

The Relations Between Muslim Community and Prostitution in Bandungan

Firhandika Ade Santury¹, Hendra Try Ardianto^{2*}, Rachmad Gustomy³

¹Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

^{2*}Department of Politics and Government Studies, Diponegoro University, Indonesia

³Department of Political Science and International Studies, Birmingham University, The UK

*Correspondence Email: htardianto@live.undip.ac.id

Received: 27 February 2023; Revised: 22 October 2023; Accepted: 7 November 2023

Abstract: *This study aims to explain how the relationship between Muslim communities and prostitution is present in everyday social life, especially in the prostitution area of Bandungan, Semarang Regency. With the case study research method, the authors conducted observations, documentation, and structured and unstructured interviews simultaneously with prostitution business actors, Muslim associations, and local government actors. As for the findings, first, the relationship between society and prostitution has been socially shaped over a very long period, not something that appears instantly. The gradual social change from the colonial era to the emergence of tourism gave rise to the characteristics of prostitution, which were relatively different from the localization models of prostitution in other regions. Second, the relationship between the Muslim community and prostitution is intertwined in social relations because of intertwined economic interests. Third, social disharmony is still present despite social harmony, especially in the relations of citizens who do not depend on their economic interests in the prostitution business, especially among people who are affiliated with Muslim organizations. This study concludes that the relationship between the Muslim community and prostitution occurs dynamically, which is still contradictory but has no conflict with each other.*

Keywords: *Muslim Community; Prostitution; Harmony; Disharmony; Economic Interest.*

How to Cite:

Santury, F. A., Ardianto, H. T., & Gustomy, R. (2023). The Relations Between Muslim Community and Prostitution in Bandungan. *Journal of Governance*, 8(4), 468-485). <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.31506/jog.v8i4.19290>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Introduction

The mass media has tended to make incomplete depictions of prostitution, along with the existence of Muslim communities, until today. Many news articles describe contradictory and unbelievable conditions. However, they are unable to clearly explain why the area known to many Muslim communities simultaneously exists in the business of prostitution. For example, this picture appears in news stories that present the strange situations in several student cities that turn out to be prostitution areas, such as in Demak, Kudus (Okezone, 2021; Solopos, 2021), Jombang (Detik, 2019; Faktual, 2018), Purwakarta (Sinar Jabar, 2019), and Tasikmalaya (Kompas TV, 2019).

Even though the depiction is incomplete, the contradictory conditions are pretty logical given the general perspective of Muslim society, which tends to oppose the existence of prostitution practices. In Islamic law, scholars agree that prostitution is the same as adultery. Meanwhile, according to the law of adultery in Islam, both those with tariffs (prostitution) and non-tariffs (infidelity) are haram (Amalia, 2018; Kenedi, 2016; Hasanah, 2019). The idea of haram means that Islamic morality broadly places prostitution as opposed to or avoided. Even some regional heads in Indonesia use Islamic morality on specific issues when issuing local policies to stop or limit the presence of prostitution in their areas (Sakai & Fauzia, 2014; Angelia et al., 2023).

Although many resist, a few people accept the existence of a prostitution business. Public acceptance of prostitution generally occurs because it increases employment and even reduces

unemployment in the area (Faizah & Sadewo, 2015). The multiple effects of prostitution must be recognized because it has created various jobs for locals (Faidah, 2014). These conditions cause the response of the surrounding community to not always be averse to prostitution (Surbakti & Yudi, 2020). Therefore, in some cases, the closure of prostitution areas, in addition to tending to create resistance from the local communities in many ways, as noted by Jailani & Badrianto (2014), cannot stop the practice of prostitution but only change the pattern of prostitution to a more covert practice.

From the explanation above, the question is: how do the santri, in Geertz's term to describe Muslims who obey the teachings of Islam (2013), respond to the existence of prostitution? However, Santri will certainly hold Islamic morality that considers prostitution an act forbidden by religion. Unfortunately, the mass media portraits of the existence of santri and prostitution have not succeeded in wholly and vividly illustrating how the two are related in daily practice.

The study of prostitution in Bandungan is not new. From the author's search, there are at least two significant focuses taken by researchers when making prostitution in Bandungan the object of their research. First, the research seeks to describe how prostitution occurred there. In his research, Abdi (2019), in detail equipped with photos, describes how this prostitution business took place in Indonesia, one of which is in Bandungan. Another study tried to trace how the karaoke business (which is legal) committed deviation by carrying out the practice of covert prostitution (which is illegal) in Bandungan (Rukhmanah et al.,

2020; Agustin et al., 2020; Sugiarto et al., 2021).

Second, the research seeks to uncover the impact of prostitution on the surrounding community. Although prostitution has a positive impact on creating jobs for locals, such as jobs in hotels, karaoke, motorcycle taxis, stalls, and other small businesses, prostitution also has a more negative impact, like the emergence of the threat of infectious diseases and psychological effects due to the presence of many commercial sex workers (PSK) around residents (Demartoto, 2013). Therefore, it is not surprising that many studies in both the social and health fields pay attention to how commercial sex workers, local villagers, and local governments deal with the problem of overcoming HIV/AIDS transmission (Mulati, 2016; Mulyaningrum & Puspita, 2016; Naryoso, 2014; Saadah & Larasaty, 2021). In addition, another study also depicts the impact on the psychological development of young people around the prostitution area, which is considered to cause the emergence of free sexual behavior among adolescents around Bandungan (Isnaeni et al., 2017; Maulidya et al., 2021).

Based on existing studies, many researchers pay attention to the relationship between Islamic society and prostitution. The reality of the field shows that many Islamic boarding schools and mosques in Bandungan indicate the presence of significant Muslim people in the region. For this reason, this article will try to provide a more detailed study of how Muslim communities and prostitution can be present simultaneously in the case of Bandungan.

Method

This research used a qualitative approach that prioritizes primary and secondary data mining efforts to obtain a comprehensive narrative related to efforts to translate the complexity of a social context (Creswell, 2016). In the process, this research relied on case study methods to uncover facts. Case studies are used to investigate an event, activity, process, or group of individuals related to a problem (Yin, 2008). The authors used structured and unstructured observation techniques, documentation, and interviews to get the data.

