

Sex workers narratives about clients with disabilities and the possibility of sexual assistance in Portugal

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Background: Sexual health depends on physical, psychological and social well-being of a person concerning their sexuality. Although sexual rights are considered human rights, there are some people with disabilities who continue to face multiple stereotypes and barriers. This situation hinders the achievement of a satisfying sexual life. Sexual assistance is a possible response for sexual expression, in which trained individuals provide sexual services to clients with disabilities. Based on clients' values, experiences and preferences sexual assistants enhance the sexuality of clients with disabilities. However, in Portugal, the issue has never before featured in the scientific sphere and sex workers, who lack any training, represent the only way to access commercial sex services.

Research Questions: In this research thirteen sex workers were interviewed in order to explore their experiences with disabled clients and to understand if training is seen as a useful resource to be taken into account for improving sexual health of clients with disabilities and themselves.

Methods: An explorative study of qualitative approach, with 13 interviews were analyzed using the thematic analysis method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Results: The key findings detail how it is men, most of them physically disabled, who seek out sexual and emotional satisfaction in sex work. Additionally, specificities inherent to the lack of training and the relationships established tend to cause experiences of embarrassment in professionals. In some cases they increase the prices charged to clients with disabilities. Sex workers point out many obstacles to access commercial sex. Finally, training is highlighted as a relevant aspect to qualify sex workers to provide a quality service.

Conclusions: To conclude, there is a necessity for further investigation of this subject in the Portuguese context. Thus, it's essential to reach more sex workers and give voice to people with disabilities. But sexual assistance might be an option of sexual expression should they so decide. Sex workers discourses leads to the believe that a specialized sex service couple with better sexual education and raising popular awareness about gender differences in the purchasing of sex would improve the lives of the parties involved.

Key Words: Sexual health, Sexual Assistance, Sex Work, Clients with Disabilities

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