



from a Social Work Perspective

SEX

WORKER

FROM A SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE SEX WORKER

Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association (2024)

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CONTENT

6 THE SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE ON SEX WORK

- 7 SEX WORK: DEFINITION AND TYPES
- 9 CHALLENGES OF WORKING WITH SEX WORKERS
- 10 ETHICAL ISSUES AND DILEMMAS
- 11 INTERVENTION STRATEGIES
- 13 COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING
- 14 SENSITIVITY AND OVERCOMING BIAS
- 15 CONCLUSION:

16 HUMAN RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS

- 17 HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN SEX WORK
- 22 HUMAN RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS IN LEGAL CONTEXT
- 24 HUMAN RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL WORK

28 HEALTH AND SAFETY OF SEX WORKERS

- 30 SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS
- 32 ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE USE
- 33 ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

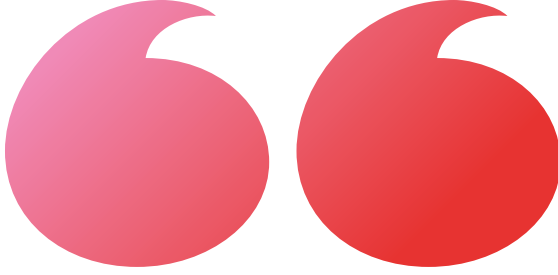
36 THE LEGAL AND JUDICIAL ASPECTS OF SEX WORK

- 37 SEX WORK LAW AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK
- 38 SHORTCOMINGS OF LAWS AND IMPROVEMENTS

41 SOCIAL STIGMA AND EXCLUSION AGAINST SEX WORKERS

- 42 STIGMATIZATION AND STEREOTYPES OF SEX WORK
- 45 COMBATING SOCIAL STIGMA
- 46 PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH IN SOCIETY

50 BIBLIOGRAPHY

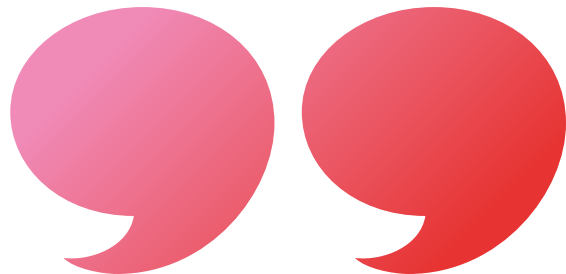


EVERY PERSON'S STORY CARRIES DIFFERENT
TRACES WITHIN THE COMPLEXITY OF LIFE.

SEX WORKERS HAVE OFTEN REMAINED A
MISUNDERSTOOD AND JUDGED SEGMENT OF
SOCIETY. HOWEVER, WHEN YOU BEGIN TO
EXPLORE THE UNIQUENESS OF EACH INDIVIDUAL,
DELVING INTO THE DEPTHS OF THEIR EMOTIONS,
DREAMS, AND THE REALITIES THAT LIE WITHIN
THEIR LIVES, YOU ARE LEFT WITH NO CHOICE BUT
TO QUESTION YOUR OWN PREJUDICES.

LIFE IS A JOURNEY WHERE EACH OF US TOUCHES
OTHERS AND LEARNS FROM ONE ANOTHER.

I HOPE THIS WORK CAN SERVE AS A GUIDING
LIGHT ON THIS JOURNEY FOR THOSE WHO WORK
WITH OR WILL WORK WITH SEX WORKERS, HELPING
US TO SHINE THE LIGHT OF OUR HUMANITY MORE
BRIGHTLY WITHIN OUR INNER DEPTHS.



CHAPTER 1

**THE SOCIAL
WORK
PERSPECTIVE
ON SEX WORK**

The chapter titled "**The Social Work Perspective on Sex Work**" will focus on the challenges, ethical issues, and intervention strategies that social work professionals may encounter when working with sex workers. This chapter will guide professionals in the field of social work to intervene more effectively and humanely in the lives of sex workers and provide a sensitive approach to the subject.

1.1

SEX WORK: DEFINITION AND TYPES

Sex work is a form of labor and employment based on consent, where sexual services are provided in exchange for money or goods. Sex work can have different legal regulations and social perceptions in different countries and societies. While it is legally recognized in some countries (such as the Netherlands, Germany, and New Zealand), it is considered a crime in some places and can lead to social exclusion.

The types of sex work vary based on the services provided by workers:

Physical Sex Work: In this type of sex work, individuals provide sexual intercourse or other sexual activities to clients.

Digital Sex Work: This refers to sex work conducted through the internet and digital platforms. Services such as live camera shows and sharing sexual content through online messaging fall into this category.

Escort Services: Individuals in this type of sex work accompany clients to social events or personal appointments for a fee. They may not necessarily provide sexual services, but in some cases, they might.

Pornography: Another form of sex work is working in the pornography industry. Actors earn money by performing in various sexual content.

The Role and Importance of Social Workers Working with Sex Workers

Social workers play a significant role in working with sex workers and help meet the needs of this marginalized group in society. The role of these professionals can be summarized as follows:

Support and Counseling: Social workers provide emotional support to sex workers and offer counseling services to help them cope with the challenges they face. This is crucial for individuals working in psychologically, socially, and economically challenging conditions.

Risk Reduction and Ensuring Safety: Social workers take various measures to keep sex workers safe and develop strategies to reduce risks. This includes prevention of sexually transmitted infections, reducing physical violence, and ensuring safe working conditions.

Facilitating Access to Services: Social workers assist sex workers in accessing necessary services such as healthcare, housing opportunities, education, and vocational support, aiming to improve their quality of life.

Increasing Awareness in the Community: Social workers conduct education and awareness-raising activities to increase awareness of sex work in society. This helps reduce negative prejudices against sex workers and encourages people to develop a more empathetic perspective.

Advocacy and Policy Change: Social workers advocate for fair and human rights-based policies and legal regulations regarding sex work and strive for changes to be implemented. This is an important step in protecting the rights of sex workers.

In conclusion, the role and importance of social workers working with sex workers constitute a significant effort to improve the living conditions of this social group. Social workers adopt a professional approach that respects the rights of sex workers and provides them with understanding and support, thus contributing to a healthier and more dignified life for sex workers.

CHALLENGES OF WORKING WITH SEX WORKERS

As social workers, we may encounter a range of specific challenges when working with sex workers. These challenges can vary from the stigma faced by this social group to safety risks and legal barriers. Additionally, we may need to cope with professional burnout and personal subjective difficulties while working in this field.

