

Community empowerment in Latin American sex worker communities: a systematic review

El empoderamiento comunitario en comunidades de trabajadoras sexuales de Latinoamérica: una revisión sistemática

Empoderamento comunitário em comunidades de profissionais do sexo na América Latina: uma revisão sistemática

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Abstract

Introduction: The research was intended to conduct an analysis of the notion of community empowerment and how it is used in sex worker collectives, was conducted through an exploration of academic publications from Latin American nations over the last decade. **Objective:** To critically analyze the notion of community empowerment and its relevance to sex worker collectivities by exploring studies conducted in Latin America (Latam) over the last decade. **Methodology:** For the study, a systematic review of the available literature was developed through a Research Analysis Matrix (RAI) to examine the notion of community empowerment and its relationship with sex workers in Latam, in coherence with a conceptual theoretical framework that has Community Psychology and gender studies as its central axis, the applicability of community empowerment resulting from the intersectionality of sex workers in Latin American contexts is discussed. **Conclusion:** Sex work was understood as a concept of resignification, which has given rise to vindicating visions translated into an exercise of female empowerment by allowing them access to resources that can help their transformation at the individual, community and social levels.

Keywords: Empowerment; Community development; Women in community development; Community psychology; Prostitution; Social exclusion; Latin America.

Resumen

Introducción: La investigación tuvo la intención de llevar a cabo un análisis de la noción de empoderamiento comunitario y cómo se utiliza en los colectivos de trabajadoras sexuales, se realizó mediante una exploración de publicaciones académicas de las naciones latinoamericanas en la última década. **Objetivo:** Analizar críticamente la noción de empoderamiento comunitario y su relevancia en las colectividades de trabajadoras sexuales, a través de la exploración de estudios llevados a cabo en la Latinoamérica (Latam) durante la última década. **Metodología:** Para el estudio se desarrolló una revisión sistemática de la literatura disponible a través de una Matriz de Análisis de Investigación (RAI) para examinar la noción del empoderamiento comunitario y su relación con las trabajadoras sexuales en Latam, en coherencia con un marco teórico conceptual que tiene como eje central la Psicología Comunitaria y los estudios de género, se discute la aplicabilidad del empoderamiento de la comunidad resultante de la interseccionalidad de las trabajadoras sexuales en contextos latinoamericanos. **Conclusión:** Se comprendió el trabajo sexual como un concepto de resignificación, que ha dado lugar a visiones reivindicativas traducidas en un ejercicio de empoderamiento femenino al permitirles el acceso a recursos que pueden ayudar a su transformación a nivel individual, comunitario y social.

Palabras clave: Empoderamiento; Desarrollo comunitario; Psicología Comunitaria; Trabajo sexual; Exclusión social; Latinoamérica¹

¹ Los términos clave han sido recuperados a partir del Tesoro UNESCOI



Resumo

Introdução: A pesquisa teve como objetivo realizar uma análise da noção de empoderamento da comunidade e como ela é usada em coletivos de profissionais do sexo, e foi conduzida por meio de uma exploração de publicações acadêmicas de países latino-americanos na última década. **Objetivo:** Analisar criticamente a noção de empoderamento comunitário e sua relevância para as coletividades de profissionais do sexo, explorando estudos realizados na América Latina (Latam) na última década. **Metodologia:** O estudo desenvolveu uma revisão sistemática da literatura disponível por meio de uma Matriz de Análise de Pesquisa (RAI) para examinar a noção de empoderamento da comunidade e sua relação com as profissionais do sexo na América Latina, em coerência com uma estrutura teórica conceitual que tem a Psicologia Comunitária e os estudos de gênero em seu cerne, e discute a aplicabilidade do empoderamento da comunidade resultante da interseccionalidade das profissionais do sexo em contextos latino-americanos. **Conclusão:** O trabalho sexual foi entendido como um conceito de resignificação, que deu origem a visões reivindicativas traduzidas em um exercício de empoderamento feminino, permitindo-lhes acesso a recursos que podem ajudar na sua transformação em nível individual, comunitário e social.

