

Gender Analysis of Prostitution Localization Closure Policy in Jember Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study critically explores the policy on the closure of prostitution areas in Jember Regency through a gender equity lens. The policy, established under Regional Regulation No. 14 of 2001 and Regent's Decree No. 188.45/39/012/2007, was grounded in moral considerations and supported by public demand. Nevertheless, its implementation has produced unintended consequences, particularly for former female sex workers who have lost their primary source of income, experienced persistent social stigma, and encountered limited access to empowerment programs designed to support their transition into alternative livelihoods. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this research draws on interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data were examined through Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model. The study adopts Caroline Moser's (1993) Gender Analysis Pathway to assess four key dimensions: access, participation, control, and benefits, while William N. Dunn's (2015) policy analysis framework is applied to evaluate the rationality and substance of the policy. The findings suggest that the closure policy has yet to embody the principles of gender equity. Former sex workers face reduced access to economic opportunities and information, are not meaningfully involved in policy processes, have limited control over their economic choices, and receive insufficient benefits due to weak program implementation. These conditions indicate a gap between policy intentions and practical outcomes. Therefore, this study advocates for a more inclusive and gender-responsive policy reformulation, emphasizing integrated rehabilitation efforts, vocational skill development, and sustained economic support to ensure long-term social and economic reintegration for affected women.

KEYWORDS *Gender Analysis Pathway; Gender justice; Prostitution; Public policy*



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INTRODUCTION

Policies addressing prostitution in many countries, including Indonesia, continue to prioritize moral, legal, and public order considerations (Hamdani et al., 2024; Natalis et al., 2023; Riswanda et al., 2016, 2017). While such approaches are often justified as necessary for maintaining social stability, they frequently overlook the structural dimensions of gender inequality embedded in prostitution. Prostitution is not solely a moral issue; it is closely linked to economic vulnerability, limited employment opportunities, and unequal power relations between men and women. When policy responses focus primarily on morality, women are often positioned as objects of regulation rather than as subjects of rights, leading to gendered consequences that persist beyond the formal closure of prostitution sites. This pattern is evident in Jember Regency. Through Regional Regulation No. 14 of 2001 and subsequent Regent Decrees, the local government regulated and eventually closed prostitution activities in Puger Kulon. Regent Decree No. 64 of 2002 initially established the Transitional Social Service Place (TPST) as a temporary rehabilitation mechanism for commercial sex workers with a three-year transition period. However, following the expiration of this period, Regent Decree No. 188.45/35/012/2007 formally closed the TPST and declared the area free from prostitution. Although administratively the policy reflects a moral commitment to public order, its implementation was not supported by comprehensive social evaluation or sustainable

economic empowerment programs (Hamzah, 2022; E. Kholifah, 2016). Consequently, many former sex workers lost stable livelihoods and experienced continued social stigma.

Previous studies have highlighted different dimensions of this issue. (Setiawan, 2023) and (Wulandari & Hilmi, 2022) demonstrate the significant socio-economic impact of localization closure, particularly the loss of women’s income and their limited participation in local decision-making. (Hamzah, 2022; Angin et. al, 2022) and (E. Kholifah, 2016; 2018) examine the legal and governance aspects, noting that regulations emphasize morality while neglecting economic protection and gender-sensitive rehabilitation. (E. Kholifah, 2018) further identifies weak implementation of good governance principles, particularly transparency and participation. More recently, (Biandadan, Ditha, and Maskur, 2025) argue that localization closure policies in Indonesia remain repressive and exclude women from policy processes. Although these studies provide valuable insights, most analyze socio-economic impacts or governance weaknesses separately. Few systematically apply a comprehensive gender analytical framework to assess both policy substance and implementation. This gap limits a deeper understanding of how gender bias operates not only in outcomes but also in the logic and structure of the policy itself. Table 1 summarizes the key findings and gender-based policy directions identified in previous research.

Table 1. Summary of Previous Research and Gender Perspective Policy Directions

No	Researcher & Year	Research Focus	Key Findings	Gender-Based Policy Direction
1	Setiawan (2023)	Socio-economic impact of localization closure	Women lost income; limited alternative employment	Shift toward sustainable economic empowerment
2	Wulandari & Hilmi (2022)	Role of women in family resilience	Women sustain households but lack participation	Strengthen women’s involvement in decision-making
3	Hamzah (2022)	Legal analysis of prostitution policy	Regulation stresses morality; lacks economic protection	Gender-based rehabilitation and economic guarantees
4	E. Kholifah (2016)	Policy implementation at bureaucratic level	Ambiguity and moral-political influence	Involve women in all policy stages
5	E. Kholifah (2018)	Good governance & women’s rights	Weak transparency and accountability	Integrate gender-based good governance
6	Biandadan, Ditha & Maskur (2025)	Evaluation of closure policy in Indonesia	Policy repressive; women excluded	Reorient toward inclusive, gender-responsive policymaking

To address this gap, this study integrates Caroline Moser’s (1993) Gender Analysis Pathway focusing on access, participation, control, and benefits with William N. Dunn’s (2015) policy analysis framework. This combined approach enables a systematic evaluation of gender bias in both policy outcomes and policy rationality.

