

Original Article

“They kicked me out of my house, I started working on the street”: intersectionality and occupational apartheid in sex work. A case study

*“Me echaron de mi casa, empecé a trabajar en la calle”:
interseccionalidad y apartheid ocupacional en el trabajo sexual. Un
estudio de caso*

*“Eles me expulsaram da minha casa, comecei a trabalhar na rua”:
interseccionalidade e apartheid ocupacional no trabalho sexual. Um
estudo de caso*

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Abstract

Introduction: Women who have engaged in sex work have been a stigmatized, marginalized, and socially alienated community. Particularly, in the case of trans women, there is a bigger percentage of violence. **Objective:** To analyze the life story of a trans woman who works in sex work, based on an intersectional and occupational analysis. **Method:** We used a qualitative study based on the Life History research technique, considering elements of the occupational narrative interview. **Results:** From her history, we can see that there are elements that have intersected throughout her life, such as the domains: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. And that her occupational choices have been strongly influenced by her context within occupational apartheid, seeking to generate spaces of resistance and agency in the face of different adversities.

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Conclusions: These situations make her living conditions precarious and alert the influences of economic, political, and heteronormative systems, among others, in determining people's lives.

Keywords: Gender Identity, Transgender Persons, Intersectionality, Occupational Therapy, Sex Work.

Resumen

Introducción: Las mujeres que se han dedicado al trabajo sexual han sido una comunidad estigmatizada, marginada y alienada socialmente. Particularmente, en el caso de las mujeres trans la situación ha sido peor, enfrentando mayores porcentajes de violencia. **Objetivo:** Analizar la historia de vida de una mujer trans que se desempeña en el trabajo sexual, a partir de un análisis interseccional y ocupacional. **Método:** Empleamos un estudio cualitativo basado en la técnica de investigación Historia de Vida, considerando elementos de la entrevista narrativa ocupacional. **Resultados:** Desde su historia, podemos ver que hay elementos que han interseccionado a lo largo de su vida, tales como los dominios: estructural, disciplinar, hegemónico e interpersonal. Sus elecciones ocupacionales han estado fuertemente influenciadas por su contexto dentro de un apartheid ocupacional, buscando la generación de espacios de resistencia y agencia frente a las diferentes adversidades. **Conclusiones:** Estas situaciones precarizan sus condiciones de vida y ponen en alerta las influencias de los sistemas económicos, políticos, heteronormados, entre otros, en la determinación de la vida de las personas.

Palabras clave: Identidad de Género, Personas Transgénero, Interseccionalidad, Terapia Ocupacional, Trabajo Sexual.

Resumo

Introdução: As mulheres que se envolvem em trabalho sexual têm sido uma comunidade estigmatizada, marginalizada e socialmente alienada. Particularmente no caso das mulheres trans, há o enfrentamento de maiores porcentagens de violência. **Objetivo:** Analisar a história de vida de uma mulher trans que atua no trabalho sexual, a partir de uma análise interseccional e ocupacional. **Método:** Utilizou-se um estudo qualitativo baseado na técnica de pesquisa História de Vida, considerando elementos da entrevista narrativa ocupacional. **Resultados:** A partir de sua história, podemos perceber que há elementos que se cruzaram ao longo de sua vida, como os domínios: estrutural, disciplinar, hegemônico e interpessoal. E que suas escolhas ocupacionais foram fortemente influenciadas por seu contexto dentro de um apartheid ocupacional, buscando gerar espaços de resistência e agenciamento diante de diferentes adversidades. **Conclusões:** Essas situações tornam suas condições de vida precárias e alertam para as influências de sistemas econômicos, políticos, heteronormativos, entre outros, na determinação da vida das pessoas.

Palavras-chave: Identidade de Género, Pessoas Transgénero, Interseccionalidade, Terapia Ocupacional, Trabalho Sexual.

Introduction

In general, the women who have been dedicated to sex work have been stigmatized, marginalized, and socially alienated community (Rule & Twinley, 2020). Trans women are especially the ones who have received greater violence, which constitutes a high rate of murders and hate crimes (Gutiérrez Gamboa et al., 2018; Radi & Sardá-Chandiramani, 2016).

Sex work as an occupation can be understood as an *unrecognized job*, a concept that encompasses occupations that, within particular socio-historical and cultural contexts, tend to be seen as "[...] unhealthy, illegal, immoral, abnormal, undesirable, unacceptable and/ or inappropriate" (Kiepek et al., 2019, p. 2); or as *transgressive occupations* that do not represent socially agreed ideals or transgress pre-established ethical, legal or moral agreements (Cifuentes et al., 2014; Palacios, 2017; De La Fuente Pérez, 2019).

Under these conceptualizations, there is an interwoven complex to account for the production of occupational choices around sex work, where occupational apartheid (Pollard et al., 2009) and *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991) are interesting perspectives to consider.