Palavras-chave: Empoderamento; Desenvolvimento comunitário; Mulheres no desenvolvimento comunitário; Psicologia comunitária; Prostituição; Exclusão social; América Latina.



Introduction

As an initial part of this paper, it is important to specify the configuration of the concept of sex work in such a way that allows us to glimpse a clear horizon around paid sexual activities that are not limited to human trafficking for the sex trade and other activities that are categorized within the framework of illegality; it is necessary to make this differentiation to make visible the existence of women dedicated to this work voluntarily and who have found in this exercise an alternative livelihood for themselves and their families. However, the intention of this paper is to generate a view of this population that is not only biased towards hygienist and welfare issues, but to recognize their capacity for aggregation and community work in favor of the improvement of their quality of life in a continuous struggle towards the recognition and observance of their rights and their integration into a society that has historically defined them negatively.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), sex work refers to sexual activities performed by women, men and transgender and/or transsexual persons for economic and/or material benefit derived from the provision of their services. In turn, it is mentioned that the performance of these activities lacks current regulations that regulate them, therefore, it is common to find a significant number of people who perform them either "legally" or illegally before the law (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos CNDH, 2019).

It should be noted that sex work is commonly associated with the term prostitution, which has historically attributed to it the definition that characterizes it and by which it is directly associated with human trafficking for sexual exploitation, which apart from generating social stigma and prejudice, frames it in a concept of illegality that results in the criminalization of those who practice it, but this is not always the case. Sexual slavery and human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation are illegal activities that violate the freedoms of individuals since there is coercion for the development of these, while "voluntary" prostitution, which is currently called selected or chosen sex work, is framed in the autonomy of the person for its exercise without any type of coercion, but with factors of influence that lead to the practice of this trade, although it does not represent a prohibition, the latter is criminalized (Lugo, 2017, p. 36).

Now, the CNDH (2019) refers to sex work as a concept coined to identify and recognize paid sexual activities as paid labor; in this sense, replacing the word prostitution, which denotes moralistic and pejorative aspects, with sex work provides a new way of understanding not only the concept, but also deeper aspects such as the socioeconomic, labor and legal dynamics surrounding this profession.

According to Morcillo and Varela (2016) cited in Vargas (2022), the term "sex worker" is an emerging expression that originates to fight against the social stigma in which this activity is framed and is constituted as an element that integrates women linked to the various areas of the sex industry, such as porn actresses, prostitutes, erotic dancers, etc.

In turn, it is necessary to understand how the concept of sex work has acquired relevant connotations for different sectors of the population that carry out this profession.



tion of her feminist positions with the reality lived by her and the women she met; since the use of the term "sex work", the main pretension was to generate a scenario of vindication and respect for women in the exercise of the trade in the sex industry and the trade itself, thus, rather than pretending to achieve a totalizing theory on the exchange of sex for economic goods, Leigh was interested in making visible the voice of the prostitutes in the discourse of feminism (Morcillo and Varela, 2016).

With regard to the above, it is possible to determine that the term "sex work" has been adopted as an element of resignification that has made it possible to obtain a distinctive look at the exercise of this work for the people who perform it, which in one way or another generates the possibility of observing it from an approach close to that of labor; In this sense, sex work as a term groups together all forms of work that are exercised within the framework of "sexual", which not only includes the commercial exchange of sex with other people, but also those services with some degree of sexual content without the need to reach intimacy with their clients; from this perspective, sex work has become an extremely useful expression to make visible the diversity around its exercise, as well as to constitute itself as an encompassing and inclusive term (Vargas, 2022).

