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## APPROACH

TO THE ALIGNED MULTIFACTORIALITY OF PROSTITUTION AND ITS SOCIAL REGULATORS

**ACERCAMIENTO A LA MULTIFACTORIALIDAD ALINEAL DE LA PROSTITUCIÓN Y SUS REGULADORES SOCIALES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article analyzes the nonlinear multifactoriality of prostitution and its social regulators, based on a critical review of the literature produced from different sciences on the subject under investigation, produced in different societies and from different theoretical and methodological perspectives. So, to carry out this work, methods such as analysis and criticism of literature are used: basic and auxiliary, both primary and secondary and tertiary, through various procedures, including: analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction, and theoretical triangulation. Likewise, the historical-logical and doctrinal method was used, to take into account the specific historical conditions in which prostitution occurs and the specific conditions that mark the work of the different authors, not to try to account for all the details of the process. historical process of prostitution, but abstraction is made of its chronological details, twists, coincidences, to basically follow the process, but highlighting the essential, only what typifies the object of study.

### **Keywords:**

Multifactoriality, women's rights, prostitution.

## **RESUMEN**

En el presente artículo se analiza la multifactorialidad alineal de la prostitución y sus reguladores sociales, a partir la revisión crítica de la literatura producida desde diferentes ciencias sobre el tema investigado, producidos en diferentes sociedades y desde diversas perspectivas teorías y metodológicas. De manera, que para la realización de este trabajo se utilizan métodos como, análisis y crítica de literatura: básica y auxiliar, tanto primarias como secundarias y terciarias, a través de diversos procedimientos, entre ellos: análisis-síntesis, inducción-deducción, y triangulación teórica. Igualmente, se utilizó el método histórico-lógico y el doctrinal, para tener en cuenta las condiciones histórico concretas en que se presenta la prostitución y las condiciones concretas que marcan la obra de los diferentes autores, no para intentar dar cuenta de todos los detalles del proceso histórico de la prostitución, sino que se hace abstracción de sus detalles cronológicos, virajes, casualidades, para seguir en lo fundamental el proceso, pero destacando lo esencial, solo aquello que tipifica al objeto de estudio.

### **Palabras clave:**

Multifactorialidad, derechos de la mujer, prostitución.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, prostitution has grown, showing increasing complexity and revealing, to a greater degree, the various forms of exploitation of other people's sexuality that accompany it, especially those related to trafficking in persons for sexual purposes. This is the third most lucrative business of transnational dimensions, after arms and drugs. The growth of prostitution, at a global level, enhances the problems that have historically accompanied it: drug use, violence, pornography, sexually transmitted infections, corruption (Anguita, 2007).

Consequently, interest in prostitution has a long history within the framework of the social and humanistic sciences that privilege it as an object of study; its renewal has its most recent roots in the 1960s and 1970s, in circumstances of the rise of the struggle for the vindication of the rights of the most oppressed social segments for reasons of ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, among others; and the development of various variants of feminist and gender theories.

Indeed, over the last few years, the topicality of the issue is also reflected in the growing attention it has received on the agenda of important international organizations, governments and NGOs; which has resulted in the multiplication of legal regulations on prostitution, starting from the last decade of the twentieth century, as stated by Ricardo & Pino (2016). The growing expansion of studies on prostitution is manifested in a vast literature on the subject, in which multiple appropriations of concepts, theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks can be observed; from which significant contributions have been made to the knowledge of the social problem (Martínez, 2021).

The vitality of the studies in question can be perceived in almost all societies, for example, in Europe, the triangulation of information provided by different authors (Pheterson, 2000; Alcaide, 2001; Bolaños et al., 2003; Pisano, 2016) allow us to approach the social problem, from views that are mostly located in female prostitution and, from different disciplines, emphasize the impact of the growing feminization of migratory flows from South to North, for economic reasons, combined with the demand for cheap labor, while various structural factors in the receiving societies reinforce the trend towards the location, sometimes simultaneous, of numerous immigrants in the most socially devalued jobs: domestic work, community services and prostitution.