This topic is very relevant due to the situations of violence experienced by trans women. The political commitment of occupational therapy and occupational science can be projected in investigations of historically excluded groups (Correia et al., 2021; Morrison et al., 2021). In this way, studying life histories from an occupational perspective could allow a greater understanding of these situations, projecting improvements in the life situations that these women face daily.

Based on the above, this investigation seeks to analyze the life story of a trans woman who works in sex work based on an intersectional and occupational analysis.

Theoretical Approaches

People who identify as trans

People who identify as trans live with a gender identity different from that expected by heteronormative society (Gutiérrez Gamboa et al., 2018). Thus, the trans experience incorporates two different, non-excluding concepts about gender. One corresponds to people who identify themselves as transsexuals, who do not agree with the gender assigned and imposed at birth, which could be expressed in the desire to carry out body modifications (hormonal or surgical). The other conception is about people who identify as transgender who break with binary and heteronormative gender categorizations, challenging pre-established cultural patrons (Bachiller et al., 2005).

The relationship between people who identify as trans and feminism arose from the third wave of feminism through Queer Theory, in which Judith Butler stands out as one of its referents, who questions the regulatory norms of sex/gender (woman/feminine and man/masculine) and the heterosexual matrix due to its binary categories (Butler, 2011). She raised the need to redefine what had been taken for granted and, when possible, promote social constructions that allow people with other identities and gender expressions to live a better life (Álvarez et al., 2016), especially when these people live in situations of invisibility and violation of rights (Chazarreta, 2016; Moraga Martínez,

2017; García Reyes, 2013). This invisibility, marginality, and discrimination led, for example, in Chile to enact what is known as the Anti-Discrimination Law¹ or the Gender Identity Law², improving, in part, the living conditions of these people, guaranteeing their rights, such as having an identity and access to education, work, housing, and health.

However, the experience in Spain and Argentina indicates that political goodwill alone is not enough for the promulgation of laws but also a profound cultural change in society that problems the fixed values associated with the regulatory norms of sex and gender in such a way as to avoid the conditions that lead these women to enter sex work, as long as it has not been freely chosen (Chazarreta, 2016; García Reyes, 2013).

Sex work YES, Prostitution NO

Sex work is a complex social phenomenon that is related to the systems of domination and oppression through the ways of relating, with the experience of sexuality and desire, with a question of rights and current legal regulations, and with a series of stigmas and discriminations based on culture. It is an activity that is embedded in the cultural and dynamic, economic, political, and ideological structures of a given society (Tirado Acero, 2011).

In political and legal terms, it is possible to indicate the position that each country has towards sex work such as prohibitionist, abolitionist, regulatory, or laborist. For example, the Netherlands has a labor position, where it is regulated and people who work in this field have the same labor rights as any other citizen. On the contrary, Ireland has a prohibitionist position, considering any activity related to sex work as a crime (Villa Camarma, 2010).

In the case of Chile, the country has an abolitionist position that is sustained by the stigma of society against sex work, condemning these practices to clandestinity. In legal terms, this is sanctioned by the *Penal Code*³ and the *Health Code*⁴.

In concrete terms, different guidelines can be indicated. One of them corresponds to the proposal by Tirado Acero (2011), who classifies sex work in 2 different ways: *forced*, consisting of a series of crimes associated with minors and human trafficking for the development of such activity; and *non-forced or voluntary sex work*, understood as voluntary sexual delivery, as a truly free option, in exchange for money.

Regardless of the previous categorization, from different feminist perspectives, the debate on whether to abolish or regulate sex work is an arduous one. For the sphere of abolitionists, MacKinnon (Daich, 2012) refers that sex work and the sexual exploitation

¹Promulgated on July 12, 2012 by the President, Michelle Bachelet. This law condemns all kinds of discrimination -including discrimination based on gender identity- in different contexts (work, education, etc.) (Chile, 2012).

²Promulgated on December 28, 2018 by the President, Sebastián Piñera. This law focuses on the protection of some aspects against the change of registration name for people over eighteen years old. For people under that age, the family courts evaluate and decide on each case Law number 21,120 (Chile, 2018).

³It only penalizes sex work carried out by people under 18 years old and not that which is consented to or performed by adults, as long as it is not human trafficking (Lampert et al., 2014).

⁴In articles 39 and 41, it regulates sex work with the sole objective of preventing the spread of venereal diseases, prohibiting the existence of brothels. Decree 206 of the Ministry of Health, which approved the Regulation on Sexually Transmitted Infections, is also in force. It should be noted that this norm does not establish any prohibition regarding sex work and does not grant the "Carabiniers" the power to take people who carry out the activity to Health Service establishments. Attendance at sexual health control is voluntary and free but subject to a record for statistical purposes and health control.

of women under the patriarchal system are two sides of the same coin since women are objectified and reduced to an object of pleasure, perpetuating an unequal power relationship that, in addition to violating the dignity and autonomy of women, implies situations of violence, which must be eradicated.

On the other hand, there is the regulatory position under the "necessary lesser evil", which proposes to regulate sex work to protect the rights of women who exercise it. In addition, it defends the idea that, although the option of not being a freely chosen job could be given, it is consented to (Daich, 2012).