Thus, once configured a term that lands paid sexual activities to a definition that separates the concepts of exploitation and voluntariness in the exercise of this trade, the criterion of voluntariness is taken for the purposes of this paper, and from there, it is necessary to make the understanding of community empowerment and its relationship with women sex workers in terms of concept and processes, in this way, it is a fundamental requirement the identification of conditions that precede the process of empowerment itself, and thus, from sex work as a concept of vindication, it is essential to identify the inequality and inequity gap that exists around this widely stigmatized activity, which is undoubtedly directly related to the non-observance and transgression of the rights of the people (mainly women) who exercise it, for whom a diversity of factors converge in which their life situations are framed, among which we can initially find gender, race or ethnicity and gender, race or ethnicity and gender, race or ethnicity and social class, which makes it a multifactorial phenomenon that has been approached and observed in a superficial manner, based on perspectives whose categories deal with moral, legal or economic issues without due articulation of these and other factors as a totality that encompasses this context. From the above, Vargas (2022) citing Doctors of the World:

It is a complex phenomenon in which different structural factors such as gender, class and race or ethnicity interact. In this sense, an adequate understanding of the phenomenon of sex work is not possible without taking into account that most of the people in this situation are migrant and poor women. (2020, p. 11).

In relation to the above, identifying the diversity of factors that permeate female sex workers is an arduous task; however, one of the main factors that generate negative consequences in the life circumstances of these women has to do with gender and the gender role that is directly associated with the collective imaginary that women per se are the ones who are awarded this work, Thus, it is of utmost importance to glimpse another of the concepts that mark the path towards the understanding proposed in this article, which is the concept of woman that initially revolves around the biological woman, whose historical development has given her a leading and demeaning role in sex work.

as victim, executor, promoter and transgressor of the law. Thus, for the construction of this document, two categories are taken into account: cisgender women and transgender women (Vargas, 2022).

According to the above, there is a clear relationship between sex work and gender roles associated with women, and it is precisely from this context that social stigma is focused on both cisgender and transgender women, which leads to this population being confronted with the non-observance and transgression of rights, violence, social exclusion, discrimination, among other factors that directly affect the situations and quality of life of these women, which confers them the irrefutable status of vulnerable population. In line with the above, the *National Directorate of Attention to Vulnerable Groups* (2011) cited in Vargas (2022), people in vulnerable situations are deprived of their freedoms in the exercise and enjoyment of their rights, many of these violations are caused by problems of identity and/or sexual condition, which generally results in the dissatisfaction of their needs.

In relation to the life situations of sex workers, it can be said that most of them are poor groups whose basic needs are not minimally satisfied, mainly sex workers in Latin America who, among other particularities, are in an irregular situation of migration. In this sense, there is an estimated number of Latin American sex workers that have been identified through characterization strategies implemented within these groups of women from their collective action and from which it has been identified that about 30% of these workers are migrants; In this regard, Mariño et al. (2020) mention that this proportion of women who engage in paid sex work in Latin America is mainly due to expectations of better job opportunities which, according to their individual logic, explains that migrating to countries with greater economic stability and legislation that generates fewer restrictions on this type of work, constitute factors that favor the phenomenon of migration for sex work purposes.

In fact, the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism [INADI] (s.f.), mentions that there are specific means for the circulation and reproduction of discrimination and that this leads to inequality, in the same way, the asymmetry between genders is defined by other specific mechanisms of oppression, specifically in populations of women and the LGBTI collective; In fact, cisgender and transgender women in the exercise of sex work who are in a regular or irregular migratory situation are faced with situations of discrimination and violation of rights both because of their gender and gender identity, thus "discriminatory, racist and xenophobic practices compromise the access and effective exercise of the human rights of historically violated groups, a situation that is notably aggravated from a gender perspective" (INADI, s.f., p. 6).

Consequently, referring to community empowerment processes requires identifying the resources and potentialities found in a group and that serve to reduce, alter and/or transform life circumstances at individual and group level, from this context, sex workers should also be conceived as integral individuals, with rights and duties, who do not need external actors to their daily lives to assert their rights, In doing so, they consolidate their role as agents of social change through the collaborative development and application of skills and resources that give them the power to take charge of their personal circumstances, from the above, it can be mentioned that empowerment is inclusion in itself, giving meaning to the generation of alternatives to give voice to the muted in societies (Vargas, 2022).



