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**Master's Thesis of International Studies  
(International Cooperation)**

**Korea's Commercial Sex Trade:  
Implications Through the Jeju Island Case**

제주도의 성매매 문화에 대한 사례연구

**February 2020**

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# **Korea's Commercial Sex Trade: Implications Through the Jeju Island Case**

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# Abstract

South Korea's commercial sex trade industry is one of the largest in the world, with anywhere from 500,000 to over a million women and girls working within it. Hundreds of thousands of men purchase sex each day, and despite strict law prohibiting the trade, the government has reported an increase in the size of the industry as of 2016. In comparison to its population of just around 600,000 people, Jeju Island has a thriving industry. With all of these numbers floating around, the question of why arises. While much of the literature on prostitution addresses female sex workers and their position in the industry, the men who make the purchases go largely unnoticed. This thesis seeks to understand why Korean men continue to pour billions of dollars into the illegal sex trade via a case study of Jeju Island. Through this, I propose a new analytical framework for understanding the phenomenon through a feminist lens.

**Keywords:** Jeju Island, sex work, Special Law on the Commercial Sex Trade, anti-sex trafficking, feminism

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## Glossary

Adult Entertainment Business: 유흥업소/유흥주점; legal businesses defined as such by their serving of alcohol along with hosting and karaoke services

Hostess: 도우미; hostesses in singing rooms; these women sing and drink alcohol with customers, sometimes providing touching and some sex acts

MOGEF: Ministry of Gender Equality and Family

MOJ: Ministry of Justice

Madame: 마담; female bosses in brothels and adult entertainment businesses; generally former workers themselves who have spent their lives in the industry

Officetel: 오피; equivalent to call girls, though they typically live in the apartment and men who call the service are given the information to go themselves; workers can sometimes work more for themselves this way and it has become preferential for pimps due to its underground nature.

Room Salon: 룸싸롱, 비즈니스클럽; an adult entertainment business with higher quality than standard singing rooms with more expensive alcohol, large and clean rooms, and higher standards for worker's appearances

Singing Room: 노래텔, 노래빠, 단란주점; adult entertainment businesses that are less expensive than room salons but provide similar services with singing, drinking and touching with hostesses

## Notes

This thesis discusses the subject of sex work, or prostitution. For the purposes of our understanding, this refers to the commercial selling of sex, which is defined in the Act on the Punishment of Arrangement of Commercial Sex Acts, Etc as both sexual intercourse and “pseudo-sexual intercourse,” which encompasses all sex acts, in exchange for “money, valuables or other property gains”<sup>1</sup>.

While the Korean government legally regards sex workers as trafficking victims, this thesis does not seek to retain this point of view<sup>2</sup>. However, it is understood that many of the women working in the sex trade in Korea, especially in the researched locale of Jeju City, have entered the industry as a result of financial coercion or in some cases, deceit. By legal definition, this would make them trafficked women; however, it is uncommon for these women to identify themselves as victims, and it largely erases experiences where women relay they have made an individual choice<sup>3</sup>. Thus, this research acknowledges sex workers as women who may or may not have been coerced into the industry and makes no assumptions about their motives for working within it.

The presented research examines sex work in the context of Korea, specifically Jeju Island, through the lens of feminist theory. While the contemporary feminist school of thought is home to many different frameworks used to understand and deconstruct the sex trade industry, which are discussed in this work as they pertain to the discourse at

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<sup>1</sup> Act on the Punishment of Arrangement of Commercial Sex Acts. Article 2(1), Article 2(2), enacted 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Act on the Prevention of Sexual Traffic and Protection, etc. of Victims Thereof. Article 1.

<sup>3</sup> 이재인, 성매매의 정치학: 성매매특별법 제정1년의 시점에서. 2006.

hand, the more common understanding of the sex trade's continued existence as a detriment to women and girls as a class is taken in this research.

This work also recognizes the nuances involved in the Korean sex trade with regard to the types of businesses involved; some consider the simple act of hosting to be a form of sex work while others argue since the law does not forbid such activity, it is difficult to consider it a societal problem without incorporating individual morals. All the same, these businesses solicit prostitution regularly. Because of their legal status, it has become a way for brothels of the past to transition under the nose of authorities. Above all, Korean adult entertainment businesses as they have been researched in this thesis allow for the purchase of women as commodities by men on a regular basis and as such, become an interesting phenomenon to examine from a sociological standpoint.

## **Introduction**

Prostitution is known by many as the world's oldest profession, but it is a profession largely illegal around the world due to its inherent exploitive nature and, today, its link to the global human trafficking industry. The last decade or so has seen a shift in an understanding of prostitution in the West, with countries like the Netherlands and Germany legalizing the sex trade, and others like Sweden employing an abolition model. Amnesty International took a controversial and radical step by announcing its position for the legalization of prostitution, or sex work as it will often be referred to in this thesis, in 2015.

