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Applying the JD-R Model to Physical Sex Work in Austria

Sex work in Austria occupies a complex space. While the sale and purchase of sexual services is legal and regulated with the intention of improving working conditions, the lived experience of sex workers often paint a different picture. If not a subject of tabloid tv (Slavik, 2021) or crimes—like the three sex workers killed in May 2024 (Mittelstaedt et al., 2024), the day to day business of “selling sex” often remains hidden, even in academic literature. This lack of understanding creates a significant knowledge gap, hindering the development of effective support measures and targeted interventions to improve the working conditions for sex workers. This thesis attempts to bridge this gap by analysing the working conditions of this field of work and generating a preliminary framework of job demands and resources.

Sex Work as Work

Understanding Sex Work’s Diverse Realities

Positional Statement

This thesis understands sex work as work and the workers as self-determined workers. I am not personally involved in sex work. I do not engage in dichotomies of agent-victim, male-female that unfortunately have been at the heart of sex work research. I also recognise the substantial heterogeneity of work field and workers, which makes generalisations for different populations and work environments impossible. This research should be understood as preliminary work for future, more specific research. This thesis wants to examine the working conditions within the framework of this understanding.

Sex Work Instead of Prostitution

While the word prostitution has historically been used more often, in recent years the term sex work has established itself to refer to commercial sex (van der Meulen, 2010). Coined in the mid 1970’s by Carol Leigh, the usage of the term sex work over prostitution has been justified by the following reasons: a) it highlights sex work as work and sex workers as workers, a perspective that has not been taken for granted in the past or at the present time (Farley, 2018; van der Meulen, 2010) and b) sex work is an umbrella term for jobs involving some kind of sexual component, that often are difficult to separate clearly, while prostitution just denotes a specific part of sex work. While it is a heavily gendered work field, with the majority of sex workers identifying as women (TAMPEP, 2009), sex work is done and consumed by all genders (van der Meulen, 2010).

Sex Work as a Heterogeneous Work Field

As already described, sex work is an umbrella term depicting a wide range of working conditions, environments and services. For the purpose of clarity, in this thesis, sex work will be separated in two simple, non-exclusive categories: physical and non-physical sex work.

Physical sex work describes what is generally understood as prostitution, and what people usually associate with sex work. Sex work of this kind describes the consensual delivery of a (sexual) service between a seller and one (or multiple) clients, usually with physical contact (Küppers, 2016; van der Meulen, 2010). This contact can stretch from full-on intercourse to manual or oral sex to no-contact BDSM.

The other side of sex work is of non-physical nature. Adult film performers or webcam performers would be typical representatives of this category. While having declined in popularity, phone sex falls also into this category. With the rise of the internet, especially in combination with the heightened internet usage during the COVID-19 pandemic, the non-physical side of sex work has grown considerably in recent years (Rubattu et al., 2023; Weitzer, 2023). While there is still intercourse or sexual contact (like in the case of pornography), this contact is not with the client. Rather, sex work in this category is more passively consumed than actively participated in as a client.

Of course, this separation is not absolute, nor exhaustive. There are plenty of sex work jobs that fall in between those two categories. For example, commercial stripping (also called exotic dance or burlesque dance) generally focuses on titillation, although physical contact is possible depending on the norms and structure of the establishment (Weitzer, 2023). There are also sex workers who engage in physical and non-physical sex work as a way to create multiple income streams and improve their financial stability. While non-physical sex work has become very popular with consumers and creators alike (Rubattu et al., 2023), and places of physical sex work are regarded as a tourist attraction in some countries (e.g. the Amsterdam red light district; iamsterdam.com, 2023), the work itself does not enjoy the same popularity in academic literature. In fact, all forms are severely under-researched, especially from a labour perspective. As the working conditions of physical and non-physical sex work are very different in an already heterogeneous field, this thesis will only examine physical sex work.

Working Conditions

Working conditions in physical sex work depend on a number of things. In particular, the legal framework in which sex work exists is important for the adequate execution of work. For this reason, we will first look at the general legal regulations that govern sex work around the world, and then look specifically at the situation in Austria.

Legal Regulations

In comparison to most other service workers and self-employed people, the legal regulations play an especially important role for sex workers. Historically, the sale and purchase of sexual services has been regulated by laws, often with the intent to control sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and infections (STI; Alexander, 1998), like HIV. Most sex workers worldwide are legally not recognised as workers. In fact, in most countries prostitution is criminalised. But criminalisation is not the only way sex work is regulated. Sex work policies are highly heterogeneous. While there is no explicit research that compares sex work policies and their effect on working conditions, there is evidence that suggests a link between health outcomes of workers and sex work regulations (McCann et al., 2021; Platt et al., 2018). In the following an overview will be given of the different legal models that regulate sex work worldwide. Along Platt et al.'s (2018) categorisation, roughly 5 legal frameworks can be identified: Full criminalisation, partial criminalisation, end-demand policies, legalisation and decriminalisation.

Criminalisation

The most common legal policy regarding sex work worldwide is the criminalisation (Karlsson, 2022; Platt et al., 2018). This includes full criminalisation, partial criminalisation as well as the so-called Swedish model (also called end-demand legislation), making sale or purchase of sexual activities illegal. Furthermore, criminalisation often also encompasses activities around the purchase or sale of sexual activities. This can be solicitation of clients, the organisation of sex work (e.g., in a brothel) or the involvement of third parties. Third party laws usually are meant to focus on pimping or brothel keeping but are often legally vague (Maratou-Alipranti & Rethimiotaki, 2018, p. 350) and can also include landlords, hotels who rent rooms to sex workers or anyone “who gain[s] material benefits from the sale of sex services, regardless of whether they provide health or security supports to workers.” (McBride et al., 2019, p. 793). Most countries in the EU fall in the category of partial criminalisation where the sale and purchase of sexual services is legal and mostly unregulated, but surrounding activities are illegal (European Parliament et al., 2021), making it difficult to carry out work in a lawful manner. Within the EU France, Ireland and Sweden currently regulate sex work via some variation of end-demand legislation.

The review of the current literature shows that any kind of criminalization of sex work increased risk of poorer social and health outcomes for sex workers. Platt et al. (2018) found significant relationships between (partial and full) criminalisation and negative social and health impacts in a meta-analysis on the association between legislation and sex workers' health. In comparison with other regulatory models, criminalisation systems continuously perform worse regarding psychological and

other health outcomes (Karlsson, 2022; McCann et al., 2021; Platt et al., 2018). Higher rates of mental health issues like PTSD (Millan-Alanis et al., 2021), depression and distress (McCann et al., 2021) were found in sex workers that offered their services under criminalised contexts in comparison to their legal counterparts. Lower access to and usage of health services (McCann et al., 2021) as well as lower condom usage and higher STI/STD and HIV rates (McCann et al., 2021; Platt et al., 2018; Shannon et al., 2015) were observed. Higher rates of experienced violence (sexual and physical) were also observed under criminalised systems (Deering et al., 2014; Platt et al., 2018).

Regulation

Under regulation (also called licensing system or legalisation) sex work is legal and regulated. As with end-demand legislation, there is a lot of variation of its implementation between and even within countries (European Parliament et al., 2021). However, all instances have in common that activities surrounding sex work are legal, usually regulated with a mix of zoning, criminal and occasionally labour law and usually linked to some requirements that must be met in order to work legally. Especially criminal law plays a major role in the regulation of sex work, with violations of these requirements often being regarded as some kind of criminal offence (Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024). In the EU six countries employ a legalisation regime: Austria, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, and the Netherlands (European Parliament et al., 2021). Despite the possibility of working within legality, advocate groups have repeatedly witnessed a “two-tiered system” (Scarlet Alliance, 2017, p. 6), in which only part of the sex worker population complies (or is able to comply) to regulatory guidelines.

While this system does have its drawbacks, there seems to be evidence that workers’ health and safety are better compared to criminalised systems. Mental and sexual health of sex workers were found to have improved after adoption of legalisation regimes in regions where sex work was illegal before (McCann et al., 2021). Platt et al. (2018) found that registration at municipal health services (often a requirement in countries that regulate sex work) had reduced odds of injecting drugs and higher odds of being tested for HIV. From an occupational perspective, Seib et al. (2012) found in their survey in Queensland, Australia, that job satisfaction was higher in workers working legally in comparison to those working without proper registration.

Decriminalisation

The legal framework preferred by national and international sex worker associations and endorsed by international policy bodies like WHO (World Health Organization, 2022), UNAIDS (UNAIDS, 2012, 2021) and Amnesty International (Amnesty International, 2023) is one of decriminalisation. This model is currently just implemented in 3 countries: New Zealand, Belgium and three states in Australia

(New South Wales, Northern Territory and Victoria), with New Zealand being the first country to decriminalise in 1995 and Belgium the latest in 2022 (Macioti et al., 2022). Decriminalisation differs from regulation in that under decriminalisation, existing work rights and regulatory mechanisms, like occupational health and safety standards or zoning and location controls are extended to sex work. Sex work-specific rules and oversight mechanisms do not exist under this legal policy. Thus, criminal law only applies when criminal activities happen. There is some evidence that suggests that decriminalisation produces favourable outcomes regarding health and overall well-being of sex workers (Macioti et al., 2022; Platt et al., 2018), but available research is too limited to date to make definitive statements. The evidence regarding the impact of these policies on working conditions is similarly inconclusive (Macioti et al., 2022).

Generally, evidence shows that any kind of criminalisation of sex work leads to worse health outcomes and higher structural barriers. This has been shown to have multiple reasons. Besides the criminalisation itself, it was observed that workers also cut down necessary security mechanisms like time negotiating or selecting client more carefully (Alexander, 1998). The possession of condoms has repeatedly been used against sex workers as evidence, leading to some people not using them to avoid arrest, which in turn increases STD/STI levels (Open Society Foundations, 2012). The observation of these effects of criminalisation in other countries was a significant factor in the legalisation of sex work in Austria (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich, n.d.).

Working under the regulation framework in Austria

In the following, working conditions in Austria under the regulation framework will be examined. As already mentioned, this system is characterised by requirements that have to be fulfilled in order to work legally. It should be noted though that the Austrian legal situation is highly heterogeneous, even compared to other EU countries (European Parliament et al., 2021). Within Austria the law differs in regulatory requirements for every state, with some states, like Vienna, having a laxer regulatory approach and other states, like Tyrol, being immensely restrictive. Due to the strict laws and the lack of permitted brothels, it is currently not possible to work legally in the federal state of Vorarlberg (Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024).

Registration. Sex workers in Austria are required to register with government municipalities. This either has to be done by the workers themselves or is done by the brothel operators, depending on the federal state in Austria (Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024; Bundeskanzleramt Österreich, n.d.). With this registration, workers receive a registration card (*Blaue Karte*), which is proof that they are registered workers, necessary for police checks. Registration with the authorities is often

justified on the grounds that it creates an institutional check point for victims of sex trafficking to get help. How effective this measure is in combating sex trafficking is not sure, though data from Germany, which enacted mandatory registration with the *Prostituiertenschutzgesetz* (Law regulating prostitution in Germany since 2017), shows mixed results (Thiemann, 2020). Workers are known to not register for different reasons outside of being victims of sex trafficking, such as not having a valid residence status, not knowing the legislation or the fear of being outed (Aidsfonds & PROUD, 2018; Akarcesme & Nagl, 2022; Thiemann, 2020). Failure to be properly registered is fined (Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024; SOPHIE Beratungszentrum für Sexarbeiter*innen, n.d.-a).

Self-Employment. In Austria, sex workers only can be self-employed. The major reason for this is that traditional employer-employee relationships are viewed critically in this field since the managerial authority could infringe on laws guaranteeing the right to sexual self-determination, for example, if an employer would instruct their employee to accept customers the employee does not want to service (Amesberger, 2014). The possibility of regulating sex services within the framework of trade law (*Gewerbe*) is currently not possible. Currently, the sale and purchase are recognised as a contract between client and sex worker, but workers do not benefit from labour protections even self-employed people in other work sectors do. While sex workers are subject to compulsory social security and income tax, Amesberger (2014) assessed that there are large differences between the Austrian federal states in its implementation. Payments into state-run pension funds, while compulsory above a certain income, are made seldomly. Amesberger (2014) explains this with the assumption of many sex workers that they will not work for long in this field.

While sex workers are only able to be self-employed, revenue authorities in Austria have repeatedly classified some work environments as dependent employment (Amesberger, 2014). This is further complicated by the fact that some sex workers also work in these establishments as bartenders and the like, which makes the brothel owners responsible for social security (SOPHIE Beratungszentrum für Sexarbeiter*innen, n.d.-b).

Work Location. All states have restrictions regarding where sex work is allowed to take place (Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024). This is usually regulated by municipalities who designate zones, often with required distance of places for example, educational institutions, residential areas, or hospitals. Offering sexual services from a residential property (e.g., a flat), whether owned by the individual or another party, is not permitted unless the property has been licensed as a brothel with local authorities.