It is worth mentioning that these are societies with high technological development, structures of which hinder the adequate social insertion of large segments of society, at the same time, it is stigmatized with a strong basis in the persistence of a sexist culture, with all its implications, those who turn prostitution into a means of survival (Pheterson, 2000), without ignoring the forms of

prostitution that cannot be explained by situations of socioeconomic vulnerability, or the possibility that there are different ways of understanding and acting with respect to those who engage in prostitution.

In American societies, several studies have been carried out (Howell, 2006; Romi, 2006; Chejter, 2011; Bermúdez et al., 2013; Montoya & Morales, 2015), that direct attention to the influence on prostitution of social problems such as poverty, the crisis of values, low levels of social integration, the increase in family breakdown and, consequently, the number of women without a fixed relationship, some of them migrant mothers from rural to urban areas.

The existence of different forms of prostitution is also considered, according to sociodemographic, sexual and, to a lesser extent, socioeconomic variables, although this does not appear in all the studies, nor it is addressed in the same depth in researches. In this context, when contextualizing the analysis for the Cuban society, indispensable condition for our research, it can be observed that around the beginning of the last decade of the last century, prostitution develops rapidly, parallel to the multidimensional and multicausal crisis that has shaken the Cuban society. Although since its reappearance, and until today, prostitution in Cuba does not reach the proportions that are verified in other societies, it is noted, here, contrary to the institutionalized values, the growth of the social problem and its link with some serious crimes (Ricardo & Pino, 2016).

In this line of thought, the humanist position, centered on human dignity, of the official institutions, and the recognition of the extent acquired by prostitution and its social implications, contribute to the fact that, in 2002, the issue became one of the work priorities of the Prevention and Social Attention Groups. The consulted literature indicates that, since the mid-1990s, the social problem has been the subject of research in universities, by the Federation of Cuban Women, the Center for Psychological and Sociological Research, the Center for the Study of Youth and the National Center for Sexual Education.

In the systematic studies on prostitution in Cuba, in the most recent period, the qualitative ones predominate, working, fundamentally, with a sample of women controlled for exercising prostitution; carried out from socio-psychological, philosophical, juridical perspectives and to a lesser extent, in gender theory and structural functionalism. The studies contribute to the knowledge of current prostitution, its heterogeneity and multifactoriality, without achieving the same degrees of approach to the social problem, the empirical verification of the factors that are considered relevant, and their interpretation in the light of the theories that guide scholars.

Consequently, empirical and theoretical evidences show that prostitution is an aligned multifactorial social problem,

which is not fully developed in the consulted studies, since the non-linear multifactoriality of prostitution, in its interrelation with aspects of social life that function as regulators of human behavior, has been insufficiently studied by previous authors. Hence, the aim of the present article is to analyze the linear multifactoriality of prostitution and its social regulators.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In the research, an eminently social methodology would be used, carried out through the study and analysis of both doctrinal works, mainly through various works of relevance within sociology. The approach or method used in the research would be the mixed one. To develop the research, the analysis-synthesis and induction-deduction methods were used, which allowed the critical analysis and the taking of theoretical positions; another method used was the documentary review of legislations and articles, aimed at analyzing the phenomenon of prostitution. Finally, different studies conducted in Cuba on the subject from the 1990s to the present were consulted.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

In order to clarify clarity, the ideas presented, it is considered necessary to make clear some terminological and conceptual aspects assumed by the authors of the paper. It is assumed that the aligned multifactoriality of prostitution refers to the complex nature of prostitution, by virtue of: the multiplicity of factors, inseparable from the social context of their development, which, intertwined and in retroaction, condition, or may have as one of their effects, the social problem; the variability of the factors, some are present, or may have influenced, certain subjects, but not others; the change, or the entry, of a given factor or of a particular situation may result in different behaviors, provided that the actors have alternatives courses for action; and the retroaction of prostitution.

