

# Cutting the Chains of Prostitution Community: A Study on Lower Class Prostitution in Jember, East Java

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# Cutting the Chains of Prostitution Community: A Study on Lower Class Prostitution in Jember, East Java

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**Abstract.** This study aims to describe the reality of community empowerment among lower class prostitutes. The background of the research is that the existence of this group needs continuous attention. More attention is needed because empowerment of vulnerable communities has a high failure rate. This study will describe the obstacles in dealing with lower class prostitution communities. This research is based on primary data (prostitutes, local government, and surrounding communities). Data were obtained through in-depth interviews. The results of the study showed that community empowerment within the lower class prostitute community had been carried out by the government by equipping the prostitutes with business skills and providing them with business capital support. However, the government's efforts did not yield positive results. Some of the contributing factors include the reproduction of prostitution, ambiguity in implementing prostitution banning policies, and ignorance of the surrounding community. Thus the recommendation of this study is "cutting the chain of prostitution community."

**Keywords:** barrier chains, community empowerment, lower class prostitution community

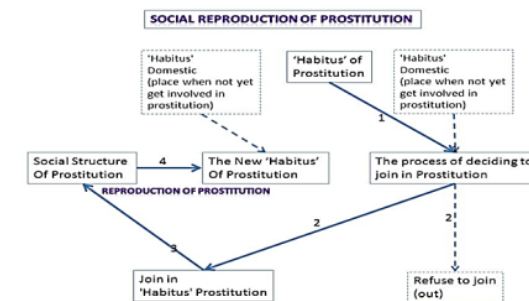
## INTRODUCTION

Female prostitutes are included in pathological groups [1]. The empowerment approach used should be different from the approach used with other groups. This group has two problems, economic and moral problems. A special therapy is required to enable empowerment (improving socioeconomic status and morality). However, there may be some obstacles to achieve this, as mentioned by some previous studies, such as the beliefs of women prostitutes in what they call religious prostitutes in Nur Syam [2]; the strength of prostitution networks that are neatly organized and maintained by the reproduction of prostitution [3], a non-continuous prostitution women's empowerment model [4], and ambiguity in the policy implementation [5], [6], [7].

The belief factor of female prostitutes that God forgives every act of His servants makes female prostitutes have the view that they will be forgiven because their actions are solely based on their poverty

condition. Prostitutes believe that everything happens because of God's will, and thus, any changes in their lives can only happen in God's destiny [4], [2]. This phenomenon suggests that the possibility of changing the behavior of prostitutes towards normal life depends on nothing but the empowerment policies carried out by the government.

The system of brothel prostitution is one of the factors influencing the success of the prostitute empowerment. Studies conducted in 2005 in Yogyakarta Flower Market [3], Malang, Surabaya [8], and many other cities in Indonesia [9], illustrate how pimps had a role in ensnaring young women through debts. The pimps also managed the prostitutes' financial distribution (30% for pimps, 30% for donations, and 40% for the prostitutes). It shows the unequal relationship between the female prostitutes and their pimps [8] [4], and this happens because the prostitution system continues to develop through the reproduction of prostitution [3]. The following chart provides an overview of the parties related to the reproductive system of prostitution.

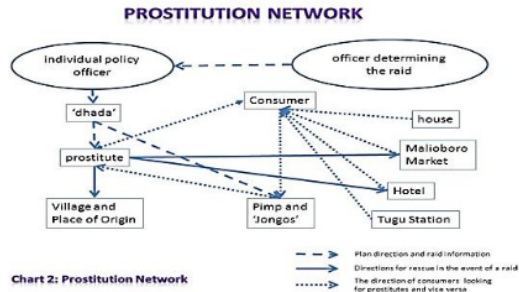


Source : MudjiJono, 2005, Sarkem, *Reproduksi Pelacuran*, p.113

Chart 1: Social Reproduction of Prostitution

The chart above illustrates the prostitutes' activities in their own domestic habitus when they have not involved themselves in the world of prostitution. For various reasons, they get involved in prostitution (see line 1 in the chart). After being involved, they are divided into two groups, those who refuse to join (line 2) or do not accept prostitution habitus, and those who receive prostitution habitus and continue to get involved in the activity (line 2), which will eventually occupy a new structure in its role in prostitution activities (line 3). They will unconsciously participate in reproducing prostitution (line 4). There are other actors too. The reproduction of

prostitution, along with its prostitution network, is getting stronger because there are some government officials who are intensively involved. In this case, the role of the policy-implementing officers is the focal point in the 'permanence' of prostitution habitats, as seen in the chart below.



The prostitution network illustrated in the chart above indicates that prostitution activities still exist. The two major work axis networks are networks of female prostitutes, procurers, and pimps, who work closer to the customer; and the other axis is the working network between those involved in prostitution and government officials from several agencies. Meanwhile, a Dhada connects various parties when there are new notifications for raids [3].