Mandatory Health Checks. Another feature is the mandatory STD/STI and HIV health checks that workers have to pass in order to be able to work legally. Confirmation for these checks are the so-called control cards (also called *Grüne Karte*) which workers need to be able to provide at police checks. These laws obligate sex workers to get tested for STD/STIs at least every 6 weeks as well as for AIDS at least every 3 months. While low in cost, workers have to pay for them (Amesberger, 2014; SOPHIE Beratungszentrum für Sexarbeiter*innen, n.d.-a).

Regulated Working Conditions. There are federal laws regulating sex work, though the actual legislation concerning working conditions is, if even regulated at all, on state level (Arbeitsgruppe Prostitution, 2021; Bundeskanzleramt Österreich, n.d.). For example, the state of Vienna does have some laws obliging brothels to keep some hygiene standards as well as having alarm buttons in every room (Prostitution; Einrichtungen Und Sicherheitsvorkehrungen, 2023).

If requirements are not met by workers, sex work is considered to be illegal. Reasons for sex work to be illegal in Austria are varied. These may include that the sex worker is not registered, does not have a valid control card certifying that they are free of STDs/STIs, the sex work is carried out in an unauthorised place, or the sex worker does not have a valid residence permit (Amesberger, 2014). With these regulations sex workers are put in a rather unusual position, which assumes a lot of responsibilities, but seldom offers labour protection. In this regard, they are comparable with workers in the gig economy who often face similar challenges as pseudo-self-employed workers (Watson et al., 2021).

Work Environments and Their Features

As the settings for physical sex work vary widely, so do the working conditions. Therefore, applying uniform job characteristics across all work environments is not reasonable. In the upcoming section, an overview of the major work environments for sex workers is provided, along with their distinctive features.

Brothel

Since there is no agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a brothel, this thesis will use the definition used by Austrian work group on prostitution (Arbeitsgruppe Prostitution, 2021). This includes all establishments of the commercial sex sector that rent rooms and usually have a bar, that is, brothels or nightclubs. Sex workers often drink with or entertain clients in the bar section. Clients then choose the worker(s) and the services they want. Rooms only have to be paid for by the worker if they need them to service a client. Austrian financial authorities have repeatedly classified employment in those kinds of establishments as dependent/salaried (Amesberger, 2014). There are factors that make brothel

closer to salaried jobs than other fields of sex work, like fixed opening and closing hours or set prices for services.

The serving of alcohol in these locations holds some occupational hazards (Ross et al., 2012). Earnings in brothel not only come from sexual services but can also come from commissions sex workers earn if they facilitate the sale of (usually) alcoholic beverages. While not obligatory, these establishments can have the implicit directive that sex workers have to drink with their clients to entertain and facilitate the sale of beverages, leading to increased alcohol use and alcohol-related health issues (Amesberger, 2014; Li et al., 2010). As in non-sexual nightclub or bar working environments, factors like night work, alcohol consumption, drunk customers or loud music can be perceived as potential work stressors (Apelt-Schunk, 2022; Whitfield, 1998).

Laufhaus

Different from brothels is the so-called *Laufhaus*, which is mainly found in German-speaking countries. In the Netherlands, this type of brothel is represented by the window brothels (*raambordeel*), for example in the red-light district in Amsterdam. Sex work here is independent, with sex workers renting (usually) a room in an establishment for a set time period and having control in regard to how many/which customers they want to service for what prices (Amesberger, 2014; Apelt-Schunk, 2022; Arbeitsgruppe Prostitution, 2021). The establishments themselves usually don't have an entrance fee for clients and seldom have a bar or offer food or drink consumption. Clients walk through the establishment and choose the room of the sex worker they want a service from. Negotiations and payment are done between client and sex worker only. Proprietors of these establishment do not interfere. Some Laufhauses have opening and closing times while other are open around the clock.

This work environment offers a great deal of autonomy in regard to how workers are able to design their workday. But it also comes with very high rent prices that sex workers have to pay for the rooms. Amesberger (2014) cites a range from 270-630€ per week, while newer online sources mention rent prices of at least 700€ (Laufhaus Wien Mitte 1030, n.d.; violet, 2021). Thus, Amesberger (2014) observed that sex workers who mainly worked in Laufhauses had the highest hours worked in comparison to other work environments. She explains this difference with the necessity to first work to break even with rent and then make a profit. High rents leading to higher work hours has been observed with the Dutch window brothels as well (Wagenaar et al., 2013). Another factor is, that Laufhauses are often living and working spaces at the same time, especially for foreign workers (Amesberger, 2014). This leads to workers using the entire opening hours of the Laufhaus as working hours, since they are present anyway.

Street

One of the most researched work environments in physical sex work is outdoor/street-based sex work (Karlsson, 2022). While it is the arguably most visible work environment, it does only represent a small fraction of sex workers overall (Amesberger, 2014; TAMPEP, 2009). If street-based sex work is allowed and regulated, like in the state of Vienna, it underlies strict guidelines (Apelt-Schunk, 2022). Typically, sex workers stand on the side of the street, waiting for clients to contact them. The sexual services are then usually performed in cars or in hotel with hourly rates, though they can also be done outdoors or at the client's home (Apelt-Schunk, 2022).

Advantages of this work environment are low overhead costs (Amesberger, 2014) and no requirement of extensive language skills (Apelt-Schunk, 2022). There are no ties to establishment owners or managers. Working hours are flexible, though often dictated by existing ordinances. Street-based sex work is generally seen as one of the riskier work environments in sex work, with higher risk of experiencing violence (Amesberger, 2014; Deering et al., 2014), worse mental health (Drydakis, 2022; Martín-Romo et al., 2023), contracting STI/STDs (Seib, Debattista, et al., 2009) and using drugs (Ross et al., 2012; Seib, Debattista, et al., 2009; Seib, Fischer, et al., 2009), compared to other work environments in physical sex work. In addition to these factors, weather conditions can also be a decisive factor in this field of work.

In Austria, Vienna is the only state that allows street-based sex work (Arbeitsgruppe Prostitution, 2021).

Escort

Often seen as a sex work job in a more high class sector (Kay Hoang, 2010; Ross et al., 2012), escort is a description for a heterogeneous work field that focuses on being someone's companion for some time. Escort jobs can go beyond just sexual services and include accompaniment to (social) events. They can be facilitated through escort agencies or, with the increased usage of the internet, are booked directly with the workers through internet portals (Apelt-Schunk, 2022; Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024; Craciun, 2022). Sexual services are usually provided in hotels or at the client's home. As in *Laufhauses*, workers generally have higher degrees of freedom in structuring their workday (Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024). Time and location of the appointments are agreed upon with clients before, as well as the kind of services that are desired. In the case of working through an escort agency, drivers will usually bring the sex worker to the clients and pick them up again (Arbeitsgruppe Prostitution, 2021).

While a diverse work environment, some shared characteristics in escort can be made out. Amesberger (2014) cites the long waiting times that workers have to experience until they get a date, since their services are usually booked on short notice. Additionally, workers who get booked through online platforms have to spend a significant amount of time with soliciting dates, which consists of writing with potential clients and negotiating price and services (Craciun, 2022).

In Austria, escort agencies are illegal since they fall under third party laws (Arbeitsgruppe Prostitution, 2021).

Special Contexts in Physical Sex Work

While the following special contexts of sex work can take place in aforementioned establishments, thus are not stand-alone places of work by themselves, it is necessary to examine them. These contexts offer unique working conditions and requirements.

A special context that has a gotten more recognition in the last years is sexual assistance (Campbell, 2017). This focuses on the sexual development and expression of people with physical or mental disabilities and older people. The sexual services offered range broadly from non-penetrative practices, such as massage or masturbation, to intercourse and other sexual practices (Pinho et al., 2020). Professional training regarding efficient communication, knowledge about different disabilities and suitable sexual practices are imperative for this work environment (Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024; Pinho et al., 2020). Current legal regulations exacerbate this work however, since there are few locations these services can be legally performed in. While there are few brothels that are accessible for people with disabilities, other people are only able to be visited. This leaves institutions in which these demographics often reside, but a significant proportion of them are included in municipal zones where sex work is not permitted, such as nursing homes or retirement homes. Since house visits are not legal in every federal state, sexual assistance cannot be performed in every state legally (Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024).

BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, Sadism, Masochism; Merriam-Webster, n.d.) encompasses a wide range of sexual practices, often with focus on punishment (e.g., slapping, flogging) or role-play (e.g., master-slave play, job/occupation play; Rehor, 2015). While there is an erotic element, sexual intercourse or physical contact is not always an expected necessity in (commercial) BDSM. Given the presence of potentially intense dynamics in BDSM, focus on consent is deemed especially important in this sexual practice (Williams et al., 2014). Typically, individuals navigate their sexual encounters guided by the widely recognized principles of the BDSM community, such as SSC (Safe, Sane, Consensual) or RACK (Risk-Aware Consensual Kink). These principles serve as frameworks for negotiation and mutual

agreement among BDSM participants regarding their sexual activities. The contents of the emotional labour can also be different from other types of sex work, with clients explicitly wanting to be treated dismissively or even hostile. Furthermore, some BDSM practices involve more (occupational) hazards than other, like risk of infection or wounds. Expensive equipment is necessary for some BDSM sessions. Work in BDSM is often varied, with clients desiring different kinds of so-called scenes that require different tasks and demands (Apelt-Schunk, 2022). Good communication (and therefore language) skills are necessary to maintain client well-being and consequently also client retention. BDSM is generally seen as one of the less stigmatised contexts of sex work (Toubiana & Ruebottom, 2022).

Another special context is male sex workers (MSW). This describes both men who have sex with women and men who have sex with men. This type of sex work is generally considered to be smaller in scale, though research is more difficult because of multiple facets of stigmatisation these workers face. While work environments of MSW can encompass the places examined above, there is evidence that male sex work usually takes place in other, more informal locations (Amesberger, 2014). Craciun (2022) reports a strong focus of escort work in this field.

In the case of MSW who have sex with men, additional occupational risks can be higher risk of STI/STD and HIV infection or effects of substance abuse within the context of *chemsex*, the practice of having sex under the influence of drugs, usually stimulants (Baral et al., 2015; Brooks-Gordon & Ebbitt, 2021; World Health Organization, 2022).

Precarious Sex Work, (Labour) Migration and Exploitation

Because of its particular position in labour law, labour protections that are granted to employees or other self-employed workers do not cover sex workers. These problems are not unique to sex work though, with a lot of Austrian workers that fall under the new self-employed (*Neue Selbstständige*) category experiencing similar challenges. Amesberger (2014) cites working conditions in 24-hour care as comparable. These challenges are often experienced as part of precarious work. There is no agreed-upon definition for the term, but Allan et al. (2021) ascribe multiple characteristics to precarious work: a) Atypical employment such as gig, casual or temporary work or self-employments, b) economic insecurity like low pay or limited access to benefits, c) limited social and organisational power, and d) lack of workplace protections and rights. Precarious employment was found to be linked with depression and anxiety as well as stress (Blustein et al., 2023; European Parliament et al., 2017). Especially the job insecurity was found to have an adverse effect on mental health (Rönblad et al., 2019).

Sex work also involves atypical employment and a lack of protection and rights in the workplace, which qualifies as precarious work. Though there is a persistent myth of quick and ample earnings, this cannot always be confirmed. While sex workers report their income as comparatively high in a 2021 study by Benoit et al., especially for people with a low level of formal education, other researchers see reported earnings falling closer along the lower-income line (Amesberger, 2014; Gunst et al., 2022; McCarthy et al., 2021). The variation in income is best described by Rössler et al.'s (2010) study which reported a very wide range of weekly incomes, from €93 to €6262. Moreover, Amesberger (2014) reports that working hours are generally higher than the Austrian population, with an average of 50 hours per week, and in some work environments, such as Laufhaus, as many as 70 hours per week. These high work hours can have various reasons, such as the need to first pay off fixed costs, high personal expenses, or for a significant amount of sex workers, providing for family in their country of origin (Akarcesme & Nagl, 2022).

Making statements about demographic descriptors of sex workers is seen as immensely difficult, although one constant has been noted repeatedly: the large amount of migrants in (physical) sex work (Akarcesme & Nagl, 2022; Arbeitsgruppe Prostitution, 2021; Sou et al., 2019). Especially the EU labour market allows for border-free mobility of workers. As a report by the European Agency for safety and healthy at work (EU-OSHA) there is significant labour market segmentation: migrants work either in high-skilled professions or “for the three D-jobs: dirty, dangerous and demanding” (2007, p. 21). These dynamics are also true in the sexual service sector: Labour migration is a significant part in sex work. For migrant sex workers, this often means facing two-fold disadvantages, as they are not only subject to prejudice because of their work, but also because of their migrant identity (Akarcesme & Nagl, 2022). This migrant identity may also imply other structural disadvantages, such as less knowledge of the legal situation in the country where they work, or financial responsibilities for families in their countries of origin.

As with other work sectors, especially those that feature primarily in low-skilled labour segments with a high degree of migrant workers, precarious working conditions and labour exploitation are not unusual (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2007; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018, 2019; Svensson et al., 2013). This is true for domestic work, agriculture, construction and also sex work (Amesberger, 2014; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019; Svensson et al., 2013; Thiemann, 2020).

