ACROSS THE
THIN BLUE LINE

Examining the Relationship between Sex Workers and Police Officers in Addis Ababa

Kalkidan Asmamaw
2022 CARD Werdwet Fellow

Professor Habtamu Wondimu (PhD)
Research Advisor
About CARD

The Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD) is a board-led, for-
not-profit organization registered in Ethiopia under the Civil Societies Law 1113/2019
with registry number 4307. CARD acquired its legal personality on 24 July 2019.

CARD aspires to see Ethiopia where democratic culture flourished on human rights
values and has been working with a mission to empower citizens and groups
of citizens to ensure their ability to promote and defend human rights and build
democratic governance in Ethiopia.

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For More Info

Email: info@cardeth.org
Website: www.cardeth.org
Phone: +251 116 671 657

Book Design: Armonium Solomon
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincerest appreciation to the Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD) and Werdwet Fellowship for providing the opportunity to conduct this research and contribute to the protection of sex workers rights. I am sincerely grateful to the entire staff for their support and cooperation throughout the process.

I am also greatly indebted to my research advisor, Professor Habtamu Wondimu, for his expert guidance, unwavering support, and flexibility throughout the research process. His invaluable advice and timely responses were instrumental in the success of this study. Additionally, I would like to extend my utmost gratitude to Arsema Getachew, my research assistant, for her dedication and exceptional assistance throughout the research process.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my data collectors, who exhibited remarkable patience and unwavering commitment during the data collection phase, even in the face of numerous challenges. Moreover, I am humbled and deeply appreciative of the invaluable contributions and insights provided by Bitya Elias, Meital Kupfer, Hannah Rieck-Guenthner, and Nardos Meles in shaping and honing the research questions, focus, and report.

Most importantly, my deepest expression of appreciation goes to all the study participants (sex workers and police officers) in this study for their cooperation. Their willingness to share their experiences, insights, and perspectives was essential to the success of this study. I acknowledge the difficulty of sharing their stories, and I am grateful for their courage and
determination to contribute to this research.

Lastly, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my friends and family for providing me with support and encouragement throughout this process.

My heartfelt thanks to all.

Kalkidan Asmamaw
May 2023, Addis Ababa
DEDICATION

To all the female warriors in Ethiopia, who courageously fight their own battles in their own extraordinary ways - this research is devoted to you.
FOREWORD

The Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD) aspires to see Ethiopia where democratic culture flourished on human rights values and has been working with a mission to empower citizens and groups of citizens to ensure their ability to promote and defend human rights and build democratic governance in Ethiopia. To this end, CARD implements various projects under five program areas namely Youth and Women Empowerment, Civic Engagement, Media Literacy, Digital Rights, and Democratization Index.

CARD Werdewet Research Fellowship is project under the Youth and Women Empowerment program with the objective of raising the capacities of youth and women to make knowledge-driven societal changes through the facilitation of research opportunities and promotion of gender rights and protection of marginalized and vulnerable groups.

The CARD Werdewet Research Fellowship was first introduced in 2020. It is named after the Guraghe legend, Yeqaqe Werdwet, who fought for women’s equal marital rights in the second half of the 19th century. CARD decided to name this research fellowship after Yeqaqe Werdwet because Werdwet’s story is historical, inspiring, and educating to address traditional challenges through traditional means by promoting and exhaustively exploring local remedies.

Werdwet Fellowship will continuously take young researchers and assist their search for evidence to promote gender-sensitive values in Ethiopia’s traditions and give their research reports a platform for the use of civil societies.
The Fellowship additionally gives women and the youth an opportunity to pursue their passion in researching and promoting indigenous knowledge and local medium to fight inequality and the rights of marginalized and vulnerable sections of the society. In 2022, CARD awarded the fellowship opportunity to five Ethiopian youth who aspire to scale up their research skills whilst helping knowledge-based advocacy for equality and promotion of a rights-oriented sociopolitical system. The research fellows have received financial support to cover all related costs of the research work. Furthermore, a research advisor have been hired to assist the fellows develop a quality research product. By doing so, CARD believes that it can empower the fellows as well as support its advocacy through evidence-based researches.

Kalkidan Asmamaw was selected as one of 2022 CARD Werdwet Research Fellow after presenting a proposal to study the relationship sex workers have with Addis Ababa Police Officer. Kalkidan, 26, has been an emerging campaigner and advocate for women’s rights when she became a Werdwet Fellow. Her research report is also an evidence to the rewarding investment of time and resources CARD has provided to support young researchers. Her unique work has put out very informative findings on how one of the most vulnerable members of our society are unfairly treated by the very institution and/or people expected to protect them; i.e. the police officers. CARD strongly believes that the findings and recommendations in Kalkidan’s research will help stakeholders to take corrective measure to a dignified treatment of sex workers.

A country’s democratization can be measured by its treatment of its marginalized and vulnerable citizens. In this era, when there is global decline to democratization and when rule of law is undermined by rule of men, women are more
threatened by weaponized rape, gender based discrimination, and systemic marginalization. Thus, the role of research based advocacy to counter this trend is paramount along with a firm stand in human rights protection. It is in CARD’s faith that democratization starts at the bottom where people, regardless of their class, gender, or race, make the rules that govern them. Therefore, CARD invites all stakeholders to take comprehensive response to guarantee the protection of marginalized and vulnerable sections of the society to bring up a functional and cohesive social system.

Befekadu Hailu,  
Executive Director  
Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD)
## LIST OF ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDRE</td>
<td>Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGDs</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-Based Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICCPR</td>
<td>The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICESCR</td>
<td>The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STI</td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Infection</td>
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<td>UDHR</td>
<td>The Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
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ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The aim of the research was to examine the relationship between sex workers and police officers by focusing on their knowledge of sex workers’ rights, their attitude towards each other, and the nature of their interaction. The study also aimed at identifying ways to improve the relationship between the two groups by gathering suggestions and suggestions from the groups themselves.

**Methodology:** The study employed a mixed-method approach involving the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. A survey was administered to 82 police officers and 79 sex workers to gather quantitative data, while qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews. Three FGDs were held with police officers (28 participants) and four with sex workers (35 participants). Additionally, eight interviews were conducted with officers and seven with sex workers.

**Key findings:** The study found a poor relationship between sex workers and police officers due to differences in understanding the laws related to sex work, negative attitudes towards each other, and interactions often involving gender-based violence and unlawful arrests. The study reveals a worrying pattern of interactions between sex workers and law enforcement officials, with police officers primarily initiating contact when they suspect criminal activity or engage in street clearance efforts. Sex workers report consistent and frequent incidents of gender-based violence, including verbal threats, physical violence, extortion, and sexual assault. Additionally, they report experiencing mass and individual arrests with limited explanation, along with violations of their rights while
in custody. Notably, police officers who participated in the study did not report similar levels of violence by the police.

The study further reveals a mutually negative attitude between police officers and sex workers. Police officers tend to hold unfavourable views towards sex workers, seeing them as immoral, sinful, and undeserving of societal acceptance. They associate sex workers with negative stereotypes such as sexual addiction, drug addiction, HIV, and criminal activities. Law enforcement officials who took part in the study also tend to blame sex workers for the existence of sex work and seek to criminalize and punish them to protect society from perceived negative impacts. Additionally, they attribute the sexual assault sex workers undergo to their clothing and believe that sex workers provoke and seduce perpetrators, thereby placing blame for their own victimization on sex workers. Conversely, sex workers in the study harbor a negative perception of police officers, viewing them as dishonest and biased. They do not place trust in police officers when it comes to providing them with solutions to their problems and fear being abused or falsely accused if they approach the police. Furthermore, female police officers were described as more ruthless, disrespectful and abusive towards sex workers than male officers.

Although both sex workers and police officers demonstrate an awareness of sex workers’ basic human rights, conflicts can still arise due to differences in their interpretation and implementation of laws related to sex work. For example, both groups recognize sex work as legal in private in the surveys collected, but they assert that it is illegal in public forums such as FGDs and interviews. This discrepancy implies that their relationship in public settings may be fraught with conflict, as police officers are responsible for enforcing laws that criminalize sex work, while sex workers may perceive
such enforcement as a threat to their livelihoods and rights. Additionally, despite the shared view that sex workers do not enjoy the right to engage in street-based sex work, many still pursue it due to financial necessity. This creates another potential source of conflict between police officers, who are responsible for enforcing laws and regulations related to sex work, and sex workers who rely on this form of work to make a living. The difference in perspectives between the two groups may contribute to a tense and often hostile relationship on the streets. There is also a notable difference in beliefs between police officers and sex workers regarding the behavior of clients who pay for sex. Police officers tend to believe that once a client pays for sex, they have the right to do whatever they please, while sex workers may hold a different view. This disparity in perspectives could potentially lead to conflicts between the two groups.

**Implication:** The implications gleaned from the findings are that there is a significant negative relationship between sex workers and law enforcement officials, marked by a lack of mutual trust, negative perceptions of each other, and gender-based violence as well as unlawful arrests by police officers. The study highlights a concerning trend in the interactions between these two groups, with potentially serious human rights violations on the part of law enforcement officials. The fact that both groups display a level of awareness of sex workers’ basic human rights is a positive sign, but conflicts arise due to differences in interpretation and implementation of laws regarding sex work. The study suggests that there is a need for greater understanding and cooperation between these groups, with potential avenues for improvement including increased awareness of sex workers’ rights, improved police training on issues related to sex work, and safe spaces for dialogue and collaboration.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

The power dynamics between sex workers and police officers is a complex and sensitive issue that has been linked to abuse and conflict in previous researches. While there is limited research on this topic in Ethiopia, instances of police officers committing human rights violations against citizens suggest its relevance. Thus, in this research, I examined the intricate relationship between sex workers and police officers, delving into their understanding of sex workers’ rights, attitudes towards one another, and the nature of their interactions, while also analyzing the impact of patriarchal ideologies on these dynamics.

Police officers in Addis Ababa wield substantial power over ordinary citizens in their role as representatives of the state. Under the Criminal Procedure Code of Ethiopia police are empowered to apprehend offenders, investigate, summon individuals, and apply for arrest (Criminal Procedure Code of Ethiopia, 2004). Additionally, the male-dominated composition of police forces all over the world contributes to a more aggressive and confrontational policing style based on traditional masculine values (Yalley & Olutayo, 2020). To make matters worse, the definition of masculine traits in Ethiopia lies in extreme forms of competitiveness, dominance, forcefullness, endurance, confrontation, self-resilience, and willingness to take risks (Karekatti, 2018). The intersection of personal authority granted by the state, the overrepresentation of male officers in the profession, and the association of law enforcement with conventional masculinity
work together to uphold the power and dominance of police officers over the broader society, which includes individuals engaged in sex work.

In contrast, sex workers occupy a vastly different position in the power dynamic. They face discrimination and stigma due to the criminalization and marginalisation of their work. They are considered to be spoiled identities because they have sex with multiple partners and take sexual initiative and control, inciting male desires and receiving sex which is outside of their gender role (Bellhouse, 2015). In Ethiopia, sex work is considered to be a deviant behaviour and immoral (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2016). Furthermore, though the act is not criminalized, Articles 846 and 847 of the Ethiopian Criminal Code penalize those who solicit clients in public or advertise for debauchery, which can easily be used to criminalize sex workers (Overs, 2011), and reinforces the notion that sex work is wrong and immoral.

In addition to the vast power difference between the two groups, the Addis Ababa police force is notorious for the violations of citizens’ rights. Despite being tasked with upholding the law and protecting citizens, the police have been known to make arrests without a warrant, detain individuals unlawfully, and release information about suspects who have not yet been convicted in a court of law (Tulu, 2010).

In order to promote the protection of sex workers’ rights and address power imbalances, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of their relationship and identify any areas of uncertainty. Therefore, this research aims to explore the relationship between sex workers and police officers in Ethiopia, examining factors such as their mutual attitudes, knowledge of sex workers’ human rights, familiarity
with legal frameworks governing sex work, and patterns of interaction. By shedding light on these issues, the study seeks to inform efforts to promote a more equitable treatment of sex workers and improve relationships between sex workers and law enforcement.

Firstly, the study aims to identify knowledge gaps and misunderstandings that contribute to conflicts and power imbalances in their relationship. For instance, lack of awareness among police officers about the legal protections for sex workers can result in abusive and exploitative behaviour towards them. Similarly, lack of knowledge about their rights among sex workers can make them more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Additionally, the attitudes of both groups towards each other play a critical role in addressing their relationship. Negative attitudes, prejudices, and stereotypes held by police officers towards sex workers can lead to discrimination, harassment, and abuse. Conversely, mistrust and negative attitudes held by sex workers towards the police can result in reluctance to seek help from law enforcement when needed.

Lastly, the study will focus on examining the actual interaction between sex workers and police officers with the aim of identifying areas where improvements can be made to facilitate better communication, promote mutual respect, and build trust.

This study takes a feminist perspective and aims to investigate the relationship between sex workers and police officers in Ethiopia. By analysing the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of both groups, the research seeks to identify how patriarchal ideologies influence the power structures that shape this relationship. Typically, power structures are maintained by patriarchal ideologies, social norms and
institutional frameworks (As All About Power: Understanding Social Power & Power Structures, n.d.). In the context of the relationship between sex workers and police officers, these power structures may be rooted in various factors, including negative attitudes towards sex workers held by police officers as a result of ideological stances, everyday practices of police officers towards sex workers, and institutional frameworks such as laws governing sex work in Ethiopia. Through a nuanced exploration of these issues, this research seeks to illuminate how these power dynamics operate and how they impact the attitudes and behaviours of both parties.

**Note:** In this study, I aim to explore the experiences of female sex workers in Addis Ababa. Thus, for the purpose of the study, I define sex workers as individuals who engage in sexual activities in exchange for money or goods. Throughout this paper, I will use the term ‘sex workers’ to refer exclusively to female sex workers.

**1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The relationship between police officers and sex workers is critical. Negative interactions can have significant consequences, including an increased risk of violence and a lack of access to healthcare and harm reduction services. Previous research has shown that human rights violations against sex workers are associated with an increased risk of HIV and physical and sexual violence. Negative police interactions have also been linked to decreased trust in law enforcement and increased reluctance to seek help or report crimes (Decker et al., 2015). Additionally, police harassment and violence towards sex workers have been shown to be
associated with decreased access to harm reduction services and an increased risk of violence (Shannon et al., 2014). Therefore, it is crucial to establish positive relationships between sex workers and police officers to address health concerns and prevent acts of violence perpetrated by private individuals (Mbote, 2020).

However, the current relationship between these two groups is widely acknowledged to be characterized by high rates of violence, ill-treatment, and abuse towards sex workers. Sex workers are subjected to persistent and egregious forms of mistreatment by law enforcement, including harassment, physical violence, use of pepper spray, sexual assault, and torture (Evans & Walker, 2017). Many police raids are characterised by misconducts, human rights abuses, and violence against sex workers, clients, and anyone arrested. Additionally, police are typically accused of extortion and deprivation of personal belongings following release from detention (Salihu & Fawole, 2020b).

They are known for abusing their power and demanding illegal fees from arrested sex workers, seizing condoms found in their possession to use as evidence. Sometimes, they coerce sex workers into performing sexual acts in exchange for a jail pass or release. In countries such as Canada, where prostitution is legal, sex workers still experience passive forms of victimisation by police officers, such as being chased away from city centres through the use of violence (Scroggins, 2021) According to other several studies, sex workers experience sexualized verbal abuse, including being called offensive names and propositioned for sex by police officers (Decker et al., 2014; Williamson et al., 2007). Additionally, police officers have been reported to demand sexual favours in exchange for protection and leniency (McBride et al., 2020).
In Ethiopia, the existing literature on the relationship between sex workers and police officers is limited. Despite the power imbalance consequences between the two parties as been documented in previous studies, the focus of most research on the topic remains on the discrimination sex workers face, client-perpetrated violence, and health-related issues, among others (Abdella et al., 2022; Alemayehu et al., 2015; Amogne, 2019). Nonetheless, few studies have shed light on the matter. According to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2016), sex workers in Ethiopia often feel unprotected by police and face persistent judgement and victim blaming after experiencing sexual violence. In cases where the perpetrator has a good relationship with the police, no action is taken by the police. However, a study by Overs et al. (2011) found that police officers have become fair-minded over time and police abuse is sporadic rather than routine. The study also suggests that sex workers are sometimes falsely accused of robbery though there have been no reported arrests related to their work.

