

COMPREHENDING COMMERCIAL SEX: AN EXPLORATION INTO GOVERNANCE MODELS ROOTED IN FEMINIST DISCOURSES

Muhammad Usman Amin Siddiqi *

Aamir Yaqoob **

***Abstract:** Prostitution and its illegal status exist side by side in most of the countries in the world. This odd coexistence is indicative of moral and operative divisions in societies like Pakistan. In the backdrop of this division, the paper intends to critically comprehend the justifications of abolitionist and regulatory approaches through an exploratory descriptive methodology. The governance strategies of abolitionism and regulatory model, it is found, are based in theoretical controversies of feminism. Radical feminists are strong advocates of eradication of commercial sex whereas liberal viewpoints suggest a controlled regulation of prostitution.*

Keywords: Commercial sex, governance models, abolitionism, regulatory, feminist discourse.

Introduction

Prostitution is perhaps one of the oldest professions, but this historical status of it does not confer any accolades upon it. This research aims at exploring ideological and operational justifications offered by liberal and radical feminists that are usually adopted to deal with commercial sex. The study seeks to identify connections between theory and governance of sex work in a traditional but fast changing society like that of Pakistan. It also tries to comprehend that how the phenomenon of prostitution is considered as offensive to the

* Muhammad Usman Amin Siddiqi is Lecturer, Department of Political Science, GC University, Lahore and currently a Fulbright PhD Scholar at Oregon State University, Corvallis, USA (Email: siddiqim@oregonstate.edu).

** Aamir Yaqoob is Visiting Faculty at Department of Political Science, GC University, Lahore.

state sanctioned moral standards of any society. While sex-trade is illegal in most of the countries, it exists as an open secret. Even more intriguing is the fact that there apparently is no consensus about the status of sex workers – not only in the eyes of those who are in this trade but also among most of those who are charged with the responsibility of enforcing state morality through laws. Even more fascinating than the arbitrary implementation of the law is the evolution of state laws and norms of morality themselves.

The roots of traditional prostitution in Pakistan can be traced back to a clan system prevailing in South Asia which over-time gave rise to a professional clan called *Kanjar* offering some cultural but mostly sexual services to the middle and upper echelons of the society. Women belonging to this group worked as sex-workers while the clan's men played supportive roles. Later on, the working classes also had access to brothels which actually evolved when power of the kings and nobility started declined. During the British Raj, the colonial government started patronizing the sex trade and formalized prostitution around the mid 18th century.¹ The British made first laws in this regard, and they ordered their police force to protect women sex workers. It were them who created "red light" areas like *Heera Mandi* and started providing basic health and cleanliness services to the localities where brothels were housed.² Afterwards, these traditional "red light" areas underwent many changes and started attracting well-heeled clients and grew in importance as home to singers and actresses for country's nascent show business industry. However, prostitutes and their associates in the sex-trade could never really remove the social stigma attached to their profession.³

¹ Ashwini Tambe, *Codes of Misconduct: Regulating Prostitution in Late Colonial Bombay* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

² Sadiya Ansari, "Canada Faces Year of Argument on Prostitution Law," *We. News* January 7, 2014, <https://womensenews.org/2014/01/canada-faces-year-argument-prostitution-law/>.

³ Fouzia Saeed, *Taboo: The Hidden Culture of Red Light Area* (Karachi: OUP Pakistan, 2006), 141–164.

The profession which grew under the wings of government and especially military patronage in the subcontinent (as in many other parts of the world) had to bear the brunt of General Zia-ul-Haq's top-down Islamization of the nation. Prostitution was now viewed as an intolerable evil in an otherwise moral society, and vigorous attempts were made to eradicate it. Performance hours for the dancing girls were reduced to two hours in the evening. The police force used to establish checkpoints on all entrances of red-light districts so that the music rehearsal and practice hours may not be misused. These measures effectively frightened the clients away – as nobody would like to have his/her name recorded in police registers.⁴ Though these regulations failed to eradicate prostitution, they indirectly forced the prostitutes to find new safe havens in settled area of the cities. Resultantly, new customers, recruits, and ways to run the business were discovered. Consequently, prostitution today is quite different and diverse phenomenon than it used to be decades ago having numerous changes and important new players.