However, exploitation has historically and socially been a special focus in sex work, often conflated with human trafficking, forced prostitution or an understanding of prostitution as being

inherently exploitative (Farley, 2018; Wagenaar et al., 2013). While a special focus on exploitation in the context of sex work is warranted, with the right to sexual self-determination being a basic right in the Austrian constitution, there is no reason to consider it to be other than labour exploitation when taking an occupational approach to sex work. Amesberger (2014) suggests that some dependencies of workers, especially on brothel owners, are due to the heterogeneous and confusing legal situations. On an individual scale, third parties are often only identified as pimps, with laws often understanding them as such. And while exploitation at the hands of pimps or so-called loverboys does happen (Katona, 2017), the reality of third parties is seldom that simple, “with involvement ranging from exploitative and coercive to protective and supportive ” (McBride et al., 2019, p. 792).

With an understanding of labour exploitation, measure to combat it can be taken as for other forms of worker exploitation, as the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA; 2019) suggests, like informing workers of their rights, avoiding situations of irregularity and avoiding dependency on employers.

Job Demands and Resources in Sex Work

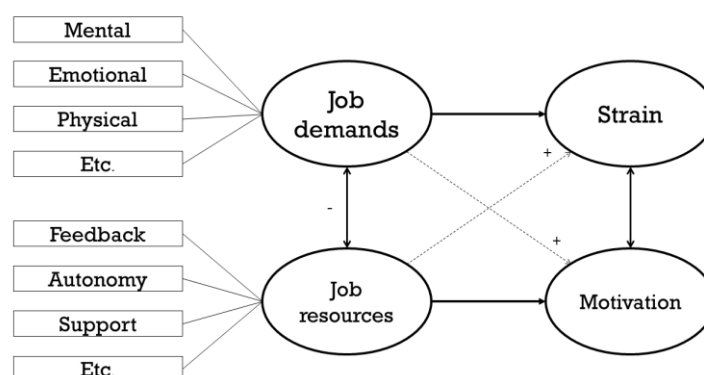
The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, first devised by Demerouti et al. (2001) in the early 2000s, assumes that job characteristics can be categorized as either job demands or job resources. Based on their understanding, job demands encompass a multitude of aspects inherent to the job itself, including physical, psychological, social, and organisational elements. These demands necessitate sustained physical or psychological effort, which consequently result in physiological or psychological costs. Conversely, job resources pertain to job characteristics that facilitate the accomplishment of work-related objectives. They serve to mitigate the burdens imposed by job demands, promote personal growth, foster learning, and facilitate professional development.

Thus, this model assumes the negative impact of job demands on the employees’ well-being and the positive impact of job resources (depicted in Figure 1; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Additionally, it is assumed that there are interactions between job demands and resources, with resources mitigating the impact of demands, particularly when demands are high. Another assumption of the model is that personal resources, akin to job resources, such as self-efficacy, are linked to work engagement. From their review of existing literature Bakker and Demerouti (2017) concluded that motivation was found to have a positive effect on job performance, while job strain had a negative impact on job performance. The JD-R model is characterized above all by the fact that it does not assume any specific job demands and resources which makes it highly flexible. Job demands and resources can be examined specifically

for each occupation and workplace (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In the following, job demands and resources of physical sex work in literature will be discussed.

Figure 1

Illustrative JD-R model based on Bakker & Demerouti (2007)



Job Demands

Job demands and resources have not been researched explicitly, although there are a handful of studies using occupational psychology frameworks analysing the working conditions of sex work (Duff et al., 2017; Seib et al., 2012; Sou et al., 2019; Vanwesenbeeck, 2005). Occupational hazards which can be counted as job demands researched most in the field are violence at the workplace and experiences of stigmatisation.

Stigma

Stigma is defined by Goffman (2009) as a social attribute that separates individuals from others based on socially given judgments. Stigmas are deeply discrediting and reduce the bearer from a complete and accepted person to a tainted and discounted one. Stigma has been found to be negatively associated with mental health and the ability to build up personal resources (Mak et al., 2007). It encompasses labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination of stigmatised individuals (Link & Phelan, 2001). Literature researching stigma surrounding sex work has measured stigma in a variety of ways, with a focus on discriminatory behaviour against sex workers.

Sex work stigma has been linked to worse mental health of workers (Macioti et al., 2021; Reynish et al., 2021), lower usage of health services (Benoit et al., 2019; Brookfield et al., 2020; Lazarus et al., 2012; Reynish et al., 2021; Zehnder et al., 2019), higher STD/STI and HIV rates (Krüsi et al., 2016; Lyons et al., 2020) and has been associated with violence against sex workers (Aidsfonds & PROUD, 2018; Deering et al., 2014; Grittner & Walsh, 2020; Krüsi et al., 2016). Sex workers report not being able to rent or buy homes or open bank accounts (Aidsfonds & PROUD, 2018).

But also within-group stigma has been observed. Toubiana and Ruebottom (2022) report that sex workers themselves order themselves to a stigma hierarchy (sometimes called *whorearchy*). There, jobs that involve no or little physical contact with clients, like BDSM sex work or pornography, are placed higher in hierarchy. Sex work that involves a high contact with clients or is done “purely for money” (2022, p. 531), is perceived as more stigmatised. They describe that additionally, the whorearchy also reproduces societal demographic hierarchies, like the stigmatisation of LGBTQ people or migrants.

Violence

Violence against sex workers has been researched extensively. There is consistent evidence of the high prevalence of sexual and physical violence sex workers experience, although structural factors (like the legal status of sex work) have been found to be a determining factor in the extent of experienced violence (Deering et al., 2014).

Even within regulated legal frameworks, instances of physical or sexual violence remain disproportionately high compared to the general working population. A Swiss study found that 25.9% of workers within the red-light district reported experiencing physical violence, while 19.7% reported incidents of rape (Rössler et al., 2010). In a report from the Dutch sex workers advocacy group PROUD and Aidsfonds (2018), focusing on violence experiences, these figures were particularly concerning, with 60% and 78% reporting physical and sexual violence, respectively. Though, it is important to note that for this study, the use of broad definitions for sexual and physical violence may contribute to the elevated prevalence.

While the prevalence rates observed are unusual for workplace violence and seem unique to sex work, similar patterns of high prevalence of physical and sexual violence are also observed in other professions, such as elder care. Research by Bauer et al. (2018) indicates that 35.6% of nursing and care staff in long-term care in retirement and nursing homes in Austria reported experiencing physical violence at least once a month. Additionally, nearly 20% of employees in those facilities reported instances of sexual advances and harassment. Unsurprisingly, Duff et al. (2017) found that workplace violence among Canadian sex workers was significantly associated with increased work stress. Perpetrators are often clients, bosses and studio owners or colleagues (Aidsfonds & PROUD, 2018). Additionally, especially in criminalised settings, police can be identified as perpetrators of violence as well (Platt et al., 2018).

Emotional Labour

Other job demands can be identified in the literature, although not explicitly named as such. Frequently mentioned are various facets of emotional labour, like demanding contact with clients

(Macioti et al., 2021; Markelj et al., 2022; Seib et al., 2012) or faking attraction in order to create a satisfactory customer experience (Kay Hoang, 2010; van der Meulen, 2010).

The concept of emotional labour can be traced back to sociologist Arlie Hochschild whose research referred to the growing demands of service sectors employees to manage their feelings in order to support company profit (Diefendorff et al., 2012). High emotional labour jobs are characterised by Hochschild (1983, as cited in Diefendorff et al., 2012) by the following three criteria: a) frequent interactions with the public, b) the expectation of inducing emotions in others, and c) the management/control of these interactions. Thus, physical sex work can be assessed as high emotional labour work. Hochschild (2003) differentiates between surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting is described as the modification of emotional expression in order to satisfy job expectations, for example faking a smile. A concept related to surface acting is emotional dissonance which describes the “state of tension when there is a discrepancy between feelings and display” (Diefendorff et al., 2012, p. 6). Deep Acting on the other hand is the process of modifying one’s feeling in order to satisfy job expectations. This can happen by for example reappraising one’s feelings in the situation. Emotional labour, at least surface acting and emotional dissonance, can be regarded as important job demands in the service sector. Both surface acting and emotional dissonance showing a positive correlation of moderate strength with the burnout components emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Hülshager & Schewe, 2011; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). Furthermore, surface acting is moderately associated with psychological strain and psychosomatic complaints. Negative associations with job satisfaction were also found for surface acting and emotional dissonance (Hülshager & Schewe, 2011; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012).

Emotional labour in sex work has surprisingly just been researched occasionally as an explicit demand (Carbonero & Gómez Garrido, 2018; Deshotels & Forsyth, 2006; Kay Hoang, 2010; Smith et al., 2015; van der Meulen, 2010).

While physical sex work can be counted as a high emotional labour job, there seem to be differences in work environments relating to the degree of emotional labour (Carbonero & Gómez Garrido, 2018; Weitzer, 2023, p. 17). Kay Hoang (2010) found in their study of sex workers in Ho Chi Minh City that the demand for emotional labour differs with the status and price of physical sex work. Sex workers in low-end sector did not report of expressive emotional labour while mid-tier and high-tier sector sex workers (bar-based work and escort, respectively) engaged in relational work like getting to know their clients and entertain them.

Following this as well as Apelt-Schunk's (2022) assessment, escort and sex work in bars and night clubs are two work fields that are especially intensive in emotional labour because it is expected as part of their service. Workers have to entertain clients and fake interest or attraction. While immediate client satisfaction may not be always a primary concern during initial encounters, its significance lies in fostering ongoing relationships with regular clientele. This is of significant importance to workers who undertake solicitation and advertising independently.

Idle Time

Another demand which is frequently mentioned is the experience of idle time. Idle time has been defined as "as a period of involuntary downtime during which in-role tasks *cannot* be done" (Brodsky & Amabile, 2018, p. 3), although there is ability and motivation of the worker to do these tasks. In sex work, this mainly manifests as the wait times for customers. Research of idle time at work and its consequences for work-related behaviour is fairly new in occupational psychology and there are no studies focusing on idle time in sex work, though it is mentioned as a feature of some work environments like escort (Amesberger, 2014). Idle time at work is associated with boredom as well as turnover intentions and negative impacts on mental well-being (Schubert et al., 2023; Zeschke & Zacher, 2023).

Language Barriers

As previously outlined, sex work is profoundly influenced by labour migration. Furthermore, given the lack of linguistic requirements for a significant proportion of sex work jobs, language barriers can arise within the workplace. Language difficulties may impede communication with clients or colleagues, hinder the formation of a supportive work environment, and prevent individuals from accessing legal information. Lack of language skills to deal with clients, brothel owners, or colleagues has been identified as a work stressor for immigrants (Rössler et al., 2010; Sou et al., 2019).

Job Resources

As with job demands, job resources also have not been explicitly researched. Even more, research surrounding sex work rarely examines aspects of the jobs that have motivating effects in the individual. In the literature, three aspects are brought up repeatedly though: the comparatively high earnings sex work offers, the autonomy and decision control as well as social support. As discussed above in the section [Precarious Sex Work, \(Labour\) Migration and Exploitation](#), high earnings cannot be confirmed for every work environment.

Autonomy

Autonomy, decision control as well as “independence” and self-employment are often used synonymous in the literature. In studies, themes like agency, the hours and the flexibility sex work offers (Aidsfonds & PROUD, 2018; Amesberger, 2014; Macioti et al., 2021; Rössler et al., 2010) or being able to pick their clients and work hours (Vanwesenbeeck, 2005; Wagenaar et al., 2013) appear repeatedly. McCarthy et al. (2021) found in their comparative analysis of sex work and hairstyling, that sex workers perceived a significantly higher decision latitude compared to the sample of hairstylists.

Notably, especially the repeated mention of various forms of autonomy could also be influenced by the self-employed nature of sex work. Khan et al. (2021) found that the flexibility, job control, independence from a supervisor and autonomy in regard to work schedule and pace self-employment offered were generally seen as benefits of being self-employed. In her 2005 study on burnout in Dutch sex workers, Vanwesenbeeck found that a higher degree of control over interactions with clients was negatively associated with emotional exhaustion. The same correlation was also found for degree of sex work not being one’s own choice, unsurprisingly. When Sou et al. (2019) examined the impact of immigration on work stress in sex workers, they found that decision authority was generally low, though the duration of residency was influenced by the degree of perceived decision authority. All in all, it can be said that autonomy is an important resource.

Social Support

Social support is named repeatedly as a health-related resource in sex work. Social support, and more specifically support of their sex worker peer community (Macioti et al., 2021), was significantly associated with better mental health, like high self-esteem and less suicidality (Mühlen et al., 2022) as well as lower rates of mental disorders (Rössler et al., 2010). Social support was also found to positively influence uptake of mental health services (Reynish et al., 2021). Vanwesenbeeck (2005) found a significant negative correlation between supportive organisational culture and emotional exhaustion, as well as a positive correlation between unsupportive organisational culture and emotional exhaustion in their study of Dutch sex workers.

Research Gap

As mentioned before, research on sex work is sparse. This is especially true for research from an occupational perspective, that is understanding sex work as work. The research area of regulated sex work offers little systematic insight into everyday work.