The object of this study was conducted in Bandungan District, Semarang Regency, Central Java. The entire research process was generally carried out from October 2021 to February 2022. The informants who became the research data source included members of religious organizations, mosque administrators, Islamic boarding schools, commercial sex workers, business owners, and actors from the government in the Bandungan prostitution area. Although the subject of this study is quite sensitive, the author chose to disguise the names of local citizens and informants, as well as the names of hotels and karaoke places. Moreover, the author still mentions the actual names of the figures cited by the media and the names of the locations, such as hamlets, villages, markets, mosques, and Islamic boarding schools. The selection of this method is based on the consideration of not declaring a particular party.

Result and Discussion

In compiling this article, the author will use the concepts of harmony and

disharmony to explain the findings. The use of these two concepts is carried out in order to be able to describe the findings precisely related to the relationship between two opposing identities. This concept is often used during this time to see the relationship between two or more identities with very striking differences.

The concept of harmony or disharmony is usually used to analyze ethnic or religious-based identity relations (see Amaliyah, 2015; Muslim, 2016; Rosyid, 2015; Suhaidi, 2014), but in this study, it will be used to analyze two opposing identities, namely Santri and those involved in the prostitution business. Conditional harmony describes a relationship in line with realizing a function or a condition in which interests, needs, and activities can be well coordinated and integrated into meeting common goals (Ip, 2014). At its core, harmony describes the harmony of different people's lives (Sharma, 2015).

An important key to creating conditions of harmony in society is the existence of attributes or values that have been agreed upon as common goals by the community. Each society has different multidimensional attributes for realizing a harmonious situation, such as economic, political, cultural, religious, and so on (Ip, 2014). This condition allows people to live together despite many differences and opposition.

However, it is also necessary to understand that harmony is a dynamic social situation. The situation of harmony in society is likely to change because of the different attributes embraced or desired by members of society. Due to a disharmony situation, there is a relationship between communities that

negates, harms, and contradicts each other (Ip, 2014). If left unchecked, the situation can trigger the birth of conflictual relationships, and it is not impossible to cause violence between groups of people. Through these two concepts, this research explores the relationship between harmony and disharmony in the community of Muslim people and perpetrators of prostitution in Bandungan.

The History of Prostitution in Bandungan

The outbreak of the prostitution business in Bandungan is not a new thing. Its presence is a consequence of the emergence of business opportunities and the high number of tourists (Markov & Kenarov, 2018). Therefore, according to Abdi (2019), the existence of prostitution in Bandungan is considered to have similarities with prostitution areas adjacent to natural attractions, especially around cold mountainous areas, such as those in Tretes (Pasuruan), Batu (Malang), Gang Sadar (Purwokerto), or Gang Semen (Bogor). Based on the latest survey data conducted in 2014 by the Semarang Regency AIDS Prevention Commission, there are around 700 more commercial sex workers in Bandungan, and this number is the second largest after Dolly's localization before the prostitution area was closed by the Surabaya City Government (Kompas, 2014).

Although prostitution in Bandungan is known to everyone, both the public and the government, not many recognize it. The author's experience in interviews with the government shows that some answers have almost similar editorials. Indri, one of the officers of the Semarang Regency's social services and

rehabilitation departments, commented, "In Bandungan, there is no localization, so there are no commercial sex workers. In my opinion, there are only karaoke workers in Bandungan, and it is not included in our duty area" (interview, January 9, 2022). Johan also conveyed the same thing; one of the officers of the Pamong Praja Police Unit (Satpol PP) stated that "We do not have data on prostitution and commercial sex workers in Bandungan; therefore, in our work, there is no special task, so that the Bandungan area is the same as other areas in Semarang Regency" (interview, December 19, 2021). The lack of state recognition of prostitution in Bandungan is because there is no formal regulation issued by the government regarding its phenomenon. This means that the state, in this case, the Semarang Regency Government, has never granted the status of localization of prostitution in Bandungan, even though its existence has been ongoing for a long time.

Based on the latest data, the number of hotels in Bandungan has almost reached the 200s. Most of them are one-star hotels or not star-rated at all. This hotel has only low prices of IDR 30,000–50,000, and tenants can get beds, television, and hot spring facilities. In general, these cheap hotels are considered by some Bandungan people as "esek-esek" (local terms) hotels" where prostitution takes place. Another place known for running a prostitution business is a karaoke place. Based on existing data, there are at least more than 50 karaoke places scattered in various corners of Bandungan (Tribun, 2020). This karaoke place has many female karaoke guides,

who usually also perform the role of prostitutes. Prostitution transactions are usually carried out at karaoke venues by direct negotiation with commercial sex workers or through pimps. Not only that, prostitution also occurs in boarding houses where commercial sex workers live. This business of prostitution in boarding houses involves a more complex network, which, for reasons of limited space in the article, the author does not describe.

On the other hand, the existence of this prostitution business is quite contradictory, considering that almost 96.5% of the population of Bandungan is Muslim, and various religious institutions are very active. It is recorded that there are several religious organizations in Bandungan, such as the Branch Child Leader (PAC) of the Ansor Youth Movement, Barisan Serba Guna (Banser), the Nahdlatul Ulama Student Association (IPNU), the Nahdlatul Ulama Women's Student Association (IPPNU), the Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Institute (LDII), and the Quranic Interpretation Council (MTA). In addition, there are also religious institutions in the education sector, namely 11 Ibtidaiyah Madrasahs, 5 Tsanawiyah Madrasahs, and 2 Aliyah Madrasahs. Not only that, but in Bandungan there are also several relatively large and well-known Islamic boarding schools, such as Ummul Quro Islamic Boarding School, Peasntren Nurul Amal Kenteng Cottage, Al-Mina Islamic Boarding School, Al Falah Islamic Boarding School, Blater Islamic Boarding School, and most recently As-Salam Islamic Boarding School, as well as several other smaller Islamic boarding schools. In this

case, the author has ensured—because one of the authors is a Bandungan citizen—that those religious institutions have quite active activities and play an essential role in people's daily lives.

