



Mapping the Promotion of Commercial Sex Services Using the MiChat Application: From Prevention to Solutions

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ABSTRACT

The disclosure of several cases of online prostitution using the MiChat application in major cities of Indonesia shows that the phenomenon of prostitution is increasing. Prostitution practices are prohibited in Indonesia as it included in human trafficking. Furthermore, prostitution using virtual networks is part of cyber-crime regulated in the Electronic Information and Transactions Law. Despite the existing regulations, online prostitution activity continues. One of the reasons is the use of social media and online applications that facilitate the distribution of sexual services. This study aims to obtain an overview of online prostitution activity through the MiChat application and its solutions. This study used a content analysis method equipped with interviews with informants who are competent in handling prostitution. The results of the study concluded that the 'people nearby' feature in the MiChat application was dominated by accounts aimed at online prostitution, including the promotion of sexual services through profile information, timelines, and uploading photos/videos related to service offerings, payment execution, also customer testimonials. Various efforts have been made by the government by blocking negative content regarding prostitution, but unfortunately, the platform itself has not been closed. In addition, all parties have taken preventive measures in terms of the prevention and handling of online prostitution.



INTRODUCTION

In January 2021, the Criminal Investigation Team of the Samarinda sector police, East Kalimantan, arrested MG, a 22-year-old suspect for allegedly being involved in sexual service transactions through the MiChat application. According to the chief of Samarinda sector police, AKP Aldy Harjasatya, the tariff for sex services is around 1.8 million rupiahs for the one-time date, while MG gets 400 thousand rupiahs as commission. The police explained that they had conducted an in-depth investigation into online prostitution activities through MiChat. It is known that the perpetrator used a fake name/ identity in carrying out their action (Rosadi, 2021).

In different locations, the Bandung City Police managed to uncover cases of online prostitution through the MiChat social media application in December 2020. This action took place in an apartment in Bandung. From the police investigation, it was explained that both pimps and commercial sex workers (CSWs) earned 1-million-rupiah profit in a day. Meanwhile, in one day, they usually get 3-5 customers who order sex services (Kurniawan, 2020).

The disclosure of several cases of online prostitution in big cities in Indonesia shows that the phenomenon of prostitution is increasingly unstoppable. According to the data disclosed by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2015, the number of Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs) in Indonesia was 64,435 people spread across 168 localizations. This amount was recorded before the government released a policy to close the localization. Based on data from the Directorate General of Social Rehabilitation in October 2016, there were 19,726 CSWs in 143 localizations spread across Indonesia (Murdiyanto, 2020).

Despite the government's efforts to close conventional brothels in recent years, prostitution has shifted to other locations such as private apartments, boarding houses, hotels, and other locations. In recent years, people don't have to visit brothels to order sex services, but rather transact through social media and instant messaging applications. Only by choosing services, prostitutes, and prices as desired, transactions for sex services can also be done (Widowaty, 2019).

Prostitution itself is a practice that is prohibited in Indonesia because it is included in the realm of human trafficking. Meanwhile, prostitution using virtual networks is part of cybercrime or crimes in the cyber world as regulated in Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions Article 27 paragraph 1, that is "Actions of distributing and/ or transmitting and/ or making electronic information accessible and/ or electronic documents that have contents that violate decency." (Rhiza K & Dyah, 2013). In addition, prostitution also has an impact not only on perpetrators and consumers of sexual services but also on the wider community. Prostitution endangers domestic life and can lead to criminal acts, prohibited by religion and so on. Hull, et al, (in Rhiza K & Dyah, 2013) said that prostitution is not only an individual symptom but has become a social symptom of deviating from normal sexuality and also religion.

Even though there are laws and regulations, online prostitution activities never stop. One of the reasons is the freedom to use any media connected to the internet which makes it easier for the distribution of sex services to grow. The utilization of information communication technology (ICT) devices connected to the internet has contributed to the proliferation of the online prostitution industry in Indonesia, although this is not the only reason. Prostitution is



migrating massively onto the internet as the dominant market where commercial sex is advertised, negotiated, and even transacted in new market forms such as webcams and phone/ text chat (Sanders et al., 2018).

The Internet as a medium of communication would exist without the sex industry, but the internet industry would not have grown and developed at its current level without the sex industry (Hughes, 2000).

This was proven in 1998. As much as US \$ 1 billion or about 69% of total sales of content on the Internet is controlled by sales of "adult content" (Moore, 1999). Various studies also often conclude that social media and instant messaging applications are widely used by online prostitutes to promote sexual services. Cunningham, et al., Stated that prostitution has undergone an evolution, including using social media as a promotional medium and bringing sex workers together with potential service users. Currently, prostitution has turned into a multi-regional network of prostitution, with various classes, for a new style, namely online prostitution (Cunningham et al., 2011).

