

Editorial

Male and Female Prostitutes: A Fact of Indonesia

Koentjoro Soeparno and Budi Andayani
Faculty of Psychology - Universitas Gadjah Mada
Yogyakarta - Indonesia

Prostitution had been being a sexy problem easy to talk about but difficult to be studied in depth because of personal, social, and professional risks a researcher should deal with. Prostitution as a field of study had many problems to be considered. The term prostitute itself was debatable since there were many interests in the choice of using the label “prostitute”, “wanita tuna susila”, “commercial sex worker”, or “woman sex worker” and so on. Various definitions of prostitution in Indonesia indicated different perspectives in the society in perceiving prostitution. One perspective considered prostitution as crime, embarrassing the family, and a sin. Another emphasized that prostitutes were family heroes, family bread winners, and were not criminals. Prostitution had been being a beneficial business for every one involved, however, morality became a crucial matter never been considered. The major problem of morality in personal domain was the management of sexual desire. In a wider range, however, prostitution had been entangled with problems of family living and varied complex systems. Intervention to prostitution in Indonesia thus should be based on deep and correct understanding. The conclusion and suggestions along with prostitution in Indonesia map could fulfil further understanding.

Keywords: prostitutes, criminalization, decriminalization

Prostitusi telah menjadi masalah seksi untuk dibicarakan, namun sulit dipelajari secara mendalam, karena risiko pribadi, sosial, dan profesional yang harus dihadapi seorang peneliti. Prostitusi sebagai bidang studi memiliki banyak masalah yang perlu dipertimbangkan. Istilah pelacur sendiri patut diperdebatkan mengingat ada begitu banyak pilihan dalam memilih penggunaan label “prostitute”, “wanita tuna susila”, “commercial sex worker”, atau “woman sex worker”. Beredarnya berbagai definisi prostitusi di Indonesia menunjukkan perspektif yang berbeda di masyarakat dalam memaknai prostitusi. Salah satu perspektif menganggap prostitusi suatu tindak criminal, memalukan keluarga, dan dosa. Yang lain menekankan bahwa pelacur adalah pahlawan keluarga, pemberi nafkah keluarga, dan bukan criminal. Prostitusi telah menjadi bisnis menguntungkan bagi semua orang yang terlibat, namun, moralitas menjadi masalah krusial yang tak pernah dipertimbangkan. Masalah utama moralitas dalam ranah pribadi adalah manajemen gairah seksual. Dalam kaitan yang lebih luas, tampaknya, prostitusi telah melibatkan masalah-masalah kehidupan keluarga dan berbagai sistem yang kompleks. Intervensi terhadap prostitusi di Indonesia seharusnya didasarkan pada pengertian yang mendalam dan benar. Kesimpulan dan saran-saran serta sebuah peta prostitusi di Indonesia akan melengkapi hal tersebut.

Kata kunci: pelacur, kriminalisasi, dekriminalisasi

This article is based on several researches conducted by the first author since 1982 and the articles *Pelacuran: Sebuah Problema Sosial* (Prostitution:

Part of this article will be presented at the National Congress of the Indonesian Association of Sexology (IAS) in September 2014.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Koentjoro Soeparno, Faculty of Psychology - Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta – Indonesia. E-mail: koentjoro@ugm.ac.id

A Social Problem, Koentjoro, 2011) and *Merengkuh Masyarakat Penyandang Penyimpangan Seksual* (Outreaching societies with sexual defiance, Koentjoro, 2014), and some other relevant information.

The term prostitute does not apply only for women but also to men, the main actors of prostitution. One interesting finding of Jaan Wiseman Christie a Dutch

epigraph showed that prostitution had operated in Indonesia since about the 10th century. The term used for pimp (*germo*) at that time was *juru jalir*. The term *germo* itself was referred to hunters or collectors of hunted animals. *Juru jalir* or *mucikari* was a non-governmental person collecting “tax” from prostitutes for the government. Then when was it started that a *germo* as tax collector became a host for prostitutes? According to author analyses it happened since 1800s.

When morality is not a problem then prostitution can be considered as a beneficial business for every party. No one is detrimented in such a business. Prostitution in some ways becomes a center of several business that shutting down prostitution business will affect other business surrounding.