Considering the available evidence, the research into the relationship between sex workers and police officers in Ethiopia is insufficient, outdated, and lacks a comprehensive approach; it neglects the impact of patriarchal systems and power structures. Consequently, it falls short in terms of providing context on the situation of sex workers, how to afford them protection, and developing fair and effective policies and practices, where amicable relationship would prevail. To address these gaps, a feminist lens is necessary to explore the complexities of the relationship between sex workers and police officers and expose how patriarchal systems contribute to violence and abuse against sex workers.

Towards this end, this research paper referenced theories from Marxist feminism, intersectional feminism as well as a
feminist interpretation of the Routine Activities Theory (RAT) to examine and analyse the identities of the study participants and their relationship. Specifically, Marxist feminist theories were applied to investigate the economic and social class identities of those involved in sex work, while intersectional feminist theories were made use of to deconstruct the multiple identities that grant power to police officers and perpetuate the marginalization of female sex workers. The feminist interpretation of the Routine Activities Theory (RAT) was utilized to explain how the relationship between sex workers and police officers can be characterised by abuse and exploitation.

1.3. SETTING THE RESEARCH FRAME

1.3.1. The research objectives and questions

The purpose of this study is to fill the research gap regarding the relationship between sex workers and police officers in Addis Ababa by examining their knowledge of sex workers’ rights, their mutual attitudes, and their interactions through a feminist lens.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Assess the knowledge of sex workers’ rights among police officers and sex workers in Addis Ababa.

2. Find out the attitudes of sex workers and police officers towards each other.

3. Examine the types of interactions prevalent between sex workers and police officers.
4. Analyse the relationship between police officers and sex workers from a feminist lens.

5. Propose recommendations and suggestions to improve the relationship between police officers and sex workers.

The questions the study addresses are as follows:

1. What is the level of knowledge about the rights sex workers are entitled to and the laws related to their working conditions among police officers and sex workers themselves and how do their awareness of those legal frameworks compare?

2. What are the attitudes and perceptions of police officers and sex workers towards each other?

3. What is the nature of the relationships between sex workers and police officers?

4. How can the relationship between police officers and sex workers be improved?

1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in both academia and the real world. In academia, this research can contribute to the existing literature on the topic and provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between sex workers and police officers in Ethiopia through the prism of a feminist lens.

It also highlights the need for a more comprehensive and feminist approach to research in this area. In the real world, this study has practical implications that positively impact
the lives of sex workers and the protection of their rights. The findings of the study can be used to inform policy and practice as well as to develop strategies for improving police-sex worker relationships. The identification of solutions put forward by both police officers and sex workers can also be of invaluable help in resolving conflicts and building a better relationship between these two groups.

1.5. ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

The report is organised into six chapters. The first chapter sets the stage by outlining the objectives, research questions, and scope of the study. The second chapter delves into the long history of sex work and the various feminist perspectives that have shaped my understanding of it, as well as relevant local and international laws related to sex work. In the third chapter, the report takes a closer look at the methodology behind the research, while the fourth chapter presents the key findings from both qualitative and quantitative research. The fifth chapter brings the findings together with a discussion of the key findings from the previous chapter. The final chapter ties everything together by presenting the conclusions and recommendations that have been derived from the findings.

Throughout my research, I have opted to use the term “sex worker” instead of “prostitute” in order to show respect for individuals involved in one of the oldest professions. The terminology I choose acknowledges the multifaceted nature of the work and the autonomy of those performing it. The term “prostitute” has historically carried a strong negative connotation and has been utilized to shame and demean individuals working in the sex industry.
2. RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. HISTORY OF SEX WORK

The origins of sex work are not clear, but it is believed to have existed in various forms throughout history. The profession involves the exchange of sexual services for financial compensation, typically performed by women and sought by male customers. Despite its widespread occurrence, it is often viewed in a negative light (SARODE, 2015).

The phenomenon initially rose in Egyptian history more than 4,000 years ago, and it later expanded to the cultures of the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Iberians as well. The earlier type of sex work was more intimately linked to religious convictions. Parents would send their attractive children to sacred locations for sex acts involving the caressing of their private parts by priests and devotees throughout the post-AD era. (Bhat, 2022).

Generally speaking, the history of sex work in Africa is complex and varied due to the influence of a range of cultural, economic and political factors. However, the emergence of sex work as a form of labour involving money came on the heels of colonialism. Sex work is a functional consequence of the rise of the urban society created by early industrial capitalism. The establishment of colonial urban centres, mining camps and military bases brought serious changes in gender roles as well as the economic and political structures.
of various parts of Africa. Women, like men, migrated into the cities to partake in the new cash economy that came with imperialism (Jacob, 2015).

Although the history of sex work in Ethiopia is extensive and intricate, it has not been well documented. The 16th century Portuguese traveller Alvares made mention of a group of women known as “amaritas” that he said were considered as sex workers. Additionally, the chronicler of Emperor Iyasu I, who ruled between 1682 and 1706, mentions a fire that ravaged the home of a woman referred to as a “galamota”, who was subsequently identified as a sex worker or a woman of loose morals. This is the earliest recorded reference to such a woman in Ethiopian historical literature (Pankhurst, 1974).

Sex work in Gondar, the capital city of Ethiopia then, appears to have been widely practised but controversial, during the 19th century. Emperor Tewodros, who reigned from 1855 to 1868, was quoted in an Ethiopian chronicle as expressing disgust with monks and lay clerics who were rumoured to “live in the city” with galamotas (sex workers) and the “wives of others.”

French linguist Antoine d’Abbadie, who undertook a research in Gondar city, recorded five terms used to describe sex workers at the time: “galamota,” “wesema,” “dangasur,” “mahababaya,” and “zama,” which translates to “dissolute.” The act of sex work was referred to as “galamotenat” or “gelemutena” and also as “zemu,” indicating that sex work was prevalent in Gondar during that period and that several terms were used to describe it and those involved in the industry.

Sex work was also rife in Addis Ababa, which emerged as the new capital city in the late 19th century. There were many “places of lust,” or brothels, in the city. These establishments
were often located near cheap taverns that became more common in the early 20th century. These taverns, or taj houses, were typically long, narrow rooms with a single floor that were rented out for a high price. In the brothels of Addis Ababa and the eastern city of Dire Dawa, each room was equipped with a bed and a curtain that was lowered when a customer entered. A young slave would then prevent other customers from entering by saying “አቸው አለ,” meaning “someone is present.” One of the most well-known sex workers in these establishments was a certain Wäyzero Sadeq (Pankhurst, 1974).

In the early 20th century, the Arabic term “särmuta,” sometimes shortened to “sârmé, began to be used in Amharic. It is believed that the term may have been introduced by Arab or Harari merchants in Addis Ababa who patronised sex workers. Its wide adoption thereafter can be ascribed to its use as a euphemism or due to its novelty.

Sex work in Addis Ababa seemed to have increased significantly in the years leading up to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935-36. By then, sex work had become deeply rooted in society. However, it was not immune to social condemnation. Mahätäma Wärq Ešeté, penned a letter to the Berhanena Salam newspaper in July 1928 in which he called for government oversight of the issue. In the letter, he expressed frustration and suggested that sex workers be relocated to designated areas outside the city where they could be monitored and statistics could be gathered.

Nonetheless, the arrival of large numbers of Italian soldiers and labourers in Eritrea prior to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia led to a significant increase in demand for the services of sex workers. The port of Massawa, which served as a disembarkation point for the Italian forces, had a “native
relAted literAture review

red-light district” where local soldiers went to find women. Similar facilities were available for Italian soldiers as well. “The Italians believe in letting Nature take its course, and they were too sympathetic with natural urges to interfere with their desire to get together with a black woman.

During the five-year Italian occupation of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa saw a significant increase in sex work, with several houses being converted into brothels (Pankhurst, 1974). As men left to fight against the invaders women found an alternative income by meeting demand for sex created by Italian soldiers (Overs et al., 2011). At that time, the absence of breadwinners deprived the women and children of a source of income. The easiest option for the women was to migrate to towns in hopes of getting employment. Unfortunately, most did not have employable skills, forcing them to take up sex work (Hope Enterprise, 1997).

The history of the sex work industry in Ethiopia has always been marked by societal resistance. Nevertheless, it managed to flourish owing to a host of political, cultural, and economic factors. It is difficult to establish a precise figure of the current number of sex workers in Ethiopia on account of the societal stigma and marginalisation associated with the profession. Nonetheless, a study conducted in 2011 identified 31,562 locations such as homes, hotels, bars, and streets where sex work activities took place across 89 cities in the country. The study further estimated that approximately 85,294 women were engaged in sex work in these cities (PSI/Ethiopia, 2015).

2.2. FEMINIST THEORIES ON SEX WORK

The feminist theory is a way of understanding and looking at the experiences and roles of women in society. It tries
to fathom why inequality between men and women exists and proposes ideas on how to create a more equal world. It also includes seeking ways to make life better for women. The theory studies how women are treated unfairly because of their gender and how this affects their lives. It looks at the reasons for this inequality and suggests ways to end it. Feminism further examines how the disparity impacts different parts of society and how this interacts with other forms of inequality based on race, class, age, and nationality (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2009).

In a nutshell, major feminist theories argue that women are one-half of the world population, and need equal treatment and equal share of resources, should enjoy equal rights; women are oppressed economically, politically, culturally and psychologically by the patriarchal systems prevailing in the world, and hence, working towards equality, respecting rights of all, expanding human choices, ending sexual violence and promoting sexual freedom are needed.

The feminist philosophy offers a valuable lens for analysing the relationship between police officers and sex workers. It provides a conceptual framework that illustrates how gender, power, and patriarchy shape the interactions and dynamics between these two groups. This deeper understanding of the challenges faced by sex workers in their interactions with police officers can guide the development of strategies to address these issues. Feminist theories also bring attention to the reinforcement of traditional power dynamics and gender roles in these interactions and offer alternative approaches that prioritise the agency and autonomy of sex workers.

2.2.1. Neo-abolitionists/Radical feminists

In the field of feminist research, there is a divide between two main groups of scholars and advocates regarding
sexual exploitation and sex work. The first group, known as neo-abolitionists, believes that all forms of sex work, whether voluntary or involuntary, are a form of oppression against women. Neo-abolitionists, which include radical and Marxist feminists, argue that sex work can never truly be consensual and should not be considered a valid form of employment or career. On the other hand, the second group, comprising many sex positivists, believes that women have the right to choose sex work and other forms of sex work as a means of employment. Sex positivists argue that women should have the agency to make their own decisions about their careers, including the decision to engage in sex work (Gerassi, 2015).

Abolitionist feminists contend that sex work is harmful to women because it is based on the patriarchal construction of female sexuality and reinforces male dominance over women. They hold that women cannot have agency in sex work and that it reinforces patriarchal power dynamics. They further argue that the commodification of sex promotes the exploitation of women and that those who engage in the sex industry become objects for male consumption, leading them to advocate against the legalisation of pornography and the acceptance of the sex industry. According to their perspective, it is impossible for a woman to have agency within the realm of sex work because it is founded on the degradation of women (Mullin & Flannery, 2021).

Radical and Marxist feminism serve as the roots of current day neo-abolitionist perspectives with regard to sexual exploitation of women and girls. Radical feminism espouses the view that the exploitation and oppression of women through sexual commerce is rooted in the patriarchal structure of government and society, which has historically excluded women from high-status roles and confined them to the home. Radical feminists argue that sexual commerce
perpetuates the subordination of women to men because it allows men to have access to women’s bodies and reinforces their dominance. They also believe that all forms of sex work contribute to harm and violence against women.

According to the Marxist feminist theory, patriarchy is a widespread and harmful influence in society that creates adverse conditions for women. It postulates that women are continually fighting against the control and power that men have over them in various areas of life such as the home and the workplace. Historically, men were often the main providers while women were expected to take care of children and household duties, leaving women reliant on men for financial support. Moreover, women face difficulties in obtaining meaningful and well-compensated employment due to discrimination and segregation in the workforce, sometimes forcing them to resort to sex work as a means of livelihood. Marxist feminists see sex work as a logical extension of the commodification of labor and the oppression and inequality that women experience in society. They argue that women who are economically and socially oppressed are more likely to turn to sex work. Patriarchy plays a critical role in this exploitation, being present both in the household and in the means of production. Thus, Marxist feminists believe that women who are disadvantaged in the labor market are more likely to engage in sex work, especially when other options are limited. This is supported by Green (1989) who posits that women who experience greater oppression in their lives are more likely to participate in sex work (Child, 2009).

Critics of radical and Marxist feminism argue that their focus on sexual exploitation and trafficking survivors ignores the agency and autonomy of women who choose to engage in sex work. These arguments have been seen as paternalistic, with the goal of abolition being viewed as acting in the best
interest of the sex workers rather than respecting their right to make their own decisions. In addition, the dichotomy created by categorizing all sex workers as victim can be unhelpful in law and social services as it assumes that all sex work involves some form of force, fraud, or coercion (Gerassi, 2015).

Nonetheless, abolitionists claim that the power dynamics inherent in patriarchy make it impossible for women to truly consent to sex work given they are in a position of subordination that weakens their decision-making abilities. The societal structures that place women in a lower class compared to men, objectifying and defining them solely by their body and sexuality, impede women from exercising agency and truly consent to sex work. These power imbalances and forms of subordination make it difficult for women to make fully autonomous decisions about their bodies and sexualities (Mullin & Flannery, 2021).

2.2.2. Sex-positive feminists

Sex-positive feminists believe that a woman should have the freedom to choose how she uses her body, including in the context of sex work. They maintain that a woman’s worth should not be based on her sexual choices, and sex work can be a way for women to have agency and control over their bodies while still maintaining self-respect. This perspective challenges the view of the abolitionist approach, which claims that sex work is inherently oppressive. Scholars who identify with this theoretical approach contend that to claim sex work is harmful to all women is denying a woman the power to liberate herself through sex.

They argue that society’s narrow standards of acceptable sexuality, which often involve monogamy and procreation within a heterosexual relationship, unfairly label women who engage in different forms of sexual expression as “whores”
and devalue them. To counter this, sex-positive feminists advocate for the legalization or decriminalization of sex work and see it as a form of bodily autonomy and agency. Critics of sex positivism point out that it fails to address the problem of consent in light of high rates of sexual abuse, and the absence of alternative economic opportunities. Religious groups also voice their concerns about the commercialization of sex and its impact on moral values. In repost, sex-positive feminists hold that the abolitionist approach to dealing with the exploitation of women in the sex industry reinforces harmful gender stereotypes by reducing women to their sexuality and denying them the agency to make autonomous sexual decisions. They insist that the neo-abolitionist approach also disregards the personal experiences and needs of sex workers and fails to recognize them as deserving of respect. Sex-positive feminists believe that decriminalizing sex work would provide better protection for workers and help to normalize it as a legitimate form of work, rather than viewing sex workers as immoral or lacking in other qualities (Mullin & Flannery, 2021).

2.2.3. Middle-Ground Feminism

An emergent feminist thought that promotes a “middle-ground” stance on the subject of sex work is gaining traction. This perspective aims to unite the abolitionist focus on social structures with the sex-positive emphasis on personal agency to tackle the diverse problems experienced by sex workers. This “third-wave” feminism is referred to as such as it goes beyond the traditional binary opposition between abolitionists and sex-positivists. The goal is to find a more comprehensive solution that addresses both personal and systemic issues. Scholars such as Fahs and Cavaleri believe that the conventional binary approach to sex work theory
is inadequate to deal with the complexity of the subject, and that a middle-ground approach is necessary in order to effectively advocate for the liberation and protection of sex workers. This approach acknowledges the agency of sex workers and works towards the destruction of larger social structures that contribute to the exploitation and oppression of women (Mullin & Flannery, 2021).

Simone de Beauvoir was a prominent feminist philosopher who made significant contributions to modern feminist theory and philosophy, which paved the way for further critical analysis of feminism. According to her philosophy, sex work is a product of female oppression, resulting from a world where women are economically and socially subservient to a male-dominated society.

De Beauvoir’s argument is rooted in middle-ground feminism, as she believes that sex work is not inherently immoral or unethical, but rather disadvantaged due to its association with women and the societal structures that perpetuate this disadvantage. She advocates for the fair compensation, regulation, and legal protection of sex workers, as well as for women to have equal opportunities to pursue intellectual endeavors beyond certain forms of work. The negative reputation of sex work is a consequence of the historical oppression and stigma attached to women, and therefore, it is crucial to implement legal protections, safe working conditions, and equitable compensation to empower sex workers and reduce the demand for the industry (Feeney, 2015).