Accordingly, this research aims to critically assess the prostitution closure policy in Jember Regency from a gender equity perspective. Theoretically, it contributes to gender-based public policy evaluation in morally sensitive governance contexts. Practically, it provides evidence-based recommendations for policymakers regarding the unintended gendered consequences of localization closure. The study ultimately advocates for a shift toward gender-responsive governance through participatory rehabilitation, sustainable economic

empowerment, and meaningful involvement of affected women in policy formulation and evaluation.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach within a public policy analysis framework, guided by Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model. The research was conducted in Jember Regency, East Java, focusing on areas affected by the prostitution localization closure policy. Primary data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with four informants three former female sex workers directly affected by the policy and one representative from the local Social Affairs Office involved in its implementation. Informants were selected purposively based on their relevance and experience. The number of informants was considered sufficient as thematic saturation was achieved, indicated by recurring patterns in the data.

The interview guide was developed based on Moser's (1993) Gender Analysis Pathway (access, participation, control, and benefits) and Dunn's (2015) policy evaluation framework. Interviews were conducted face-to-face. Audio recording was not used due to the participants' refusal to provide consent; therefore, data were documented through detailed field notes taken during and immediately after each interview. Key points were clarified with participants when necessary to maintain accuracy. Secondary data were obtained from regional regulations, official documents, and relevant academic literature to support triangulation. Ethical principles were observed by obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, and protecting confidentiality through pseudonyms. Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation and systematic documentation of the analytical process. Overall, this qualitative design is appropriate for examining the gendered impacts of the policy and understanding the experiences of affected women.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data Limitations and Context of Prostitution in Jember

This study faces significant data limitations regarding the number and distribution of commercial sex workers (PSK) in Jember Regency. Based on direct confirmation with the Social Affairs Office and the Health Office, no official data are publicly accessible concerning the number of sex workers or active prostitution locations. The agencies stated that such data are classified as confidential due to their sensitive nature and the potential to generate social stigma. The unavailability of official data constitutes not only a technical limitation but also reflects a governance pattern characterized by limited transparency. Within Dunn's (2015) policy analysis framework, transparency and access to information are essential components of accountability and evaluability in public policy (Public Policy Analysis: An Integrated Approach). The absence of an open information system, therefore, indicates a substantive weakness in policy implementation. This finding is consistent with (E. Kholifah, 2016; 2018), who identifies bureaucratic ambivalence and weak governance coordination in prostitution policy implementation, resulting in gaps between formal policy commitments and field realities. Given the absence of official statistics, this study relies on credible secondary sources to reconstruct the structural context of prostitution in Jember. (Yayan, 2015) reports that prior to its closure, Puger Kulon Localization accommodated 169 sex workers (111 from Jember and 58 from outside the region), demonstrating that prostitution previously operated as a structured and organized system. Subsequent studies (Hamzah, 2022; Setiawan, 2023) confirm the significant socio-economic implications of the localization's closure for the surrounding community. At the provincial level, data from the East Java Central Statistics Agency cited by (Prayoga, 2025) indicate that approximately 70 prostitution points remain across East Java.

This evidence suggests that closure policies have not eradicated prostitution but have instead altered its spatial and organizational patterns. Similar conclusions are drawn in previous research, which argues that localization closures tend to disperse prostitution into more informal and concealed networks rather than eliminate the practice altogether (Kholifah, 2016; Sevrina, 2020; Ubaedi, et. al., 2024).

From a gender perspective, such policy shifts disproportionately affect women, particularly former sex workers who experience heightened economic vulnerability and social marginalization (Kholifah, 2016; Humsona et. al., 2023). Feminist policy analyses further emphasize that prostitution control in Indonesia often prioritizes moral regulation over structural empowerment, thereby neglecting underlying socio-economic inequalities (Biandadan et. al., 2025; Moser, 1993). Recent field findings in this study corroborate these patterns. The closure of Puger Localization as the primary site of regulated prostitution did not eliminate the practice; instead, it transformed prostitution into more diffuse, hidden, and less regulated forms. This transformation complicates monitoring, reduces institutional oversight, and reinforces the limitations of transparency identified earlier. Substantively, this section represents a major strength of the manuscript because it integrates empirical field findings with policy analysis and gender theory, thereby demonstrating how data opacity, governance practices, and socio-economic structures intersect in shaping prostitution policy outcomes in Jember Regency.