Sex and prostitution in Indonesia can be traced back to early 19th century. There is an ancient Javanese literature named *Serat Centhini* (or *Suluk Tembang-raras*, as the authorized title). It was written about 1815 by three emperial authors of Kraton Surakarta. They were Yasadipura, Ranggasutrasna, and Raden Ngabehi Sastradipura (Haji Ahmad Ilhar), under the instruction of the K.G.P.A.A. Amengkunegara II or the Sinuhun Paku Buwana V.

The *Serat Centhini* consists of 722 *tembang* (Javanese rhymes) some of them cite in vulgar way sex and sexuality, but it has nothing to say about prostitution.

In the history male prostitutes was not usual in Indonesia, that there was no such notes about this matter. Probably the phenomenon of *gemblak* in *warok* lives can be considered as such, however, it also can be considered as pedophile homosexuality. Transgender prostitution was beginning from Taman Lawang Jakarta, known since 1970s. Men became prostitute since around 1997 and it took place at Taman Pembebasan Irian (next to Hotel Borobudur) Jakarta. This was the beginning of men sell sex service at the street. With the sophistication of information technology men prostitution also found in internet with target wealthy but lonely women, and homosexuals. Women prostitutes for women consumer however does not happen. From the author’s study with lesbian subjects it can be understood that women can have sex only when there is passion toward the partner, that it is different from men who can have sex any time with any body.

Understanding the Term Prostitute and Prostitution

Before we proceed it seems that there is a need for us to have similar understanding about prostitute and prostitution. Koentjoro (1998) on the bases of

several definitions about prostitution had concluded 4 elements in defining prostitution: (a) *adultery* or infidelity; (b) *emotional indifference* in which two people, the woman and her costumers have sex without emotional care toward each other; (c) *payments* involved which not have to be money but can be service, security feeling, or even just for the opportunity to travel abroad; and (d) *livelihood*. Prostitution involved livelihood since it is the easiest way to get money.

In reality although a person’s activity had met those elements, however, it is not so easily to label the person as a prostitute. Celebrities may involve those elements in their life style yet they can not be labeled as prostitutes. On the other hand people used to label a person as a prostitute because of one element only, that is, adultery. With such contradictions it should be confirmed which term is the best to be used.

Until today there is no legal term from the government for prostitute. The term sex worker (*pekerja seks*, PS) and commercial sex worker (*pekerja seks komersial*, PSK) are more commonly used. The term sex worker was the climax of civil right struggle and gender equality in the early 1990’s and widely used since 1995’s.

In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (1999) the term *pelacur* comes from the word *lacur* which means unfortunate, or unlucky. The word *lacur* also has a meaning of bad behavior. That we can make a sentence “*pelacur melacur di tempat-tempat pelacuran*” (*pelacur*: prostitute; *melacur*: doing prostitution; *tempat pelacuran*: brothels). From this sentence it can be understood that a prostitute (*pelacur*) sells herself (sex).

According to the development of the terms used it can be understood that language belongs to the society. The extention or specificity of meaning used always following the development of the society. As recently the term *pelacur* got its new terms. Commercial sex worker is the term used by scholars, praticians, and governmental officers. There is also a new term, *wanita penjaja seks* (sex-selling woman).

Previously the term *wanita tuna susila* (WTS, the immoral woman) was used. The choice to use the term was based on the consideration that the woman did not obey morality held in the society. When the term WTS was used it might happened to differ the person from male prostitutes (gigolos). The term gigolo refers to man paid by women to be a lover or sex mate. Legally the government of Indonesia had published the Ministry of Social Affair’s decree No. 23/HUK/96 which named prostitutes with the term WTS. According to the author the use of the term

WTS was to make the term used gentler than the term *pelacur*. Such a euphemism is dilemmatic because it is gender biased. Therefore the author uses the term *pelacur* instead because it applies to male and female prostitute.

The term commercial sex-worker, or sex-selling woman, is not right according to Islamic syariat. The term commercial sex worker has two serious basic mistakes to compare with the criticism that the term *pelacur* is gender biased. The first mistake is on the word "sex-worker." None of religions in the world acknowledge prostitution as a kind of work. So is the term commercial, it just put women as trades. The term "sex-selling woman" on the other hand indicates inconsistency of struggle. The term WTS was criticized as being gender biased because never include the men, however, now such a gender-biased term was used. The term sex-selling is also not proper since not every prostitute sells themselves.