This paper argues for the adoption of middle-ground feminism when addressing the complex issue of sex work.
2.2.4. Intersectional feminist theory

Intersectionality is an analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which gender intersects with other identities and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege. It is widely accepted in feminist theory that women’s experiences are shaped by multiple and intersecting systems of oppression. This understanding of oppression, which sees it not as a single process or binary political relation, but as a result of multiple, overlapping systems, originated from antiracist feminist critiques of the notion that gender analysis alone could capture women’s oppression.

Intersectionality provides a theoretical and political solution to the most significant challenge faced by contemporary feminism, which is its history of exclusions (Morris & Bunjun, 2007). The intersectional analytical approach can and should be understood as arising from a notion that the line that binds women together is stronger than the lines dividing them (Mahler et al., 2015).

Using an intersectional feminist framework is crucial to studying the relationship between sex workers and police officers. It allows for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the power dynamics and intersections of gender, race, class, and other systems of oppression that shape the experiences of both sex workers and police officers. The theory can shed light on the ways in which gender, class, criminalization of some aspect of sex work in Ethiopia shape the lives of sex workers.
2.3. INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS RELEVANT TO SEX WORKERS

Sex work is an occupation that some women engage in voluntarily. Their line of work, however, still renders them prone to high levels of violence from customers, employers, associates, domestic partners, police officers, and others. This type of violence violates several fundamental human rights they are entitled to. The following is a brief overview of some of the significant international and local human rights laws that protect the rights of sex workers, either directly or indirectly (Marshall, 2016).

2.3.1. UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

Generally speaking, the UDHR protects the right to life, liberty, and personal security as well as economic, social, and cultural rights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Marshall, 2016)
2.3.2. CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women)

The CEDAW is an international legal instrument that requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in all areas and promote women’s and girls equal rights. The focus of this legal document has shifted from an abolitionist viewpoint to one that acknowledges the human rights of sex workers. In General Recommendation 19, the Committee defines gender-based violence as a type of discrimination. In reference to article 6 of the Convention, the Committee states that sex workers are particularly susceptible to violence due to their marginalised status, which, it says, may not be legally recognized. Nonetheless, they require the same legal protection against rape and other forms of violence as anyone else (Marshall, 2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: List of provisions of CEDAW relevant to sex workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Article 6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Marshall, 2016)

2.3.3. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is a multilateral treaty that commits nations to respect the civil and political rights of individuals, including the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, electoral rights and rights to due process and a fair trial
The provisions cited here underscore the imperative to prevent the infringement of rights experienced by sex workers, particularly in nations where sex work is considered illegal. As previously stated, law enforcement is a major source of abuse towards sex workers, who are often subjected to profiling, harassment, and even sexual violence (Marshall, 2016).

### Table 3: List of provisions of the ICCPR relevant to sex workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Article 7</strong></td>
<td>No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Article 9** | 1. Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.  
2. Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against him. |
| **Article 10** | All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. |
| **Article 14** | The right to equality before the law; the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty; and the right to a fair and public hearing by an impartial tribunal. |

(Marshall, 2016)

### 2.3.4. ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)

The ICESCR convention emphasizes the utmost importance of access to medical services for sex workers. Beyond providing care for physical,
sexual and psychological violence, sex workers also require access to essential items such as condoms, birth control, and regular testing for sexually transmitted diseases (Marshall, 2016).

### Table 4: List of provisions of the ICESCR relevant to sex workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Article 6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Article 11</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The steps to be taken by the States Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realisation of this right shall include those necessary for:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The provision for the reduction of the stillbirth-rate and of infant mortality and for the healthy development of the child;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. The improvement of all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The prevention, treatment and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The creation of conditions which would assure all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Article 12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The steps to be taken by the States Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include those necessary for:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The prevention, treatment and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. The creation of conditions which would assure all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4. RELEVANT FDRE CONSTITUTION PROVISIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The 1994 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia places a strong emphasis on the fulfillment of basic freedoms and rights for individuals and the population as a whole, promoting equality and eliminating sexual, religious, and cultural discrimination. More than a third of the Constitution is dedicated to provisions protecting fundamental human and people’s rights, which are extended to all citizens regardless of their background. As human beings and citizens, sex workers are entitled to these same rights and protections.

Table 5: List of relevant provisions of the FDRE Constitution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constitution Articles</th>
<th>Article 9</th>
<th>Supremacy of the Constitution</th>
<th>4. All international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article 10</td>
<td>Human and Democratic Rights</td>
<td>2. Human rights and freedoms, emanating from the nature of mankind, are inviolable and inalienable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 13</td>
<td>Scope of Application and Interpretation</td>
<td>1. All Federal and State legislative, executive and judicial organs at all levels shall have the responsibility and duty to respect and enforce the provisions of this Chapter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. The fundamental rights and freedoms specified in this Chapter shall be interpreted in a manner conforming to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenants on Human Rights and international instruments adopted by Ethiopia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>Rights to life, the Security of Person and Liberty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 14.</td>
<td>Every person has the inviolable and inalienable right to life, the security of person and liberty.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 15.</td>
<td>Right to Life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Every person has the right to life. No person may be deprived of his life except as a punishment for a serious criminal offence determined by law.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 16.</td>
<td>The Right of the Security of Person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Everyone has the right to protection against bodily harm.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 17.</td>
<td>Right To Liberty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. No one shall be deprived of his or her liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. No person may be subjected to arbitrary arrest, and no person may be detained without a charge or conviction against him.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 18.</td>
<td>Prohibition against Inhuman Treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Everyone has the right to protection against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 19.</td>
<td>Right of Persons Arrested</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Persons arrested have the right to be informed promptly, in a language they understand, of the reasons for their arrest and of any charge against them.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Persons arrested have the right to remain silent. Upon arrest, they have the right to be informed promptly, in a language they understand, that any statement they make may be used as evidence against them in court.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Persons arrested have the right to be brought before a court within 48 hours of their arrest. Such time shall not include the time reasonably required for the journey from the place of arrest to the court. On appearing before a court, they have the right to be given prompt and specific explanation of the reasons for their arrest due to the alleged crime committed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5. LAWS CRIMINALISING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN ETHIOPIA

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive phenomenon that involves inflicting physical, mental, or sexual harm on a person against their will due to gender differences. It is a serious violation of human rights that predominantly affects women and is present in most societies. Ethiopia criminalizes GBV, and the Criminal Code provides laws, penalties, and procedures for investigating and prosecuting cases while also promoting respect and equality. By doing so, the Criminal Code helps to create a safer environment and sends a powerful message that GBV is not acceptable.
Table 6: List of relevant articles of the Ethiopian Criminal Code regarding gender-based violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>620.</td>
<td>Rape.</td>
<td>1. Whoever compels a woman to submit to sexual intercourse outside wedlock, whether by the use of violence or grave intimidation, or after having rendered her unconscious or incapable of resistance, is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from five years to fifteen years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>622.</td>
<td>Sexual Outrages Accompanied by Violence.</td>
<td>Whoever, by the use of violence or grave intimidation, or after having in any other way rendered his victim incapable of offering resistance, compels a person of the opposite sex, to perform or to submit to an act corresponding to the sexual act, or any other indecent act, is punishable with simple imprisonment for not less than one year, or rigorous imprisonment not exceeding ten years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>625.</td>
<td>Taking Advantage of the Distress or Dependence of a Woman.</td>
<td>Whoever, apart from the cases specified in the preceding Article, procures from a woman sexual intercourse or any other indecent act by taking advantage of her material or mental distress or of the authority he exercises over her by virtue of his position, function or capacity as protector, teacher, master or employer, or by virtue of any other like relationship is punishable, upon complaint, with simple imprisonment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Criminal Code, 2004)

2.6. LOCAL LAWS REGARDING SEX WORK IN ETHIOPIA

In many developing countries including Ethiopia, the laws that impact sex workers are modelled after the legal frameworks established in European countries. These laws criminalize
various aspects of sex work, including brothel keeping, human trafficking, and public solicitation. Penalties for violating these laws can be severe, particularly in cases involving minors (Overs, 2011).

### Table 7: List of relevant articles regarding domestic laws and regulations on sex work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>634.</td>
<td>Habitual Exploitation for Pecuniary Gain:</td>
<td>Whoever, for gain, makes a profession of or lives by procuring or on prostitution or immorality of another, or maintains, as a landlord or keeper, a brothel, is punishable with simple imprisonment and fine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 846.    | Immoral Soliciting and Debauchery. | Whoever in the street or in a public place or in a place accessible to the public:  
(a) with an intent contrary to decency or morality molests a person who is not soliciting; or  
(b) by improper soliciting incites another person to sexual intercourse or to committing an act contrary to decency or acts of debauchery of any kind whatsoever; or  
(c) by engaging in sex work or debauchery, is a nuisance to the occupiers of the dwelling or the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, is punishable with fine or arrest not exceeding one month. |
| 847     | Advertising for Debauchery. | Whoever, with a view to encouraging debauchery or satisfying the sexual urge of others, publicly advertises by any means that debauchery may be enjoyed in a particular place, is punishable with fine or arrest. |

(Criminal Code, 2004)
2.7. POLICE VIOLENCE AND SEX WORKERS

The human rights of sex workers are frequently disregarded in human rights conventions or declarations. However, all individuals, including sex workers, are entitled to the fundamental rights and protections as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) is one of the few conventions to explicitly recognize the rights of sex workers. The legal instrument recommendation emphasized the vulnerability of sex workers to violence due to the criminalization and marginalization of sex work and affirmed their right to equal protection against abuse (Decker, Crago, Chu, Sherman, Seshu, Buthelezi, Dhaliwal, & Beyrer, 2014).

The Ethiopian constitution also enshrines rights related to the protection of human rights, including the protection of individual and group rights. In addition to promoting and protecting the human rights principles provided in the Constitution, the Ethiopian government has never ceased its efforts to enforce international human rights instruments such as CEDAW, ICCPR and ICESCR. Moreover, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has enacted the Criminal Code of 2005, which specifically penalizes domestic violence, female circumcision, rape outside of marriage, abduction of women for marriage, and underage marriage.

The inclusion of these provisions in the Code was necessitated by the persistent violations of women’s rights stemming from a lack of knowledge among public authorities and deeply ingrained discriminatory attitudes
towards women. Moreover, the justice system in Ethiopia faces a significant gender imbalance, with poor record-keeping, inadequate investigation, and inadequate special handling of cases involving women and children (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2011).

Despite these international and legal frameworks that afford protection to sex workers, sex workers continue to face high levels of discrimination, violence and stigma. At some point in their careers, sex workers have a 45-75% chance of experiencing sexual violence (Koster, 2017). In Ethiopia, sex workers face a high prevalence of such work-related violence as unprotected sex with regular, non-paying partners among those who abuse alcohol (Mooney, 2013). The lifetime prevalence of rape among sex workers was 24.3% in Bahr-Dar (Misganaw, 2013). In the northern city of Mekele of 250 commercial sex workers surveyed, the prevalence of sexual violence was 75.6% (Alemayehu et al., 2015).

Sex workers also face abuse by the police, which includes verbal and physical abuse, arrest, refusal to protect, and confiscation of condoms (Mbote, 2020). Police raids targeting sex workers have been broadly described as being marked by unethical conduct, human rights violations, and violence against the sex workers and their clients. There have been numerous reports of police officers engaging in assaults, battery, and sexual harassment during these raids. Additionally, instances of extortion and theft of personal belongings from arrested sex workers after their release from detention have also been reported (Salihu & Fawole, 2020).

Police officers often abuse their power by demanding bribes and information from sex workers through coercion, including the threat of arrest, physical harm, and sexual assault. The extent of this extortion is estimated to range
from 12% to 100% of sex workers. This financial exploitation compels sex workers to accept more dangerous clients or engage in more hazardous forms of sex work, leading to a higher likelihood of inconsistent condom use and increased symptoms of sexually transmitted infections (Decker, Crago, Chu, Sherman, Seshu, Buthelezi, Dhaliwal, & Beyrer, 2014).

Furthermore, sex workers are routinely denied access to police protection and criminal justice in countries and regions where sex trade is fully or partially criminalised. Sex workers’ reports are dismissed, discredited, or blamed in the course of reporting violence to authorities (Crago et al., 2021).

In some contexts, sex workers themselves are charged, arrested or detained when they turn to authorities to report the violence they experienced. Additionally, there are recurring reports of sex workers being subject to police violence in the course of attempting to report violence (Crago et al., 2021). In one study, several of the sex workers interviewed reported having negative experiences with law enforcement in regards to their work, including instances of victim-blaming. Patty, who was severely injured by an unknown attacker, was questioned by the police with statements such as “What were you doing in that area at that time of night? And why were you wearing those kinds of clothes?” These questions made her feel like she was being portrayed as the perpetrator (Chu, Santini, & Clamen, 2020).

Stigmatisation of female sex workers, often referred to as “whores,” arises from popular beliefs about the ways in which they violate societal norms for women’s behaviour. These norms include having sex with strangers, multiple partners, and exchanging sex for money. Additionally, being sexually assertive and knowledgeable, fulfilling male sexual desires and fantasies, and being in potentially dangerous situations
with men is also stigmatised. In recent years, sex workers have been depicted as carriers of diseases like HIV/AIDS and as a threat to the “respectable community” (Wong et al., 2011b). Thus, this stigma and discrimination, coupled with violence and punitive legal and social environments, become key determinants of sex workers’ increased HIV vulnerability (Mbote, 2020).

The criminalization of sex work has also negative impact on sex workers, rendering them more susceptible to workplace violence and limiting their ability to seek protection from the police. A study conducted by The Lancet found that human rights violations against sex workers are most prevalent in areas where sex work is criminalized as they are afraid to report violence due to the risk of being charged. Worldwide, the harsh enforcement of laws against street-based and indoor sex work has resulted in sex workers being forced into isolated locations, making them more vulnerable to violence and coercion.

Furthermore, the criminalization of sex work allows for police abuse and mistreatment of sex workers, including harassment, physical and sexual assault, and forced sex under the threat of arrest. This hinders their access to justice and is a significant obstacle for sex workers (McBride et al., 2020).

Police officers often abuse their power by demanding bribes and information from sex workers through coercion, including the threat of arrest, physical harm, and sexual assault.
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

Mixed-methods research is a methodology that combines qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem. This approach benefits from the integration of multiple types of data, providing both depth and breadth in comprehending the phenomenon under study.

The use of qualitative data, such as interviews or observations, can provide rich, detailed descriptions of experiences and meanings, while quantitative data, such as survey results, can identify trends and patterns in a population. Thus, by utilising both methods, researchers can get a more complete and nuanced understanding of the topic being studied (Wasti et al., 2022).

Additionally, the discourse in feminist research has moved from the qualitative/quantitative dichotomy to employing mixed methods approaches combining both methods. The mixed method approach has gained more traction as a means of balancing the drawbacks of each technique and help triangulate results (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2012).

As a result, in order to fully understand the relationship between sex workers and police officers, this research employs a mixed-methods approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.
3.2. PARTICIPANTS

A total of 118 police officers and 121 sex workers participated in the research. Some 161 questionnaires were collected—79 from sex workers and 82 from police officers. In addition, three FGDs were held with police officers (28 participants) and four with sex workers (35 participants). Finally, eight police officers and seven sex workers were interviewed. In total, 89 male and 148 female participants took part in the study.

**Sampling:** According to the deputy director of Timret Lehiwot Ethiopia, the areas with the highest concentration of sex workers in Ethiopia are Yeka Sub-City, (Sholla market area), Bole Sub-City (Chechnya area), Akaki Kality Sub-City (Akaki Gebeya), and Addis Ketema Sub-City (Atobis Tera area). Accordingly, these areas were chosen for the study.

In order to access individuals who are difficult to locate as well as to secure the participation of individuals who are unwilling to disclose their identities, the study employed a snowball sampling method. This approach has been shown to be an effective and cost-efficient method for reaching hard-to-reach populations (Naderifar et al., 2017). As a result, the study utilised this method to recruit sex workers through local NGOs (Nikat Charitable Association and Timret Lehiwot Ethiopia), which helped confirm the participants’ occupation as sex workers. Employing a similar approach, the study used police officers to identify additional officers for participation.

