

Socio-Cultural Review of Prostitution in The Parangkusumo Beach Tourism Area, Bantul, Special Region of Yogyakarta

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Abstract. The phenomenon of prostitution in tourist areas is a complex social issue, particularly when it intersects with local culture and tourism activities. This study aimed to examine the practice of prostitution at Parangkusumo Beach, Bantul, Yogyakarta Special Region, from a socio-cultural perspective. The research method used a qualitative approach with observation techniques, in-depth interviews, and a literature review. The results show that the existence of prostitution in the area is not only influenced by economic factors but is also related to the social construction of the surrounding community, cultural symbolism, and the dynamics of beach tourism. Prostitution in Parangkusumo is often perceived ambiguously; on the one hand, it is considered a moral deviation and a social problem, while on the other, it is understood as an economic reality inherent in a busy tourist area. Furthermore, the practice of prostitution at the location is intertwined with certain myths and ritual traditions that have developed around Parangkusumo, thus forming a relationship between tourism, culture, and social behavior. This study emphasizes the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the phenomenon of prostitution in tourist destinations while encouraging the formulation of policies that are not only oriented towards legal enforcement but also sensitive to the local socio-cultural context and tourism dynamics.

1 Introduction

Tourism has a positive impact, one of which is improving the local economy. Economic growth can be realized if people possess knowledge and skills in the tourism industry. Some examples of knowledge and skills in tourism include cooking, guest guiding, motorcycle/car driving, and room tidying. Tourism can only reach communities with the aforementioned knowledge and skills. Tourism has not yet accommodated those without knowledge and skills in tourism. One immediate option for those lacking tourism knowledge and skills who want to gain added economic value is to become commercial sex workers (PSK) or PL (Song Guides). The Parangkusumo area is one of several red-light districts in the Special Region

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of Yogyakarta. During the Dutch colonial era, road and railway construction created a high demand for prostitution [1]. Cities located along the railway line faced an increase in the number of rail users, resulting in increased demand for accommodation and sexual services. Prostitution, karaoke, and alcohol businesses in the Parangkusumo area began around the 1990 [1].

The emergence of prostitution, karaoke, and alcohol businesses stemmed from the large number of tourists visiting Parangkusumo Beach and the Batu Cepuri cultural site. The Parangkusumo area boasts not only natural attractions but also a cultural attraction, namely Batu Cepuri. Batu Cepuri is said to be the site of a meeting between Panembahan Senopati and Nyi Roro Kidul. Rituals at Batu Cepuri are held on Tuesday Kliwon and Friday Kliwon and are frequently visited by pilgrims and pilgrim tourism enthusiasts to pray. The rise in prostitution in the Parangkusumo area has caused concern among the local community. The community, along with the local government, has collaborated to raid brothels where sex workers and guests engage in sexual activity. The government also issued Bantul Regency Regulation No. 5 of 2007 concerning the Prohibition of Prostitution in Bantul Regency. Regional regulations can serve as a legal basis for the Civil Service Police Unit (SatPol PP) to conduct raids and inspections.

Aside from cases of mistaken arrests targeting pilgrims (suspected of being sex workers), the Bantul District Court reported in its records that no pimps or brothel owners have ever been prosecuted under Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2007 [1]. Conversely, the intensity of raids conducted by the police and the Public Order Agency (Satpol PP) targets sex workers experiencing economic hardship. Women activists and several non-governmental organizations strongly criticized Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2007 [1]. Activists and several NGOs have alleged that it criminalizes women. Several legal efforts have been made to amend or revoke Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2007. Activists and several NGOs hope that a judicial review can be initiated through a judicial review to the Supreme Court, but so far, this has been unsuccessful. Prostitution, on the other hand, can provide a lifeline for local communities lacking tourism knowledge and skills, allowing them to benefit from tourism's economic impacts. Prostitution can serve as a social safety net to minimize crime rates. The Gift Paradox, written by French sociologist and anthropologist [2], explains that a social entity can provide hope to society, but at the same time, it can also act as a problem maker. This social entity forms social solidarity in many aspects, including politics, economics, religion, law, morality, and aesthetics [2]. This study aims to examine the socio-cultural history of the community within the dynamics of the prostitution industry in the Parangkusumo Beach area. Second, this study aims to understand the socio-cultural dimensions of the phenomenon of tourism and prostitution in the Parangkusumo Beach area. It is hoped that the Bantul Regency Government can explore other perspectives on the phenomenon of prostitution in the Parangkusumo area. The Bantul Regency Government is expected to provide solutions, such as human resource training and job creation for women with sexual disabilities (WTS), rather than simply regulating and prohibiting prostitution.