- **Stigma and Social Exclusion:** Sex work still carries a heavy stigma and social exclusion in society. Sex workers may struggle with negative stereotypes across society, leading to social isolation. This can have adverse effects on the safety and well-being of sex workers and may lead to reluctance in engaging with social workers.
- **Safety Risks and Hazards:** Sex workers may face safety risks and hazards in their working environments. They are at risk of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as violence. As social workers, it requires us to take specific measures to protect individuals and mitigate risks.
- **Legal Barriers and Discrimination:** Sex work may be subject to legal regulations or considered a crime in many countries. Legal barriers and discrimination can make it difficult for sex workers to exercise their legal rights and make them vulnerable. As social workers, we should help sex workers understand their legal rights, connect them with legal support services, and ensure fair treatment.
- **Professional Burnout and Subjective Challenges:** Working with sex workers can be emotionally and mentally intense for social workers. The challenges, pain, and trauma experienced by sex workers can also affect social workers. Coping with professional burnout and subjective challenges reminds us of the importance of preserving our emotional well-being to provide interventions aligned with ethical values.

To address these challenges, social workers should approach with empathy and understanding, prioritizing individuals' needs and priorities. Equipped with strong ethical values, we strive to support the respect

for human rights of sex workers, access to safe and healthy working conditions, and reduction of social exclusion. Additionally, emphasizing teamwork, we collaborate with other professional groups and institutions to provide comprehensive support to sex workers. These efforts are crucial steps towards improving the quality of life for sex workers and protecting their human rights.

1.3.

ETHICAL ISSUES AND DILEMMAS

As social workers, there are significant ethical issues and dilemmas we may encounter when working with sex workers. These topics include sensitive issues such as consent and conflicts of values, balancing sex workers' right to self-determination and autonomy with compulsory intervention and individual preferences.

- **Consent and Conflicts of Values:** Working with sex workers may confront us with conflicts between our personal values and attitudes towards consent. The stigma surrounding sex work in society can lead to various attitudes among social workers. Conflicts of values and approval can influence how we approach and support sex workers. In such situations, it's important to remain true to our ethical values, work with individuals free from prejudice, and demonstrate an empathetic perspective.

- **Sex Workers' Right to Self-Determination and Autonomy:** Sex workers have the right to determine their own lives and career choices. However, there may be instances where society, and even social workers, may question or feel compelled to intervene in these decisions. This can present ethical issues concerning sex workers' right to self-determination and autonomy. As social workers, we should respect individuals' choices, provide supportive interventions tailored to their needs, and respect their freedom of will without interference.

- **Compulsory Intervention and Individual Preferences:** While working with sex workers, there may be situations where compulsory intervention is necessary due to urgent concerns such as safety or health. However, compulsory intervention may occur without considering individuals' preferences. This situation may conflict with principles of respecting the autonomy of sex workers and not interfering with their individual choices. Therefore, compulsory interventions should be carefully evaluated and implemented only in vital circumstances.

In conclusion, dealing with ethical issues and dilemmas requires a careful and sensitive approach when working with sex workers. As social workers, we must rid ourselves of biases, respect individuals' right to self-determination, and base our interventions on their needs and preferences. By adhering to our ethical values, we focus on ensuring the safety, well-being, and protection of human rights for sex workers. In doing so, we take an important step towards better understanding the lives of sex workers and providing them with more effective support.

1.4.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Developing effective and supportive intervention strategies while working with sex workers is an important task for social workers. We can implement the following intervention strategies to improve the quality of life and ensure the safety of sex workers:


- **Education and Awareness:** Providing education and raising awareness about the rights, health, and safety of sex workers is an effective strategy. Equipping them with knowledge about human rights and understanding legal rights and protection mechanisms can be helpful. Additionally, organizing training sessions on preventing sexually transmitted infections, ensuring safe working conditions, and other risk reduction methods can support their health and safety.

- **Risk Reduction and Safety Measures:** Sex workers may face various risks in their working environments. As social workers, we can develop strategies to reduce these risks. For example, we can enhance

their safety by establishing security protocols and ensuring access to safe working spaces. Moreover, we can guide individuals on how to react in risky situations and how to ensure their safety.

- **Health Services and Counseling:** Facilitating access to health services for sex workers plays a significant role in maintaining their health. Providing information on preventive health services such as regular health check-ups and screening tests for sexually transmitted infections can support their health. Additionally, offering counseling services for emotional and psychological support can enhance their emotional well-being.

- **Strengthening Community Support and Connections:** Having access to community support and connections helps reduce social isolation and provides support for sex workers. As social workers, we can connect sex workers with social support networks and strengthen their connections with community groups, NGOs, and other support services. This contributes to meeting their emotional and social needs.



In conclusion, developing effective intervention strategies while working with sex workers is crucial for improving their quality of life and ensuring their safety. By providing education and awareness, implementing risk reduction and safety measures, offering health services and counseling, and strengthening community support, we contribute to empowering sex workers. These strategies are important steps towards protecting their human rights and enabling them to lead better lives in society.

1.5.

COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING

When working with sex workers, the importance of collaboration and networking for an effective social work approach cannot be overstated. Collaborating with other professions and institutions, joining civil society organizations and support networks, and advocating for policy and legal changes are crucial steps that contribute to protecting the rights and improving the living conditions of sex workers.

- **Collaboration with Other Professions and Institutions:** Social workers should collaborate with other professions and institutions when working with sex workers. This involves communication and coordination with healthcare professionals, psychologists, lawyers, shelter services, and other experts who provide social support. This collaboration ensures that the diverse needs of sex workers are met more comprehensively and effectively.
- **Civil Society Organizations and Support Networks:** Social workers should connect with civil society organizations and support networks for sex workers. These organizations provide emotional, financial, and legal support to sex workers, helping them to become stronger and more protected in society. Through the services they provide, social isolation among sex workers is reduced, and they receive the support they need.
- **Advocacy for Policy and Legal Changes:** Advocating for policy and legal changes to improve the rights and living conditions of sex workers plays a significant role. Social workers can demand policy changes to reduce discrimination and difficulties faced by sex workers in society and work towards ensuring that legal regulations are in line with human rights. Such advocacy efforts can contribute to improving the lives of sex workers and gaining societal acceptance.

Collaboration and networking contribute to empowering sex workers and enabling social workers to provide effective support. These approaches ensure that the needs of sex workers are addressed more comprehensively and promote a societal approach that respects human rights. By working collaboratively, social workers can help reduce negative biases against sex workers and promote a more inclusive approach in society. In this way, we make significant contributions to supporting and empowering sex workers prioritizing their human rights.

SENSITIVITY AND OVERCOMING BIAS

When working with sex workers, overcoming sensitivity and prejudice is an important task for social workers. This involves developing the ability to empathize with individuals, recognizing our own biases, and demonstrating cultural and social sensitivity.

- **Education and Increasing Awareness:** The first step in overcoming sensitivity and prejudice is education and increasing awareness. Being knowledgeable about the challenges, experiences, and rights of sex workers helps us understand them better. By educating ourselves about different types of sex work, working conditions, and issues of social exclusion, we can develop a more empathetic perspective and provide more sensitive services.

