

SEX WORKER STIGMA IN MAUPASSANT'S "BOULE DE SUIF" AND TIRTAWIRYA'S "CATATAN SEORANG PELACUR"

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Abstract. This study aims to reveal stigma toward sex worker depicted in two literary texts i. e. a short story entitled "Boule de Suiif" by Guy de Maupassant, a French writer and a short story entitled "Catatan Seorang Pelacur" by Putu Arya Tirtawirya, an Indonesian writer. The two short stories are chosen for the reason that both works depict the life of a female sex worker. This study is designed as a descriptive qualitative study with sociological approach. The sociological approach is applied because this study looks at society's views on female sex workers that is reflected in the short stories. Moreover, theories of stigma are reviewed to support the analysis. The Analysis is focused on the sex worker stigma, the manifestation of stigmatization against sex workers, how the female sex worker in each short story responds to the stigmatization, and whether authors of the short stories affirm or criticize their society.

Keywords: *sex worker, sex worker stigma, stigmatization*

INTRODUCTION

Occupation that involves sexual service is referred to as sex work or prostitution. Benoit et al. (2017: 1 - 2) states that prostitution or sex work is payment for the exchange of sexual service. Further, they explain that the term "prostitution" is continually used in most government policy documents and it remains in usage by advocacy groups and scholars. However, some researchers prefer the term "sex work" since it emphasizes labor/work and economic implication of involvement in the sales of sexual services. Valadier (2018: 502) defines that sex work is sex engaged in for financial or material compensation, involving activities of direct physical

contact between buyers and sellers as well as indirect sexual stimulation. According to Balfour and Allen (2014: 3) direct sex work involves services like indoor and outdoor prostitution as well as escort services characterized by exchange of sex for payment in which genital contact is common. While indirect sex work involves services like lap dancing, stripping and virtual sex services over internet or phone. Although genital contact is less common, payment is still required in this type of sex work.

Individuals who engage in sex work are called sex workers. Berg in Mesce (2020: 48) defines sex workers as individuals that accept money or good in place of sexual services, and that knowingly

considered those activities as income generating.

People are often treated depending on their status or what position they occupy and have. When people are at a high level of status they will be treated well and respected, whereas people who have low status will be marginalized or discriminated against. Sex workers or prostitutes represent a marginalized group subjected to stigmatization (Wong, Halroyd, and Bingham, 2011: 51). According to Goffman in Benoit et al. (2017: 2) stigma is a social attribute or mark that differentiates individuals from others by way of socially given judgments. Ma and Loke (2019: 1-2) argue that Female Sex Workers may undergo multiple levels of stigma i. e. social stigma, structural stigma, and self stigma. Social stigma refers to the attitude and beliefs that society hold toward the stigmatized group. Structural stigma is the practice institutions legalize and maintain stigma. Self stigma is the internalization of social and structural stigma by the stigmatized individuals that results in negative consequences. Self-stigma can be categorized further into experienced, anticipated, and internalized stigma. The experienced stigma is the actual happening of prejudice or discrimination encountered by the members of the stigmatized groups. The anticipated stigma is a notion that the members of the stigmatized group may undergo stigma when their stigmatized condition has been known. Internalized stigma arises when the individuals who belong to stigmatized group take and internalized the negative attitudes of the

society. Social stigma is the ultimate reason for social exclusion, oppression and human rights violations encountered by sex worker (Dziuban, 2015: 11).

METHOD

This study is a qualitative study with descriptive method. It aims to provide in-depth understanding of social problems related to sex worker stigma reflected in literary works. The literary approach applied is sociological approach because the focus of this study is to look at society's view on female sex workers in which the texts were written.

The data sources of this study are two short stories written by two different writers. The first is "Boule de Suif" written by Guy de Maupassant, a French writer. This short story was published in 1880. The second is "Catatan Seorang Pelacur" written by Putu Arya Tirtawirya, an Indonesian writer. The two short stories were chosen as the object of this research because they had similarities, namely the main characters in the two short stories, Boule de Suif in Maupassant's "Boule de Suif" and Neng Sum in Tirtawirya's "Catatan Seorang Pelacur", had the same social background namely sex workers. In addition, because the short stories were written in different social context and time, it was also assumed that the stories might contain differences. Therefore, this study aimed to look if there were similarities and differences that can be found in the two short stories.

In revealing stigma toward sex workers which is depicted in the two short stories, theories related to stigma are

reviewed. These theories are used as the bases for identifying the kinds of stigma experienced by sex workers, the manifestation of stigmatization, and how the sex worker stigma affect the sex workers personal life.

