Prostitution Practices of Elderly Commercial Sex Workers in the Perspective of Social Bonds Theory

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Abstract: This article discusses about the social control among community towards the practice of prostitution from elderly commercial sex workers in the Pamulang area, South Tangerang by using social bonds theory with 4 main components, namely attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. This research was conducted within 5 months in Pamulang, South Tangerang. The subjects of this research amounted to 5 resource persons, namely 3 commercial sex workers, 1 surrounding community, and 1 party from the South Tangerang Social Service. This research implements qualitative approach by descriptive method, with primary and secondary data sources. The result shows that the community is aware about the social deviation of prostitution practice around them, then they reject it by giving a warning. The involvement of community leaders who act as pimps encourages the community to be permissive. The permissive attitude that arises is due to economic factors and weak community conditions. The weak relationship with the family and never making an example of the mistakes she experienced by continuing to choose a job as a commercial sex worker until her elder age. This makes the social control of the community that occurs in the Pamulang area, South Tangerang weak and the practice of prostitution of elderly prostitutes will continue to occur.

Keywords: Prostitution, Elderly Commercial Sex Workers, Social Bonds Theory.

Kata Kunci: Prostitusi, Pekerja Seks Komersial Lanjut Usia, Teori Social Bonds.

INTRODUCTION

Social deviance can lead to social problems. One of the social problems for the lower middle class is the difficulty of finding jobs in Indonesia, accompanied by low levels of education and skills. One example that is always around the community is the practice of prostitution. The practice of prostitution is carried out by a commercial sex worker or commonly abbreviated as a prostitute, by providing sexual behavior services.
that aim to earn money by using her/his services.\textsuperscript{1} According to the National Coordinator of the Indonesian Social Change Organization or (OPSI), the number of commercial sex workers, especially women in Indonesia in 2019 reached 230,000 people and this number can increase every year.\textsuperscript{2} In addition, data from the South Tangerang Social Service shows the number of commercial sex workers, especially women from 2016-2023 in South Tangerang, as many as 620 people were secured.\textsuperscript{3}

Prostitution is practiced at all reproductive ages, from teenagers to elderly. As in the media, the news published can inspire someone to be good, or vice versa can also make someone bad, just such as a tutor in committing a crime.\textsuperscript{4} According to a news aired by national online mass media that occurred in Central Java, Satpol PP found 2 elderly sex workers in a rice field area in Sukoharjo which has long been a location for prostitution practices. The sex workers were found serving their customers at a rate of IDR 10,000 to 20,000. The caught sex workers were over 50 years old. Satpol PP managed to secure two sex workers and customers.\textsuperscript{5}

Law Number 13 of 1998 concerning Elderly Welfare in article 1 paragraph (2), contains elderly people are them who have reached the age of 60 (sixty) years and over.\textsuperscript{6} In 2021, the elderly are included in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Koentjoro, On the spot: tutur dari sarang pelacur (Yogyakarta: Tinta, 2004). 339.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Wawancara dengan Hadiana, Sub Koordinator Rehabilitasi Sosial Tuna Sosial dan Perdagangan Orang, di Kantor Dinas Sosial Tangerang Selatan, 14 Februari 2023.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Mantovani, C. “Mangkal di persawahan,2 PSK lanjut usia diciduk satpol PP,” Sulaposs.Com, 3 Desember 2021. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 13 Tahun 1998 Tentang
\end{itemize}
the low economic group. As many as 43.29 percent of the elderly are in the bottom 40 percent expenditure group and 19.31 percent in the top 20 percent expenditure group, because they have to work to make ends meet. The reason why the elderly are still working is because they are still physically and mentally strong. But the main factor is economic difficulty, because of this factor there are some elderly people who decide to become prostitutes.\textsuperscript{7}

In related research also conducted by Santika et al (2017), that there are indeed internal and external factors for someone working as a prostitute, namely internal factors of broken heart, divorce, low education, and skills possessed. External factors, namely economic factors, invitation of friends, and environmental influences.\textsuperscript{8} While this study found field facts, that the factors of the elderly working as prostitutes in the Pamulang area, South Tangerang are economic factors, low education, environmental influences, and failure in marriage. Although the elderly have limitations in carrying out activities due to physical and psychological decline, they still work to meet their needs.

