

SEX
ROBOTS
WOMEN*

future & taboo

Strategy paper for implementation /
use of the results of the project

by erfolgsfaktor FRAU e.V.

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1. Introduction

The project “Sex, Robots, Women* - Future and Taboo” deals with the topic of sex robots in relation to women¹. Sex robots are artefacts which

- have a humanoid form and behaviour,
- are mainly used for sexual purposes and
- have some degree of artificial intelligence (AI).

The existence of this kind of robot has major consequences for the position of women in society, whose sexuality has always been a taboo. It leads to

- an increase in the objectification of women,
- a reinforcement of views of women as hypersexualised beings and
- a continuation of discriminatory behaviour towards women.

The main goal of the project is to prevent sex robots from perpetuating the inequality of women in our society.

This is what the educational video (Title: Musings of a Mechatronic Mistress) of this project aims to achieve. In a second project we have been drawing up ethical guidelines for the development of sex robots and disseminating these to relevant groups of people in the field of adult education, sex robot manufacturing, politics as well as society, this can/should be used to support the video.

In order to support this dissemination to relevant target groups and the implementation of activities where the results of our project can be discussed, we developed this strategy paper.

2. Practical recommendations for events for sensitization of different target groups

As it can be seen whilst reading these recommendations best results could be achieved if all different groups would discuss this very future relevant topic together, because for targeting the issue from the roots and in a very holistic form the groups need the information from each other. So, for example professionals need decisions from politicians to assure an ethical correct use, but on the other hand politicians will need the concerns and problems in daily work of the professionals to develop such binding framework. Otherwise without the consultations of the practitioners they might not consider all the constrains and challenges.

To keep this strategy paper very structured we present it group by group.

2.1. Professionals in care for elderly people

Professionals in the care sector will definitely be a group that will be affected by AI and ethical questions of its use sooner or later in the future. For this reason, it might be very interesting for them to discuss the topic already now as they might deliver valuable practical input and questions for which politicians should find the relevant answers.

a. Materials needed for the workshop

1. Technical equipment to show the video
2. Select appropriate video sequences from the appendix "Thematic outline educational Video: Musings of a Mechatronic Mistress"
3. Guidelines
4. A closed room where participants can discuss without being interrupted
5. Timeframe of about 2 hours
6. Flipchart or board to collect the main points from the discussion

b. Relevant Questions supporting and encouraging the discussion in the group and the reflection

1. Definition of the use: Who defines the way how it is used with elderly people? Who will be responsible for the ethical correct use?
2. Definition of the users: Who deserves to receive the sex robot? Who defines that? Does everyone have approach? Or specific persons?
3. How will it be perceived amongst elderly people to get access to the sex robot? Will they perceive it as pleasure and support to cope with a desire or as a impertinence (you are old and need it, so you get the robot?)
4. Do elderly people really all need sex or is it more the desire for intimacy?
5. Specific Training on how to use: Is there a specific training on how to use the sex robot? Who will receive this training and in what way? The professionals (are they there to assist?) or the elderly people? Are those who are considered to be the users really able to use it alone or are professionals assisting? In which way?
6. Practical Implementation: Is there a timetable to follow, when the sex robot can be used by whom? What if the robot is not available, when someone needs it? What if, someone is not able, when he can use it. This might be also embarrassing...
7. How this will be handled with people who are not able to speak for themselves?
8. Personal Protection: In a home? Will the Robot be sent to the rooms of the users or will there be special rooms? How will this be perceived /observed by the others? How the individual can be protected the most?
People in care at home: Will the sex robot come to their home?
Disinfection after use?
9. Health risks: will there be a health check before the use (to avoid the risk of heart attacks for example); psychological or physical problems created by the use?
Prevention and how such problems will be handled?
10. What does the use of the sex robot mean to the social life in the home for elderly people? What changes are you expecting? Which areas do you think might not be affected?

c. Further readings on the topic

Ärzteblatt, D. Ä. G., Redaktion Deutsches. (2019, May 10). Sexroboter in der Therapie: Zunehmend positiver Trend. Deutsches Ärzteblatt.