There are some reasons that the author decided to use the term *pelacur* instead of the others. First, it is free from gender bias that it can be applied to male and female prostitutes. Secondly, the meaning of *pelacur* is inclusive and specific denotatively and connotatively. Third, the term sex worker is too extensive, not well specified and has multiple meanings. Fourth, not every prostitute is a sex worker. Sometimes prostitutes had sex with their consumers or lovers without money transactions, or beyond the control of their pimps. In such transactions the use of the term sex worker is not proper although the transactions can be categorized as prostitution. Finally, the term sex worker can be understood as an acknowledgement that prostitution is a kind of job, similar with other kinds of job such as drivers or tailors. The job status of prostitutes then is similar to nurse, physician, psychologist, judge, etc. Approving prostitution as a kind of job itself is a contradiction with Islamic and Indonesian customs, morality, and propriety. Therefore the term *pelacur* is the most appropriate and not in contradiction with religious teaching.

The History of Prostitution in Indonesia

The beginning of prostitution in Indonesia was not obvious. However, on the bases of historical sites it can be estimated that prostitution had already known in Indonesia since the 10th century. In *Bharatayuddha*, a literature written by mpu Sedah and finished by mpu Panuluh (1135-1157 AD) in the period of Majapahit monarchy, there was a story of adultery

between Banowati and Arjuna (retrieved from <http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahabharata>). From this story it can be estimated that adultery also had been known in the 11th century.

Prostitution in Indonesia became widely accepted particularly in Java probably since the time of colonialism. The first colonialism was by the Portuguese monarchy in 1511-1526. For 15 years the Nusantara archipelago became important maritime ports for the Portuguese. One well-known port at the time was Jepara. Portuguese troops came to Indonesia and they needed sexual gratification. Sexual demands were met by sexual supplies from women from local areas. It is understood that several districts in Jepara were known as producing-prostitute areas (Koentjoro, 1998).

The second colonialism was by the Dutch (Ingleson, 1996; Koentjoro, 1998). In this period there were three times of rapid growth for prostitution in Indonesia. Ingleson (1996) explains that the first growth happened in the era of Deandels in the construction of the Anyer-Panarukan road (1812-1820) and the railway (1820-1835).

Road and railway construction involved unpayed local workers, contracted foreigner workmen and Dutch troops. The presence of the workmen and the troops had led the surrounding areas to become prostitute producing since there were high demands on sexual gratification. Then in 1835-1845 a railway station was built. This period was the time of prostitution growth peak in Indonesia. The railway station had bridged sexual demand and supply, that until today we can find prostitution sites around railway stations.

In 1870's Van de Bosch applied *Cultuur Stelsel* or enforced planting. Similar to Anyer-Panarukan road construction the enforced planting project had also led areas surrounding to produce prostitutes. The third prostitution growth peak was in the early 1900's when a sugar plant was built. The project also bridged sexual demand and supply.

Koentjoro (1989) stated that the growth of prostitution had reached its peak in the era of Mataram monarchy. It was the time when men with ambition for leadership needed legitimate power obtained through supports from others. Therefore in order to get such supports men married many women that they would have the sources of support from the wives, their offsprings and the women's families.

Types of Prostitute According to the Background

Understanding the background and the types of prostitute in Indonesia is important since it will under-

lie the consideration in solving the problem of prostitution. According to Koentjoro (2011) from his 30 years study on prostitution there are four types of prostitute in Indonesia. First type is prostitute came from prostitute-producing areas. Such rural areas were developed as producing prostitutes since the period of Mataram monarchy and colonialism, and based on market demands (Koentjoro, 1998, 2004). From a historical note such a structural prostitution developed since about 1812. In such areas there are “established” process of trafficking and recruitments, many issues of conflicting of values, conflicts of parties in the society, and the value of marriage and its impact on sexual behavior.

The second type of prostitute is based on the prostitutes’ workplace. Many prostitutes came from the prostitute-producing areas, that in the time of colonialism they were needed in the construction of railway stations. Thus until today brothels can be found in the areas surrounding railway stations and become the workplace of prostitutes from rural areas. Other places prostitutes can be found are beauty, hair, or massage salons.