Like research conducted by Nining (2017), which examines menopause, it was stated that menopause occurs when women are aged 40 years late and 50 years early. In addition to menopause at the age of 50 years and above physical changes are also seen, such as changes in skin elasticity or


what is commonly called wrinkles and also health that begins to decline.\textsuperscript{9}

This is a challenge for elderly sex workers in the Pamulang area to compete with sex workers who are still young. Due to the concept required by the sale of sexual services, the appearance is still attractive. In addition, age for sex workers is a selling point to attract customers.\textsuperscript{10}

The community, especially the family, has an important role in supporting the lives of the elderly. But in reality, there are still many elderly people who are not cared for by their families and the surrounding community. Therefore, social control is important, especially for the community in order to overcome the practice of prostitution on an ongoing basis.\textsuperscript{11}

The practice of prostitution can be seen in big cities, as in this study which explains the large number of elderly prostitution practices in the Pamulang area, South Tangerang city. In this case, information was obtained from interviews with elderly prostitutes whom informed that the surrounding community was the target of various prostitution practices.


Based on a report from the Social Service Office of South Tangerang City, the number of prostitutes aged 36 years-55 years in South Tangerang in 2018 was recorded at 8 people, and in 2022 the number of prostitutes increased to 60 people. This shows that the number of prostitutes in South Tangerang has increased.12

The practice of prostitution that occurs in the Pamulang area, namely Jalan Puspitek, is a popular place in community.13 They stand on the side of the road or in dimly lit coffee shops, accompanying the customers drinking in these stalls. Then, the purpose of this study is to describe the form of social control of the community over the practice of prostitution, especially elderly commercial sex workers. Besides, this also aims to find out the application of social bonds theory in community social control of

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prostitution practices of elderly commercial sex workers in Pamulang, Tangerang.

METHOD

The current research uses qualitative research with a descriptive approach. This research method explains how social control is carried out by the community against the practice of prostitution of elderly commercial sex workers in the Pamulang area, South Tangerang. Data sources were obtained from primary and secondary data.

Observations were made using the interview method. Researchers conducted interviews related to the problems in the study, namely how social control of the community towards the practice of prostitution by elderly commercial sex workers. As well as conducting interviews with informants who are one of the main data sources in this study. This research took 5 months in the Pamulang area, South Tangerang. The subjects of this research amounted to 5 informants, namely 3 commercial sex workers, 1 surrounding community, and 1 party from the South Tangerang Social Service.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Elderly Commercial Sex Workers

Prostitution is a behavior carried out by men and women by having sexual intercourse by changing partners for money. It is even found that people of elderly age do this activity. As experienced by an elderly prostitute on Jalan Puspitek Pamulang, in an interview with the researcher. The informant does her daily life by working as a commercial sex worker. This is done because of economic needs, low education, social environment, and failure in marriage. The informant herself does not have strong ties to her family, as evidenced by the confession of the informant who was abandoned
by her husband and child. In practicing prostitution, there are background factors, especially older prostitutes. Because they have limitations in carrying out activities due to physical and psychological decline.

Based on the results of interviews that researchers have conducted, it is known that several factors cause an elderly person to become a commercial sex worker, namely due to economic factors, low education and skills to gain access to decent work. In 2021, the elderly were included in the low economic group, that is as many as 43.29 percent of the elderly were in the bottom 40 percent expenditure group and 19.31 percent in the top 20 percent expenditure group. This happens because the elderly are still physically and mentally strong. But the main factor is economic difficulty, because of this factor there are some elderly people who decide to become prostitutes. In addition, social factors and the surrounding environment have first plunged into the world of prostitution. The absence of supervision from the family and a sense of revenge for failure in marriage are also factors behind the elderly becoming prostitutes.14 In social bonds theory, someone who has weak ties with internal such as family, friends and external such as society, then the greater the person to follow his/her desire to break the law.15

**Social Control in the Practice of Prostitution of Elderly Commercial Sex Workers in Pamulang Area, South Tangerang**

Based on the researcher’s interview with one of the community, there are forms of social control carried out by the community on Jalan Puspitek Pamulang, such as through reprimands, and giving warnings. The community had rejected the existence of prostitution practices, through a permissive attitude or an attitude of allowing uncontrolled moral. This is

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because the security forces and community leaders who are supposed to be an example in the community, reflect the lack of social control. In addition, the pity of the community makes the practice of prostitution still exist and grow. There are no social organizations, such as youth organizations or community organizations in the prostitutes’ environment. In a permissive environment that has weak control within its scope, so prostitution can easily develop in that environment.

In social control itself, which is a system or process to foster, invite, and urge people to act in accordance with the norms that apply in society by means to create public order.\(^\text{16}\) It is important for the community to tackle the practice of prostitution on an ongoing basis. As in social bonds theory, the community is part of social control that can control itself. Because internal control is more influential than external control.\(^\text{17}\)

There are still many prostitution practices on Jalan Puspitek Pamulang, due to factors that trigger the emergence of the place of practice. One of them is the social control carried out by the community is weak or not implemented because of a permissive attitude or allowing some immoral behavior. This is because the security forces and community leaders who are supposed to be an example in the community, reflect the weak social control, thus the prostitution practices continue to exist. Besides, this also happens because of the weak supervision by the government for dimly lit stalls at night. In addition, security officers such as Satpol PP have carried out several


raids, unfortunately it only impacts temporarily. Also, the low economic condition of the community causes people around Jalan Puspitek to benefit from the practice of prostitution by opening small businesses that can help their family’s economy. Such as karaoke bars, food stalls, and grocery stores that sell various daily necessities. The owners and keepers of rented accommodation also benefit from the prostitutes who rent their premises.

