



Investigating the Social Drivers of “Duta Kayuagung”: A Crime Culture in Kayuagung, South Sumatra

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	ABSTRACT
<p>ARTICLE INFO: Received July 15, 2024</p> <p>Revised September 03, 2024</p> <p>Accepted September 23, 2024</p> <p>KEYWORDS: Crime Culture, Duta Kayuagung</p>	<p>The aim of this research is to identify the factors contributing to the occurrence of Duta crimes in Kayuagung, OKI, and to explore the social motives of the perpetrators. This study uses a field research approach with a qualitative, descriptive methodology. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. The subjects of this research were four individuals. The findings indicate that the main social motives driving Duta crimes in Kayuagung include economic pressures, social environmental influences, and the pursuit of social status, such as assisting the local community or contributing to the construction of mosques, prayer rooms, and roads. Economic hardships often compel individuals to seek quick ways of making money, while influences from the social environment, such as peer groups and family, significantly shape criminal behavior. Additionally, the desire for social status and recognition within the community serves as a key motivator. This research underscores the need for comprehensive social interventions, including economic empowerment, education, and the reinforcement of social values, to help reduce crime in society.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Humans increasingly indulge in the creativity of their own inventions, often even venerating their creations (Demirtaş & Karaduman, 2021). With a consumerist nature, humans have numerous needs that must be met, yet such progress does not always lead to happiness, peace, or safety (Corkum et al., 2014). The advancement of human civilization is accompanied by various issues, including environmental problems and an increase in criminal activities such as robbery, rape, kidnapping, and murder in daily life (Eigenberg & Policastro, 2015). These actions and crimes often harm the perpetrators themselves, as well as others, the broader society, the nation, and even the state (Jun, 2018).

In large Indonesian cities, the most common crimes include theft, fraud, assault, narcotics offenses, embezzlement, two-wheeled vehicle theft, violent theft, beatings, and misappropriation (Triandini et al., 2019). Between January and April 2023, the Indonesian National Police (Polri) reported 137,419 crime cases, marking a 30.7% increase from the same period in the previous year (Secom, 2023). Aggravated theft, or "curat," accounted for 30,019 cases and is regulated by Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code (KUHP). Aggravated theft includes theft under circumstances warranting harsher penalties, such as the theft of sacred or historical objects, livestock, or essential livelihood items (Landström et al., 2015).

Most crimes occur at night, particularly from 18:00 to 21:59, which accounts for 11.42% of cases, with high frequencies also noted in the morning (08:00-11:59), afternoon (15:00-17:59), and early morning (04:00-04:59). This data, gathered through the E-MP application used by police for case management, highlights patterns in crime timing. Low education levels lead to limited job opportunities, impacting the unemployment rate, which in turn has a positive and significant correlation with crime rates (AntaraneWS, 2024). Alongside low education, practical thinking also contributes to the high crime rates, influenced by environmental lifestyle factors (Reiter et al., 2007).

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In South Sumatra's Ogan Komering Ilir Regency, specifically in Kayuagung District, a form of organized criminal activity persists, spanning generations among both the young and elderly. Locals refer to this group as "*Duta Crime*." These *Duta Crime* are individuals who turn to crime to fulfill their daily needs, often risking their lives. While the crimes committed resemble general theft, *Duta Crime* differ in terms of the locations and methods they use. The term "*Duta Crime*" typically refers to individuals who migrate abroad with the intention of working, but with criminal methods that violate international, national, customary, cultural, and religious laws. *Duta Crime* activities include pickpocketing, shoplifting, theft, and robbing bank customers, primarily driven by economic pressure. The *Duta Crime* are sent from their home regions to commit crimes abroad to generate income (JA, 2006).

Economic hardships in their origin communities are the primary motivation for *Duta Crime*. As a result, families and communities may select individuals to act as *Duta Crime*, tasked with committing crimes such as theft, fraud, robbery, and even holding affluent people at gunpoint abroad. *Duta Crime* represent a phenomenon of individuals or groups migrating to other locations specifically to commit crimes (Kharisma, 2017).