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d. Do's and Don'ts for the implementation of discussion rounds

1. Try to keep the discussion structured. Either provide a specific timeframe for each question, or select specific questions which seem the most relevant for your group
2. If the group is too big, form smaller groups. This allows all to participate in the discussion and avoids people dropping out and just listening.
3. Encourage the participants to use visualization materials in order to collect the most important outcome of the discussion
4. Agree discussion rules and respectful behaviour as this topic might get very personal
5. In order to avoid that the discussion is very general or responsibilities are just passed to someone outside of this circle invite participants to imagine the following scenario: One day in 5 years in our organization the boss comes and presents the new Sex robot: What questions would you have to your boss on how to work with this in your daily routine? For which situations would it be helpful? Which problems do you expect? What do you want your boss to clarify for the whole team before introducing the sex robot?

2.2. Professions working with people with special needs

This group may show overlapping's with the first one, but it might be even more challenging in regard to ethical questions.

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b. Relevant Questions supporting and encouraging the discussion in the group and the reflection

1. Definition of the use: Who defines the way how it is used with people with special needs? Who will be responsible for the ethical correct use?
2. Definition of the users: Who deserves to receive the sex robot? Who defines that? Does everyone have approach? Or specific persons?
3. Specific Training on how to use: Is there a specific training on how to use the sex robot? Who will receive this training and in which way? The professionals (are they there to assist?) or the elderly people? Are those who are considered to be the users really able to use it alone or are professionals assisting? In which way?
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People in care at home: Will the sex robot come to their home?
Disinfection after use?
7. Health risks: psychological or physical problems created by the use? Prevention and how such problems will be handled?
8. What does the use of the sex robot mean to the social life for people with special needs? What changes are you expecting? Which areas do you think might not be affected?

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2.3. Decision makers on different policy levels

Compared to the first two groups these targets will be dealing with the issue on a more abstract level. They are not so much aware of the daily challenges and routine with the end-beneficiaries but have to different extents the potential to agree on the ethical framework which determines future use. It might be very useful for you as workshop leader to start with the first two groups before working with this group. This may allow you to come up with practical examples from the daily routine of the first two groups in case the discussion gets too abstract.

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b. Relevant Questions supporting and encouraging the discussion in the group and the reflection

1. Definition of the use: Who defines the way how it is used? How it is used elderly people and with people with special needs? Who will be responsible for the ethical correct use?
2. Definition of the users: People who can afford it or people who need it? Who deserves to receive the sex robot? Who defines that? Does everyone have approach? Or specific persons?
3. What framework/which decisions on political level could help the ethical correct use? How this will be handled with people who are not able to speak for themselves?
4. What framework is needed to avoid abnormal use?
5. How can negative effects on women be reduced by political framework?
6. Specific Training on how to use: Is there a specific training on how to use the sex robot? Who will receive this training and in which way? The professionals (are they there to assist?) or the elderly people or those with special needs?
7. Health risks: psychological or physical problems created by the use? Prevention and how such problems will be handled?
8. What does the use of the sex robot mean to the social life? For feminism, for elderly people and people with special needs? What changes are you expecting? Which areas do you think might not be affected?
9. How you personally could take decisions to support this issue? Start networking with whom?

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5. In order to avoid that the discussion is very general or responsibilities are just passed to someone outside of this circle invite participants to imagine the following scenario: One day in 5 years there has been an incident with a sex robot, now you are asked to define a new framework to protect users and assure ethical correct use of sex robots together with your colleagues from this group here.

2.4. Professionals in sexual counselling e.g. sextra

Professionals in the counselling sector will be definitively a group that will be affected in the counselling process by AI and ethical questions of its use sooner or later in the future. For this reason, it might be very interesting for them to discuss the topic already now as they might deliver valuable practical input and questions for which politicians should find the relevant answers.

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b. Relevant Questions supporting and encouraging the discussion in the group and the reflection