What is paradoxical is that, when the debate was carried out in the academy, discussing the need to abolish or regulate sex work, sex workers were not integrated as subjects who had something to decide, denoting not only marginality in society but also in knowledge production circuits (Morcillo & Varela, 2016).

Therefore, it is reasonable to think that if women dedicated to sex work are invisible and ignored by some feminist communities, trans women have also been there, particularly by excluding trans feminists (Ferré-Pavia & Zaldívar, 2022). Today, if there is a greater opening for cisgender women dedicated to sex work, trans women dedicated to the same thing do not have the same success (Gómez Restrepo & Betancur Vásquez, 2020).

Trans women and sex work

Authors like García Reyes (2013) have tried to make the narrative of trans women who dedicate themselves to sex work visible, as one of the many realities that, despite existing, seem to be more hidden.

The bibliography regarding women who identify themselves as trans and who engage in sexual work indicates that, in most cases, this occupation responds more to a subsistence measure rather than a free choice, becoming a dehumanizing practice that arises due to several reasons such as the low level of education and the uprooting of the family nucleus, family with scarce resources, and the rejection of the society that confines the access of these people to all sorts of social rights such as work, health and education (Chazarreta, 2016, 2017).

In addition, sexual work brings consequences that are intensified in trans women: violence like offenses or strikes on public roads, sexually transmitted diseases, and others associated with unhealthy lifestyles and homicides (Chazarreta, 2016, 2017).

In cases where sex work has not been freely chosen, there is a violation of rights, as well as a violation of autonomy to choose the productive activity that one wants to carry out. On the other hand, some studies question the idea that sex work only generates vulnerability, highlighting the importance of this space, especially for trans people, in terms of sociability and the learning of survival strategies, body construction strategies for sex work, in addition to advice on hormones, etc. (Monzeli, 2013).

Intersectionality

Black feminism, which in addition to revealing the biased vision of Western feminism -and at the same time hegemonic-, gave an account of other systems of oppression, such as social class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality (Cubillos Almendra, 2015).

One of the constructs that emerged from black feminism was *intersectionality*, which identifies that the *patriarchal* (manifested in categories such as sexual orientation and gender identity), the *capitalist* (manifested in the socioeconomic level), and the *post-colonial* (manifested in race and ethnicity) interact in a differentiated way and intersect as structural systems of oppression and domination (Sherwin & Tato, 2014).

This construct was mentioned by Kimberlé Crenshaw to refer to multiple and simultaneous systems of oppression in black women, in which categories such as race and gender intersect to influence their life trajectories, giving rise to different power relations. She indicated that, just as racism does not manifest in the same way in men and women, sexism affects white women and black women in different ways (Cubillos Almendra, 2015; Expósito Molina, 2013).

Patricia Hill Collins understands intersectionality as an:

[...] analysis that asserts that the systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age mutually form the construction of the characteristics of social organization, which shape the experiences of black women and are formed by black women (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 299).

The *intersectionality* can be analyzed from a *Matrix of Domination*, which refers to the particular and the global social organization in a society. For this, it identifies four intertwined domains: *structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal areas* (Hill Collins, 2000).

- a) *the structural scope* consists of structures such as the law -the right-, the politics, the religion, and the economy, which establish the structural parameters and access to power.
- b) The *disciplinary scope* seeks to control and organize human behavior through bureaucratic, religious, cultural, educational institutions, etc., which manage the oppression from the structural domain and which, in a hidden way, lead to sexism, and racism, among others.
- c) The *hegemonic scope* legitimizes the oppression while being endorsed by culture, the point of communion between ideology and conscience. In addition, it is manifested in the values, the language we use, the images we store, and our ideas. At the same time, it is reproduced through studio plans and textbooks, religious teachings, mass media of communication, community cultures, and family stories. All this generates that the dominant hegemony unites the structural, disciplinary, and interpersonal areas.
- d) The *interpersonal scope* influences the daily life of people, which is composed of personal relationships, as well as the different interactions of daily life. It is important to highlight that the change starts in the intrapersonal scope, that is, how an individual sees himself and understands himself and his experiences. The first step to changing the interpersonal domain is to see how their "[...] thoughts and actions are held in front of another subordinate person" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 287).

Some perspectives that have investigated sexual work from an intersectional point of view emphasize who the people involved in sex work are under what conditions they perform, and what they represent in society (Hurtado Saa, 2013; Tirado Acero, 2011).

In addition, it has been understood as an ethnicized, racialized, feminized, and precarious occupation, in which the people who perform them are undervalued by the culture (Hurtado Saa, 2013) such as some marginalized trans people. This phenomenon is strengthened by the exclusion of trans women from visible spaces in society, becoming obliged to make certain occupational choices in the context of Occupational Apartheid.