**METHOD**

The study was conducted using a qualitative research method. This method is suitable for describing how prostitution networks work, which plays a significant role to the existence of prostitution, and the success or failure of the empowerment of female prostitute initiated by the government [10]. This study took place in some red-light districts in Jember Regency. Specifically, there were at least twenty locations [11] [12]. The largest one was the former brothel / TPST Besini Hamlet, Puger Kulon Village, Puger Sub-District, Jember Regency.[13]

**TABLE 1 : ILLEGAL BROTHELS IN JEMBER REGENCY**

1. Lokalisasi Besini Puger Kulon: 450 rooms, 93 pimps, 70-100 prostitutes
2. Tanjungrejo Timur Wuluhan (4 pimps, 4-5 prostitutes)
3. Tanjungrejo Barat Wuluhan (3 pimps, 10 prostitutes)
4. GS (gang siji) Umbulsari (20 pimps – 40 prostitutes)
5. Muko Selogiri Umbulsari (any two local of brothels 10 pimps)
6. Bu Bahul di Cangkring (2 pimps)
7. Bu Tri di Glindungan Kecamatan Wuluhan (1 pimp)
8. Bu Sudat Sumberejo Wuluhan (6 brothels, 25 prostitutes)
9. Klopo-klopoan Desa Lojejer Wuluhan (5 brothels, 10 prostitutes)
10. Jembe Anum Kecamatan Kasihan (3 brothels, 10 prostitutes)
11. Dusun Pulo Gantol desa Wironorejo Kecamatan Klenong (10 brothels, 15 prostitutes)
12. Bu Sum Desa Pontang Kecamatan Ambulu (4 prostitutes)
13. Desa Blatter Kecamatan Ambulu (4 prostitutes)
14. P. Jatem, Bu Bina, Bu Is Sumbersari, Kecamatan Sumbersari (3 brothels 15 prostitutes)
15. Pontang, Ambulu (1 brothels, 3 prostitutes)
16. Rumah-rumah di Pesisir Watu Ulo
17. Tanjung Rejo Wuluhan
18. Bu Temon di Dusun Krajan Lojejer Wuluhan
19. Belakang SMA 2 Tanggul
20. Di sekitar alun-alun Jember
21. Di sepanjang pelikemas Rambipuji
22. Gudang Dolog Pakusari
23. Di daerah Balung tepi sungai

Sources: Research Observations (2018)

The participants of this study were pimps, prostitutes, security guards, neighborhood leaders, surrounding communities, village heads, police, and religious leaders, while the secondary data sources were policy documents, history books, activity photos, recordings, and other forms of secondary data [14]. The participants selected

were those who were considered knowledgeable about the questions asked (purposive) (Bogdan and Biklen, 1981 in Moleong [14].

**RESULT**

**Women Prostitution Policy in Jember Regency**

The prohibition of women prostitution in Jember Regency is stated in the Regional Regulation No. 14 Year 2001 [15]. It is prohibited for everyone to carry out prostitution activities, including providing prostitution facilities (e.g., houses and tools for brothel businesses). After this regulation was issued in 2001, the local social workers in Jember gathered pimps and prostitutes and educated them. And six years later, a Regional Regulation number 188.45 / 39/012/2007 [16] was made regarding the closure of TPST prostitution throughout Jember Regency. Nowadays, the local government is no longer educating prostitutes, for it has no legal basis to carry out education or rehabilitation activities. It means that there should have been a legal basis for closing prostitution in Jember Regency, which might help in eradicating prostitution activities (e.g., prostitutes and pimps) in Jember Regency. In the meantime, pimps and prostitutes caught up in a raid must be punished immediately.

The prostitution eradication in Jember started with educating all prostitutes throughout Jember Regency. In this case, they were gathered in one place called Puger District for rehabilitation purpose. The rehabilitation program was carried out through the establishment of the Transitional Social Service Site (TPST), which was mentioned in the local regulation (Perda) 14/2001 [15]. The program was funded by the 2002 local budget (APBD) with the estimated cost of Rp. 30,000,000 (thirty million rupiahs) under the name of the Social Rehabilitation Program [17].

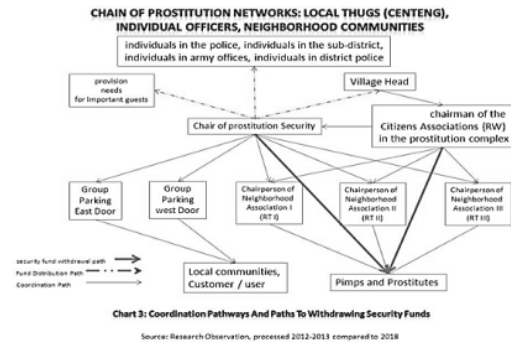
Meanwhile, the cost of the Women's Empowerment Program (the empowerment of local prostitutes) was IDR 150,000,000 (one hundred million rupiahs) [18]. The women's empowerment program also provided business tools and equipment, which was purchased using APBD at IDR 30,900,000 (thirty million nine hundred thousand rupiahs). Besides, assistance for Social Institutions was given by providing a set of embroidery machines, which cost IDR 3,000,000 (three million rupiahs). The Regional Regulation also gave a mandate to the Working Group to carry out rehabilitation activities with the support of an honorarium fund for 3 years since 2002. The program involved village and sub-district government officials.