In social bonds theory, it is revealed that a person in society has the same tendency to be good or evil. Whether a person is good or evil depends entirely on their society. This happens when a person’s bond with society weakens or breaks, which then continuing the practice of prostitution to grow. From this, community participation is needed, in order to help in creating public order.

In addition, the permissive attitude taken by the community will have its own impact on the elderly prostitutes and the community. Such as: diseases that will be suffered by the elderly, because the elderly are very vulnerable to disease and the elderly prostitutes are feared to be able to transmit diseases to the people in the area. It can also have an impact on the Pamulang area, especially Jalan Puspitek, which will be viewed badly by the wider community. In addition, other impacts are felt directly or indirectly, causing disruption to the comfort of the surrounding community.

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Analysis of Social Bonds Theory on Social Control in the Practice of Prostitution of Elderly Commercial Sex Workers in Pamulang Area, South Tangerang

Society has a very influential role in the practice of prostitution that occurs at Jalan Puspitek Pamulang and that is in accordance with the proof of the theory used by researchers, namely social bonds theory. By using 4 components of the Social Bonds theory, namely attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief, indirectly the elderly prostitutes on Jalan Puspitek Pamulang are also aware and know that their actions have violated the prevailing norms. This means that these elderly prostitutes deliberately violate or disobey the rules or norms found in society. In social bonds theory, a person in society will have the same tendency to be good or evil. Whether a person is good or bad depends entirely on their society. This happens when a person’s ties to society weaken or break.\(^{22}\)

Based on the findings of the researcher’s interview with informant 1, who is an elderly prostitute on Jalan Puspitek Pamulang, which the attachment to the existing family is not going well. As evidenced by the experience of informant 1, she does not have a good attachment to the family, especially the husband. In addition, environmental factors such as friendship also cause a person to commit deviant acts, namely prostitution. She did that because she followed her friend from her area, who also worked as a prostitute. As long as the informant lived in Jalan Puspitek Pamulang, the surrounding neighbors also had the same profession as her, namely being a commercial sex worker.

In addition, informant 1 also has a weak or unimplemented commitment as evidenced by the experience of informant 1, who has never been made an example of the mistakes they have experienced, namely their

choice to become commercial sex workers until their advanced age which is very detrimental to their health in the future. The elderly prostitutes in taking action do not think rationally, making themselves prefer to take jobs that harm and destroy themselves. They did not consider the risks, such as the profits and losses that will occur. Because prostitutes are women who are at risk of having venereal diseases and have the potential to spread them, they can endanger themselves and the people around them.

Based on this community behavior, there is no involvement of informant I with the community as one of the components of social bonds theory. That informant I has a bad reputation, because of the influence of friends in the same profession. Informant I chose to do negative activities, such as working at night as a prostitute and never participated in activities carried out by the community. Working in prostitution and becoming a prostitute are deviant behaviors that violate community norms.

A person’s belief in the norms and regulations that exist in society is an important factor in preventing deviations and violations from occurring. For example, what happened to informant I was due to the lack of trust built by elderly prostitutes on Puspitrek Road towards themselves, their families, especially their husbands. Making informant I spend her time resting and working at night. In addition, the lack of understanding of the social norms that exist in the community makes the informant continue to work as a prostitute even though she knows that her actions have violated the prevailing norms. This means that in this social bonds theory, not everyone breaks the law, someone is categorized that s/he breaks the law when s/he fulfills the 4 components mentioned above.
CONCLUSION

The community in Jalan Puspitak Pamulang realizes that the practice of prostitution in their environment is a social deviation, by rejecting it through reprimands and giving warnings. The involvement of community leaders who act as pimps, encourages the community to be apathetic towards the practice of prostitution. Therefore, the social control of the community that occurs on Jalan Puspitak Pamulang against the practice of prostitution of elderly prostitutes is weak and not implemented. The permissive attitude that arises is due to economic factors and weak community conditions. The weak relationship between the informant and the family, the absence of commitment from the informant because she never made an example of the mistakes she experienced by continuing to choose a job as a commercial sex worker until her elder age. In this social bonds theory, not everyone breaks the law. Someone is stated breaking the law when s/he fulfill the 4 components above. However, in this case the informant can be categorized that she does not break the law that can cause the practice of prostitution to continue and even grow.

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