MiChat is an instant messaging application that is quite popular in Indonesia. Although it is different from common social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, MiChat has several advantages with a variety of interesting features for its users. In addition to communicating by sharing messages, users can also share status activities in the form of text (writing), photos, or videos.

This application is also favored by teenagers and parents. In general, this application is only known as a message-sharing communication application with certain advantages such as easily making new friends around its user; through the message tree, users can increase the reach of existing social networks throughout Indonesia; they can add friends via room or group in trending chat; and share their status easily (Energi, 2020). Unfortunately, the various raids carried out by the police on cases of online

prostitution show that the perpetrators use the MiChat application in plenty of transactions for sexual services.

Research conducted by Prasetyo et al. Prasetyo et al. (2018) describes that the Wechat and MiChat applications are used by users to establish positive communication and friendships but are later abused by some individuals to carry out online prostitution activities.

This phenomenon is interesting to study how this instant messaging application is used specifically for online prostitution activities, considering that this application is somewhat different from other social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. Based on the above background, the research question in this study is how online prostitution activity takes place through the MiChat application, and what is the solution? This research aims to obtain an overview of online prostitution activities through the MiChat application and its solutions.

Research on the use of social media and instant messaging applications in online prostitution was conducted by Prasetyo et al. (2018) with the title "Online Prostitution through the Wechat and Michat Friendship Application". This study aims to obtain an overview of the phenomenon of online prostitution among the community in Kijang Kota Village by using the friendship application Wechat and Michat. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative.

The conclusion of this study found that online prostitution in Kijang Kota began to bloom in 2012 using online applications. Some people use this case to become a business opportunity to market sexual services for a fee. Online prostitution exists due to the influence of technology, lack of social control, and circle of friends. Juditha (2021) has also conducted research entitled "The Communication Network of Online Prostitution in Twitter". This study aims to obtain an overview of the online prostitution communication network on Twitter using social media analysis methods. The results of

the study found that a complete communication network was formed between actors even though there were not many of them. The content exchanged is only regarding the promotion of commercial sex services through the timeline. Some actors are connected indirectly and have no ties. Both only use hashtags that are commonly used by online prostitutes such as #openbo, #realangel, #bispak, and #bisyar. At the group level, some actors have a unique position (pimps) to help with service marketing by retweeting messages from other actors. As for private networks, most actors run independently without being associated with other actors (pimps) in promoting commercial sex services.

"Information Dynamics Shape The Sexual Networks of Internet-Mediated Prostitution" is a study conducted by Rocha et al., (2010). The study examined anonymous sexual contacts reported by mentors of 6,624 and 10,106 sex buyers drawn from the online community over six years. This study also investigates the category of sexual relations or types of sexual activity performed by buyers. From the posts on the temporal bipartite network, it was found that a fairly high level of feedback on previous posts influenced the commercial success of related sex workers. It was also found that a growth pattern of turnover of community members and sex workers led to sublinear preferential attachments. In addition, there is a strong geographic influence on the network structure, geographically grouped but still close to connections, the contacts are consistent in the trading pattern.

Previous studies have focused on the use of friendship applications, social media, and the Internet in online prostitution practices. Meanwhile, this study focuses on the use of the MiChat application in commercial sex trade activities using qualitative content analysis methods. Previously, research on a similar topic had never been conducted using qualitative content analysis methods which were then

complemented by in-depth interviews with informants related to this issue. This is the novelty that distinguishes this research from previous research so that it is worthy of research.

As stated before, online prostitution began to develop rapidly after the existence of new media which was also increasingly used by people. New media is media that uses technology-based Internet, has a flexible character, has the potential to be interactive, and can function privately or publicly (Mondry, 2008). An example of a media that really represents new media is the Internet. McQuail (2011) explains that the main characteristics of new media are interconnectivity, access to individual audiences as message recipients and senders, interaction, various uses as open characters, and its ubiquitous nature. The existence of new media gives rise to a new culture called virtual culture, the result of virtual communication. Social spaces that were previously visible in the real world can now be found in the virtual world. These spaces are social simulations of real spaces in the world, which are then referred to as social spaces.

The online prostitution business process requires an internet connection to carry out activities in a virtual space. Social media and instant messaging applications are places for internet-based communication activities so actors involved in the online prostitution business rely heavily on their business on this media both in the form of information and also interaction. Prostitution activities that occur in the online prostitution business process are in the realm of new media, namely social media or instant messaging applications that are connected to the Internet.

Prostitution, according to William Benton in the Encyclopedia Britannica, is the practice of sexual intercourse, which is done for a moment and is carried out with anyone in exchange for money. The development of the era with the use of information and

communication technology is increasingly massive, making the practice of prostitution move to cyberspace. Currently, there are more online sites, social media accounts, and instant messaging applications that are being used for online prostitution practices (Rhiza K & Dyah, 2013). The definition of online prostitution according to Farley et al (2014) is that prostitution activities occur face-to-face, it's just that promotional activities, information exchange, and negotiations take place in the realm of new media.