- **Confronting Our Own Biases:** Everyone has biases, and social workers are no exception. However, these biases can hinder us from providing services impartially and fairly when working with sex workers. Confronting our own biases involves becoming aware of them and supporting individuals objectively without being influenced by these biases. Sensitivity and empathy play an important role in reducing our biases.

- **Cultural and Social Sensitivity:** Sex workers come from different cultures, social backgrounds, gender identities, and sexual orientations. Therefore, it's important to demonstrate cultural and social sensitivity, understanding, and respect. This means respecting individuals' values, beliefs, and lifestyles. Considering cultural and social diversity makes it easier to provide appropriate support to sex workers and gain their trust.

Overcoming sensitivity and prejudice is a fundamental aspect of being an effective social worker. When working with sex workers, we must respect human rights, set aside our personal values in favor of individuals' needs and preferences, and support them in an objective and impartial manner. By showing sensitivity and empathy, we gain the trust of sex workers and play a more effective role in improving their quality of life. Additionally, by demonstrating cultural and social sensitivity, we understand and respect the differences of each individual. Such an approach helps us positively impact the lives of sex workers and assist them in becoming more empowered.

CONCLUSION:

The evolving dynamics of sex work and the social work field enable the empowerment of social workers' roles and the promotion of a more inclusive approach in society, allowing for effective and dignified support for sex workers in the future.

- **Changing Dynamics in Sex Work and Social Work Field:** Sex work is influenced by social, political, and economic changes. In the future, the dynamics of this field will continue to evolve, presenting social workers with new challenges. Factors such as legal regulations, societal attitudes, and working conditions in sex work will require social workers to continually reassess their strategies.

- **Strengthening the Role of Social Workers:** The role of social workers is crucial in providing effective support for sex workers, and this role will need to be strengthened in the future. This can be achieved by obtaining comprehensive training, developing intervention strategies tailored to the needs of sex workers, and collaborating with other professional groups and organizations. Social workers should engage in raising awareness and sensitivity among various segments of society to contribute to supporting sex workers in a manner respectful of their human rights.

- **Promoting a More Inclusive Approach in Society:** Promoting a more inclusive approach in society in the future plays a significant role in reducing social exclusion and discrimination against sex workers. Social workers can contribute to this by conducting education and awareness campaigns targeting different segments of society, thereby reducing prejudices and promoting a societal approach respectful of human rights. This facilitates better integration of sex workers into society and more effectively meets their needs.

In conclusion, the changing dynamics of sex work and the social work field require the empowerment of social workers' roles and the promotion of a more inclusive approach in society. Social workers should prioritize supporting sex workers in a manner consistent with ethical values and strive to improve their living conditions. In the future, the widespread adoption of a more empathetic, aware, and equitable approach to all members of society will make significant contributions to empowering and supporting sex workers.

CHAPTER 2

HUMAN RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS

In this section, the importance of addressing sex work from a human rights perspective will be emphasized. Sex workers face issues such as discrimination, exploitation, and violence. This topic, which will also be examined in a legal context, will be approached as a matter of social justice and human rights that necessitates respect for and protection of the human rights of sex workers.

When the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) examines sex work from a human rights perspective, it focuses on the following issues: equality and discrimination, representation, bodily autonomy, privacy, and free decision-making. It underscores the need to ensure the human rights of sex workers throughout these processes, including the highest standards of health and the right to be protected from violence. Sex workers encounter various types of human rights violations in their daily lives.

2.1

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN SEX WORK

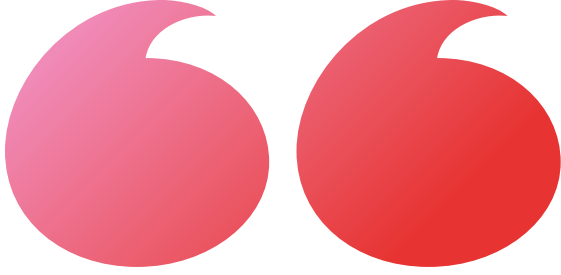
A. Discrimination:

Sex workers can be targets of discrimination throughout society. Due to their profession and lifestyle, they may face social exclusion and discrimination. Legal regulations, societal attitudes, and prejudices can limit sex workers' access to basic human rights and their right to equal treatment.

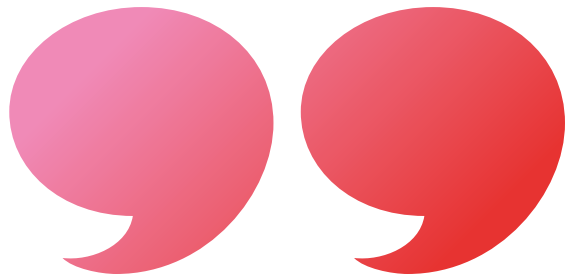
There are various reasons for the discrimination experienced by sex workers. Social prejudices and moral stigmatization may stem from cultural and societal norms that tend to view sex work as taboo or criminal. Additionally, the lack or ambiguity of legal regulations may not only fail to protect sex workers but also negatively affect their working conditions. Furthermore, economic necessities and limited opportunities for education and employment can lead individuals to engage in sex work. Many individuals face difficulties in accessing existing opportunities due to their gender identity and sexual orientation. For example, according to a survey conducted by the Red Umbrella Association with 132 sex workers in 2022, *when asked to provide solutions to the problems they face while practicing their profession, sex workers*

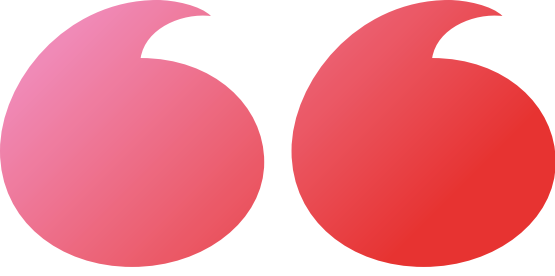
mentioned the need for widespread dissemination of educational content on sexual identity, sexual orientation, and sexual health, providing training to healthcare personnel and law enforcement officers, opening up different employment opportunities for sex workers, facilitating access to sexual health materials and gender affirmation processes by the state, improving the legal framework regarding sex work, putting an end to arbitrary law enforcement, strengthening access to justice and healthcare services, eliminating the threat of violence, and preparing protective legal regulations.