Notable is the significant amount of grey literature in the field of sex work research. There are multiple advocacy organisations as well as national and international policy bodies that have published

studies examining occupational perspectives on sex work (Aidsfonds & PROUD, 2018; Deutsche Aidshilfe e. V., 2022; Maciotti et al., 2021; UNAIDS, 2021; World Health Organization, 2012). While a lot of those studies are done in cooperation with researchers (see, e.g., Maciotti et al., 2021), seldom are the results of these studies peer-reviewed and published in academic journals. Research of this kind is often participatory and is generally positively regarded in the sex worker community.

Shaver denotes in a 2005 article three sets of challenges that sex work research faces. Firstly, because of the high mobility of this working group and the lack of reliable population data, it has proven immensely difficult to claim representative samples. This difficulty is also recognised by the Austrian work group on prostitution (Arbeitsgruppe Prostitution, 2021; Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024).

Another challenge Shaver (2005) notes are the difficulties for researchers in finding field access and willing study participants. Even in regulated or decriminalised settings, stigma or illegalised behaviours can prevent sex workers from participating in studies out of privacy or confidentiality concerns. Workers can have a general distrust against researchers, too (see e.g., Seib et al., 2012). Thus, sex work research has relied strongly on convenience sampling (Bungay et al., 2016; McCann et al., 2021). This of course, can lead to biases and measurement errors, though it has been accepted for these hard-to-reach populations since it is often the only way these populations can be researched (Johnston & Sabin, 2010).

The third challenge of sex work research Shaver (2005) highlights is the existing presumptions that have coloured research, like the assumptions of homogeneity of the population or associations with victimisation. Sex work research itself historically has had a strong focus on STD/STI/HIV risk as well as experiences of violence (Weitzer, 2023, p. 6). Physical health of sex workers is almost exclusively researched regarding STD/STIs and HIV/AIDS. Sex workers do face a disproportionate burden of HIV infections and STD/STIs (World Health Organization, 2022), so the importance of that research cannot be denied. Nevertheless, research has neglected other physical demands and their effects on overall wellbeing of workers. Alexander (1998) cites musculoskeletal injuries as an occupational hazard.

As already mentioned in the chapter [Work Environments and Their Features](#), street-based sex work is a frequent focus of studies, while only making up a tiny portion of the sex industry, especially in regulated contexts (Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024; TAMPEP, 2009). Samples often consist of sex workers in particularly precarious situations, like experiencing homelessness or drug addiction, making statements about populations difficult. Participants are often recruited from counselling centres, which already restricts the sample to those sex workers seeking out these

institutions. Furthermore, male sex workers who have sex with men as well as trans men are especially underrepresented in research (Bungay et al., 2016) as well as migrant sex workers (Karlsson, 2022).

Methodologically, the past literature has also been criticised. Karlsson (2022) identified in their scoping review regarding sex work policy that most studies did not use empirical methods, and overwhelmingly were conducted in English-speaking countries, with relatively few from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This was also found by McCann et al. (2021) who highlighted the lack of high-quality studies in their review, especially those with formal ethic approval. Qualitative, cross-sectional designs are common (Karlsson, 2022; McCann et al., 2021). Deering et al. (2014) have stressed the need for methodologically robust research that includes different methods like longitudinal or mixed methods studies.

Current Study

Due to the previously discussed gaps in work psychological perspectives, there is a need to assess the job characteristics that influence sex work. The aim of this study was to identify the relevant demands and resources of sex workers who work in Austria. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, to find out what job demands and resources are relevant for sex workers and how these could be modelled using the JD-R model. These interviews were also used to review demands and resources from the previous literature review. A valid model of job demands and resources is an important basis for future research in this field.

Since sex work is under-researched, especially with an occupational psychology perspective, this master's thesis will take a more exploratory approach.

The leading research questions are:

1. What factors (job demands & resources) influence the working conditions of sex workers?
2. What job demands do workers face and how do they affect their well-being?
3. What personal job resources are available to workers to cope with job demands?
4. What institutional job resources are available to workers to cope with job demands?

In the following, the study will be outlined. Sampling and recruitment will be described as well as the chosen analysis method. The results will be presented regarding which job demands and resources were named in the interviews, and subsequently it will be discussed how these results fit into current literature. Implications for future research will be given.

Methods

In anticipation of difficulties in access to the field, and in view of the fact that advocacy groups have repeatedly asked to be part of studies, people with access to the field were contacted early in the

study. These community sources were also consulted regularly about the design of the study and community concerns. Ethical approval was obtained on November 29th, 2024, from the University Ethics Committee after revisions to recruiting material before starting data collection (No. 01044).

Sample and Recruitment

All adult sex workers who work in Austria and offer sexual services with physical contact were eligible for participation. The sampling strategy was to have at least one person working in each major sectors of sex work (i.e., brothels/night clubs, Laufhauses, sexual assistance, escort, street-based sex work and BDSM). A priori, the possible sample size was restricted to a maximum of 8 people.

Interviews were offered in English, German or Spanish. Since the majority of Austrian sex workers are migrants (Arbeitsgruppe Prostitution, 2021), the possibility of conducting the interview with the help of a translator was also offered. Interviews were offered in person, either at the university or on the premises of counselling centres.

Participants were recruited via aforementioned contacts at trade associations and counselling centres, as well as online (via social media) and offline (via posters in university communal areas, supermarkets and cafes).

Informed written consent was necessary to participate in this study. Participants were informed about the content of the interviews, the measures to ensure anonymity and confidentiality and their rights regarding their data and participation. Participants were not required to provide their real name nor any other revealing information. The participants received a lump sum compensation for their expenditures of 50€ in cash. This money was provided by the queer-fem scholarship of the Students' Union (ÖH) at the University of Vienna.

Interviews

Six interviews were conducted as semi-structured individual interviews with narrative elements. Overview over all participants can be found in Table 1. This semi-structured interview guideline was developed based on the literature review conducted for this master thesis and available in German, English and Spanish. It consists of three major blocks: everyday work and its tasks, emotional aspects of the job, and environmental factors like social relationships and the legal situation. Each block has a few guiding questions as well as some follow-up questions. Interviewees were prompted with one of the open-ended guiding questions and were not interrupted when answering, except for clarification.

A semi-structured interview design was chosen to react dynamically to the flow of the interview and thus give the interviewees the opportunity to answer the questions as in depth as they saw fit. This was deemed especially important because of the exploratory nature of this study. All interviews were

introduced with a short description of the following study as well as disclosure about intimate topics, like experiences of violence or stigmatisation, and concluded with a block where participants could make remarks, add information, or ask questions (see [Appendix 1](#) for the full interview guideline in German). One interview (SW05) was conducted with the help of a translator who was familiar with the work field and translated Romanian to German.

Table 1

Overview of Participants

Participant ID	Code name	Interview duration	Interview language	Gender	Age range	Nationality	Area of sex work	Duration in sex work (in years)
SW00	Brigitte	117 min	German	Female (cis)	50-60	AT	Escort, sexual assistance	30
SW01	Dhyana	123 min	German	Female (trans)	40-50	AT	BDSM, brothel	1
SW02	Maria	73 min	German	Female (trans)	20-30	AT	Escort, Laufhaus, Online porn	1
SW03	Layla	93 min	German	Female (cis)	30-40	AT/RO	Escort, Laufhaus, nightclub	0.3
SW04	Ana	92 min	English	Female (cis)	30-40	RO	Escort, Laufhaus, brothel, escort agency	4
SW05	Sonia	95 min	Romanian and German	Female (trans)	50-60	RO	Street, brothel	36

Note. $N = 6$. Participants were on average 42.8 years old ($SD = 12.2$). Age ranges instead of specific age are reported out of privacy concerns of participants. AT = Austrian, RO = Romanian. Cisgender (often abbreviated to cis) is a term for people whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth.

Analysis

All interviews were first pre-transcribed automatically (*F4x Spracherkennung*, 2024) and then manually corrected. In the case of SW05, whose interview was conducted with the help of a translator, the entire interview was transcribed automatically, but only the German parts were manually corrected

and used for analysis. The transcribed interviews were analysed using MAXQDA 24 software (2024) following Mayring's (2015, 2021) qualitative content analysis (QCA). QCA is an established method in German-speaking countries for thematically analysing and categorising qualitative data (Mayring, 2021; Mayring & Gläser-Zikuda, 2008).

Given the exploratory nature of the study, the approach of forming categories inductively was chosen (see Mayring, 2021, p. 150). Thus, no prior developed coding guideline was utilized, and no categories were created from paraphrased text segments. Instead, the segments were used as they were. With the transcripts being in different languages, coding was done solely in English to provide accessibility and consistency. The coding, context, and recording units were clearly defined initially, to ensure consistency and accuracy throughout the analysis, as it is recommended by Mayring (2021, p. 150).

Consequently, coding was started by identifying concise semantic elements in the text that discussed personal experiences of job demands or resources in physical sex work, as they were described by Bakker and Demerouti (2017). After working through three transcribed interviews in this way, the codes were clustered content-wise, to build categories for specific job demands or resources (e.g., "demanding contact with clients", "lack of social network & social support"). All existing codes of these three interviews were assigned to these preliminary categories. Within these categories, the codes were clustered again to build more specific subcategories. Initially, some interview segments appeared to be relevant for coding, but after further analysis using the primarily defined category definition and levels of abstractions, these were deemed irrelevant (i.e., not pertaining to personal experiences or being too abstract) and subsequently excluded.

The remaining interviews were analysed with this code system. Some subcategories were slightly changed to accommodate for new codes, but the categories themselves remained unchanged. Finally, some subcategories were merged to be more concise. As a last step, all interviews were reviewed using the final coding system, rather than having another person also code the interviews. This was done to consolidate the system and re-examine the categories to reduce bias, as it was not possible for another person to do this within the scope of this thesis.

Table 2

Summary of qualitative categories

Cluster	Category	Subcategory	Number of Instances
	Unfavourable Working Hours		12

Demands related to self-employment in sex work	Lack of Formal Social Support	Interaction with Third Parties	14	
		External Factors	13	
		Little Contact with Other Sex workers	12	
	Volatile Income	Interpersonal Reasons	10	
		Financial Pressure	20	
Income Instability		13		
Resources related to self-employment in sex work	Autonomy	Flexibility	21	
		High Job Control	16	
		Autonomy Compared to Traditional Employment	9	
	Informal Social Support Systems	Influence on Job	5	
		Informal Workplace Social Support	25	
		Social Support from Friends & Family	5	
	Information About the Job	Colleagues as a Source of Information	7	
		Institutions as Source of Information	5	
		Internet as a Source of Information	4	
	Sex work-specific demands	Stigmatisation and Discrimination	Disclosure of SW Job	15
			Discrimination	14
Societal Perception of SWers			13	
Transphobia as a SWer			10	
Xenophobia as a SWer			5	
Emotional Demands		Emotional Demands During Solicitation	18	
		Client Needs Outside of Sex	9	
		SW Goes Beyond Sex	8	
		Client Interaction as Exhausting	5	
		Interacting with Difficult Clients	16	
Emotional Dissonance		Surface Acting	5	
		Seducing Clients	3	
Work-Home Conflicts			16	
		Idle Time	10	
Unfavourable Work Environments			10	
Violence at Work	Perspectives on Violence	16		
	Exposure to Violence	7		
Occupational Risks and Hazards		8		

Sex Work-specific Resources	Restrictive Laws Make the	Laws Against Flat Prostitution	8
	Job More Difficult	Heterogeneous Laws	5
	Experience in Sex Work		25
	Work Engagement Factors	Emotional Engagement	6
		Tracking Clients and Preferences	5
		Working Creatively	3
	Meaning of Work		3
	High Hourly Compensation		11
	Appreciation by Clients		17
	Coping with Emotional	Emotional Distance	17
	Demands	Coping Mechanisms	17
	Security Mechanisms Against	Social Contacts as Security	17
	Violence	Mechanism	
		Client Selection as Security	13
		Mechanism	
Environment specific demands & resources	Escort	Physical Self-Defence Mechanisms	12
		Time Spent Organising Dates	30
	BDSM	Short Notice Work Time	7
		Professional development	11
		Responsibility for client well-being	9
		Task Variety	6

Note. SW = sex work; SWer = sex worker

During the analysis some categories were also found to be related to sex work on different levels of specificity. While some categories could just be due to self-employment in sex work, others were highly specific to certain work environments. Thus, to enhance comprehensibility, categories were finally organised along job demands and resources that could also be due to self-employment, those specific to sex-work and those specific to certain sex work environments. A summary of identified categories and subcategories is provided in Table 2. The analysis resulted in 24 categories, of which 13 were classified as job demands and 11 as job resources.