All of the above is framed in components of Community Psychology (CP), it should be noted that the group of sex workers share common contexts and scenarios, in the same way, they attend to their own dynamics related to the same territory which has been appropriated as their home, so the main purpose is to examine the term community empowerment applied to communities of women working in the sex industry in Latin America.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/ FRAME OF REFERENCE

Sex work

According to the CNDH (2019), the concept of sex work was conceived as a term that would give rise to the recognition of this activity as a job that involves remuneration, a work in which there is commercial exchange and as a term that would replace that of prostitution, which is socially pejorative and moralistic.

In this sense, sex work has been a difficult topic to address due to the dissimilar positions related to this issue that lack objectivity, turning mainly towards negative views of the phenomenon in question due to the main notion that sex trade and intimate relationships are actions outside human dignity, The above statement is supported by Lamas (2016) who emphasizes that the sexual act in the context of late capitalism has contributed to the organization of people and social life in relation to stigmatizing or valuing practices of some behaviors.

Now, the historical process to recognize sex workers as subjects of rights has brought with it multiple conflicts and opposing positions that have given rise to the debate on the approach to this profession, thus, one of the actions originated from the *National Organization of Women in the United States* gave rise to the commission on the rights of "prostitutes", from which a contrast arose between opposing feminist points of view under the approach that all sexual acts (including commercial sex) corresponded to a liberating action, while other approaches considered the same activity as an oppressive action (Lamas, 2016).

Sex work: the positions of feminism

In relation to the above, within the framework of feminism, two clearly defined positions can be observed: the feminists who are in favor of sex workers and have a position against prostitution, from which two clearly differentiated lines of thought emerge, the first of which emphasizes sex work as an activity that involves a commercial transaction in exchange for remuneration and that can promote dynamics of autonomy in women who exercise it without disregarding that there is a very marked asymmetry of power, positioning the client, who is generally a man, in a higher position on the social scale in relation to the woman who remains in a lower position; On the contrary, prostitution is seen by anti-prostitution feminists as a form of violation of rights, discrimination, social stigma, economic instability, and unhealthiness, among others.



factors that have reduced women to a state of self-invisibility, as well as social, cultural, political, economic and institutional invisibility (Vargas, 2022, p. 43).

According to Moncada (2020), the regulationist view of feminism advocates the legalization of sex work and thus the recognition of the labor rights of sex workers, favoring dignified human conditions, while the abolitionist position seeks the eradication of prostitution and all forms of sex work, arguing that it is an activity that favors the exploitation and perpetual domination of women's bodies.

Finally, the regulatory approach emphasizes a control mechanism that views prostitution as an inescapable evil that contributes to the spread of diseases such as STIs, and requires regulation to stop its spread, in that sense,

sex workers were placed as propagating agents, so that the health services (hygienist doctors) were granted sanctioning powers supported by legislation in order to exercise control over prostitutes, this indicates that regulatoryism is a completely hygienist model, from which the State has a broad interference over women and their bodies. (Tarantino, 2016, p. 3)

Sex workers

According to Vargas (2022):

The term sex worker covers the group of people who engage in the commercial exchange of sexual activities freely and voluntarily, however, it is a concept that still continues to generate controversy given the conditions in which this activity is performed, its "free" characteristic denotes a bit of skepticism in view of the fact that the situations that lead to its exercise in one way or another attend to diverse individual and social realities that do not pose another option for those who face such circumstances. (p. 46).

In the same way, the term "sex workers" refers to the group of women who recognize themselves in the exercise of the sex trade in a free and conscious manner, this term has been appropriated by them as an action of dignification, according to Vargas, it is crucial to evidence the contextual reality that has been reflected in this writing and the undeniable stigmatization oriented to the historical gender role that was granted to women as that exclusive person to exercise sex work (Vargas, 2022, p. 47).

Sex workers: human groups that make up a community

In order to delimit a human group under the criterion of community, it is necessary to define this concept; thus, community refers to the place of commonality; it is the scenario or territory where people with converging dynamics, values, needs and problems are located (Montero, 2004).