Occupational Apartheid and occupational choices

Occupational Apartheid is a disciplinary construct that was developed to refer to structural elements that generate mechanisms of oppression and that affect, restrict, or limit access to significant occupations. Linked to the idea that not all people are equal, some people have greater privileges than others due to a social structure that reproduces inequalities. Occupational Apartheid accounts for this segregation, which affects groups of people who are limited in their occupational opportunities, based on race, skin color, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, or other characteristics (Kronenberg et al., 2006; Pollard et al., 2009).

This process mentions the specific circumstances in which the segregation of people is organized and has the intention of producing serious inequalities, or is operationally maintained by a dominant group despite the evidence of the harmful effects that it produces in an oppressed group. According to this conception, segregation is systemic, generated from a series of rules established in society that previously define what is normal/possible and what is not, generating opportunities only for some social groups, while for others it confines these opportunities, establishing barriers that prevent optimal participation in occupations. This is why Occupational Apartheid is the result of political constraints that affect all aspects of everyday life and human occupation through legal, economic, social, and religious restrictions (Pollard et al., 2009).

In addition, it produces "classes of people", some of the first category (cisgender people) and the second category (trans people). Both categories have different social and economic values and statuses, which implies that the people who hold more power deny or ignore the participation in significant occupations of the second category, confining them to survive on the margins of society and with repertoires of impoverished occupations (Moraga Martínez, 2017).

Finally, Occupational Apartheid is configured in such a way that it can be made explicit through laws that account for particular restrictions on the rights of people, even in matters such as health (Núñez et al., 2019) or, in the "silence" of the system, its opposition and resistance to make certain structural modifications that are requested by the oppressed groups and that would improve their living conditions and improve their access to human rights (Morrison et al., 2020).

Regarding *occupational choices*, they involve the application of a choice to participate in occupations, they are co-constructed through their transactional relationship with the context, and they always depend on the past (Galvaan, 2012). They correspond to the choice that a person makes to participate in a certain occupation, which depends both on the person (as a social agent), on their abilities/capacities for the activity, and on the socioeconomic and political contexts that support the social structure. Thus, contextual factors are the ones that to a greater extent influence whether or not a person can participate in an activity of his/her choice (Galvaan, 2012). An occupational choice *can*

be made manifesting as a process. It is also the result of a decision regarding participation in occupations and occurs implicitly and explicitly when action is applied to occupational commitment in a particular context (Galvaan, 2015). Thus, occupational choices will or will not perpetuate certain social structures, or they will be perpetuated by these same structures, causing a status quo around the situation of people.

In this way, the occupational choices will be determined by the context (Avillo et al., 2015; Galvaan, 2012, 2015; Morrison et al., 2020), creating difficulties to transform the possibilities and the spaces where people develop. This is because the perceptions of control and election are constructed from social and cultural dimensions (Galvaan, 2012, 2015).

From other perspectives of occupational science, there is a difference between occupational choices and *occupational decision-making*. Occupational decision-making can be understood as a process situated through which individuals, families, or groups respond to a set of opportunities and choices driven by the context to select the occupations in which they will participate. Occupational decision-making is a process that empowers people to be agents, rather than passive, in a significant occupational commitment throughout life (Parnell et al., 2019). From the perspective of Galvaan (2015), occupational decisions are related to day-to-day decisions, which on occasion can be invisible to the context in which they occur, while occupational selections emphasize the process in which they produce, reproduce and carry out certain occupations.

In this case, we will be interested in identifying the relationships between occupational choices and sexual work. In addition to the above, the context in which these occupational selections take place is Occupational Apartheid, which may have elements in common with the analysis carried out by the intersectional perspective. Thus, how the intersection of the systems of oppression, domination, and Occupational Apartheid impacts a trans woman who performs sexual work is a central aspect that this investigation tries to relate.

Methodological Reference

This investigation is based on a constructivist paradigm since it focuses on the meanings that a person attributes to the reality that lives and builds, and the meaning is seen as something from social exchanges between different people, within the guidelines of culturally assigned lives (Gergen, 1996).

This paradigm does not seek to elaborate theories or models that predict human behavior but the *interpretation of a life story*, for example. It understands that concepts, such as sex work or identifying oneself as a trans woman, are social constructions limited to a particular culture, which in addition have been described negatively because of the beliefs that have been transmitted from popular knowledge and also for the vision adopted by certain institutions such as the Church or the State.

This is a qualitative study based on the *Life Story* research technique. Through the report of the interviewed person, the researcher collects the life experiences to transcribe and analyze them, allowing us to know their subjectivity, social reality, and their meanings (Blanco, 2011).

The life story of a 31-year-old Chilean trans woman who has been working as a sex worker for 10 years and who expresses interest in being part of the research process was reconstructed. All the necessary ethical aspects were taken, such as the signing of an informed consent term, and the suggested recommendations for research with people were followed (Organización Panamericana de la Salud, 2016). The research was approved by the bioethics unit where one of the researchers works.