1. Definition of the use: How is it used by advice seeking people, is there a lack of knowledge? In which way could it be used? Is responsibility for the ethical correct use established? Which consulting scenarios are conceivable?
2. Definition of the users: How could people get approach to these devices? People who can afford it or people who need it?
3. What framework/which decisions could help or reflect the ethical correct use?
4. What framework in counselling is needed to avoid abnormal use? Will negative effects on women a topic in the counselling process?
5. Specific Training on how to use: Is there a specific training/knowledge needed how to use the sex robot for professionals? Is this a new field of offering counselling in this area?
6. Health risks: psychological or physical problems created by the use? Prevention and how such problems will be handled?
7. What does the use of the sex robot mean to the social life? For feminism, for elderly people and people with special needs? What changes are you expecting? Which areas do you think might not be affected?
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3. Encourage the participants to use visualization materials in order to collect the most important outcome of the discussion
4. Agree discussion rules and respectful behaviour as this topic might get very personal
5. In order to avoid that the discussion is very general or responsibilities are just passed to someone outside of this circle invite participants to imagine the following scenario: One day in 5 years there has been an incident with a sex robot, now you are asked to define a new framework to protect users and assure ethical correct use of sex robots together with your colleagues from this group here.

2.5. Instructors in technical engineering training centres with social robotics approaches

In many other disciplines (medicine, social sciences), the inclusion of ethical issues in education is absolutely self-evident and fundamental. Ethical courses should be offered as a compulsory part of studies in technology and engineering. Recent studies show that artificial intelligence that learns on the basis of human-generated data also adopts stereotypical images of humans. From a gender perspective, "machine learning" is tricky especially when applied to humanoid robots (sex robots). Traditional role models that fight against are still stuck in this data and transferred to robots. Often, without intention, there is not much reflection in the development process, so there is a risk that stereotypes will be reinforced. That's why we should urgently start discussing what a people-friendly technology future might look like as early as today, during the educational phase.

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b. Relevant Questions supporting and encouraging the discussion in the group and the reflection

1. Definition of the use: Who defines the way how it is used? How it is used by the target group of development? Who will be responsible for the ethical correct use?
2. Definition of the users: People who can afford it or people who need it? Who deserves to receive the sex (social) robot? Who defines that? Does everyone have approach? Or specific persons?
3. What framework/which decisions on political level could help the ethical correct use? How this will be handled with people who are not able to speak for themselves?
4. What framework is needed to avoid abnormal use/how is abnormal use defined?
5. How can negative effects on women be reduced by internal/external frameworks?
6. Health risks: psychological or physical problems created by the use? Prevention and how such problems will be handled?
7. What does the use of the sex (social) robot mean to the social life? For feminism, for elderly people and people with special needs? What changes are you expecting? Which areas do you think might not be affected?
8. How you personally could take decisions to support this issue in your work life? Start networking with whom?

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2.6. Educators in adult learning with issues of gender equity, artificial intelligence and ethics

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3. What framework/which decisions on political level could help the ethical correct use? How this will be handled with people who are not able to speak for themselves?
4. What framework is needed to avoid abnormal use/how is abnormal use defined?
5. How can negative effects on women be reduced by internal/external frameworks?
6. Health risks: psychological or physical problems created by the use? Prevention and how such problems will be handled?
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d. Dos and Don'ts for the implementation of discussion rounds

1. Try to keep the discussion structured. Either provide a specific timeframe for each question, or select specific questions which seem the most relevant for your group
2. If the group is too big, form smaller groups. This allows all to participate in the discussion and avoids people dropping out and just listening.
3. Encourage the participants to use visualization materials in order to collect the most important outcome of the discussion
4. Agree discussion rules and respectful behaviour as this topic might get very personal
5. In order to avoid that the discussion is very general or responsibilities are just passed to someone outside of this circle invite participants to imagine the following scenario: One day in 5 years there has been an incident with a sex robot, now you are asked to define a new framework to protect users and assure ethical correct use of sex robots together with your colleagues from this group here

3. Conclusions and recommendations

We hope that our recommendations help you to approach the different target groups with this sensitive topic in the way that you can raise interest, overcome possible barriers and encourage fruitful discussions amongst them.

These discussions will be very important to bring up many relevant aspects from the practitioners view so that sooner or later they can also reach the level of decision makers and politicians so that they can be considered for future legal framework for use of AI supported solutions in this area.

For the moment we developed these 6 areas:

- Professionals in care of elderly people
- Professionals working with people with special needs
- Decision makers on different policy levels
- Professionals in sexual counselling e.g. sextra
- Instructors in technical and engineering training centers with social robotics approaches
- Educators in adult learning with issues of gender equity, artificial intelligence and ethics

If in your training you find any additional target groups which may have interest in the topic or additional recommendations we would be happy to learn about them to include them in our materials.