

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE DECISION TO BECOME SEX WORKERS FOR NORTH COASTAL WOMEN OF JAVA ISLAND

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ABSTRACT

Women are not only faced with challenges regarding social construction but are also faced with natural challenges. The uncertain climate has in fact become one of the reasons for fertilizing the prostitution business in the northern coast of Java Island. Climate change is making poverty even more real. The drastic decline in marine products and the uncertainty of life during the pandemic provide a special impetus for women in making decisions as sex workers. A phenomenological approach is used to reveal the meaning behind women's decisions. The results of the study reveal that there are at least two things that are taken into consideration in making women's decisions to become sex workers, namely economic incapacity and powerlessness in social construction as women.

Keywords: *Sex Workers, Coastal Women, Climate Change*

A. INTRODUCTION

Women are more vulnerable than men to the impacts of climate change, especially because they are often members of the majority of poor communities in many parts of the world. They often live in areas that are easily affected by natural disasters such as floods, droughts and storms (Rochadi et al., 2022). In addition, women often face social, economic and political obstacles that make them more vulnerable to climate change (Ardhyarini et al.,

2016). Women's dependence on men in accessing resources and making decisions also increases their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change (Lama et al., 2021). Therefore, efforts to address the impacts of climate change must take a gender perspective and ensure women's active participation in planning and implementing sustainable solutions.

Women face social, economic and political barriers that limit their ability to cope with the uncertainties of climate change. Social barriers include, for example, the idea that women are socially dependent on the presence of men. Traditions and social norms often limit the roles given to women, thereby impacting their ability to participate in decision making regarding climate change (Hugo, 1995). Economic constraints are also a serious problem. Many women depend on local natural resources for their livelihoods, and climate uncertainty can threaten their economic sustainability, with frequent droughts and floods impacting crop yields. In situations like these, women often have more limited access to education, capital, and markets that could help them overcome the impacts of climate change (Watson Andaya, 1998).

Political barriers also play a role in preventing women from taking action. The inequality of power between women and men, especially in decision making in the family and community, can result in women not having much control over how to deal with climate change. Involving women in decision-making processes related to climate change and the environment is essential to ensure that proposed solutions reflect their interests and needs (Wardojo, n.d.). Therefore, it is important to overcome these obstacles and promote gender equality in the fight against climate change. Involving women in planning, implementing and monitoring climate change efforts is an important step that enables women to act effectively and sustainably in facing the challenges of global climate change.

Women have an important role in positive changes related to mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Women's domestic roles in the family often include caring for children and daily tasks, and this gives them the opportunity to shape environmental awareness and sustainable behavior within the family (Hillmann & Ziegelmayr, 2016). Through their love and care for children, women can transmit values about environmental conservation, resource saving and sustainability. This is important because early education about environmental awareness can form a younger generation who is more concerned about environmental issues.

Apart from that, women can also be the main actors in various adaptation efforts to environmental changes. They often have extensive local knowledge of surrounding

ecosystems and changing climate patterns. This knowledge can be used to develop effective adaptation strategies, such as smarter water management, sustainable agriculture, and building homes that are more resilient to natural disasters. In many communities, women are also involved in various social groups and organizations working to combat climate change. They can play an important role in mobilizing communities for collective action, advocating for more sustainable policy changes, and participating in climate change projects. In summary, women have great potential to become effective agents of change in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Their role in the family and community, as well as their knowledge and experience, can be used to shape sustainable behavior, involve the community, and encourage sustainability in overcoming the challenges of climate change (Megawati & Bando, 2021).

Women who are exposed to climate change, especially women from lower classes and poor socio-economic status who live in vulnerable areas such as the North Coast of the Java Strait are often exposed to climate change. There is extreme financial pressure. Climate change can disrupt traditional livelihoods such as agriculture and fishing through flooding, sea level rise, and unpredictable weather (Mustaurida & Falatehan, 2020). In situations where traditional livelihoods no longer provide adequate income or economic security, some women feel pressure to seek alternative ways to meet their basic needs and those of their families. An often available alternative is to become a sex worker. These decisions are often not taken spontaneously, but in response to existing economic uncertainty and social pressures.