The data were sentences from the two short stories that were related to the topic of the discussion. The steps taken in collecting the data involved reading the texts closely, marking sentences that were considered as data, and recording and classifying the data. The steps taken in analyzing the data involved identifying the data, interpreting the data, and making inferences about the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Sex Worker Stigma in Maupassant's "Boule de Suif"

Maupassant's "Boule de Suif" was published in 1880. It tells about a female sex worker called Boule de Suif who is on a trip in a coach with nine other people. They are leaving their hometown because their hometown is occupied by Prussian soldiers who have colonized their country. It is from the events during the journey that the reader can see society's judgment on sex workers.

Social stigma against sex worker is apparent in Maupassant's "Boule de Suif". It can be revealed through the way Boule de Suif's travelling companions treat her. As soon as her existence in the coach is recognized by the respectable matrons who know that she is a sex worker, she hears them whisper among themselves and the words "hussy" and "public scandal" are said loud enough for her to hear. The

words are obviously used with derogatory intent.

"As soon as she was recognized the respectable matrons of the party began to whisper among themselves, and the words "hussy" and "public scandal" were uttered so loudly that Boule de Suif raised her head
(Maupassant, 1880: 7)."

The stigma against female sex workers is also apparent in the way Boule de Suif's travelling companions degrade her. As Boule de Suif's profession is a sex worker, she is negatively labelled as a disreputable female. They also have negative attitude toward Boule de Suif that is shown through a feeling of scorn directed toward Boule de Suif.

"The scorn of the ladies for this disreputable female grew positively ferocious; they would have liked to kill her, or throw her and her drinking cup, her basket, and her provisions, out of the coach into the snow of the road below

". . . They decided that they ought to combine, as it were, in their dignity as wives in face of this shameless hussy; for legitimized love always despises its easygoing brother
(Maupassant, 1880: 9)."

Stigmatization experienced by Boule de Suif also occurs in the form of sexual

assault done by a Prussian officer. When Boule de Suif and her travelling companion are stopped at the detention center, they are arbitrarily detained by the Prussian officer who has found out that Boule de Suif's profession is a sex worker. They will be allowed to continue their journey only if Boule de Suif will sleep-together with him.

"You are wrong, madame, for your refusal may bring trouble not only on yourself but also on all your companions. It never pays to resist those in authority. Your compliance with this request cannot possibly be fraught with any danger; it has probably been made because some formality or other was forgotten (Maupassant, 1880: 15)."

At first, Boule de Suif spurns the Prussian officer's will because of her patriotism. At the end, however, she is persuaded by her travelling companions to fulfil the Prussian officer's demand so that they will not be detained any longer. What the Prussian officer did to Boule de Suif is a form of sexual assault because she is physically forced to engage. At first, Boule de Suif spurns the Prussian officer's will because of her patriotism. At the end, however, she is persuaded by her travelling companions to fulfil the Prussian officer's demand so that they will not be detained any longer. What the Prussian officer did to Boule de Suif is a form of sexual assault because she is physically forced to engage in a sexual act against her will.

Another form of stigmatization faced by Boule de Suif is being ignored and

rejected by her travelling companions. Yet, in spite of the sacrifice she has made for them to be able to continue their journey, they ignore her existence.

"No one looked at her, no one thought of her. She felt herself swallowed up in the scorn of these virtuous creatures, who had first sacrificed, then rejected her as a thing useless and unclean (Maupassant, 1880: 7)."

The stigmatization experiences by Boule de Suif affect her inner self. She feels angry and hurt by the contemptuous attitude of her travelling companions.

B. Sex Worker Stigma in Tirtawirya's "Catatan Seorang Pelacur"

Tirtawirya's "Catatan Seorang Pelacur" was published in 1986. It tells about a long reflection of a prostitute woman named Neng Sum about her life as a sex worker who once tried to become a good woman by becoming a legal wife. Being a legal wife means she has a desire to change and repent. But because community members condemn sex work, her presence in the society is rejected because of her background as a sex worker. She got married several times but no one of the men who was married to her could save her from society's stigmatization against her and this makes her back to become a sex worker because she is unable to find another job due to her lack of ability.

"Bagi diriku yang telah terlanjur bergelimang lumpur, maka cinta (dalam arti berlaki- bini) adalah omong kosong. Beberapa lelaki telah mencoba melepaskan diriku dari kamar mesum ini, tapi semuanya menyadari keterbuisan mereka selama itu setelah kami berada di tengah masyarakat yang mengutuki pelacuran."

"For me, who is already in the mud, love (in the sense of being married) is nonsense. Several men had tried to get me out of this lewd chamber, but all of them realized their intoxication during that time after we were in a society that condemned prostitution (Tirtawirya, 1986: 2).

Rejection of Neng Sum's existence does not only come from the community members but also from her own family. Her family feels ashamed of her status as a sex worker so that her presence in the middle of her family is ignored and she is even considered does not exist. Hence, she distances herself from her family and the community members and endures a lonely life.