On the other hand, when referring to social regulators, it is assumed that the word regulator has among its meanings that it regulates; and to regulate (from the Latin *regulāris*) means adjusted and in accordance with the rule. Then, it is considered that social regulators are the universe of ways of meaning or constitution of subjective meaning and normative sanctions, which constrain/enable the action of socio-historically situated actors; which stems from the fact that the norms, on the one hand, are inserted in the system of social relations and interactions, in which the objective and subjective conditions of their application (of class, social origin, resources, power, knowledge, aspirations, discourses, etc.) are concretized and on the other hand, although associated with it, the capacity of the subjects to understand, interpret, become aware of and transform the circumstances of their action, and to reflexively self-regulate themselves.

Within this framework, the social regulators of prostitution include all aspects of social life, which, due to their potential effectiveness in constraining/enabling the action of socio-historically situated actors, can be interrelated, influence the course of the social problem, especially its degree of presence, its tendency to decrease or increase, and to preserve or modify its forms of existence, within certain circumstances.

Similarly, etymologically, prostitution comes from the Latin *prostitutio*, which means to expose in public, to put on sale. From antiquity to the present day, when speaking of prostitution, in its strict sense within science, what is exposed and put on sale, through the body, is human sexuality. As a social fact, prostitution is, in part, a frequent sexual service provided by those who are willing and able to pay (the demanders or clients). For this service, the providers receive something, be it money or other goods. All this leads to sexual promiscuity and sexual relations of convenience.

Thus, sexual promiscuity refers to the performance of sexual acts by a person with many others. However, prostitution and promiscuity are unidentifiable because in the former the sexual act is always performed for material retribution, while the latter can be performed without this type of retribution. On the other hand, from a sexological, psychiatric and medico-legal perspective, Romi (2006), refers that one of the manifestations of sexuality is that it is performed through group sex and it is translated with the generic term of sexual pluralism. This is generally framed by medicine as sexual deviations, and has its followers for religious and ethical reasons, as it is considered a right to freely exercise one's sexuality.

It should be noted that simultaneous activities are part of sexual pluralism, such as sexual addiction, group sex (Trio, Gang Bang, Orgies, Polyamory); as well as successive activities in time, for example, open marriage, exchange of partners (Swingers). Of course, in prostitution it is frequent that activities proper to sexual pluralism are carried out, especially those that are simultaneous; but these activities can be carried out outside prostitution.

Therefore, given the need for a definition of prostitution that includes the features that typify it, when the World Health Organization (1989), defines prostitution as any activity in which a person exchanges sexual services in exchange for money or any other good, some authors propose including other features, among them that sexual acts are frequent and that there is a plurality of persons (clients) with whom these acts are performed, with a predominance of non-exclusivity (Romi, 2006). This definition does not include the word woman or man, nor a word that alludes to the sexual orientation, identity and preference of those who offer or consume sexual services. This updates knowledge about the social problem, which for many

years identified prostitute/woman, client/heterosexual man (Voghon, 2012).

In relation to this topic, there are multiple reasons that could explain why many authors identify prostitute/woman, client/heterosexual man, and as a corollary, the reproduction of a vision of prostitution, where prostitute women always appear as victims of circumstances and of men formed in a sexist culture, a vision that obviates or pays little attention to the heterogeneity of prostitution in terms of gender, identity, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic situation, among other aspects.

In this sense, the first forms of prostitution, the best known and most widespread, were exercised by women. Thus, in many ancient cultures, such as those of the Near East, those of the Mediterranean basin, as well as in India and Egypt, religious prostitution was common, examples of which are the handmaids of Ishtar or Millita in Babylon, the dancers in the temples of India, the hierodules of Amatitit in Armenia, of Astarte in Phoenicia, of Isis in Egypt and of Aphrodite in Corinth. At the same time, there developed, conditioned by the time and the social context, strictly economic forms of prostitution, which the predominant literature associates with women, seeking to satisfy peremptory needs, increase monetary resources and acquire the dowry for marriage.