Additionally, most of the sex workers who participated in the study continued with the following statements:

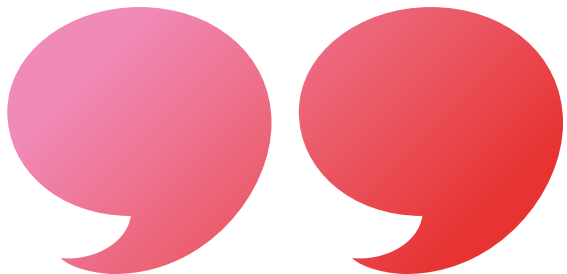


**JOB OPPORTUNITIES
SHOULD BE PROVIDED.
THERE SHOULD BE
FREEDOM. EQUAL
RIGHTS SHOULD
EXIST FOR EVERYONE.
THE GOVERNMENT
SHOULD PROVIDE
SUPPORT AND CREATE
JOB OPPORTUNITIES.**





**I WOULD CHANGE THE
LAW. I WOULD MAKE
REGULATIONS TO ENSURE
THAT NO GENDER
FACES DISCRIMINATION
IN HUMAN RIGHTS.
NO ONE SHOULD
BE DISCRIMINATED
AGAINST BASED ON
THEIR ORIENTATION AND
IDENTITY.**



The consequences of this discrimination can have profound effects. Sex workers may experience social exclusion due to the discrimination and stigma they face. This situation can lead to psychological stress, mental health issues, and emotional difficulties. Additionally, their access to healthcare services may be limited, and their rights to legal protection and access to justice may be restricted.

From a human rights perspective, fair legal regulations and policies are necessary to prevent the discrimination and violations of rights experienced by sex workers. These individuals should be treated with respect for their human rights, and they should be provided with equal rights and opportunities. Furthermore, efforts should be made to reduce prejudices and prevent discrimination through social awareness and educational activities. This way, sex workers can have the chance to live and work in an environment where their rights are respected, just like everyone else.

B. Exploitation and Violence:

Sex workers may face the risk of sexual exploitation, harassment, and violence in their working environments. Physical, sexual, and emotional exploitation can lead to the violation of sex workers' human rights. Moreover, the disregard of violence by legal regulations and protective mechanisms can endanger the safety of sex workers.

Sex workers are often confronted with risks of sexual exploitation, harassment, and violence, and this issue should generally be examined from a legal perspective. First and foremost, cases of violence and exploitation against sex workers need to be addressed within a legal framework. This may involve reviewing existing laws and making necessary adjustments. Sex workers require legal protections to be able to carry out their work in a safe environment. Additionally, it is important to strengthen access to justice in cases of violence or exploitation.

From a human rights perspective, various recommendations exist for addressing these issues. Firstly, respect for the human rights of sex workers should be upheld and protected. Legal regulations should aim to ensure justice and protection for individuals engaged in sex work. Furthermore, social services such as counseling, support, and safe housing options should be provided to these individuals.

Education and awareness also play a significant role. Education programs should be organized in society to reduce prejudices about sex work and prevent discrimination against these individuals. Additionally, it is import-

ant to train and increase the sensitivity of relevant actors such as law enforcement and justice institutions.

In conclusion, addressing the risks of exploitation and violence faced by sex workers requires not only legal regulations but also approaches based on respect for human rights and protection. This way, sex workers can have the opportunity to live and work in a safe environment where their rights are respected, just like other individuals.

2.2.

HUMAN RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS IN LEGAL CONTEXT:

A. Universal Declaration of Human Rights and CEDAW:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are important references for protecting the human rights of sex workers.

These documents lay the foundation for significant international steps to protect the human rights of sex workers. Here is how the rights of sex workers can be safeguarded within the framework of these documents and the important international steps:

- **Combatting Equality and Discrimination:** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and CEDAW emphasize the principle of equality and the prevention of gender discrimination. Within this framework, it is stated that all individuals, including sex workers, are entitled to equal rights and should not be subjected to discrimination.
- **Respect for Human Dignity and Fair Treatment:** These documents emphasize that every individual deserves to be treated with respect for human dignity and to receive fair treatment. It is strongly emphasized that sex workers should also have these fundamental rights.
- **Protection and Justice:** International documents aim to ensure access to justice for sex workers in cases of violence, abuse, and discrimination. It is recommended that legal regulations be established to protect these individuals and provide justice when needed.

- **Education and Awareness:** Documents and conventions highlight the importance of education and awareness-raising efforts in reducing misconceptions about sex work in society and preventing discrimination against these individuals.

These documents suggest that countries should enact national legal regulations and develop policies to protect the rights of sex workers. Additionally, international cooperation and information sharing are important steps for protecting and supporting the human rights of sex workers. It is important for the international community to actively work to protect the rights of sex workers based on these documents. This is an important step in preventing human rights violations and making the lives of sex workers safer.

B. National Legal Regulations:

States have failed to ensure that sex workers fully enjoy their human rights without discrimination. Regulations regarding sex work can often be defined within gray areas that fall between legal and illegal domains, adding to the complexity of the systems. This situation not only leads to legal uncertainties but also frequently results in violations of universal human rights standards. Furthermore, the implementation of various policies concerning street-based sex workers, who are one of the most vulnerable groups, is often characterized by arbitrary power exercised by law enforcement agencies, legislative bodies, or social welfare institutions. Discriminatory laws against LGBTIQ+ communities, restrictive immigration policies, the conflation of sex work with sex trafficking, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health rights in many countries all contribute to the disadvantaged position of sex workers. The regulatory approach aimed at controlling sex work, known as legalization, has many problematic aspects that lead to the violation of sex workers' rights. There are many arbitrary practices that violate human rights regarding who can engage in sex work, where, and how, often leaving many sex workers outside the scope of legality.

Countries like New Zealand, the Netherlands, Denmark, and certain regions in Australia do not criminalize sex work or consider it an activity requiring punitive state intervention, instead regulating it through administrative provisions such as licensing or zoning, effectively decriminalizing or legalizing it (Amnesty International, Body Politics).

It is important to educate and sensitize oversight mechanisms (law enforcement) and communities (community members, health service providers, media) to ensure that they are aware of sex workers' rights and their responsibilities regarding human rights violations.

Providing support services such as safe housing, healthcare, and counseling for sex workers is imperative for fostering a societal approach that respects human rights.

2.3.

HUMAN RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL WORK

Human rights refer to the rights inherent to all human beings simply because they are human. The rights-based approach, advocating that social services are the right of every person in need, is the prevailing approach in contemporary social work. Moreover, the theory, ethics, values, and practices of social work begin with the acceptance of human rights. The discourse of human rights in social work emphasizes the identification and support of fundamental rights and underscores the necessity of ensuring that every individual enjoys these rights without discrimination.

Social work, aiming to establish a fair social structure within society and to protect human dignity and honor by providing them with opportunities for protection and development, is considered a human rights profession, based on the acknowledgment of the value of every individual (IFSW, 1988).

Sex work is one of the most stigmatized and discriminated professions. In most parts of the world, theories, regulations, policies, and various practices work 'against' sex workers.

Due to human rights violations, sex workers are subjected to exploitation, violence, stigmatization, and discrimination by their clients, members of society, their families, and even the police.

They are often HELD RESPONSIBLE for the stigma, exploitation, and violence they experience.