Despite so much historical and moral controversy, prostitution is almost an untouched area of research for academicians in the country. Pakistan, unlike the west, remained largely immune to the waves of feminism; therefore, research on prostitutes – normally the lowest stratum of women in the society – is almost unknown to the academic world. Fauzia Saeed, and Louise Brown's books are the only two scholarly works that have carried out serious exploratory expeditions into the functions and structures of traditional prostitution in Lahore's red-light district – commonly known as *Heera Mandi* or *Shahi Mohallah*.⁵ However, these two works are primarily culturist inquiries and do not systematically examine the complex relationship of state's construction, its response and strategy for prostitution governance, and social stigma backed by law attached to prostitution. Moreover, these studies are largely confined to traditional ethnic group (*Kanjari*) and a specific location of Lahore's red-light area and lack the capacity to grasp the complexity of prostitution beyond the tradition. Therefore, an academic investigation to look into prostitution is timely and needed.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

The study is also important from the feminist point of view as it gives primary importance to the women of lowest rank in the society. Prostitutes in Pakistan are too often classified as "bad-girls" who do not fit the traditional image and standard of femininity.⁶ Therefore, the voices of the women in the sex trade are usually overlooked, and the opinions or verdicts about them are typically made by anyone but the prostitutes. In short, the governance of prostitution in Pakistan under an abolitionist regime makes the women in sex work at odds with official version of state morality rooted in the anti-prostitution legal apparatus. The conflict is indicative of the existence of parallel perceptions about the phenomenon of prostitution. This study is a methodical exploration to trace the parallels of state's moral and prostitute's pragmatic viewpoints on this defamed profession in the governance debates of radical and liberal feminists using an explorative descriptive methodology.

Governing Prostitution

Governance of prostitution is a question of great controversy rooted in divergent forms of feminism – the abolitionists and regulatory approaches can be traced back into heated arguments between radical and liberal feminists. The dispute about the response of state and society (governance) to prostitution is actually a resultant debate that starts taking its shape in the theoretical nursery of feminism. Owing to this interconnection, at times, a clear distinction between theoretical and operational debates cannot be plainly upheld. However, recent studies on prostitution mainly concentrate on operational side of the debate, and theoretical arguments are only referred to for aligning and situating the study into a concerned framework.

The governance debates are actually the analysis of legal strategies the states use to deal with prostitution primarily divided in two main groups – abolition and regulation. McCarthy, Benoit, Jansson and Kolar talk about the existence of several legal strategies

⁶ Ibid., 44; Louise Brown, *Sex Slaves* (Little Brown, 2001).

to deal with the sex work. They attempt to assess these strategies and identify the gaps in their form and implementation.⁷ Both abolitionist and liberalists agree that the women in prostitution are stigmatized, and their life is miserable.⁸ Nonetheless, they propose different solutions to the problem. Abolitionists believe that no improvement is possible in the lives of the women in prostitution, and the only viable solution is to eradicate all forms of prostitution. On the other hand, the supporters of regulation believe that states' constructive intervention and recognition of sex as "work" can make the lives of the women in prostitution better.

The Abolitionist Approach: The abolitionists criminalize prostitution and any form of selling and buying sexual services. The enthusiasts of this approach firmly believe that prostitution is a form of violence against women, and the only solution to end this ferocity is to abolish prostitution in all its forms. Modern states and societies responded to prostitution in the beginning with abolitionist model and criminalized it in order to bring an end to this illicit business. To date, criminalization has been popular trend throughout the world with some procedural and executory differences. "The abolitionist model has historically been the first one seeking to put an end to the prostitution business. From the 19th century until after World War II, European countries adopted legislation declaring selling and buying sex as well as all related activities such as running brothels, pandering, and procuring as illegal because of religious and moral attitudes."⁹

Abolitionists build their argument against prostitution almost entirely around the extreme violence which is, to them, intrinsic to prostitution. Melissa Farley, for example, describes essentiality and extent of violence in prostitution in her lengthy article titled *Bad for*

⁷ McCarthy et. al., "Regulating Sex Work: Heterogeneity in Legal Strategies," *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 8 (2012): 255-271.