Duta Crime usually operate with high-stakes, large-scale targets and work in coordinated teams to ensure substantial rewards. This form of theft, prevalent in Kayuagung and surrounding areas, is viewed as a form of protest against the local government's lack of adequate employment opportunities, especially for young people. According to one perpetrator, Duta MD, in the 2000s, it was still possible to falsify identities and passports, as electronic IDs (e-KTP) were not yet in place, making it harder to track real identities. The rise of *Duta Crime* has been driven by both social and economic pressures. Kayuagung's economy relies mainly on small-scale industries and rural communities on agriculture. Limited regional budgets (APBD) lead to restricted development, leaving many unemployed. Consequently, local youth increasingly consider urbanization or even migration abroad to seek better opportunities (Antia et al., 2020).

Although the actions of *Duta Crime* contradict Islamic teachings, which prohibit such behavior as outlined in the Quran and Hadith, these individuals often still observe Islamic practices (Yaacob & Bambang, 2019). Many attend mosque prayers, fast during Ramadan, perform Friday prayers, and participate in local religious activities (Susilo & Dalimunthe, 2019). Their social motives include using their earnings to share with neighbors, support family economies, and contribute to building local infrastructure like mosques and roads (Yang et al., 2019). Additionally, before leaving for their destinations, some *Duta Crime* hold religious gatherings, such as Yasin recitations, attended by family, community members, and sometimes religious leaders who pray for their journey. Their return is highly anticipated, as the community views them as benefactors who help fund community needs and religious projects.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the underlying social motives driving the actions of *Duta crime* perpetrators in Kayuagung, South Sumatra. By examining the economic and social pressures that compel individuals to engage in organized crime, this research aims to uncover the factors that shape these motives, including how local economic hardships, community expectations, and cultural perceptions contribute to the rise of *Duta crime*. Additionally, the study seeks to understand how these motives intersect with religious and social practices, revealing the complex dynamics that sustain this phenomenon. Ultimately, the findings of this study could provide insights to help local authorities and policymakers develop effective intervention strategies to address the root causes of crime and create alternative pathways for economic empowerment.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Duta crime phenomenon and related events. A qualitative descriptive design is well-suited for exploring social motives, contextual factors, and the lived experiences of those involved (Hardani et al., 2020). This design is applied in the context of field research, allowing researchers to collect primary data directly from the field.

Procedure

The research procedure includes direct field engagement, which involves visiting the site, observing interactions, and documenting real-time events. This procedure enables the researcher to capture authentic behaviors and social interactions within the Duta crime context. Following ethical guidelines and maintaining participant confidentiality, researchers employ systematic steps for data collection to ensure reliability and depth of information (Moleong, 2014).

Measurement

Observation involves closely watching and recording events, behaviors, and interactions related to Duta crime. Detailed notes are taken to capture a thorough and unbiased view of the participants' environment and actions. Interviews are conducted in a semi-structured format to collect in-depth information directly from individuals involved in, or knowledgeable about, Duta activities. These interviews provide firsthand accounts, allowing the researcher to explore motives, experiences, and perspectives through a question-and-answer format. Documentation includes the analysis of records of past events, such as official reports, photographs, and personal accounts related to Duta crime. These documents serve as supplementary data, offering additional insights to support the findings from observations and interviews (Creswell, 2015).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study is conducted through a structured four-step process. Data is first collected from field observations, interviews, and documentation (Satori & Komariah, 2015). Next, data reduction is applied to eliminate irrelevant details, focusing on the most significant findings related to the study's objectives. The organized data is then presented in a structured manner to identify patterns, relationships, and themes within the phenomenon of Duta crime. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the analysis, aiming to synthesize findings into coherent insights regarding the social motives and contextual factors contributing to Duta crime activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Preview Subject

Based on research conducted with former Duta and native residents of Kayuagung, it can be concluded that one of the main factors behind Duta crimes in Kayuagung is economic pressure. In interviews with informant KR, he shared that his motivation to become a Duta was not due to peer influence but rather his own intentions.

"...Can you tell me what motivated you to become a Duta?"

KR Said; "It wasn't because of friends or family. It was my own decision."

"Did you face any pressure from your family or community to take this path?"