To illustrate the stigma, exploitation, and violence to which sex workers are subjected, one can refer to a study conducted by the Red Umbrella Association in 2022 with 132 sex workers.

*According to the responses given to the question **"Do you feel safe while practicing your profession?"**, **103 participants (68.93%) answered "No"**, while **11 people (8.33%) answered "Partially"**. Those who answered "No" generally mentioned the negative attitudes of customers and law enforcement officers. Those who answered "Partially" stated that their sense of safety varied depending on the circumstances.*

*Within the scope of the research, **87 people (65.90%) stated that they were subjected to physical, sexual, or verbal abuse by customers, while 44 people (33.33%) answered "No"**. There is 1 participant who did not want to answer the question. Some of the participants who answered "Yes" also noted that they did not report the abuse they experienced to any institution and even if they did, they did not get any results. This situation is important in showing that sex workers are excluded from access to justice mechanisms. Legal regulations that carry the spirit of punishing sex work and different sexual identities make the subjects who have been violated reluctant to access justice. Furthermore, the experiences of sex workers in accessing justice indicate a widespread discrimination phenomenon. For example, **out of the 48 people who answered "Yes" to the question "Have you ever been sexually assaulted?"**, 26 stated that they did not seek help from any health institution or protection mechanism after being sexually assaulted.*

*The research highlighted the problems experienced by sex workers. In this context, the main problems can be grouped under the titles of **"lack of trust"**, **"violence and discrimination"**, and **"lack of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections and hygiene problems"**. While 46 people (36.36%) mentioned the lack of trust when discussing their problems, 33 people (25.75%) talked about*

their experiences of violence and discrimination, and 24 people (18.18%) mentioned the lack of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections and hygiene problems. Additionally, 29 people preferred not to answer the question.

Based on the findings of this research, it is evident that sex workers are deprived of their fundamental human rights. As a first step, sex work should be recognized as a profession. Social workers aim to secure the working and human rights of sex workers rather than attempting to "rescue" or rehabilitate them (Gil, 2021). Sex workers need supportive policies instead of being blamed or criminalized due to the violence they face.

Through legal regulations and policies, sex workers should have and be able to advocate for their rights as humans and workers. Social work professionals should actively participate in such macro changes. Considering that legal regulations and policies perpetuate human rights violations against sex workers, especially social work professionals should be more involved in policy-making, strive to prevent human rights violations against sex workers, and advocate for their rights on different platforms.

Research by Amnesty International shows that even in countries where sex work is legal, sex workers often receive little or no legal protection. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in the United States supports laws that provide equal opportunities to protect sex workers from violence.

Awareness among mental health practitioners regarding sex workers should be increased, and the professional principles and responsibilities discussed when working with this group should be adopted. Due to a lack of education and training regarding the unique experiences, special needs, and strengths of sex worker clients, stigmatization is common among mental health professionals, which can result in practices such as premature termination, unfair, and unethical treatment that may harm clients (Hasdemir, 2020). This creates a reluctance and difficulty for sex workers to access mental health services.



Conclusion:

This section emphasizes that respecting the human rights of sex workers is a matter of social justice and human rights. Issues such as discrimination, exploitation, and violence have been addressed in the legal context, and steps to be taken at the international and national levels to respect the human rights of sex workers have been emphasized. Respecting the rights of sex workers will contribute to promoting a more inclusive approach in society. As social work professionals, we must strive to protect and support the human rights of sex workers and raise awareness in society on this issue.

CHAPTER 3

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF SEX WORKERS

This chapter will focus on the health and safety needs of sex workers. Sex workers are exposed to a range of health and safety risks in their work environments. Issues such as sexually transmitted infections, addiction, protection methods, and access to health services are critically important for the health and safety of sex workers. This chapter will examine these issues in detail and emphasize how the health and safety needs of sex workers can be met.

"Health services must be accessible, non-coercive, and able to respond to the various needs of sex workers. Health is not merely the absence of illness. Well-being is important for all sex workers, and they should have access to inclusive health services that are accessible, non-stigmatizing, and fully encompass their right to access health care. These services include non-discriminatory sexual and reproductive health services, psychological and psychosocial support, specialized health services, and access to justice and social protection. Sex workers are not carriers of disease and should not be treated as such by the health system."

(West, 2021, Chapter 1)

"Establishing trust and partnership between the health system and organizations led by sex workers is important. Non-stigmatizing and non-discriminatory approaches are best developed for and with sex workers and community-led organizations led by sex workers. To establish more nuanced and non-stigmatizing relationships between health service providers and sex workers, continuous education on sex workers' experiences, expertise, and needs should be provided to service providers through community-led initiatives. Understanding health inequities and the needs of key populations, including sex workers, should also be fundamental components of medical education."

(Goldenberg, 2021)

"Regardless of migration status or internal mobility, ensuring access to health services and social support for sex workers is equally important. Sex workers need to access critical social services, including housing rights, food support, basic income, and employment insurance support, as well as other vital social services, including support for victims of violence. Despite this need, migrant and mobile sex workers are often unjustly excluded due to eligibility restrictions, stigma, and the lack of recognition of sex work as work. Urgent policy reforms are particularly needed to ensure the provision of these protections for migrant and mobile sex workers who often cannot access health and social services and local registration and/or immigration status-dependent protection programs."

(West, 2021, Chapter 1)

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS:

A. HIV and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections:

Sex workers are at a higher risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Infections such as HIV, syphilis, chlamydia, and hepatitis pose significant risks to the health of sex workers. In this section, the importance of raising awareness among sex workers about STIs, prevention methods, and regular health screenings will be emphasized, and recommendations will be provided for ensuring their access to health services.

Prevention and Safe Sex:

It is important for sex workers to be knowledgeable about safe sex and prevention methods in order to protect their own health. The use of condoms, as well as prevention methods like Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), helps sex workers protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections.

PeP and PrEP:

- PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) and PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) are medications used as tools for protection after risky behaviors.
- PEP, recommended for use only after emergencies, can be taken within 72 hours (3 days) after a potential exposure to HIV (such as condom breakage, sexual assault, etc.) and should be taken for 28 days. If cells have been exposed to HIV after a suspected/risky behavior, PEP helps prevent HIV from replicating and spreading.
- In Turkey, PEP can be prescribed for free only for healthcare workers due to occupational exposure.
- PrEP, on the other hand, is a preventive method that can be used before risky exposure. It is a method for individuals at high risk of HIV transmission through sexual intercourse or needle sharing to prevent HIV transmission.
- When used as prescribed by your doctor, PrEP can prevent HIV transmission through sexual intercourse by up to 99%.
- It's important to note that PEP and PrEP are not effective in preventing pregnancy or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The most effective way to prevent unwanted pregnancies and STIs is by using condoms.

Kondom Use:

The most effective method known to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancy is the use of condoms.