Results

As described above, job demands and resources will be reported by first describing the characteristics that are also prominent in self-employment, followed by those unique to sex work. Subsequently, some job demands and resources that are related to a specific work environment will be examined. A cross-tabulation analysis of the major categories is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Crosstab Analysis of Categories

Category Type	Categories	No. of Instances	Documents
Demands	Stigmatisation and Discrimination	58	5
	Lack of Formal Social Support	52	5
	Emotional Demands	51	5
	Volatile Income	33	5
	Violence at Work	29	5
	Restrictive Laws Make Job More Difficult	29	4
	Emotional Dissonance	25	5
	Work-Home Conflicts	16	2
	Unfavourable Work Environments	15	5
	Unfavourable Working Hours	12	4
	Idle Time	11	2
	Occupational Risks and Hazards	8	3
Resources	Autonomy	66	5
	Security Mechanisms Against Violence	50	5
	Coping with Emotional Demands	34	4
	Informal Social Support Systems	30	4
	Experience	26	5
	Information About the Job	20	5
	Appreciation by Clients	17	5
	Work Engagement Factors	16	4
	High Hourly Compensation	11	3
	Meaning	3	2
	Other	19	6
All Documents			6

Note. Environment-specific job characteristics are not included.

If the quotes used originated from an interview conducted in German, they have been translated by the author. (...) denotes omitted sections for brevity, while content within [] signifies

author's annotations or additional contextual details. Codenames were chosen after consulting the participants and are used as stated in Table 1.

Job Demands and Resources Related to Self-Employment in Sex Work

Job demands and resources in sex work cannot always be clearly separated from those in self-employment. Maria (Escort/Laufhaus) described her relationship to her work like this:

Because I am *self-employed*, (...) of course I have more paperwork with taxes and all sorts of things, but I have much more freedom (...). So, this personal freedom that I have because I do this independently is incredibly valuable.

Moreover, several job demands and resources identified through interviews mirror those encountered by other self-employed individuals. These include typical demands such as volatile income (Khan et al., 2021), and long or irregular working hours (Nordenmark et al., 2012; Rietveld et al., 2015) or resources such as autonomy (Khan et al., 2021). Thus, these demands and resources are reported under the category of self-employment.

This section will first explore the demands presumably linked with self-employment in sex work, followed by an examination of the perceived resources.

Demands Related to Self-Employment in Sex Work

Unfavourable Working Hours. As already mentioned, as a part of the entertainment service sector, sex work mainly takes place at night. It was most apparent for the participant working on the streets, since the city of Vienna only allows street-based prostitution between the hours of 22:00 and 6:00. Sonia (street/brothel) reported that her working hours depended mainly on the availability of clients and the availability of public transport at night. She explained she had to leave her workplace at 12:30 during the week but could stay until 4 o'clock during the weekends when public transport operates all night.

Long working hours were occasionally reported by some participants working in Laufhauses and brothels, like Maria (Escort/Laufhaus) who described working the full opening hours of 16 hours one day. However, this did not seem to be a typical work shift duration. Regarding the unusual and often long work times, two older participants said that they had noticed that these working hours had become more physically demanding.

Lack of Formal Social Support. Since traditional hierarchies of supervision are not legally possible, colleagues are the only formal social support in Austrian sex work. All participants reported having little to no contact to other sex workers during working times. Some just did not have any contact with colleagues to begin with because of the solitary nature of their work environment. This was

especially true for people who did escort. But also in locations where there are other sex workers like Laufhauses or brothels, little contact was reported.

This was explained with different reasons. While not perceived as a problem at work with clients, the language barrier was mentioned as a hindrance for building relationships with foreign colleagues. Sonia (street/brothel) talked about having had friendly relationships with a few other colleagues on the street which were broken up by the pimps of those colleagues. But also, more trivial reasons, like not having a community room that could be used by non-smokers were mentioned. Interpersonal reasons given were that colleagues generally were perceived as unfriendly or having had fights or being bullied in the past. Often participants also said that they had no interest in building up collegial structures, preferring solitary work.

However, most participants attributed the lack of social support to the competitive atmosphere, as Maria explained, that “in the Laufhaus (...), where there *are* others, they are competitors. So, you don't have a friendly exchange with them, you try to take customers from each other.”

This pressure was especially reported by people who worked in Laufhauses and on the street, which fuelled interpersonal conflicts and jealousy. Sonia (street/brothel) recounts a colleague's presumed lie that she was able to earn 2000 EUR one night, despite the lack of comparable earnings among the other workers, which prompted her to say: "you're not as pretty as Pamela Anderson either".

Volatile Income. As it is often the case with other types of self-employment (Khan et al., 2021), the instability of income was mentioned frequently by sex workers as stressful.

The participants who worked part-time usually reported working the other job to have a stable income. Since the pay was directly dependent on the availability of clients, it was reported to vary monthly. This was also shared by the participants working in nightclubs. Presence in the club was mandatory during opening hours regardless of customer volume, but not paid, as one participant explained:

So, [during working] time, the girls, they really have to stay in the club, in the bar. It's not like you can go to rest a little bit or something. No. (...) These are the working times and all the girls, they have to stay there. (Ana, Escort/Laufhaus/brothel/escort agency)

No participants reported working in an establishment with basic pay. Thus, the financial incentive to have clients was perceived as high. However, this pressure was noticed the most for participants who worked in the Laufhauses. One participant explains why she preferred escort over Laufhaus work with the financial pressure she faced because of the high rent, detailing “Yes, of course

you're still motivated when you're paying 1000 Euros a week in rent, but you're still motivated to have a lot of customers there. (...) [long pause] So it's more stressful in the Laufhaus”.

Financial pressures related to financial instability were reported as stressful. However, these pressures were also perceived on a broader economic scale. One participant said that she feared that these pressures could shape the demand for services she did not want to perform:

and there are women who urgently need the money, they will do it without protection. (...) because if everyone suddenly told me okay, I only want (...) without protection, then I can't do the job, even if I want to. It is *simply not* possible. (Layla, Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub)

Resources Related to Self-Employment in Sex Work

Autonomy. The topic of autonomy took a variety of forms in the narratives of participants, reflecting its role as a significant motivational factor in sex work. All participants said they perceived autonomy positively.

Sex work was perceived as being very flexible in terms of working hours. Two participants reported doing sex work as a side job, finding it very compatible with their other careers. Its flexibility regarding private obligations like pets or family life were also named as benefits by participants.

Autonomy was also perceived as a high level of job control. All participants reported being able to freely choose their clients, though one person mentioned having trouble declining customers for economic reasons, even when they were unwanted.

Outside of clients, high job control regarding working time/hours and workload was reported, especially in the work environments escort, Laufhaus, BDSM and street-based sex work. Dhyana (BDSM/brothel) for example explained her decision control in her BDSM sex work like this: “I decide. When, how, where, what, why”. Especially control over time spent with clients was regarded as positive, though approaches varied. While one participant explained she “do[es] it very strictly, when I say 60 minutes, I mean it”, others liked to set the end of appointments how they saw fit. This control over work schedule also meant that participants had to decide for themselves when to conclude their workday, particularly in workplaces that operated 24 hours a day or for those who received bookings online. The participants doing primarily escort explained that they limited their work times to maintain a consistent sleep schedule, as illustrated by Maria, who avoided accepting client appointment after 10 o'clock at night. Especially the Laufhaus and escort environment were repeatedly named as providing a lot of autonomy. One participant explains her possibilities of designing her working day in the Laufhaus like this:

I pay my room rent for the week and I do what I want. I can have the door set to occupied the whole day, and then I can sleep all day if I want. Or I can take as many or as few customers as I want. Nobody can dictate to me how much I charge, what I do, who I work with, that's not allowed anyway. (Maria, Escort/Laufhaus)

This autonomy was somewhat qualified by one participant in particular, who felt that if workers use the rooms also as living spaces, this autonomy could be restricted by Laufhaus proprietors. She explained that since they depend on the Laufhaus not only for work but also for housing, they would have no bargaining power if the owners made demands and would have to give in, possibly accepting clients or perform services they did not want to.

The autonomy was especially appreciated in comparison to traditional employment. The lack of a superior as well as the freedom and control to design one's workday were named as advantages compared to former, traditional jobs.

Informal Social Support Systems. This category describes informal social support at the workplace as well as private social support. In absence of a direct supervisor, third parties like proprietors or establishment owners were often named as other significant social contacts at work next to colleagues. One participant praised the studio proprietor she worked with, assigning him a vital role in generating a motivating and respectful work atmosphere. Though this experience was rather unique, as she acknowledged. Indeed, most participants reported having had difficult relationships with third parties, with studio owners being perceived as unhelpful and too focused on profit without consideration for the wellbeing of workers. One participant described having had a pimp in the past when working in another country where sex work is illegal but did not elaborate about the relationship.

While social support from friends and family is generally seen as a significant resource in self-employment (Khan et al., 2021), they only influenced the work lives of sex workers marginally. Only Dhyana (BDSM/brothel) described having a reliable private social network that would support her unconditionally. Sonia (street/brothel) told that she was able to talk and relax with housemates after work although this relationship was not described as very profound.

Information About the Job. Knowing information about the legal and labour aspects of the job were regarded as important. When asked about what she would advise colleagues that just start out, Layla (Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub) answered "that they inform themselves as well as possible beforehand and don't just go for it. (...) That you inform yourself a bit about how it works, what rights you have". One participant explained how difficult she perceived the unfamiliar work environment when she changed from an escort agency to a Laufhaus:

And for me it was very difficult because I didn't know the system (...) Laufhaus system, how it is. (...) And at a beginning I *didn't* know how it is. (...) So I was available all day from 10 o'clock to 2 o'clock. With no success. (...) It was very hard in the first week. (Ana, Escort/Laufhaus/brothel/escort agency)

As sources of information the internet, trade associations, counselling centres and colleagues at workplaces were named. Three participants reported informing themselves online about the job, either on forums or reading the relevant laws directly. Counselling centres and trade associations were repeatedly named as the preferred choice for information and advice, with most participants having had contact with them and recommending them for new sex workers.

Colleagues were regarded as a good source of information about the guidelines of a specific workplace like the drink menu or regulars but were less likely to be mentioned as a source of information about sex work in general.

Job Demands and Resources Related to Sex Work

This section explores the job demands and resources reported within the context of sex work. Various challenges that sex workers face are examined, like emotional strain, social stigma and legal restrictions. Following this, resources available to sex workers that can potentially buffer these demands, such as security measures, work experience, and aspects of work that provide satisfaction or meaning are reported.

Job Demands Related to Sex Work

This subsection delves into factors named by participants that were perceived as challenging such as emotional demands, stigmatisation, restrictive laws, long waiting periods, and work-home conflicts. Impact of these demands on well-being are reported as well.

Emotional Demands. The emotional demands reported were various. It was reported that generally sex work was more than just sex and required some kind of emotional labour, even if there was no explicit relational component. As Layla (Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub) explains, “you adjust to every customer”. One participant tells of her own misconception about sex work at the start of her career at an escort agency:

I thought when they want- they book me two hours. I thought they want to have sex two hours. Yeah, because nobody told me actually how it is. So that's why I started to [inform myself] and I understood. I said, okay, stop. This job is not only sex. It's also, we speak a little bit. We have fun. We play games. (Ana, Escort/Laufhaus/brothel/escort agency)

As expected, work environments differed in the intensity and type of emotional labour. Participants who worked in Escort, BDSM and Brothels had more client relational contact. While one reported her escort work consisted of only sex, another participant described her appointments as containing dinners or lunch, conversing with her clients or being booked for multiple days to go on holiday with clients.

However, even if an appointment consisted only the performance of sexual services, aspects of emotional labour were still reported to be present. Clients were often reported to converse with the workers outside of sex, usually after, if there was still time on the clock. One participant described these moments as psychotherapy for the clients:

So then I'm a kind of a therapist, (...) because they talk to me about ALL their problems. Because I'm already there. (...) Oh, there's all sorts of things. (...) So there are people who talk about their sexuality, because I'm trans. (...) So- one person has started talking about gender identity.

(Maria, Escort/Laufhaus)

Outside of escort, brothels were also named as work environments with high emotional labour. Exemplarily for this, one worker describes a regular who “just wants us to be there, chatting with him (...) and laughing”, without ever having booked a room with a sex worker.

Emotional Dissonance. Since income is primarily dependent on customers, client satisfaction and retention were reported to be especially important. In the discussion of emotional labour, surface acting played a big part. Emotional dissonance describes therefore the display of incongruent emotions in regard to client-worker interactions. Having to be nice to difficult clients was described as emotionally demanding, especially in work environments where client contact was more relational.

However, such situations were also viewed as challenging due to existing power differentials, both in the workplace and socially. These imbalances were characterized as “unfair” and “one-sided”. One participant described how she had to be polite to a client when he asked her if psychological trauma was the reason she did sex work:

I could actually ask the same question, but I need money now and then I don't want to be rude, but otherwise I would also ask, (...) why you come to me and pay me and have a guilty conscience? (...) why are you actually cheating on your wife? so, do you have any problems in life? (Layla, Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub)

Ana (Escort/Laufhaus/brothel/escort agency) described how she always tried to “explain to them why I don't do what he wants,” “in a funny way”, so as not to cause conflict. She explains the balancing act of being polite and attractive for clients as well as being assertive regarding her own

boundaries as “for every little thing like [bad hygiene or bad jokes], I had to think, how to tell them in a nice way, but to understand”.

