

### **Should prostitution be legalized?**

Throughout history, prostitution has long been pervasively practiced worldwide; it has even been described as "the world's oldest profession." Dictionary simply defines this occupation as an act or practice of engaging in sexual intercourse for money in exchange; however, people's thought toward this career is not simply as mentioned in the dictionary. Even the Feminists who drive the women's movement have controversial views on legalizing prostitution. Pro-prostitution feminists believe that prostitution should be legalized because women deserve the right to do whatever they want to their bodies. Prohibition of selling sexual services is violating women's rights to choose a career they want and think that it doesn't harm others. They also believe that legalizing prostitution will improve the safety of sex workers. Some people even said that legalizing can boost the economy of the country. In contrast, anti-prostitution feminists believe that prostitution should not be legalized because this kind of sexual practice is a type of sexual harassment, harming both the prostitutes themselves and society as a whole. They also believe that legalizing prostitution also could lead to an increase in human trafficking. In Thailand, stigma against sex work is deep-rooted, and people generally disapprove of prostitution. Even though this kind of practice is illegal, it's like an open secret that prostitution is widely practiced. People generally know that they can easily get service by visiting soapy massage, karaoke bars, or massage parlors to get service. The city of Pattaya in Thailand has been branded as the sex capital of the world; it's well known for its famous red-light district and having an estimated 27000 prostitutes working in the town. It seems like good things that with the Thai sex industry's reputation, the country can generate a lot of revenue inflow to the country. However, there are also side effects of this industry; Thailand has a long time severely facing a high trafficking rate in children and women for prostitution. Like other countries, Thailand has also debated controversial topics, like should the country bring prostitution to light by legalizing it or keep leaving it in the shade of grey as it always be.

Many people think that legalization is the way to make things better. It's not only the way to grant women the right to have full control of their bodies and do whatever they want but also to organize the messy society better. With unlegalized prostitution, it's difficult to precisely determine the number of people engaging in this industry, making it hard for the

government to control, organize, and even grant sex workers protection. In Germany, where prostitution is legal, It requires sex workers to register with a government official for a license and do regular physical checkups, requiring these business operators to apply for a license and forced service buyers to use condoms. With those regulations, the Germany government can access data of sex workers and operators of the involved business. The government can then limit the area like in "Straßenstrich, or street prostitution, is usually only allowed in regulated areas with off-limit zones called Sperrbezirk" Porter (2019) and the Police can supervise the patrol areas. Forcing buyers to use condoms helps in protecting both buyers and sellers from sexually transmitted diseases. According to Juno Mac, sex workers and activist on TEDxEastEnd, if you're selling sex in places like Kenya, South Africa, or New York, where prostitution is full criminalization, a police officer can arrest you if you're caught carrying condoms because condoms can legally be used as evidence that you're selling sex. Hence, it incurred a strong incentive for sex workers to leave condoms at home when they need to choose between risking arrest or having risky sex, leading to increases in HIV risk. According to the interviewing of Sandy of Bahnhofsviertel, a 50-year-old Thai Transgender Women who had started her career in sex work in Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall, making prostitution fully legal allows sex workers to sue for wages, be covered by health insurance, and social security. Moreover, It also makes selling sex work not considered 'Immoral' as the law has long been defined. Legalization can prevent and protect sex workers from sexual harassment and violence. When prostitutes are in danger or are physically abused by buyers, they can't call the police because they are afraid to be arrested by the police due to their illegal jobs. What is worst is that prostitutes become more susceptible to rape or beatings because the knowledge that prostitution breaking the law empowered people to target and threaten sex workers with the confidence that they can easily get away with it. Some people believe that making prostitution legal can reduce rape, According to Researchers at a public research institute in the Netherlands, the place where street prostitution can work legally, tippelzones, reports declining in rape and sexual abuse by as 30 to 40 percent in the first two years after opening the zone.

Besides solving the problem in society, improving the social welfare and legal rights of prostitutes, some people believe that legalizing prostitution can boost the economy and develop the country. Parit Wacharasindhu, also known as Itim Parit, Social entrepreneur, and

Politician, mentions in his article that For the general public, If prostitution is legal, Income from commercial sex activity can be taxed to be used to develop the country in other ways. To illustrate, Itim gives Germany as an example. Germany's legal revenue from sex trade is equivalent to 2 percent of GDP. For Thailand, Havoscope estimates that the Thai sex trade industry's total revenue may reach 1-2% of GDP or 1-2 hundred billion baht while the Ministry of Education's total budget is approximately 500 billion baht per year. It was stated on WowEssays that "Legalization of prostitution helps the government in reaping economic benefit from the business." It is not only direct taxation from prostitutes but also benefits from brothels- property tax, liquor expenses, and licensing fees, and other commercial businesses that are indirectly involved. Kyle Hulme mentioned on Culture Trip that nowadays, over 4 million tourists come to Thailand only for the sex industry. Undoubtedly, the tourists don't pay only for sex trade but also have to make other transactions, such as transportation, food, and hotel. Moreover, prostitution helps create job opportunities for unemployed people during the recession, and Income earned from trade helps increase consumer spending. Consumption is one of the critical components determining the country's GDP. Therefore, if prostitution legalization can ensure an increase in consumption, contributing to GDP, there will be an increase in the economic development level.

