

## THE SEXUALITY OF SEX WORKERS: SEXUAL AROUSABILITY AND THE SEXUAL PROFILE OF WOMEN ENGAGED IN PROSTITUTION IN SERBIA

Danijela Tiosavljevic<sup>1,2</sup>, Maja Pantovic Stefanovic<sup>1,2</sup>, Bojana Dunjic<sup>1,2</sup>, Pavle Piperac<sup>1</sup>, Milan Latas<sup>1,2</sup>, Maja Milosavljevic<sup>1,3</sup> & Sreten Vicentic<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

<sup>2</sup>Clinic of Psychiatry, Clinical Centre of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia

<sup>3</sup>Institute of Mental Health, Belgrade, Serbia

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### SUMMARY

**Background:** In a view of sex work being a sexual behavioural activity, the main objective of our research was to explore the sexuality of sex workers in Serbia regarding to intensity of their sexual arousability.

**Subjects and methods:** The research was conducted on 30 sex workers and 30 controls of randomly selected social and demographic characteristics, without any signs of psychiatric morbidity. For the evaluation of the intensity of sexual arousability, SAI (Sexual Arousability Index) questionnaire was used.

**Results:** The analysis of the main total scores of the SAI for the sex workers and control participants showed no statistically significant difference in the overall intensity of arousability ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, item by item analysis of the questionnaire showed qualitative difference in sexuality between sex workers and controls, related to certain aspects of sexuality.

**Conclusions:** These findings allow the space for further research in the way of identifying origins of qualitative issues in the sexual profile of sex workers, in correlation to women who are not sex workers, i.e. whether they had been result of potential biological, specific psychodynamic factors, or have been formed as a result of the direct influence of the sex work.

**Key words:** sex workers - female - sexual arousability - sexuality

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### INTRODUCTION

Transition in Serbia has led to poverty and deprivation in educational and employment opportunities, creating an environment suitable for illegal activities like illicit drug markets, sex work and human trafficking (Rhodes & Simic 2005). Most published papers indicate that countries undergoing socio-economic transition are confronted with an increase in risky behaviours (especially among adolescents) as well as increase in the pregnancy rate, the abortion rate and the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) (Delva et al. 2007, Delva et al. 2008, Rasevic & Sedlecki 2009). Beside other factors, sex work may directly or indirectly threaten the reproductive health of people (Ilic et al. 2010).

Research and understanding the reasons of existence and survival of this kind of human behaviour, are still in their beginnings, even though prostitution has been embedded throughout the history of human relationships. Some authors suggest that psychological morbidity is a prerequisite for prostitution (Michael & Marzuk 1999, Tiosavljevic et al. 2016). Others claim that the interactions and experiences in prostitution are primarily psychologically and culturally based (Mc

Cormick 1997, Begum et al. 2013) pointing out the importance of studying the health of sex workers.

Many authors have studied the health of sex workers basing their studies exclusively on the significant link between sex work and addiction problems and STDs (Choudhury et al. 2012). In connection with this, a high rate of blood borne virus (BBV) transmission of sexually transmitted diseases from clients to the general population has been noticed (Karamouzian et al. 2017, Gossop et al. 1995, Tuan et al. 2004). It has also been proven that prostitutes regularly consume alcohol and drugs on purpose, in order to become numb to what they do. They sometimes do it in order to draw a clear conceptual line between their job and their life beyond job (Wesely 2003). According to collected data, cocaine and crack are the most frequently used drugs by prostitutes in so-called developed countries (the USA, the UK, Australia) and these drugs are responsible for their life and work conditions deteriorating (Hudgins et al. 1995, Maher 1997, Tyndall et al. 2003, Degenhardt et al. 2006, Bowen & Bungay 2016). Moreover, it has been shown many times that using various opiates results in poorer or non-existent strategies for risk management in prostitutes (Inciardi & Surratt 2001, Minichiello et al. 2003, Roxburg et al. 2005).

