

Perception of Early Male Adolescents Living in the Indonesian Red-Light District

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Abstract

The red-light district of Argorejo, Semarang City is the biggest prostitution area in Indonesia. In 2015, there were more than 500 early male adolescents lived in the area. This study captured the profile of the early male adolescents living in the surrounding area of the red-light district of Argorejo and their perception of the practice of prostitution. The authors used a qualitative research method with a descriptive phenomenology approach. The main informants consisted of four early male adolescents with predetermined criteria. Meanwhile the supporting informants consisted of the main informants' neighbors, a local leader, and an activist of a local non-government organization. The data collection used an in-depth interview. The data obtained were analyzed by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. There is no significant difference compared to early male adolescents in Semarang City or Indonesia in general. They hope the government will immediately close the red-light district of Argorejo as soon as possible.

Keywords: Early Adolescent, Perception, Red-Light District, Prostitution

I. Introduction

The red-light district of Argorejo or Localization of Sunan Kuning in Semarang City became the biggest prostitution area in Indonesia. In 2015, it was estimated that there were around 700 FSWs working there. The red-light district of Argorejo which is located in the middle of public settlement, does affect the lives of the nearby communities which are the communities of Kalibanteng Kulon Village.

The development of adolescents in Kalibanteng Kulon will also be influenced by the lifestyle surrounding the red-light district of Argorejo. In 2015, there were more than 500 early male adolescents lived there. In early adolescence, the adolescents will experience maturity of sexual organs. They will also reach the physiological reproductive changes that will be accompanied by both somatic growth and psychological perspectives.

Studies across the world have long focussed in investigating vulnerable youth or adolescent in high risk areas. In United States, adolescents living in vulnerable neighborhoods have worse physical health (Esteban-Cornejo et al., 2016). Meanwhile, the urban youths in South Africa who witnessed community violences have a higher levels of psychological problem (Shields, Nadasen, & Pierce, 2009). Another studies among urban adolescents in South Africa

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revealed that public drunkenness was positively correlated with drinking behavior (Parry, Morojele, Saban, & Flisher, 2004) while neighborhood quality was negatively correlated to sexual risk (Goodrum, Armistead, Tully, Cook, & Skinner, 2017).

In Indonesia, some studies about adolescent conducted in red-light districts (Andriani, Juniarti, & Widiarti, 2017; Issabela & Hendriani, 2010; Kalsum & Harianto, 2017; Mahlawi & Rachma, 2012; Yusuf, Bahiyah, Nihayati, & Wiyono, 2007). However, not many of them focused in understanding profile of the adolescent as well as their perception. In order to fill this gap, the objectives of present study were to understand early male adolescents of Kalibanteng Kulon's perception on the practice of prostitution in the red-light district of Argorejo. This study could be a basis for consideration for various parties in deciding the policy for redevelopment of the red-light district of Argorejo and the early male adolescents in Kalibanteng Kulon in the future. This study is significant as the findings help the stakeholders to take appropriate, effective, sustainable and comprehensive policies and programs in order to improve the well being of the early male adolescent living in the red-light district.

II. Method

Design and Informants

The study used a qualitative design with a descriptive phenomenology approach. The setting of present study was the community of early male adolescent around the red-light district of Argorejo. It was located in Hamlet IV (Argorejo Street), Kalibanteng Kulon Village, Semarang City, Indonesia. At the time of the study (2015), there were more than 500 early male adolescents lived nearby.

To get a deep, detailed and comprehensive finding, the authors selected main informants with following criteria. First, a male between 13-15 years old. Secondly, born and lived in the surrounding of the red-light district of Argorejo with a radius of less than 500 meters and thirdly, had a high contact with the red-light district of Argorejo at least eight hours per week.

Meanwhile to represent the population diversity the informants were divided into three categories. First, informant with parents whose occupation is directly dependent on the red-light district of Argorejo. Second, Informant with parents whose occupation is indirectly dependent on the red-light district of Argorejo. Third, Informant with parents whose occupation is not related with the red-light district of Argorejo. In addition, for data triangulation, the authors also selected some supporting informants.