In line with the above, the community is not only constituted by relationships between people but also by relationships between people and places from which actions, expectations, emotions, affections, failures and triumphs are shared and are experienced and felt collectively, thus propitiating the creation of a community that is not only a community of people but also a community of people and places from which actions, expectations, emotions, affections, failures and triumphs are shared.



In this sense, the community is not simply a physical territory, it is also an emotional place where people gather (Montero, 2004).

Arango et al. (2019) mention that a community is not only a group of people, it also requires a shared union around values, standards and practices that allow recognizing the feeling of a "we" in love with a shared cause.

Arango et al. (2019) define that a community is not only a grouping of people in a given territory, the term goes beyond that and attends to the consolidation of a common unity that revolves around norms, values and collective practices that lead to the achievement of a sense of "we" committed to a common struggle.

Therefore, it could be said that Latin American sex workers' communities are created in the context of coexistence, which implies a physical territory and coexistence, linked through their life stories, shared needs and problems, mutual help, among other distinctive features of the concept of community (Vargas, 2022, p. 54).

Community empowerment

In the same way that the community can be seen per se as a social phenomenon susceptible to transformation given that it is dynamic and its identity and social sensibilities are subject to change, community work also shows a broad interest in the psychosocial processes of oppression, liberation and transformation that emerge in individuals and communities as a result of coexistence in certain contexts from which forms of adaptation or resistance have been generated and for which change is desirable (Montero, 2004).

Thus, the process by which people take control of their own lives is known as empowerment (Rappaport, 1984 in Casique, 2017).

In turn, it is understood as an expansion of people's ability to make strategic decisions for their lives in a context in which this possibility was previously denied to them. (Kabeer, 2001 in Casique, 2017, p.88)

In relation to the above, community empowerment has been defined from two perspectives: the Anglo-Saxon one, from which it emphasizes the mediating role between institutional programs and individuals who have social structures; while the Latin American perspective defines empowerment as a strengthening process based on collective emancipation that focuses on achieving power in communities where its members are "social actors who are builders of their reality and the changes that occur in it" (Montero, 2003 cited in Sánchez-Vidal, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

The systematic review of documents served as the basis for the methodology used to develop the research. This methodology allows for analysis with a qualitative approach and follows a systematic process.

methodical and methodical, allowing the understanding of phenomena and processes, as well as the clarification of the meaning of notions (Gómez-Ortega and Amaya-Rey, 2013).

In order to carry out the purpose of the research, a critical analysis was constructed in relation to a series of study and dissemination works found in the scientific databases located in the electronic library of the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia UNAD, the main ones were Web of Science, Scopus, Springer Nature, SagePub, Elsevier, Redalyc, ScienceDirect, Scielo, Ebsco and Dialnet, in the same way the following search parameters were used: female prostitution, sex work, female sex work, sexual and work, sexual work, sexual work, community empowerment, Female sex workers, Latin American sexual work, community empowerment, in this way the identification of specific study categories was achieved to reach the understanding of the concept of community empowerment around its applicability and the role of female sex workers in the mentioned processes.

Simultaneously, community-produced literature developed by Latin American sex workers and related to the concept of community empowerment and the strategies generated in the region were included; this search was carried out in the *"Sandra Cabrera's virtual community library on sex work of the Network of Women Sex Workers of Latin America and the Caribbean - RedTraSex"*.

The systematic review of the data collected was carried out through a categorical analysis of the documents from the interpretative prism, which allows going beyond their apparent content, which has several advantages, among which is the formation of major categories of study (Díaz Herrera, 2018).

To achieve the above, an Analytical Research Matrix (RAI) was used; in this instrument approximately eighty bibliographic documents were analyzed, and from this, the concepts were articulated as categories of analysis; in line with the above, three main categories were established, from which related subcategories were articulated, as shown in Table No. 1.

Table 1
Description of categories and subcategories of analysis.

