

Addressing the Wrong Kind of Violence

(I use the term “people who sell sex” throughout because the majority find any derivative of “prostitution” deeply offensive and hurtful and a minority feel the same way about the term “sex work”. Both deserve equal respect.)

I have made many submissions over the years¹²³⁴⁵⁶⁷⁸⁹. These submissions make no reference to ideology and confine themselves to hard practical concerns while raising some tangible legal and rights issues. Similar concerns have, for the most part, also been raised by many others with direct experience of selling sex and/or the people who sell sex¹⁰¹¹¹²¹³¹⁴¹⁵¹⁶¹⁷¹⁸.

Not once, in more than 10 years, has anyone from the End Demand/Nordic/Equality Model lobbies made any attempt to address these concerns in realistic terms. Practical concerns do not work quite the same way as ideologically generated, hypothetical, concerns and ignoring them does not make them dissipate or somehow render them harmless.

Such consistent and determined ignorance would be unacceptable in any other issue, it also meets the broader criteria for at least **collective violence** and in some cases **state violence**. Further, it carries the same direct personal impact as **psychological and emotional violence** imposed, not just upon people who sell sex, but anyone else who is familiar with the reality of their lives.

No matter how wealthy and influential a lobby may be or how many psychological tactics it is prepared to deploy¹⁹²⁰ it will never be able to erase the experience, observations, knowledge needs and nature of real people as a prelude to conditioning them to comply with an ideological and/or political agenda, yet this seems to be what the End Demand/Nordic/Equality Model lobbies have been striving to do for a quarter of a century. The end result has been to maintain, and even significantly increase, the existing alienation experienced by people who sell sex while consistently undermining their intelligence, integrity, judgement and overall sense of self. It also serves to annihilate any trust they could ever hope build in the society around them or any resources that society could provide, not just in relation to selling sex, but for life.

There is a case to be made for claiming that the end justifies the means, I was an activist in the early 90s when one of obstacles to providing resources was the political and societal resistance to sympathising with people who sell sex. It needed to be addressed but the End Demand/Nordic/Equality Model lobbies have, in addition to exacerbating and inflicting additional harm, distorted the reality of the lives, needs and natures of people who sell sex to the point where lavishly funded resources are at best inappropriate, irrelevant, useless and unlikely to benefit anyone who is not drawing a salary for running them.

Any case that could be made for the need to sacrifice the rights and well-being of people to sell sex to the prevention of human trafficking is thoroughly negated in reality:

- Human trafficking is a serious crime on par with hijacking or kidnap for ransom and deserves to be treated as such, not deployed as an excuse for other agenda.
- There is no consistent, uniform, objective definition of trafficking for sexual exploitation.
- The heavy focus on using and adapting the concept of human trafficking as a premise for End Demand/Nordic/Equality Model law and public policy has prevented and distorted any attempt at objective fact-based investigation and the collation of hard data to the point

where there is no access to any realistic picture of the prevalence of trafficking for sexual exploitation or the forms it takes.²¹

- The application of End Demand/Nordic/Equality Model law and public policy centres on the hypothesis that if you criminalise the demand for paid sex there will no longer be a market for trafficking victims. If we disregard the fact that this is a flawed oversimplification of the economics of criminalisation, we are left with a policy of unjustifiable disregard for any existing victim of large-scale organised trafficking. It is only reasonable to assume that, if such a victim ceases to have any value to a criminal organisation against which they can give evidence, far from being released, they will, at best, be coerced into criminal activity for the dual purpose of restoring their profitability and guaranteeing their continued silence, at worst, their fate may be best conveyed by the chilling, “Middle Passage”, scene from “Amistad”²².

Structural Violence

When people who sell sex are able to express themselves (in an environment where ongoing stigma mean that any public exposure can result in life changing damage, not only to themselves, but also to their families), or are directly consulted, there seems to be a clear consensus²³²⁴²⁵²⁶²⁷²⁸²⁹³⁰³¹ of opposition to any version of End Demand/Nordic/Equality Model law and policy as enacted or proposed, as follows:

- The premise of such law and policy depends on a definition and description of them and their lives that is at significant variance with reality as they experience, perceive and witness it.
- Within the framework of reality, such law and policy cannot ever hope have the outcomes attributed to it and will, inevitably, harm rather than help them.
- People who sell sex can think and speak for themselves and do not want to be spoken for by third parties who:
 - Refuse to consult them
 - Never define or describe them accurately
 - Are committed to opposing viewpoints

The specifics of their objections are seldom ideological and mostly consist in tangible practical issues that are measurable and evidenced. I cannot find a single example of proponents of End Demand/Nordic/Equality Model legislation engaging with, let alone attempting to confer with a view to exploring practical pathways to addressing them and avoiding further negative impact and outcomes.

Open debate between the two sides is almost unheard of, and it would seem that the End Demand/Nordic/Equality Model lobbies derive input from people who have sold sex exclusively from individuals who are, in some way, materially dependent upon them.

Even when the End Demand/Nordic/Equality Model lobbies do affect to respond indirectly those responses are oblivious to the practical issues raised, ignore potential and even proven harm to people who sell sex and focus on irrelevant speculative and ideological justification to reinforce their existing position rather than addressing the actual harm and potential harm asserted.³²³³³⁴ Leaving aside the clear legal issues³⁵³⁶, that encompass, but are not limited to, organisations with a de facto duty of care, this approach to law and public policy is beyond justification.