The first documented forms of prostitution correspond to societies where monogamy, slavery and patriarchy have appeared in history, which gradually implies the loss of women's economic power and the institutionalization of increasingly constrictive moral norms around monogamy. These norms place a high value on virginity, modesty and fidelity of women before and after marriage.

These legal practices focus attention on female prostitutes in the most diverse societies. They are generally the focus of legal regulations and police interventions. Men have almost always been prosecuted for their participation in some form of intermediation between the sale and purchase of bodies - merchandise, especially if it involves the prostitution of children; but men are less frequently prosecuted for selling their bodies for sexual purposes or consuming sexual services.

In short, it is no less important that a good part of the studies on prostitution take as a sample prostitute who work in the street, and carry out their studies based on the analysis of police documents, interviews and observation of these forms of prostitution (Alcaide, 2001). The authors of this research do not deny the contribution of this type of studies focused on women, almost always victims of others or of circumstances, to the knowledge of social problems and to the confrontation and solution of these forms of prostitution. What is meant is, that the situation of victims is typical of some forms of prostitution, but not of others. It should be noted that after a long silence on

male prostitution, some recent research is beginning to show that it appears in history, along with female prostitution. There is evidence that male prostitution existed in the temples of Babylon.

Different disciplines (Anthropology, Philosophy, Political Science, History, Sociology, Pedagogy) provide empirical and theoretical evidence on prostitution today, which, triangulated by the authors, allow us to affirm that prostitution is a heterogeneous problem, seen from the angle of those who offer sexual services, as well as those who consume it (the clients). In this sense, for example, according to these studies, prostitution involves individuals at different stages of the life cycle, with an overrepresentation of young people.

Similarly, alongside the growing female prostitution, male prostitution is developing; in both it is possible to find different identities and sexual orientations. Prostitution clients can also be women and transgenders, and not only men. Also, the most diverse classes, strata and social strata are represented, residents in different types of communities, subjects of different territorial origin, level of education, skin color; although individuals and groups with greater social vulnerability predominate.

Consequently, seen as a social fact, prostitution, is something more than an activity in which a person exchanges sex for material goods, given that the meeting between those who provide the sexual service and their clients occurs through a certain process of group institutionalization, and such services require for their operation a material basis, such as the modes of retribution of prostitutes and prostitutes, brothels, hotels, streets, brothels, means of communication (Ricardo & Pino, 2016).

Also, according to the forms of intermediation between prostitution providers and clients, it includes trafficking in persons for sexual purposes, the third most lucrative business, after arms and drugs (Bolaños et al., 2003; Anguita, 2007), and besides, the forms of pimping carried out by individuals and groups, sometimes family members, who facilitate contacts and agreements and offer, most of them, certain protection, conditions and teachings for the activity to be executed, in exchange for exploiting the sexuality of others (Malte, 2006; Chejter, 2011).

However, since there are people who do not have pimps, it is difficult for them to avoid the challenges that arise in the performance of their activity, in competition or conflict with other individuals and groups, which could also lead to the formation of support groups and coordination of actions among prostitutes. Constructing an ideal image of these groups in which distancing from all others, non-contact, indifference and joyful life predominate, implies ignoring the struggles for control of the most favorable spaces, the use of drugs, the corrupting capacity of prostitution, the spread of sexually transmitted infections, violence against

those members who violate the agreements and rules of prostitution groups; the knowledge about the degrees of autonomy that one possesses and its limits; knowledge about the techniques to be used and the skills to make the action more effective. There is also learning about the ways of evading internal group controls and the controls of society as a whole (Ricardo & Pino, 2016; Machado et al., 2017).