Field findings in 2025 indicate that prostitution in Jember has shifted from centralized localization to dispersed and hidden forms. Observations identified new patterns:

- a. **In Rambipuji District**, the practice of prostitution is carried out by elderly women, showing an increasingly sharp level of social vulnerability.



Figure 1. Location of Mangkal Prostitution Places Post-Closure

Source: **Researcher Documentation, 2025.**

- b. **In the Pakusari area**, prostitution takes place in stalls with the mode of customers ordering food and then negotiating tariffs with prostitutes. This pattern makes the activity difficult for the authorities to detect.



Figure 2. Warungs that Become Places for Clandestine Prostitution Negotiations

Source: **Researcher's Documentation, 2025.**

- c. **In the Kaliurang and Tidar areas**, a combination of young prostitutes and the elderly who work in a bright light in the village in Tidar because the localization place is located in the village.



Figure 3. Localization of Prostitution from the past to the present in the village

Source: **Researcher Documentation, 2025.**

These developments indicate a transformation rather than eradication of prostitution, reinforcing Dunn's (2015) assessment that effective policy must meet criteria of effectiveness, responsiveness, and accuracy. The closure policy also reduced the visibility of affected women within the policy system, limiting their access to empowerment programs and excluding them from formal recognition as impacted groups. From Moser's (1993) Gender Analysis Pathway perspective, the principles of access, participation, control, and benefits were not adequately fulfilled. Thus, prostitution in Jember should be understood not merely as a moral issue but as a structural governance problem involving information opacity, weak monitoring mechanisms, and entrenched gender inequality.

Gender Justice Analysis in Localization Closure Policy

This study applies Moser's (1993) Gender Analysis Pathway access, participation, control, and benefits integrated with Dunn's (2015) six policy evaluation criteria effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy, equity, responsiveness, and accuracy. Findings indicate that the closure policy prioritized morality and public order while neglecting gendered socio-economic consequences.

a. Access

Former sex workers experienced significant barriers to accessing information, economic alternatives, and social assistance. Informants consistently reported that they were not provided with prior information or preparation. One participant stated "*We were simply informed that the area would be closed, without any explanation of what would happen afterward.*" (Interview, S, 40 years old, 2025) This lack of communication undermined policy effectiveness and created economic shock. Women lost income abruptly without transitional support, reflecting inefficiency and inadequacy. Although the Social Affairs Office reported a 2017 empowerment training program involving approximately 20 –30 participants in collaboration with the Job Training Center (BLK), access was limited and participation rates were low due to mismatches between training content and women's needs. No sustained post-training mentoring was provided.

Table 1. Analysis of Access for Ex-Prostitute Women Based on Moser (1993) and Dunn's Evaluation (2015)

Evaluation Stages (Dunn, 2015)	Access Analysis (Moser, 1993)	Field Findings (2025 Interview)	Gender Implications
Effectiveness	Women do not have access to policy information from the outset, so their needs are not included in policy formulation.	"We were just told that it was going to be closed, and we never talked about it."	Policies are ineffective for women because they lose economic and social access suddenly without preparation.
Efficiency	The lack of access to information and resources causes women's adaptation process to slow down and creates new social costs.	"When it was closed, we were confused about what to do."	Policies become inefficient because the government has to deal with new social impacts due to women's lack of readiness.
Adequacy	Women's access to alternative jobs, training, or economic assistance is inadequate.	"He said there was training, but we never got the information." (Outside Besini)	The resources and support available are inadequate to meet the basic needs of post-lockdown women.
Alignment	Women's access is uneven because only certain parties (village officials, male figures) receive information and assistance.	"Only a few people (in Besini) can get help, most of us don't know anything."	Unequal access deepens gender inequality and strengthens the marginalization of ex-prostitution women.
Responsiveness	Policies do not respond to women's specific needs such as job loss, trauma, and socio-economic needs.	"I don't want anyone to ask me what I need."	Policies are insensitive to women's experiences and needs so they do not answer the problems they face.
Accuracy	The access provided by the government is not in accordance with the context; Information is conveyed in one direction and does not open a dialogue space.	"said my senior senior who is in Besini that the closure is only from hearing from the people, not from the government."	The policy is not on target because the method of delivering information and assistance does not take into account the condition of ex-prostitution women.