The empowerment and rehabilitation program lasted for 3 years at TPST but was considered unsuccessful [20] [21], as the number of prostitutes and pimps did not decrease [22] [20] [13] [23]. At the beginning of the TPST formation in 2002, there were 100 pimps (100 houses) with a total of 150-200 female prostitutes; then it grew to 600 prostitutes with approximately 200 pimps in 2007 (Data from Social Service, Jember Regency, 2007, newspaper [22] [21]. While the more recent data for 2011 [22] and 2018 (by observation) shows the number of

pimps was 150 people and prostitutes was 200-250 people. This data did not include other illegal brothels at the Besini TPST in 2007. [5]

**Chain of Prostitution Networks: Local Thugs (Centeng), Officers, and Neighborhood Communities**

The chain of prostitution networks still exists, and therefore requires security for the continuation of the prostitution business. The security conducive to brothel entrepreneurs and consumers of prostitution is considered important. Guaranteed security from nosy crimes, insistence from the community, and even more so, 'distraction' from government officials is the most sensitive thing for pimps and their customers. This absolute required security makes the importance of the position of a security chief in every brothel, either a collection of brothels or the independent ones. The main goal is to protect all brothel residents. This certainly incurs fees to all residents of. The brothels (IDR 30,000 per week for pimps, and IDR 5,000 - 10,000 per day for prostitutes (data observations, 2014 [5] compared to 2018 pimps, An / mami Endg). Security was increasingly important and became more expensive along with the new policy demanding the closure of brothels in 2007. In other words, it is a consequence of the illegal status of brothels in Jember Regency. With the regional regulation commanding brothel closure, the 'businessmen' (pimps) felt like getting their necks tangled, one day it was tightened, another day loosened. In fact, how the security was established in Besini red light district shows the importance of establishing a security system involving local thugs in Besini and Puger Kulon village. The extended description of the chain of prostitution network is illustrated in the chart below.

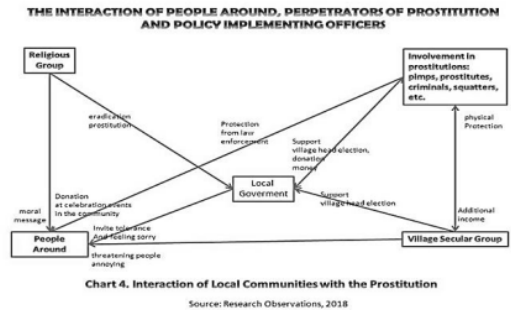


Meanwhile, the phenomenon of prostitution involves prostitutes, residents / the surrounding community, religious leaders (ulama'), and local government. It has been described above, how the village community chose not to care about the existence of prostitution red light area. Even some of the villagers stated that they did not have any economic dependence on prostitution, so any regulation imposed on the prostitution activities would not affect them. The surrounding community was apathetic because they were worried about having

problems with the security forces of prostitution. They chose to step away and did not involve themselves in conflict with any parties relating to prostitution. However, most of the villagers did not really enjoy the economic benefit of this situation. In fact, there were many shops in the prostitution red light area, operated by prostitutes and pimps, so the local community did not have the opportunity to run their shop and earn money. However, they chose not to confront because they were frightened.[5]

The local government was fully aware that Besini prostitution red light area had high political value, including regional security and stability, financial support for social activities, as well as other political events. Therefore, the village chief tried to balance the interests of the parties. Carik Sdq, a religious leader (observation data combined with data from Kholifah 2014 [5], stated that in the future, there would be better control of Besini prostitution red light area. Recently, no one had the power to confront the prostitution personnel, and the local government chose to be neutral. Although in many cases, the chief of the village (Pak Ad Stm) [5] could not act neutral because he had political debts to the Besini people who contributed their votes to PIKADES (village head election).

Religious groups were disappointed, but could not discuss the Besini prostitution. As cleric Dhfr Kecamatan Puger said [5], he was disappointed at the existence of Besini red light district but could not speak out. However, a soft movement was performed by conveying moral messages to the wider community to prevent the development of 'immorality.' In fact, when Besini red light district was closed, the Puger scholars did not go on strike or make any provocative move. Religious groups, thugs and prostitution groups, and community groups had their own interests. The local government also had an interest in balancing those interests. The interactions between interest groups can be illustrated in the following chart.



**CONCLUSION**

Lower class female prostitutes have always been linked to a strong and institutionalized network of prostitution. The network not only involves criminal groups (thugs, bouncers, thieves and drug traffickers, etc.) but also government officials (police security, or

higher rank officers), Thus, cutting the chain of prostitution involving lower class workers, needs a joint effort.

This joint effort may be difficult, but not impossible to make. This is because each party (implementing unit) has an interest based on the main tasks and functions. To balance the interest, the policy implementers often adjust the regulation and act accordingly. The higher-level government should understand this situation. There may be some cases where policy implementers at the lower level implement the policy inconsistently and hesitantly. Thus, it is essential for the higher-level government to encourage consistency and conduct supervision.

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