In a view of sex work being a sexual behavioural activity, whereby sexuality is considered as merchandise, we have decided to conduct a study in analysing the sexuality of sex workers, further initiated by the controversial results of a few rare studies and their connotations. While, in fact, certain researchers have pointed out that early sexual activity is not a marker for prostitution (Potterat et al. 1998, Begum et al. 2013), others, on the other hand, are claiming that sex workers are described, even before they start dealing in prostitution, as women of bad reputation (Iaisuklang & Ali 2017, Vanwesenbeeck 1994). Therefore, this research revolves around three questions: firstly, is the nature of sexuality the key, predisposition or at least a facilitating factor for engaging in prostitution? Secondly, can sex workers really enjoy having sex with their clients? Finally, another question is can sex workers really enjoy having sex with their beloved one, partner from their private life along with their sexual professional one?

The aim of this research is to determine the sexual profile, i.e. sexuality, in a group of women who were engaged in sex work and compare it to the control group. Sexuality was defined through the intensity of sexual arousability as a sum of all the answers to all the questions in the test. It was hypothesized that women who deal in sex work have a different sexual profile, i.e. intensity of sexual arousability, which would have either drawn them into or facilitated their engagement in the business of sex work.

## SUBJECTS AND METHODS

### Participants

The overall number of originally registered female prostitutes was 113. 73.45% (83) of them were excluded from the research as they did not match the criteria and 89.16% (74) of those excluded (65.49% from the overall number of originally registered prostitutes) had psychiatric diseases - mental disorders of axis I of The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-fourth edition (DSM-IV).

Two groups of women were included in the study. The study group was made up of 30 women who were engaged in illegal agencies dealing with prostitution and in street prostitution. The control group was made up of 30 women who were not engaged in prostitution. The researched women were engaged in prostitution through organized illegal agencies. The researched populations belong to the same age group ranging from 18 to 40 years and have been matched for socio-demographic characteristics: age, religion, marital status, educational level and official employment status.

The study sample was drawn from the Serbia Justice System and consisted of 30 cases assigned in the offices of the Department of Public Order and Peace in

the city of Belgrade, Serbia, following ad hoc performed raids by the officers of those departments. They confirmed that they were engaged in illegal sex work. They also denied that they had ever accepted money or any other kind of reward in return for performance of a sexual act. The control group of women was formed by method of random selection from a Belgrade telephone book. Furthermore, they were selected by their socio-demographic characteristics (matching with the group of prostitutes). The inclusion criterion for both the experimental and the control group was, beside their informed consent to interviews and the already mentioned age bracket (18-40 years), proof of residence in the city of Belgrade. The exclusion criteria were: psychiatric diseases (mental disorders – axis I of DSM-IV), chronic somatic and neurological diseases, as well as intellectual disability. All participants were fully informed about the purpose of the survey and asked to participate voluntarily in this study, then asked to be as sincere as possible if they consented. An informed consent form was signed by each participant, and the criterion of anonymity was fulfilled. The study protocol was approved by the ethics committee of the School of Medicine of the University of Belgrade, Serbia. All procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

### Procedure and Instruments

The survey was performed over a period of two years. Participants from both groups were completely assessed in the offices of the Department of Public Order and Peace in Belgrade, under the same conditions. Each subject was interviewed separately, in full confidentiality, by professional psychiatrist.

Socio-demographic data and information more intimately relevant to the business of prostitution for the study sample (motives, age when they began dealing in prostitution, length of dealing in prostitution, plans for the future) was gathered through semi-quantitative interview. The basic anamnesis data was collected through a standard psychiatric interview in order to exclude mental disorders (axis I-DSM-IV), intellectual disability and chronic somatic and neurological diseases. The semi-quantitative interview and anamnesis were conducted with no formal questionnaire, but personal interviews with subjects. The investigator made notes with their permission.

*Sexual Arousability Index (SAI)*. The interviewees then completed a self-assessment questionnaire for the evaluation of sexual arousability in women, the Sexual Arousability Index – SAI (Andersen et al. 1989, Hoon et al. 1976). The SAI is a self-assessment interview which defines sexual arousability as a sum of 28 ratings on erotic experiences on a Likert scale.

Multiple-regression and factor analyses were used to select valid items from a 131-item pool and build in factorial purity. The reliability and validity of the SAI has been reported elsewhere (Chambless & Lifshitz 1984; Morrell & Guldner 1996).