The sex services business has now exploited the rapidly growing internet and computer technology. Through the internet, online sex services are offered to people all over the world. Even internet websites have provided contact information, and specifics about sexual offers to be made, pornography, price codes, and reviews by sex buyers. Technology, cell phones, and other digital devices make it possible to conduct business, advertise, and increase the income of sex workers (Farley, 2016).

Sex trafficking is increasing because it has been adopted by sex service providers, including sex workers, pimps, and pornographers. The global reach of the use of the internet facilitates access for buyers of sex services thereby increasing the sex trade. Farley also said that the internet facilitates the movement of prostitution from the street to indoor locations such as massage parlors, brothels, hotels, and nude clubs or men's prostitution clubs (Farley, 2016). Sex trafficking is increasing because it has been adapted by sex service providers, including sex workers, pimps, and pornographers. The global reach of the use of the internet facilitates access for buyers of sex services thereby increasing the sex trade. Farley also said that the internet facilitates the movement of prostitution from the street to indoor locations such as massage parlors, brothels, hotels, and nude clubs or men's prostitution clubs (Farley, 2016).

A similar thing was also expressed by Hughes (2004) that technological innovation and the use of the internet as a global medium are used for sexual exploitation and abuse of men against women and children. The sex industry has been aggressively adopting every new information technology to increase sexual access to women and children. There is a mutually beneficial relationship between the Internet and the sex industry. New technology allows pimps to market online prostitution such as online strip shows, sex shows, and voyeurism commercials. Global communication forums have also increased the visibility and exposure of women and children being exploited and abused, while on the contrary, increasing the privacy and communication of those who exploit and abuse them (Hughes, 2004).

In addition to social media which is widely used by online prostitutes, instant messaging applications have also become the media that are increasingly used by actors in promoting and selling commercial sex services. Instant messaging applications or what are commonly referred to as instant messengers (IM) or chat applications are communication tools that can be used to interact and communicate remotely. This chat application allows its users to send real-time messages to other users connected to the internet. Some of these application service providers are Yahoo Messenger (YM), Facebook chat, Google Talk, and MSN. Even now other applications have been developed such as Line, Telegram, WeChat, MiChat, and others (Musyafi & Afrianto, 2015).

One of the instant messaging applications recently used for online prostitution activities is MiChat. MiChat is a complete communication tool that functions as a social media and messaging application. Users can talk with friends and family or meet new people who are close to them (by location) by following conversations about topics of interest. How to connect with other people's accounts is also quite easy, that is by connecting the user account with a phone

number to see a list of contacts who also use this application. MiChat also provides many features that can facilitate communication between users to send images, audio, video, or sticker collections to each other. In addition, users can also use the 'new friendship' tab to start communicating with users near their current position who share the same interests. MiChat is a social tool to interact with acquaintances or strangers most simply and completely (Michat, 2019).

Based on the theoretical framework and concepts described, the framework of this study is described in categorizations that serve as guidelines for the study. The categorization of online prostitution activities is adapted from the concepts of Farley (2016) and Hughes (2004), namely a profile description of online prostitution accounts (promotions), daily status descriptions, as well as conversational texts concerning price offers, service execution, and user testimonials of commercial sex services. All of this data is obtained by uploading screenshots of the account owner in their account timeline.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative content analysis method. Schreier (2012) states that qualitative content analysis is used to compile literature reviews and analyzes. Meanwhile, Snelson (2016) defines qualitative content analysis as a descriptive research method that involves the

development of qualitative coding and framework coding.

The data collection technique in this study is to take screenshots of accounts on the MiChat instant messaging application that is indicated to be carrying out online prostitution activities using the 'people nearby' feature provided by the application. These accounts are then examined in more detail by checking the content activity of the account owner which is depicted in the bio space, status, and uploaded photos, videos, and text on the timeline. The data obtained were then collected in a coding sheet and differentiated based on the categories regarding the concept of online prostitution activity that had been previously defined.

The results of data collection through the MiChat account are then complemented by interviews with informants regarding the findings of this data, namely the Police who handle cases of online prostitution through the MiChat application, the government (Ministry of Communication and Informatics, the Women and Children Empowerment Service), as well as NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) which are concerned in handling prostitution cases.

The interview was conducted to obtain anticipatory formulas for prostitution issues through the MiChat application. The categorization of online prostitution activities examined in this study is illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Categories of Online Prostitution Activities on MiChat Accounts

MiChat Account	Category	Description
Profile Room	Profile description	Information describing the profile of account holders who provide sexual services
Timeline Space	Daily status	Information describing the daily activities of account holders related to online prostitution (text, images, videos)
Conversation Room	Sex services offered, service execution, and testimonials from users of sexual services	Information that describes the conversations between providers and users of sex services, both about the offer, execution, and testimony of sexual services (text, pictures, videos)

Source: Adapted from the concept of online prostitution by Farley (2016) and Hughes (2004)

The data analysis technique in this research is descriptively in accordance with the findings of the categories in general, which is equipped with the results of interviews with informants. The results of this study are also compared

with previous studies and research, scientific concepts, and other sources with the aim of strengthening the results of scientific research.