Regarding the procedures, we used an interview based on the occupational narrative interview (Castro, 2012) through the elaboration of a battery of questions with two categories: (1) critical life events (2) occupational choices, routine, and interests, where some of the questions are intended towards intersectionality. This instrument was applied through a video call, which was recorded in audio with the date, day, and time previously scheduled, transcribed, and then analyzed according to the mentioned categories from a matrix.

Results

Life story summary

The life story we analyzed corresponds to Pamela (name changed for this article), who started with her gender transition process 12 years ago, having gone through different stages since her childhood until her gender agreed with her identity. Currently, she is a sex worker and is beginning to perform in the field of activism as an HIV/AIDS prevention monitor.

She had a traditional childhood (following the patterns established by the culture) until adolescence, where she felt different and began to search for her identity, recognizing herself first as a homosexual person, what she knew up to that moment, and also the most accepted by their peers.

Once she finished high school, she started working, doing replacement shifts in a commercial store, and then having greater responsibilities being in charge of a group of people, where he felt a certain rejection when identifying as homosexual and showing up in public with her partner. While she was working, her gender transition was accentuated, becoming interested in a drag queen, so she began to "dress as a woman" when she went out to parties. From that moment on, when she had already begun to change externally (letting her hair grow, changing her clothes, etc.), the problems at work increased, reaching the point where she stopped receiving calls for replacements and she was forced to resign.

The problems with her family also started during this period, so she had to leave her home, living a couple of days on the street, until she was helped by a friend she met. Her friend took her to a place to sleep for which she had to pay daily or weekly, and that's when she started to work in sex work.

At first, she had problems with her colleagues for being a "good girl", a person with studies and who had worked formally and should not work on the streets; however, over time she was able to relate to and live better with them.

Identifying as a woman has not been easy in her interpersonal relationships since she has had conflicts with partners and friends, who also suffer discrimination from society, making it difficult to maintain affective ties with Pamela.

For Pamela, being a sex worker is complex. She has had a contrast of sensations and feelings since at the beginning, she felt that she was entertaining and felt somehow attractive according to the canons of femininity. However, over time she stopped liking it and she became unpleasant since she needed drugs and alcohol to stay up all night, to get cold, and as an alternative to not noticing what was going on around her when she worked. In addition, she had to go through different situations of discrimination and aggression by clients such as physical aggression.

Currently, she no longer wants to work on the street but in a private home, with clients that she decides and prices that she establishes. Her occupations have diversified, as she has joined activism and the need to work in other spaces has arisen. With this, her state of health has improved. However, despite having interests such as studying for a university degree or sustaining herself within activism, she is afraid of suffering new discrimination, which limits her to stay within the area that she already knows and that, in a certain way, cannot generate more pain.

Analysis

We performed the analysis of Pamela's life story in two parts. First, we focused on the intersectional perspective, describing the different elements of the domination matrix proposed by Hill-Collins (1990); and in second moment from the occupational apartheid perspective (Pollard et al., 2009).

Domination matrix

Interpersonal scope

This will be divided into two parts, one focused on the social relationships that Pamela has established in her personal life and the other focused on *sex work*.

Pamela remembers her childhood as, *"I think I had the childhood that any child could have had"* (Pamela's Life Story [hereinafter HVP], p. 2). But later, in adolescence and adulthood, she indicates *"[...] for my parents, it was like now, they accept me as a homosexual son, but dressing as a woman, it was already too much"* (HVP, p. 4). Indeed, *"[...] the first violence that trans people experience starts at home, from the family, discrimination due to rejection, then at school [...] the issue of bullying, which is also super violent"* (HVP, p. 18).

In adulthood, while the family fades into the background, relationships with a partner and friends become fundamental. However, the social constructions associated with sex and gender once again reduce the relationships that Pamela can establish. Regarding this, she points out,

I could meet someone, yes, maybe flirting but that's it because the fact that I have to tell them that I'm trans is going to generate a conflict [...] one of two, or mine gets scared or starts with this question that highlights how, it is a before and after,

because even in the present it is noticeable, by how it touches you, by an endless number of ways (HVP, p. 20).

The imposition of binary categories in Pamela's life Another of the elements is identified in social relationships as a way of wanting to normalize her sexuality, and where the body modifications are the path, she must follow to be closer to social acceptance (looking a cisgender person). This is the reflection that arises from what Pamela mentions, when she is meeting a man as,

[...] suddenly they kind of ask you, 'Hey, are you trans?'; Yes!, 'and are you operated?'. It's like the first thing they ask you, I don't know if he's morbid [...] and if he hasn't had surgery like he already got there. And if he didn't get there, they still sexualize you (HVP, p. 12).

In addition, the systems of oppression not only work by marginalizing and stigmatizing Pamela but also all the people who get close to her affectionately or in a friendly way. This means that people who could be close to her avoid exposing themselves to sharing with her in public. Pamela points out

[...] that if I have a male friend [...] he usually doesn't go out with me. Sharing with more friends, but within an intimate area, for example, going to a disco, they will never do (HVP, p. 20).