There are two types of condoms:

- a) External condom
- b) Internal condom

- The external condom, which is more commonly found on the market, is the most well-known type of condom. It is cheaper and more accessible, often used by sexual partners.
- On the other hand, the internal condom is less known compared to the external condom. It is less commonly found on the market and tends to be more expensive. However, due to its functionality, it is highly useful and beneficial.
- The internal condom is made of polyurethane. In recent years, some companies have also started producing internal condoms using latex. Additionally, it is effective in protecting against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

How to Use a Condom:

- Take the condom packet in your hand and check the expiration date. If the expiration date has not passed, you can use the condom.
- Make sure the condom packet is undamaged and not torn.
- Do not open the condom packet in a way that could damage it with your teeth or nails. Take care not to tear the condom.
- After removing the condom from the packet, check which way it is rolled.
- Put on the condom when your or your partner's penis is erect.
- When putting on the condom, squeeze the tip to remove any air and ensure there is no air inside.
- Hold the condom by the tip with your fingers and roll it down with your other hand.
- If needed, you can apply water-based lubricant on the condom after putting it on. Do not apply lubricant to your or your partner's penis before putting on the condom.
- After ejaculation, while the penis is still erect, preferably using a tissue, remove the condom. Take care not to touch your partner and prevent semen from spilling.
- After removing the condom, dispose of it in a trash can. Never reuse a used condom. Do not flush the condom down the toilet.
- Do not expose your condoms to direct sunlight or room light!

- Store your condoms in a dry and cool environment!
- **Using two condoms stacked on top of each other is not the correct usage!** This type of use does not provide better protection; instead, it can cause friction between the two condoms, leading to tears and allowing sexually transmitted infections to enter your body easily.
- Using lubricant with a condom is important. Especially in anal and vaginal intercourse, the use of water-based or silicone-based lubricants will prevent tearing or irritation due to dryness in the anal or vaginal area. **Products such as oil, Vaseline, or skin cream can cause the latex to deteriorate and tear.**
- We recommend using a condom during oral sex.
- **Please do not use condoms that have passed their expiration date!**
- Even if you use condoms during sexual intercourse, it is important to get tested at relevant healthcare facilities at regular intervals.

3.2

ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE USE:

Sex workers may turn to substance use to cope with job stress, social exclusion, and other challenges. Addiction adversely affects the physical and psychological health of sex workers and increases safety risks. This section will emphasize the importance of sex workers gaining awareness of the risks of substance use, being supported in combating addiction, and ensuring access to treatment.

Among the potential harms of illegal drug use for sex work, increased vulnerability to HIV or other STIs, violence, stigma and discrimination, criminalization, and exploitation are assessed (West, 2021). For example, both illegal and legal drug use can be associated with increased violence against sex workers. Perpetrators of violence include clients, police, and strangers, and violence occurs in various settings and contexts. A study conducted in America shows a high association between heroin use and sex work in drug houses perpetrated by clients.

Combatting addiction and accessing treatment is crucial for sex workers' health and safety. Facilitating access to treatment and support services will help sex workers combat addiction and improve their health.

ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES:

There are several factors that hinder sex workers' access to health services. Stigma, legal barriers, and financial constraints make it difficult for sex workers to access health services. This section will emphasize measures that can be taken to overcome barriers to accessing health services and promote more inclusive health service delivery in society.

It is important for sex workers to access health services in confidentiality and safety. Healthcare providers avoiding discrimination based on characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, and occupation, and providing services in accordance with the principle of confidentiality, will contribute to meeting the health and safety needs of sex workers more effectively.

In systems where sex work is legalized, sex workers are expected to undergo regular health screenings for sexually transmitted infections. However, focusing solely on sexually transmitted infections rather than conducting a general health examination can be considered as governments perceive sex workers as potential transmitters rather than trying to protect them from these infections. In this way, governments are trying to protect other individuals from being infected by sex workers. **Thus, sex workers are seen more as a problem rather than a part of the solution regarding these infections.**

However, sex workers who are knowledgeable about and equipped with necessary tools regarding sexually transmitted infections can protect themselves and their clients when they are able to negotiate. However, despite sex workers' desire to practice safe sex methods, some clients obstruct the use of these methods because they believe they have the right to have sex as they please. As an example of this obstruction, referring to a study conducted by the Red Umbrella Association with 132 sex workers in 2022:

The most basic method of protection for sexual and reproductive health is condom use. In this context, the question "Do you engage in intercourse with your clients using condoms?" was included in the survey questions to measure the awareness level of sex workers. 115

individuals (87.12%) stated that they engage in intercourse with their clients using condoms, while 17 participants (12.87%) said they do not use condoms. The issue of not using condoms is mostly based on financial constraints. Factors such as having a reliable and regular client, client coercion, or charging extra fees stand out among sex workers who do not use condoms.

There is no system in place to empower sex workers and ensure the practice of safe sex practices to protect their health. Additionally, there are other professions such as doctors, nurses, and hospital staff who may also transmit these infections, but they are not required to undergo such screenings, reflecting discriminatory and coercive practices within the system towards sex workers. Such practices and the fear of rejection, abuse, and stigma by healthcare personnel can hinder sex workers' seeking treatment, make them reluctant to disclose their profession when receiving healthcare, lead them to remain undocumented, and thus, put them at even greater risk. To support this, an example from the research conducted by the Red Umbrella Association in 2022 with 132 sex workers can be provided.

*According to the research, **59 participants (44.69%)** stated that they concealed their profession when applying to healthcare institutions. Participants who mentioned hiding their profession or identity believed that they would not receive services if they did not resort to this measure. On the other hand, **71 participants (53.78%)** stated that they did not conceal their profession or identity. **These participants mentioned that if they concealed their profession or identity, they would not receive the appropriate service.***

In order to create a world where sex workers are not subjected to discrimination, violence, and pressure in the healthcare sector, social workers should fulfill their professional roles and responsibilities, raise awareness about the issue, and advocate for policies aimed at increasing the number of Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centers designed for sex workers.

This section has focused on the health and safety needs of sex workers, examining important issues such as sexually transmitted infections, addiction, prevention methods, and access to healthcare. The discus-

sion has emphasized how these needs can be met from a health and safety perspective and highlighted the crucial steps that need to be taken to support sex workers in accordance with their human rights. As social workers, we must strive to protect and support the health and safety of sex workers and raise awareness in society about this issue. Facilitating access to healthcare, increasing access to prevention methods, and supporting efforts to combat addiction will contribute to sex workers living healthy and safe lives.

CHAPTER 4

THE LEGAL AND JUDICIAL ASPECTS OF SEX WORK

This section will address the legal and judicial aspects of sex work. Sex workers operate under the influence of legal regulations, and these regulations directly impact their rights and livelihoods. The effects of laws on sex workers will be examined, and the deficiencies in the current legal framework will be discussed. Additionally, the focus will be on the improvements needed to support sex workers in a manner that respects their human rights.