The study involved four focus group discussions (FGDs) with sex workers across all selected sub-cities. Additionally, three FGDs were conducted with police officers in the sub cities of Addis Ketema, Yeka, and Bole. When it comes to the
interviews, the study narrowed down the scope to police officers and sex workers in Addis Ketema and Bole subities.

The table below shows the criterion used for sample selection for sex workers and police officers.

The following selection criteria were used to ensure that the research sample is appropriate for the research question being asked and that the results are relevant and meaningful.

### Table 8: Criteria used to select sex workers and police officers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Explained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>The research focused on female sex workers and both male and female police officers. The eligibility criterion for sex workers was limited to females while both genders were eligible for police officers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Participants must be 18 years of age or older and must be willing to provide informed consent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Willingness</td>
<td>The willingness of the participant is a selection criterion as it is an important aspect of research ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>The study sample includes female sex workers engaging in street-based, home-based, or bar-based sex work in designated areas, and police officers who were working at police stations at the time of the data collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Sex workers and police officers with a work experience of 6 months or above were chosen to participate in this study because they are presumed to have adequate experiences in the researched topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Geographic Area</td>
<td>Four sub cities in Addis Ababa with a high concentration of sex workers were selected for this study. These sub-cities, as identified by Timret LeHiwot Ethiopia, are Yeka, Bole, Akaki Kality, and Addis Ketema sub-cities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3. DATA COLLECTION:

The study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data from police officers and sex workers through questionnaires, focus group discussions, and individual interviews.

The questionnaire, which included a consent form and personal information section, was self-completed by 82 police officers and 79 sex workers in Addis Ababa. In its first section the questionnaire evaluated participants’ knowledge of sex workers’ rights as provided for in the constitution, criminal law, and international conventions. The second section assessed the attitudes of participants towards sex work and sex workers (for police officers) or towards police officers (for sex workers). The third section examined the behaviour of police officers towards sex workers, including interactions and incidents of gender-based violence or arrests. The final section solicited suggestions from participants for improving the relationship between sex workers and police officers.

Along with the questionnaires, focus group discussions were held with 3 groups of police officers and 4 groups of sex workers, facilitated by trained data collectors. Each discussion lasted between 40 minutes to 90 minutes and was audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated for analysis. Additionally, individual interviews with 8 police officers and 7 sex workers were conducted in person, audio-recorded, and transcribed for analysis.

In order to ensure the quality of the data, a pilot study was conducted to refine the research questions. The feedback received from the pilot test was analyzed to assess clarity and relevance of the questions. Modifications were
made accordingly to the questions and overall research methodology to achieve the research objectives. The pilot test was an essential step in ensuring the questions were refined, resulting in more meaningful data that accurately reflected the perspectives and experiences of the study participants. Moreover, the data was mainly collected at the work sites of sex workers (bars or houses), allowing for verification of their respective status.

It’s worth mentioning that during the question design process, input was received from a sex worker and a police officer with the goal of acknowledging and respecting the perspectives and insights of individuals who have direct experience in the research area.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed using the statistical software SPSS. This enabled me to compute various descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations. The results of the quantitative analysis were presented in tables and figures, making it easy to interpret and compare the data.

Qualitative data collected from the focus group discussions and individual interviews was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This involved a systematic process of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data. The analysis was carried out manually by the researchers, who familiarized themselves with the data, identified initial codes, and then grouped the codes into categories and themes. The researchers maintained a rigorous approach throughout the analysis, ensuring that all the themes were grounded in the data and accurately reflected the participants’ experiences and perspectives.
The final analysis and interpretation of the results incorporated both the quantitative and qualitative data. Triangulation of the data—comparing and contrasting the findings from both data sets—was undertaken to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between sex workers and police officers. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data not only allowed for a more deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study, but also provided a more robust basis for the researchers’ conclusions and recommendations.

3.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

**Informed consent:** Participants were fully informed about the nature and purpose of the study, as well as their rights as participants, before they agreed to take part in the research. This included providing information about the potential risks and benefits of participation, and the procedures followed during the study. Participants were also given the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any concerns before deciding whether to participate or otherwise.

**Confidentiality and privacy:** Researchers protected the confidentiality and privacy of participants by not disclosing their personal information or responses to third parties. This involved using pseudonyms or other measures to ensure that participants cannot be identified.

**Voluntary participation:** Pursuant to the principle that participation in a research study is voluntary, the participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences.
Risk of harm: Researchers took steps to minimise any potential risks of harm to participants. In cases where participants became distressed during the data collection, they were provided a contact information for a gender-based violence hotline called Alegnta 6388.

This study has received approval from the Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers, and Anthropologists (ESSSWA) institutional review board, indicating that it has undergone an ethical review and has been deemed appropriate for conducting research involving human subjects. The purpose of such clearance is to ensure that the study adheres to ethical principles and guidelines, respects the rights and dignity of participants, and mitigates potential harm. By obtaining ethical clearance from ESSSWA, the research has demonstrated its commitment to upholding ethical standards in social research and promoting the well-being of the communities involved in the study.

3.6. SUMMARY OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS’ DEMOGRAPHICS

3.6.1. Police officers

The demographic analysis of the 118 police officers surveyed in this research revealed that the majority of participants were within the age range of 18-30, with the largest age group being 25-30, constituting 46.6% of the total participants. The majority of participants were male, comprising 75% of the sample, and the majority were also married (69.4%). In terms of religious affiliation, the majority identified as Orthodox Christians (63.5%), followed by Protestants (12.7%) and Muslims (5.9%). Notably, a significant proportion of
participants deemed religious commitment as extremely important, accounting for 60.1% of the sample. In terms of education, the majority had completed secondary education (9th grade- 12th grade) (54.2%), and a notable proportion had attained degrees and above (35.5%). The largest group of participants have worked in their respective fields for 5-10 years (32.2%). It is also worth noting that the majority of participants were from Bole Sub-city, comprising 30.5% of the sample.

Table 9: Demographic profile of police officers in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1) Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>46.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2) Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>75.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3) Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>69.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox Christian</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>63.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Commitment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little importance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>60.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately important</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education/Grade</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th-12th</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>54.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First degree and above</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st-8th</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-City</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bole</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addis Ketema</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeka</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akaki Kality</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6.2. Sex workers

This section summarises the demographics of female sex workers. The largest age group among participants is between 25-30 years old (34.7%) and 30-40 years old (19%). 32.2% of the participants are illiterate or only had a primary education, with only a small number having a higher degree (1.6%). Moreover, a majority of the participants have worked in this profession for 3-5 years (44.6%).

Furthermore, the sex workers in the study did not have any other sources of income (98.3%) and 89.2% of people support others, mostly children (38.8%) and some other family members (26.4%). Residents of Bole, Yeka, Addis Ketema, and Akaki Kality sub-cities, they work either in bars or hotels (40.4%), on the street (37.1%), or in red light establishments/brothels (22.3%).
Table 10: Demographic profile of sex workers in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education/Grade</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary (5th-8th grade)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>52.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary(1st-4th grade)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary(9th-12th grade)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First degree and above</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No of years worked</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>44.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months- 2 years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 16 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other income sources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>98.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Methodology

#### 6) Sub-City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addis Ketema</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bole</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akaki Kality</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeka</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 7) No. of people supported

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>51.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 8) Place of Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bar/Hotel</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home/red-light</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22.31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 9) Identity of dependent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>38.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members (siblings, aunt/uncle, grandparents, mother, etc.)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and other family members</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None/myself</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. FINDINGS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the key findings of my research on the relationship between sex workers and police officers.

In the first section, I focus on the basic human rights of sex workers, rights related to their working conditions, rights customers are entitled to, and the provisions that can be used to protect sex workers.

The second section explores the attitude of police officers towards sex work and sex workers and the extent to which they engage in victim blaming. It also examines the attitude of sex workers towards police officers and seeking help from the police.

The third section sheds light on the interactions between police and sex workers, including their meeting points as well as their relationship dynamic, and instances of gender-based violence and arrests.

4.2. KNOWLEDGE OF SEX WORKERS AND POLICE OFFICERS OF SEX WORKERS’ RIGHTS

This theme aims to assess the awareness of police officers and sex workers regarding the rights of the latter. Based on information gathered from both groups, the assumption is
that a better understanding of the rights of sex workers by police officers translates to a positive relationship wherein the police protect sex workers. A mutual understanding of the respective rights of the two groups would point to an even more harmonious relationship. Conversely, a lack of understanding on either of their part could suggest a relationship marked by mistrust and tension.

4.2.1. Basic human rights of sex workers

As a feminist researcher, I approached my study with the understanding that sex workers are disproportionately impacted by human rights violations, particularly at the hands of the police. My assumption was informed by conversations with sex workers, existing literature (Evans & Walker, 2017; Mboti, 2020; McBride et al., 2020; Sherman et al., 2015; Williamson et al., 2007) as well as feminist theories which suggest that power imbalances often lead to violence (All About Power: Understanding Social Power & Power Structures, n.d.). The first goal of the research was to examine the extent to which these violations are imputable to a lack of knowledge among police officers. Additionally, by including human rights-focused questions in my surveys of both police officers and sex workers, I aimed to compare their knowledge and assess whether a significant discrepancy in their awareness might be contributing to the poor relationship between them.

According to the survey conducted among police officers, the majority of them acknowledge the rights of sex workers, as evidenced by the average percentage of 89.3% answering in the affirmative to each question with a standard deviation of 9.45%. In contrast, sex workers themselves exhibited an average percentage of 78.94% with a standard deviation of 11.68.
Table 11: Level of awareness of sex workers’ basic human rights among police officers and sex workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of sex workers human rights</th>
<th>Police officers</th>
<th>Sex workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex workers have human rights</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex workers have the right to life</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex workers are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law</td>
<td>96.3%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex workers have an inviolable right to life, physical security and liberty</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex workers have the right to be protected from bodily harm</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The qualitative study further explored the rights of sex workers. Both sex workers and police officers emphasised that sex workers have the same rights as any other person, with sex workers specifically highlighting the right to work.

“It is my right to stand on the street and work without harming anyone”. - Sex worker

“I have all the rights because I am a human being, I think I enjoy all the rights that human being do”. - Sex worker

“Sex workers have the right to their body. They are respected just like every other human”. - Police officer

However, sex workers groused that their rights are not respected and that they constantly face abuse from the community and the police. Some of them even reported that the police make them feel like they do not have rights.

“Your rights are not respected, you can’t move around freely here, not even go shopping. The police chase you and you might get hit by a car if you run. There might be someone here with a heart condition, but no rights are recognized here or in the neighbourhood. The cops at this police station don’t allow us to exercise any rights”. - Sex worker

On the other hand, police officers acknowledged that although sex workers’ rights are generally respected, there might be some exceptions when there are security concerns.
“Yes, just because she is sex worker, there is no reason to deny her rights”. - Police officer

“They let themselves be disrespected. There are situations though where I know bad things happening but stay quiet. However, when I suspect that they potentially pose a danger, most of the time I take them to the station and make them wait there”. - Police officer

4.2.2. Rights related to sex workers’ working conditions

The study featured questions regarding rights related to the working conditions of sex workers to get a grasp of the familiarity of police officers and sex workers on the subject matter. Any significant differences between the two groups could be contributing factors to the ensuing negative relationship. Moreover, by including such questions the study aimed at investigating if police officers have a proper understanding of the law if and when they arrest sex workers.

Table 12: Knowledge of laws related to sex workers’ working conditions among police officers and sex workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rights of sex workers</th>
<th>Police officers</th>
<th>Sex workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anyone has the right to be a sex worker.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex workers have the right to work on the street.</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex workers have the right to work even if they disturb local residents.</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study further explored the working rights of sex workers through interviews and focus group discussions with both groups. The majority of participants from both groups believed that sex work is illegal, with only a few considering it to be legal. The police expressed the view that sex work is illegal because they perceived it to run counter to Ethiopian cultural values. Some participants admitted that sex work is not explicitly outlawed under the law but still considered it wrong from a moral and religious perspective.

“Basically, most Ethiopians are religious, and both the Bible and Qoran consider sex work a sin. In the Bible, a woman found committing adultery would be punished by death”. - Police officer

“There is no law that prohibits or allows the work. But sex work is not accepted in my culture, so I consider it shameful”. - Police Officer

However, a few participants of the discussion with police officers observed that sex work is openly practiced and the lack of enforcement led them to believe it is legal.

“If sex work was illegal, I could bust a bunch of them and make examples out of them, and the others would be scared and go away”. - Police officer

Sex workers perceived their work as illegal due to the discrimination and adverse treatment they experienced at the hand of the police and society. Some cited their financial woes as the reason for engaging in sex work, which further reinforced their belief that it is illegal.
“If you’re a sex worker, people will think less of you, and no one will respect you, they’ll just treat you like garbage. So, in my opinion, it’s not allowed”. - Sex worker

“I don’t think the police would chase us without reason”. - Sex worker

“It’s just so embarrassing. It is because I have no other option”. - Sex worker

The few sex workers who believed that sex work is legal justified their stance saying that since it does not involve theft and is actually mentioned in the Bible made them consider their work to be a lawful profession.

4.2.3. Sex workers’ rights and customers

In order to better understand the relationship between sex workers and police officers, it is crucial to examine the perceptions of both groups towards the interactions between sex workers and their clients.

By surveying both sex workers and police officers, we can gain insight into their respective viewpoints on what a healthy client and sex worker relationship should look like, which can reveal any similarities or differences in their attitudes and shed light on the nature of their relationship. According to the survey results, a higher proportion of police officers (22.5%) compared to sex workers (7%) think that if a sex worker consents to provide services, the customer is entitled to participate in any sexual activity. However, a significant number of police officers (76.3%) and sex workers (82%) agree that any action beyond the agreement reached between the
customer and the sex worker constitutes a violation of the latter’s rights.

4.2.4. Provisions affording protection and justice to sex workers

In the survey addressing police officers, I aimed to assess their knowledge in regards to protecting and providing justice for sex workers. I asked for suggestions in addition to yes or no questions. The results showed that the majority of officers were familiar with Articles 35 (14 citations) and 36 (16 citations) of the constitution, which enumerate the rights of women and children, respectively, as the primary laws protecting sex workers in Ethiopia.

4.3. Attitude of Police Officers and Sex Workers towards Each Other

This theme seeks to understand the attitudes of sex workers and police officers towards each other as a way to gain insight into their relationship. Through focus group discussions, interviews, and surveys, it aims to explore the attitude of both groups towards each other.

The study explored police officers’ attitude of sex workers, the prevalence of victim blaming, and their overall stance on sex work to understand their views. It also examined the opinions of sex workers regarding police officers and their willingness to seek help from them in order to get a grasp of their views.
4.3.1. The attitude of police officers towards sex workers

4.3.1.1. Who is a sex worker: General assumptions

In order to obtain a neutral assessment of police officers’ views on sex workers, I included general questions to avoid potential biases and ensure impartiality in my inquiry.

The attitudes and perceptions of police officers towards sex work, as revealed by the focus group discussion, interviews, and survey results, are complex and diverse. In the qualitative findings, some participants demonstrated understanding and compassion towards sex workers and acknowledged the challenging situations that may lead an individual to engage in sex work.

“It’s just because of poverty, nothing else. It’s just that a sex worker sells her body because of her economic condition”. - Police officer

“It’s usually an illegal middleman that brings them here, especially girls from rural areas. They come through these middlemen, and once they’re here, they feel like they have no other options. For example, if a girl is brought here by an illegal middleman and doesn’t know anything, she might end up doing sex work because she doesn’t know what else to do. That’s why they end up working as sex workers. That’s how I see it”. - Police officer

This view is supported by the survey results, where 79% of police officers acknowledged that sex workers join the
profession because they lack better options and 45% agreed that most sex workers had a difficult upbringing.

Nonetheless, some police officers in the interviews and FGDs had negative perceptions of sex workers owing to religious and cultural beliefs.

“...and second of all, they’re not like the rest of society in terms of culture. In our culture a woman is only supposed to be with one man, but I think sex workers sleep with all kinds of men”. - Police officer

“I see it as a work that is not acceptable to man or to God”. - Police officer

In both quantitative and qualitative findings, police officers associated sex workers with such negative stereotypes as criminal activity, drug use, sexual addiction, and the spread of a disease such as STDs.

“They are women who have a really high sex drive and end up becoming sex workers”. - Police Officer.

“Sex workers are likely to have health problems like HIV because they have sex with a lot of people. That’s how I see it”. - Police Officer.