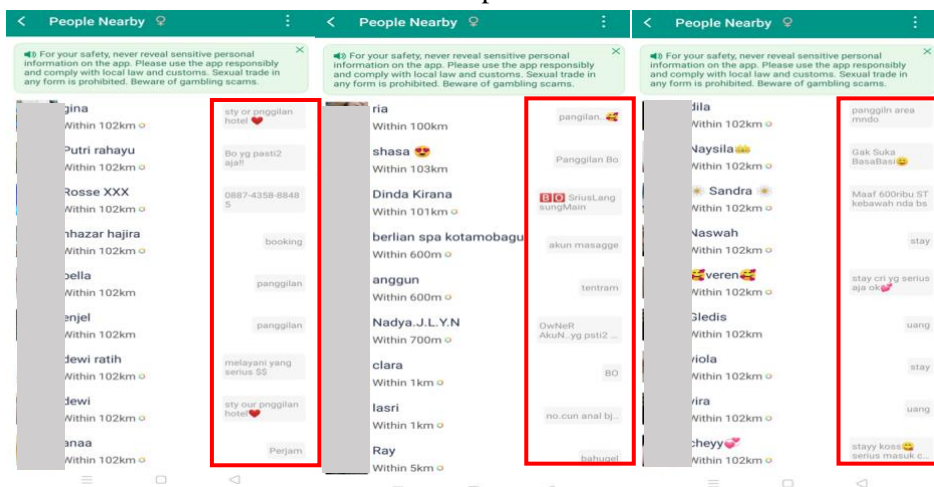
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

MiChat is a free messaging application with features that have different advantages from other messaging applications. Not only for family and friends, but MiChat also helps its user to find new friends and people nearby, thereby expanding the social network of users of this messenger application. The appearance of a MiChat account, in general, is somewhat different from other instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and others; but it has little in common with instant messaging apps like Line. Some of the features that exist on social media are also available in the MiChat application so MiChat is an amalgamation of social media and instant messaging applications. The MiChat account consists of a 'Chat' feature or a chat room whose page consists of a list of contacts of friends that can be selected to communicate with. The next feature is 'Friends' which can add new friends, people around the user (people nearby), a message tree, people

matches, and games. The next feature is "moment" which is a "home" facility where the account owner can update the moment at any time (such as status update) in the form of text, images, and videos. And lastly, the 'Me' feature, is a page for editing account profile information, QR code, uploading status (My Post), and privacy settings.

Several facts that have been previously described in the introduction reveal that the instant messaging application MiChat is widely used for online prostitution, be it for promoting sexual services, attracting customers, and also making transactions. The results of a data search on the MiChat application using the 'people nearby' feature or people closest to our location, there were found accounts that deliberately use this application for online prostitution. These accounts are accompanied by a half-naked and sexy self-styled profile photo.

Figure 1. The accounts found through the 'people nearby' feature on MiChat that are used for online prostitution activities

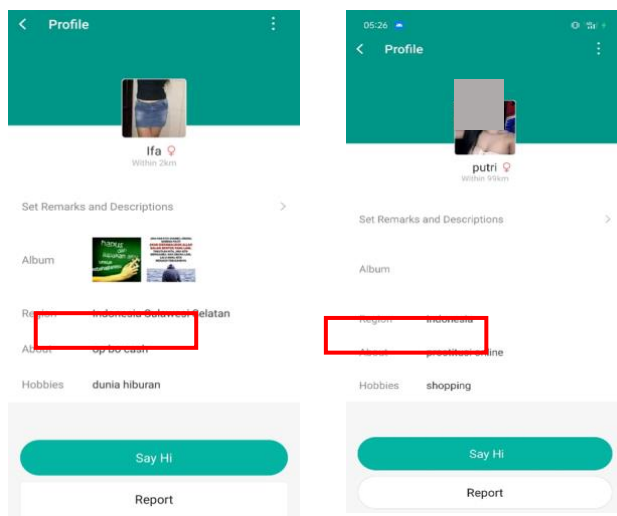


(Source: MiChat, 2020)

Some of them can be seen in Figure 1. An account with the name 'Gina' describes "stay or call to hotel", 'Putri Rahayu' ("fixed bo") or a definite booking order/ booking out, 'Bella' ("call"), or receive a call order. Meanwhile, an account with the name 'Shasa' provides information on "call bo" (call booking order), 'Dinda Kirana' ("serious BO") which means serious booking orders and direct execution of sex services, 'Clara' ("bo") or bookings. order, 'Sandra' ("sorry doesn't serve below 600 thousand ") means she won't be serving orders for sex services at a short time with the prices of 600 thousand and below, and 'Nabila' ("VCS & Video") or receiving sex and video call services.