It is important to take a holistic approach in dealing with this problem. This includes providing skills training and better employment opportunities for women in these communities, strengthening social protection frameworks, and ensuring access to education, health and necessary social services. These efforts should also include supporting women to diversify their livelihoods so that they are less dependent on one source of income and increase resilience to climate change (E. Pattinama, 2020; M. J. Pattinama, 2009).

It is also important to avoid stigmatizing women involved in commercial sex work and ensure access to safe health and safety services, including efforts to prevent the spread of disease and protect women from exploitation and violence. Addressing this problem requires collaboration between governments, community organizations and NGOs that are sensitive to women's rights to create sustainable solutions and support women in overcoming climate change and related economic challenges.

This research aims to answer questions regarding the relationship between climate change and women's decision making to become commercial sex workers. Overcoming this difficult situation requires a comprehensive approach. This includes investing in education and skills, removing social barriers that limit women's roles, and creating better economic opportunities. In addition, encouraging gender equality and creating an environment that supports women to reach their full potential is an important step in reducing disparities and vulnerabilities (Wijayanti & Nursalim, 2023). These efforts must include collaboration between government, community organizations, and civil society to bring positive change in the lives of marginalized women (Rusmadi, 2016).

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Rational choice theory, developed by James S. Coleman, is an important framework for understanding social and economic behavior. This theory emphasizes that individuals have preferences that form the basis of decision making. In this context, individuals are viewed as rational voters who actively choose the action or option that best suits their preferences based on their evaluation of the benefits and costs associated with each option. In situations of economic and social uncertainty, as many women experience in the case of climate change, they may make decisions that are considered rational because of the constraints they face. The decision to become a sex worker can be seen as a response to difficult economic conditions and limited access to other economic opportunities.

In this context, rational choice theory helps us understand why someone chooses a particular path, for example becoming a sex worker, in response to existing economic and social pressures. This is concerned with understanding the context and constraints that influence individual decision making, and how policies and programs can be designed to provide better and more sustainable alternatives for dealing with these situations. This emphasizes the importance of understanding what can be designed. However, it is also important to remember that rational choice theory does not necessarily cover all aspects of social and economic behavior. Human behavior is often complex and influenced by factors such as social norms, values, culture, and psychological stress. Therefore, in the context of climate change policies and efforts, a holistic approach that considers these factors is also very important to address issues such as women choosing sex work in response to climate change and economic uncertainty.

Economic vulnerability, limited skills and education, as well as social norms that position women as economic investments often place women in a vulnerable position in various aspects of social, economic and civil life (Ramadhani & Hubeis, 2020). Several things that need to be considered are: the first is about financial vulnerability, namely women who face financial vulnerability tend to have limitations in their ability to meet their and their family's basic needs. They may not have adequate access to economic resources or suitable employment opportunities. This often leads them to seek alternative economic solutions through less desirable or potentially risky jobs; The second is about limited skills and education, namely that limited education and skills can prevent women from getting better jobs and higher incomes. It may also limit their access to personal and economic development opportunities. With limited skills, women are often trapped in low-paid and less profitable jobs; third is about social norms and gender roles, namely about social norms that position women as economic investments, especially in traditional contexts, which can result in quite limited roles for women. They are often expected to fulfill roles as caregivers, domestic workers, or family members dependent on men's decisions. This can leave them with less control over decisions that affect their lives.

C. METHOD

1. Informant

The research informants were women aged 26-35 years in the criteria for early adulthood and aged 36-45 years in the criteria for late adulthood according to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia in 2009. The informant's status was a commercial sex worker, married, had children and/or was a single parent. The informants are also women with low education, namely elementary school. Research informants were selected purposively to form a relatively homogeneous sampling in answering and determining the meaningfulness of the research questions asked.

The research used an idiographic and inductive knowledge strategy carried out in a snowball manner with the aim of recruiting a group of informants who were defined as being able to represent a particular perspective on the research questions asked, namely about the decision to become a commercial sex worker in the uncertainty of income obtained in the extreme climate change that occurs and has an impact on the income earned. This means that informants are representatives of certain groups who in fact have the same perspective. This selection of relatively homogeneous participants will provide more insight into the

similarities and variability of individuals within a particular perspective. Because the research informants are over 17 years old and their names have been disguised by the researcher, this research does not require legality from the university ethics commission. However, all informants were willing to be involved as informants in the research. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the research informants.