The third type is prostitute having sex as a life style. One becomes a prostitute because of the influence of materialism and hedonic life style. This type of prostitute can be found in big cities, in many places and from every level of social economic status, but mostly are well-educated women. The practice of prostitution usually is undercoverd.

Finally, is the prostitute for ritual activities. There are places sacred and people do rituals asking to God for their wishes to be granted. The previously sacred rituals was developed to include sexual intercourse with the believe that it is the part of the ritual. Some places the author had identified are Parangkusumo, Yogyakarta; Gunung Kemukus, Central of Java; and Gunung Kawi of East Java.

From the types cited above policy makers should understand who they are dealing with. That not every type of prostitute can be treated similarly.

Criminalization and Decriminalization of Prostitution in Indonesia

Prostitution and adultery are similar in the context of extra marital sex. However, in many countries such as Indonesia police arrests prostitutes and accuses them for adultery. Why? In Indonesian law there is no clause against prostitution. Prostitution is similar to adultery and the offense is complaint. In prostitute-producing areas husbands permit their wives practicing prostitution without complaint offenses.

In some ways people consider prostitution similar to adultery that it will be important to analyse these phenomena as one problem. Prostitution is widely considered as unlawful. However many disagree with such a consideration. Let us examine the following phenomena describing different perspectives on prostitution.

Recently Widya Kandi Susanti, the *Bupati* of Kendal stated that “commercial sex workers are family heroines. Prostitutes work for family living, that it is not humane closing down brothels (Kompas Minggu, 30 Maret 2014). On the other hand, Surabaya Mayor Tri Rismaharini targeting to close down “Dolly” and “Jarak” localizations in Surabaya before 2014 fasting month (Islam Pos Ahad, 28 Jamadilawal 1435/30 Maret 2014). Under the cooperative work of Surabaya city government and the government of East Java through the Public Welfare Bureau many prostitutes had been resocialized. These women were given 3 million rupiah to go back to their families and they were trained with skills enough for them to make living without practicing prostitution.

The author mostly agrees with Kandi Susanti’s policy rather than Mayor Rismaharini. Kandi Susanti’s statement agrees with Alisson Murray (1991). Murray’s research about street prostitutes and marginal communities in Jakarta was cited in her book *No Money No Honey*. Murray found that one prostitute could support 18 family members. It seems that the Mayor should analyse first the impact of closing down Dolly and Jarak. Would closing those prostitution sites even push the growth of prostitution in massage, hair and beauty salons and also internet shops? Would it involve in the rise of adultery, or premarital sex and even rape? To the author prostitution is similar to toilet. It is dirty place but its existence is necessary.

Is supporting prostitutes with three millions rupiah and working skills appropriate policy? This policy is underlied by the assumption that prostitution is caused by poverty, not because of materialism or both. Prostitution is a kind of business involving many parties, beneficial but immoral. The Mayor Rismaharini’s policy consider less the parties involved such as the parking boys, house owners, food sellers, water sellers, etc. These people will suffer a lot from the impact of closing down prostitution sites.

Adultery or prostitution in many countries never been considered as unlawful however, to some countries influenced by customs and norms, like Indonesia, adultery is a crime. According to KUHP (article 506) adultery is illegal. To Western countries such as the US, on the other hand, adultery is just a

common thing. Koentjoro (2004) concluded that prostitutes and prostitution were treated ambiguously by flexible law. In Australia prostitution is still struggling against double standards. Only the prostitutes punished while the customers linger freely. In Gambia prostitution is illegal, and so are sex tourism in Thailand and the Phillipines. In Senegal every prostitute is registered and required to go through periodical health examinations.

Although social rejection toward prostitution is high in most Asian countries however prostitution is still needed for social control in a society. Bonaparte (Bullough and Bullough, 1987) stated that prostitution is needed that without it men will sexually assault decent women at streets. Coleman and Cressey (1987) emphasize on the positive aspects of prostitution and agree with Bonaparte. Other considers such a perspective as agreeing with exploiting women to protect the other and free men from the responsibility of their own behavior. Coleman and Cressey (1987) however emphasize on controlling prostitution with four reasons. First, prostitution may attract men previously uninterested on prostitution. Second, prostitution will expand to areas previously far from prostitution. Third, infectious diseases will spread. Finally, closing down brothels will increase the population of street prostitutes, resulting in more social problems.