If we look at the oral history according to the local community, the existence of Bandungan was first inhabited by a couple named Ki Sanggem and Nyi Sanggem around the 18th century AD. Both nomads with an Islamic background in *Abangan*, borrowing Geertz's (2013) term to describe a group of Muslims who still practice syncretic Islamic traditions but are looser in carrying out Islamic teachings, Residents say their arrival was to hermit looking for clues to have offspring. After successfully obtaining offspring, the two settled down and then passed on the teachings of Islam (*abangan*) to almost the entire population of Bandungan.

In the same century, around 1770, the British colonial government, under the leadership of Raffles, managed to find the Hindu heritage site of Gedong Songo Temple in Ndarum Hamlet, Bandungan (Purwardi, 2013). The site's discovery indicates a new route that widens access to Bandungan. Long after that, the colonial government's power passed into the Dutch's hands. In 1873, the first railway line in Ambarawa was officially built by the private railway company *Nederlandse Indische Spoorweg Maatschappij* (NISM), which obtained a concession permit for the construction of the first railway line, Semarang-Vorstenlanden or Solo-Yogyakarta (Kontan, 2020). This also makes Ambarawa's position more strategic and access to Bandungan much more open. Since then, many colonial

elites and railway companies have built houses in Bandungan, followed by resorts to inns as their resting place (Sunindyo, 1993).

The railway station was constructed by mobilizing the community, especially among men from various places, through the forced labor system. According to residents' stories, the economic situation was complicated, and many men were killed, causing many women to be widowed. On the other hand, amid the massive mobilization of male workers for the construction of railways, prostitution began to emerge to channel the sexual desires of the workers of the time. Conditions like this explain why, in Java and Sumatra, there are many prostitution areas adjacent to train stations (Hull et al., 1997). The majority of these prostitutes are widows whose husbands were killed or poor women who were in economic difficulties. At that time, prostitution began to emerge, which was carried out with the concept of dimly lit stalls (Sunindyo, 1993). It then rolled and spread to the Bandungan area until the post-independence era. The practice of prostitution became more prominent around the 1960s and 1970s in Kalinyamat and continues to spread in the surrounding area.

Two conditions explain the existence of Islamic groups and prostitution in the past. First, the Islam that spread in Bandungan in the past tended to be in the style of *abangan* Islam, which was relatively loose in obeying Islam's teachings (Shari'a). Conditions like this make no efforts to enforce Sharia, namely combating prostitution, which in fact is an act that is forbidden by religion.

Second, prostitution is not driven by the internal initiatives of Bandungan residents but by external preconditions due to the confluence of several factors, mainly the mobilization of workers for railway construction. Here, colonial state policies forced the presence of prostitution to emerge along with the compulsion of women to meet economic needs and meet the sexual needs of out-of-county workers who were building railroads. Slowly but surely, these two conditions explain why the practice of prostitution in Bandungan is getting bigger and bigger.

Only in 2002, for the first time, the Ummul Quro Islamic Boarding School appeared, marking Muslim groups that adhere to Islamic teachings. At this time, the author considers the Islamic group Santri to have begun to emerge. It could be that the emergence of students is longer than in 2002, but it is not easy to find a definite marker for what year. The single most extended tracking is the first appearance of Pesantren Ummul Quro in 2002, while the presence of GP Anshor, Banser, IPNU, IPPNU, SIT, and MTA only appeared around 2005 and above. Some of these religious institutions that the author will categorize as Santri Groups will be analyzed in the following discussion, especially to see the relationship of Santri to the prostitution business actors.

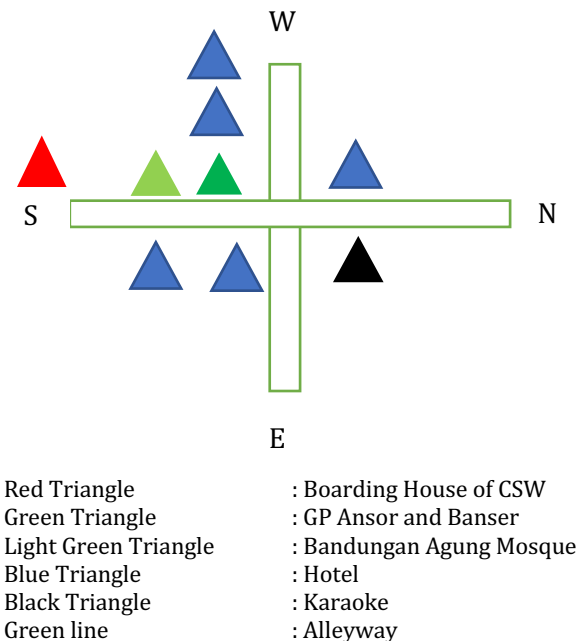
Santri and Prostitution: The Contradiction Relations

During a considerable prostitution activity in Bandungan, religious groups

such as the students of an Islamic boarding school and Muslim organizations or communities (after this was written by Santri) were no less active. Through their various religious institutions, these Santri have a great deal of activity in the community. They participate in recitation, activities to celebrate Islamic holidays, common pilgrim prayers (or prayers during Ramadan), and Friday prayers in mosques. In addition, the students also uphold Islamic traditions held by the surrounding community, such as "Yasinan," "tahlilan," and "mujahadah" activities to traditional Islamic ceremonies from birth to death. This means that these two seemingly contradictory conditions can meet each other without interruption; one side of routine religious activities is carried out, and commercial sex workers and people involved in the prostitution business can also carry out their activities.

Other evidence shows how accepting relationships can also be traced to spatial patterns in Bandungan, especially the problematic position of activities between students and the prostitution business. If researchers observe spatial patterns there, two areas can be studied. The two epicenters of prostitution, namely Bandungan Tempel and Ngunut, have quite interesting spatial patterns. As seen in Bagan I below, the mosque's position, the offices of GP Anshor and Banser, is appropriate in the middle of the hotel complex, karaoke, to PSK boarding houses (see chart I).

