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ECOSOC 3

Research Report

Topic 1: Legalisation of prostitution and an examination of its economic significance



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Introduction:

Prostitution is known to be the world's oldest profession dating back to 2400 BC¹. The way people enter the prostitution industry is usually due to financial problems, or lack of education. Many also enter the prostitution industry by being trafficked and made to do the job against their own will. The social perceptions of being a prostitute pervades all faces of a society, as it is viewed as bringing disgrace to the society, societal dishonour or having a spoiled identity. In addition, due to the society's perspectives, it is often the prostitutes who are criminalised for providing sexual services rather than the clients who are taking those services or the owners who hired the employees to take part in sexual acts.

Prostitution is also seen as a dangerous profession as (most) women get involved in sexual assault, physical abuse, forced drug usage leading to drug addiction and death is also said to be common in this industry. It is a profession where it is difficult to escape as seeking for help could lead to an arrest.

Many argue that prostitution should be illegal due to the concern for the health and safety of women. Thus, many get the idea that legalising prostitution would lead to more sexual assaults, abuse, and death. This report will go deeper into the topic and provide thorough information about its economic advantage for its country if prostitution is legalised. It will also highlight possible solutions to ensure that more countries can legalise prostitution.

Definition of Key Terms:

Prostitution- Is a business which involves taking part in sexual activity in exchange for money.

Brothel- An area or a place where people engage in sexual activity with prostitutes.

Trafficking- Being part of an illegal trade or deal.

Decriminalization- A process to remove something from being considered as a criminal status.

Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)- It is an infection that is mainly spread through unprotected sexual contact. Some can also be spread through infected blood, pregnancy or childbirth.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)- A virus that attacks the human body's immune system. It is a virus that cannot be treated.

Background Information:

Prostitution is regarded as one of the oldest professions in the world and is a widespread practice. Prostitution is described as "the commission by a person of any natural or unnatural sexual act, deviant sexual intercourse, or sexual contact for monetary consideration or [some] other thing of value" Any individual who offers sexual services in exchange for cash or another item is a prostitute. Prostitution is typically frowned upon as a social vice in most nations, and those who engage in it are typically shunned by society.

Additionally, rather than the customers who pay for such services or the brothel owners who hire prostitutes, it is typically the prostitute who is charged with a crime for offering sexual services.

Prostitutes who choose to participate in the profession freely and those who are trafficked into it are two common categories for how people enter the prostitution business. In general, it is believed that financial pressure, a lack of education, and emotional or physical abuse are the main causes of voluntary prostitutes entering the sector. On the other side, trafficked prostitutes are forced into the business against their will.

With the passing of decriminalization, sexual service providers, customers, and the economy will benefit from higher revenue gains, cost savings in the criminal justice system, and cost savings in the health sector. Sex workers will have the choice of paying income taxes and supporting other sectors. A change in the function of law enforcement will lead to fewer people being imprisoned in a criminal justice system that is already overburdened with arrests for freely selling or soliciting sex. Clients will be less inclined to conduct crimes like physical assault because they will know that they can be reported and arrested for them; those who do will be more likely to report their crimes to the authorities since sex workers won't fear being jailed. Less STIs and HIV cases will occur when sex workers and their clients are more likely to use condoms.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved:

Belgium-sex work has been decriminalized since 1 June 2022. It is the first country in Europe and the second country in the world to decriminalize sex work.

Germany- prostitution in Germany is legal, organized, and taxed. Germany also allows brothels, advertisements, and the processing of prostitution jobs through HR companies. Germany passed the Prostitutes Protection Act in 2016, which was intended to protect the legal rights of prostitutes.

Sex Workers Project- is an organization that regardless of whether someone participates in sex work out of choice, necessity, or coercion, The Sex Workers Project offers client-centered legal and social services. The Sex Workers Project, one of the earliest organizations to offer assistance to victims of human trafficking, is credited with developing a philosophy of service that is based on respect for human rights, harm reduction, and the actual experiences of its clients.

¹ProCon.org. "Historical Timeline - Prostitution - Procon.org." *Historical Timeline*, 28 Aug. 2013, <https://prostitution.procon.org/historical-timeline/>.

Relevant UN Resolutions:

[UNAIDS Guidance Note on HIV and Sex Work](#)

Discrimination remains legal against women, men who have sex with men, sex workers, drug users, and ethnic minorities. In countries without laws to protect these groups, only a fraction of the population has access to antiretroviral treatment. Sex workers and their clients are at heightened risk of HIV, in large measure due to a larger number of sex partners. Vulnerability to HIV as a result of sex work extends to women, men, and transgender people. Less than 1% of global funding for HIV prevention is spent on HIV and sex work.

Prevention of Prostitution

Invites the Economic and Social Council to consider the whole question of the suppression of the traffic in persons and of the exploitation of the prostitution of others at its 1st regular session of 1986; invites the Working Group on Slavery of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to transmit its report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its next session; requests the Secretary-General to expedite the issuance as a UN document of the report on the suppression of the traffic in persons and of the exploitation of the prostitution of others.

Previous attempts to solve the issue:

In 100 countries, 51% countries have legalised prostitution and 12% have partially legalised it. Some of which include Germany, India, New Zealand and many more. These countries' governments have also imposed codes or acts that ensure the legal protection for the prostitutes. Organizations like World Health Organisation, American Civil Liberties Union, Human Rights Campaign and many other organisations have supported the decriminalisation of prostitution and have worked towards making prostitution legal and ensure to keep the women in that profession safe and healthy.

Other than working towards legalizing prostitution, WHO has been working on providing accessible health care needed for prostitutes, providing them with condoms and pills that prevent women from getting HIV. They have also provided with treatment services for women who have gotten HIV².

ACLU and HRC focuses on providing legal protection for prostitutes as well as provide them with health access and other necessary services without facing discrimination.³

Possible solutions:

Even though prostitution is legalised in 51 countries, many still look down upon the prostitution industry. However, if these nations who have legalised prostitution cooperate and help convince other nations who have illegalised prostitution to legalise it or even partially legalise it would not only help the nation's economy to grow and help promote health access, but it would also help change society's perceptions on prostitutes.

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² "Sex Workers." *Who.int*, 2023, www.who.int/teams/global-hiv-hepatitis-and-stis-programmes/populations/sex-workers.

³"Organizations That Support the Decriminalization of Prostitution - Decriminalize Sex Work." *Decriminalize Sex Work*, 30 Dec. 2022, decriminalizesex.work/why-decriminalization/organizations-endorsing-decriminalization/.

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