Based on the general and spesific criteria, a total four early male adolescents were selected for main informants. Meanwhile, two neighbors of the main informants, a local leader and an activist of a local non-government organization were selected for supporting informants.

Instrument

A guideline of semi-structured interview was developed and used to collect the required data. Thereafter, a construct definition of each subthemes was developed. The final version of the guideline of semi-structured interview consisted of questions related to understanding about the red-light district, opinion about the red-light district, and judgement about the red-light district (see Table 1).

Table-1. Themes of study

Theme	Subthemes
Perception	Understanding about the red-light district
	Opinion about the red-light district
	Judgement about the red-light district

To ensure the validity of the guidelines developed, the authors used experts judgement validation. Two experts assisted the authors to improved the guideline.

Data Collection

For data collection purpose, two letters were sent to the local leader of Kalibanteng Kulon Village as well as the leader of Red-light district of Argorejo. The letters were a requirement for permission to do a data collection process at the red-light district of Argorejo. After their permission was obtained, the authors invited those who fulfilled the criteria as informants in the study. The data collection process was conducted for seven months, starting from January 2015 till July 2015. Semi-structured interviews and observation were used as the main data collection techniques.

The informants were interviewed in their home and (or) in the nearby location of the Red-light district of Argorejo. All interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese. Interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed and translated. The authors read interview responses from all informantss and extracted repeated codes. Finally, all interviews were coded. Once coding was complete, counts were taken for the number of times that each theme was mentioned across all interviews.

Data Analysis

The data obtained by in-depth interviews were analyzed using an adaptation of a method called Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 1996, 2004). The stages of modified of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis are as follows: (a) Reading several times the verbatim of interviews, the field notes (interview notes), and the observation notes. (b) Doing initial notes. (c) Categorized the notes to the spesific theme (subtheme). (d) Moving the next cases. (e) Finding the patterns across cases. (g) Conclusion and data verification.

In order to maintain the validity of this qualitative study namely the truth, consistency, and usability (Noble & Smith, 2015). The authors adopted several strategies including; comparing cases to ensure different perspectives (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Slevin & Sines, 2000), involving other researchers to reduce research bias (Sandelowski, 1993), inviting informants to comment on the results of the research interpretation (Long & Johnson, 2000), and the use of triangulation (Morse et al., 2002; Slevin & Sines, 2000).

III. Results

The results of the study were obtained from the interviews with the main informants, and interviews with the supporting informants. The data collection were done from January to July 2015. Description of informants are presented in the Table 2. The results of the study are presented in the following description:

Table-2. Description of Informants

o	nitial	ex	S	Parent's occupation	Status
P	ale		M	Baby sitter of FSW	Early adolescent
P	ale		M	Masseus	Early adolescent
J	ale		M	Karaoke operator	Early adolescent
D	ale		M	Ticket officer	Early adolescent
S	emale		F	-	Neighbour of RP and IP
W	ale		M	-	Neighbour of RJ and BD
ET	ale		M	-	Local leader
YY	ale		M	-	NGO activist

Finding from RP: The Sissy Boy

RP is a second grade student of 41 Semarang Middle School. He is 15 year olds. RP is the second child of two siblings, his sister is four years older than him. RP received religious education in the Arrahman Koran Center (TPQ) for six years when he was in elementary school (SD).

When he was elementary school, RP had begun observing the red-light district of Argorejo directly. RP also got information from his friend (who lived in the middle of the red-light district of Argorejo) about prostitution. However, at that time RP could not understand the meaning of prostitution or activity of selling sex. RP clearly

understands the existence of the red-light district of Argorejo and its activities since middle school. RP argues if the reason for women being FSW is because of economic pressures or invited by their friends.