Interestingly, participants mentioned several times that the nightclub environment provides a unique situation to experience emotional dissonance. This was illustrated by the need to “seduce” clients into choosing their services. Participant Layla (Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub) described it as having “to be really friendly and nice” to customers and having to “give so many compliments in an artificial way” which she perceived as very taxing.

Stigmatisation and Discrimination. Expectedly, stigmatisation was mentioned often as an impairing factor for work and non-work life. Here, different aspects of stigma were named, like discriminatory behaviour against sex work, the decision to (not) disclose their job, the societal perception of sex work and the experiences of intersectional stigmatisation.

Discrimination was described by several participants. Sonia (street/brothel) reported that she was filmed at her workplace and posted to social media without her consent. Other participants tell of clients and health providers assuming that the work is not done voluntarily, the workers needing to be rescued or the work being a result of psychological trauma. Layla (Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub) describes her frustration with a Laufhaus operator who expressed his disapproval of sex work and how “he would *never* allow his wife to do that” as not being “fair”, adding “they want to cash in everywhere and are actually against it”.

Most participants selected very carefully who they disclosed their work to. However, two people were very open with the fact that they did sex work, citing their desire to do activist work as the reason.

The stress of concealing one's work status was also reported. One participant described the anxiety she faced when she thought an associate knew about her former sex work, fearing that it would undermine her authority in her current non-sex work job: “he has to speak to [the chairperson] in private, he has something to- he has to clarify something with [them]. (...) And then I broke out in a sweat, I thought to myself, Oh dear, oh dear”.

This state of having to be vigilant about what others might find out about one's sex work, even after some time, was described by several participants as one of the greatest emotional challenges of their work and was a major theme in the interviews.

Some participants talked about the intersectional discrimination they faced. The trans participants talked about being otherised or fetishised as trans women, like Sonia (street/brothel), who was told by a client that “trans women (...) do their job better than a (...) female (...) sex worker”. One worker reported being charged 300 Euro more for a room after the establishment proprietor realised,

she was trans. This kind of transphobia was not limited to interactions at work, but also in the social sphere. Dhyana (BDSM/brothel) described that she often perceived being trans as a bigger hurdle socially than her job as a sex worker, finding it “more difficult to explain to someone I am a trans woman, than, I work as a dominatrix”.

Experiences of xenophobia as a sex worker were also reported. One participant with migrant background talked about how frustrated she was, because she was perceived by clients as easy to take advantage of because of her background:

[clients] think I can't speak the language properly, or they want to negotiate me down just because they know, (...) I'm from abroad (...) And yes, I know MY rights and everything, and that's the hardest thing to deal with. (Layla, Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub)

Restrictive Laws Make the Job More Difficult. Especially the heterogeneous legal situation in Austria and the laws against flat prostitution were often mentioned as an obstacle to doing their job properly. Not knowing the extent of regulations or requirements was common, especially at the beginning of their work as sex workers. Two participants said that because of the complexity of the legal situation they worked illegally at some point of their career. One said that she was unsure of the current requirements to work legally and was currently working illegally.

Laws against flat prostitution were mentioned multiple times by participants working escort as a barrier to working as they wished. Flats were understood as a cheap alternative, yet currently illegal to Laufhauses for being visitable. Especially the high rent of Laufhauses in comparison to the housing market was cited here, with Maria (Escort/Laufhaus) assessing that “You pay 700 [Euros] a month for a [one-bedroom] flat[.] (...) I pay that a week in the Laufhaus, and in the Laufhaus it's for a room that's a quarter of the size of the room here”. Having more control about security measures was named as a potential advantage of flat prostitution as well.

The reactions on the mandatory health checks were mixed, with some participants seeing them as necessary and others seeing them as shifting the responsibility of sexual health from clients to workers. Though it was mentioned several times that the testing times, which are only offered in the morning, clashed with the more night-work orientated field of work.

Violence at Work. When asked directly, none of the participants said they had experienced violence at work, though some experiences reported could be classified as workplace violence. Generally, it was agreed upon by participants that sex work was a risky job. Three people perceived violence at work as an inevitability, which “sooner or later every person [in sex work] will experience” as Dhyana (BDSM/brothel) put it. When asked to define workplace violence, most participants described it

as a violation of established boundaries. Because of that, the participants practicing BDSM perceived themselves as more privileged in this regard, since the establishment and observance of boundaries is particularly important in BDSM culture (Williams et al., 2014).

Two participants reported being touched non-consensually by clients, either in body regions not negotiated before or before consenting to any sexual services. Both participants reported removing these clients themselves from the establishments.

Two other people added to their definition that violence could also be psychological. Instances of psychological/emotional violence (though not always labelled by participants as such) were bullying between co-workers, or intimidation, especially by third parties like pimps or security staff.

One person explained that she had the impression that some sex workers were too naïve in regard to their safety and felt that experiences of violence were sometimes necessary for them to protect themselves properly.

Work-Home Conflicts. Work-home conflicts were exclusively mentioned in regard to romantic relationships. Two people reported being in romantic relationships. Both engaged in non-traditional relationship forms like polyamory and open relationships. One participant chose not to disclose the extent of her sex work to her partner, causing anxiety about them finding out and stress outside of work.

Idle Time. Unsurprisingly, idle time was reported as an important factor in the workdays of participants working in Laufhauses, in night clubs and on the street. One participant described her workday in a Laufhaus as following:

And most of the day is spent lying in bed watching TV and waiting for someone to knock. And of course most people who knock ask how much for an hour and then leave again. That means you have this routine that you have to stop watching the series every five minutes, and then talk to someone and then you *might* get paid. (Maria, Escort/Laufhaus)

The necessity to be present, but not being able to work and earn money was experienced as frustrating and limiting. While experiences of idle time were also mentioned by participants doing escort work, it was perceived as being more manageable since other activities could be pursued, such as meeting with friends or engaging in online sex work.

Unfavourable Work Environments. Because of their dependence on weather and season, outdoor workplaces like the street were seen as less than ideal. Layla (Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub) reported of her dislike of the nightclub environment where she worked for a short time, citing her

inability to relax and perform her role adequately amidst loud music and dazzling colours. Having a favourable workplace was deemed important by one participant as a tool of cultivating a client base.

Occupational Risks and Hazards. Typical occupational hazards were the contraction of STDs/STIs or HIV and the consumption of alcohol in night clubs.

Of those interviewees who worked in brothels or nightclubs, all reported drinking alcohol as part of the job. It was understood as risky, but also part of the job that did not have a significant effect if one limited the alcohol consumption, either by working less in that environment or throw away the alcohol without the client noticing. Ana (Escort/Laufhaus/brothel/escort agency) explained that commission was dependent on the night club:

And in [one nightclub] I had commission from the champagne. Only from the champagne. And in [other nightclub] I had no commission from champagne. Because they said we don't- (...) push the girls to drink. (...) So that's why it was no commission. So it was like, you want to drink, it's your problem. (...) We don't tell you to drink.

She stressed that she never felt pressured to drink alcohol. One other participant, who did not work in a brothel nor a nightclub but was sober from alcohol addiction said she felt “weird” working in an environment where “most drink alcohol”.

In most interviews, sex workers stressed that they always use condoms with clients, though not every interview touched upon this topic. Some participants reported that they immediately refused clients who asked for unprotected sex. Others took the time to explain why they were uncomfortable doing so. The importance for protected sex also for other sex workers was stressed by the interviewees, like one participant who described sex “without protection (...) [is] just like suicide by instalment”.

Job Resources Related to Sex Work

Outside of autonomy and social support, which were also named in the literature review, participants named other resources that helped them cope with the demands of the job.

Security Mechanisms Against Violence. Participants reported three mechanisms in particular to reduce the risk of experiencing violence or conflict: Social contacts, client selection and physical self-defence. Individual measures were especially important in visiting sex work like escort and street.

None of the people doing primarily escort reported giving someone notice of their whereabouts. While it was agreed upon by these participants that it was not ideal in regard to their safety, they preferred working in this manner compared to Laufhauses or brothels, which might offer better security. This was explained by one participant preferring to have control over their security themselves since “you shouldn’t rely on others [for your safety]”. She explains:

[Escort work] doesn't sound so safe because there's no security. (...) But of course I can judge who I'm meeting, where I'm meeting, I can tell someone where I'm going. That means it's safer and I have much more freedom to (...) work with whoever I want, (...) to go whenever I want. (Maria, Escort/Laufhaus)

Client selection was named as an important mechanism against violence or conflict. This was especially important during solicitation. Two participants reported actively denying bookings to married clients in order to protect themselves from potential conflicts with the spouse. In a brothel, client selection began at the door policy which was admitted being discriminatory at times. This was seen as a necessity to secure the safety of workers.

Another way sex workers protected themselves was physical defence. This began with mentioning to clients their martial arts experience, as Layla (Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub) explained but was also reported to be actual physical force against aggressive customers.

Three sex workers reported to be armed in some way when visiting someone. Curiously, two participants credited their lack of violent experiences to the fact that they are trans, as Maria (Escort/Laufhaus) explained: "I've never been threatened. I attribute this to the fact that I am trans and 6 feet tall."

The legality of sex work was named multiple times as a deterrent for violent customers, as Ana (Escort/Laufhaus/brothel/escort agency) explained: "And because everybody knows, in Austria, (...) the sex workers are legal, they have papers. So automatically, when I work legal and I have a problem, I call the police. So the men, they are aware of this."

Experience in Sex Work. Longer tenure was perceived as very helpful when doing sex work. This was not only in regard to learning legal regulations or developing healthy coping skills, like one participant described, but also in learning how to select the clients that were willing to book an appointment. Especially for the sex workers doing escort work learning to filter out unserious booking request was perceived as important, since it cut down on the time organising dates. When talking about how she felt security mechanisms did not seem to be a priority for colleagues starting out, one participant was prompted to suggest "there should be proper training for sex work. Sounds strange (...), but it's true."

Appreciation by Clients. Positive client interactions were repeatedly mentioned as a source of motivation. These were understood by participants as either feedback about the performed services or appreciation by clients.

Positive client interactions were described as fostering a sense of respect and validation. Clients that fell into this category were described as “real gentlemen”, who “know how to behave” and with whom one could have “nice chat[s]”. Direct feedback of customers was appreciated, though the personal relevance differed between participants. Two participants recounted how this kind of feedback was sought by them at the beginning of their careers as sex workers to ease insecurities:

Yes, at the beginning I was a bit unsure, yes, am I doing everything right[?] Should I do something else[?] [At the beginning] I always asked if they had any feedback when we got dressed again. And the answer was always (...) hm, all good. And that's all it is. Because they probably don't think during sex, (...) the blowjob technique is only 9/10. (Maria, Escort/Laufhaus)

While the feedback was initially sought for reassurance, both participants clarified that, despite being pleasant, it had limited relevance for the improvement of their services or their professional development as they progressed in their careers.

Coping with Emotional Demands. Participants shared various strategies for navigating emotional demands that helped them to perform their roles effectively. These strategies ranged from self-care practices such as psychotherapy and meditation, to substances such as alcohol and drugs to cope with job pressures.

Almost all participants described their work as some form of acting to distance themselves from the emotional demands. One participant described herself to be a shy person “in [her] real life”, contrary to her work persona. Dhyana (BDSM/brothel) outright described her job as “I am an actress and I sell illusions”. She also explained that for her, this work persona was bound geographically to her workplaces:

And it's also very important that when I work in the studio or enter a flat that I leave my private person outside as much as possible, yes? So you really do create a second personality. And then you slip into this role. (Dhyana, BDSM/Brothel)

Maintaining this separation was particularly challenging when expressing tenderness in their work or engaging in private conversations with colleagues during work hours, as it blurred the lines between personal and professional identities.

Substance use was perceived by most participants as a prominent way by other sex workers to deal with emotional demands. Two participants admitted to having used substances during work like alcohol and cocaine. One participant reported using substances like marijuana, CBD, or alcohol as a way to relax after demanding workdays.

Two participants described that psychotherapy helped them deal with the emotional demands of the job. Of those, one reported actively seeking out therapy as a way to process difficult or uncomfortable work situations.

Work Engagement Factors. Two participants in particular reported feeling engaged by their job. This relationship was described by factors like high dedication to their work and to the service provided as well as the possibility to work creatively. One participant described her relationship with her work like this:

because in my private life, I don't think to my clients, but I think to my work. So, for example, as I said, I think, what should I wear next time? What- if- what dress when I go out, or what shoes. So I don't think to *them* as men and what we do. I think to my work, what I wear, what I do with my hair, what colour I have on, I will have on my nails. Things like this.

Ana (Escort/Laufhaus/brothel/escort agency)

The enjoyment of being able to work creatively was mainly described by Dhyana (BDSM/brothel), who saw her BDSM sex work as “erotic art”, preferring longer appointments because they gave her the possibility “to be more creative”.