In the survey, police officers associated sex workers with HIV (43.8%) and drug addiction (50.1%). Additionally, a significant proportion (68.8%) of police officers agreed that sex workers will lie about getting sexually assaulted if they are angry with their clients.
Moreover, the FGDs and interviews revealed the prevalence of the belief that sex workers are linked to criminal activities, particularly theft. The officers view sex workers as potential suspects and believe that they collaborate with thieves to hide them. They also accuse them of providing the thieves with tips about and distracting victims. Some police officers shared the specific techniques and methods that they believe sex workers use to steal. Others believe that even if sex workers are not actively involved in crimes themselves, they create an environment that is conducive to criminal activities. These officers also stated that they had been instructed by their superiors to view sex workers in this manner.

“I keep a close eye on areas where sex workers work to keep criminals from hiding out in their homes”. Police Officer.

“Sex workers create a lot of issues. They live off of renting out rooms. The woman goes in, hides her husband under the bed and when the client arrives, they take all the money he has. Once the client leaves, she’s gone too, leaving behind no trace”. - Police Officer.

“Some people use sex workers as a cover to commit crimes.”- Police Officer.

In the quantitative study, 30.1% of the police officers associated sex workers with theft.

An additional noteworthy outcome of the qualitative data was the perception of sex work as the commodification of the body rather than a service provision.
“Sex workers stand on the side of the road, selling their bodies, and say it’s just their job. They’re just giving themselves up for money”. - Police Officer.

Furthermore, the police officers that participated in the focus group discussions and interviews consistently classified sex workers into two distinct groups. The first group consisted of individuals who were driven to sex work due to financial difficulties and were regarded with empathy. The second group, on the other hand, was considered to be comprised of individuals who engaged in sex work voluntarily. The sex works lumped under this group were perceived as lawbreakers who financially sustain men, regard sex work as a commercial venture, and possess luxurious vehicles and properties.

“When it comes to sex work, it’s better to break it down into two parts. Those in the first group are forced to do it because of their families and they work in bad conditions. Then there’s the second group who do it because they want to - they have a nice house, a nice car and they see this as a way to make money. If you go to the Bole area, you’ll see some sex workers driving around in fancy cars and they’re like business women - they have their own “brokers” and they’re doing it because they want to”. - Police officers.

4.3.1.2. Victim blaming

This section focuses on examining the attitudes of police officers towards sex workers, with a specific emphasis on
instances of victim blaming. This scrutiny is crucial as the attitudes of police officers can reveal their overall views towards sex workers and provide insight into any biases they may hold. These attitudes can have a significant impact on how sex workers and police officers interact as well as the behaviour of sex workers when they seek justice.

The qualitative data suggests that police officers frequently placed responsibility for incidents of gender-based violence suffered by sex workers on the sex workers themselves, saying that their clothing was a factor that contributed to the assaults. Certain types of clothing, such as those that are considered to flout traditional cultural norms, can expose sex workers to violence and contribute to the vulnerability of women in the industry by stirring seduction and lust. Additionally, some of the participants stated that if a sex worker is wearing provocative clothing and standing on the street, it implies that she is willing to accept gender-based violence.

“There are some strange clothes my sisters wear that are outside of our tradition. I think that might be the reason why they get so much violence thrown their way”. - Police Officer.

“You know when you see them out there wearing short coats with half their body showing or wearing bodysuits and bras, it’s not like they’re trying to be someone else. But when people walk by, they might think she’s asking for it, like she’s already looking for a guy to use her”. - Police Officer.
“The way she dresses might turn him on and make him do something he wouldn’t normally do”. - Police Officer.

Additionally, in the interview and FGDs, participants expressed that aside from the clothing of the sex worker, intoxication also played a part.

“When guys are drunk or have an addiction to something, they might be more tempted to commit sexual crimes”. - Police Officer.

Moreover, police officers floated other reasons as to why they believe sex workers are victims of violence. They suggested that sex workers may be vulnerable due to addiction and unsafe working conditions, such as working in dark places.

Some participants of the interviews and focus group discussions were of the view that clothing is not the primary cause of violence against sex workers. They believed that the root cause lies in negative societal attitudes and behaviours towards women and sex work. The police officers emphasized that men can also be victims of violence, adding the issue should be addressed through community education and discussion, rather than solely blaming the clothing worn by sex workers. They also highlighted the importance of consent, noting that the way they dress does not justify forcing oneself on them.

“...I can’t say that a woman’s outfit is the reason a guy sexually assaults her. They stand on the street and ask customers what they want, and if a guy is interested, he’ll go up to them and ask if
they’re sex workers. Just because she’s wearing a short skirt, it doesn’t mean he can force her into his car. A woman’s clothing doesn’t make men want to sexually assault her”. - Police Officer.

“I don’t think it’s about clothes unless the person has some kind of sexual addiction or pressure buried in his subconscious. Most of the time, you see women wearing revealing clothes on the street, and you might like it, but that doesn’t give anyone a reason to attack them”. - Police Officer.

“So, the sexual abuse that happens to sex workers also happens to my brothers. Is it because of their appearance?” - Police Officer.

The quantitative data supports the findings obtained through the qualitative approach. It was found that 30% of respondents believed that sex workers encourage men to commit sexual assaults against them. 46.3% of the participants said that sex workers should cease wearing provocative clothing to avoid sexual assaults.

Similarly, 30.1% believed that clients only patronise sex workers due to seduction. Moreover, 22.5% of police officers stated that some sex workers deserve violence and 15.1% believe that sex workers are obliged to agree to any sexual favor their clients ask.

Furthermore, the survey results showed that 42% of the participants agreed that the fact that sex work is carried out during night time was a contributing factor to sexual assaults against sex workers.
On the other hand, police officers still think that sex workers can be sexually assaulted (70%) while 85% agreed that it is essential for a sex worker to get justice when she is sexually abused.

### 4.3.1.3. Perception of sex work

As part of the research, it was also important to investigate the broader attitudes of police officers towards sex work and whether it should be criminalized or not. This was driven by the imperative to gain a comprehensive understanding of their views and how these views might influence their treatment of sex workers.

In the study, police officers evinced a negative attitude toward sex work itself. The qualitative data suggest that officers believe that sex work should be outlawed because it promotes crime, undermines cultural values and the moral compass of children, and damages marriages. They also raised concerns about the spread of disease like HIV, and other STDs as well as the exploitation of young people as reasons to criminalize sex work.

“Because of these sex workers, diseases like hepatitis and liver problems are becoming a big health concern. It’s getting bad, and that’s why I think it’s time to put a stop to it”. - Police Officer.

“We need laws in place because we’re losing a whole generation, and a lot of marriages are falling apart because of sex workers. I’m serious”. - Police Officer.

Most police interviewees felt that sex work should be a criminal that sex workers should be punished for. The main reason cited was that sex work is regarded as corrupting
Ethiopian culture. The police officers, however, demurred from accusing customers of actively participating in the illegal activity, arguing they are simply satisfying their sexual urge. Law enforcement officials also emphasized that in the absence of sex workers there would be no customers.

“If she doesn’t show up, the customer might not come either. You get me?” - Police Officer.

“In Ethiopia, it’s not common for a girl to stand on the street like that. A lot of people in my culture would be disgusted by it. It’s not something that’s accepted, and people would probably isolate her because of it. So, it’s really on her for doing something that goes against my culture”. - Police Officer.

Very few police officers believed that it should not be banned because it is natural and a source of income for sex workers.

“As long as there are people, this thing will exist”. - Police Officer.

As opposed to the proposal to completely ban the industry, alternative suggestions were tabled in the discussions and interviews to regulate and tax the industry with the goal of creating conditions under which sex workers can make a voluntary decision to exit the profession.

“…..If there is a tax or something, it means that there will be something to reduce the money that goes into their pocket”. - Police Officer.

The quantitative data supports the qualitative findings.
However, it also reveals some conflicting perspectives among police officers. The numerical data shows that although a majority of police officers, 55.1%, concurred that sex work would persist despite law enforcement efforts, a larger percentage, 71.3%, felt that strong laws were necessary to grapple with the issue. This perspective was in contrast to the views of 33.7% of the participants, who believed that sex workers should be legally punished for their profession, while a larger group of 76.3% believed that sex workers should have equal political, social, and economic rights. Furthermore, while 83.8% of police officers acknowledged the importance of receiving training on the rights and circumstances of sex workers, only 67.5% believed that law enforcement personnel should provide protection for sex workers.

When it came to punishing those involved in sex work, 42.5% agreed that if it were to be a crime, the sex worker should be punished, while 16.3% believed that the client should be punished instead.

### 4.4. The Attitude of Sex Workers Towards the Police and Seeking Help from the Police

The study also sought to understand the perspective of sex workers towards police officers. This includes their opinions and perceptions of the police and their willingness to seek help from law enforcement. I believe the information gathered from sex workers will provide valuable insight into the relationship between sex workers and police officers. It will also help in understanding the barriers and challenges that may prevent sex workers from seeking help and support.

In focus group discussions and interviews, sex workers complained that the police are biased towards them and do
not accord them the same level of respect they do to other members of society. They feel that the police are more likely to side with well-heeled clients or individuals and that they occasionally engage in ethnic profiling.

“There’s no one protecting us and even if the girl or woman claims to have been abused, they always side with the man”. - Sex Worker.

“So, a group of sex workers was forced to hand over their IDs, and they found out they were Tigrayans. They were taken to the police station. They made them take their clothes off? Can you even imagine? Seriously, even if they’re not from the same ethnic group, can’t they use their brain a little? Isn’t a cop supposed to enforce the law? Anyway, these sex workers had to spend the whole night outside, naked and everything. They didn’t get released until 8 in the morning, and they weren’t allowed to put any clothes on. Five women had to sit there all night like that”. - Sex Worker.

Similarly, the survey findings indicate a lack of trust and confidence in the police among sex workers. A majority of the participants, 69.6%, perceived that the police did not address their needs and concerns while 65.8% lacked trust in the honesty of law enforcement and 74.7% felt that the police did not treat everyone equally. Additionally, 67.1% of sex workers believed that police discriminate against certain groups.

The findings also show 50.6% of sex workers who took part in the study (do not support the police system and 56.9% have a
poor relationship with the police.

The qualitative data further suggests that sex workers are often hesitant to report incidents of gender-based violence to the police. They have concerns like the police not taking their complaints seriously because of their job, difficulty in finding the person who caused them harm, and fear of facing further abuse, arrest or false accusations.

“Even if you go to the cops, they might say you went into the room with him because you wanted to. They might dismiss you by calling you a sex worker”. - Sex Worker.

“I wouldn’t recommend it. Chances are that the guy might not even be there. It’s better to just cut ties with him on good terms”. - Sex Worker.

“For instance, a man might blame a sex worker for transmitting a disease to him. Because of the nature of my work, we’re exposed to these risks. But instead of taking responsibility, he might blame the sex worker and say she ruined his life. The truth is, no one knows who might have infected whom, but he might still blame the sex worker”. - Sex worker.

“I’m not going, no way. If I go there, I’ll just get arrested or beaten or even tortured. Why would I put myself through that? I’m not going”. - Sex worker.
injuries or evidence of a crime, they may not be taken seriously or receive any help.

“**You are the only one to blame and even if you are bleeding they have no answer**”. - Sex worker.

The findings of the survey indicate that a substantial number of sex workers are apprehensive about seeking assistance due to perceived insecurity. Nearly two-thirds (63.3%) reported that the police do not make them feel safe and over half (58.2%) stated that they do not believe the police would respond quickly in the event of a call for help. Furthermore, nearly half (40.5%) of the sex workers surveyed do not have confidence in the police’s ability to solve crimes. What’s more, a substantial number of sex workers have limited trust in the police to handle reports of sexual violence, with 44.3% indicating a complete lack of trust and 15.2% expressing only a minimal level of trust. Despite these concerns, the majority of sex workers (88%) believe that the police should provide protection for them.

According to the qualitative study participants, seeking medical attention and avoiding the perpetrator again may be more effective ways of handling the situation.

“**What is done is done, so I would tell her to steer clear of him**”. - Sex Worker.

“I would tell her to go to a health facility”. - Sex Worker.

One individual though sounded pugnacious and said that she and her friends would confront the customer, provided they were able to locate him.
Sex workers differentiated the attitude of the police on the basis of their gender. They indicated female police officers tend to have a more negative attitude toward them compared to male police officers. Female police officers are described as hitting hard, using mean words, insults, and threats, and looking down on sex workers. In contrast, male police officers are described as being more understanding and empathetic.

“The female cops kick us with their legs, especially on the streets. All the male officers do is tell us to go away”. -Sex Worker.

“This female cop always hits me. She has hit me many times.” - Sex Worker

4.5. POLICE AND SEX WORKERS’ INTERACTION

One of the key objectives of this research was to delve into the relationship between police officers and sex workers. To achieve this goal, the study analyzed the interactions between the two groups in general as well as at crucial touchpoints such as incidences of gender-based violence and arrests. Towards this end it allowed both groups to express their own perceptions of the relationship, providing a more personalised and authentic view of the dynamic between police officers and sex workers.
4.5.1. Police and sex Workers’ meeting points

The relationship between sex workers and police officers is largely shaped by their interactions, which can either be cooperative and communicative or marked by arrests and raids. Thus, I aimed to analyse the nature of their relationship by looking at their point of interaction.

According to the qualitative findings, most of the interaction between police officers and sex workers happens during the occurrence a crime like theft or when customers lodge complaints against the sex workers. The widely-held belief among the police that sex workers are more likely to commit crimes often plays out to scenes where they move the workers off the streets. However, some officers chase off sex workers not only due to the risk of crime, but also because they deem sex work to be morally or socially wrong.

“They fool drunken people and steal from them. I deal with each other a lot when it comes to breaking the law”. - Police Officer.

“Sometimes, I try to remove them from my district. If I remove sex workers from my district and if you and another police do the same, the sex workers will become frustrated. As she can’t work she will go away. So, if she can’t work, she will do other jobs that are acceptable. So this is one of my methods”. - Police Officer.

Other interactions between police officers and sex workers include instances of client abuse and sex workers approaching the police to report customers who do not pay,
make inappropriate requests, or inflict sexual assault. This usually happens when they encounter police officers on the street.

"Sometimes we run into each other on the streets. They come to us because of our uniform and we try to hear both sides of the story. That’s how we usually come across each other". - Police Officer,

Officers, however, acknowledged that there can also be “positive interactions”, such as when they provide health resources or job opportunities to sex workers.

"We’ve helped them organise and start working together, like setting up a shower business right next to police stations". - Police Officer.

Others say that sex workers give them important information that helps them solve crimes.

"Some of the women, if not all of them, work on the street sometimes. So they can witness a crime like robbery take place while they’re out there. Even if they don’t know the guy’s name, they can describe what he was wearing, and how he looked”. - Police Officer.

“There are those who give us information”. - Police Officer.
4.5.2. Police-sex workers relationship: Analyzing their own relationship

Another focus of the research was to allow both the police officers and sex workers to assess their relationship and self-identify whether it is positive or negative. Rather than relying on outside perspectives, the study aims to give a voice to both groups and enable them to express their own opinions and perceptions of their relationship. This allows for a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the dynamics between police officers and sex workers.

The qualitative findings suggest that police officers have a complex view of their relationship with sex workers. On one hand, they acknowledge that sex workers can offer useful information for law enforcement efforts. On the other hand, though, they also view sex work as criminal and endeavour to eliminate it from their communities.

“They give us information, so in terms of that, my relationship with them is good”. - Police Officer.

“It’s not good because I interact with them when a criminal activity is afoot”. - Police Officer.

Furthermore, as explained in earlier sections, police officers often consider sex work to run foul of cultural norms and take steps to stop it.

They are also frustrated by the fact that most sex workers do not want to quit their profession and choose to continue engaging in sex work for financial gain rather than out of necessity.
“Only a small fraction of them are willing to leave the profession; it’s not just about the money”. - Police Officer.

On their part, the majority of sex workers who participated in interviews and focus group discussions had a negative perception of their relationship with the police. They reported instances of physical abuse, disrespect, and mistreatment at the hands of law enforcement personnel. They also claimed that officers were often swayed by financial incentives and favoured the interests of customers over those of sex workers.

“They’re not good to me. When I go to them after a fight with a client, they’ll hear him out but not me”. - Sex Worker.