In-depth search results of several MiChat accounts such as the account with the name "Ifa" within a 2-kilometer radius, a description found of this account was "op bo cash" (opening a booking order, paid in cash). There is also an account with the name "Putri" within a radius of 99 km which states her account as "online prostitution". Therefore, if someone wants to place an order for certain services on MiChat accounts, they could immediately select the 'Say Hi' feature and directly connect to the intended account (Figure 2).

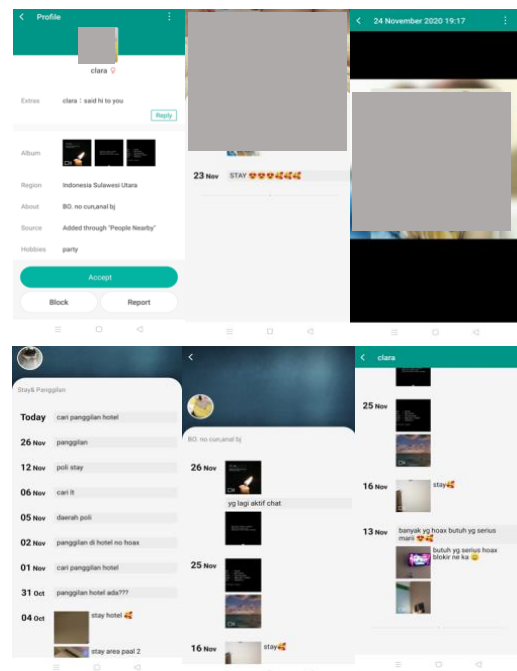
Figure 2. MiChat accounts dedicated to online prostitution



Source: MiChat, 2020

As for Figure 4, it shows a MiChat account with the name 'IncenYunita' which in her conversation room engages in communication with a potential service user by opening an offer of VCS (Video Call Sex) for 100 thousand rupiah.

Figure 3. Account on the MiChat instant messaging application which is intended for online prostitution practices



Source: MiChat, 2020

The conversation also continued with the demand of buying a certain amount of phone credit that must be sent by potential users to service providers. This credit is in exchange for service providers sending the VCS. Service users also provide testimonials that state their satisfaction with the VCS sent to them and will place another order in the future.

- ** : "Yes, please wait for the credit".
- * : "Ok bro"
- ** : "I just top up your phone credit".
- * : "Yes, it is okay".
- ** : "Have you received it?".

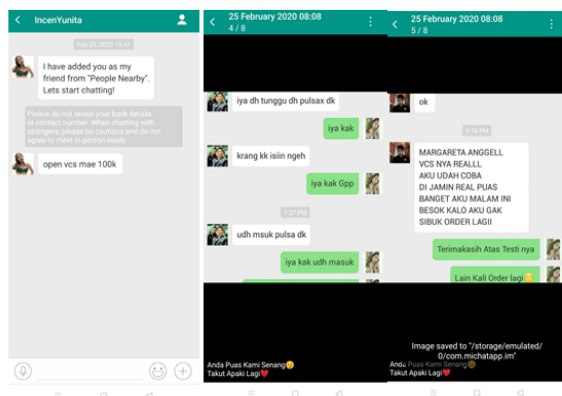
*: "Yes, already received".

**:"ok. Margareta angel. Her VCS is realll. I tried. Real guaranteed. I'm satisfied this night, if i'm not busy, i will reorder tomorrow"

*:" Thank you for the testimonial. Next time, order again".

(Note: * = sex worker; ** = service user)

Figure 4. Offering process, execution of rewards, and testimonials for commercial sex services on MiChat



Source: MiChat, 2020

Online prostitution cases in several regions in Indonesia have similar cases, that is using the MiChat application in carrying out sex transaction activities. For example, the online prostitution case that occurred in Manado City, North Sulawesi Province. The use of the MiChat application for online prostitution activities was also confirmed by the Head of Sub Directorate 4 Renakta of the North Sulawesi Regional Police, AKBP H. Gurling. According to Gurling, in 2020, the North Sulawesi Regional Police succeeded in uncovering cases of online prostitution using the MiChat application. A total of nine suspects and seven perpetrators, mostly teenagers, were arrested at a hotel in Manado City.

"Given that now the victim and the perpetrator are teenagers, even minors. As recently happened in Manado City, February 2020, which involved 9 suspects and 7 victims in an online prostitution case. In cases of online prostitution in Manado, the application most used by the perpetrators is MiChat. The mode is that the suspects sell or offer underage girls to masher men using the MiChat application. And these suspects get a reward of 50,000 rupiah for a girl (Head of Sub Directorate 4 Renakta of the North Sulawesi Regional Police, AKBP H. Gurling, 2020).