1. Community Empowerment (EP)	
Subcategory	Description
Definition and application	Refers to the implicit or explicit concept of community empowerment that is glimpsed within the community of the texts, taking into account its development context and how it is applied in the analyzed document. This subcategory refers to those authors and theoretical positions from which the notion of community empowerment has been approached from the Latin American and Anglo-Saxon perspectives of Community Psychology.
Theoretical References	
2. Sex workers (TS)	
Role in the process	It is defined as the actions of sex workers and their type of participation in community empowerment processes.
Representation in the process	From this category we seek to identify what type of population is most active in e m p o w e r m e n t processes, as well as to whom these processes have been oriented (cisgender or transgender women).


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3. Community Psychology (CP)

Associated psychosocial factors

It refers to the psychological variables that, according to Community Psychology, support the development of community empowerment processes.

Contribution

The contribution of empowerment processes to Community Psychology is defined, as well as the contributions and realities of the discipline from a Latin American perspective.

Note: Prepared by the authors, the table shows the concept to be observed and its definition for the analysis exercise.

The review of the results was done through a critical analysis, from which a detailed study of the notion of community empowerment and the relationship of this term with the collectivities of sex workers in Latin America was carried out, in order to generate knowledge about its principles and the way it is applied in the reality studied. Likewise, it is important to point out that this analysis is carried out by clarifying the main ideas related to the argument, explanation, criticism or justification of the opinion, that is, it is a critical analysis of the text (Universidad de Estudios Superiores Juventus, 2022).

4. RESULTS

Community Empowerment

It is one of the purposes of Community Psychology and is a term that is directly related to the generation of resources and potentialities for the development of equal opportunities in excluded population groups in order to achieve control of their reality, at present, community empowerment is directly related to the dynamics of development in the Latin American region from the perspective of measures aimed at reducing poverty and increasing community equity; however, from the review it was possible to identify that this concept derives from two positions that served as the basis for the study of empowerment tactics used in groups of Latin American sex workers.

From the community perspective in empowerment, processes are studied with minority groups that are not empowered (women, the poor, among others), this concept is considered by multilateral development agencies as a relevant element in poverty eradication strategies (World Bank, 2001; ECLAC, 2001 cited in Canal et. al. 2010, p. 3).

Economic poverty and marginalization were identified as conditions under which there is no evidence of a process of empowerment in the communities or collectives, from which the idea of social isolation takes on great relevance, a factor that per se hinders the acquisition of skills and tools to achieve control in the contextualized reality.

Social exclusion is defined as the systematic denial of access to satisfiers that would allow a group or collective to maintain itself independently within the social levels established by the institutions and norms of a given society (Castel, 2001 in Sánchez and Jiménez, 2013).

As part of the analysis, it should be noted that the human collectives analyzed from the review to the lithoanalytical

This is in addition to factors such as sexual identity, ethnicity, gender, among others, and so on:

there are different dimensions of exclusion: 1) poverty and inequity, 2) denial of recognition and lack of respect, and 3) disintegration and rupture of social ties, ...in the same way, the transition from social exclusion to social inclusion implies empowerment. (Canal et. al. 2010, p. 4).

Sub-Category - Theoretical references

From the above, the analysis is complemented with the identification of community empowerment based on the theoretical references generated from this concept in Community Psychology, in that sense, from the Anglo-Saxon perspective, empowerment is constituted as a process through which alternatives are granted to individuals so that their actions develop in a certain way, which corresponds to a welfare perspective; On the other hand, the Latin American vision postulates that a true process of empowerment is demonstrated "when people assume for themselves -autonomously- the reins of their own lives, taking advantage of and/or building circumstances that are conducive to this" (Canal et al., 2010, p. 4).

For the study of the data related to the concept of community empowerment, the Anglo-Saxon and Latin American theoretical approaches are used based on the particularities that each one of them addresses in relation to the social and historical context from which they originate; initially, reference is made to empowerment under the term empowerment proposed by Rappaport in the United States, a term that coined a process from which individuals and groups require the creation of conditions to facilitate strengthening (Montero, 2009).

From the Anglo-Saxon perspective of community empowerment, the psychology professional serves as a provider and facilitator of resources, not as a specialist for the community; therefore, the role of the community is that of an active participant in the process of transformation and development (Zimmerman, 2000 in Silva & Loreto, 2004).