2 Literature Review

The data required for this study included interviews and documentation as follows.

2.1 Tourism

Tourism is a temporary travel activity (not for permanent purposes) for enjoyment, curiosity, leisure, or vacation. Tourism is a complex phenomenon that includes hotels, tourist attractions, souvenirs, tour guides, tour operators, restaurants, and tourist transportation. The Great

Dictionary of the Indonesian Language defines tourism as an activity related to recreational travel. Tourism is also an instrument for driving economic growth and development in developing and underdeveloped regions worldwide.

2.2 Batu Cepuri Cultural Ritual

The Batu Cinta (Love Stone) located at Puri Cepuri is the meeting place of Nyi Roro Kidul (Nyi Roro Kidul) and Panembahan Senopati (Founder of the Mataram Kingdom). Tourists can also witness Labuhan and Melasti ceremonies. According to the Genpi.id website, the Labuhan ritual involves burying the Sultan's hair and nail clippings and setting adrift several other items [3]. Tourists also compete for these items to receive the blessings. The ritual is performed on auspicious days according to the Javanese calendar, namely Tuesday Kliwon and Friday Kliwon [1]. Therefore, hundreds of people, regardless of social class or religion, visit the Batu Cepuri Parangkusumo complex on these sacred days. A pilgrimage to Batu Cepuri is believed to help release heavy burdens and revitalize one's zest for life [3]. In addition to the Labuhan ritual, Parangkusumo Beach is also a place for Hindus to celebrate the Melasti ceremony, held approximately three or four days before Nyepi (Nyepi) (Genpi.id). The offerings to be floated are carried by dancing girls and then taken to the beach and washed into the sea. After being floated, people head to the sea to wash themselves, which means cleansing themselves of all evil.

2.3 Prostitution

According to Purnomo in [4], prostitution is a social phenomenon characterized by women selling themselves for sexual activity as a means of livelihood. According to [4], prostitution is the surrender of a woman's self to multiple men who pay for it. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), prostitution can be defined as the exchange of sexual relations for money or gifts as a form of commercial transaction (buying and selling). Several factors can drive the development of sex in tourism, including tourists, business people, and the local community. From a tourist perspective, prostitution is used as a means of channeling desires (snacking, cheating, and alcohol consumption). From a business perspective, sex in tourism is exploited as a form of commercialization. This situation can be transformed into a legal tourism package that requires sexual activity as a normal part of tourism. The above theories conclude that prostitution is a transaction between women and many men for sexual activity as a means of livelihood. In the Parangkusumo Beach area, prostitution is carried out by women, mostly older (than 40 years old). Prostitution in the Parangkusumo Beach area occurs from the afternoon until the evening, with peak activity occurring on Tuesday Kliwon and Friday Kliwon nights, as they coincide with the ritual at Batu Cepuri.