⁸ Melissa Farley "Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart": Prostitution Harms Women Even if Legalized or Decriminalized," *Violence Against Women* 10, Issue 10 (2004).

⁹ Schulze et al., "Sexual exploitation," 19.

*the Body, Bad for the Heart.*¹⁰ In this article, she has also quotes a number of studies carried out throughout the world only to find that prostitution harms women irrespective of its legal status. Another study carried out by Farley across nine countries in 2003 states that majority of women in prostitution report severe violence including physical assault and even rape.¹¹ Efendov and Stermac's study in Canada on rapes found that rapes in case of prostitutes are more frequent and violent.¹² Similarly, Valera et al. documented the judgment of prostitutes that the legal changes cannot protect them from violence.¹³ In another study, carried out in New Zealand, more than 80% of prostitutes reported some kind of violence. The same study reports around 40% of street prostitutes physically assaulted or attempted rape upon. The percentage was, however, low in indoor prostitution.¹⁴ Vanwesenbeeck too reported psychological problems among women in prostitution in the Netherlands where it enjoys a legal status.¹⁵ In a more elaborate way, Williams in Farley's article, pointing out to psychological disorder, quotes a prostitute woman saying, "For the first few months I worked, I had a lot of nightmares involving mass numbers of penises."¹⁶ Farley, while criticizing the arguments of regulationists, explains how rape becomes a norm for

¹⁰ Farley "Bad for the Body," 1087-1125.

¹¹ Farley et al., "Prostitution and Trafficking," 33-74.

¹² A. Efendo and, L. E. Stermac, "Sexual assault of female sex trade workers in an urban population," *Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association* (2003, August), Toronto,. Canada.

¹³ R. Valera et al., "Perceived health needs of inner-city street prostitutes," *American Journal of Health Behavior* 25, (2001): 50-59.

¹⁴ L. Plumridge and G. Abel, "A "segmented" sex industry in New Zealand: Sexual and personal safety of female sex workers," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 15, (2001) 78-83.

¹⁵ I. Vanwesenbeeck, *Prostitutes' well-being and risk* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994)

¹⁶ "Farley, Bad for the body," 1081.

the women in prostitution. She also equates prostituting with paid rape.¹⁷ Saeed in her adventure to explore the hidden culture of Lahore's red light area also reports violence and more seriously poor working conditions, particularly of those women who do not own a proper *kotha* and have to attract customer by standing in the street or at window much like streetwalkers.¹⁸

Violence, abolitionists say, is not only limited to physical harm rather it leads to a number of lasting psychological and mental disorders. Mary Sullivan dedicated a complete chapter to explain presence of severe violence and occupational hazards in prostitution. Throughout her book, she argues against prostitution and explains that how it damages gender equilibrium and puts the prostituted women in violent world invisible and separated from ordinary universe.¹⁹ When these fallen daughter of Eve experience violence for a time period that is extended to years, the psychological problems such is dying out sexual feelings and disassociation is quite common among them.²⁰ Belton, as quoted by Farley, for instance, found disassociation, depression, and other mood disorders among women in prostitution who work in street, brothels, and strip clubs.²¹ Vanwesenbeeck also reports long term post-traumatic stress disorders quite often among young women in prostitution.²² Farley has documented quite a lot of studies that found psychological disorders among women due to continuous exposure to physical and emotional violence.²³

Regulatory approach often criticizes abolitionists that they fail to understand the diversity within prostitution and tend to generalize

¹⁷ Ibid., 1100.

¹⁸ Saeed, *Taboo*, 225-35.

¹⁹ Mary Lucille Sullivan, *Making Sex work: A Failed Experiment with Legalized Prostitution* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2007)

²⁰ Helen J. Self, *Prostitution, women and Misuse of law: the fallen daughters of eve* (London: Frank Cass: 2005)

²¹ Farley, "Bad for the body," 1088.