Chart I: The Map of Bandungan Tempel area



As seen in the chart above, the Jami An-Nur Mosque, or what is often called the Great Mosque of Bandungan, is the center of religious activity in Bandungan Tempel. This mosque complex has a secretariat of religious organizations, namely PAC GP Ansor Bandungan and Barisan Serba Guna, or Banser. Interestingly, the location of the mosque and the secretariat is squeezed by various hotel buildings, boarding houses, and karaoke, which line up to the boundary of the highway towards Ungaran. On the north side are hotels and magnificent karaoke, namely the Dewi Arum Hotel and Sejagat Karaoke Hut. The distance between the mosque, the hotel, and the karaoke place is very close, only limited by a road less than 4 meters wide. On the east side or the front side of the mosque, there are two hotels, the Mulan Hotel and the Bunga Indah Hotel, with an elongated wall fence covering the hotel rooms and leaving only a view of the

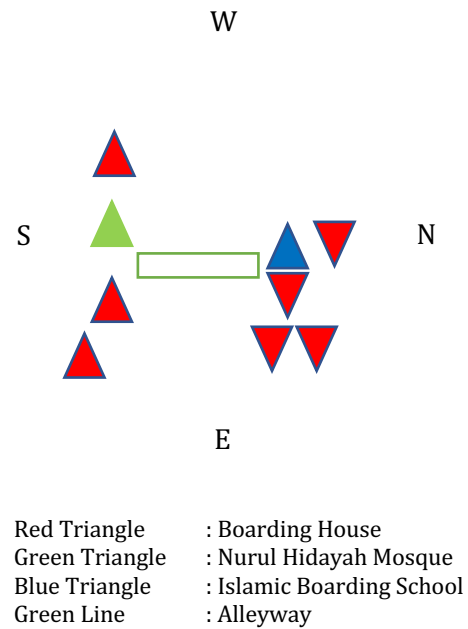
mossy tiles. The wall is less than 4 meters from the front of the mosque. On the south side of the mosque, approximately less than 10 meters away, there is a kind of former hotel complex that is now a boarding house area where dozens of prostitutes live, organized by certain karaoke.

The spatial pattern above was formed more than ten years ago. As stated by Usman, one of the Banser members in Bandungan, the Great Mosque of Bandungan was inaugurated around the 1970s, when prostitution in Bandungan was still concentrated in the Kalinyamat area, not yet expanding to Bandungan Tempel. Initially, the mosque's perimeter was vacant land owned by the community, but over time, hoteliers began to buy people's land. Initially, these hotels were a considerable distance from the mosque, but now they even surround the vicinity.

In 2013, there was a protest from the mosque management because of the plan to build a new hotel by the management of Putri Asri (one of the largest hotel and karaoke business groups in Bandungan) around the mosque, precisely in the western part of the mosque. The development protests arose because of residents' concerns that the process of community worship in mosques would be disrupted. Nevertheless, these protests could subside, and the hotel construction continued. Until now, the mosque's position has been surrounded by magnificent buildings of hotels and karaoke. According to information circulating from the public, the easing of these protests was due to vocal parties such as the village head and mosque administrators getting pressure from hotel owners. As a middle point for these negotiations, the establishment of hotels and karaoke around the mosque was built with a high-wall fence to cover various activities in the hotel and karaoke.

Almost the same as Bandungan Tempel, Ngunut also has a spatial pattern that is almost similar, although not the same. The position of Nurul Hidayah Mosque, which is the epicenter of the activities of the Muslim residents in Ngunut, Jetis Village, is also surrounded by boarding houses for commercial sex workers (see Bagan II). Both the west side and the east side of the Nurul Hidayah Mosque have been filled with rows of boarding houses that commercial sex workers mainly inhabit. Moreover, the ablution place on the west side of the mosque has a position attached less than 30 cm to the walls of the boarding houses of the sex workers.

Chart II: The Map of Ngunut Hamlet



The existence of mosques appeared first compared to boarding houses. However, starting in 2014, residents around the mosque began to open boarding houses, considering that many migrants from outside came to Ngunut and worked in hotels, orphanages, and karaoke in Bandungan. Therefore, it is not surprising that Ngunut is only inhabited by 80 heads of families but has more than 130 boarding houses.

In addition to the mosque flanked by many sex workers boarding houses, there is a small Islamic boarding school surrounded by prostitute boarding houses as well. That is Al-Anwar Islamic Boarding School, which was established in 2018 when sex workers' boarding houses were being carried out in Ngunut. This pesantren was established by Ustadz Hanif, a native of Bandungan, after his return from one of the Islamic boarding schools in Magelang. This pesantren is relatively small, with only 7–10 students.

Looking at Bagan II, the pesantren's location is close together and arguably crowded.

This unique situation is a logical fact, considering that the sex workers boarding house adjacent to the pesantren is indeed owned by Ustadz Hanif's father, who is also the head of the RT there. Based on residents' narratives around the pesantren, the establishment was indeed carried out because of Ustadz Hanif's desire to practice his knowledge and his subtle resistance efforts through proselytizing to foster a religious life amid the prostitution community. This argument is corroborated by the statement of Sholeh, one of the students there, that the most frequent message Ustadz Hanif reminds his students is not to go out often at night to avoid meeting prostitutes who tend to dress "inappropriately."

If we examine the spatial pattern analysis above, it can be seen that there has been a process of mixing between students and perpetrators of prostitution. However, these Santri still have identities as opposed to the perpetrators of prostitution. Mosque administrators, Anshor administrators, and Banser continue to consider prostitution to be a toxic behavior prohibited by Islam. By understanding the idea, they still oppose the existence of prostitution, even though, as an act, they do not express it openly. This is as stated by Usman, a member of Banser Bandungan, that:

"No matter what form it takes, it is still wrong. However, we cannot just play with brushes. It must be seen the conditions. However, many people depend on prostitution. So playing the brush is very risky, especially triggering conflict with our own society. So, it must

remain conducive and prostitution activities do not interfere with Islamic sharia". (interview with Usman, February 28, 2022)

Usman's perspective expresses most of the Santri in the Bandungan area. They prefer to focus on proselytizing, inviting people to recitations, enlivening mosque activities, and trying to stay away from and avoid intoxication through more subtle invitations, not by violent means.

