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Original research article

“It is such a very free job.” Selected aspects of the lifestyle of women in the private sex business

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ABSTRACT

The lifestyle of people working in the sex business differs, especially due to the financial situation, specific working hours, choice of how leisure time is spent and the nature of the work. Recently, the sex business in the Czech Republic has moved from nightclubs to apartments and private flats. The secretiveness of the private sex business is connected with a very small mapping of this form and the persons working in it, therefore the aim of this paper is to describe the lifestyle of women working in the private sex business considering their everyday life at work as well as out of it. A qualitative research strategy with the technology of a biographical-narrative interview has been used in the research. The research file was formed of 10 women working in the private sex business within the South Bohemian Region. The ascertained data has been processed and coded in the Atlas.ti programme and then by means of set theory the following main categories were identified: addictions (substance and non-substance), relationship to clients, family, partners, relationship to work and healthy lifestyle. The results show that women in the private sex business are a markedly heterogeneous group considering the area of relationships. A common aspect is considering the sex business as “a business”. The informants positively evaluate their work with respect to the opportunity to decide on their working hours and leisure time by themselves, and with respect to the financial benefits that often serve as support for close family.

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Introduction

There are many definitions of prostitution or the sex business, but it can be defined as the supply of services to satisfy sex

needs for payment [1]. However, it does not have to be only providing sex for financial means but can also be for obtaining a certain advantage or return service [2]. The sex business has been present in society since ancient times and occurs in almost all societies. Some of them perceived the sex business

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as a sacred deal, others as a sin [1]. Women as well as men work in the sex business. This paper focuses only on women working in the private sex business. The aim of this paper is to describe the lifestyle of these women considering their everyday life at work as well as out of work.

The sex business can be hierarchically structured according to the environment with the supply of services as follows: street, club, hotel, private and escort service [3]. The lower the position it has within the hierarchy, the more hazardous it is [4]. Women working on the street not only have a markedly lower social status than other women but there is also a more frequent occurrence of drug addiction [5], somatic and mental diseases and criminality [6]. In the Czech Republic the sex business experienced a distinctive boom in connection with the opening of the borders in the 90s and it has changed many times. Recently the club scene has transformed into a private scene where there is a bigger guarantee of customer and prostitute privacy [7]. Private prostitution is provided in the privacy of rented or self-owned flats whereas usually several women pay the rent together. The flats are often changed. This scene is characterized by a small, relatively constant and solvent group of clients who search for private services mostly on websites and by means of printed advertising. The age structure of women in this scene is most frequently between 20–40 years and these women have different educations and backgrounds [8]. Private flats offer a wide spectrum of services and advantages consisting of a big number of hostesses, from massage to so-called happy hours, which are discounts in order to remain competitive fight [9]. Although professionals point out that the closeness and anonymity of the private scene leads to risks, for example in the form of violence towards prostitutes, at the same time this scene can be very difficult to grasp for social and other services and that is why it is not more closely mapped [10].

Lifestyle of women working in the sex business

A lifestyle means a structured complex of relatively stabilized methods of realization of daily activities and practices in various aspects of human existence [11,12] and it results from an individual's position in society [13].

We recognize many typologies of lifestyle/ways of life according to different authors. We state a typology considering consumption and satisfying the needs because the individuals working in the sex business satisfy their needs – especially material needs – with this work. This typology has been stated by, for example, Kubátová [14] who states:

1. A conformist way of life that is closely linked to a cultural value formula and value attitudes of a society, i.e. a person longing for the satisfaction of their needs shall respect the value orientation and the cultural value formula of a society.
2. A hedonistic way of life that is not focused on work but on consumption. A person with a hedonist lifestyle satisfies their needs immediately. However, they should behave faithfully at work.
3. A deviant way of life due to the fact that the interests of society do not conform to the individual's interests, for example also because the society does not enable all individuals to achieve socially set targets. Each class within

the European community has its own symbols and formula of success [15].

From this typology an alternative lifestyle or way of life can also be stated. The term “alternative lifestyle” is most often used in connection with environment or health, however, it is also used as a covering category that also includes the lifestyles of smaller – and in some aspects distinctive – groups. These are women working in the sex business or the sex business itself that can be put into the category of alternative lifestyle [16].

Many authors, such as Green et al. [17], McClanahan et al. [18], Hwang and Bedford [19] and Murphy [20] describe significant differences in the lifestyle of women working in the sex business, i.e. within the above-mentioned hierarchic arrangement. However, generally it can be stated that the lower a woman is within the hierarchic arrangement, the more hazardous her lifestyle can be expected to be [4]. Financial situation and consumption have a significant influence on lifestyle [21]. The sex business is especially connected with the opportunity of easy and high earnings, which is then reflected upon managing the earned money. It therefore often happens that the women suddenly make an unusual amount of money and that is why they tend to invite their friends or even strangers and pay for them. Thereby they lose their earnings quickly [22].

Material and methods

A qualitative research strategy with the technology of biographical-narrative interviews has been used for the implementation of our research. A narrative interview does not confront the subject with standardized questions but it invites them to a completely free narration [23]. When a narrative interview is combined with a biographical one, we gain an informant's interpreted life story [24]. Before the start of the research the informants were instructed about its targets and use and they were given fictitious names to ensure their full anonymity. The basic question for interviews was set as follows: “Describe your day to me, from the morning when you get up until you go to sleep.” The interviews were realized in the period of June–August 2016 and recorded on a Dictaphone under the agreement of the informants, then rewritten word for word and further coded in the Atlas.ti programme. The ascertained data were further processed by means of set theory, namely open coding. Subsequently axial coding was used to find relations between the identified categories.

The research file was formed of 10 women working in the private sex business advertising their services within the South Bohemian Region. To be specific, the advertisements were on the Internet portals of Naprivat.cz and Agamasez-namka.cz.

Results

According to the data analysis, four key categories of lifestyle were identified, which are as follows: addiction, human relations, relation to work and healthy lifestyle. The

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