2.4 Tourism Skills

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), skill is the ability to complete a task. Skills are the expertise to perform a task that is acquired only through practice. Skills are divided into three categories: mental skills (analysis, decision-making, calculation, and memorization), physical skills, and social skills (the ability to influence others, such as giving a speech and promoting products). Skills are the capacities needed to carry out certain tasks, which are the result of personal development through training, technical guidance (bimtek), and experience [5]. Tourism skills can be summarized as the skills or expertise needed to carry out tourism-related activities. Examples of skills that can be practiced in the Parangkusumo area include guide, F&product, F&service, and housekeeping skills. Tourism

skills are important for local communities around the Parangkusumo area to develop their tourism potential and to attract tourists.

2.5 Regional Regulation

Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2007 explains that the prohibition on carrying out prostitution activities includes a prohibition on carrying out prostitution in the regional area, a prohibition on becoming a pimp in the regional area, a prohibition on providing buildings used for prostitution in the regional area, a prohibition on every person or community to protect prostitution activities in the entire regional area, and business activities that are proven to be accompanied by prostitution activities. Regional government officials have the authority to close them.

2.6 Social Dimension

The social dimension is a perspective that sees sexuality emerging in interpersonal relationships, humans adapting or adjusting to the demands of their social environment, and socialization of the roles and functions of sexuality in human life. Every society plays a strong role in shaping sexual values and attitudes [6]. Furthermore, each society can shape or hinder the sexual development and expression of its members. Each social group has its own rules and norms that guide its members' behavior. Sexuality is viewed from a social dimension, sexuality emerges in interpersonal relationships, with environmental influences shaping views on sexuality, which ultimately shape sexual behavior [7]. Environmental factors influence views, behavior, sexual practices, gender roles, interpersonal relationships, adjustment to the demands of social roles, and the function of sexuality in human life. Social networks influence the tendency to act in accordance with the social environment.

Social problems arise from two options. First, a manifest social problem is a social problem arises from imbalances in society. This problem arises from inconsistencies in societal norms and values, ultimately creating a label of dislike for deviant behaviors. Second, a latent social problem concerns things that contradict societal values but are not generally recognized by the surrounding community. The social dimension of sexuality can be summarized as a perspective from which sexuality emerges from interpersonal relationships and can be influenced by environmental factors, ultimately leading to the formation of sexual behaviors. The social dimension that occurs in the Parangkusumo area in the context of sexual behavior is the view of sex workers (PSK) who view being a sex worker as an easy way to earn money:

2.7 Cultural Dimension

The cultural dimension refers to sexual behavior that is part of a society's culture. The cultural dimension demonstrates how cultural values and ethics influence sexuality assessments. Vietnam is an example of this theory. Vietnam has a traditional wedding ritual called "Husband Kidnapping," which aims to maintain marital happiness and uphold marital fidelity. A person's sexuality essentially consists of sexual identity, consisting of gradations of masculinity and femininity, gender behavior/roles, whether determined by culture or chosen in conflict with other cultures, and, particularly in modern societies, sexual orientations that deviate from or adhere to the culture. The cultural dimension can be concluded that sexual behavior can be influenced by the inherited culture. The cultural dimension of sex in the Parangkusumo area is prostitution, which has existed since the 1990s. At that time, pimps moved some of their sex workers from Pasar Kembang (near Tugu Station) to the southern coastal areas, such as Parangbolong and Parangkusumo [1].

2.8 Social Safety Net

A social safety net is a program formulated as a basic strategy to prevent impoverishment and unemployment and facilitate economic recovery [8]. The Indonesian government designed the social safety net program to prevent the impact or social explosion of a prolonged economic crisis [9]. Furthermore, this program was implemented to ensure the smooth and uninterrupted implementation of long-term development programs. A social safety net is defined as a series of public and private policies aimed at preventing, reducing, and eliminating economic and social vulnerability to poverty [10]. A social safety net is a policy or system designed to prevent social explosions and poverty. Indirectly, the social safety net in the Parangkusumo area includes prostitution, karaoke businesses and alcohol. This social safety net prevents lower-class communities from falling further into poverty and can prevent crime. Unemployment is a cause of rampant demonstrations, accompanied by vandalism and other criminal acts that harm many parties. To date, prostitution in the Parangkusumo area has not been eradicated and continues to exist. This indicates that the local government has not found a solution to prevent unemployment and poverty.