The sex workers also maintained that the police often showed a lack of interest in their reports and did not ask important questions about their stories. If the police do ask questions, they often focus on the sex worker’s profession, background, or financial compensation. When they found out the person was a sex worker, the police frequently ignored their reports and told them to leave.

“I went to the police station for work-related issues once. The cop just kicked me out, saying something like “aren’t you a sex worker?” I went there with a problem and left without getting it solved”. - Sex Worker.

“When I tell the police what I do for work, they don’t pay attention to me”. - Sex Worker.
4.5.3. Gender-based violence

It is of vital importance to examine the gender-based violence sex workers are subjected to at the hand of the police given the pervasiveness of the problem as demonstrated by previous studies. The unequal power dynamics between the groups can result in police officers abusing their authority without facing significant consequences. An understanding of the extent and nature of this violence can offer deeper insights into the relationship and the role of law enforcement in addressing it.

In my research, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between police officers and sex workers. Qualitatively, police officers conceded that police intervention in cases of physical violence or verbal abuse involving sex workers does occur, albeit rarely.

“I once physically assaulted a sex worker who had entered a room with a man, stolen his gold, and concealed it in her breast. When questioned, she denied having the gold. A female officer was brought in to search for her, and the gold was discovered. I got really upset because of her actions and slapped her”. - Police Officer.

While the majority of officers denied committing sexual violence against sex workers, a minority acknowledged having heard of actual cases or through rumours the occurrence of such incidents in the past in other districts. They also reported that steps have been taken to address past incidents or improve the situation in general and that personal intervention or departmental systems were in place for investigating misconduct.
“Of course, I haven’t heard anything like this in the past 8 years. But I remember incidents going back to the late 1990s (Ethiopian calendar)” - Police Officer.

“I remember, there was one police officer who was caught when he tried to do something at the police station”. - Police Officer.

“Some of the cops might do something to sex workers in the dark. We’ve seen a few try to do that”. - Police Officer.

Quantitatively, the findings showed that a smaller proportion of officers admitted to using threatening behaviour (32.5%), verbal aggression (25%), or physical aggression (15%) toward sex workers in their interactions.

The findings from sex workers paint a different picture. According to the qualitative data, a significant number of sex workers reported facing ongoing psychological, physical, and sexual violence as well as extortion at the hands of the police. Many of them claimed that officers in their neighbourhood demanded money or personal belongings such as phones in exchange for release from custody or criminal charges. Furthermore, the police were accused of engaging in threatening and insulting behaviour both on the street and while the sex workers are in custody. The quantitative findings support these claims, with 57% of the sex workers reporting being threatened or having friends threatened, 62% reporting disrespectful treatment and insult, and 38% reporting being stopped and questioned about their work.

“My friend and I were carrying 50 birr each,
and when I begged them to let us go because I had a kid, they said, ‘How are we supposed to let you go? “If you have money, just give it to us and take off.’ I ended up handing over 100 birr and running away”. - Sex Worker.

“They come straight to my neighbourhood and as soon as they get here and see that there are sex workers, they spit in disgust, right in front of us”. - Sex Worker.

Additionally, the findings from both qualitative and quantitative data gathered from sex workers indicate the prevalence of a pattern of physical and sexual abuse. Participants frequently reported experiencing physical violence. In fact, in one FGD, all participants reported that they had undergone police beatings. Some sex workers also reported instances of rape committed by police officers or their acquaintances. The quantitative data support these findings, with 38% of participants reporting being physically assaulted by the police and 32.9% claiming to have been asked for sexual favours.

“When COVID hit, there were girls getting raped. They were getting chased by the police and taken off the street in the dark. The girls would say, “He’s coming, he’s coming,” and run away. But then they would get raped in the dark”. - Sex Worker.

“If I run away, I’ll be safe. But if they catch up to me, they’ll definitely hit me”. - Sex Worker.
Sex workers sat down for the interview and FGDs have also reported instances of physical violence by police officers who pose as customers. This includes incidents of being beaten and subjected to intimidation and other forms of abuse. These officers use their positions of authority to gain free services, ask for their money back, or avoid paying for them. In some cases, they may demand free and unprotected sex in exchange for protection.

“After using my service, they try to intimidate us by saying stuff like ‘I’m a cop and I’m going do this or that’ to scare us”. - Sex Worker.

“For example, if he stays longer than I agreed and I ask him to pay more for the extra time, he might say something like, ‘I am not paying because I am a police officer.’ He might even try to hit you”. - Sex Worker.

4.5.4. Arrest

To gain a complete understanding of the relationship between police officers and sex workers, I sought to gather information about their experiences with arrests. I aimed to uncover any evidence of discrimination and abuse in their interactions so as to be able to have a clearer comprehension of how the police exercise their state-granted authority to arrest sex workers.

The findings from the FGDs and interviews with the police officers show that the police arrest sex workers when they are suspected of committing a crime or deemed to pose a threat to national security. These arrests usually take place en masse during major operations in specific locations like Chechnya.
and Piaasa. These actions are also carried out to differentiate between criminals and non-criminals.

“I gather information and keep an eye out for suspicious activity until the desired target is apprehended. So, in order to separate the innocent from the bad apple, I might have to arrest sex workers along with people who steal, sell weed and alike”. - Police Officer.

The police also asserted that sex workers are treated are accorded the same treatment as other individuals suspected of committing crimes and their legal rights are respected while they are in custody, including being taken to court within 48 hours of their arrest.

“Sex workers will be brought to court within 48 hours of their arrest. They will be questioned in the same way as any other person who has been arrested”. - Police Officer.

On the other hand, the quantitative findings gleaned from the police indicated that a substantial proportion of police officers (33.8%) reported arresting sex workers due to their work or based on customer complaints (33.8%). Of those, a significant number of officers (53.8%) reported informing sex workers of the reason for their arrest in a language they understood. According to the officers in the study, the reasons for the arrests of sex workers appeared to be diverse, ranging from aggression to theft and physical fights, among others.

Nevertheless, sex workers in the study reported being frequently and arbitrarily arrested by police officers without
They also described being physically abused, such as being physically assaulted and threatened with waterboarding while in custody, and sometimes being forced to spend the night without clothing. Some sex workers were arrested due to disputes with customers or for seemingly trivial reasons, like playing music or speaking a particular language. Others reported being arrested on accusations of theft or when seeking help from the police.

“They warn us that if we talk back or ask to be released, they’ll stick us in a water-filled barrel”. - Sex Worker.

“They were arrested for a few days just because they were playing Tigrigna music”. - Sex Worker.

Sex workers also went through frequent instances of being arrested in groups with the minimal explanation offered, particularly during international events such as AU meetings or when they failed to comply with the demands of police officers.

“Last time, I was at the beauty salon and I saw some police officers. They just grabbed some sex workers, threw them in a car and made them spend the night at the police station, and then let them go. They were left outside the whole night”. - Sex Worker.
5. DISCUSSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings from the mixed study on the relationship between sex workers and police officers in Addis Ababa will be contextualised, explored and analysed. Despite the significant power imbalance between sex workers and police officers emanating from the fact that police officers are endowed with significant powers under the Criminal Procedure Code of Ethiopia and sex workers facing widespread discrimination and marginalisation, the current/available research on their relationship is insufficient, inconsistent, and outdated.

Thus, the aim of this study is to fill this research gap by examining the knowledge of sex workers’ rights, mutual perceptions, and interactions between the two parties through a feminist lens. Utilising a mixed methodology that combines focus group discussions, interviews, and surveys, the study attempts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

This chapter of the paper will assess the implications and significance of the findings and place them within the context of existing literature and the legal frameworks in Ethiopia. The structure of the discussion mirrors the key findings and first explores knowledge-related topics, followed by attitudes, and finally the interaction between sex workers and police officers.
5.2. KNOWLEDGE OF POLICE OFFICERS AND SEX WORKERS ON SEX WORKERS’ RIGHTS

The initial research question aimed to investigate two key areas related to the rights of sex workers. The study primarily sought to assess the extent to which police officers are knowledgeable about the rights of sex workers as are sex workers regarding their own rights with a view to comparing the awareness levels of both groups. This comparison was important to get a sense of the dynamics of their relationship.

A shared understanding of these rights is likely to lead to better cooperation between sex workers and police, enabling sex workers to assert their rights and the police to work at protecting them. Another focus of this theme is examining the knowledge of both groups on laws related to sex workers. If both parties have a proper understanding of the appropriate legal frameworks, they are more likely to get along. However, a dissimilar knowledge of the regulations that govern sex work can be one factor contributing to their negative relationship.

In this section of these findings, it is important to acknowledge that during the survey, police officers may have felt pressured to answer questions correctly in the belief they were being tested. As a result it is distinctly possible that they may have been more inclined to provide answers that they believed were correct or socially acceptable instead of expressing their actual perception.

This impression was based on informal conversations with some of the police officers, who said they found the survey to be akin to a challenging exam. Similarly, while interacting with sex workers, it was observed that some of their responses may not have fully conveyed their understanding of the
relevant laws but rather what they believed they can and cannot do. This was reflected in their body language and tone during the interviews.

5.2.1. Understanding the basic human rights of sex workers: Perspectives from police officers and sex workers

The 1995 Ethiopian constitution recognizes and protects various human rights for all citizens, including the right to life, equality before the law, freedom of speech, and so forth. It protects the rights of prisoners and detainees, and prohibits torture, and inhumane treatment. The constitution also enshrines the rights of women and children, and provides for the protection of their interests. On the other hand, the Ethiopian criminal code criminalizes rape, sexual outrages accompanied by violence as well as taking advantage of the distress or dependence of a woman.

Ethiopia has further ratified international human rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

All of these laws can be used by the police to provide an effective protection and access to justice for sex workers in Ethiopia. If the police are aware of the fundamental rights citizens, including sex workers, enjoy, they are more likely to respect these rights and provide justice in cases where they rights are violated (Kostić, Đan, Đorđević, & Litavski, 2014).

According to the results of the survey involving 82 police officers, an average of 89.9% answered “yes” to each question regarding the rights of sex workers. This indicates that the
surveyed police officers are well aware of sex workers’ rights. However, the standard deviation of 9.45% suggests that there was some variability in the responses, hinting that not all police officers had the same level of awareness for each question. Nonetheless, based on the initial findings indicating that police in Addis Ababa are fairly knowledgeable about the rights of sex workers, it would be reasonable to expect a positive relationship between sex workers and police officers.

However, this research has revealed that despite their knowledge, the police still continue to commit serious violations of human rights. Unfortunately, this pattern of human rights violations by police officers in Addis Ababa is consistent with the findings of other studies that have shown that in spite of receiving human rights training as part of their basic police courses, police officers still engage in violations of the civil rights of citizens (Girma Kibret Hailu, 2018) and do not conduct their operations in accordance with human rights principles (Tulu, 2010).

It should be noted that the better-than-average level of knowledge among police officers in the study regarding the human rights of sex workers may be attributed not only to the basic police training they receive, but also to their educational background. The majority of police officers in the study (89.8%) have completed secondary and higher education, a fact which likely contributes to their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. This is supported by the fact that civic education, which includes topics such as human rights, is typically taught in Grade 9 or 10 as part of the social studies curriculum in Ethiopia. Therefore, it is possible that some police officers may have received civic education that covered human rights and related issues, enhancing their knowledge and awareness of sex workers’ rights (Fenta & Gebre, 2020).
Even so, based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that merely understanding the rights of sex workers does not necessarily equate with a relationship that is not marred by rights violations. This suggests that there may be other factors that explain the mistreatment of sex workers, some of which were included in the research question of the study. These factors could include systemic biases or prejudices against sex work, inadequate training or education on sex worker issues, societal pressure to conform to certain attitudes and norms, corruption, or criminalization of some aspect of sex work, among others.

Another possible explanation is the fact that while police officers who participated in the study scored high on closed-ended questions about the human rights of sex workers, they were less knowledgeable when it came to specific examples of constitutional provisions protecting the human rights of sex workers in open-ended questions. While discussing the rights of sex workers, some police officers only cited articles 35 and 36 of the constitution, which address women’s and children’s rights, respectively. While these articles are relevant to the rights of sex workers, it is essential to recognize sex workers’ human rights. The police officers’ high score on the topic led to an expectation that they would reference articles on human rights on the open-ended question. However, it is possible that they struggled to connect the rights of sex workers to human rights, seeing them solely as women or children. The failure of police officers to make mention of articles explicitly related to sex workers’ human rights or other relevant laws can be an indication of a lack of understanding of the basic human rights principles, a likely contributing factor to the negative relationship between sex workers and police officers. However, as previous research shows it is essential that police officers understand and respect the
human rights of sex workers in order to improve public health outcomes and the reporting of crimes or human rights abuses to authorities (Decker et al., 2015).

The survey results of sex workers showed that, on average, 78.9% affirmed knowledge of their rights by responding affirmatively to each question regarding such rights, indicating a good understanding of their grasp. However, the relatively high standard deviation of 11.68% suggests that there was a considerable degree of diversity in the responses, implying that not all participants had an equal level of comprehension or awareness regarding each question.

This shows that sex workers possess some level of knowledge about their rights. As a result, it would be reasonable to expect sex workers to seek assistance from the police where emergencies arise. However, the later part of the research revealed that sex workers in the study were reluctant to report violation of and take steps to safeguard their claimed right, indicating that such other factors as fear of abuse and violence might be at play as well. This is borne out by previous research showing that sex workers mainly tend to avoid reporting violations of their rights to the police due to the likelihood of negative interactions with law enforcement (Chu, Santini, & Clamen, 2020).

Additionally, although the study revealed that sex workers had a moderate level of knowledge about their rights, some of the responses were concerning. For example, only 64% of the respondents knew of their fundamental human rights. This lack of awareness could be attributable to the discrimination and marginalization that sex workers often face coupled with the negative impact of criminalization on certain aspects of sex work. These factors can create obstacles for sex workers in accessing crucial services and contribute to confusion and
uncertainty regarding their legal rights. In Canada, a study found that inadequate understanding of legal rights regarding immigration, housing, and employment among sex workers was associated with the criminalization of sex work (Benoit et al., 2019).

It should also be noted that the vast majority of sex workers surveyed (84.2%) had received less than a secondary level of education. This is a significant finding as it suggests that educational barriers may be contributing to the relatively low levels of knowledge among sex workers regarding their legal rights.

5.2.2. Understanding sex workers’ right to work: Perspectives from police officers and sex workers

In Ethiopia, sex work itself is not considered a criminal act. However, other related activities are punishable offences under the law. For instance, Article 634 of the criminal code states that making a living from sex work as a landlord, keeper, or pimp is illegal.

Article 846 of the code criminalises immoral solicitation and debauchery, prohibiting improper solicitation and actions that go against decency. This article also bans sex workers from disturbing their surroundings. Furthermore, under Article 847, publicly advertising debauchery is prohibited and carries a punishment of a fine or arrest.

The findings of the study indicate that sex workers and police officers had a vague understanding of the laws related to sex work. In the survey, a majority of police officers (60%) and an even larger proportion of sex workers (77%) of sex workers agreed that a woman has the right to engage in sex work. Regardless, in the qualitative study it was found that both
the police and sex workers strongly believed that sex work is illegal in Ethiopia, albeit for different reasons. The police view it as a violation of religious principles and cultural norms while the sex workers seem to have arrived at that conclusion because they are at the receiving end of negative treatment from the police and the community. Societal values and personal experience thus influence sex workers’ and police officers’ knowledge of the legal framework of sex work rather than their awareness of the actual laws.

Furthermore, although the focus group discussions indicated that both sex workers and police officers believed sex work to be illegal in Ethiopia, the survey data revealed a more liberal understanding of the topic by both groups. Interestingly, the data also showed that a slightly greater percentage of sex workers than police officers believe that they have the right to work on the streets despite any potential nuisance to local residents.

One possible explanation for the observed differences between the survey results and the focus group discussions/interviews is that the survey questions may have been interpreted differently by police officers and sex workers as described in the introduction of the discussion section.