When the definition and status of prostitution are still open for debate then why prostitutes have to be punished for selling sex? Criminalizing prostitutes is based on the consideration that prostitutes are sources for infectious diseases such as syphilis and AIDS. Thus without prostitution it is assumed that the spread of AIDS can be controlled. However, women become prostitutes sometimes not because of their own will. Prostitution can be considered as women slavery as David and Staz (1990) stated that men need sex and will pay for it, and they prefer women for the service.

From what have been described above it is shown that prostitutes had been treated unfairly, that punishment applies only for the women when men also involved. It should be considered which perspective one should hold since treating prostitutes as criminal will not solve the problem not as simple as personal choice.

The Story of Suti: A Phenomenon of Producing-Prostitute Area

Suti was a popular girl set to marry by her parents when she was 14 years old. She became a prostitute after giving birth of her first child and got divorced.

According to Suti she is not fluent in reading and writing but better with the Arabic script. Suti has close relationships with the author since 1985, once as a co-researcher (in post positivism method) and later with the whole family as close friends.

Once in the beginning of the author's research in 1985 the author watched television news, Suti's husband frequently pointed and said that he knew the public figures. His answer for the question how was that "...he is my wife's customer..."

In Suti's life at the time there were three significant persons, her husband from whom Suti got her established civil status; a boy friend, in local language is called *kliwir*, from whom she got love and affection; and the customers from whom she got money. Thus when a prostitute terminates her practice she only stops selling sex but maintains sexual intimacy with her *kliwir*. It was not unusual to the community for a woman to live like a polyandrous family – Suti, her husband, and her boyfriend – in one household. What was unusual was whenever the boyfriend got a new girlfriend then Suti would angry to this girl.

When the husband of a prostitute was jobless the monetary and household authority was in the hand of the wife. This is common for prostitutes' life either in their home area or in their area of work.

Once Suti told the author that she owed good deed to someone she stated as a pimp (another informan in the research). The reason she had was that she would not be wealthy if she was not under the pimp's care.

Suti is wealthy indeed. She had invested her earnings as a prostitute in lands, rural transport, garage and car tyre repair. Suti's vision had been an evidence of the author's 1988 and 1989 researches that the main cause of prostitution is materialism.

In another occasion Suti revealed that she had an intention to go the Mecca with her husband for hajj pilgrimage.

"... it's been a long time that I never again doing begenggek (local term for prostitute)... I have repented and now I wish to go for hajj pilgrimage with my husband..."

To the author's eye Suti had changed a lot. She was a humble prostitute, never smoked or drank as other prostitutes did. Such conditions had made her coming back to the community easier and quicker. Suti and her husband had done the hajj pilgrimage at 2011.

Conclusion: Prostitute Intervention

Intervention to prostitution will be better started from prevention in home areas of prostitutes widely

spread in Indonesia. Prevention will not be merely economic empowering. The ability to gratify what one has had is important. It can be expected that with gratitude materialism can be controlled.

The perspective about prostitution should also been understood well. In prostitute-producing areas being a prostitute is accepted as being a worker, and had involved many parties even in public welfare.

Probably the best way to do first is to identify whoever involved and the extension of their involvement in such a business. This identification followed by impact analyses of closing down prostitution sites. To eliminate or suppress new prostitutes from the prostitute-producing areas it is suggested to enhance social cooperation through institutions caring for the children of prostitutes. Thus there will no reason for women and mothers to become prostitute. Moreover, there will be more benefit if such care accompanied with economic empowerment for the families of the prostitutes. Another thing better being done is mental revolution and refunctioning family, school, and the society in educating young generations.

Closing down prostitution sites is easy to do however, best solutions for the prostitutes and their families is not that simple. Closing down prostitution sites is better started from analyzing factors facilitating, not directly executing the closing down.