Several participants reported keeping track of their clients, their preferences, and past appointments. This was done for organising reasons, but also to provide a better service, as Ana (Escort/Laufhaus/brothel/escort agency) describes: “So next time when [the client is] coming, I know he is, so I can surprise him with something, so he can write again something good and nice [on the internet].” Both Dhyana (BDSM/brothel) and Ana (Escort/Laufhaus/brothel/escort agency) perceived this as fulfilling their own expectations of good customer service, with Dhyana (BDSM/brothel) expressing it as, “I just don't like to do repetitions. It's supposed to be fun.”

High Hourly Compensation. While traditionally not a resource in occupational psychology, some participants reported feeling motivated by the short working time required to earn money. This was described as “stressful days are not that stressful for long” by Maria (Escort/Laufhaus). When faced with days where her intrinsic motivation to work was low, she felt it was easier to manage than a traditional job: “I know it only takes an hour. After an hour, the alarm goes off and no matter what has happened, I leave. (...) And after an hour I leave again, I've got my money and then I'm happy.”

Meaning of Work. Two participants perceived their job as meaningful. Ana (Escort/Laufhaus/brothel/escort agency) described her work as “necessary”, comparing it to getting massages: “And you come happy and relaxed at home (...) after the massage. (...) This is a purpose also,

of this job.” Meanwhile, Dhyana (BDSM/brothel) expressed satisfaction in being able to fulfil her client’s fantasies.

Job Demands and Resources Pertaining to Specific Sex Work Environments

During the analysis, some demands and resources were constructed that were related to single specific work environments. These are reported in the following:

Escort

Time-consuming Organisational Tasks. Organising the appointments was perceived as very time-consuming, with Layla (Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub) describing “all the writing and organising takes twice as much time” as the actual appointments with clients. This organisational effort was described as exhausting. The time-consuming nature of organising appointments was the reason Ana (Escort/Laufhaus/brothel/escort agency) preferred working with an escort agency, as she explains: “So, actually, what is a sex worker? A sex worker is selling. Her. Time. (...) So selling her time is not, she has to do this, this, this [referring to organisational tasks]. It's a big list. No, it's selling her time.”

All participants engaging in independent escort work reported doing the advertising themselves. This ranged from advertising on local contact exchanges to advertising on established websites for erotic classifieds, to programming their own website or advertising on SFW social media.

Especially online feedback was perceived as important for business. While online forums where clients share experiences resemble traditional word-of-mouth advertising, websites where escorts could be booked from, employ a Performance Appraisal System:

And my current rating is actually [very high]. And that's- has more advantages than you might think. For one thing, it makes a good impression on new customers. Secondly, the website charges less money per month for advertising if you have good reviews. (Maria, Escort/Laufhaus)

Working on Demand. The participants working in sex work all repeated having to deal with short notice, usually same-day appointment bookings. This meant that days were usually planned around these appointments. While Maria (Escort/Laufhaus) reported not having problems with this work rhythm, since she either worked during idle time on her online pornography or spent time with friends, Layla (Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub) expressed the wish for more predictable work hours.

Short-notice cancellations happened repeatedly, which was described as a major source of frustration since workers saw no way to be reimbursed for their time organising and preparing for the appointment.

BDSM

Professional Development. Since sex work nor BDSM sex work in particular is bound to any kind of formal training or education, professional development programs are often lacking. Still participants described the professional development as an important resource in BDSM sex work. Specifically non-commercial kink communities were named as sources of professional development, like regular gatherings or sex positive locations. As Layla (Escort/Laufhaus/nightclub) expressed in her interview, “So today I'm also going to a femdom party. And just let myself be inspired”.

One participant in particular articulated her desire to undergo further training in a range of disciplines, including BDSM and sexual assistance. However, she felt constrained by the limited resources available for professional development in Austria.

High Responsibility for Client Well-being. The two participants engaging in commercial BDSM both felt that this was a sector in sex work with a high degree of responsibility in comparison to traditional sex work. Dhyana (BDSM/brothel) described it as “hav[ing] control over the mental and physical health of the client”. Because of this, a strong care for the client was reported, spending time after sessions with them to recuperate, so-called aftercare, as well as having special attention for the hygienic aspects of the work.

Task Variety. One participant stressed that she found BDSM work particularly engaging because it offered a lot of possibility for variation in her workday. Even within one style of BDSM, she perceived a lot of possibilities to design her sessions creatively and concluded “no two sessions are the same”.

Discussion

The present study is aimed to better our understanding of sex work under the regulation framework. This small-scale interview study was conducted in order to explore which job demands and job resources are common in the work lives of sex workers in Austria. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants with different work backgrounds. Although the sample size is small, the extent in which this study collected relevant job demands and resources across multiple work settings is novel.

A set of theory-driven and inductively created codes was used, of which most were consolidated into categories that describe challenging and motivating factors at work. The analysis confirms the heterogeneous nature of physical sex work and the breadth of how this work can be experienced.

Some major and minor job demands and resources were reported by participants (see Figure 2). Of the job demands, following stands out from the multitude of job characteristics constructed from the interviews as especially important: Emotional demands including demands regarding emotional

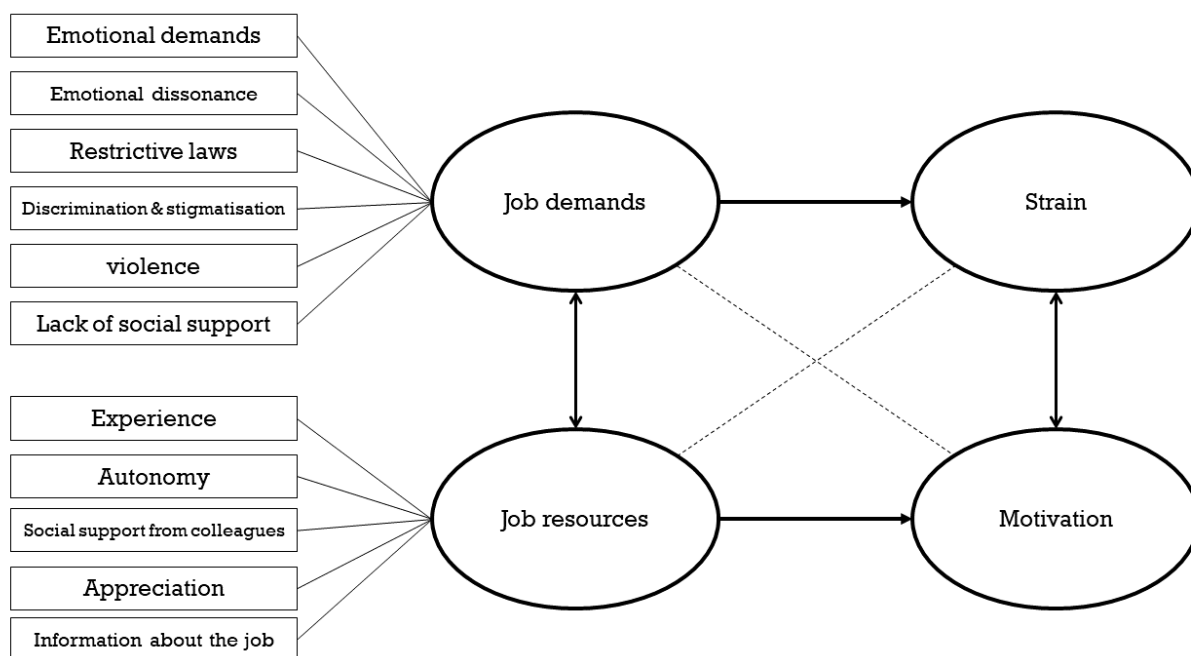
dissonance, lack of (in)formal social support, Experiences of stigmatisation and discrimination, and restrictive laws.

As for job resources, relevant aspects are high autonomy including high decision control and flexibility, coping strategies for emotional demands, information about the job, work experience and appreciation by clients. These factors are identified as relevant either because they were central themes in the interviews and mentioned often, or multiple participants had stressed that they were important in their workday.

While model outcomes like strain and motivation were often subject in the interviews, this study did not examine any outcome variables. However, this should be subject of future research to adequately contextualise job demands and resources. While not relevant in the current study, in context of the existing literature, violence as a job demand and social support from colleagues as a job resource seem to be regarded as important. Thus, they have been included in the following model in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Proposed JD-R Model for Physical Sex Work in Austria



Note. Model adapted from Bakker and Demerouti (2007).

While these factors cannot (and should not) be generalised, they give important insight for possible future research. Some common aspects of this are highlighted in the following section. Additionally, they will be discussed in relation to the literature as well as potential implications.

Emotional Demands as a Major Source of Work Strain

The results regarding emotional demands highlight how sex work often involves more than just physical interactions and requires emotional labour. That these demands were regarded as influential in their relationship with their work as well as their well-being, is not surprising, given that prior studies report that newcomers usually underestimate the emotional intensity of this work (Smith et al., 2015). As expected from previous literature (Kay Hoang, 2010; van der Meulen, 2010), the intensity of emotional labour varies depending on the work environment, with some workers engaging in extensive client relations, including conversations and outings.

Most workers coped with these demands by constructing a work persona which is described by Sanders (2005) as a common approach to manage emotions in sex work. She understands these strategies as deep acting whereby internal feelings are separated to fit the context, either work or private interactions. De- and re-attachment processes to work were also described in relation to these strategies, especially regarding geographical workplaces (see Schleupner et al., 2024).

Surface acting and emotional dissonance were described as particularly demanding. Strains by the perceived power imbalances between sex worker and client were exacerbated by financial instability. However, that client interactions were not only a source of strain was also reported. Especially non-sexual parts of the work, like conversations with clients, were seen as overwhelmingly positive. These conversations were not only understood as an easier way to make money, with sex being just a part of the interactions with clients but also were reported to be appreciated beyond that. Two participants reported deriving significant meaning from these interactions. This relationship with relational emotional labour is also reflected in Smith et al.'s (2015) study of male escort sex workers.

Contrary to previous studies (Macioti et al., 2021; Mühlen et al., 2022; Vanwesenbeeck, 2005) social support - formal or informal – at work played only a minor role for these participants. Only one of the participants reported having a reliable social network. This was also the person who used social contacts as a security mechanism. Lack of peer community spaces and language barriers were brought up as external reasons, though probably the most impactful factors were the competitive and financial pressures workers are under that prevent them from building up social support. In other comparable fields like nursing, supportive social environments have been established as an important protective factor for the negative consequences of emotional labour (Delgado et al., 2017; Edward et al., 2017), though this is usually in structured work environments like hospitals. Further research into the role of social support as a coping mechanism and as a general resource in sex work is needed.

Interconnectedness of External Factors and Job Demands

Notably, results indicate that external factors have significant influence on job demands. This was also a major source of frustration for participants since these factors were perceived as being outside of their control. The complex legal situation, the (regulatory) restrictions on their ability to work, and the societal stigma were often mentioned in this context.

Many felt that restrictions regarding where they could work impeded their ability to work independently, making them dependent on brothel operators which in turn negatively affected their working conditions. Because of the strict brothel licensing procedures and consequently, low number of sex establishments, some states in Austria have seen a concentration of market share of brothel owners (Amesberger, 2014). This concentration of power has the potential to worsen working conditions or force workers in case of conflict with the owner out of the workplace.

That so many interview participants admitted to having problems orienting themselves among the regulative guidelines, is not surprising. PROUD and Aidsfonds (2018) found in their Dutch study that 43% of sex workers had only a partial or no understanding of licensing policies. The complexity of the Austrian legal situation, especially in regard to the various state laws, has been topic of the work group on sex work multiple times (Arbeitsgruppe Prostitution, 2021; Arbeitsgruppe Sexuelle Dienstleistungen, 2024), but to date, there are no plans to change laws.

That knowledge about the legal situation and worker's rights was deemed important by participants is not unexpected either, since other studies like Rössler et al. (2010) have alluded to knowledge about the legal system being an important resource in protecting mental health against negative aspects of the job as well. This is probably also the reason experience as a sex worker was reported to be important since difficulties with legal orientation were reported to have happened especially when starting out. More experience with the work was linked with having more information about the job. Sex workers with longer tenure described also learning how to select and deal with customers. Since client selection is linked to security while working, providing information to sex workers starting out is especially important.

While all participants agreed that violence was generally a significant factor in sex work, experiences of (physical) violence were reported as low. Instead, participants shared different experiences of emotional violence, that they experienced in the context of being stigmatised because of their job. The low experiences of (physical) violence at work differs from most international literature (Aidsfonds & PROUD, 2018; Deering et al., 2014; Rössler et al., 2010)—as well as the participants' own assessment of the job, but actually corresponds with the findings of Amesberger (2014). In her study of

Austrian sex workers, exposure to physical, sexual, and financial violence by clients was equally low. This discrepancy could have different reasons.

Of course, participants could have just declined to share experiences of violence, being uncomfortable or fearing that these experiences could be used against them. As stated, some participants answered that they did not experience any workplace violence when asked directly but told of experiences that could be classified as such during the interview. The reason for the lack of violent experiences could also be that all participants had predominantly worked legally and described this as a form of violence prevention. The possibility of knowing that in the case of violence, they would have the right to legal claim could not only be helpful in these actual situations but also shape the way these workers engaged with their customers. This sample also predominantly speaks German and is relatively highly educated, making it easier for them to inform themselves of their rights. Outside of the sample, external factors should also be considered. Since the majority of literature on this subject is conducted within criminalised contexts, where levels of violence are considerably higher than in regulated frameworks, this could have significantly distorted the perception of violence in sex work. Further research is needed to assess the prevalence of violence in Austrian sex work.