Economic violence

There is a serious flaw to be addressed in strategies centred on ending demand for transactional sex due the extent to which they consistently meet globally established criteria for **economic violence** against a cohort already acknowledged to be exceptionally vulnerable in that respect.

“Economic violence is a common form of violence against women statistically defined as ‘any act or behaviour which causes economic harm to an individual’. Economic violence is rooted in gender inequality and reinforced by traditional gender norms. Perpetrators of economic violence control the victim’s ability to ‘acquire, use, and maintain economic resources, threatening their economic security and potential for self-sufficiency’”³⁷

“Socio-economic deprivation can make a victim more vulnerable to other forms of violence and can even be the reason why other forms of violence are inflicted.”³⁸

There is a broad consensus among economists that any reduction in demand will have a corresponding negative impact on those who supply^{39,40,41} yet there seems to be no attempt to ensure that this effect is in any way ameliorated before any attempt is made to reduce demand. To the contrary the negative impact is completely disregarded except to be cited as a weapon against criminal exploitation, even though, where that is the case (where hard data exists at all⁴² it does not seem very prevalent), the impact would surely be even worse on those being coercively exploited?

In Conclusion

“If you can find a way to abolish the sale of sex justly and without utilising that which is haram, I have no quarrel with you, but equally, as long as they do so honestly, justly and honourably any movement of secular people demanding secular rights in secular law will always be absolutely none of my business as a Muslim.”⁴³

Gaye Dalton, 18 January 2024

¹ [Response to Discussion Document on Future Direction of Prostitution Legislation Ireland 2012](#)

² [Questionnaire ‘Leaving Prostitution: a strategy for help and support’ 2015](#)

³ [Submission to UK Consultation February 2016](#)

⁴ [Universal Credit and Survival Sex: UK Work and Pensions Committee 29 April 2019](#)

⁵ [Submission Women and Equalities Commission UK August 2019](#)

⁶ [Submission to Review of Section 4, Sexual Offences Act 2017 September 2020](#)

⁷ [Equally Safe – challenging men’s demand for prostitution: consultation November 2020](#)

⁸ [Submission to 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report](#)

⁹ [Submission – IHREC Strategy Statement 2022-24 Consultation](#)

¹⁰ [No model in practice: a ‘Nordic model’ to respond to prostitution Sarah Kingston, Terry Thomas University of Lancaster, 2018](#)

¹¹ [The impact of end-demand legislation on sex workers’ access to health and sex worker-led services:](#)

¹² [What do sex workers think about the French Prostitution Act?: A Study on the Impact of the Law from 13 April 2016 Médecins du Monde. 2019](#)

¹³ [ECHR CINQUIÈME SECTION DÉCISION Requêtes nos 63664/19 \(pages 3-7\) Google Machine Translation - English](#)

¹⁴ [Life for Sex Workers in Ireland Under the Swedish Model of Client Criminalisation 2020 – Adeline Berry](#)

¹⁵ [Not collateral damage: Trends in violence and hate crimes experienced by sex workers in Ireland 2020 – Campbell et al](#)

¹⁶ [“We live within a violent system”: Structural violence against sex workers In Ireland Amnesty Ireland Report January 2022](#)

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- 17 [I Must Be Some Person GOSHH University of Limerick Report July 2022](#)
- 18 [Criminalising the Sex Buyer: Experiences from the Nordic Region Niina Vuolajärvi, LSE June 2022](#)
- 19 [Simplifying the Disaster of the Nordic “Equality” Model](#)
- 20 [21st Century Gaslighting](#)
- 21 [Victims of the Same Fiction](#)
- 22 [“The Middle Passage” “Amistad” 1997](#)
- 23 [No model in practice: a ‘Nordic model’ to respond to prostitution Sarah Kingston, Terry Thomas University of Lancaster, 2018](#)
- 24 [The impact of end-demand legislation on sex workers’ access to health and sex worker-led services Canada 2020](#)
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- 32 [‘Decriminalisation of the sex trade vs. the Nordic Model: What you need to know’ Nordic Model Now 2022](#)
- 33 [Comments on Criminal Law Amendment Bill to repeal the Sexual Offences Act South Africa CAP Intl 2022](#)
- 34 [REPORT on the regulation of prostitution in the EU: its cross-border implications and impact on gender equality and women’s rights \(2022/2139\(INI\)\) Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Rapporteur: Maria Noichl](#)
- 35 [Punitive Damages & Gross Negligence, Burns, White LLC 2023 - Lexology](#)
- 36 [In 2014 Nissan quietly settled with 350,000 drivers after 4,000 complained of a brake defect in 2017 they tried to deny the same defect with the result that \\$25,000,000 was awarded to the plaintiffs.](#)
- 37 [Understanding Economic Violence Against Women - European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023](#)
- 38 [Gender Matters, Socio-economic violence - Council of Europe](#)
- 39 [Demand curve - Wikipedia](#)
- 40 [Excess supply - Wikipedia](#)
- 41 [What Is a Surplus? Definition, Reasons, and Consequences - Will Kenton 29, August, 2023](#)
- 42 [Research into Prostitution in Northern Ireland - Department of Justice NI, 2014. page 134, 8.4.8](#)
- 43 [Activism and Islam](#)