Additionally, social desirability bias may have influenced the responses given by the participants in the focus group discussions due to a possible inclination to give answers that were more socially acceptable or that aligned with the views of their peers. This bias is particularly common in studies that involve sensitive topics, such as those related to sex, as prior research has shown (King, 2022). Moreover, generally speaking study participants in focus group discussions tend to conform to the norms of the group and express opinions that are socially desirable (Hyde et al., 2005).
The sporadic findings related to the laws related to sex workers can give a great insight into their relationship. In private, police officers were more likely to recognize the rights of sex workers to pursue a profession of their choice whereas in focus group discussions and interviews they tended to subscribe to a more restrictive approach towards sex work. Similarly, sex workers expressed the belief that sex work was illegal in social settings during qualitative research methods. In the survey though they expressed the view that they had more freedom to work. This can mean that, even if the police do not wholeheartedly believe that sex work is illegal, they might engage in activities that imply that sex work is illegal in Ethiopia in social setting such as during patrols with their colleagues. For instance, they might chase off sex workers or arrest them for standing on the streets, among others. Meanwhile, sex workers could also accept such violations of their right under the impression that sex work is illegal in the country.

Interestingly, while both sex workers and police officers had a generally liberal stance towards sex work according to the survey, sex workers appeared to feel entitled to work on the streets even if it disturbed their neighbours while police officers expressed a more conservative view on the matter. This difference in approach could potentially lead to frustration and anger for both groups, with police officers disapproving of the way sex workers conduct their work and sex workers feeling that it is their right to do so but the police are not treating them fairly.

Furthermore, the results of the study show that compared to other questions regarding the rights of sex workers related to their work, the right to work on the street scored the lowest percentage for both sex workers and police officers. Only 52% of sex workers and 36.5% of police officers agreed that
sex workers are entitled to work on the street. These findings are consistent with other results of the study indicating that police officers view sex workers as engaging in criminal activities when working on the street and that standing on the street goes against cultural norms. This bias may have influenced their knowledge and interpretation of sex workers’ rights. Furthermore, the frequent police practice of chasing sex workers away from the streets may have contributed to the perception that working on the street is not a right sex workers can lay a claim to.

Despite the higher percentage of belief prevailing among police officers that sex workers have no right to work on the street compared to other aspects of their work, sex workers still engage in street-based work as a means of finding clients. In fact, 37.19% of sex workers in the study were street-sex workers. Thus, the divergence of views over the right to work on the street could potentially lead to frequent disputes and violence in their interaction.

The relationship between street-based sex workers and police officers is further complicated by a provision of the Ethiopian criminal code. Article 846 of the criminal code criminalizes anyone who works on the streets and solicits sex in public spaces. However, this provision is problematic due to its ambiguous language, particularly when it comes to the interpretation of such terms as “improper soliciting” and “contrary to decency,” especially in the context of modern life and changing cultural norms. Unfortunately, previous studies show that vague and overbroad laws can be used to restrict the rights of specific groups, as seen in India, where such laws are used to target and harass journalists, limit the activities of NGOs, and discriminate against marginalised communities. These actions often result in violence and discrimination against targeted individuals as authorities have the power to
interpret the laws in ways that suppress peaceful expression and political dissent (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

5.2.3. The right of a sex worker with a client: Perspectives from police officers and sex workers

The criminal code criminalizes those who compel a woman to submit to sexual intercourse outside of wedlock, whether by use of violence or grave intimidation or after rendering her unconscious or incapable of resistance.

A significant chunk of police officers in the study (22.5%) believe that a customer is entitled to participate in any sexual activities once a sex worker consents to provide services while a smaller proportion of sex workers (7%) concur with this view. Moreover, 15% of police officers think that a sex worker should do whatever a customer asks her to do.

This difference can be attributed to a hazy understanding of the concept of consent in Ethiopia, which is also reflected in a study that found a lack of understanding and communication among boys regarding consent and sexual behaviour (Taylor, 2020). Furthermore, the patriarchal socialisation in Ethiopian society may also contribute to these differences as women are expected to be subservient and tolerant of their partners.

This explains why police officers might also hold the belief that sex workers are expected to be obedient and subservient to male customers’ requests due to their gender. However, as demonstrated by the results of the survey, sex workers seem to disagree with such notions and do not share the same perception held by customers or police officers, resulting in disputes and disagreements.
5.3. THE ATTITUDE OF THE POLICE AND SEX WORKERS TOWARDS EACH OTHER

The second research question aims to explore the attitudes and perceptions held by the police and sex workers towards each other and to examine how these attitudes influence their relationship and interactions. In a bid to probe the attitude of police officers towards sex workers, the researchers posed questions about their opinions on sex work, their inclination to assign blame to the survivors, and their general outlook on the topic. On the other hand, to gauge the attitude of sex workers of police officers, the research questions focused on what they think of police officers in general as well as their inclination to contact the police cases of emergency.

5.3.1. Behind the uniform: Uncovering police attitudes towards sex workers

Stigmatization of sex work is a pervasive issue that is shaped by social and cultural factors in specific contexts, namely religion. In Ethiopia, religion, particularly Orthodox Christianity, plays a central role in individual lives as evidenced by the high proportion of the population that attends church regularly, prays daily, and places great importance on religion. This cultural and religious perspective not only moulds societal attitudes and values, but also contributes to conservative attitudes towards social and moral issues, including sex work (Pew Research Center, 2017). Both Christianity and Islam do not approve of sex work (El-Khoury, 2015).

The negative views towards sex workers expressed by police officers in the study are emblematic of a wider religious and societal perception of sex work as sinful and corrupt.
A significant proportion of the surveyed police officers (82.19%) identified as either Muslim or Christian, with 73% of respondents considering religion to be a crucial part of their lives. Thus, one possible contributing factor to the disapproval of sex work among police officers, as indicated by the study, is their religious interpretation of sex work as immoral or sinful.

The negative attitude towards sex work is not solely influenced by religious beliefs; it is also determined by societal expectations regarding women’s behaviour because of the rigid standards of acceptable sexuality particularly for women. Thus, persons who use their sexuality in ways that are considered outside of these norms are often subjected to harsh labelling (Mullin & Flannery, 2021). Consequently, sex workers are negatively seen because they are going against patriarchal norms by engaging in sexual activities with strangers, having multiple partners, and exchanging sex for monetary compensation (Wong et al., 2011c). This often leads to marginalisation and othering of sex workers, portraying and associating them with negative stereotypes. Police officers who partook in the study tended to associate sex workers with drug use, sexual addiction, and disease transmission. Other studies have also shown that police officers hold a negative attitude of sex workers and consider them to be criminals. These officers view sex work as a major contributor to serious crimes and believe that stronger measures, such as imprisonment, should be taken to control it (Jorgensen, 2018). Another study also indicates that police officers are generally prejudiced towards sex workers (Pauwels & Williamson, 2022).

In this particular study, sex workers said they were also subjected to marginalisation and discrimination in a distinctive way. Asked to provide their definition of a sex worker many
of the police officers in the study characterised sex workers as individuals who sell their bodies, regarding them as mere objects of commerce. The police officers displayed sympathetic attitudes towards sex workers who engaged in this profession due to necessity, while showing frowning on those who were perceived to earn considerable sums of money through sex work.

Furthermore, some police officers brought up their experiences of sex workers engaging in criminal activities such as theft, potentially contributing to and reinforcing the stereotype of sex workers as being associated with crime. However, given the strong evidence of prejudice among police officers towards sex workers, it is difficult to fully rely on these accounts. This area of research requires further investigation. It is important to note here that police supervisors sometimes order lower-ranking officers to remove sex workers from the streets under the premise that they are potential criminals. While the supervisors may be motivated by the goal of crime prevention, this reinforces the labelling of sex workers as potential criminals, thereby perpetuating the existing bias among police officers. Regrettably, such orders may result in police officers abusing their power, increasing the vulnerability of sex workers and impacting their relationship with them negatively.

Moreover, in the focus group discussions, police officers consistently shared their beliefs, informed by experiences, that sex workers were involved in criminal activities, particularly theft. However, in the survey, only 30% of police officers agreed that most sex workers were thieves. It is possible that the conversation in the focus group discussions was influenced by a few officers who initially introduced the topic, prompting to a change in direction. Despite the potential influence of those few officers, it is clear that the experiences
of police officers with sex workers involved in criminal activities has left an indelible impression on their perceptions, leading them to stereotype workers as thieves.

5.3.2. Police officers’ perceptions of sex work: Understanding attitudes and beliefs

The study’s findings suggest that police officers tend to view sex work in a one-dimensional way, solely focusing on its negative consequences for society without taking into account the experiences and perspectives of the sex workers themselves. This narrow focus disregards the structural factors that contribute to the existence of sex work and ignores the needs and rights of the individuals who engage in it.

Sex work is often viewed as an essential source of income for women who have limited access to education and employment opportunities and live in poverty. The prevalence of exploitative labour markets and limited options for alternative employment are crucial factors that lead individuals to engage in sex work, as noted in prior research (Mullin & Flannery, 2021). In this regard, the study revealed that women who were economically and socially disadvantaged were more likely to engage in sex work (Child, 2009).

The study also found that a significant proportion of sex workers had limited educational backgrounds, with 82.28% having less than a secondary education. Furthermore, a substantial percentage (89.2%) of the participants had dependents to support, including children (38.8%) and other family members (26.4%). These findings highlight the financial burden that sex workers face and illustrate the critical role that sex work plays in supporting the livelihoods of those who
have limited options for earning income.

In the study, police officers expressed a belief that sex workers should be punished instead of their clients, describing the customers as products of the sex work industry. However, this perspective fails to acknowledge the larger social and systemic issues surrounding sex work. Sex work is a manifestation of the power dynamic between men and women and the exploitation of women’s bodies, driven by the demand for it (Mullin & Flannery, 2021). The intense disapproval of sex work by police officers in the study may have led them to overlook the complex factors that contribute to the existence and perpetuation of sex work.

“During the data collection process, I initially believed that not all sex workers were solely in the profession for economic reasons, and that some enjoyed the promiscuous lifestyle that it offered. However, I quickly discovered that I was mistaken. Every sex worker I encountered expressed a deep loathing for their job and was only doing it out of necessity to survive. It became evident that their economic needs were the primary reason they remained in the profession despite their resentment towards it. Additionally, almost all the sex workers I spoke with had a family to support, and leaving the job would mean struggling to provide for them. This realization provided an answer to my question as to why sex workers remained in the profession for an extended period despite their dislike for it”. - Reflection by a data collector

On the other hand, the quantitative study produced some results that were difficult to interpret, indicating a need for further investigation or clarification. For instance, on the one hand, a majority of the officers, 55.1%, believed that sex work would persist despite law enforcement efforts. On the other hand, 71.3% felt that strong laws were necessary to eliminate the issue. These conflicting views among police officers
highlight the complexity of the issue of sex work and the need for a nuanced and comprehensive approach. Further research is required to explore the underlying factors that contribute to these conflicting views and to inform the development of more effective and equitable policies and practices.

5.3.3. Victim blaming tendencies among police officers on sex workers

Victim blaming is a phenomenon where the survivors of a negative event are held accountable for it. This is especially prevalent in cases of sexual assault and can vary based on the specific circumstances depending on the nature of the relationship between the perpetrator and survivor (Gravelin et al., 2019). In the case of sex workers, the stigma and discrimination towards the work means sex workers often face a disproportionate amount of victim blaming for their assaults compared to other populations. This is because hostility, prejudice, and aggression towards a perceived outgroup can reduce empathy (Pauwels & Williamson, 2022). For instance, one research has shown that participants who read an article about a sex worker being raped responded with less empathy towards the survivors and more blaming compared to those who read an article about a non-sex worker being raped (Sprankle et al., 2017). A study with police officers and sex workers also showed similar results. Police officers’ attributions of victim-blaming were more prominent toward the sex working survivor, and they assessed the consequences that she suffered as less severe (Zvi, 2021).

The results of this research align with previous studies that have shown police officers blaming sex workers for being assaulted and holding them responsible for the violence inflicted upon them. The officers in the study believed that sex workers’ clothing choices were a contributing factor to their
assault. This attitude was also reflected in the quantitative findings, with 46.3% of participants sharing the same view. The conclusion is supported by other researches that had participants declaring that the more revealing clothes a woman wears, the more likely it is that she will be harassed or assaulted (Oppenheim, 2019).

Moreover, the officers in the study were found to be more focused on protecting the perpetrators rather than supporting the survivors. In the qualitative study, most police officers rationalized acts of sexual violence, saying that alcohol use might have influenced some perpetrators to engage in sexual assaults. On top of that, in both the qualitative and quantitative findings, the officers blamed the sex workers, suggesting that they initiated contact and even encouraged perpetrators to commit sexual assaults. Such attitudes can be taken as rape myths that protect perpetrators while punishing survivors (Kennon, 2021). According to these police officers, the perpetrators were driven into committing violence on account of the sex workers’ clothing and seduction.

Blaming sex workers for being victims of gender-based violence is a contributing factor to a negative relationship between sex workers and police officers. This tendency marginalizes survivors and creates an environment in which they do not feel safe or comfortable coming forward to report the abuse (Rape Culture, Victim Blaming, and the Facts | Southern Connecticut State University, n.d.).

However, it is important to note that this study’s findings on victim blaming may have been affected by the gender composition of the participants, who were predominantly male. Previous research has indicated that men, particularly male officers, tend to exhibit unfavourable attitudes towards sexual assault survivors (Zvi, 2021).
5.3.4. Sex workers’ attitude towards police and seeking their assistance

Sex workers in this study displayed an unfavourable attitude towards police officers, believing that they discriminate against them, prioritise the interests of customers or wealthy individuals, and do not treat them justly. As a result, they are reluctant to report incidents to the police. Additionally, they are disinclined to seek the police’s help because of the consensual nature of their work as well as fear of abuse from them.

In other relevant studies, sex workers reported that they would only turn to the police as a last resort due to negative experiences or negative anecdotal accounts. Some participants outright refused to contact the police under any circumstances. Calling the police was perceived as dangerous, as it could result in identification, investigation, entrapment, harassment, assault, arrest, or bribery attempts (Stardust et al., 2021). Conducted in Botswana, the study validates the idea that sex workers are hesitant to seek help from the police due to fear of discrimination and judgement. Some sex workers also believe that the police are more likely to arrest than help them. However, there are also instances where sex workers have reported positive experiences with police officers who, they say, “understand” and “help” them (Hendriks & Woensdregt, 2020).

According to the responses of sex workers in this study, female police officers display a more negative attitude towards sex workers compared to their male colleagues. These officers are depicted as being unsympathetic, using offensive language, making threats, and exhibiting a contemptuous attitude towards sex workers. The negative attitude of female police officers towards sex workers, as
observed in this study, may stem from their perceived need to assert their toughness and competence in a profession that is predominantly male. To demonstrate their authority and capability, female officers may employ excessive force and other forms of harsh treatment towards sex workers. This explanation finds support in previous research that has documented how female police officers often face greater levels of stress related to their gender and their work organisation, including harassment, and are frequently underestimated in terms of their physical abilities relative to male officers (Angehrn, 2021).

5.4. THE INTERACTION BETWEEN POLICE OFFICERS AND SEX WORKERS

The third research question pertains to the interaction between police officers and individuals involved in sex work. The findings of this study suggest that the overall nature of contact between police officers and sex workers is predominantly negative, as evidenced by their primary points of contact, the prevalence of gender-based violence, and the frequency as well as nature of arrests made.

According to the data, police commonly interact with sex workers in the context of suspected criminal activities such as theft and customer complaints or when attempting to remove them from public areas. At times, sex workers approach police officers when they have disagreements with clients and see police officers on the streets. This finding is consistent with two additional findings from this study, which lend further support to the negative dynamic between police officers and sex workers. First, sex workers are less likely to report incidents due to their belief that the police
discriminate against them and lack of trust in their ability to provide a satisfactory solution. This makes it unlikely for sex workers to approach the police for help, contributing to their limited interaction. Secondly, police officers tend to focus on removing sex workers from the streets as they perceive them as creating an environment conducive to crime. As a result, the negative dynamic between police officers and sex workers is reinforced since their primary point of contact is through criminal activities and removal efforts, rather than reporting incidents.

In addition, sex workers reported a pervasive problem of gender-based violence in their interactions with police officers. According to their accounts, police officers often demand money and possessions in exchange for their release from custody or resolution of their cases. Police also threaten and insult sex workers, with a pattern of physical and sexual violence also emerging in the relationship. Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, sex workers claimed that there were frequent instances of police officers committing rape. Although the police officers in the study did not fully refute the claims made by sex workers, they attempted to minimize the frequency and severity of gender-based violence and unlawful arrests. Specifically, the police officers downplayed the prevalence of physical and verbal abuse, suggesting that it was a relatively infrequent occurrence. Moreover, while some police officers acknowledged the possibility of sexual violence, they suggested that it only occurs in other sub-cities/districts outside their jurisdiction, that they had only heard rumours about it, or that it was a problem that had been addressed through internal mechanisms. Only a small number of officers acknowledged the occurrence of gender-based violence in the interactions between the police officers and sex workers.
The police officers in the study also claimed that sex workers are only arrested when they have committed a crime or are considered a threat to national security, adding their legal rights are upheld including bringing them to court within 48 hours of their arrest. However, the sex workers in the study provided a different account, stating that they are often arrested without a clear reason and subjected to verbal and physical abuse while in custody. They also reported experiencing serious human rights violations, such as being forced to spend the night without clothing. Additionally, mass arrests were also described as a common occurrence by sex workers.