"No, there was no pressure. It was something I decided on my own. I wanted to find a way to earn more quickly."

"What benefits have you seen from this line of work?"

"It has helped me support my family financially, and I also give back to my community. It's not always easy, but it's rewarding in its own way..."

The motivation to become a Duta stemmed from personal choice rather than external pressure. Economic needs and the desire for quick earnings influenced the decision, with work carried out mainly in large cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung, typically for up to two years at a time.

"...I chose to become a Duta because I needed to support my family..." one former Duta explained. "...It wasn't about what others expected of me..." Despite the risks, the role provided significant financial support for family needs and allowed for contributions back to the community, adding a sense of personal reward to the work. "...I feel a sense of pride knowing that my earnings help build mosques and improve our roads..." he added.

KR's activities are primarily within the country, focusing on cities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung. KR operates in these target cities for a maximum of two years at a time. He emphasized that his decision to engage in these activities was not influenced by family expectations or social pressure but stemmed from his own interests. The concept of becoming a Duta has existed for generations, but it is not an obligation.

"...I work mainly in Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung for up to two years. My decision to become a Duta was entirely my own there was no family or social pressure. This tradition has been around for generations, but it's not an obligation..."

The interviews with KR, a former Duta, further revealed that social motives for Duta crimes often relate to family needs, especially for young adults seeking opportunities after school. Many Duta direct their earnings back to their communities, helping fund infrastructure projects like mosques, prayer rooms, and roads. While this community-oriented spirit exists, some individuals in Kayuagung still choose traditional hard work over becoming a Duta. According to KR, the positive impact of his role as a Duta includes supporting both his family's and his community's economy.

The interviews with KR, a former Duta, revealed that social motives for Duta crimes often relate to family needs, especially for young adults seeking opportunities after school. Many Duta direct their earnings back to their communities, helping fund infrastructure projects like mosques, prayer rooms, and roads. As KR stated.

"...I became a Duta to support my family, and I send most of my earnings home to help build mosques and roads in our community..."

Interviews with three local informants from Kayuagung AN, ST, and MN indicate that the Duta presence in the area is largely accepted, as it has been a part of the community for a long time. While informant AN notes that not all Duta help their communities, ST and MN affirm that many do contribute, particularly by funding mosque construction. This support extends to the family economy and broader community, as seen through regular participation in communal religious activities such as congregational prayers and Quranic recitations. Typically, a send-off ceremony (*yasinan*) is held for departing Duta to pray for their safety. The informants observe that most Duta are respectful and generous toward local residents, and the duration of their time away ranges from months to years depending on their financial gains.

Factors Contributing to Duta Crime in Kayuagung South Sumatera

Economic pressures caused by limited employment opportunities and high unemployment drive many people from Kayuagung to urban centers or abroad to seek better opportunities, including becoming a Duta Crime. This role, seen as a fast route to financial gain, is especially attractive to young people with limited local employment options. For them, the Duta role promises significant profits quickly, contrasting with other forms of work. Additionally, traditional customs in Kayuagung, such as ceremonies and religious observances, often impose high financial expectations. While these traditions strengthen social bonds, they can also create economic strain in a region where local economies may not support such expenses. This traditional pressure, combined with economic hardship, contributes to the decision for some individuals to seek income through alternative and sometimes criminal means.

The primary motivation for moving to urban areas or abroad is economic survival. Rising prices and financial challenges push people to pursue various methods to secure a livelihood. Those with limited education and skills may see fewer lawful options and turn to criminal activities like theft or robbery as a means of coping with economic pressures.

Analysis of the Social Motives Driving Duta Crime in Kayuagung South Sumatera

Socially, Duta Crime often show considerable community support, frequently making donations to neighbors in need, supporting orphanages, assisting with road construction, and contributing to mosque renovations. When successful in their ventures, Duta are often seen as community benefactors, bringing tangible benefits to their hometowns. This socially responsible behavior coexists with their pursuit of personal gain and satisfaction, often prioritizing immediate financial benefits over long-term ethical considerations.