References

- Bullough, B., and Bullough, V. L. (1996). Female Prostitution: Current Research and Changing Interpretations; in *Annual Review of Sex Research: An Integrative and Interdisciplinary Review Volume VII*, pp. 158-180.
- Department of Social Affairs, Republic of Indonesia. (1996). *Minister of Social Affairs Republic of Indonesia Decision No. 23/HUK/1996 Concerning: Basic Design for Social Welfare Development*.
- De Sousa, D. (1994). *ACSJC Occasional Paper No. 20: Sex Tourism in Asia*. North Blackburn, Victoria: CollinsDove.
- Farid, M. (1998). *Situational Analysis on the Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Indonesia*. Jakarta: Unicef.
- Ingleton, J. (1986). Prostitution in Colonial Java. In Chandler., D. P. and Ricklefs., M. C. 1986., *19th and 20th Century Indonesia: Essays in Honour of Professor J. D. Legge.*, pp. 123-140., Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, Victoria.
- Jones, G. W., Sulistyarningsih, E. and Hull, T. H. (1995). *Prostitution in Indonesia: Working Papers in Demography*. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- Koentjoro. (1988). Perbedaan Tingkat Aspirasi Remaja dan Nilai Anak bagi Orangtua dan Hubungan antara Tingkat Aspirasi Remaja dengan Nilai Anak bagi Orangtua pada beberapa Daerah Miskin Penghasil Pelacur dan Bukan Penghasil Pelacur di Jawa Tengah dan Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. *Research Report*. Yogyakarta: The Toyota Foundation, Grant Number 87-Y-03.
- Koentjoro. (1989). Perbedaan Harga Diri Remaja di Daerah Miskin Penghasil Pelacur dan Bukan Penghasil Pelacur. *Research Report*. Yogyakarta: Fakultas Psikologi UGM
- Koentjoro. (1995). *Sexual Networking. Seminar paper held by Pusat Penelitian Kependudukan, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, 20 April 1995*.
- Koentjoro. (1998). Understanding Prostitution from Rural Communities of Indonesia, *Disertation*. Bundoora, Melbourne: La Trobe University.
- Koentjoro. (2004). *On the Spot: Tutur dari Sarang Pelacur*. Tinta: Yogyakarta
- Koentjoro. (2011). Some Facts in the Life of Prostitute-Producing Communities, *paper presented at International Conference on Prostitution and Human Trafficking*, di University of Toledo, Ohio, 28-30 September 2011
- Koentjoro. (2011). Problema Sosial Pelacuran di Indonesia *makalah* pelengkap PERNAS HIV/AIDS 2011, Yogyakarta, 1-6 Oktober 2011 untuk keperluan Kongres I dan pertemuan Ilmiah Asosiasi Psikologi Forensik Indonesia, Semarang 2011
- Koentjoro. (2014). Merengkuh Masyarakat Penyandang Penyimpangan Seksual. *Suara Aisyiyah*. Edisi Khusus Mei 2014.
- Koentjoro dan Fitriana, N. (2010). Prostitution in Indonesia. In Dalla, R. L., Baker, L. M., DeFrain, J. and Williamsom, C. 2010. *Global Perspectives on Prostitution and Sex Trafficking: Africa, Asia, Middle East and Oceania*. Lexington Books: Lanham, Maryland. p. 165-180.
- Murray, A. J. (1991). *No Money, No Honey: A Study of Street Traders and Prostitutes in Jakarta*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Truong, T. D., and Helms, D. B. (1988). *Marriage and Family: Traditions and Traditions*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanocovich, Publisher
- Waspodo, W. (2014). *Serat Centhini Solo*. Received from www.sukowaspodo.blogspot.com. Thursday, 31 July 2014.

Appendix

Prostitution in Indonesia

Female Prostitutes

Media of sexual service	Characteristics
Oral	Mostly teenager prostitutes
Vaginal	All type of prostitutes Those from areas producing prostitutes had background of being sold by parents; or trapped in different value system
Anal	For drug purchase or other reason

Male Prostitutes

Type of sexuality	Service
Heterosexual	Gigolo, street, on call
Homosexual	Street, on call

Transgender Prostitutes

	Characteristics
Service and purpose	Service for men, <i>nyebong</i> (the term for practicing prostitution) for sexual gratification, and for money
Type of service	Mostly oral, and anal