RP argues, the red-light district of Argorejo is a bad and dirty labeled place by community because it is a prostitution area. In school, RP's teachers also think the same. RP agrees with the opinion of his teachers and the community. Meanwhile, a small number of his friends did not think so. They think that both bad or good behavior of a person or people are a personal business. RP strongly supports the closure of the red-light district of Argorejo by the government. RP hope his settlement gets a positive label from other communities. RP think that the red-light district of Argorejo only had a negative impact for bad reputation of his settlement. RP do not feel it had a negative impact socially and psychologically for the people.

Finding from IP: The Religious Boy

IP is a second grade student of Setia Budi Semarang Middle School. He is 15 year olds. IP is the youngest of eight siblings. The oldest sibling is 32 year olds. IP had received religious education at Arrahman's TPQ for five years when he was in elementary school.

When he was a child (elementary school), IP played more with friends around the mosque (outside of the red-light district). He was rarely playing in the middle of the red-light district of Argorejo area. It happen until present in the middle school. IP has at least 20 friends who live in the middle of the red-light district of Argorejo. However, IP claims that he do not want to be too close with them. It is because his parents and his neighbors always do not want their children to get along with them. Interaction between IP and FSWs is by soft talking. It happened when he delivering his mother to massage her FSW client at a guesthouse. IP claimed that he was quite disturbed when the FSW discussed his work in serving customers.

Since elementary school, IP has begun observing the red-light district of Argorejo directly and getting information from his friend (pimp's child) about the activities in it. However, IP just understand the meaning of red-light district and prostitution when he sat in sixth grade of elementary school. IP had been invited to did karaoke in the guesthouse of his friend's parents.

IP considers that the red-light district of Argorejo is a bad place and forbidden by his religion. That opinion he got from his Islamic teacher at TPQ. IP will support if the red-light district of Argorejo closed by the government in order to his residence becomes a safe and clean area. IP think that a red-light district area will be a bad influence for children. Children will know earlier about sexual relations. In addition, IP has also been a victim of motorcycle theft by a drunk FSW customer.

Finding from RJ: The Fashionable Boy

RJ is a first grade student at Setia Budi Middle School Semarang with over 14 year olds. RJ is the youngest of two siblings. His older sibling two years older. RJ had received religious education at TPQ Baitul Huda for one year while in elementary school.

When he was child (elementary school), RJ played more with his friends nearby. His friends from childhood until present mostly come from the red-light district of Argorejo area. Despite living in the heart of the red-light district of Argorejo, moreover his father is a karaoke operator, RJ claimed he had never talked with FSWs.

RJ has understood the meaning of red-light district and prostitution since elementary school. RJ fully understands the activities in the guesthouse such as singing (karaoke), drinking, and having sexual intercourse. According to RJ, free sexual relations at the red-light district of Argorejo are caused by the wrong relationship and for reasons of libido.

RJ considers that the red-light district of Argorejo is a place that is not good and forbidden by religion. RJ got that idea from his Islamic teacher in his TPQ and his Islamic youth association. RJ will supports the closure of the red-light district of Argorejo by the government.

Finding from BD: The Masculine Boy

BD is a third grade student at 31 Semarang Public Middle School. He is 15 year olds. BD is the first kid of three siblings. BD had attended religious education at TPQ Baiturrahman for four years while still in elementary school.

When he was child (SD), BD used to play soccer with his friends around his home. His friends from childhood until present came from around the red-light district of Argorejo area. BD claimed to sometimes chat briefly with FSW. In addition, BD also entered several times in the guesthouse owned by his friend who is a pimp's child.

BD has been understood and aware with the activities of the red-light district of Argorejo since the fifth grade of elementary school. BD understands the activities in the guesthouse from karaoke to sexual intercourse from the explanation of his friend (pimp's child). BD believe that a woman becomes a FSW for reasons of economic demands. Meanwhile, BD does not know the reason for a man being a FSW customer.

The red-light district of Argorejo is considered by BD as a bad place because besides inviting stigma to the community, it also has a negative impact on children in his residence. BD said that there are many children in their neighborhood, dropped out of school, got drunk and even became FSW because of the bad influence of the red-light district of Argorejo. BD supports the red-light district of Argorejo closed by the government in order to his residence would be safer. BD also believes that almost all residents in the red-light district of Argorejo think same with him.