In the questionnaire, the subjects tested write a number (from -1 do 5) next to each item, selecting the statement which most closely describes her feelings in respect of the item content. The instructions ask the participant to indicate how sexually aroused they felt when they had the described experience or how they thought they would feel if they were to have the experience. Each item was rated on a 7-point scale. The numbers indicate the following: -1 = *affects negatively*; 0 = *has no effect*; 1 = *possibly affects*; 2 = *affects sometimes*; 3 = *usually affects*; 4 = *almost always affects* and 5 = *always affects the sexual arousability*. The SAI has shown test-retest reliabilities in the 0.74 to 0.90 range and has correlated as expected with measures of objective and subjective measures of sexual dysfunction, including orgasm difficulties (Andersen et al. 1989).

### Statistical Analyses

Data was analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Version 15 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). For exploring differences between two compared groups of women *t*-test was used. All *p*-values less than 0.05 were considered significant.

## RESULTS

### Baseline data

Eighty-three (83) female prostitutes were excluded from the research as they did not match the criteria: 89.16% (74) of them had psychiatric diseases (mental disorders - axis I of DSM-IV), 3.61% (3) of those prostitutes were excluded due to below-average intelligence, and 7.23% (6) of the excluded prostitutes suffered from chronic somatic diseases (two of them suffered from diabetes mellitus and four had hypertension). These criteria were eliminating for the research as they could be directly or indirectly “responsible” for being a prostitute (some of them by changing the intensity of sex drive as well).

Socio-demographic data (Table 1) shows that the majority of the women in both groups are within the age bracket ranging from 18 to 25 (the average age of the researched women who deal in prostitution was 24, and the average age of the control group was 22). Regarding religious affiliation, 86.67% of sex workers were orthodox, as well as 93.33% of women in the control group, which can be explained by the prevalence of the orthodox religion in the area where the surveys were conducted. The majority of women within both groups were never officially married (83.33% of sex workers and 76.67% of women in the control group), had completed high school (43.33% and 46.67%) and were not employed (90% and 83.33%), whereby a woman was considered to be employed if she held a permanent employment in the public or private sector.

**Table 1.** Sample Characteristics

Variable	Prostitutes (n=30) (%)	Controls (n=30) (%)
Age group		
18-25	12 (40%)	14 (46.67%)
26-30	8 (26.67%)	9 (30%)
31-35	6 (20%)	4 (13.33%)
36-40	4 (13.33%)	3 (10%)
Religion		
Catholic	1 (3.33%)	0
Muslim	3 (10%)	2 (6.67%)
Orthodox	26 (86.67%)	28 (93.33%)
Marital status		
Not married	25 (83.33%)	23 (76.67%)
Married	3 (10%)	6 (20%)
Divorced	2 (6.67%)	1 (3.33%)
Widowed	0	0
Education		
Elementary school	5 (16.67%)	4 (13.33%)
Craftschool	11 (36.67%)	9 (30%)
High school	13 (43.33%)	14 (46.67%)
Graduate degree	1 (3.33%)	3 (10%)
Employment status		
Unemployed	27 (90%)	25 (83.33%)
Employed	2 (6.67%)	3 (10%)
Student	1 (3.33%)	2 (6.67%)