This choice of attitude is considered the most reasonable, considering that most of the interests of residents have been twisted into economic interests involving the business of prostitution. This is strengthened by the fact that most of the boarding houses of the commercial sex workers are owned by the surrounding residents themselves, not to mention the food stalls, grocery stores, laundry, salons, motorcycle taxis, and other jobs in hotels, orphanages, and karaoke places, which have been twisted with the economic attributes of the surrounding residents. This condition explains why it is rare for Santri to take a violent approach to oppose the practice of prostitution because such a way of opposition would mean the same thing as disrupting economic relations, in this case, income, for the citizens of Bandungan itself.

This condition of not vis-à-vis is still maintained today, although often ambiguous situations arise in society. On the eve of Magrib and Isya prayer hours, the administrators of this mosque chant holy verses and *sholawat* praise through the toa-toa of the mosque and the mosque as a sign of the pilgrim's invitation to prayer. However, at the same time, these commercial sex workers also began to go out of the boarding house for activities.

These prostitutes began to come out of the boarding house in very revealing, minimalist work clothes and show their "aurat." As a result of the scene of people coming to the mosque for pilgrim prayers, there was also a scene of prostitutes coming out of the boarding house in "sexy" clothes.

While there is a sense of mutual respect for each identity, it does not mean that no citizen is furious about this situation. The results of the author's interviews with several informants, especially among students who do not depend on their income concerning the prostitution business, show an unequivocal answer regarding their opposition to the existence of prostitution. This is as stated by Umar, one of the administrators of the Nurul Hidayat Mosque in Ngunut, Jetis Village:

"The hamlet officials such as RT, RW, and the Head of Hamlet all have boarding houses. Some mosque administrators also have boarding houses. This seems impressive if this boarding house business is politically and religiously strong. At the same time, those of us who resist tend to be silent because our strength is small. Besides, if it is frontally opposed that we are dealing with our neighbors." (interview with Umar, January 8, 2022)

From Umar's statement above, the author finds two realities. First, the position of the students who oppose prostitution is still a minority. People like Umar, who do not rely on income relating to the prostitution business, are still relatively few. Second, frontal opposition will be constrained by the calculation of the emergence of hostility with one's neighbors, let alone the village administrators. This is a compelling

reason why they did not choose the frontal path of opposition to the prostitution business.

The absence of frontal opposition is also caused by the mixing process carried out by some commercial sex workers in residents' daily lives. Many commercial sex workers rely on catering food shipments from locals. Sometimes, they mingle with residents in stalls to find food, in the laundry to wash clothes, or with motorcycle taxi drivers when traveling. Not only that, in national important day events, a few prostitutes were involved and participated, at least being spectators at the August 17 celebration, for example. These spaces—stalls, laundry, or community events—have become arenas for cross-cutting affiliation between residents and prostitutes.

Not only that, religious events also sometimes become a medium of cross-cutting affiliation for commercial sex workers and residents, although the number is still relatively minimal. One of the sex workers' informants whom the author met, Mawar, stated that she often participated in recitation activities; even in Ramadan, she still participated in Tarawih prayers in mosques. It is, as Rose points out:

"Even though my job is this, religiously, it may be forbidden, but I cannot worship because of that; I should not. After all, I also have this way of living. So, I want to worship. In addition, I also want to blend in with the community. It is hard when you have a hard life; also, being shunned by society is not good. Thankfully the community is good, and I was invited to join the worship." (interview with Rose, January 14, 2022)

Several other commercial sex workers also face this reality. Melati, one

of the prostitutes whom the author met, also stated that she took part by donating rice boxes to the free food program carried out by the Nurul Hidayah Mosque Administrator after Friday prayers.

Donating this rice box was confirmed by one of the mosque administrators, and they did not refuse the donation of rice boxes from the sex workers. According to Usman, one of the administrators of the Nurul Hidayah Mosque:

"Anyone can contribute to giving boxed rice because he came as a person who wanted to share. As a human, I want to worship and not as a prostitute who is in the mood to have sex. We accept anyone's goodwill. However, if it is for mosque purposes, we prohibit soliciting funds from the prostitution community, whether karaoke, hotels, or prostitutes". (interview with Usman, February 28, 2022)

From the story above, it is evident that there is a fairly obvious pattern of cross-cutting affiliation between a small part of the commercial sex workers and the students. There is a process of mutual acceptance, not mutual affirmation, regarding the social affairs of society, which shows a situation of harmony between the two identities.

Inevitable Frictions

Although social life in Bandungan looks quite conducive, the relationship between students and prostitution does not always run smoothly. In documentation studies and author interviews, it was recorded that there had been some friction and high social tensions between students and prostitution in Bandungan. The first significant friction record occurred in July 2012. During Ramadan, dozens of people on behalf of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) carrying

wooden and bamboo clubs came to sweep the Bandungan street area towards Sumowono, which was filled with hotels, karaoke, and street vendors. They came in two cars that read FPI Central Java. They walked down Bandungan and stopped when they found a sweeping target. The group is led by KH Ahmad Rofi'i, who claims to have a mandate from the Central FPI to combat anything that does not respect the holy month of Ramadan (Merdeka, 2012).

After acting, KH Ahmad Rofi'i said that his party would do the same thing again at locations suspected of being used for prostitution and "maksiat" events that were considered contrary to the teachings of the Islamic religion. The action taken by the FPI received a response from one of the clerics who cares for the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in Semarang Regency, namely KH Muhdori. He condemned any acts of violence that argued against the control of several people or groups in the name of Islam (Merdeka, 2012).

Friction recurred and tapered off one month later, in August 2012. On the evening of August 1, 2012, hundreds of Bandungan residents were preparing to confront the Central Java FPI, whose issue was to sweep the Bandungan area. Some hotels and entertainment venues closed early, at 9:00 p.m. In fact, in the regent's circular, the provision to open during Ramadan starts at 20.00 to 24.00. Some business people decided to close early following the news that the Central Java FPI was holding a meeting in Mapagan Ungaran Barat, which was planned to be followed by sweeping action on entertainment venues in the Bandungan area.