²² Vanwesenbeeck, *Prostitutes' well being*

²³ Farley, "Bad for the body," 1094.

on the basis of limited research on streetwalkers. Weitzer, a resilient propagator of regulation, summarize her argument in these words: “The irony is that most of the research has been done on the least prevalent form of prostitution.”²⁴ Farley, in response, rushes to rescue the abolitionist with bringing in various references to prove that violence is prevalent in all types of prostitution from the vulnerable street prostitutes to the sophisticated call girls. She quotes Raphael and Shapiro as finding same frequency of rape in escort service and street prostitution in Chicago.²⁵ Other than this study, Farley comes up with various other similar findings of her own and her fellow abolitionist about the existence of violence at all levels of prostitution.²⁶ One such study unveiling equal violence and emotional distress in indoor and outdoor prostitution is carried out by Vanwesenbeeck in the Netherland where prostitution is legal.²⁷ Some writers even assert that indoor sex sellers experience more violence as compare to streetwalkers as they too enjoy little or no control over their environment.²⁸

Health hazards in prostitution offer yet another ground of controversy between abolitionism and regulatory approach. For abolitionists, these health hazards cannot be overcome and none of the regulatory models has the capacity to ensure safety against HIV/AIDS and other STD (sexually transmitted diseases).²⁹ Remaining true to abolitionism and its arguments, Sullivan presents the disaster of HIV/AIDS and the failure of government to ensure the safety of prostitutes against STDs as one of the strong arguments against legalization of the this system of female oppression.³⁰ Other

²⁴ Weitzer, “New Direction,” 215.

²⁵ Farley, “Bad for the body,” 1099.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Vanwesenbeeck, *prostitutes’ well being*.

²⁸ D. Boyer, L. Chapman and B. K. Marshall, “Survival sex in King County: Helping women out,” *Report to the King County Women’s Advisory Board*, (WA: Northwest Resource Associates, 1993)

²⁹ Sullivan, *Making Sex Work*, 244-80.

³⁰ Ibid.

than their own research, abolitionists most often rely on somewhat independent studies conducted for medical purposes either by governmental and non-governmental organizations or by academia largely immune to the governance debate on prostitution. For example, a Canadian Commission's report is quoted by Farley that shows forty times higher death rate among women in prostitution.³¹ Other than this report, Farley identifies, based on various such studies, HIV/AIDS, cervical cancer, unwanted pregnancies, reproductive and genital problems, insomnia, and eating disorders diseases most commonly found in prostitutes.³² A survey in Germany, for instance, has been quoted by Erika Schulze that finds a range of mental health problems among the women selling sex in Germany.³³

In order to counter the arguments of legalization supporters, abolitionists do bring in evidences stating almost equal frequency and severity of violence in prostitution in both regulated and criminalized sex trade. For Farley "its cruel lie to suggest that decriminalization or legalization will protect anyone in prostitution. There is much evidence that whatever its legal status, prostitution causes great harm to women."³⁴ Immediately, after making this sweeping claim, she does quote about two dozens of different studies carried out in various countries during last two decades.³⁵ Sullivan too seems to defend the cause of abolitionists with same potency on this front also. The very title of her book, *Making Sex Work: A failed Experience with Legalized Prostitution*, suggests the story inside it. Throughout her sizeable volume, she has taken all the pains to discuss at length that how the legalization as a governing strategy failed miserably. Simultaneously, she feels no harm in calling legalization as an attempt to institutionalize men's right to women's bodies.³⁶ In the

³¹ Farley, "Bad for the body," 1097.

³² Ibid.

³³ Schulze et al., "Sexual exploitation," 18.

³⁴ Farley, "Bad for the body," 1094.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Sullivan Jeffreys, *The idea of prostitution* (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1997).

Netherlands, Vanwesenbeeck finds 40% of her interviewees forced into prostitution, and more than 50% of them were subjected to physical assault and sexual violence.³⁷ Abolitionists, in order to prove their point in a more comprehensive and systematic way, attempt to analyze and expose the regulatory regimes embraced by individual countries. Sullivan's book exposed violence in legal prostitution in Victoria State of Australia while Farley's article mainly focuses on regulation of prostitution in New Zealand. Nevada state's brothels' failure is surfaced in a study by Sward (quoted by Farley), and Vanwesenbeeck's study documents the violence experienced by the prostitutes in Holland.³⁸ Talking about individual countries, after doing in depth scrutiny of the legal system and its implementation, abolitionists clearly support their earlier theoretical standpoint and conclude that no governance system has the capacity or the will to eradicate miseries from prostitution. Moreover, their findings only reaffirmed their view that prostitution itself is violence against women and only eradication of this undesirable and inhuman business could heal the wounds.