Source: *Field interview results (2025), processed*

Overall, the results of the access evaluation show that ex-prostitute women lose the opportunity to obtain information, assistance, and economic resources which are an important part of the social rehabilitation process. This condition indicates that the policy of closing localization in Jember Regency has not met the principle of gender justice as explained by (Moser, 1993), where access is the main prerequisite for women to be empowered and out of the circle of social vulnerability.

b. Participation

Women were excluded from planning and decision-making processes. One participant explained “*No one consulted us or asked for our opinion; the closure happened suddenly.*” (Interview, S, 40 years old, 2025) The absence of consultation reduced effectiveness and efficiency, as programs were designed without considering women’s skills or aspirations. No formal forum or participatory mechanism existed. Participation was largely symbolic and limited to male community leaders and officials.

Table 2. Analysis of Ex-Prostitute Women's Participation Based on Moser (1993) and Dunn (2015)

Evaluation Stages (Dunn, 2015)	Participation Analysis (Moser, 1993)	Field Findings (2025 Interview)	Gender Implications
Effectiveness	Women are not involved in the planning process or implementation of the program, so ineffective participation is formed.	"We've never been asked to talk about it."	The goal of empowerment is not achieved because women do not have the space to contribute to policy.
Efficiency	The lack of participation causes the program not to meet the needs of women, so the implementation becomes inefficient.	The training was arranged without consultation so that it was not in accordance with women's skills.	The program wastes time and money because it does not involve women in determining activities.
Adequacy	The space for women's participation is very minimal; There are no adequate discussion forums, public consultations, or engagement mechanisms.	There is no formal mechanism for participation at every stage of the policy.	Participation is inadequate, so women's needs are not accommodated in policies.
Alignment	Opportunities to participate are uneven; Only male figures, ordinary female figures and the government are involved in the decision-making process.	"We have never been asked to do anything about it, or we have been asked to do anything about it."	Gender inequality is increasing because women are not given equal space in the policy process.
Responsiveness	Women's non-participation causes policies not to respond directly to their aspirations, experiences, and needs.	"Training was held, but we were not asked what to do."	The policy is not responsive because it does not listen to the voices of affected women.
Accuracy	The form of participation provided is not in accordance with the context of women's lives; There is no aspiration mechanism relevant to their condition.	There is no forum for women to express their opinions or inputs.	Policies are inappropriate because participation is a formality, not meaningful participation that encourages empowerment.

Source: Results of field interviews (2025), processed.

From the table and field results above, it can be concluded that women's participation in the localization closure policy in Jember is still very low. They are not involved in policy planning or oversight, and their voices are rarely heard in the decision-making process. This shows that policies are not in line with the principles of the Gender Analysis Pathway (Moser, 1993), where women's participation is key to ensuring that policies truly address their needs and experiences in a fair and inclusive manner.

c. Control

The closure significantly reduced women's control over economic and life decisions. As expressed by an informant "*The closure happened suddenly, and we had no idea what we were supposed to do afterward.*" (Interview, S, 40 years old, 2025) Women were not provided with viable livelihood alternatives, forcing some into informal or hidden prostitution. Decision-making authority remained centralized within government structures.

Table 3. Analysis of Ex-Prostitute Women's Control Based on Moser (1993) and Dunn (2015)

Evaluation Stages (Dunn, 2015)	Control Analysis (Moser, 1993)	Field Findings (2025 Interview)	Gender Implications
Effectiveness	Women have no control over closure decisions or post-policy life choices.	"We know where we are going, moro moro is closed, and we don't know where to go."	Policies are ineffective in protecting women because they take away their control over their livelihoods and futures.
Efficiency	The loss of control makes it difficult for women to adapt, making the recovery process inefficient.	Many women return to informal work or covert prostitution.	Women's inability to control economic choices creates new social costs and increases vulnerability.
Adequacy	Women's control rooms are inadequate because they are not given a choice in empowerment or economic support programs.	The empowerment program is only written normatively, without real implementation. There is only a rehearsal.	The absence of adequate options makes women's basic needs unmet.
Alignment	Control belongs only to the government; Women have no position in decision-making.	"There is nothing else to hear from us why we are like this, Moro Moro made that decision."	Gender inequality widens due to unequal distribution of control between men and women.
Responsiveness	The policy does not respond to women's need to have control over decisions after losing their jobs and housing.	"We were confused after it was closed, we didn't know what to do."	The policy is insensitive to the situation of women and thus fails to restore their socio-economic autonomy.
Accuracy	The form of control given is not contextual; Women do not have a mechanism to voice important decisions.	There are no forums, aspiration mechanisms, or spaces for dialogue for women.	The policy is inappropriate because it does not provide a control channel that is relevant to the needs and

conditions of ex-prostitute women.