Regarding Pamela's social relationships as a sex worker, she points out that at the beginning she had difficulties with her colleagues due to her educational level and social class, which generated discrimination:

I had a lot of problems with my companions because I came from another world, I was like "[...] the good little girl" to them, you know? because it was that, 'how can a nice little girl stand in the corner?', they were full of prejudices (HVP, p. 5).

She adds, "[...] it was super hard [...] the issue of living with my colleagues. It took me a lot to win the street. I had to fight to win, to be able to stand still" (HVP, p. 6).

As for relationships with clients, it is here where the systems of domination in the sex worker-client relationship are expressed in a more accentuated way. A power relationship where the man hires Pamela's services, objectifying her and reducing her to an object of pleasure. In this sense, Pamela points out,

Who am I? The first time, I am the first experience, or I don't know, the one you got the urge and it was what you got in some cases. But that's why I'm telling you, that is, there were very few, well today there are more, those who are open to knowing you, you know? but others think I am nothing more than that [an object], especially on the street (HVP, p. 8).

Wanting to delve into the negative experiences that Pamela has had as a sex worker, she indicates, "I think the most violent one I had was when a guy punched me in the leg

because he didn't want to pay me. yes, and that's it, I've had good experiences [...] good ones, I think more than bad' (HVP, p. 7).

Based on what has been pointed out in this domain, where the systems of domination and oppression materialize in violent social relations or those tending to marginalize it because they differ from the socially accepted categories, it is inevitable that there will be consequences in self-esteem and self-concept, the ones who are required to face new challenges and carry out other activities of personal interest. By the way, Pamela refers to the following,

I am giving myself the possibility to do other things. With a lot of fear, because it's still complicated, especially when you've lived through discrimination and violence for so long, you know? If in the end [...] that is what scares me, [...] being super well and suddenly, out of nowhere, something comes out and the plane crashes down and leaves everything thrown away. Because I don't know if I feel like continuing to receive bad vibes (HVP, p. 10).

Hegemonic scope

In this domain, the labels –thinking of people who identify as trans–, often dual and opposite, make it possible to distinguish those who are within society since they satisfy the expectations associated with their biological sex and, therefore, they can enjoy the privileges; of those who are condemned to live a life on the margins of society for not meeting those expectations. However, those who have a life confined to the margins can assume a position of resistance, challenging the labels and social constructions that have been associated with the gender/sex system to produce stigma. In this regard, Pamela, from a position of resistance, says,

I do not identify myself as a trans woman, I only identify myself as a woman, I wear the tag of trans woman to introduce myself [...]. since society is organized with so many labels, I need to have the label of being a trans woman so that the rest feel comfortable (HVP, p. 1).

Another characteristic in this domain is the conflict that can arise between ideology and conscience. In this case, the ideologies represented by the binary norm and the heterosexual matrix, which, when constituted from a collective thought, imposes the socially accepted ways of life, and Pamela's awareness that before those ideologies she postpones her gender identity, as a way, perhaps, to avoid rejection and marginalization. This led, for example, to Pamela having normative behaviors from an early age,

I felt different, you know? but I never said that, as I always kept quiet, until very old age, because even [in] adolescence I also tried to have this heteronormative life in a certain way (HVP, p. 2).

It should be noted that even when Pamela continued to feel different or alien to the binary norms of our heteronormative and patriarchal society, these differences led her to think in the first instance that she was homosexual. What could be due to the greater visibility and acceptance of certain homosexual people within society, finding a greater

amount of information about it, in contrast to people who identify as trans, who, by breaking with the expectations associated with their sex, such as roles, ways of being, behaving and dressing, produced greater social rejection, tending to make these realities invisible. Regarding this, Pamela tells us that,

I thought I was homosexual, I built myself from that part, because in a certain way, I could start having relationships with men and all that, but the issue continued poorly, I couldn't look at myself in the mirror [...], in a certain way it came with this education that we all had, a man is a man and how is a man going to dress as a woman? And how is a man going to be a woman? And all those prejudices, you know? (HVP, p. 3).

In a second instance, and with more information on trans identities, he began his transit. This process implied challenging the regulatory norms of sex/gender to live and express their gender identity, for which their conscience was superimposed on the ideologies and socially accepted ways of life, even knowing that by breaking with the expectations associated with their biological sex, society would oppress their choice of life through rejection and marginalization. Regarding this, Pamela refers,

Already assuming the role [...] I began to let my hair longer, I began to dress not so masculine, you know? and it was not the same. In other words, in a certain way, for them it was strange, and above all, because I was already working. It was like that, that is, I knew that in reality as a woman they were not going to receive me anywhere (HVP, p. 6).

Disciplinary scope

As a domain that acts to regulate human behavior of people, here lies a series of institutions that are in the line of discipline⁵. One of them corresponds to educational establishments, which reproduce visions associated with the binary and the consequences it produced in Pamela, exacerbating certain normative behaviors to the detriment of others that, in the eyes of other people, are not normative or acceptable. Regarding this, Pamela indicates,

I was so stuck on the subject of being perfect, trying to behave well, trying [very] hard at school, and that no one could say anything more about me, more than what was obvious, that I was very feminine, well, even though he had a very masculine build (HVP, p. 2).