IV. Discussion

Directly or indirectly, they mingled with residents of the red-light district of Argorejo even though some of their parents were very resistant to the place. It is diagnosed by a total ban from parents on their children to enter the gate of the red-light district of Argorejo. As finding of Esteban-Cornejo et al. (2016), Parents' perceptions of stranger danger and crime safety were all related to adolescents' physical activity in their neighborhood. Another the study of Mmari et al. (2018) In Baltimore, Nairobi and Shanghai which reveal that parents believed that early male adolescents increased freedom triggered to greater exposure to peer pressure in their communities. Meanwhile, efforts from the parents to protect their children is one of the behaviors of maintaining family resilience (Issabela & Hendriani, 2010). The interaction of the early male adolescents of Kalibanteng Kulon with pimps and karaoke operators was very common because some of their playmates were family members of the red-light district of Argorejo's element. Whereas their interactions with FSWs are generally because their parents have work affairs with the FSW. Parents who work as karaoke operators, ticket holders, parking attendants, washing workers, massagers, and practical traders will interact with the FSWs and their customers.

Kalibanteng Kulon's early male adolescents faced and observed the activities in the red-light district of Argorejo since childhood. In general they could understand the meaning of prostitution since in the fifth grade of elementary school. Early male adolescents who lived in the middle of the red-light district of Argorejo earlier understand the meaning of prostitution than who lived outside the walls. They generally argue that if a woman falls into the world of prostitution for economic reasons or relation with friends who becomes a FSW earlier. They also understand if FSW customers come to the red-light district of Argorejo to satisfy their sexual desires.

Early male adolescents of Kalibanteng Kulon generally agreed if the red-light district of Argorejo with all its activities is a bad-dirty-prohibited by religion place. They got the idea from their families, the community and their teachers or Islamic teachers. This is in line with the findings of Maryatun and Purwaningsih that negative perceptions of adolescents on prostitution are influenced by the values instilled by their parents (Maryatun & Purwaningsih, 2012).

They realize that Kalibanteng Kulon's children are earlier to understand about sexual relations prematurely. They witnessed that children in their neighborhood were victims of the bad influence of the red-light district of Argorejo such as dropping out of school, getting drunk and even becoming a new FSW. Some are them traumatized because they have bad experiences with FSW's customers. This finding is in line with the research in another red-light district which states that one of the main problems of adolescents in the red-light district area is interference from customers of FSW (Mahlawi & Rachma, 2012). Shields et al. (2009) argue that "all forms of exposure to violence were also correlated with distress".

They also felt embarrassed because their reputation was tarnished as a result of their homes being labeled badly by other communities. This is also experienced by adolescents in other red-light district who feel they get a bad stigma from other communities (Mahlawi & Rachma, 2012). They hope the government will immediately close the the red-light district of Argorejo as soon as possible.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study has some limitations. First, the main informants were only middle school students. It may influence the findings of this study. Role differences significantly influence the profile as well as the perceptions of informants. Second, the informants was fairly homogenous in regards to the early adolescents' ethnic and religion. All of informants were Javanese and moslem. Third, information about relationship and chemistry among informants with their family was presented only from the main informants' point of view. Based on the limitations, the authors strongly recommended for the future studies to involve more diverse informants. In addition, the future studies have to optimize the use of observation technique to gain deeper profile of early adolescents.

V. Conclusion

Early male adolescents of Kalibanteng Kulon generally agree that the red-light district of Argorejo is a bad-dirty-prohibited place. They understood that a woman falls into prostitution for economic or social reasons, while FSW customers come to red-light district to satisfy their sexual desires. They realized that they understood earlier about sexual relations and watch their peers who were badly influenced by the nature of the red-light district of Argorejo. They felt ashamed that their homes have been labeled badly by the other communities. Finally they hope the government will immediately close the red-light district of Argorejo as soon as possible.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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