Meanwhile, Tomy Panaha, Chairperson of Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Sahabat Sehati in North Sulawesi, who is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that deals with prostitution issues in Manado City and its surroundings also confirmed that the use of the MiChat application is widely used by online prostitutes in promoting sexual services.

"Hide population of prostitution is bigger. So that there is one application that is familiar which we often call MiChat. That's where these practices can be done. Because maybe it's also more private, and they feel safer with the application. " (Chairman of CBR Sahabat Sehati North Sulawesi, Tomy Panaha, 2021).

Online prostitution cases using the MiChat application that occurred in the city of Manado involved many victims of minors. This was expressed by the executor of the Regional Task Force (RTF) for the Protection of Women and Children, the Office of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (WECP) of North Sulawesi Province, Marcel Silom.

"Regarding the use of MiChat for online prostitution activities, it happens that we

have handled several cases, in 2019 there were 6 victims, then in 2020 during the pandemic, there were 5 women and 1 boy aged 14-18 years. Still young and student age". (Taskmaster RTF Women and Children Protection, North Sulawesi Province WECP, Marcel Silom, 2021).

In line with Tomy and Marcel, the utilization of the MiChat application in online prostitution was also confirmed by the staff of the Directorate of Media Management, Director General of Information and Public Communication of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia, Dimas Aditya Nugraha. According to Dimas, open online prostitution is often found on the MiChat application.

"But there are a lot of practices, right? The most open platforms in the online platform are the Twitter application and the social media platform Michat. If you have MiChat, you can see in the status section that is very open." (Directorate of Media Management, Director General of Information and Public Communication, Ministry of Communication and Informatics RI, Dimas Aditya Nugraha, 2021).

Realizing that online prostitution activities are mostly carried out through the MiChat application, it is necessary to anticipate these activities that violate laws in Indonesia. Therefore, the informants agreed that the government should block the MiChat apps. According to Gurling, the government have to block this instant messaging application since it is widely used for online prostitution activities involving minors.

"The application mostly used by perpetrators in online prostitution cases in Manado is MiChat. If possible, Kominfo should immediately block the application, as Kominfo has done with the Betalk application, which is widely used for online

prostitution practices." (Head of Sub Directorate 4 Renakta of the North Sulawesi Regional Police, AKBP H. Gurling, 2020).

Meanwhile, according to Dimas Aditya Nugraha, there are three levels conducted by the Ministry of Communication and Information in dealing with the issue of negative content including pornography and prostitution. The first level is blocking, the second is a campaign to use the internet properly, and the third is literacy.

"As far as I know, there are three levels in Kominfo. The most basic is digital literacy, this is general. Then we go further with the campaign of internet usage that is good and correct. And at the top, the blocking actions by AIS. Collaboration with all kinds of platforms is needed, as this is a public interest." (Directorate of Media Management, Director General of Information and Public Communication, Ministry of Communication and Informatics RI, Dimas Aditya Nugraha, 2021).

Tomy Panaha also agreed that online prostitution applications and accounts on social media should be blocked. Although according to Tomy, this will not deter the perpetrators, it will at least minimize the perpetrators' access.

"Even though we do online blockades, the perpetrators' thoughts won't stop there. This is their livelihood and they gain benefit from the business. So for me, we could block it online, but then there is still more. The only way is synergic raids with the security section as regularly as possible." (Chairman of CBR Sahabat Sehati North Sulawesi, Tomy Panaha, 2021).

In terms of access policy, the Head of Negative Content Blocking Section, Director General of Telematics Applications, Ministry of Communication and Information, Taruli,

said that the majority of blocked pornographic content is online prostitution content. The blocking is still limited to the content, not yet on the application.

"AIS machines will search for negative content on the Internet, including social media for 24 hours. We need to verified whether it was a pornography account, online prostitution, or not. If it is correct, we will collect the data and then send it to the social media platform to be blocked. On daily basis, we can pull 1000 data, but not necessarily all of them are real prostitution accounts. So we have to check one more time and have to manually verify it. We keep checking twice so it won't cause problems. " (Head of Negative Content Blocking Section, Director General of Telematics Applications, Ministry of Communication and Informatics, Taruli, 2019).

Dimas Aditya Nugraha also added that there is a need for community guidance from each social media platform which must be elaborated and adjusted to the norms and culture of the Indonesian people. For example, when the government wants to do takedowns on social media for certain negative cases, for example, but because the social media community guidelines do not prohibit it, they could not block them. Meanwhile, what Indonesian culture understands is that this negative case should be prohibited. According to the government agency, it should encourage efforts to formulate community guidelines from social media platform owners.