4.1.

SEX WORK LAW AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK:

Sex work law has been approached with various perspectives throughout history.

Legal regulations can affect the rights of sex workers and respect for human rights. The impact of laws on sex workers' working conditions, access to health services, and safety will be discussed, and the weaknesses of the current legal framework will be highlighted.

The decriminalization of sex work removes it from being considered a crime, enhancing the safety of sex workers. Human Rights Watch has consistently found in its research across various countries that criminalization makes sex workers more vulnerable to violence, including rape, assault, and murder. Due to the low likelihood of seeking help from the police, sex workers can be easily targeted. The indirect criminalization of sex work exposes sex workers to exploitation by law enforcement officers, such as police officers. Reports of robbery, harassment, and physical and verbal abuse against sex workers by police officers are widespread. Criminalization marginalizes sex workers.

For example, in Sweden, where the Nordic Model emerged, sex workers say that the policy resulted in the displacement of sex work to clients' homes due to the fear of client arrests. However, this change means that sex workers would have fewer escape options in case of violence by a client. However, it should not be overlooked that even in regions where sex work is decriminalized, sex workers may still face extraordinary risks such as assault and murder. For instance, in Austria

and the Netherlands, it has been found that legalizing and regulating sex work did not reduce the prevalence of illegal practices, thus not improving the exploitative working conditions for sex workers (Withers, 2022).

Data analysis from 27 European countries has shown that in countries where sex work is partially or fully decriminalized, female sex workers have a lower HIV burden compared to countries where it is criminalized (West, 2021, page 110).

4.2.

SHORTCOMINGS OF LAWS AND IMPROVEMENTS:

It is crucial to evaluate sex work laws from a human rights perspective. Laws should be designed in a way that respects sex workers' right to self-determination, autonomy, and fundamental rights.

There are different approaches and models regarding the legal regulations of sex work.

A few countries claim to shift criminal responsibility away from sex workers by directing sanctions towards individuals buying or attempting to buy sexual services. This approach, occasionally referred to as the "Swedish Model," as it was adopted by Sweden in 1999, has since been adopted by Norway, Iceland, Northern Ireland, and France. Such laws are typically based on the view that sex workers are "victims" of non-consensual sexual exploitation and that all sexual interactions within the context of sex work constitute coercion and gender-based violence (Amnesty International, Body Politics).

It is essential to make changes to legal regulations to protect the rights of sex workers and promote an approach that respects human rights.

Increasing societal awareness and conducting educational campaigns are crucial for effectively improving sex work laws. Evaluating how laws affect the lives of sex workers and assessing them from a human rights perspective contribute to promoting a more inclusive approach in society.

Sex work legislation and practices are among the most significant factors that can either protect or violate the rights to sexual health, reproductive health, and access to justice. Within this framework, this section of the study will evaluate legal regulations and practices.

In Turkey, sex work can legally be conducted in registered brothels thanks to legal regulations such as the Umumi Hifzısıhha Law enacted in 1930, the Circular on Combatting Prostitution, and the Regulations on Combatting Venereal Diseases Transmitted Through Prostitution dated 1933. The General Provisions Applicable to Women and Brothels and the Regulations on Combatting Venereal Diseases Transmitted Through Prostitution, enacted in 1961, made comprehensive changes to sex work legislation. These regulations are still in force today. According to these regulations, Venereal Diseases and Prostitution Control Commissions, which decide on law enforcement practices concerning sex workers, have been established under the governorships in provincial centers and under the district governorships in districts. These commissions, stated to have been established to prevent the disruption of public order, aim to regulate and control "prostitution" and sexually transmitted infections. **The regulation is written in a sexist language, aiming to oppress and control sex workers working in brothels. It focuses only on sex workers assigned the female gender and completely ignores transgender women. In short, it is a legally blind text in terms of inclusivity and sexual identity.**

The 15th article of the regulation defines sex work as: "Women who make a profession out of satisfying the sexual pleasures of others for benefit and who have intercourse with different men are referred to as common women." According to the regulation, the commissions established are tasked with taking necessary measures to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases due to prostitution. The executive authority of these commissions includes "identifying and registering brothels, revealing places where secret prostitution takes place, bringing individuals who need examination, and closing places that need to be closed."

Additionally, according to the fourth paragraph of the Social Security and General Health Insurance Law, "common women" are considered fully insured. This paragraph ensures that sex workers have the same rights as insured individuals, but sexually transmitted infections are not considered occupational diseases. This results in sex workers carrying any sexually transmitted infections not being eligible for compensa-

tion for incapacity for work. Furthermore, sex workers who are expelled from the profession are not granted the right to disability retirement. These legal regulations and practices indicate the absence of a fundamental human rights approach to access to sexual and reproductive health rights.

The Turkish Penal Code does not directly define sex work as a crime. However, many articles in the law are of a nature that would lead to the criminalization and stigmatization of sex workers. Crimes such as "Indecent Acts," "Obscenity," and "Prostitution" expressed in the "Crimes Against General Morality" section of the law are among the forefront of these regulations. Moreover, the provisions of the Law on Misdemeanors such as "Contrary to Orders Conduct," "Noise," and "Disturbance" are also cited as reasons for imposing administrative fines on sex workers. The tendency of the current legislation to punish sex workers should be recognized as the main reason for problems in accessing justice. Establishing a legal framework that respects fundamental human rights is a crucial step in addressing the problems of access to justice for sex workers.

Conclusion:

In this section, the legal and judicial dimensions of sex work have been addressed, and the effects of laws on the rights of sex workers have been examined. The shortcomings of the current legal framework and its compliance with human rights have been discussed, emphasizing the improvements needed to protect and support the rights of sex workers. As social work professionals, we should support changes in legal regulations to ensure that sex workers are supported in a manner consistent with human rights and to promote a more equitable approach in society. Emphasizing the importance of awareness and education efforts, we should strive to create a more just and human rights-based legal framework for sex workers.

CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL STIGMA AND EXCLUSION AGAINST SEX WORKERS

This chapter critically examines how sex workers should combat social stigma and exclusion. Sex work continues to face widespread misconceptions, stereotypes, and discrimination in society. These negative societal perceptions hinder the respectful support and protection of sex workers' human rights. As social work professionals, we will focus on how to support sex workers in overcoming social stigma and exclusion and advocate for a more inclusive approach in society.

5.1

STIGMATIZATION AND STEREOTYPES OF SEX WORK:

A. Social Perceptions and Misinformation:

Canadian sociologist Goffman suggests that stigma has a deeply degrading nature towards individuals. People in society may tend to judge, condemn, stereotype, and blame certain individuals with specific characteristics. These characteristics can include race and physical attributes, as well as the cultural and social devaluation of certain behaviors. Drug use and sex work fall within these culturally stigmatized and devalued actions.

