and

to shed some light on potential interventions, remedial treatment, and public policy issues in this area. The researchers hypothesized that attitudes may be a valuable consideration in understanding prostitution customers and that their attitudes towards prostitution may be further influenced by basic demographic variables such as age, marital status, educational level, employment stability, and sexual satisfaction.

Mensah Richard Obeng wrote an article entitled “ Should Prostitution be Legalized” for Ghana Web, which contrasted legalized prostitution.

Consequently, the article accentuates the arguments against legalized prostitution and contradicts the premises for legalizing prostitution in United States. The foundation of factors influencing the views of many people hinge on morality, culture differences, religious considerations, human rights and political affiliation. The author asserts the premise that legalized prostitution will not improve healthcare for women nor will legalization provide protection from HIV or STDs. Furthermore, legalized prostitution will support the degradation of women, increase sex trafficking, and further endanger physical well-being of women who participate in the sex industry. Obeng focuses on an alternative perspective that substantiates the potential negative outcomes of legalized prostitution in the US and other countries.

Methodology

After careful review of the literature and analyzing similar questionnaires used to measure attitudes of prostitution it was determined that there are many questions that can be utilized from other studies that will aid in developing a well-organized questionnaire that will test the public’s opinion on Prostitution. In the development of the questionnaire it was found that <https://assignbuster.com/the-unbiased-truth-of-the-prostitutes-sociology-essay/>

there must be specific demographic variables that will accommodate a wide range of personnel in order to separate different sociological groups.

Demographic variables such as: Gender, Race, Religion, Age Range, Political Party affiliation, Employment status, and many others were incorporated to introduce statistics on whether or not there is a correlation between the demographic variables and the individual's opinion on prostitution. These types of demographic variables are otherwise known as independent variables because they are variables that typically cannot be changed by any outside forces. The first half of the survey will consist of all of the different demographic variables, while the second portion will be a better strategically placed set of questions that will allow people to reveal their opinions on all sorts of different aspects of prostitution. Some examples of the questions that will be asked to the public are: Prostitution should be legal; Prostitutes enjoy their work; it would be okay if my daughter grew up to be a prostitute; and so on. After the series of questions are asked they will be coded to determine ultimately whether or not the individual answering the question is more in favor of prostitution or against prostitution. The survey recipient will be asked to respond to the questions by circling the answer that best describes their feelings or attitudes on the subject. The answers of the questions will be modeled after the Likert Scale which includes: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, and strongly agree. By asking the survey recipient to answer the questions in this manner allows the surveyors the ability to code the answers and devise a score that will tell the researchers whether or not the survey recipient agrees or disagrees with the legalization or decriminalization of prostitution. The last set of coded

questions are considered to be dependent variables because it is believed
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that there are many aspects of life that will change one's views or attitudes on the legalization and decriminalization of prostitution.

Once the questionnaire was developed, the survey was then distributed randomly to fifty males and fifty females in various classrooms at Old Dominion University and also various transportation and shopping areas in the Norfolk area. Once the surveys are completed, the data that was collected will be entered into SPSS and analyzed for correlation. The correlation can be determined through cross-tabulation of the variables that the researcher wants to analyze. For example, if the researcher wants to analyze the correlation between the demographic variable of race and the survey question of whether or not prostitution should be legalized, then the researcher would place the two different variables into crosstabs and the output would tell the researcher whether or not there is a correlation. The correlation is generated by enabling the Chi Square and Cramer's V checkbox and it is this that will generate the output correlation score that will allow for the researcher to see the visual indication of the correlation between the variables. The process will then be repeated until it is determined which variables have an impact on one's opinion on the legalization or decriminalization of prostitution.

Findings