The Regulatory Approach: The arguments of abolitionists do not go unchallenged, and the advocates of regulatory model come with their version of the story. For liberalizing model, prostitution is legitimate act of buying and selling sex by consenting adults that needs no criminalization by the state. However an adequate intervention to regulate sex market is desired which is only possible if sex work is recognized as a legitimate business. Erika Schulze summarizes her understanding of regulatory approach in these words:

Contrary to the abolitionists, the regulatory approach does not want to end prostitution but to recognize selling and buying sex as an economic activity with offer and demand regulated through the price on the prostitution market which is regulated by law. This

³⁷ Vanwesenbeeck, *Prostitutes' well-being*, 56.

³⁸ Jeffreys, *Idea of prostitution*; Farley, "Bad for the body," 1092; Vanwesenbeeck, *Prostitutes' well being*.

approach is therefore also known as legalizing and liberalizing prostitution.³⁹

The regulatory approach never forgets to remind abolitionists that prostitution is not an act in which only "women sell and men buy," rather it is opposite of this sometimes. In addition to male prostitution, transgender prostitution is also prevalent in the world. Ronald Weitzer, for illustration, accuses the supporters of abolition and eradication of prostitution of their biased conclusion on the basis of limited research only on female prostitution. Weitzer argues that it is a bare fact that male and transgender prostitution is a significant segment of sex industry.⁴⁰ A study by Sanchez Tylor is already quoted in the paper which unveils the existence of male prostitutes and female buyers. The liberals and regulatory approaches present the incidence of transgender and male sex work as an argument against the abolitionists' claim that prostitution is violence against the women by virtue of the privileged status of buyer over the sellers' bodies.⁴¹

In response to the assertions of abolitionists about violence in prostitution, the regulatory approach constructs the argument around the internal diversity in prostitution and the agency of women involved in prostitution. As far as diversity is concerned, Weitzer deals with this issue under a separate heading in her article titled *New directions in research on prostitution*. She writes:

Victimization and exploitation is highest among street prostitutes and among those who have been trafficked into prostitution, but other workers are much less vulnerable to violence, exercise more control over

³⁹ Schulze et al., "Sexual exploitation," 20.

⁴⁰ Weitzer, "New directions," 220.

⁴¹ Ronald Weitzer, "Flawed theory and method in studies of prostitution," *Violence Against Women* 11, no.7. (July, 2005): 934–949

their work, and derive at least some psychological or physical reward from what they do.⁴²

She, in her article, identifies more than six different levels and ways of prostitution, each with its corresponding working environment with streetwalkers exposed to most of the violence in prostitution. She also charges abolitionism for quoting the violence in street prostitution as violence in prostitution per se.⁴³ Monto, too, sounds similar while defining prostitution as a remarkably diverse field with diversity of experiences and participants.⁴⁴ Perkins, Prince and Vanwesenbeeck seem to be in perfect harmony to conclude that call girls exert better control on their working condition; therefore, they have better job satisfaction as compared to brothels and street prostitution.⁴⁵ Moreover, Fouzia Saeed while highlighting the miseries experienced by the women in prostitution testifies the existence of various levels and corresponding working conditions in prostitution with *mithi khaniann*, the most vulnerable group among all.⁴⁶ By presenting various studies exposing greater variations in prostitution, the regulatory model concludes that the type of prostitution is the best forecaster of working conditions hence violence in prostitution is not intrinsic.⁴⁷

When it comes to the agency of women in prostitution, the abolitionists borrow the arguments from fellow liberal feminists. They tend to draw a line between coercion and free will. Erika Schulze summarizes her understanding of their argument saying that they regulatory regimes have a tendency to distinguish between forced and voluntary prostitution, and thereby between sexual

⁴² Weitzer, "New Directions," 219.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Martin Monto, "Female Prostitution, Customers, and Violence," *Violence Against Women*, no 10 (2004): 160-168.