Sex workers are often blamed for breaking the traditional family model, carrying sexually transmitted infections, and increasing crime rates in urban areas. Consequently, they are perceived as easy targets in terms of stigma and discrimination.

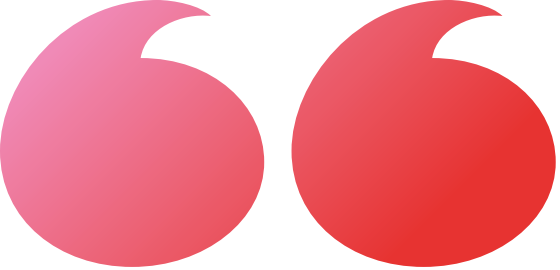
In addition to advocating for breaking societal norms regarding sexuality, many individuals working in the sex industry also face intertwined stigmas for other reasons. Particularly, the sex industry largely consists of groups historically blamed as the primary culprits for societal issues. These groups include women, minorities, immigrants, individuals with sexually transmitted infections, gay and transgender individuals, and illegal drug users. People subjected to multiple stigmas due to their professions, genders, sexual orientations, races, and ethnicities face

greater difficulties in accessing resources. Their ways of protecting themselves against the harmful effects of stigma are limited (Peers Victoria, 2014). Widespread misconceptions and misleading information about sex work form the basis of stigma and discrimination against sex workers in society.


B. The Role of Media:

Like in many other areas, the media also plays a role in controlling and directing individuals' awareness regarding sex work.

Janet Mock, an American transgender rights activist and writer, summarizes that popular culture's portrayals of sex work fail to reflect reality as follows:



**OUR CULTURE, FROM THE
BIG SCREEN TO TELEVISION
DOCUMENTARIES,
IS OBSESSED WITH
OBJECTIFYING, VICTIMIZING,
AND OFTEN SILENCING SEX
WORKERS. YET WE RARELY
SEE NUANCED PORTRAYALS
OF THEIR LIVES, BODIES,
EXPERIENCES, AND POLICIES.**



In the Turkish media, we frequently encounter newspaper articles containing phobic hate speech targeting LGBTI+ individuals and institutions, including a significant portion of sex workers. If we examine some newspaper columns from 2023, as studied by the Kaos GL Association, it is clear that sexually transmitted infections, homosexuality, gender equality, LGBTI rights, and "illegitimate" relationships are characterized as chaos in humanity and the collapse of the institution of family, leading to their stigmatization and targeting.

5.2.

COMBATING SOCIAL STIGMA:

It is important to examine the impact of societal stigma on the daily life practices of sex workers, which is a form of symbolic violence. The fact that sex workers transform their practices in accordance with society can be seen as a reflection of the intense exclusion of sex workers by society and heterosexual discourse. Individuals who are stigmatized by society often perceive the breaking down of these societal taboos as impossible and often do not choose to form a counter-reaction against this rejection, thus limiting their actions in this regard. This prevents them from entering another area beyond the 'space' they live in.

5.3.

PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH IN SOCIETY:

A. Advocacy for Policy and Legal Changes:

Policy and legal changes are important for supporting sex workers' human rights and reducing societal stigma. As social workers, we advocate for policy changes and support the enactment of regulations that promote a more inclusive approach in society and respect human rights.

B. Increasing Social Awareness:

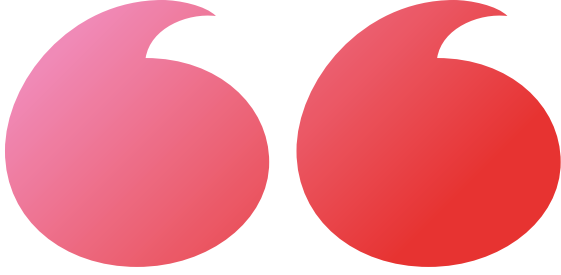
Increasing societal awareness is important for promoting a more inclusive approach in society.

The InDoors project by APDES, an organization working for sex workers in Portugal, aims to help change social attitudes towards sex workers that prevent them from having the same rights as other workers and citizens. This campaign targets the general public of nine countries. The awareness-raising campaign supports the ongoing efforts of NGOs. As an example, the message preferred by Austria is as follows:

"Respect for sex workers! Stigmatization is a serious health risk. Sex workers deserve the same respect as other workers. It is important to clearly state that stigma and discrimination have a negative impact on the living and working conditions, as well as the physical and mental health of sex workers."

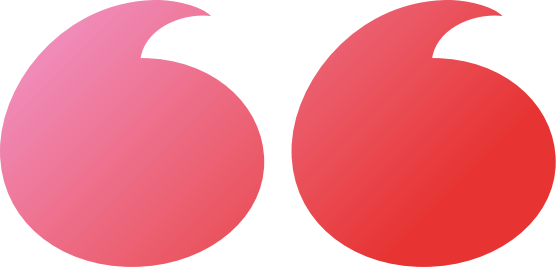
In France, Autres Regard, a public health organization working with and for sex workers, has used the following message:

"Stigma is a serious health risk. Stigmatization triggers feelings of rejection, fear, shame, and insecurity for sex workers, resulting in further isolation, more violence, and less access to health and HIV/STI prevention measures. Granting sex workers the same rights is important to ensure effective access to health care."


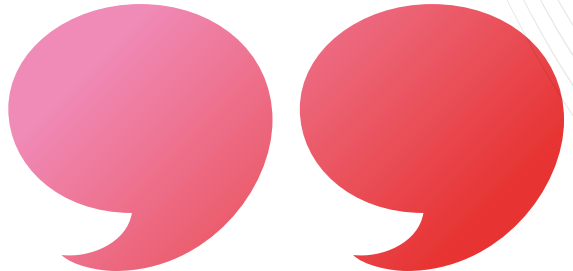


**RESPECT FOR SEX WORKERS!
STIGMATIZATION IS A
SERIOUS HEALTH RISK. SEX
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STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION
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HEALTH OF SEX WORKERS.**





STIGMA IS A SERIOUS HEALTH RISK. STIGMATIZATION TRIGGERS FEELINGS OF REJECTION, FEAR, SHAME, AND INSECURITY FOR SEX WORKERS, RESULTING IN FURTHER ISOLATION, MORE VIOLENCE, AND LESS ACCESS TO HEALTH AND HIV/STI PREVENTION MEASURES. GRANTING SEX WORKERS THE SAME RIGHTS IS IMPORTANT TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE.



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Conclusion:

This section critically examined how sex workers can combat societal stigma and exclusion. The discussion addressed how societal stigma and discrimination affect sex workers' lives and make it difficult for them to be supported in a manner consistent with human rights. As social workers, we must continue to lead efforts to support and empower sex workers by advocating for education and awareness-raising initiatives to combat societal stigma and exclusion. Additionally, by advocating for policy changes and increasing societal awareness, we can contribute to promoting a more equitable and human rights-based approach in society.

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