**Table 2.** Mean Ratings on the Sexual Arousability Inventory (SAI) in Prostitutes and Controls

Variable	Prostitutes (n=30)		Controls (n=30)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. Oral-genital	2.83	1.80	3.57	1.59	1.671	0.162
2. Hands-breast	3.73	1.11	3.67	1.42	-0.202	0.708
3. Seeing nude partner	3.90	1.12	2.53	1.63	-3.773	0.015*
4. Caressed visually	4.03	1.19	3.83	1.46	-0.581	0.516
5. Manual-genital (R)	3.70	1.51	3.47	1.63	-0.574	0.197
6. Touch, inner-thighs	3.77	1.04	3.93	1.17	0.582	0.568
7. Manual-genital (D)	3.90	1.03	3.47	1.74	-1.176	0.176
8. Read porn story	3.10	1.49	1.93	1.87	-2.666	0.125
9. Undressed by partner	3.13	1.38	3.67	1.18	1.604	0.699
10. Dancing	3.53	1.28	3.17	1.53	-1.006	0.853
11. Intercourse	4.03	1.19	4.33	0.88	1.109	0.328
12. Touch/kiss nipples (R)	3.83	1.21	3.63	1.79	-0.507	0.140
13. Caress (nongenital) (R)	3.77	1.10	3.73	1.05	-0.120	0.795
14. See porn pictures	3.17	1.66	1.90	2.19	-2.525	0.140
15. Lie in bed with partner	3.67	1.47	3.53	1.28	-0.375	0.653
16. Kissed passionately (R)	4.03	0.93	4.63	0.61	2.952	0.047*
17. Hear sounds of pleasure during sex	3.70	1.21	3.93	1.34	0.709	0.616
18. Tongue kissing (R)	3.47	1.38	4.10	1.27	1.848	0.037*
19. Read porn poetry	3.53	1.48	1.67	1.75	-4.464	0.006**
20. See strip show	3.33	2.01	1.60	1.61	-3.691	0.000**
21. Oral-genital (D)	3.93	1.55	3.23	1.50	-1.775	0.006**
22. Caress (nongenital) (R)	3.70	1.36	4.10	1.03	1.345	0.594
23. See porn movie	3.37	1.47	2.40	1.90	-2.199	0.172
24. Undress partner	3.77	1.33	3.37	1.33	-1.166	0.332
25. Oral-breast (R)	4.03	1.13	3.70	1.70	-0.893	0.560
26. Make love in unusual location	3.87	1.50	4.27	0.98	1.221	0.506
27. Masturbation	4.63	0.72	2.83	1.78	-5.129	0.002**
28. Partner orgasm	4.57	0.63	4.03	1.07	-2.363	0.022*
Overall SAI	3.72	1.30	3.36	1.44	0.973	-0.050

Note: \**p*-value < 0.05; \*\**p*-value < 0.01; Variable labels are abbreviations for the activity described in the item. (R) refers to being the recipient of the activity; (D) refers to doing the activity to the partner

From the semi-quantitative interview with sex workers it was discovered that the average age of engagement in prostitution was 18.1, and that the number of years in dealing in prostitution up to the moment of testing was 3.8. The first sexual experience defined as penile penetration occurred at the age of 15.8. All of them stated that money was the only or main motive for engaging in prostitution. They considered prostitution as a temporary situation which they plan to change “one day”, “as soon as a normal job comes up”, “well paid” or “they save enough to start a private business”, being fully aware of the oppressive characteristics of the job (aggressive clients, infections, arrests) and its implications. The single sex workers (90%) would like to marry one day and form a family. The married (10%) were dealing in the business of prostitution not only with the approval of, but also under the protection of their husbands who took over the role of their pimp. None of them felt remorse because of their work and

kept going back into prostitution even after numerous arrests. They all declared that they usually did not get aroused while dealing with their customers and did not reach orgasm. Most of them used vaginal lubricants to compensate for vaginal dryness. They mostly did not practice safe sex with their customers if those so requested, especially if they were offered extra money for that. They often masturbated, mostly using their own hand, and the masturbation was followed by fantasies of mostly stereotypical content connected to an imaginary or real love object.

### Sexual Arousability Index Scores

Statistical analysis of mean ratings for every item of the Sexual Arousability Index (SAI) in sex workers and the control group, summarized in Table 2, shows there are several significant differences regarding some of the items of the SAI. Those are the items that included

experiences in which prostitutes and the control group had substantially different level of sexual arousability with their loved one, or how they thought they would feel if they were to have the same experience with them.

Women from the control group get significantly more sexually aroused ( $p < 0.05$ ) compared to prostitutes “when kissed passionately by a loved one”.

“When their loved one is kissing them with an exploring tongue” women from the control group get significantly more aroused than prostitutes ( $p < 0.05$ ). In the group of sex workers there are also some which are “indifferent” to the described erotic experience (6.66% vs. 0%).

When they see their loved one naked, prostitutes are more sexually aroused than the women from the control pool ( $p < 0.05$ ). While the largest number of women who are not dealing in prostitution get sexually aroused fairly rarely i.e. “possibly” (0% vs. 26.67% for sex workers and the control group, respectively) the largest number of tested prostitutes said that they got sexually aroused by the mentioned experience “almost always” (36.67% vs. 20%) and “always” (33.33% vs. 13.33%). Even though none of the women tested in both groups described the experience as an aversion towards sexual arousability, there were some who were “indifferent” (3.33% vs. 10%).