"Actually, this is a community guide. When community guidelines such as on Instagram do not violate, it is considered not to violate. So, it needs elaboration or adjustment and alignment. That, please let us, this is the realm of Indonesia. When you sell your products here, the community guidelines follow the normal rules. So, it is

not enough that you only have a reporting mechanism, as they are only encouraged to have a reporting mechanism for negative content and so on." (Directorate of Media Management, Director General of Information and Public Communication, Ministry of Communication and Informatics RI, Dimas Aditya Nugraha, 2021).

In addition to the technology provided for solutions and overcoming prostitution online, access has also begun to be restricted by blocking which is then complemented by literacy and education programs for the public. This is as stated by Chary & Aikins (2010) that infrastructure (technology) policies are not limited to technological aspects but also include socio-economic policies, education, literacy, individual welfare, and other policies that also have an influence on aspects of people's lives, including addressing online prostitution in Indonesia this is what is known as public policy.

The Indonesian Police have a special program that synergizes with other ministries and agencies related to this issue. As has been done by the Regional Police (North Sulawesi, which in recent years has been handling cases of online prostitution in their region).

"Every year, we carry out collaborative programs with the Ministry of Women and Children Empowerment to the community, especially educations about the dangers of online prostitution. Given that now both the victim and the perpetrator are teenagers, there are even minors. As recently happened in Manado, February 2020 which involved 9 suspects and 7 victims in an online prostitution case. (Head of Renakta Directorate Sub 4 of the North Sulawesi Regional Police, AKBP H. Gurling, 2020).

Meanwhile Dimas Aditya Nugraha emphasized that it was not enough for the government to just block them, but

there needed to be a diversion of activities that would generate economic benefits.

"Apart from digital literacy, IKP also helps campaigns on how to make good use of the Internet. For example, not limited to filtering before sharing. Not only limited to blocking or just banning, that is all, but there needs to be a diversion. For example, you can get the benefit and you can use that, such as when GoJek appears and so on, it was like a distraction, everything has changed, and everything has a chance. "(Directorate of Media Management, Director General. Information and Public Communication Ministry of Communication and Informatics RI, Dimas Aditya Nugraha, 2021).

A similar thing is done by CBR Sahabat Sehati of North Sulawesi, which has a special program for empowering FSW or female sex workers. According to Tony Panaha, this program aims to provide education for FSW that is preceded by a target group outreach program. So that educational communication can be given directly to FSW. In addition to providing a healthy understanding of HIV AIDS, this NGO is also working with the Office of Social Affairs as a partner in a productive economic business assistance program for FSW in the context of behavior change. Tomy Panaha also said that there needs to be a substitute effort prepared by the government to change the behavior of FSW. Because economic problems are a major factor that is often experienced by FSW.

Some of the results of this study are interesting to discuss, among others, that many facts refer to the use of the MiChat application in online prostitution activities. The recommendations of the study by Juditha, et.all (2021) aim to issue blocking regulations intended explicitly for online prostitution

practices to cut off existing networks. In addition to Twitter, MiChat is the most used app by online prostitutes.

This can be seen from the results of research which reveal that the promotion of sexual services has been informed by the account owner through profile information, timelines, and uploading photos/ videos about service offer conversations, payment execution, to consumer testimonials. This can be seen in the 'people nearby feature, which generally trades sex services. This fact is in contrast with the community guide uploaded by the MiChat platform on their website.

On the community guide page, this platform clearly states that "MiChat is not a medium for prostitution, sexual solicitation, or human trafficking. This is included as an act of grossly abusing our services. Anyone who tries to use MiChat for acts of prostitution and/or sexual solicitation will be banned. Do not solicit any sexual activity through our platform, regardless of whether there is consent from all parties and regardless of whether there is a payment of money or benefits; Do not try to coordinate commercial sexual services or prostitution activities, such as soliciting or offering or asking for rates for escort services that are filled with sexual domination or lust." (Michat, 2019).

Unfortunately, the fact is that MiChat account users do not heed these community guidelines. MiChat has several advantages such as easily making new friends nearby by using the 'people nearby' feature. The advantage of this feature is used by users of online prostitution accounts to sell sexual services to people who are not far from their location. So, it also makes it easier for potential customers to order services. This indicates that the use of internet-connected information and communication technology has two sides, namely positive and negative.

The negative side is that social media and instant messaging applications are used massively for online prostitution. As stated by Cunningham et al., (2011) that technological changes in the prostitution industry have represented growth in the prostitution market as a whole. The media have facilitated online prostitution activities carried out by sex workers.

The use of online media in the practice of prostitution in some big cities is considered to be very profitable for sex service providers compared to conventional business methods in the streets, brothels, brothels, pubs, and other places. Cunningham et al., (2011) revealed that the internet has exponentially increased the ability of sex workers to reach large numbers of potential users with informative advertising through social media and instant messaging applications; build a reputation for high-quality service, and arrange for the secret execution of sexual services to reduce the risk of being caught by the police.