Tabel 1. Informant Characteristics

Informant	Age	Marital status	Length of time working as a sex worker	Number of children
Yusi	28 years	Married	2 year	1
Sisil	30 years	Married	2 year	1
Cinok	35 years	Divorced	3 year	2
Memey	37 years	Divorced	3 year	2

2. Procedure

Information regarding the research was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in regional languages, namely Javanese with the Indramayu dialect. This was done with the aim of building closeness between researchers and research informants through language. The use of the same accent also aims to lighten the atmosphere and create closeness between the two. Informants to researchers did not hesitate to express their experiences related to the questions asked during the interview process. The interviews were conducted by the researcher himself, supported by the capabilities of one of the researchers as a native of Indramayu who masters the regional languages of Indramayu in various dialects of their respective regions.

In this research, the researcher hides his identity as a higher education academic with the aim of breaking the gap between researchers and research informants. They actually prefer to talk to the general public, without bringing status into the work environment. In a way, status in the work environment will bring its own skepticism to the interview process. This has been proven previously, to one of the informants, as a result the interview process did not go as expected. Informants were less open about what actually happened, what background led to their decision to become a commercial sex worker.

The interview process was carried out like a normal question and answer session, casually, without writing equipment. The researcher only asked permission to record the discussion process from the research informant using the recording device on the researcher's smartphone. Each participant is given an incentive as a sign of gratitude and enthusiasm when the researcher invites discussion or shares stories and experiences.

Interviews were conducted using two methods, namely directly and indirectly, namely by telephone. This is done directly at the informant's residence, some at the informant's workplace, and indirectly through telephone calls or the WhatsApp application. Researchers take turns visiting participants to collect and understand the meaning of the data obtained. The length of the interview process varies from one informant to another, requiring a minimum of 45 minutes to open and approach the informant as a source of research data. On the other hand, researchers can spend all day, and end before the informant starts working as a sex worker.

The interview transcription process is divided into three stages, namely, first, writing down the raw interview results which are still in regional languages into Indonesian; second, to translate the language from the regional language into Indonesian, and third, assisted by a professional translator, to translate into English. Data analysis was carried out using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The researcher made a commitment to idiography by analyzing case by case in each research question asked. Each case is read and analyzed for the depth of its meaning, by looking for descriptive note points, re-doing the data and translating it into sub-themes that are concise and meaningful for the individual. This was recorded separately by the researcher on a different transcript, so that analysis and deepening of meaning could be carried out as a whole without being disturbed by the researcher's subjective experience.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Climate Change and the Decision to Become a Sex Worker

The situation reflects the real impact of climate change on the lives of coastal (Pantura) women who depend on seafood. Climate change, including rising sea levels, changes in sea temperature, and unstable weather conditions, is causing a drastic reduction in fish catches and other marine resources. This creates significant economic uncertainty for the Pantura fishing community (Nurbayani et al., 2019; Wilodati et al., 2019).

Using Coleman's theory, we look at how women as actors in this research have goals and choices that have basic value so that they can be used to make choices based on in-depth consideration regarding various decisions taken based on their awareness and consideration. The resources controlled by women in this decision are based on certain interests, especially income for living needs. In this situation, women are placed in a difficult choice, between taking part in fulfilling the family's economic needs or making a controversial decision as a sex worker.

The choice to become a sex worker is taken as a way to maximize income and fulfill living needs. This "occasional" choice can be understood as the result of value considerations and other choices made, such as the resources possessed by the high needs of life being things that are unequal to be resolved in the "usual way". Women's decisions to become sex workers in climate change and decreasing incomes focus on several things, namely considerations of actors, namely women themselves, the resources they have, considerations of values and choices, collective behavior, as well as various interventions in explaining women's decisions.