Sex workers get significantly much more aroused than women from the control group “when reading suggestive or pornographic poetry” ( $p < 0.01$ ). Even though reading suggestive or pornographic poetry does not “negatively affect” the sexual arousability of any of the tested women, the majority of women from the control group were “indifferent” to it (3.33% vs. 36.67% for sex workers and the control group, respectively).

Women engaged in sex work get significantly much more aroused than women from the control group “when watching striptease” ( $p < 0.01$ ). The largest number of women from the control group is “indifferent” when watching striptease (36.67%). The largest number of prostitutes is “always” sexually aroused when watching striptease (50%).

“When stimulating their partner’s genitals with the mouth or tongue” prostitutes get more sexually aroused than women from the control pool ( $p < 0.01$ ). Unlike the group of prostitutes, there were some women within the control pool who declared that the described erotic experience “negatively affected” their sexual arousability (0% vs. 3.33% for sex workers and the control group, respectively).

Sex workers get more aroused than women from the control pool “when masturbating” ( $p < 0.01$ ). Unlike the group of sex workers who “mostly always” get sexually aroused (73.33% vs. 23.33%) there were women in the control pool who declared that masturbation even “negatively affects” their sexual arousal (0% vs. 3.33%) or leaves them “indifferent” (0% vs. 10%).

Sex workers get more aroused than women from the control pool “when their partner reaches orgasm” ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Statistical analysis of the answers to the other 20 items, as displayed in table 2, showed no statistically significant difference between the sex workers and the control group in the level of sexual arousability on any of those other items.

Analysis of the main total scores on the SAI for the prostitutes and control participants showed no statistically significant difference in the overall arousability ( $p > 0.05$ ). The described differences in sexuality are qualitative in nature and refer to certain aspects of sexuality, but their number is insufficient to make a global difference in sexuality, because in the SAI sexuality was defined through the intensity of sexual arousability as a sum of all the answers to all the questions in the test.

What is striking is that the distribution of women in the compared groups sometimes seemed different in giving answers to the offered experiences as “affecting negatively” (-1) and “indifferent” (0). Summarising all “affects negatively” answers to all items in the SAI, the conclusion is reached that all of them (100%) come from the control group. On the other hand, most of the “indifferent” answers (71.74%) come from the sex workers, whereas 28.26% come from the participants of the control group.

## DISCUSSION

As already mentioned in the Introduction section, the number of authors who paid attention to prostitution from an ethical, sociological, cultural, as well as an economic aspect is far greater than those who dealt with it from a health aspect, especially with the psychopathology of the women who deal in it (Qiao et al. 2015, Lazarus et al. 2012).

Even though all the tested sex workers had mentioned money as the only or main motive for dealing in prostitution, there are many people who desperately need money, but they do not all engage in prostitution. So, some additional explanation should be found.

In favour of our way of thinking are the results of one of those rare studies, where three major motives were given for entering prostitution: the main was “thrills and adventures of the life”, then “earning quick, easy money”, and then “seeking stability and integration into the prostitution subculture” (Potterat et al. 1998). These are the results of an exploratory control case study in which the control group had an equal need for money, just as it is shown in this research. We would like to emphasise that this research was done in Serbia, a country undergoing transition, and of which the main characteristic is the economic deprivation of its population. As we previously mentioned in the

introduction, the transition has struck the most vulnerable group of people whose basic needs (for food, drink, clothes, heating, care for children, their health and the health of their families) are challenged. That explains the fact that money for the majority of women who are engaged in sex work in Serbia is not only the main, but the only motive for entering sex work. Furthermore, money as the only or main motive for sex work explains why they stay in sex work even though sex with customers does not go along with sexual satisfaction, unlike the sex with a beloved one. In this area prostitution was considered the most evident form of commercialised sexuality (Radulovic 1986) and, nowadays, as a form of sex industry, a new branch of the developed world industry of modern time (Mijalkovic 2005).