2.9 The Gift Paradox

This paradox can be understood as a contradiction between the phenomenological approach and the structural perspective, which places gift exchange as originating from society while simultaneously demonstrating that structural elements exist transcendently [2]. The Gift Paradox begins by describing the ethical shift of capitalism, and the current government's spirit of gift-giving is repeatedly transformed into an antidote to the evils of an uncontrolled market and a dysfunctional state [11]. Popular and academic discourse advocates ethical idealism and conscious capitalism, suggesting a rejuvenation of gift-giving as the key to re-establishing lost social bonds and solidarity [11]. The Gift Paradox theory concludes that a social entity can provide hope to society, but at the same time, it can also act as a problem-maker. The social entity referred to in this study is prostitution in the Parangkusumo area of Yogyakarta. Prostitution provides hope for communities lacking tourism knowledge and skills, but at the same time, it also raises issues related to religion and morality.

3 Research Method

The data required for this study were collected through interviews, documentation, observation, and literature reviews. To obtain this data, the researchers conducted interviews with stakeholders, observed conditions at Parangkusumo Beach, conducted documentation, and searched for relevant literature. The data analysis method used in this study was qualitative and descriptive. Data analysis is a series of activities carried out by researchers after collecting, processing, and drawing conclusions [12]. The data analysis method used in this research was qualitative descriptive analysis. The data presentation method in this study involved reducing the data obtained from the findings at the Parangkusumo Beach. Data obtained through source triangulation verified the validity of the data from the interviews, observations, and documentation. Next, the reduced data were condensed through narrative descriptions to produce concise and easily understood data.

4 Finding and Discussion

4.1 The Social and Cultural History of the Parangkusumo Coast Community in the Dynamics of the Prostitution Industry

Parangkusumo Beach in Bantul Regency is a popular tourist destination on the southern coast of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, steeped in mystical tales and the history of the Mataram Kingdom. Batu Cepuri is believed to be the meeting point for Prince Diponegoro and the Queen of the South. It is believed that this stone is a place where prayers are asked and answered. Furthermore, Parangkusumo Beach is used for rituals, often held every Tuesday and Friday Kliwon night. The large number of tourists visiting Parangkusumo Beach has significantly impacted the local economy. Several food stalls, restaurants, karaoke bars, and homestays are available for renting. This has fueled the prostitution industry at the beach. The large number of tourists attending the Tuesday and Friday Kliwon rituals has enticed prostitutes to participate. Prostitution is increasingly prevalent in the Parangkusumo Beach area.

Prostitution has existed since the Dutch colonial era in Indonesia. In the 1850s, the Dutch colonial government enacted regulations to legalize prostitution to prevent illegal and uncontrolled prostitution. The Dutch colonial government implemented this regulation by providing brothels to facilitate the control and enforcement of security forces. Furthermore, along with the increasing growth of the plantation and sugar industries in East and Central Java, private investment in Java, and the development of road infrastructure and railway networks, this has triggered the migration of male workers to Java and increased the demand for sex workers [1]. Yogyakarta City was the initial location of the prostitution center. The first prostitution location was in the Pasar Kembang area, near the Tugu station in Yogyakarta City. In the 1990s, pimps moved prostitutes to areas south of Yogyakarta City, such as the Parangkusumo Beach.

4.2 A Scientific Perspective on the Socio-Cultural Dimension: Observing the Phenomenon Between Tourism and Prostitution in the Parangkusumo Beach Area

The phenomenon of prostitution is a social problem, involving sexual relations between men and women who are not their wives in exchange for economic compensation, and is believed to have existed since the kingdom era [13]. During the kingdom era, prostitution was often practiced in the name of tradition and the king's power, as reflected in the large number of concubines owned. Women sent to become the king's concubines came from various regions, and to this day, cities are known to supply prostitutes. The areas known for supplying king's concubines include Indramayu, Karawang, Kuningan, Pati, Jepara, Grobogan, Wonogiri, Bliitar, Malang, Banyuwangi, and Lamongan [14].