Several important factors that can be identified in this situation are: First, regarding dependence on marine resources, namely that the Pantura community is very dependent on marine resources, which is often their main source of livelihood. The decline in seafood production due to climate change threatens its economic sustainability; The second issue regarding skills limitations is that the lack of skills and alternative livelihoods makes women in these communities more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. They may not be qualified enough to do work outside the fisheries sector. Another thing related to social culture is the decision to marry a daughter to a rich man. Some women may decide to marry their daughters to rich men in order to survive and provide for their families. This decision is often taken in response to financial constraints that require a search for alternatives to continue family life.

We cannot deny that this decision is not without support. Family and society provide their own influence and "support" in influencing women's values and preferences in choosing work (Wulandari et al., 2022). A family and community environment that is less sensitive to results and success in a job, or more precisely only focuses on the material value obtained, is one of the things that seems to be the "confirmation" in making this decision. On the other hand, this decision clashes with weak social attachment in maintaining more positive values and preferences for a job. The decision to become a commercial sex worker

seems to be justified in an effort to fulfill increasingly high economic needs, while resources and skills are minimal.

In this context, it is important to take steps to support Pantura communities affected by climate change. Some actions that can be taken are: Firstly improving education and organizing training, which is about providing alternative skills training to women and other community members, so that they have more choices in facing economic uncertainty; Second, local economic development is about encouraging the development of small and medium businesses in the Pantura community to create job opportunities and increase income; The third is about social policy and protection, namely implementing policies that support social and economic protection for communities affected by climate change. Involving women in planning and decision-making is key to sustainably addressing the impacts of climate change and ensuring that actions taken reflect their needs and aspirations.

2. Poverty and Decision Making

Poverty is one of the main reasons women decide to become sex workers. Poor economic conditions and economic uncertainty, exacerbated by the pandemic situation, have caused many women, especially those in difficult economic situations, to turn to sex work to survive and provide for themselves and their families.

Economic conditions that are below the poverty line make the decision to become a sex worker seem like the right one. Minimal marine products, an uncertain climate have a special influence on women's determination in their decisions. There are many worries that women feel in living their daily lives in a family which is full of economic uncertainty. It started with concerns about whether the seafood her husband obtained could meet today's food needs? If it's still difficult to eat, what about other needs? This worry about food needs touches the deepest hearts of women. Concerns about welfare are even greater when you think about your children's future education. If it's difficult to eat, what about other needs?

Worries that are not balanced with women's resources in overcoming them seem to be something that never ends for women. Women are faced with difficult situations in choices that risk their self-esteem. Because this is not just about the woman and herself as an individual, but this is about her child's life, her family's life, and how she should be able to make sure everything will be okay. It is not an easy decision, but the decision to become a sex worker is something that can be relied upon in various doubts about the family's economic condition.

It becomes sad when this decision is publicly known by family members, parents or husband. Economic helplessness, the inability to develop oneself to get a better job really makes this decision seem like a natural thing. On the other hand, we are also faced with "family pride" in what is produced in work as a commercial sex worker. It cannot be denied that some families are even "proud" of the material results that women obtain in this work. Values and norms in the family and society seem to be destroyed in an endless economic spiral. Pride in material results seems to be a separate acceptance of what women do in an effort to meet the family's living needs.

Several factors that can be identified in this context are: first about poverty and economic vulnerability, namely that women who are in poverty or low economic status often do not have adequate access to stable and well-paid work opportunities; the second is about meeting basic and family needs, that is, women are often responsible for the basic needs of their families, including food, shelter and children's education. Unable to meet these needs, women immediately looked for additional sources of income; third is about the limitations of economic alternatives, namely a lack of skills or access to other jobs can make women feel that sex work is their only option. They may not have suitable alternatives to earn enough income to survive.

E. CONCLUSION

This research combines analysis of the physical and social environment related, climate change which has a huge influence on women in their decision to become sex workers to meet the family's economic needs. The vulnerability of individuals, in this case women, in decision making, as well as the social vulnerability of society in patterns of shared control in the values of social norms, are also dissolved in economic inability, so that decision making as a sex worker seems to be rationalized by the circumstances. Woman are not only faced with challenges regarding social construction but are also faced with natural challenges. In fact, the uncertain climate is one of the reasons for fostering the prostitution business on the north coast of Java Island. This climate change makes poverty even more real. Marine products have decreased drastically and the uncertainty of life during the pandemic has provided a special impetus for women in making decisions as sex workers.

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