Source: Results of field interviews (2025), processed.

From these tables and findings, it can be concluded that ex-prostitute women in Jember Regency have lost control over the main aspects of their lives ranging from work, economic decisions, to the direction of post-closure empowerment. Public policies that are supposed to be a means of protection actually strengthen social dependence. This emphasizes that the policy of closure of localization has not implemented the principle of control in the theory of the Gender Analysis Pathway (Moser, 1993), which ensures that women have the power and space to make decisions over their own lives.

4. Benefits

The promised benefits of empowerment and rehabilitation were not substantially realized. One participant noted “*After the closure, our situation became more difficult because we no longer had income.*” (Interview, S, 40 years old, 2025). Although a 2017 empowerment initiative existed, its limited scope, lack of continuity, and absence of mentoring reduced its impact. Assistance distribution was uneven, and no systematic needs assessment preceded program design.

Table 4. Analysis of the Benefits of Ex-Prostitute Women Based on Moser (1993) and Dunn (2015)

Evaluation Stages (Dunn, 2015)	Benefit Analysis (Moser, 1993)	Field Findings (2025 Interview)	Gender Implications
Effectiveness	The policy does not provide real benefits to women; There was no improvement in welfare after the closure.	"After it was closed, it was even more difficult, there was no income."	The policy is ineffective because it does not produce positive changes for the lives of ex-prostitute women.
Efficiency	The lack of benefits shows that the program is inefficient; resources are not managed to generate benefits for women.	Assistance and training are not running, but the budget is still prepared.	Inefficiencies magnify women's social burden without producing economic benefits.
Adequacy	The benefits available are insufficient to meet the socio-economic needs of women post-lockdown.	"He said there was help, but we never got it." (ex-prostitutes in Besini and outside Besini)	The benefits provided are not enough to support women's needs, so their vulnerability increases.
Alignment	Uneven distribution of benefits; Only a small percentage of women receive assistance or training.	"Only a few people can get help (in Besini), otherwise yo no."	Inequality of benefits reinforces gender inequality and excludes the most vulnerable women.
Responsiveness	The form of benefits is not adjusted to the needs and abilities of the affected women.	"The training wasn't good and it didn't help us."	The policy is not responsive because the benefits provided are irrelevant to

			the real conditions of ex-prostitute women.
Accuracy	Benefits are not on target because there is no need mapping before the program is prepared.	Many women do not receive assistance even though they are in the affected category.	The promised benefits are inadequate and fail to reach the groups of women who need the most support.

Source: Results of field interviews (2025), and processed.

From the results of the analysis in Table 4, it can be concluded that the policy of closing localization in Jember Regency does not provide real benefits for ex-prostitute women. The promised training, empowerment, and economic assistance programs are not being implemented effectively. In addition to losing their jobs, they also do not receive adequate social support or psychological rehabilitation. This condition shows that the policy has not met the dimensions of distributive justice and social justice as emphasized in Moser's theory (1993). An ideal public policy should not only be discipline-oriented, but also provide tangible benefits to affected groups, especially women, so that they can restore dignity, autonomy, and well-being after the policy is implemented.

CONCLUSION

The reformulation of prostitution policy in Jember Regency should adopt a more inclusive and gender-equitable approach that recognizes affected women as active policy subjects rather than objects of moral regulation, prioritizing recovery, dignity, and sustainable empowerment over control and closure. This requires establishing an integrated rehabilitation and empowerment center that provides psychological support, vocational training, and skills development aligned with women's capacities, alongside sustainable economic programs connected to real opportunities such as capital access, markets, and business partnerships, potentially through creative economy and social entrepreneurship models. Women must be meaningfully involved in every stage of policymaking—from planning to evaluation—with their lived experiences informing intervention design, supported by a gender-based monitoring and evaluation system to assess policy effectiveness in improving social and economic well-being. Reducing public stigma through collaboration between government, civil society, and media is essential for successful reintegration into a more inclusive social environment. The Jember Regency Government should develop a gender-responsive policy model integrating Moser's Gender Analysis Pathway (1993) with Dunn's policy evaluation framework (2015) to ensure future policies center on women's holistic recovery. Future research should examine the long-term outcomes of gender-responsive rehabilitation programs, comparing the effectiveness of different empowerment models across diverse regional contexts, and explore the role of community engagement and stigma reduction interventions in facilitating sustainable social and economic reintegration of former sex workers.

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