The Parangkusumo Coast area has an implicit link between local myths and prostitution, a connection kept secret by the role of the Yogyakarta Palace and the involvement of local caretakers[15]. Tourism activities and attractions can have at least six positive impacts: increasing foreign exchange, spreading development, creating jobs, stimulating economic growth through a multiplier effect, broadening public awareness of global nations, and encouraging increased education and skills. The relevance of prostitution to tourism in the Parangkusumo Beach area. Prostitution is an integral part of tourism and is inherent in tourism development [16]. Similarly, stated that a negative impact of mass tourism-oriented tourism is the proliferation of prostitution practices [17]. Tourism can be categorized into five 5Ss: sun, sex, sight, saving, and servility. The proliferation of prostitution in the Parangkusumo area is due to the massive spiritual, cultural, and natural tourism at the beach.

Poverty is not the sole reason for prostitution, but there are several other factors, such as lack of attention from family, some traditional beliefs, consumerist urban life, and domestic violence [13]. The proliferation of prostitution in the Parangkusumo area is not only an economic problem but also a socio-cultural and psychological one. Psychological pressure causes sex workers to fall into a cycle of cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs as a form of escape to reduce socio-psychological suffering. In addition, the sociology of prostitution for sex workers includes lack of attention from family, the influence of consumerist urban life, the seduction of pimps, victims of violence, victims of disharmony in the family, and a cultural shift that does not consider prostitution taboo. Furthermore, the sociology from the perspective of sex workers is due to work pressure, being away from their wives, and having free time to visit the red-light districts. This sociological influence strengthens the reasons people enter the prostitution industry, both as prostitutes and consumers.

Prostitutes are at risk of having children and living in a world of prostitution. Researchers have described the social chain of prostitution as follows:



Figure 1. Social Chain of Prostitutes Source: Researcher Documentation (2024)

Women with low economic status, little education, and no skills are potentially offered positions as therapists, prostitutes, and karaoke hostesses by massage parlor owners, brothel owners, pimps, and karaoke business owners. These women are vulnerable to these lucrative offers because they are offered higher salaries than other jobs. Furthermore, these prostitutes age and become middle-aged. When they have unwanted children, they are more likely to be drawn into the prostitution industry. While the prostitution industry has negative impacts, it also has positive ones. One positive impact of prostitution is its role as a social safety net for women. The social safety net protects communities from poverty. Furthermore, a social safety net can be defined as a system for maintaining public order by reducing crime, which disrupts national stability. The social safety net, in the context of prostitution in the Parangkusumo area, is one way to protect poor communities from falling deeper into poverty. Prostitution has become a lifeline for prostitutes with limited economic resources, education, and skills amid the massive tourism boom in the Parangkusumo area.

Data from the Organization for Social Change (OPSI) indicate that in 2019, the number of sex workers in Indonesia reached 230,000. It contributed IDR 32 trillion to the economic turnover of the prostitution industry. This number and economic turnover place Indonesia as the 12th largest of 24 countries with the largest prostitution industry worldwide. This

number also poses a serious problem for the Indonesian government, which is working to find solutions so that these sex workers can continue to access other sources of income.

However, prostitution remains an unresolved social problem. The gift paradox is an apt theory for describing prostitution in the Parangkusumo Coastal Area. Prostitution provides a livelihood for lower-class people, yet simultaneously constitutes social problems. This social problem cannot be resolved solely from an economic perspective; it also falls under the responsibility of policymakers, particularly the Bantul Regency's Social Services. Prostitution has various negative impacts on sex workers, family resilience, and the community. This practice has evolved into two types and modes of operation, supported by various factors. Therefore, the handling of these factors requires consideration of their diversity.