The tense situation was in response to police officers deploying their personnel in anticipation of clashes between the FPI and hundreds of Bandung residents. By then, residents had gathered to form a kind of mob in some places, especially in front of hotels, several karaoke venues, and certain alleys. According to one of the karaoke owners in Bandung at that time, Jalidin, the closure, accompanied by a ready and standby attitude, was carried out to maintain assets that were used as a source of livelihood for the surrounding community (JPNN, 2012). However, conditions could ease after the FPI confirmed the absence of a sweeping plan.

Still in the same month, on August 7, 2012, as the Wahid Institute report reported, friction had also occurred in Bandung. Around 20 people, on behalf of the Kaaba Youth Movement (GPK), conducted sweeps of food stalls and hotels along the Bandung area. However, this sweep was finally stopped by Semarang Police officers when the GPK crowd was about to act in front of the Anisa Hotel on Jalan Lemah Abang, Duren Village, Bandung. At that time, police confirmed that GPK members carried two 90-centimeter-long swords. (Wahid Institute, 2012).

Not only stopping there, on August 12, 2012, around 200 GPK members returned to Bandung to conduct a convoy. This aims to ensure that activities that lead to prostitution stop during Ramadan. The convoy was carried out with ten cars and dozens of motorcycles. Previously, the Secretary of the Central Java GPK at that time, Mustafid, had warned that there would be no sweeping action unless the practices of prostitution

continued during Ramadan. Then his party would not hesitate to go to the field to regulate (Kompas, 2012).

Ramadan in August 2012 is quite a tense month for the people of Bandung itself. At that time, Bandung residents even received Banser security assistance from Demak Regency. Deputy Commander of the Karangtopo Village Banser, Karangtengah District, Demak Regency at the time, Ahmad Munif, said that the presence of the Banser in Bandung was due to a request to secure the area. In the seventies, more Banser members were deployed to maintain the condition. They are ready to be on standby to anticipate unwanted things due to the GPK convoy action in Bandung (Kompas, 2012).

If we look at it, several things can be observed in the case above. First, considerable friction only arises in the relationship between students and prostitution, where the position of the students is that of a group that comes from outside Bandung, not students from Bandung itself. Never in the record have FPI and GPK organizations had a mass base or institutionalization of organizations in the Bandung area, even today. Second, frictions that arise from the outside instead trigger the solidarity and solidity of citizens to protect their interests, even those related to the prostitution business. The emergence of citizen awareness evidences this to be alert to sweeping actions from the FPI or GPK.

This difference has tapered off into a split in the management of the Nurul Hidayah Mosque into two groups. The first group is mosque administrators who have boarding houses, including Rojak, Surat, Andi, and Kusno as the owners of the

boarding houses. A second group is a group of administrators who do not have boarding houses or other businesses involving the prostitution community. This group comprises Mamat, Jiman, Kardi, and the mosque's administrators.

According to the first group, they believe that what they do is not to blame. This is because the "ijab" (lease agreement) between them and the tenants (PSK) is only in the lease relationship to provide housing. The next thing that stays is a prostitute or not. That is another matter. Thus, this group thinks the source of sustenance obtained is halal because of the principle of "ijab." Also, the intention is only for the residence of people in need, not deliberately providing a place for prostitution.

Meanwhile, the second group had different views. Although it is considered that they do not intend to live with the prostitutes, in practice, the owner of the boarding house knows that the tenants are the prostitutes. Moreover, the boarding houses are inhabited by women, where many non-Mahram men come and even live together with female residents without marriage. This means that renting out boarding houses for these commercial sex workers in an "amaliyah" manner (an act that has consequences for charity) contradicts Islamic teachings.

Although this opposition does not directly affect the prostitution community, it is enough to trigger momentary social tensions, especially between mosque worshippers. Some mosque administrators who have boarding houses are then increasingly cornered, considering that they are actually among the members of the Bandungan community who are considered to have a

better understanding of religion than the general public. Eventually, these tensions eased slowly as the first group began to withdraw from activities in the mosque and chose to be active in smaller mosques. This attempt to withdraw from mosque activities was evident when this first group disappeared from the daily prayers of worshippers in the mosque, except during Friday prayers. This first group congregated in "mushala," not in Nurul Hidayah Mosque.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that, despite some external and internal frictions in the Bandungan community itself, prostitution remains unshakable. Moreover, the facts prove that the tensions triggered by outside groups create solidarity among residents in Bandungan itself, including those involved in the prostitution business. This can happen because economic attributes have bonded society to one common goal. This explains why disharmony never enlarges into conflictual relationships that attack each other.

Conclusion

From the discussion of this article, it can be concluded that the relationship between students and prostitution occurs dynamically, remaining contradictory but not negating each other. At the level of ideas (thoughts), these two identities still show a situation of disharmony because students generally judge prostitution as wrong and prohibited by religion. Students continued not to accept (or justify) prostitution. Nevertheless, the students did not express that disrespect frontally in everyday social life.

This expression of tolerance and respect for differences arises because the

community's economic interests have been so closely twisted with the business of prostitution there. This conclusion also complements other studies that explain the primary key to harmony appearing. All this time, the study of harmony has often been seen as the result of local "wisdom" values that bind to each other's identities (Muslim, 2016, hal. 121; Saihu, 2021, hal. 24; Suhaidi, 2014, hal. 18; Syuhudi, 2021, hal. 18); the existence of a unified figure in the middle of differences (Amaliyah, 2015, hal. 93; Misbah, 2018, hal. 105); or the intervention of outsiders through programs that foster mutual harmony (Mukhibat, 2015). This article shows a pattern (Mukhibat, 2015). This article shows another pattern: harmony can arise due to expected economic interests, which are intertwined between residents and prostitution business actors. It can prevent conflict between students and perpetrators of prostitution so that conflictual relationships do not arise that negate each other.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank his colleagues at "Pustaka Bestari," a reading house where young people in Bandung gather and discuss many social issues. Thanks also to all informants, who have been publicly willing to be interviewed despite his real name we kept secret.

