

# Dramaturgy as a Part of Female Commercial Sex Worker's Life

Ratifika Dewi Irianto, Elly Malihah and Siti Nurbayani  
*Department of Sociology of Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia*  
ratifika@student.upi.edu, {ellyms, s.nurbayani}@upi.edu

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**Abstract:** As night falls in Bandung, it is a right time for female commercial sex workers to start their day. One of the many places for them to commercialize their bodies is Station area localization in which a transaction between these female commercial sex workers and their male customers exists. A life shown by them is nothing but the existence of a backstage and front stage life as a life value that different from one to another. This kind of contradiction between the backstage and front stage life, however, does not influence their roles as mothers. This research employs qualitative approach to see how dramaturgy is performed by these female commercial sex workers. This study will show the contradiction between the night life and the day life of the female commercial sex workers.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Basically, a woman wants to have a good life partner as well as a perfect family where the husband earns the money to fulfill the family needs. Yet, this kind of thing is nothing but false hope for female commercial sex workers. They don't have husbands who are able to fulfill their needs. The lives of female commercial sex workers in Station Bandung localization reflect their economic struggle due to the condition of not having a husband. In reality, even though they are said to commit deviant behavior by being commercial sex workers, they are still ordinary women who run their lives as mothers just like everyone else out there despite the bitter pill they swallow every night as the commercial sex workers.

This condition brings up a contradiction between their real live where they become the mothers of families who give life values to their children and their night lives where they become these commercial sex workers who involve in deviant behavior.

Prostitution, essentially, is a sex behavior of changing partners, performed by either male or female (Sandra, 2013). The commercial sex workers usually gather in an area that turns out to be called localization (Amaliyasari dkk, 2008). They gather to perform prostitution to gain money. The economic struggle is one of the reasons of the existence of commercial sex workers in the bustling city like Bandung. It is strengthen by the data from

Performance and Accountability Reports of Government Agencies (LKIP) of Bandung Departments of Social Service through The Central Statistic Agency in 2014 on commercialized women quoted in 2012 for the 2013-2018 period showed 319 out of 3.847 women who were socially and economically vulnerable fell into prostitution as commercial sex workers.

For them, being commercial sex workers means to feel what you do not want to. It is a dilemma to have this kind of job for them because on one side, they are embarrassed to do so but on the other side, they need to do it in order to make a living. By this existing inner conflict, they try to hide their real identities from people around them.

As a matter of fact, these sex workers who face the conflict will resolve them by faking their identities in front of people near them. They do it so that their children will not be embarrassed to know their mothers true profession. They act in a play in front of their children, families, and people around them. They act in a play in front of people to gain a better judgment or recognition. Truthfully, role-play is a common thing to do by a person. However, on this particular case, there is a contradiction between their roles as mothers and as commercial sex workers. There is the concept of dramaturgy in their lives. Dramaturgy is an effect of a phenomenon, or a reaction towards the increase of social or racial conflict (Suneki and Haryono, 2012).

It leads to the objective of this research that is to see how dramaturgy is performed by the married female commercial sex workers in Station area localization in front of the families and people around their lives.

### 1.1 Commercial Sex Workers

The localization situated in Station area has been established since Dutch occupation in Indonesia. This localization gives negative influence to the commercial sex workers themselves. One of which is felt by their own family.

Kartono (2011) says that prostitution comes from Latin *prostituere*, which mean letting oneself commit adultery, whoring, or obscenity. Being a commercial sex worker nowadays becomes a choice of profession, more of a shortcut, for women with economic struggle despite the pros and cons among the society.

The most decisive factor for someone to be involved in prostitution is economic pressure (Sandra, 2013). Other than that, Sihaholo (2012) states that other external factors are the low social control due to insufficient law in Indonesia and the state of globalized modern life that considers women as things to exploit. This can also happen due to peer encouragement that attracts the women to be commercial sex workers. Meanwhile, ones of the internal factors are the women's materialist lifestyle and abnormal sexual drives.

Deviant behavior done by these women has its own downslide. They feel guilty doing the profession which is not along with the will of the society and seen as defiance. They have this inner conflict within each of them.

Moreover, they are also afraid of the medical problems they may get such as HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases. It gives impacts like worry and fear every time they do their jobs.

### 1.2 The Dramaturgy of Sex Commercial Workers

Dramaturgy as one of theories coined by Erving Goffman shows how human life has two parts: front stage and backstage. Dramaturgy is a life performance acted out by individual by role-playing more than one character. Theatrical performance performed on the stage is none but a miniature of human life with variety of acts and interactions of one another. Dramaturgy theory states that an act done by human being has the similarity to that on theatrical stage.