As closed as prostitution groups may seem, information is constantly circulating among the people who belong to them and the rest of society, to the point that the so-called lay actors know about the reality of prostitution, some of them without having had face-to-face contact with individuals dedicated to the purchase and sale of sex. The channels through which information circulates can be multiple, from a friend who knows about prostitution, neighbors who talk about how much they know about it, daily observation, and the media.

In addition, people in prostitution generally have families, reside in a community, and multiple relationships can be established among them following different paths. These relationships can be conflictual, of rejection and censorship, leading to segregation and stigmatization of prostitutes (Bolaños et al., 2003) and also of acceptance of, compliance with, and acquiescence to prostitution providers (Santana, 2003), and acquiescence directed to prostitution providers and favorable attitudes towards the consumption of sexual services, based on sexist beliefs, knowledge and opinions, which often ignore the difficult reality of those who practice prostitution (Corchado et al., 2011).

It is clear that in some communities going through new circumstances and social problems that affect daily life and the satisfaction of peremptory needs, it is possible that many subjects stop perceiving prostitution as a problem, or at least as their main problem, while considering it a private matter or a valid and effective life strategy. If the above is combined with satisfactory and trusting relationships between subjects in prostitution, family and community, favorable attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, which are conducive to prostitution, may emerge and be reinforced (Ricardo & Pino, 2016).

Similarly, the authors consider that social attitudes towards prostitution are not homogeneous. This is related to the degree to which prostitution is established as a social problem in a society, which in turn derives not only from the type of legal norms or the lesser effectiveness of legal and police interventions, but also, mainly, from other social factors of prostitution. Therefore, it is important to clarify that moral and legal norms regarding prostitution are not homogeneous in different societies. At present, three basic ways of proceeding legally with respect to

prostitution predominate: legal tolerance, legal regulation and prohibitionism.

However, it is interesting that in societies with different legal frameworks regarding prostitution, the existence of this social problem is observed (Bolaños et al., 2003; Ricardo et al., 2022). An understandable explanation for this could be found in the fact that the contents of the legal framework may influence in prostitution, but it is not the only factor that influences the social problem. Consequently, it is analyzed that there are multiple aspects of social life that are regulators of human behavior and, therefore, function as social factors (Giddens, 2000), which act intertwined, and in feedback, on prostitution, without inexorably influencing in the same way and having the same results for all individual and group subjects. The social regulators of behavior rarely act harmoniously. Most commonly in history, these regulators exert countervailing influences. Hence, for example, the inability of the constitution of a constrictive sexual morality, by itself, to curb the advance of prostitution, even in the Middle Ages, despite the rise of Christianity and the institutionalization of a sexual morality founded on the constriction of sexuality and on the notion of sin. This eliminated part of the moral foundation of the sex-object; however, Christianity cannot eliminate the rest of the social foundations of prostitution.

From the study of the aforementioned bibliography, it is clear that, at the basis of prostitution, there is a profound conflict between economic structures, moral and legal norms, and the impossibility, or scarce possibility, of satisfying the needs of daily life, in exploitative and increasingly unequal societies; in other words, this social problem, like others, reveals effects that Giddens (2000), refers to as a contradiction between social and cultural structures, and between culturally formed values and the impossibility of acting in accordance with those values, due to the position of the subjects in the social structures.

Consequently, the factors of prostitution derive from the conditions of society and social situations. Class societies, where inequality, poverty and social alienation are rooted, and situations of profound change associated with crises, create a favorable scenario for the growth of prostitution. On the other hand, it has been shown that the demand for prostitution influences its supply, just as the latter influences demand, and in the midst of this the influence of forms of intermediation, in scenarios of crisis, concentration of military forces, conflicts of any kind, the rise of tourism, modernization processes (Bolaños et al., 2003).

Socioeconomic and demographic factors have a strong influence on prostitution. Research carried out in European societies (Suárez, 2021) shows prostitution in more technologically developed societies. The growing tendency to migrate from developing societies to more technologically advanced ones has prostitution as one of its

consequences. In Spain and France, for example, many immigrants work in the most socially devalued activities, with fixed-term employment contracts, subject to layoffs and an increase in the informal economy.