"Malam di luar yang begitu kelam seperti kopi, kegelapan yang seperti inilah terbentang di muka hidupku kini; tanpa batas waktu kapan akan berakhir. Hidup yang sebatang kara, meskipun aku masih punya keluarga, tapi mereka malu dan menganggap kehadiranku di tengah mereka seperti sebuah

angka nol dan malahan bersyukur jika aku tak muncul- muncul lagi di mata mereka."

"The night outside as dark as coffee, this kind of darkness spreads over the face of my life now; indefinitely when it will end. Living alone, even though I still have a family, but they are ashamed and consider my presence in their midst like a zero and even grateful if I don't appear in their eyes again (Tirtawirya, 1986: 3).

Neng Sum status as a sex worker has also made her to be sexually objectified by men. This means that she is viewed as the object of men's sexual desire.

"Malah para lelaki yang pernah menerkami tubuhku merasa janggal, merasa aneh, melihat kehadiranku di tengah-tengah pergaulan mereka yang sopan, dan aku tahu lewat sorot mata mereka, aku dapat menangkap sinar jalang mereka yang menyayangkan kehadiran diriku di luar dunia buram ini. Mereka telah kehilangan tubuhku yang sebetulnya dapat mereka jadikan mangsa yang nikmat nafsunya mengubah mereka dari drakula atau seekor kucing kelaparan yang di matanya aku adalah seekor tikus betina."

"Even, the men who had pounced on my body felt strange, saw my presence in the midst of their polite

association, and I knew through the look in their eyes, I could catch the rays of their bitch who regreted my presence outside this blurry world. They had lost my body which they could have made prey for whose pleasures of lust turned them from Dracula or a hungry cat in whose eyes I was a female mouse (Tirtawirya, 1986: 4).

Neng Sum views that men objectify her because they consider her body as a physical object of their sexual desire and she believe that men are never satisfied with only one woman. She never believes in marital love and decides to become a single independent woman.

Society stigma against sex worker has been internalized by Neng Sum and this becomes the leading cause of her self-stigma. The self-stigma experienced by Neng Sum is internalized stigma in the form of shame. She is unhappy with her profession as a sex worker but she has no choice because she is unable to find another job. Moreover, she considers herself as a dirty and sinful woman because she engages in a sex work. All of these feelings burden her conscience. To reduce her burden, she keeps a diary in which she can vent her feelings.

Based on the result of the analysis it can be inferred that both the authors of "Boule de Suif" and "Catatan Seorang Pelacur" criticize the society's attitude toward sex workers. Through the characterization of the female sex workers, Maupassant and Tirtawirya want to draw the reader's sympathy.

In Maupassant's "Boule de Suif", Boule de Suif is characterized as a prostitute who has some good qualities as an individual. One of her good qualities is that she is generous. When her travelling companions are starving because they do not bring provisions for the journey and they cannot find food sellers because of the war, she willingly shares her provisions with them. Boule de Suif is also a considerate person. Although she is a sex worker, she does not do whatever she happens to feel like doing. This is clearly shown when one of her male travelling companions ask her service while they are staying in a hotel. She refuses it because she considers it as a shameful thing to do in their situation, "No my good man, there are times when one does not do that sort of thing; besides, in this place it would be shameful (Maupassant, 1880: 19)." Boule de Suif's good quality can also be measured from her patriotism. She loves her country so that she is determined that she will never sleep-together with her country's enemy although she is eventually not able to hold her principle because she is forced to do so.

In "Catatan Seorang Pelacur" Neng Sum is also depicted as a sex worker that can grow the reader's concern about her situation. For one reason, she has to endure loneliness because she is ostracized by the community members and her family. Another reason that grows the reader's concern about her situation is that she is forced to engage in sex work because she is unable to find another work. Moreover, she always feels guilty of being a sex worker but she cannot quit because

she needs money to support her life and to save for her old age prosperity.

The authors' criticism to the society's attitude is shown through the way the authors in both short stories depict the society's treatment toward female sex workers. The community members in both short stories stigmatize female sex workers in various ways, ranging from ostracism, scorn, and disregard. All of which affect the personal life of the sex workers negatively. The community members who judge themselves as virtuous creature display attitude that is in contrast with it. Therefore, it can be inferred that the authors undermine dehumanization of sex workers since such attitude violates human rights.

CONCLUSION

Sex work is an occupation that is viewed negatively by societies throughout the world for the reason that it is considered deviating from the society's norm. This judgement becomes the leading cause of sex worker stigma.

Dehumanization of sex workers in the form of stigmatization as depicted in the two short stories indicates that sex worker stigma is an everlasting phenomenon. Maupassant's "Boule de Suif" and Tirtawirya's "Catatan Seorang Pelacur" were written in different century and is set in different social context but both stories reflect the same attitude of the societies in treating female sex workers.

Maupassant and Tirtawirya have a lot in common in depicting issues related to sex work. There is no significant

differences in terms of sex work issues that can be found in the two short stories even though they were written in different societies, French and Indonesia. This indicates that issues related to sex work are universal.

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