Those people who are opposed to legalized prostitution have several reasons to support their argument from household issues-like broken families to national concern-like trafficking. In the opponents' views, prostitution violates the moral norm. In Thailand, even though the stigma for prostitutes is not permanent and faded through time since many prostitutes support their family through their job; however, it is unarguable that many parents still can't accept if their children work in the sex trade industry, leading to a broken family.

Health problem is the thing people concern regarding the legalization of prostitution. The opponents argue that prostitution plays a significant role in spreading sexually transmitted diseases (STDs); for instance., HIV/AIDS, Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and Chlamydia. Most sex workers are at high risk of infecting and spreading the STDs due to their occupation nature. Most prostitutes are coerced by their clients to have sexual intercourse without protection like a condom. They are likely to have multiple sexual partners whom their HIV/AIDS status may be unknown, leading to increased chances of contracting the disease. Some prostitutes are very money-oriented; they only care about how much money they make

and don't even care whether their clients use protection or not. An infected prostitute has a high potential to spread the disease to many clients due to many sexual partners, and their infected clients who engage can further spread the infections to their partners.

One of the arguments that has much support from anti-prostitution feminists is that the sex trade is sexual harassment that is always associated with violence. Regardless of legal or illegal, those commercial sex workers are subject to abuse and harassment due to the job's nature. Some clients even pay extra to force miserable sex workers to have sex without protection or brutally rape them. Most of the women who decide to enter the sex trade industry want to kick themselves and their families out poverty and choiceless by doing the job that doesn't require any capital investment but their bodies. Therefore, they are likely to tolerate any abuse from the clients to receive extra money. Many research shows that most prostitutes have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), especially child prostitutes who are victims of trafficking. There is a paper showing that almost a third of prostitutes have considered suicide. Anti-prostitution feminists are also afraid that legalized prostitution will increase human trafficking, recruitment, and the exploitation of the underage. According to "Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking?" by Seo-Young Cho, Axel Dreher, and Eric Neumayer, Countries with legalized prostitution are associated with higher human trafficking inflow than countries prostitution is prohibited. The research also shows that the country that criminalizes Prostitution like Sweden, which criminalizes the people who buy sex instead of the people who sell sex, resulted in the shrinking of the prostitution market and the decline of human trafficking inflows.

The last argument against the legalization of prostitution in this essay is that the sex trade industry is always linked with drug abuse. Many sex workers use illegal drugs, like heroin, methamphetamine, and crack cocaine, to face violence and assault from their client and the brothel owners. Some women are sold by their close relatives, but some women choose to turn themselves to be prostitutes to finance their habit of abusing drugs. According to Bangkok Post, in Thailand, there is a case that a 19-year-old teen lures a 15-year-old girl into prostitution for a drug network in Roi Et and the case that children had been victimized by their parents who had raped them and provided them for sex in exchange for methamphetamine pills.

At present, Thai people's views on prostitution are more open and have changed better than before. Thai people began to support the rights and safety of sex workers. However, Prostitution in Thailand is still an illegal gray business that can be seen widely everywhere. It raises the question that we should start doing something to improve society like legalizing prostitution or leave prostitution the way it always be. Both sides of people, pro-legalization of Prostitution and anti-legalization of Prostitution, have come up with the supports of their arguments. The group of people who support making prostitution legal believe that women should have the right over their bodies and freedom to choose any career they want. The supporters indicate that if prostitution is legal, society will be more organized, both buyers and sellers in the sex trade industry will be safer. Prostitutes can access welfare and receive protection from the law. Moreover, they show how taxation and other economic activities related to the legalization of prostitution can boost the economy. In contrast, the opponent group claims that prostitution should not be legalized because it violates the moral norm and indicates that people in the sex industry are highly exposed to violent sexual harassment due to this profession's nature. The countries that legalize prostitution are likely to have a high rate of human trafficking than the countries that don't legalize this kind of sexual activity. They also show how prostitution can harm sex workers and society as prostitution is the vital key in the spreading of STDs and is always related to drug abuse. No matter we legalize prostitution or not, both options have advantages and disadvantages. However, considering that prostitution will not disappear from the country in any case, it's reasonable to think that legalization might be better for the public. As the legalization of prostitution can increase consumption contributing to GDP, and life up the level of economic development. Therefore, with justice distribution, legal prostitution can solve the root problem like poverty that directly, and indirectly forced poor people to enter the sex trade activity.

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