⁴⁵ Vanwesenbeeck, *Prostitutes' well-being*, 223

⁴⁶ Saeed, *Taboo*.

⁴⁷ Weitzer, "New directions," 219.

exploitation and selling sex.⁴⁸ Sanders et al. also discusses the issue of agency and draws a line between forced and voluntary sex work.⁴⁹

In addition to free will of women and diversity in sex trade, the regulatory approach further negates the arguments of radicals and abolitionists about inherent ferocity blaming the legal system and social stigma for violence experienced by sex workers. Sanders and Campbell, supporting decriminalization if not complete legalization, point out the existence of empirical data supporting the fact that criminalization not only violates employment rights but also deprives women in prostitution of their human rights. They also tend to oppose criminalization as it is for them damaging to prostitutes and sex industry at large.⁵⁰ They also identify decriminalization and full legalization as incidence of constructive state intervention in the arena for protection of those selling sex out of their free will.⁵¹ Arnott and Crago also find in their study that criminalization in Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa bring many misfortunes for sex workers such as extortion by police, vehemence by customers and pimps, vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, unavailability of health facilities, and resultant violent and unhealthy working conditions.⁵² Swedish model, penalizing demand instead of supply and creating new strategy of neo-abolitionism, is criticized by Sanders and Campbell as an another way to penalize prostitutes indirectly and striking forced rehabilitation while affronting the agency of women in sex trade.⁵³ Similarly, Kinnell relates violence experienced by sex workers to criminalized status of prostitution in the UK. The author also says that the law and its implementation strategies are responsible for

⁴⁸ Schulze et al., "Sexual exploitation," 20

⁴⁹ Sanders, O'Neill and Pitcher, *Prostitution*, 11.

⁵⁰ Sanders and Campbell "*Criminalization*," 539.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 540.

⁵² Jayne Arnott and Anna-Louise Crago, *Rights Not Rescue: A Report on Female, Male, and Trans Sex Workers' Human Rights in Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa* (New York: Open Society Institute, 2009).

⁵³ Sanders and Campbell "*Criminalization*," 539.

much of the violence in prostitution.⁵⁴ Saeed in her *Taboo* also highlights vulnerability due to illegal status of prostitution in Pakistan. She also talks about the severe problems particularly during Zia's regime due to harsher intervention by the states with puritanical aims.⁵⁵ Regarding the state's motivation to end sex trade, McCarthy et al. conclude that state use variety of moral and religious reason to come up with its abolitionist façade.⁵⁶ The writers also seem to side with regulatory approach when they perceive criminalization as an intervention of governments in "buying and selling of sexual services by consenting adults."⁵⁷

The advocates of regulatory model do not simply blame the legal system for violence in prostitution; they also take all the pains to convey evidences of improved working conditions if the sex trade is legalized or at least decriminalized. Sanders, for instance, cited a number of studies evaluating various liberal models of governance of sex work. Decriminalization in Nevada (US), New Zealand, Australia, and partial or full legalization in Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Germany is identified as alternative to criminalization of either demand or supply.⁵⁸ In the Netherlands, Dalder states that the vast majority of women in sex work both working as escorts or in window units reported general satisfaction and feeling of greater safety.⁵⁹ Brents and Hausbeck, on the other hand, place protection from violence and safe working environment as two of the prime benefits of regulated prostitution in Nevada.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ H. Kinnell, "Clients of female sex workers: men or monsters?," in *Sex Work Now*, eds. R. Campbell and M. O'Neill, (Cullompton: Willan, 2006)

⁵⁵ Saeed, *Taboo*.

⁵⁶ McCarthy et al., "Regulating Sex Work," 260.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Sanders and Campbell, *Criminalization*, 14-15.

⁵⁹ A.L. Dalder, *Lifting the Ban on Brothels* (The Hague: Netherlands Ministry of Justice, 2004), 30.

⁶⁰ Barbara Brents and Kathryn Hausbeck, "Violence and Legalized Brothel Prostitution in Nevada," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 20, (2005): 289.