Job Resources: Beyond Self-Employment

As expected, autonomy was reported as a significant resource. As it was the case in the theoretical part of this thesis, the participants did not differentiate much with regard to this concept either. A few different aspects can be distinguished though: Flexibility, high job control and independence from an employer. The independence from an employer was usually compared to traditional employer–employee relationships and seen as very valuable. This is also found in literature (Macioti et al., 2021).

Flexibility was named especially in the context of time. Participants reported very little work–family conflict related to time clashes because of this flexibility. Sex work was described very compatible with other job, while not being too stressful itself. Though usually when participants spoke about autonomy in their job, they referred to the high job control they perceived. On one hand, high job control seems to be inherently necessary for this job—else it could result in infringements on sexual self-determination. On the other hand, workers reported actively designing their workdays, outside of freely choosing their clients, in terms of appointment duration, working hours or prices. Pull motivations for self-employment, as highlighted by Keith et al. (2020) and Khan et al. (2021), include factors such as autonomy, a key contributor to job satisfaction among self-employed workers (Hundley, 2001). Amesberger’s (2014) theory that job satisfaction is indicated by the length of time sex workers stay in

with an establishment, can also be confirmed in this study. It was common practice to try out establishments, and if the working conditions or environment were deemed unsuitable, they were changed. Those participants who were with an establishment for a long time and left it, did so because of external factors, such as the Covid-19 pandemic or an abusive ex-partner.

Limitations and Future Research

The sample is varied in age, migration background, experience, and work environments. Nevertheless, it still left out experiences of male sex workers as well as sex workers who do non-registered sex work. While there are participants with different migration experiences, migrant sex workers who come from non-EU countries would also allow for other important perspectives. While a person specialised in sexual assistance was in the sample, they did seldomly give specific answers for this work environment. Future research should broaden the sample size to include this, as well as interview multiple people from one work environment. While interviews were offered in three languages, in the face of the large migrant population, future research should offer interviews in more languages, possible working with peer researchers to facilitate access to participants and include more research languages.

Contrary to the guidelines of inductive categorisation in QCA (Mayring, 2021), an inter-rater-reliability was not calculated. This was not done because it was deemed unfeasible in the context of this master thesis. However, since this code system was built only on the coding of one person, biases and presumptions may have influenced the development.

A broad study like this is the first of its kind and was designed purposely broad in its examination of sex work. Nonetheless, future research could focus on specific work environments to sharpen the perspectives on demands and resources. Two important constructs were generated in this study for the job demands and resources in sex work: Autonomy and emotional demands. Both were shown to be multi-faceted constructs. It is imperative to examine these two aspects more precisely. Since they have been established concepts in occupational psychology, it could also make sense to examine them quantitatively. In case of future quantitative research, usage of international inventories like the Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ; Karasek et al., 1998) or the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire III (COPSOQ; Burr et al., 2019) offer broad assessments of work conditions. Duff et al. (2017) adapted in their study on work stress the JCQ for sex work. The COPSOQ offers assessment for multiple of the relevant job demands and resources of this study (such social support, emotional demands, influence at work, job satisfaction and meaning of work) and has been shown to work well within the framework of the JD-R model (Burr et al., 2019). For sex work-related concepts like stigmatisation though, there is to

date considerably less repertory to quantify those experiences. Benoit et al. (2015) developed and used a short scale on different aspects of discrimination due to sex work which was also used successfully by Alschech (2019). Outside of appropriate inventories, researchers need to design their survey with their sample in mind. That is, a high focus on anonymity, multiple language versions to ensure accessibility as well as close collaboration with stakeholders.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Guideline in German

Interviewleitfaden

[nochmal Aufklären über Datenschutz/Anonymisierung, Unterschreiben von Einverständniserklärung]
Vielen Dank.

Wir führen heute ein sogenanntes narratives Interview.

Das bedeutet, dass meine Rolle weniger aktiv ist, als du das aus einem normalen Gespräch wahrscheinlich gewohnt bist. Ich habe einige Leitfragen und eine grobe Struktur, hauptsächlich geht es aber darum, dich erzählen zu lassen und deine Gedanken und Erlebnisse nachzuvollziehen.

Das Interview gliedert sich in ca. 3 Teile. Ich möchte darüber reden, wie der Alltag an sich ist und was für Arbeitsaufgaben anfallen, über emotionale Aspekte der Arbeit und dann so ein bisschen Umfeldfaktoren, also soziale Beziehungen und die rechtliche Situation. Das Interview wird zwischen 60 und 90 Minuten dauern.

Es ist sicherlich nicht der Fokus, aber es kann sein, dass ich im Laufe des Gesprächs auch nach Stigmatisierungserfahrungen oder Gewalterfahrungen am Arbeitsplatz frage. Die Teilnahme ist komplett freiwillig – wenn dir eine Nachfrage unangenehm ist oder du über etwas nicht sprechen willst, musst du das selbstverständlich nicht. Du kannst dich auch jederzeit entscheiden, das Interview zu beenden.

Wenn ich während des Gesprächs nach unten schaue, mache ich mir gerade Notizen – Du hast dennoch meine ganze Aufmerksamkeit.

Noch Fragen?

Zuerst einmal, was sind deine Arbeitsorte? Zum Beispiel in einem Bordell oder im Laufhaus oder als Escort.

Block A

Kannst du mir einmal einen typischen Arbeitstag beschreiben? Vom Aufstehen bis zum Einschlafen sozusagen.

Mög. Nachfragen:

- Arbeitszeitlänge – Dauer und Stunden generell
- Arbeitsrhythmus?
- Wie geht es dir körperlich nach einem Arbeitstag?
- direkten Vorgesetzten?
- erfolgreicher Arbeitstag?

Bei deinem Arbeitstag -so wie gerade beschrieben- wie viel Spielraum bei Entscheidungen von Arbeit hast du? Was kannst du eher selbst entscheiden oder wird durch andere Leute entschieden?

Nachfragen:

- Druck von Vorgesetzten (ohne Service, bst. Praktiken)
- Hat sich das mit der Zeit verändert?
- Gibt es Teile deiner Arbeit, bei denen du gerne mehr Einfluss oder Beteiligung hättest? Wie würde dein Arbeitstag aussehen, wenn du in diesen Bereichen mehr Einfluss hättest?

Frühere Arbeitserfahrung außerhalb Sexarbeit? Vergleich?

Block B

Jetzt würde ich gerne ein bisschen darüber sprechen, wie du die Arbeit mit der Kundschaft erlebst. Um die Arbeit so zu machen, wie du es vorhin beschrieben hast, inwiefern muss man sich emotional auf die Kundschaft einlassen? /Wie fühlen sich die Kunden, wenn sie zu dir kommen ☹ wie fühlst du dich?

Mög. Nachfragen:

- Jetzt gibt es auch immer mal wieder Tage, an denen man nicht so enthusiastisch bei der Arbeit ist, wie geht man mit diesen Tagen um? [surface acting]
- Wie entspannst du dich nach einem anstrengenden Arbeitstag? Was gibt dir Kraft?
- Wie wichtig ist es für dich die Emotionen bei der Arbeit und die Emotionen im Privatleben zu trennen? [Arbeit mit heim nehmen] /Abschalten, denkst du an die Arbeit/
- Inwiefern bekommst du Rückmeldung von der Kundschaft und ist das wichtig für dich?

Was ist für dich Gewalt am Arbeitsplatz?

Hast du schon mal Gewalt am Arbeitsplatz erlebt?

Mög. Nachfragen:

- Wie hat sich das auf deinen Arbeitsalltag ausgewirkt?
- Unterstützung von welcher Stelle?

Block C

Ich möchte jetzt ein wenig über die Personen in deinem Arbeitsalltag außerhalb von der Kundschaft reden. Kannst du die wichtigen sozialen Beziehungen in deinem Arbeitsleben beschreiben? Wie beeinflussen diese Menschen deinen Alltag bei der Arbeit?

Nachfragen:

- Welche Sachen machen die Zusammenarbeit mit Kolleg*innen schwierig?
- Und welche Sachen machen die Zusammenarbeit leicht?

Als du mit dem Job begonnen hast, welchen Leuten hast du davon erzählt?

- Erzählst du es jetzt?/Wem erzählst du es jetzt?
- Wenn geoutet: freiwillig/unfreiwillig

Hast du den Eindruck, dass deine Kolleginnen und Kollegen (auch in einem allgemeineren Sinne) bei den verschiedenen Arten von Sexarbeit, z. B. Straßenarbeit und Escort, unterschiedlich reagieren?)

Wie findest du die rechtliche Situation für Sexarbeiter*innen zurzeit?

Mög. Nachfragen:

- Wie hast du dich über die rechtliche Lage informiert?
- Gut auskennen? Hilfe von wem?
- Wünsche für Gesetzesregelung? / "Zauberstab"

Demographische Daten [Nur gesammelt & zur Beschreibung von Stichprobe, keine Beschreibung von Einzelfällen]:

- Wie lang in Sexarbeit? In Jahren
- Geschlecht?
- Alter?
- Nationalität?
- Bildung?

Noch irgendwelche Fragen? Gibt es etwas, was ich nicht gefragt habe, aber was du gerne ansprechen möchtest? Wie möchtest du in Endbericht genannt werden?

[Bedanken für Teilnahme, Fragen nach Transkript, Fragen nach Studienergebnisse, Geld]

Appendix 2: Abstracts (German and English)

Abstract (English)

Austria regulates the sale and purchase of sexual services with the intention of being able to better monitor workers, and thus also improve the working conditions. Nevertheless, sex workers still belong to a marginalized group that deals with precarious working conditions and legal and social restrictions when practicing their profession. The stigmatised nature of this area of work is also reflected in the scientific literature which shows large gaps, especially from an (occupational) psychological perspective. This small-scale qualitative study aims to analyse physical sex work in Austria using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 adult sex-workers in Austria, sampling for maximum difference in terms of work environments (brothel, Laufhaus, escort service, sexual assistance, street-based sex work, BDSM). Analysis was done following Mayring's qualitative content analysis (QCA). A broad range of major and minor job demands and resources were generated. Relevant demands were various aspects of emotional labour, lack of social support and experiences of stigmatisation and discrimination. Factors like Autonomy, Information about the job and appreciation by clients were reported to be significant job resources.

This study contributes to the limited (work)psychological examination of physical sex work, offering an understanding of job demands and resources in the field. This will serve as a crucial framework for future investigations, enabling systematic identification of job demands and resources and thus enabling practitioners and policy makers to develop targeted policies and interventions to improve working conditions.

Keywords: Sex work; JD-R model; job demands; prostitution; working conditions

Abstract (German)

Österreich reguliert den Verkauf und Kauf von sexuellen Dienstleistungen mit der Absicht, Sexarbeiter*innen besser zu kontrollieren und dadurch auch die Arbeitsbedingungen zu verbessern. Dennoch gehören Sexarbeiter*innen nach wie vor zu einer Randgruppe, die bei der Ausübung ihres Berufs mit prekären Arbeitsbedingungen sowie rechtlichen und sozialen Einschränkungen zu kämpfen hat. Die Stigmatisierung dieses Arbeitsfeldes spiegelt sich auch in der wissenschaftlichen Literatur wider, die insbesondere aus (arbeits-)psychologischer Sicht große Lücken aufweist. Diese qualitative Studie zielt darauf ab, Sexarbeit mit Körperkontakt in Österreich anhand des Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Modells zu analysieren. Es wurden halbstrukturierte Interviews mit 6 erwachsenen Sexarbeiter*innen in Österreich geführt, wobei eine möglichst große Bandbreite an Arbeitsumgebungen (Bordell, Laufhaus, Escort, Sexualassistent, Straßenstrich, BDSM) berücksichtigt wurde. Es wurde ein breites Spektrum an Arbeitsanforderungen und -ressourcen generiert. Relevante Anforderungen waren verschiedene Aspekte der emotionalen Arbeit, der Mangel an sozialer Unterstützung und Erfahrungen mit Stigmatisierung und Diskriminierung. Faktoren wie Autonomie, Informationen über die Arbeit und Wertschätzung durch die Kunden wurden als wichtige Arbeitsressourcen genannt. Diese Studie trägt zur begrenzten (arbeits-)psychologischen Forschung über Sexarbeit bei, indem sie ein Verständnis der Arbeitsanforderungen und Ressourcen in diesem Bereich bietet. Sie bildet einen wichtigen Rahmen für künftige Untersuchungen und ermöglicht die systematische Ermittlung von Arbeitsanforderungen und -ressourcen, so dass Fachleute und politische Entscheidungsträger*innen gezielte Maßnahmen und Interventionen zur Verbesserung der Arbeitsbedingungen entwickeln können.

Stichworte: Sexarbeit; JD-R Modell; Arbeitsanforderungen; Prostitution; Arbeitsbedingungen