The rehabilitation program implemented by the government, through the Ministry of Social Affairs or the Bantul Regency Social Services, generally targets sex workers who are caught in raids. Furthermore, rehabilitation is carried out through beneficial activities in shelters. However, evaluations of the effectiveness of this rehabilitation are rarely available. The government should consider the best principles for an effective rehabilitation process to improve rehabilitation outcomes. This includes increasing the capacity of service providers to implement activities based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Empowering participants by considering their input, needs, and aspirations is crucial to ensure that rehabilitation does not become a one-way process that accommodates and benefits the interests of one party.

The ideal rehabilitation pattern should consider various aspects, one of which is the typology of prostitution. There are three social categories of prostitutes related to the adaptation process and survival strategies they develop: pessimistic prostitutes, dreamers, and subordinated prostitutes who eventually manage their situations [13]. Several weaknesses in past prostitution management policies [14] need to be evaluated. These include inaccurate assumptions about the causes of prostitution, a lack of agreement on the terms prostitute, prostitute, and prostitute, and a highly partialistic approach to the subject. The Bantul Regency Government's approach remains repressive. This repressive nature refers to the use of law enforcement officers to raid prostitutes during their prostitution activities. The Bantul Regency Government has not yet implemented soft power measures by adopting a humanistic approach and outreach. A humanistic approach is expected to foster good communication so that the Bantul Regency Government can understand the desires of prostitutes and vice versa. Important principles that can be used as references for best practices in services that help sex workers leave their jobs. These principles are outlined as follows [18]:

1. **Holistic Interventions:** Interventions need to integrate multiple approaches to help strengthen sex workers' motivation and increase their confidence and ability to leave their profession. In other words, interventions must address the various issues or obstacles often faced by sex workers, including psychological barriers stemming from childhood trauma and/or exploitative conditions experienced during their work.
2. **Ease of Access: Proactive Interventions:** Actively reach out to sex workers without coercion. This outreach maximizes the opportunity to identify sex workers interested in leaving their profession and in need of support to do so. Furthermore, services must be located in areas that are easily accessible to sex workers. Being forced to participate in rehabilitation programs due to being caught in a raid negatively impacts rehabilitation effectiveness. Furthermore, rehabilitation services can be distributed in locations that are easily accessible to sex workers and without the impression of exclusion, thereby reducing social stigma.

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4. **Relationships Based on Mutual Trust:** Interventions need to build trust between sex workers and their implementers, and vice versa. Conversely, relationships based on suspicion, victimization, stigma, and discrimination can negatively impact interactions between service providers and participants, hindering the achievement of program outcomes.
5. **Dedicated Services Supported by Adequate Resources:** This includes clear and measurable programs, supporting facilities and infrastructure, adequate funding sources, and dedicated and competent human resources. How are the above principles applied in the context of government-led rehabilitation of commercial sex workers in Indonesia? To date, obtaining data on the effectiveness of rehabilitation through these institutions is difficult. Data on the monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up of program implementation and its impact on reducing prostitution among participants are very limited. However, available data and information indicate that there are still gaps in the application of best-practice rehabilitation principles in sex worker rehabilitation programs in Indonesia.

5 Conclusion

The social and cultural phenomena observed at the Parangkusumo Beach tourist destination can be summarized as follows: First, the history of prostitution in the area dates back to the kingdom era and continues to the present day. Second, the persistence of prostitution within the tourism industry reflects the complex sociocultural issues faced by lower-class communities. Third, long-established social structures and patterns within society are difficult to change or eliminate using purely repressive approaches. Fourth, implementing social safety nets is an important mechanism for reducing crime among lower-income groups. Finally, the Gift Paradox illustrates how prostitution can simultaneously function as both a solution and a problem within the sociocultural landscape.

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