In conclusion, Duta in Kayuagung embody a blend of self-interest and community service. Despite the ethical and legal implications, they view their actions as a means to fulfill personal and familial needs, rationalizing them against societal norms of right and wrong. This research illuminates the complex economic and social motives behind Duta activities, highlighting both their contributions to and tensions with community values in Kayuagung.

Discussion

The phenomenon of Duta Crime in Kayuagung, South Sumatra, reflects the intersection of economic pressures, limited local opportunities, and cultural expectations. Young people in Kayuagung face challenging economic conditions, with few employment options within the community, often making it difficult to secure stable incomes. Consequently, the role of a Duta, with its promise of quick financial gain, becomes an attractive alternative. This pursuit of income, although involving criminal activities, provides a path to economic survival and social recognition, especially for individuals unable to meet financial needs through conventional employment (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). The allure of significant earnings in a short period contrasts sharply with the slower and often insufficient financial rewards of more traditional local jobs (Singh et al., 2022).

The influence of cultural expectations in Kayuagung is substantial, with traditions and religious customs placing a high economic demand on families. These traditions strengthen community bonds and play an essential role in the social fabric of Kayuagung. However, the associated costs, particularly for ceremonies and observances, can create financial strain for many residents. In a region where local economies may not be robust enough to support these expenses, individuals are often compelled to seek alternative income sources to fulfill both familial obligations and community expectations (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2004). For some, the path of a Duta offers a solution, despite its association with criminal activities.

From a social perspective, Duta often balance personal gain with a sense of responsibility to their communities. Many Duta, upon achieving financial success, contribute to community projects,

such as infrastructure development, mosque construction, and assistance for orphanages. This dual role of criminal and benefactor complicates the community's perception of Duta activities. While their actions might challenge legal and ethical standards, their contributions to local welfare create a nuanced view within the community. In this way, Duta maintain a level of social acceptance as their financial support is seen to benefit the broader community, despite the questionable means used to acquire such resources.

In conclusion, the Duta role in Kayuagung represents a complex socio-economic response to local limitations and cultural expectations. This research highlights how economic hardships, coupled with social traditions, drive some individuals toward unconventional and criminal paths for survival and status. Despite the ethical conflicts, the dual motivations of personal benefit and community support underscore the Duta's actions, bridging self-interest and social duty. This dynamic captures the intricate balance between individual aspirations and community values in Kayuagung, offering insight into the multifaceted motivations behind Duta Crime activities in the region.

Implication

The findings on Duta Crime in Kayuagung highlight critical implications for addressing socio-economic pressures and cultural expectations in similar communities. To mitigate the appeal of high-risk activities, local development programs should prioritize job creation, vocational training, and educational support, offering young people alternative income sources. Adjusting the costs associated with cultural practices could also ease financial burdens on families, reducing motivations for crime. Furthermore, fostering lawful avenues for community contributions can help former Duta reintegrate positively, while social and ethical education can encourage young adults to support their communities within legal boundaries, strengthening both economic and social resilience.

Limitation

This study has several limitations. First, the research focuses on a small group of participants from Kayuagung, which may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and motivations among Duta in other regions or communities. Additionally, due to the sensitive nature of Duta activities, some respondents may have hesitated to provide full disclosure, potentially impacting the accuracy of the findings. The qualitative design also means that the insights gained are specific to this context and may not be easily generalizable. Lastly, the study primarily relies on self-reported data, which can introduce biases in how participants perceive and narrate their experiences. Future research could expand the sample size, include comparative studies in other regions, and incorporate quantitative data to address these limitations.

CONCLUSION

this study reveals that the decision to engage in Duta activities in Kayuagung is deeply influenced by a combination of economic necessity, cultural pressures, and social motivations. Economic challenges, particularly limited employment opportunities, push individuals to seek fast income sources, and Duta activities are often seen as a viable solution despite the risks. Additionally, cultural expectations, like costly ceremonies, add financial strain that contributes to these choices. Interestingly, Duta also demonstrate strong community involvement, using their earnings to support local projects and alleviate economic pressures in their communities. This duality of self-interest and communal support reflects the complex nature of Duta roles in Kayuagung. Overall, this study underscores the need for sustainable economic solutions and social programs that address both the economic and cultural pressures that shape these decisions.

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