On the other hand, there is the concept of empowerment seen from the Latin American perspective, which is related to the Anglo-Saxon notion and shares some fundamental bases; however, for the purposes of the critical analysis, the terms community strengthening or empowerment, typical of this line of thought, are appropriated.

Empowerment is described as the process by which the individuals of a collectivity or group jointly enhance their resources and capabilities to give meaning to their own living conditions through community action to achieve social change in accordance with their identified needs and aspirations. Similarly, it is important to emphasize that community strengthening actions do not involve the intervention of external agents to provide resources to community members. This process is led by the collective and its identified resources to achieve changes for the benefit of the community and, consequently, to overcome inequality, exploitation, subjugation or oppression (Montero, 2003).



In order to demonstrate empowerment, it is necessary to specify that it is supported by community processes such as participation, awareness, exercise of control, power, politicization, self-management, commitment, evolution and individual growth and a form of social identity that implies community identity (sense of community) (Montero, 2009).

5. DISCUSSION

The concept of sex work became a great challenge during the development of the documentary analysis due to the lack of material on the subject beyond prejudices, it became difficult to examine, since the research and documents used for this purpose are mainly related to the term prostitution, which is mostly constituted as an activity that obeys exclusively to human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation and/or sexual slavery.

The approaches to sex work are limited to the hygienist perspective with prevention and/or health promotion approaches related to HIV and STIs.

During the analysis it became evident that the use of the term "sex work" is somehow excluded or marginalized from the vocabulary used to refer to people who engage in paid sexual activities; although it is mentioned in the documentary sources, it is still approached from a stigmatizing perspective and, on occasions, it is focused on a regulationist-hygienist perspective.

In addition, by examining the documents produced by the community, it is possible to appreciate how the term sex work acquires a meaning of vindication and empowerment, especially for women involved in this work, these articles highlight how this term provides them with tools for their transformation both individually and within their communities.

The concept of "sex work" was proposed as an option to describe the practice of a labor that has been strongly marked by stigma and that throughout history, most people associated it only with those who have intimate relations in exchange for money; however, the definition has been expanded to include other forms of sexual work and services. This clarification was a crucial factor in the search, since it allowed understanding that sex work encompasses much more than the initially established definition.

Community empowerment is a concept of considerable relevance in the field of Community Psychology, since it is positioned as one of the main objectives of this discipline, it is a process that is carried out with minority groups that lack power and are affected by poverty and marginalization.

Empowerment places particular emphasis on identifying people's strengths and potential, focusing on the positive aspects of each individual, its main objective is to promote human well-being through a positive approach; it is relevant to highlight that empowerment seeks social change, autonomy and freedom, aimed at establishing fair and egalitarian societies in which all people have the opportunity to actively participate in decision making and in the transformation of their reality, instead of focusing on curing problems or identifying risk factors.

Currently, the meaning of empowerment is widely used to describe various processes in which people acquire motivation or validation to act in a certain way, however, it is within the field of Community Psychology where this concept acquires greater importance in relation to community processes. Thus, although the expression "empowerment" is used interchangeably in many fields, it is especially relevant in community psychology as it focuses on strengthening communities by promoting their empowerment and encouraging their active participation in the search for positive social change.

Initially, we chose to search only for the term "community empowerment", which yielded shallow and limited results; however, by incorporating the concept of "community strengthening" into the search, new research possibilities were opened up, although empowerment and community strengthening share similarities, they are approached from two different perspectives: Anglo-Saxon and Latin American.

Although the notions of "empowerment" and "community strengthening" share a similar purpose, it is important to point out that each responds to different dynamics according to the context from which they originated; in the first instance, from the Anglo-Saxon perspective, empowerment seeks the creation of favorable conditions to facilitate strengthening; this approach seeks to grant or provide opportunities for individuals to behave in a certain way; from this vision, empowerment implies a process of empowerment and capacity building.