Sex work is a sexual behavioural activity where sex is merchandise with use and trade value, but also a fact appearing even in the most primitive and undeveloped populations. Bearing that in mind, and additionally provoked by the controversial findings of a few rare researches (mentioned in the Introduction section) that refer to the sexuality of sex workers, an investigation of the sexuality of women who deal in prostitution in Serbia was performed. In line with this, the goal of this research is to determine the intensity of sexual arousability in women who deal in prostitution in comparison to the ones who do not.

The overall significant difference in the intensity of sexual arousability between sex workers and the control group could not be proven, but differences in answers to several items showed to be important. The control participants get statistically significantly more sexually aroused in comparison to prostitutes “when a loved one kisses them passionately” and “when a loved one kisses them with an exploring tongue”. Sex workers get significantly more aroused when they “see their loved one naked” and “when their partner reaches orgasm”, and highly significantly more aroused “when they read suggestive or pornographic poetry”, “when they masturbate”, “watch striptease” and “when they stimulate their partner’s genitals with their mouth or tongue”. From these particular differences in sexual arousability between sex workers and the control group, as well as from the interview with these women, it is concluded that the simpler, more explicit and concrete symbols of coitus have a stronger aphrodisiac effect on prostitutes. These more directly associated symbols of coitus, and thus, maybe we could say, its more „primitive” symbols, arouse prostitutes more than women who are not dealing in prostitution. This furthermore leads to the conclusion that prostitutes have a more instinctive perception of the sexual act as well as a prompter preparedness for the coital intercourse. This makes us believe that the sexual profile of prostitutes in these aspects is qualitatively more

similar to men’s sexuality, relying on the conclusions of the researches who confirmed the existence of such differences between the two genders (Laan et al. 1994, Zdravkovic & Petrovic 2006, Maric 2006, Hald 2006).

The view on kissing talks in favour of this conclusion. In the interview most sex workers said that they kissed their clients. While some stated that their clients wanted it that way, others were saying that it “looks more normal”, “looks more natural” that way. The fact that most sex workers do not feel and understand that kissing with clients is normal or natural, but that they stress that it just “looks” more normal and natural that way, adds to the view that it seems that sex workers mostly use the kiss as a kind of tool for better, more authentic dealing in the business.

Even though there is no significant influence of the professional sexual life of sex workers on their private one, kissing, by our opinion, maybe one of those rare private experiences which is more “affected” (in a negative way). A kiss is also a way of transmitting more subtle sexual messages, especially messages of tenderness, love and intimacy, which need not have a coital realisation. The kiss, therefore, finds itself on the opposite side of primitive, concrete, “brutal” symbols of “turning on” i.e. those which are the most directly associated and instinctively connected with coitus. If it is an introductory part of a complete sexual intercourse, it allows slower, step by step preparation for the proper realization which characterises women’s sexuality (Maric 2006, Choudhury 2010, Begum et al. 2013). A kiss more significantly positively affects the sexual arousability in women who not deal in prostitution, no matter what type of kiss it is (“passionate kiss” or “kiss with an inquisitive tongue”).

This is also seen as the reason why sex workers are significantly more aroused by the nudity of a beloved one, i.e. because this stimulus is in the same group of concrete and explicit stimuli, which have a greater potential for coital realisation. The stimulus requests prompter readiness for coitus as well. “While watching striptease” additional coital movements simulated by a male stripper, for the same reason further increase the sexual arousal of a prostitute on an even higher level in comparison to the women from the control group, creating a highly significant difference between their response.

“Stimulation of the partner’s genitals with the mouth or tongue” is a greater stimulus for sex workers, as this can even lead to the partner’s orgasm. That is in line with the next finding that the prostitutes get more sexually aroused when “their partner reaches orgasm”, and shows that the sexual arousal of their partner is a stronger aphrodisiac to sex workers than to women who do not deal in prostitution. This as well is where the sexuality of prostitutes gets closer to the sexuality of men, having in mind the findings of the authors who

say that men have a tendency to focus more on the desire and pleasure of their partner in their fantasies (Zurbriggen & Yost 2004, Ngugi et al. 2012).

Taking this into account, as well as that the prostitutes in our study were not aroused by the client's orgasm even though the client's satisfaction is the ultimate goal of the sex worker, and if not reached, they will not be paid, we can conclude that sexual arousal as a response to these stimuli does not depend only on the characteristics of the stimuli yet on the interpretation of the depicted relationship.