In addition, the educational and labor system of the country reproduces the patriarchal logic of society, because it is not the same to be a trans woman as a trans man, both aspiring for example, to incorporate themselves into a higher education establishment, to maintain themselves and to egress from this, what could be related to what trans women like Pamela have fewer opportunities to live a better life without having to apply for sexual work as a way of subsisting. In this sense, Pamela comments,

⁵It is important to consider that at the time the interviewee's story refers, neither the gender identity nor non-discrimination law existed. This is relevant, since they are two of the laws that provide some support to trans people in Chile today.

If we had options, for example, to study well, to work well, in safe, healthy environments, you know? we wouldn't do it po' [to work in the sex trade] [...]. From 25 up they also have all this stigma, you know? because today, for example, they are seeing trans partners at the university...partners, because there are hidden trans men, you know? (HVP, p. 15).

Structural scope

As a domain about accessing power in a differentiated way, due to laws, politics, and the economy, which guarantee access to rights in social groups, it can be indicated in the HVP that access to rights in many instances of her life was denied to her because she was a trans woman. From this, there is the importance of the gender identity law as an essential right that recognizes people who identify as trans, nurturing the feeling of being someone and belonging to something. Pamela tells us that,

[...] the fact that you already have an identity, you are already a subject of rights. You already have an identity, you belong to something... in this logic, it is very difficult to understand us for this very reason, because from this area of 'privileges' you go to have nothing and to not be part of anything, where your whole being becomes invisible (HVP, p. 19).

However, Pamela began her transition when neither the Anti-Discrimination Law nor the Gender Identity Law existed. Therefore, her labor and educational rights were violated, which added to her lack of social support, and confined her possibilities of maintaining the life she had. These violations of her access to her rights and her continued involvement in the activities led to her engaging in forced sex work. In this regard, Pamela points out: “[...] *once I started with transit, I could not continue working and apart from being kicked out of my house, I started working on the street*” (HVP, p. 3).

The vulnerability of rights means the lack of current legislation to save the rights and the physical and emotional integrity -at the moment- in the soil of people who identify as trans, but also those who engage in sex work.

While doing sex work, Pamela rescues the precarious working conditions in which some women who identify themselves as transgender perform and stresses the need for sex work to be recognized as a decent job, which is why the country adopts a regulatory stance (and ideally laborist) rather than abolitionist, highlighting that,

[It is sought that] women sex workers have a better job, to see it in a more dignified way, because in a certain way, we all see work today as escort work and the whole story, as luxury work. But there is also a large part of the population that is a sex worker and that is quite precarious [...] where they do not even have a hygienic bathroom [...] (HVP, p. 8).

Finally, we can point out that Pamela has experienced a double or even triple violation of rights and invisibility for being a woman, transgender, and also doing sex work, which continues to this day. She said in her words: “[...] *in adulthood [rights are violated] in all senses: economic, social, justice [...] we experience extreme violence*” (HVP, p. 18).

Occupational Apartheid and occupational elections

In Pamela's life story, we were able to show how the patriarchal system, through the systems of domination, privileges men over women, and cis identities over trans people. This has a direct impact on occupational choices that people can access.

From here, the transition that Pamela lived from a cis man to a trans woman has manifested as a limitation in her participation in occupational choices. This is reinforced when Pamela speaks explicitly about the consequences of the transit: *"I lost everything, I lost my life, [...], if you realize, I had a very good job [...] but I couldn't keep working"* (HVP, p. 13).

Going deeper into her work, she points out, *"[...] because as a man I had a job [...], I was an account executive in commercial stores"* (HVP, p. 5-6). However, after her transition began, her employers stopped communicating with her to make replacements,

When I started the change, for example, it was no longer useful to them because I had longer hair, I changed the color, and now I was going to feminize a little more, you know? And since there was a conflict, obviously they don't tell you verbally but they stopped calling (HVP, p. 14).

In the case of their participation in activities of interest such as a choir, Pamela says, *"[...] they were already more drastic and put to a vote if my permanence was good or not"* (HVP, p. 14), which concluded that *"I could not follow"* (HVP, p. 14).

The aforementioned experiences, added to being uprooted from her home, led to Pamela having to resort to sex work, not by choice, but by necessity and by force. This is due to having been considered a second-class person who does not have current legal regulations that would ensure her recognition and the guarantee of basic rights such as identity, education, or work; nor with enough social openness to overcome the binary categories and role expectations assigned to her gender, led her to have to support herself in the only way she found, even if it is not to her liking,

Uh, I don't like my job [...]. The first years were entertaining because I had sex and they pay you for it and the whole story, but now, when I had the knowledge and the whole story, it becomes quite tedious [...] because you don't always like the person, you know? (HVP, p. 9).

This shows how Occupational Apartheid builds impediments (caused by society, family, etc.) that transformed Pamela's life due to her gender identity, which caused a deterioration in her living conditions due to a greater violation of her rights and discrimination, and about work, job insecurity.