Suneki dkk (2012) argues that dramaturgy theory cannot be separated from Cooley's influence about the looking glass self, which consists of three components. First, we establish how we perform as other people. Second, we imagine how they judge our performances. Third, we generate feelings such as embarrassment, proud, as forming of others' judgment.

Goffman makes a distinction between front stage and backstage. The front stage is also separated into her own private front and setting. The setting supports the individual to act. Without the setting, that very individual cannot act out the performance. Parts of the setting on dramaturgy theory are front stage and backstage.

## 2 RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted in Station area in Bandung. I choose this area based on preliminary research showing the area was suitable for gaining data. In Station localization located in Kebon Jati Bandung gives an illustration on how a female commercial sex worker performs dramaturgy on her daily life among their families.

The research data gained from eight married informants with children by using qualitative method. The study was conducted by running an interview and observation.

The analytical unit of this research is the commercial female sex workers' family as the supporters to extract data on dramaturgy performed by these women. The data were analyzed before and during my research on the field. As the preliminary research, I observed how the defiance, that was the female commercial sex worker, had the family, how she interacted with her family, how she presented herself in front of her children and how she delivered her self identity in front of people around her. Meanwhile, for onsite data analysis, during the field research, I interacted and asked directly until it reached data saturation.

The first method I employed to analyze the data was to deduct the data by filtering unimportant ones for my further study. Afterwards, data presentation shows that there were informants giving depth data through interview and observation. I ended the research by making the conclusion. I emphasized the snowball throwing data which made the research would stop when it had reached data saturation. Data triangulation had been performed to women who were commercial sex workers, their children and their other family members. The triangulation technique

was conducted through observation, interview, and documentation.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the interview and observation showed that all the eight informants were married and have children. The research reflects the life of female commercial sex workers who do not want any of their family members know what kind of job they are doing at night. It was revealed by their answers to my question as well as my observation that five of the informant said they claimed to be a song leader or staff at a karaoke house. Such claim legitimized their need to go at night and come home in the morning. One informant said she worked at a café, which made her go at night and come home in the morning. Another informant said she was a store employee. This finding shows that they need to play a different role when they face other people around them and they too need to play another role when they do their job in Station.

From a sociological perspective, this finding is considered as part of female commercial sex workers lives dramaturgy even though truthfully every individual does dramaturgy but the one run by these women is a contradictive role, between the role as mothers at home and the role as commercial sex workers at night. It was proved that they performed religious activity to be seen by their children, they also followed Quran study group near their house so that their neighbor would not be suspicious. Another example is when they did not tell anybody around them what kind of thing they did for a living. To keep their secret, they were forced to change their clothes and using the make- up in public restrooms near the Station as well as use particular transportation.

The theory of dramaturgy of Widodo in Suneki and Haryono (2012) explains that social interaction is interpreted as theatrical performance or play on the stage. Human being is an actor who tries to unite personal characteristics and objectives for other people through him/herself. From the expert opinion, we can see that social interaction conducted by female commercial sex workers has different part of front and back region. Their front stage is when they put on masks as good mothers in front of their children. They act as if they are ordinary mothers. Through the result of this study, eight informants embedded good values to their children especially religious values. Meanwhile, the backstage is when at night they take off their front stage masks. In the backstage, they are free to do whatever they want

such as cursing, flirting men, or being naughty women.

In this discussion, when they are in their own home, it is their front stage, unlike other individuals who will give up their roles when they are home. It is to say that they actually put on their fake role in front of their children by being commercial sex workers so that their children will be better than them.

### 4 CONCLUSIONS

Being a female commercial sex worker is a tough decision to make, especially if she is a mother. There is no easy way for this kind of case yet it is one of the solutions for her to be out of economic struggle so that dramaturgy is a mean of help for her to support her defiant behavior while make a living. Dramaturgy or role play supports the defiant behavior conducted by the mother, the existence of the front stage as a good mother for her children and people around her makes the mother keeps her job as a commercial sex worker. On the front stage, she limits the contact with her audience. At the same time, the backstage shows how she does her job as the commercial sex worker. Through dramaturgy performed by her, she gives a positive impact for her family by keeping her job as a secret so that she is able to nurture her children into better human beings. It will be different if she does not perform dramaturgy that will lead to psychological as well as moral burden for both her family and her children if they find out what the real profession of their mother.

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