From the results of our research we also notice that there is no significant difference in the sexual arousal between the two groups when they read a pornographic story, as well as when they watch pornographic photos (slides), but there is a definitely more significant sexual arousal in sex workers when they read "suggestive or pornographic poetry". We are of the opinion that this could be so because stories and slides are more complete, finalized, whereby poetry is "hazier". The latter leaves a gap for fantasies about the partner. The interviewed sex workers in our study reported they use fantasies very often, among other immature defence mechanisms whose use by sex workers has been proven in other studies as well (Vanwesenbeeck 1994, Tiosavljevic et al. 2016, Tiosavljevic 2016).

Prostitutes in our study get highly more significantly aroused by masturbating than the control group and they masturbate more frequently. They reported they use fantasies while masturbating. Our research about the similarity of the sexual profile of prostitutes to men's in its certain qualities is supported by two different studies. The first of these is the findings of Katchadourian (1998) who has shown the higher prevalence of masturbation in men (90 percent) in comparison to women (60 percent). The second is that desire and pleasure are more closely linked in the fantasies of men than in the fantasies of women (Zurbriggen & Yost 2004). Whether those fantasies are mostly an accompanying element of masturbation or a dominant reason why they masturbate more often than women who do not deal in prostitution is a question that we could find an answer for in some new research in the future.

Our findings about more enjoyment in masturbation while fantasising about beloved ones are also in favour of the next conclusion. According to the individual interviews of all sex workers, in which they have declared that they do not get sexually aroused and do not reach orgasm when having sexual intercourse with a client, and according to the fact that they equally find pleasure and enjoy in their sexuality when they make love to a beloved one as do women who do not deal in prostitution, we can conclude that the examined sex workers have a kind of double sex life.

In doing so, it seems that they lead a "professional" sex life on the side, parallel with their "private" (whether their loved one exists or is currently an object of their imagination), and while their "professional" sex life is psychosexually dysfunctional, their "private" sex life is one they fully enjoy. In this we find that psychological intimacy and tenderness, in other words, being affectionate and aware of the deeper meaning of the relationship (which in fact differentiates a loved one from a purely sexual partner), generally intensifies sexual arousability. This finding is support to the findings of the studies who demonstrate that relationship factors can influence sexual arousal patterns in women (Chivers & Timmer 2012, Carvalho et al. 2013, Scorgie et al. 2011).

In favour of our conclusion are the results of the research done by Savitz and Rosen (1988) where sex workers described their sexual enjoyment in their private sex life. The conclusion was that professional experiences of sex workers generally do not appear to interfere with the achievement of very satisfying private sex lives. So we could confirm our abovementioned conclusion that sexual arousal as a response on stimuli does not depend only on the quality of the stimuli but on the meaning of the current relationship.

Since we have discovered within our research that there is a highly significant larger number of "indifferent" sex workers in comparison to women who belong to the control group, and that all the women "affected negatively" by the offered erotic experiences were women from the control group, we dare to conclude that these kinds of arousability responses on sexual stimuli can make it easier for women to deal in prostitution. A question remains as to whether this might be dominantly a derivate of being a prostitute (of their professional activity), the influence of their specific psychosexual or psychosocial development even before entering prostitution or dominantly a result of their biological nature. Some of the further research could be based on the investigation of the influence of those potential causal factors on this very interesting finding.

Some of the authors claimed that early sexual activity is not a marker for prostitution, it's a mandatory precondition (Potterat et al. 1998). We could not agree with them since the first sexual experience of the tested sex workers in our group (defined as penile penetration) happened at the age of 15.8, and having in mind that in the cultural background in which the research was performed sexual activity of women at that age is labelled as being too early and that is how the attribute of "bad reputation" is also acquired. In this we even agree with Vanwesenbeeck (1994), who stated that the prostitutes were so labelled even before they started dealing in prostitution. This provokes us to think that prostitution is a phenomenon that may have

some markers, such as the abovementioned, and that they are as different as the characteristics of the cultures of the societies where prostitution exists. We believe that they often depend on the attitudes of the societies towards sexuality in general and especially towards sexuality of women (Chen et al. 2017, Scorgie et al. 2011). We believe that a transcultural study and comparative analysis carried out in the future would be useful in discovering the specificity of those markers.