The results of this study also concluded that online prostitution is now become a popular activity because of its easy access and is not regulated by anyone, even without having to go to a certain place (such as localization) to make transactions. Commercial sex service providers prefer online ways of selling sexual services. With the online system, all processes become easier and safer, even prospective service users only need to choose the service provider and the desired price. Besides that, it is also faster and they can immediately meet potential customers without having to go through intermediaries and setting prices in advance before the agreement (Arif & Triana, 2019).

Information and communication technology including the internet, cell phones, and social media have changed people's way

of communicating and finding information. There is no doubt that technology is increasingly playing a role in the practices and processes surrounding the trafficking of persons to exploit commercial sex. Human trafficking has various aspects and technology plays a very important role in shaping these aspects (Boyd et al., 2011).

Prostitution activities and practices in several countries, including Indonesia, are prohibited as it violates the law. In principle, prostitution both offline and online is the same thing. The difference between the two is only in terms of the use or use of the Internet as a means of crime or violation. Online prostitution is regulated through the Criminal Code and related laws and regulations as a conventional offense.

Online prostitutes can be charged under Article 296 of the Criminal Code (general offense) and can be added to the weight of the use of the Child Protection Law, if the perpetrator is indicated to be exploiting children/ minors, or even the Law on the Eradication of the Crime of Trafficking in Persons if indicated as a human trafficking network. Other provisions that can be used are regional regulations where the act or means of violation occurred.

By the government, online prostitution is included in the category of pornography. So that the efforts made by the government (Ministry of Communications and Informatics Technology) until now are blocking negative content as stated in the Regulation of the Minister of Communication and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia Number 19 of 2014 concerning Handling of Internet Sites with Negative Contents. In addition, Law no. 19 of 2016 concerning Amendments to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions specifically Article 27 paragraph 1 which regulates the

prohibition of spreading data or content that violates decency.

Even though it has been categorized as a prohibited practice, the fact is that online prostitution promotion activities are still easily accessible through social media and instant messaging applications such as MiChat. Prostitution is also considered contrary to moral values in religion and morality. It has been around for a long time and is said to be a disease of society (Wongso, 2016).

Meanwhile, the reality of online prostitution is increasing, and its perpetrators are not ashamed to sell sexual services accompanied by photos or videos with minimal clothing on their social media.

Besides the technological factors that make online prostitution activities thrive, there are also several basic reasons for a person to become a commercial sex worker, including economic factors and low levels of education (Bachtiar, 2007).

This is what makes prostitution a difficult problem in the formulation of solutions. However, various efforts need to be made by the government and all institutions and also society in synergy. As recommended by Juditha (2021), the government will continue to block accounts that are indicated to be engaged in online prostitution, considering that communication in this online prostitution network is relatively open and vulgar. This is also in line with what the informants suggested in this study, that is for the government to act decisively in blocking MiChat accounts that are indicated to be engaged in online prostitution activities until the closure of the application platform.

In addition, there is also an action to divert to positive activities that bring benefits and behavior change. Also, preventive actions

are taken by a party either by the government, police, private institutions, educational institutions, or women and child empowerment institutions in terms of the prevention and handling of online prostitution (Utami et al., 2017).

CONCLUSION

The results of the study concluded that one of Michat's features, that is 'people nearby', is generally dominated by accounts that deliberately use this application for online prostitution. These accounts promote sexual services through profile information, timelines, and uploading photos/videos of service offers conversations, payment execution, also testimonials from commercial sex consumers. The results of the research on the content of MiChat accounts were also strengthened by the results of interviews with some informants who confirmed that the MiChat application was widely used for online prostitution activities and practices.

Various solutions to minimize online prostitution practices have been and are being carried out by the government, police, private institutions, educational institutions, and women and children empowerment institutions in terms of prevention and handling of online prostitution, including tracking and taking actions against cases of online prostitution crimes, providing guidance, conducting virtual literacy and so on. The government, in this case, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, has routinely blocked the accounts that are indicated to contain negative content including pornography and online prostitution, but unfortunately, the media platform or the application itself have not been closed.

This study recommends that the government should review the MiChat

application which is widely used for online prostitution activities. If needed, this application can be closed and banned so that it cannot be used in Indonesian territory. The government also needs to encourage the enforcement of any social media platform community guidelines that are following Indonesian culture.

Meanwhile, the MiChat platform needs to strictly block the accounts that are indicated to be carrying out online prostitution activities. Synergic efforts between all institutions including the government, police, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, and other institutions that are directly related to the issue of online prostitution are urgently needed to overcome or minimize the practice of online prostitution in the community.

CREDIT AUTHORSHIP

CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Christiany Juditha: Writing-conceptual draft, methodology, data curation, draft compilation, investigation, reviewing and editing.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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