Despite the conflicting narratives of sex workers and police officers regarding gender-based violence and arrests, the feminist interpretation of the Routine Activities Theory (RAT) suggests that the sex workers’ claims may hold some truth. The RAT theory argues that three components must be present for a crime or violence to occur: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian (Krishnakumar & Verma, 2021). In the case of the police officers and sex workers in the study, all three components are present. The police’s negative attitudes towards sex workers, such as viewing them as sinners, morally corrupt and criminal, can serve as motivation to abuse them. Sex workers may also be seen as suitable targets due to their vulnerability because of the stigma and discrimination they face in Ethiopian society. Additionally, the criminalization as well as the unclear laws regarding sex work in Ethiopia reinforces the belief that sex workers are deserving of punishment. Furthermore, the absence of capable protectors, as evidenced by sex workers in the study, the reluctance to seek help from the police and legal system, makes them even more vulnerable to abuse. Overall, from the perspective of
RAT, the combination of societal attitudes and conditions make sex workers more likely to be targeted and abused by police officers.

Another reason that adds to the credibility of the sex workers’ accounts is that previous studies have reported instances of abuse of power by police officers in different contexts. These studies have shown that police officers often subject sex workers to violence, harassment, and abuse, including physical assault, denying basic necessities, and degrading body searches (FIDA Kenya, 2008). Raids on sex workers by the police have also been marked by unethical conduct and violence, with sex workers reporting verbal abuse, physical violence, and sexual harassment by law enforcement agencies. These findings have been reported in multiple countries, including India, Ethiopia, Uganda, Bangladesh, the United States, and England (Salihu & Fawole, 2020). Moreover, the actions of police officers may be influenced by the desire to protect their personal and organisational reputation. Studies have documented that people may sometimes lie or manipulate information to maintain a positive image (Senthilingam, 2020). Therefore, it is possible that police officers may not fully disclose their actions or attitudes towards sex workers in order to avoid negative perceptions or repercussions.

It is particularly crucial to include another important factor in this regard— the legal framework in Ethiopia governing sex work. The criminalization of certain aspects of sex work in Ethiopia, as reported by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada in 2016, could potentially contribute to negative perceptions of sex workers, thereby increasing the likelihood of mistreatment and abuse by the police. This criminalization may provide a justification for law enforcement officers to use violence and coercion against sex workers despite
Knowing these rights. In such contexts, police officers hold considerable power over sex workers and may arbitrarily arrest and detain them (Hendriks & Woensdregt, 2020).

In this study, there are discrepancies between the responses provided by the police and their actual behaviour. For instance, when asked whether sex workers have the right to be informed of the charges against them in a language they understand, the vast majority (95%) of participants responded affirmatively. However, when the researchers looked at actual arrest practices, only 53% of officers reported complying with this requirement when arresting sex workers.

One possible explanation for this difference is the negative attitudes police have towards sex workers impacts their decision-making. For example, during a video game simulation, police officers in the study demonstrated a tendency to shoot black characters, indicating a possible racial bias (Correll et al., 2007). Additionally, research published in the International Journal of Police Science and Management found that police officers who held negative attitudes towards victims of domestic violence were less likely to make arrests in domestic violence cases (Gover et al., 2011). These studies suggest that police officers’ biases and attitudes can influence their interactions with different groups, including sex workers.

Moreover, studies have suggested that the hypermasculine culture of the police force can result in violent and aggressive behaviour towards marginalised groups, including women and people of colour (Martin et al., 2015; Norman et al., 2015). This could explain why some police officers engage in threatening behaviour (32.5%), verbal aggression (25%), or physical aggression (15%) towards sex workers despite recognizing their right to protection against cruel, inhuman,
or degrading treatment or punishment (95%). The focus group discussions with police officers revealed that they are under significant pressure from their supervisors and higher-ranking officials to remove sex workers and eliminate criminals from the sub-cities they operate in. These strict orders could contribute to the police officers’ behaviour towards sex workers, which may include more aggressive tactics and actions that perpetuate the negative relationship between the police and sex workers.

5.4.1. Unforeseen interactions: Sex workers and police officers

This study also uncovered some unexpected relationships between sex workers and police officers. One such relationship is manifested in police officers extending help to sex workers to quit the profession. During the focus group discussions and interviews, police officers reported making efforts to create job opportunities for sex workers and provide them with free healthcare. This finding is consistent with the negative attitudes that police officers in the study held towards sex work, viewing it as illegitimate and morally wrong. As a result, it is reasonable to consider that some police officers may attempt to help sex workers leave the profession because they consider it to be a form of deviance.

However, it is important to note that these claims were not corroborated by the sex workers themselves. This may be due to the possibility that the sex workers who received help from the police may have no longer be engaged in the profession, making it difficult to verify the officers’ claims.

Another interesting finding from the study, based on data from police officers, is that sex workers sometimes work with officers as undercover informants for certain criminal
activities. However, it is important to note that these claims were not substantiated by the sex workers themselves, likely due to concerns about their safety and potential repercussions. Nonetheless, it is important to know that the use of sex workers as informants by police officers is a complex issue with potential ethical and safety concerns.

The last interesting interaction that emerged in the study was the involvement of police officers as clients of sex workers. While this is not an uncommon phenomenon, what was notable was the reported use of police ID to try and obtain free or discounted services. This suggests an abuse of power by some police officers, who are leveraging their authority and status to gain benefits that are not available to the general public. Such behaviour may further undermine the already tenuous relationship between sex workers and law enforcement and highlights the importance of addressing issues of power and abuse in this context.
6. CONCLUSION

This chapter will conclude the study by summarising the key research findings in relation to the research aims and research questions as well as the value and contribution thereof. It will also review the limitations of the study and propose opportunities for future research.

6.1. FINDINGS SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between sex workers and police officers, focusing on the understanding of sex workers’ rights among both groups, their attitude towards each other, and their interaction. Additionally, the research aimed to find ways to improve the relationship between sex workers and police officers as suggested by the study participants.

Most of the findings of the study indicate that there is a negative relationship between sex workers and police officers. The research revealed that there is a disparity in the understanding of the laws related to sex work between sex workers and police officers. Additionally, both parties have a negative perception of each other and their interactions are often marked by gender-based violence and unlawful arrests by the police officers.

The study’s findings highlight a concerning trend in the interactions between sex workers and law enforcement officials. The primary point of contact between the two groups occurs when police officers suspect criminal activity
or engage in street clearance efforts. Moreover, sex workers report a consistent and widespread pattern of gender-based violence and unlawful arrest by police officers.

According to the sex workers interviewed for the study, police officers frequently engage in abusive behaviour, including verbal threats, physical violence, extortion, and even sexual assault. They also reported experiencing frequent mass and individual arrests with limited explanation as well as violations of their human rights while in custody. However, despite these serious allegations, the police officers who participated in the study did not report the same level of violence.

The research also found that there is a mutually negative attitude between sex workers and police officers. The police officers tend to view sex workers as sinners, immoral and undeserving of societal acceptance; they associate them with negative stereotypes such as sexual and drug addiction, spreading of HIV/AIDS, and criminal activities. Law enforcement officials also often hold sex workers responsible for the very existence of the sex work profession, and as such, seek to criminalize and punish sex workers in order to protect society from perceived negative impacts. Additionally, the officers associated the sexual assault sex workers are subjected to with the clothing they wear and believe that they provoke and seduce perpetrators, thereby placing the blame for their own victimization on the sex workers themselves. The sex workers in the study do not trust police officers and consider them to be dishonest and biased. They do not believe that police would provide solutions to their problems, and fear being abused or falsely accused if they go to the police. Sex workers’ negative attitude was especially strong towards female police officers, describing them as more ruthless, disrespectful, and abusive towards them than male officers.
Despite the negative relationship between sex workers and law enforcement officials, the fact that both groups display a level of awareness of sex workers’ basic human rights is a positive sign. It suggests that there is some potential for mutual understanding and cooperation. However, the potential for conflict remains due to differences in their interpretation and implementation of laws pertaining to sex work. Although both police officers and sex workers privately recognize sex work as legal, they publicly assert that sex work is illegality in interviews and focus group discussions.

This discrepancy implies that their relationship in public settings may be fraught with conflict, as police officers are responsible for enforcing laws that criminalize sex work, while sex workers may perceive such enforcement as a threat to their livelihoods and rights. Additionally, despite the shared view that sex workers do not have the right to engage in street-based sex work, many still practise it due to financial necessity. This creates another source of conflict between police officers, who are responsible for enforcing laws and regulations related to sex work, and sex workers who rely on this form of work to make a living.

The difference in perspectives between the two groups may contribute to a tense and potentially hostile relationship on the streets. Furthermore, the fact that police officers believe that customers have the right to do whatever they please once they have paid for sex contradicts the views of sex workers and could actually result in conflicts between the two groups. Considering the potential conflicts arising from the different perspective and interests of police officers and sex workers regarding the legality of sex work, it is very likely that these two groups have a negative relationship.
6.2. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As any research this study was constrained by a host of limitations. One is the small sample size made it difficult to accurately capture the experiences and perceptions of the entire population of sex workers and police officers in Ethiopia or other countries. Additionally, the fact that the study relies on self-reported data, may render it subject to bias and social desirability effects. It is also important to note that the research was hampered by time and financial limitations, which may have affected the scope of the research.

Moreover, the research did not examine in-depth the laws and regulations pertaining to sex work, which is a crucial component of the relationship between sex workers and police officers. Understanding the legal framework governing sex work is essential to comprehending the complexities and challenges of this relationship. The lack of analysis on this topic thus may limit the scope and depth of the study’s findings.

In recognition of my position as a feminist researcher, it is important to acknowledge that my personal background and perspective may have influenced the analysis and interpretation of the data. My liberal views, professional involvement in feminist activism, and educational background in health science, as well as my participation in projects and campaigns with sex workers, might have influenced in which I conducted this research.
6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.3.1. Recommendations for future research

The current research suffers from the absence of a sufficiently large target population as it focuses only on a small sample of sex workers and police officers in specific sub-cities of Addis Ababa. Given this handicap may pose an obstacle that prevents the experiences and perceptions of these groups across Ethiopia from being adequately reflected, future research should aim for a larger-scale study with a more diverse sample.

Another important aspect to be addressed in future research is the evaluation of laws and policies governing sex work as they have a significant impact on the relationship between sex workers and police officers.

During the course of conducting this research, I have identified a number of areas that require further investigation. Future studies could examine, for example, the impact of the strained relationship between sex workers and police officers, the dynamics of the relationship between police officers and clients, the potential role of sex workers as informants, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the interactions between sex workers and law enforcement officials. Moreover, researchers can explore the relationship between female police officers and sex workers. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that this research only focuses on a specific group of sex workers, excluding those who work in massage establishments or who earn high incomes. Therefore, future studies should also consider these groups to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by sex workers in Ethiopia.
Finally, it should be pointed out that this research relied on a limited number of feminist theories, including Marxist feminism, intersectional feminism, and a feminist version of the Routine Activity Theory. While these theories are valuable in analyzing the power dynamics and gendered nature of the relationship between sex workers and police officers, there are other feminist theories that could be utilized to further explore the issue. Future research may benefit from incorporating a wider range of feminist perspectives to better understand the complexities of this relationship.

### 6.3.2. Recommendations by study participants

In addition to identifying the challenges, I also sought to gather input from both police officers and sex workers regarding potential solutions to improve their relationship. This approach is based on the belief that those who have first-hand knowledge of the problem are in the best position to offer effective solutions. The recommendations they forwarded are laid out as follows:

#### 6.3.2.1. Police officers’ recommendations

- Joint training and discussions between sex workers and police officers to foster better understanding and cooperation;
- Sex workers must avoid getting involved in criminal activities;
- Alternative jobs should be provided to sex workers;
- Sex workers should give information to the police to foster trust and collaboration;
- Police should respond promptly to reports lodged by sex workers’
6.3.2.2. **Sex workers’ recommendations**

- Sex workers should be informed of their rights and work in a safe, private location where they are not visible to the public.
- The police should improve the way they interact with sex workers. They should comport themselves in a manner marked by respect and empathy;
- The police should be trained to understand sex workers’ rights as well as the inclusion of sex workers in these trainings;
- Government should take action with a view to address mistreatment and discrimination of sex workers. For instance, an independent oversight body could be established to investigate complaints of misconduct, abuse, and discrimination by police officers towards sex workers, to ensure accountability and improve the unhealthy relationship between the police and sex workers.

6.3.3. **Recommendations for stakeholders**

Female sex workers in Addis Ababa confront various challenges and experience specific needs that are shaped by their gender, occupation, class, and other intersecting identities. These factors often compound to result in discrimination and marginalisation of sex workers. In addition, the ambiguous nature of certain laws surrounding sex work and the criminalization of some aspects of it leave sex workers vulnerable to arrest and punishment, particularly at the hands of law enforcement officials.

The interplay of these disadvantages creates a perfect storm in which sex workers are a marginalised population with
limited autonomy and power to fight the injustices they face. Interactions with powerful and influential individuals, such as police officers, can be particularly unjust due to the latter’s gender, social status, and occupational advantages. To address these issues and support the advancement of sex workers, a range of stakeholders, including the government, police commissioners, and civil society organisations, can take the following actions in order to rectify the power imbalance between sex workers and police officers:

- **To enhance the relationship between** sex workers and police officers, it is imperative that legal professionals and feminist activists collaborate to undertake a critical assessment and modification of the current laws governing sex work. Enacting precise and clear laws that protect the interests of sex workers can help better the relationship between sex workers and police officers. Additionally, in view of the societal conservatism of the country, discussions and value clarifications should be provided to police officers to avoid cultural and religious influences that could hinder the reinforcement of these laws.

- **There needs to be an establishment of** safe and neutral space where police officers and sex workers can come together to collaborate, find common ground, and work towards mutual understanding. By providing an opportunity for police officers and sex workers to interact on an equal footing, it may be possible to foster empathy, build trust, and overcome negative attitudes and perceptions. In addition, it would be beneficial to create spaces that are specifically designed for female police officers and sex workers to come together and find solidarity. These spaces could serve as a platform for building mutual trust,
promoting understanding, and developing strategies for improving the relationship between the two groups.

- Establishing a platform for police officers to engage in a dialogue about gender-based violence issues such as consent and victim-blaming, with a focus on sex workers, is crucial. This is because sex workers often wear particular types of clothing to lure clients and require specialised attention and understanding when it comes to the dynamics of their interactions with clients.

- It’s paramount to hold police officers accountable for any misconduct towards sex workers. This requires the establishment of mechanisms for reporting and addressing any human rights violations or gender-based violence faced by sex workers. Moreover, specific protocols and guidelines should be put in place to handle cases that involve sex workers and their clients. This calls for trained officers who can effectively address the unique circumstances and challenges that sex workers face.
Civil society organisations (CSOs) can play a vital role in supporting the advancement of sex workers in Addis Ababa by advocating for changes in the laws that govern their work. This would entail highlighting the challenges that sex workers face, particularly in their interactions with police officers, within the existing legal framework. Additionally, campaigns and advocacy efforts can be carried out by these organisations to address the negative attitudes that exist between sex workers and police officers. By taking these actions, CSOs can contribute their share to promote a more just and equitable society, enhance the agency and autonomy of sex workers, and improve their safety and well-being.

Moreover, CSOs can play a critical role in influencing and collaborating with police officers by sharing their knowledge and expertise. This includes collaborating with the police department in setting up accountability mechanisms, delivering training, and facilitating value clarification dialogues. By working together, these organisations can create a more supportive and enabling environment for sex workers and improve their relationship with law enforcement.
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**LAWS**


Examining the Relationship between Sex Workers and Police Officers in Addis Ababa

Kalkidan Asmamaw
2022 CARD Werdwet Fellow

Professor Habtamu Wondimu (PhD)
Research Advisor