From the Anglo-Saxon perspective, it was found that 33.3% of the documents examined (20 articles) addressed empowerment strategies for female sex workers; these documents revealed that the approaches focus on assistance and sexual health approaches with emphasis on HIV and sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevention; in addition, it was observed that there were limited actions related to the recognition of the rights of these communities from a legal perspective.

During the second part of the critical analysis of the concept of community empowerment, it is important to examine it from the Latin American approach, which uses the term "community strengthening", from this perspective, people take control of their lives independently, taking advantage of and developing their own resources and potential, from this perspective, the collective assumes the initiative in the development of their actions for change, in this sense, strengthening is understood as an intrinsic empowerment.

Another aspect that was identified in relation to this theoretical approach is that community action originates from and with the community, which is a highly relevant factor to consider, in that sense, community empowerment requires the identification of resources and potentialities in the community to achieve social change, but this does not require the participation of external agents, actions start from within.

According to this second look at the concept from a Latin American perspective, 66.6% of the articles searched (40 documents) show actions to approach sex workers' communities that focus on Latin American strengthening and are based on a participatory approach and community action oriented to social change carried out by the community.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The literature review showed that there is little clarity regarding the notion of sex work versus the term prostitution, the latter being directly associated with human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, while sex work is an exercise that in one way or another is voluntary.

Otherwise, the absence of clear concepts of sex work prevents an understanding of the magnitude of this work in terms of the number of women involved, which clearly leads to the violation of their rights by making them invisible.

The concept of empowerment is related from various angles, and today it is a notion that is arbitrarily used to define various ways of acting, however, when framing the processes of empowerment from the perspective of community psychology, it is possible to observe that these processes are adapted to the environment and realities of sex workers according to their life circumstances.

Although the notion of empowerment occasionally translates into the acquisition of certain qualities that generate control over reality, there are many different ways of interpreting it, thus, in light of the review, empowerment can be seen in two different contexts, The first is as an individual and collective process that results in the development of support networks, levels of competence and cooperation to favor community changes and take control of one's own life, which is related to the term community strengthening since the actions are carried out with and from the community.

Community empowerment, on the other hand, is also seen as a process that, while it can be developed both individually and collectively, and would also produce support networks, levels of competence and cooperation to foster community change and take charge of their own lives, empowerment differs from the idea of strengthening in that the strategies are developed in and for the community.

Community empowerment is a condition that individuals must meet in order to emerge from social isolation, so that through institutional and/or community initiatives, they can acquire the necessary skills to gain control over their reality.

As a result, it was observed that the category of "Community Empowerment" encompasses two con- ceptions: *empowerment*, whose attributes characterize it as actions undertaken on the basis that empowerment occurs under the creation of conditions for its development; in this sense, a provider agent is required as a mediator, who places the collectivity as an active participant, on the other hand, community strengthening, which presents the community as an active agent of change, maintains that the circumstances for empowerment are created by the community, without the existence of a provider of these conditions being necessary.

For communities, the pursuit of community participation and access to decision-making in various areas that will enable them to fully enjoy the opportunities presented to them should be a major focus of community empowerment processes, rather than simply focusing on the following



in identifying resources and potentialities and using them to gain control and the ability to influence their reality in order to improve it.

It is crucial to continue studying the issue of sex workers because there is still data that is hidden due to the stigma and stereotypes associated with this profession, it is also important to include sex workers in these studies to raise awareness about this population.

It is suggested to analyze strengthening as an alternative notion to empowerment.

Conflicts of interest

In compliance with current regulations: resolution 8430 of 1993, resolution 2378 of 2008, and other international ethical guidelines, we, Diana Milena Vargas Rodríguez and Tatiana Martínez Santis, declare that this article is not subject to economic interests, political affinity, family relationships or particular interests with organizations related to it. This declaration is made taking into account that in the case of scientific research the term "conflict of interest" is defined as that situation or condition in which the judgment of a professional concerning his or her primary interest of scientific integrity and the integrity of his or her actions (e.g., the integrity of a research) are unduly influenced by a secondary interest (e.g., economic or personal).



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