Although it is true that in certain circumstances the economic, political and social models of these societies discriminate on the basis of sex, class, territorial origin, ethnicity, of immigrants and of some autochthonous groups, although immigrants are involved in riskier, dirtier and poorly paid activities, some of them may recall to prostitution as the only or complementary means to satisfy their needs and support their families in their societies of origin.

However, as Alcaide (2001), observes, economic vulnerability, poverty and marginalization and emigration are found in indigenous groups, some of whom resort to prostitution. Societies with high technological development do not manage to eliminate these bases of the social problem. It happens that prostitution exercised by autochthonous women remains hidden, when we take as a sample immigrant woman, violated by pimps and traffickers, controlled by the police and work with official reports, where data on low prostitution predominate. Added to this is the withdrawal of national prostitutes to safer houses and places.

In Latin American societies, there is a high incidence of prostitution among women with a low level of education, illiterate, without completed studies at different levels of education, immigrants from rural to urban areas, many are mothers without a fixed relationship, some have managed to get into low-paying jobs, others have not; and some decide to engage in prostitution as a complementary and sometimes the only means to achieve or increase the income required to support their families (Howell, 2006).

Likewise, forced prostitution, sometimes associated with human trafficking, and voluntary prostitution are influenced by interrelated factors - not always fully present in each of the groups studied - such as poverty, school dropout, unemployment, the crisis of values, domestic violence, the increase of children and adolescents on the street and in the street (Chejter, 2011) and certain impunity and non-compliance with international obligations from some official institutions (Puentes & Pierbattisti, 2013).

However, there are forms of prostitution that are not due to social factors related to economic vulnerability, poverty, and in general to the aspects most worked on by preceding researchers. These forms of prostitution, involving middle- and upper-class women, are not new in history. In recent decades, the so-called high prostitution, about which very little is known, from systematic studies, but some authors have already provided us with some information.

In this sense, authors such as Montoya & Morales (2015); Ricardo & Pino (2016); Ricardo et al. (2020); Izcara (2020), from qualitative studies, provide evidence of forms of prostitution, which do not obey survival situations, where they find some university students with a good socioeconomic situation, actresses, models, professional dancers and even certain science professionals. In general, they lead a double life. Many of them act through virtual platforms, they are prepaid, escorts and obtain huge material dividends.

In other words, it seems that the reasons for entering prostitution show variability, depending on the subject studied, but these reasons include the possibility of managing their time and their own expenses, whether for comfort and luxury goods or for professional improvement, saving money and having a considerable bank account that guarantees independence and security in the future, from which to be able to face possible unforeseen situations, and consumerism. In some cases, there is a downward social mobility, which does not place them in the lowest social strata, but affects the way and life style they had up to that moment.

In connection with the above, we consider the influence exerted on prostitution by the needs of the subjects, their values and, in general, their subjective meanings. Regarding the needs of the subjects, it is possible to think, given the paradoxical, aligned character that the hierarchy of needs may present, and the satisfaction of lower needs, that the search for, or maintenance of status and power, based on behaviors that transgress social rules, influences prostitution. The deepening of the causes of forms of prostitution that are not due to survival situations, but to status and power needs, is one of the most interesting tasks of authors that are interested in understanding the multifactorial nature of prostitution.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study of the social factors of prostitution should distance itself from causal simplifications, since in the understanding of this social problem the researcher can place himself at different levels of analysis of social reality: national, regional, community and global; as well as at the social, group and individual levels. It can also be positioned at different levels: internal and external. However, this excludes the possibility of absolutizing some of the factors, levels and considered planes and ignoring the complex interrelations between them.

The heterogeneous and multifactorial nature of prostitution requires an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach to the social problem and that special importance be given to the information and knowledge produced in the context under study.

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