As a limitation of this research we could take the relatively small number of assessed women engaged in prostitution. Nevertheless, as far as we know this kind of scientific research has never been done on a significantly greater number of sex workers. This tells us that there are difficulties in both recruiting sex workers as study participants and carrying out the whole process of research. We think that the reasons lie in specific characteristics of the phenomenon of sex work as well as in characteristics of sex workers. The fact that sex work is not a legalized activity in Serbia (it is treated as a misdemeanour) made our research especially difficult.

In connection with the overall number of originally registered prostitutes, it is important to note that more than two thirds of them had psychiatric disorders and thus were excluded from the research after a medical check-up. This can imply that psychiatric disorders (disorders from axis I-DSM IV) are rather more frequent than absent in this population of women. This finding supports the already approved disposition of sex workers to psychiatric disorders in the study (Tiosavljevic 2016) which has determined the expression of Eysenck's dimensions in personalities of women who work as prostitutes by using Eysenck's questionnaire.

Another limitation of this research could be that sex workers were surveyed in specific circumstances (the Department of Public Order and Peace). However, each of the sex workers had already had the experience of police raids and arrests, most of them more than once. That is why they are used to that and find that arrests are a common risk as part of their work. Our impression that surveyed sex workers did not feel uncomfortable during the research was supported by the fact that they did not give up taking part in the research even though it was emphasized that their participation in this research would not reduce legal consequences for doing sex work. Also, as previously mentioned, each subject from the control group was completely assessed in the offices of the Department of Public Order and Peace, under the same conditions. Therefore, if there was any uncomfortable feeling in both groups, it could only be due to the fact that they were being interviewed.

Despite the abovementioned limitations, we would like to mention some potential advantages and contributions of this study. This research is among a small

number of studies about sex workers, which have included a comparison group (Potterat et al. 1998, Platt et al. 2018). So far, not only in this area, but in general, such a research has never been done in this field by using the measurement instruments and methodology applied in this research. What sets this work apart as well is an integrative approach thanks to which we connected earlier thoughts about sexuality and the new ones that are the results of reliable research which has been made possible only in modern times (Semple et al. 2019). They confirm and complement each other, leading to the same conclusions. According to our knowledge, such an approach is nowadays rare in this research field, regarding to data integration, that required the extensive overview of the literature about sexuality and prostitution.

By the analysis of the findings, we tried to understand the nature of sexuality, i.e. the intensity of sexual arousability and the sexual profile of women who are without psychiatric entities (disorders of axis I of DSM-IV), chronic somatic and neurological diseases, nor are intellectually challenged but deal in the business of sex work willingly. To our knowledge, we could also say that this research is the first in this region in analysing the sexuality of sex workers. We consider it a contribution to the understanding of the sexuality of prostitutes as a part of their nature, and indirectly prostitution as a phenomenon itself.

## CONCLUSION

Following the results of this research we excluded the intensity of sexual arousability as a predisposing factor for being a sex worker. We concluded that female sex workers fully enjoy their private sexual life, but do not enjoy their professional one. We also found that the sexual profile of prostitutes is qualitatively different in some aspects in comparison to the sexual profile of the control group of women who do not deal in prostitution. Our opinion is that further research should identify the origins of the qualitative differences we have found in the sexual profile of sex workers in comparison to women who are not engaged in prostitution, i.e. whether they are the result of potential biological or specific psychodynamic factors (which maybe play a facilitating or predisposing role for entering into prostitution), or have been a result of sex work.

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### Contribution of individual authors:

Danijela Tiosavljevic: study design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data, literature review, statistical analysis, manuscript preparation, approval of the final version;

Maja Pantovic Stefanovic & Bojana Dunjic: study design, analysis and interpretation of data, approval of the final version;

Pavle Piperac, Milan Latas & Maja Milosavljevic: data collection, analysis and interpretation of data, approval of the final version;

Sreten Vicentic: analysis and interpretation of data, statistical analysis, approval of the final version.

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Correspondence:

Sreten Vicentic, MD, PhD  
Clinic of Psychiatry, Clinical Centre of Serbia  
Pasterova 2, Belgrade, Serbia  
E-mail: sretenvicentic@gmail.com