References

- Abdi, Y. (2019). *Prostitusi: kisah 60 daerah di Indonesia*. Surabaya: Airlangga University Press.
- Agustin, D., Syafitri, L., Muhaimina, A., & Kholik, N. (2020). Song Guides and Prostitution (Analysis of the Phenomenon of Deviations in Criminological Perspectives). *Law*

Research Review Quarterly, 6(2), 139-156.

- Amalia, M. (2018). Prostitusi Dan Perzinahan Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam. *Tahkim (Jurnal Peradaban dan Hukum Islam)*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.29313/tahkim.v1i1.3265>
- Amaliyah, E. I. (2015). Harmoni di Banjaran: Interaksi Sunni-Syiah. *Harmoni*, 14(2), 81-96. <https://jurnalharmoni.kemenag.go.id/index.php/harmoni/article/view/89>
- Muda, I., Deliana, M., & Angelia, N. (2023). Kebijakan Penanggulangan Prostitusi Liar Di Kota Medan. *Jurnal Ilmiah Muqoddimah: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik, dan Humaniora*, 7(2), 607-610.
- Creswell, J. W. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.
- Demartoto, A. (2013). The existence and the effect of sex tourism habitus in Bandungan, Central Java, Indonesia. *Asian Social Science*, 9(15), 93. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v9n15p93>
- Detik. (2019). *Sandang Kota Santri, Jombang Masih Marak Praktik Prostitusi*. <https://news.detik.com/berita-jawa-timur/d-4762439/sandang-kota-santri-jombang-masih-marak-praktik-prostitusi>
- Faidah, M. (2014). Pusaran ekonomi di balik bisnis prostitusi di lokalisasi Dolly- Jarak Surabaya. *Lentera*, 10(1), 17-29.
- Faizah, L., & Sadewo, F. X. S. (2015). Prostitusi Dan Kontrol Sosial Masyarakat Sedati Ngoro Mojokerto. *Paradigma*, 3(1), 1-6. <http://jurnalmahasiswa.unesa.ac.id/index.php/paradigma/article/view/1>

- 0401
 Faktual. (2018). *Bisnis Prostitusi di Kota Santri, Ditunjang Berbagai Sisi Makin Liar Tak Terkendali*.
<https://faktualnews.co/2018/04/27/bisnis-prostitusi-di-kota-santri-ditunjang-berbagai-sisi-makin-liar-tak-terkendali/78240/>
- Geertz, C. (2013). *Agama Jawa: Abangan, Santri, dan Priyayi Dalam Kebudayaan Jawa*. Komunitas Bambu.
- Hasanah, N. D. U. (2019). Politik Hukum Pengaturan Pelaku Prostitusi Melalui Transaksi Online Perspektif Sadd Al-Dzari'ah. *Al-Balad: Journal of Constitutional Law*, 1(3).
- Hull, T. H., Sulistyaningsih, E., & Jones, G. W. (1997). *Pelacuran di Indonesia: Sejarah dan perkembangannya*. Pustaka Sinar Harapan bekerja sama dengan the Ford Foundation.
- Ip, P.-K. (2014). Harmony as happiness? Social harmony in two Chinese societies. *Social indicators research*, 117(3), 719-741.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24720967>
- Isnaeni, N., Laksono, B., & Deliana, S. M. (2017). Hubungan antara Pengetahuan, Pola Asuh Permisif, Tayangan Pornografi, dan Konformitas Teman Sebaya dengan Perilaku Seks Remaja yang Menggunakan Jasa WPS (Wanita Penjaja Seks) di Bandungan Kab. Semarang. *Public Health Perspective Journal*, 2(1).
- Jailani, A. S., & Badriyanto, B. S. (2014). Prostitusi di Jember tahun 1974-2007. *Publika Budaya*, 2(2), 1-9.
- JPNN. (2012). *Bandungan Siaga Hadang FPI*.
<https://www.jpnn.com/news/bandung-an-siaga-hadang-fpi?page=2>
- Kenedi, J. (2016). Wanita dan Prostitusi dalam Perspektif Alquran dan Hadis. *El - Afkar*, 5, 1-12.
 10.29300/jpkth.v1i6.1238
- Kompas. (2012). *GPK Jateng: Siap Sweeping jika Polisi Tak Konsisten*.
<https://properti.kompas.com/read/2012/07/26/03223243/~Regional~Jawa>
- Kompas. (2014). *KPA Semarang: PSK Bandungan Terbanyak Kedua Setelah Dolly*.
<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2014/06/23/1535001/KPA.Semarang.PSK.Bandungan.Terbanyak.Kedua.Setelah.Dolly>
- Kompas TV. (2019). *Prostitusi Online di Kota Santri*.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_i3m9iwY8mQ
- Kontan. (2020). *Mengenal sejarah museum kereta api Ambarawa*.
<https://industri.kontan.co.id/news/mengenal-sejarah-museum-kereta-api-ambarawa>
- Markov, G., & Kenarov, D. (2018). Prostitution. *Ploughshares*, 44(3), 179-190.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/plo.2018.0068>
- Maulidya, I., Musthofa, S. B., & Indraswari, R. (2021). Faktor yang Berhubungan Dengan Perilaku Seksual Remaja Awal Di Lingkungan Prostitusi Bandungan Kabupaten Semarang. *Jurnal Kesehatan Masyarakat (Undip)*, 9(3), 287-293.
<https://doi.org/10.14710/jkm.v9i3.29341>
- Merdeka. (2012). *FPI Jateng razia warung dan losmen di Bandungan Semarang*.
<https://m.merdeka.com/peristiwa/fpi-jateng-razia-warung-dan-losmen-di-bandungan-semarang.html>
- Misbah, A. (2018). Potret Lanskap Harmoni dalam Proses Propagasi Sufisme di Warung Kopi Yogyakarta.