However, over the years, Pamela has found opportunities to make occupational choices within a limited repertoire of occupations, such as working as a sex worker, no longer on the street, but in an apartment. She has also been involved in other occupations, those that are most satisfying to her, and in which she would like to continue participating. In this regard, she points out that *"I would like, I don't know, suddenly to be able to continue on this issue of being an activist, but already with a salary, as a public official in some area in which I can develop these skills"* (HVP, p. 10). This is

partly due to the following, "[...] *being a sex worker has never [been] in my mind all my life*" (HVP, p. 10).

This is also due to the greater social acceptance, the provision of current legal regulations that condemns any discriminatory act based on gender identity, and to the different opportunities that he has been having to choose occupations of his choice, not without some fear and reluctance due to the stories of infringement and discrimination experienced throughout their life trajectory, as previously analyzed.

Finally, it should be noted that this situation and this feeling are not only Pamela's, but in her eyes, some experiences and situations are shared by her colleagues, emphasizing that it is not a particular reality of a particular person "[...] *in a certain way I see how my colleagues have it, they have had it just as bad as me, and even worse*" (HVP, p. 13).

Discussion and Conclusions

When we began to inquire about our topic of interest, we realized that women who identify as trans and who perform sex work were not only invisible in everyday life but also in the circuits of knowledge production. From this, interest arose in providing a space where trans women who practice sex work could tell about their life experiences and express their feelings. However, the Life Story technique has a challenge, as trans women who engage in sex work are willing or not to reconstruct their history, including experiences that in some cases could be marked by suffering (Villamizar & Gama, 1994). From there, having used this technique could have been a limitation in the face of the possibility of knowing other realities of trans women who perform sex work.

Regarding Pamela's Life Story, we identified that critical life events -particularly the negative ones- are transversal, both to the systems of domination and oppression (intersectionality) and to the restriction in the participation of occupational choices, in which Pamela's transit was the stage that narrowed the different constructs the most and that was due to the transgression of the patriarchal system and the regulatory norms of sex and gender. In this way, the different domains -structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, interpersonal- intersected to generate vulnerability, marginality, discrimination, and job insecurity, which added to the limitations of choosing their occupations, resulting in Pamela presenting at different moments of her life situations of Occupational Apartheid.

In addition, and accordance with the literature found (Morcillo & Varela, 2016; Ranea Triviño, 2012; Rule & Twinley, 2020; Tirado Acero, 2011), Pamela did not voluntarily choose sex work, but rather, due to her context and the situations that she experienced in her life such as being uprooted from her home, which led her to live on the street, the impossibility of continuing to study and the loss of her job, led her to sex work, sticking with it even though it is not a job she would like to continue in. Even when the structural and disciplinary domains are being modified using legal regulations -in laws and circulars-, a greater social opening towards transgender identities is necessary, which generates changes in the interpersonal and hegemonic domains, since people feel they have the right to decide who is more and who is less worth (for example, when deciding whether or not to pay someone for the services they provide or not

offering them a job because they do not comply with the binary norm), generating transphobic discrimination.

From the previous paragraph, we can also note that marginalized groups such as trans women who are sex workers have fewer opportunities to participate in occupational choices (Galvaan, 2012), being completely dependent on contextual factors such as the differences in socioeconomic level of a family.

Due to the few opportunities that Pamela has had to choose her occupations, it is worth noting the role of an activist that she currently plays in an organization, in which she expresses her desire to continue, and where she is resistant (and as a second-class person) to challenge the labels and social constructions associated with the regulatory norms of sex and gender.

Finally, this whole situation not only has a socioeconomic impact but has caused Pamela mental suffering and difficulties in socializing, as well as the fear of getting involved in other occupations of interest, such as studying for a university degree, as a result of this instability and discrimination who has lived in different areas of her life.

Projections

The knowledge generated with this type of research can facilitate the understanding of situations of oppression faced by different groups that have been historically excluded. In this way, the disclosure of how systems of oppression operate is a matter of ethical-political commitment within the discipline that should be multiplied. Thus, these investigations can be an input for the construction of different public policies or suggestions from public organizations. The construction of this type of bridge is crucial.

Regarding disciplinary relevance, it is essential to open the possibilities of knowledge construction, both in occupational therapy and occupational science. This research is positioned from a critical perspective of research in both disciplines and seeks to promote the study of groups that have been poorly linked in both disciplines. Thus, we believe that our work could be relevant in these areas.

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Author's Contributions

Raiza Julieth Álvarez Franco, Andrea Soledad Duarte Martínez, Dafne Jara Steembecker and Franco Muñoz Orellana managed the research idea, and carried out the bibliographic review, fieldwork, and analysis. They also wrote the first version of the text and approved its final version. Rodolfo Morrison and Gustavo Artur Monzeli managed the investigation, made theoretical contributions, and contributed to the analysis. All authors approved the final version of the text.

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