Weitzer quotes the report of Australian Crimes and Misconduct Commission as proclaiming that legal brothels in Queensland are modern examples of healthy, crime-free, and safe prostitution which is working smoothly with very rare incidence of interruptions.⁶¹ In addition to this report, she, like Sanders, mentions various studies proving the relative improvement in the lives of sex worker across all levels of prostitution from streetwalkers to call girls in the countries where prostitution is either legal or decriminalized.⁶² McCarthy et al. also mention various benefits of legalized prostitution in their article dedicated to explore and examine heterogeneity in legal ways to govern prostitution.⁶³

Conclusion

Academic debate on the governance of prostitution is not immune to the fierce theoretical opposition between liberal and radical feminists. In actuality, it is the same theoretical debate that leads to division of literature between abolitionism and regulatory approach. Following observations can be made about contemporary literature on governance of prostitution.

The literature on prostitution, like theoretical debates, is polarized between two strikingly opposite groups (abolitionists and regulatory supporters), supporting completely adverse methodologies to deal with phenomenon of prostitution. One group strongly calls for abolition of any form of buying and selling sex whereas other group supports its decriminalization and even legalization and call for acceptance of prostitution as normal economic activity. Interestingly, both groups bring in not only well-constructed arguments but empirical data to support their conclusions.

The division between the supporters of legalization and abolitionists goes down into the core of governance and theoretical debate so much so that even the language used by them speaks the volume of their commitment to the underpinnings of their respective

⁶¹ Weitzer, "New directions," 217.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Bill McCarthy et al., "Regulating Sex Work," 255-71.

school of thought. Abolitionists refer to women in sex business as "prostituted women" to give impression that prostitution is violence against women and no women can freely and actively chose it. Moreover, "pimps" and "Johns" are the terminologies used for the owners of business and buyers of sex respectively. Through these words, the abolitionists present buyers and managers as people full of luxury loving tendencies and lustful sexual behavior with money-maker's mind who are always ready to coerce female in order to get their nefarious objectives achieved. In contrast, regulatory approach in partnership with liberal feminists coined more respectable terms to talk about this controversial business. For them, prostitution is too stigmatizing word hence sex work replaces prostitution and the women involved are referred to as sex workers throughout liberal literature. Buyers of sex are customers whereas pimps are managers for regulatory approach as they tend to normalize sex trade as a regular economic activity. Though this diversity of terminology is confusing for initial reader, the division in language is still helpful in order to classify the literature in either of the two categories.

Though the conclusions and solutions offered by abolitionists and regulatory supporters are quite different, they agree on a number of things as well. Both groups agree that the women in prostitution are stigmatized. This stigma marginalizes them and reduces them to lesser human being. Similarly, trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation is almost equally condemned by both groups with little operational disparities. They also seem to be in perfect harmony when it comes to the presence of severe violence in prostitution. However, they seriously dispute the causes of the violence and offer opposing solutions for the wellbeing of women. Motivation, at least explicitly claimed one, is also same. Both opposing groups look to prostitutes with sympathy and rush to rescue them. Perhaps this is the reason both opposing schools of thought can trace their roots in feminism. Lastly, both abolitionists and regulatory approaches call for further research in the controversial field.

The literature revolving around the governance of prostitution is contributive as it not only enriches one's knowledge on the subject but also help asses various strategies adopted by different states in diverse contexts to deal with this contentious issue of prostitution. It reveals the significance and scope of states' intervention to rescue

women in sex trade on one hand and to chalk out workable strategies to eradicate or regulate it. Having said this, the literature somehow deficient to grasp the understanding of full scale sex industry as the research largely is confined to the sex workers with little or no attention on customers, managers and ancillary industries. Similarly, majority of authors, academicians and researchers fail to liberate them from of arresting binary of the liberal and radical debates. They in way or the other take sides and struggle to prove their engrossed ideas. Many a time, it seems that the researchers have predetermined suppositions and they are running to support their conclusions with adequate data. To conclude, one can say that the literature on governance is revealing yet there are few under researched area demanding objective and independent research beyond the binaries of preexisting literature.