- Harmoni: Jurnal Multikultural & Multireligius*, 17(1), 92–108. <https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v17i1.286>
- Mukhibat, M. (2015). Rekonstruksi Spirit Harmoni melalui KPM Posdaya Berbasis Masjid di Kecamatan Pulung, Kabupaten Ponorogo. *Harmoni*, 14(2), 55–67. <https://jurnalharmoni.kemenag.go.id/index.php/harmoni/article/view/87>
- Mulati, T. S. (2016). Perilaku Pekerja Seks Komersial Terhadap Pencegahan Penyakit Menular Seksual Di Lokalisasi Kalinyamat Bandungan. *Jurnal Kebidanan dan Kesehatan Tradisional*, 1(1), 40–47. 10.37341/jkkt.v1i1.28
- Mulyaningrum, F. M., & Puspita, R. (2016). Perilaku Pencegahan IMS, HIV dan AIDS Wanita Pekerja Seksual Tidak Langsung di Pub, Karaoke, dan Cafe di Bandungan Kabupaten Semarang. *The Shine Cahaya Dunia Kebidanan*, 1(2). <http://ejournal.annurpurwodadi.ac.id/index.php/TSCBid/article/view/15>
- Muslim, A. (2016). Kitorang Samua Basudara: Bijak Bestari di Bilik Harmoni. *Harmoni*, 15(2), 109–122. <https://jurnalharmoni.kemenag.go.id/index.php/harmoni/article/view/34>
- Naryoso, A. (2014). Model Komunikasi Strategis untuk Mengatasi Teror HIV pada Kelompok Pekerja Seks Komersial (PSK) Bandungan. *Ragam*, 14(3), 185–202.
- Okezzone. (2021). *Berjuluk Kota Santri, Kudus Ternyata Miliki Surga Esek-Esek Legal*. <https://nasional.okezone.com/read/2021/12/23/337/2521741/berjuluk-kota-santri-kudus-ternyata-miliki-surga-esek-esek-legal>
- Purwardi. (2013). *Sejarah Kebudayaan Jawa*. Pararton.
- Rosyid, M. (2015). Harmoni kehidupan sosial beda agama dan aliran di kudus. *Addin*, 7(1). <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/54394-ID-harmoni-kehidupan-sosial-beda-agama-dan.pdf>
- Rukhmanah, H., Fannisa, M. N. H., Tuti, N. G., & Atika, R. D. (2020). Deviations in the Community How Criminology and Legal Studies Respond to the Prostitution Phenomenon in the Karaoke Business (Case Study in Bandungan Area, Semarang Regency). *Law Research Review Quarterly*, 6(4), 349–360. 10.15294/lrrq.v6i3.31117
- Saadah, M. N., & Larasaty, N. D. (2021). Gambaran Wanita Pekerja Seksual (WPS) Dalam Melakukan Pemeriksaan HIV/AIDS Voluntary Counselling & Testing (VCT) di Bandungan, Jawa Tengah. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Unimus*, 4. <https://prosiding.unimus.ac.id/index.php/semnas/article/view/938/945>
- Saihu, S. (2021). Harmoni Hindu-Muslim di Bali Melalui Kearifan Lokal: Studi Di Kabupaten Jembrana. *Harmoni*, 19(01), 7–27. <https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v19i1.376>
- Sakai, M., & Fauzia, A. (2014). Islamic orientations in contemporary Indonesia: Islamism on the rise? *Asian Ethnicity*, 15(1), 41–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2013.784513>
- Sharma, M. (2015). Social harmony for being social. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: Sociology & Culture*, 15, 3–7. link: https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume15/2-Social-Harmony-for-

- Being-Social.pdf
- Sinar Jabar. (2019). *Prostitusi Online Mulai Marak di Kota Santri*. <https://www.sinarjabar.com/ragam/pr-2912134984/prostitusi-online-mulai-marak-di-kota-santri>
- Solopos. (2021). *Menilik Jejak Prostitusi di Kota Santri Jateng*. <https://www.solopos.com/menilik-jejak-prostitusi-di-kota-santri-jateng-1223894>
- Sugiarto, L., Astuti, E. P., Dewi, M. B. K., & Salsabila, R. W. (2021). *Perlindungan Pekerja Hiburan Terhadap Kedaulatan Tubuh Dengan Pendekatan "Kapabilitas" Capability Approach" Di Kecamatan Bandungan*. *Jurnal Pengabdian Hukum Indonesia (Indonesian Journal of Legal Community Engagement) JPHI*, 4(1), 68-76.
- Suhaidi, M. (2014). *Harmoni Masyarakat Satu Desa Tiga Agama di Desa Pabian, Kecamatan Kota, Kabupaten Sumenep, Madura*. *Harmoni*, 13(2), 8-19. <https://jurnalharmoni.kemenag.go.id/index.php/harmoni/article/view/123>
- Sunindyo, S. (1993). *She who earns: The politics of prostitution in Java*. The University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- Surbakti, K., & Yudi, P. (2020). *Kajian Mengenai Faktor Penyebab dan Respon Masyarakat Terhadap Praktek Prostitusi di Objek Pariwisata Bukit Lawang*. *Jurnal Curere*, 4(2), 26-33. <http://www.portaluniversitasquality.ac.id:5388/ojssystem/index.php/CURERE/article/viewFile/473/271>
- Syuhudi, M. I. (2021). *Islam-Kristen di Kota Kalong: Best Practice Pembangunan Rumah Ibadat Berbasis Kearifan Lokal*. *Harmoni*, 20(2), 173-187. <https://jurnalharmoni.kemenag.go.id/index.php/harmoni/article/view/511>
- Tribun. (2020). *Karaoke Bandungan Ada yang Tak Berizin, Pemkab Semarang Beri Teguran Tertulis*. <https://jateng.tribunnews.com/2020/02/04/karaoke-bandungan-ada-yang-tak-berizin-pemkab-semarang-beri-teguran-tertulis>
- Wahid Institute. (2012). *Laporan Akhir Tahun Kebebasan Beragama dan Intoleransi 2012*.
- Yin, R. K. (2008). *Studi kasus: Desain & metode*. Raja Grafindo Persada.