Within the policy debate surrounding sex work, there are three large camps activists tend to fall into: prohibition, the continued criminalization of the trade, abolition, the criminalization of purchase, and legalization, decriminalization and regulation of the trade outright. South Korea's policy is currently one of prohibition, with the goal of eradicating the practice entirely to protect victims of trafficking. What this thesis tries to tackle is this very concern: it is difficult to discern whether Korea's current prostitution law has affected the industry in terms of size. Hundreds of thousands of women remain involved in the commercial sex trade, and the amount of solicitation businesses has increased over the years since 2004's law went into effect. This thesis looks to provide an analysis of Korea's persistently thriving sex trade industry in the face of strong policy to combat it, utilizing the foundational idea of abolition found in the Nordic model. The Nordic model argues for the criminalization of purchase, not sale, in an effort to curb demand. I argue Korea's present struggle is the result of a failure to target demand. With

demand consistently high, supply persists.

Critics of the Nordic model suggest sex workers choose to do such work; capitalism allows this freedom. There are many reasons to believe this is inaccurate. Financial coercion is one of the most common reasons women enter the sex trade. Teenage runaways, single or divorced mothers, refugees: these are just a few examples of the type of women and girls found in the sex trade worldwide. Without access to job training, housing and financial support, even therapy or counseling services, many of these women lack agency. Rather, to pose a question: is it choice when a woman's options are between making money or losing their life? This is the dilemma many sex workers struggle with.

South Korea has been taken as the initial empirical case through which I seek to better understand the reasons behind continued demand for a commercial sex industry. What strikes me as interesting, however, is the differing culture surrounding the industry based on location. Thus, this thesis will look at Jeju Island; why does the industry continue to thrive on the island and what does it look like? Taking the feminist perspective and recognizing the vast amount of research conducted on the supply, or female sex workers, demand, or male sex buyers, became the focus of the presented research. Interviews with Jeju residents and local experts were conducted, as well as observations and data collection and analysis to either place the Jeju case within an existing framework for understanding the sex trade supply-demand cycle or to create a new one.

This paper ultimately seeks to establish a conceptual framework for understanding the sources of demand for the sex trade on Jeju Island, with emphasis on Jeju City.

Government and non-government entities have acknowledged the intensity of the sex trade industry in the country as a whole, but the question of what drives continued demand has not been addressed on a lawmaking level. More specifically, the industry on Jeju Island differs slightly from that of the mainland, and the density of it exceeds that of any other province. By focusing on Jeju Island, we may be able to better understand the industry on the smallest level and improve both federal and local law.

The research questions can thus be expressed as following:

*Why does demand for the sex trade appear to be high on Jeju Island despite the 2004 Special Law on Prostitution effectively eradicating red light districts across Korea?*

*How can we explain the contributing factors to demand for the sex trade on Jeju Island?*

## **Literature Review**

While this work emphasizes the Jeju case and the field research conducted there, gaps in the research have been supplemented with other resources from both local Korean academic works, journalism and Western academic work published about prostitution and demand.

The catalyst for this thesis' focus on demand arose from the work of Kyoung-ho Shin, Professor of Sociology at Northwest Missouri State University, who has conducted extensive work on globalization and various Korean social issues associated. "A Theoretical View of the Globalizing Sex Industry: World System Position, Local Patriarchy, and State Policy in South Korea" presents a framework for understanding Korea's place in a globalized sex industry. The purpose of Shin's article here is to "understand women's participation in domestic and global sex (entertainment) industries in South Korea" through the proposal of a theoretical framework of political economy<sup>4</sup>. The framework incorporates three dimensions: Korea's position in the world-system, the local patriarchy and the state policies regarding sex work. Similar to Shin's work, this thesis also looks to develop a framework but of quite a different nature. Shin examines Korea's sex trade within the global context. Demand for sex is not the focus, but a small part of the research. Shin's work will be referenced later in the discourse surrounding the embedded cultural misogyny driving demand for the sex trade in Jeju.

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<sup>4</sup> Shin, Kyoung Ho. "A Theoretical View of the Globalizing Sex Industry: World System Position, Local Patriarchy, and State Policy in South Korea". *Advances in Gender Research*, Vol 15, 75-94, 2011.

The second key work that aided greatly in understanding the 2004 law and its subsequent impacts, along with various local Korean feminist views on the law's effectiveness and necessity, comes from the Seoul National University Gender Research Institute. A book on the "Special Law on Prostitution, 1 Year After its Enactment" provides transcripts of discussion between feminists, academics and experts, along with writings on the law's impact over the first year of its enactment. Many of those included in the book express concern over the government's ability to protect the women they wrote into the law as inherent victims, as the raids on red light districts were not conducive to protection of the women, but rather punishment. Understanding various perspectives was crucial to developing the final framework; many of the ideas regarding the view of women taken by men who participate in the purchase of women for sex found through the local field research are also discussed in this book as a part of the feminist discourse. This assists in the research by allowing us to see the ideas are not subjective, but have been raised in Korean feminist arenas.

Works by Byeong-Joo Jeon and Sang-Yong Yoon and Su-jin Bae on male attitudes toward prostitution also allowed further insight into the point of view local men have regarding sex work. Bae's work focuses on men in Busan, fewer than ten but with in depth interviewing, while Jeon and Yoon's work surveyed men in Chungbuk Province. Jeon and Yoon take a criminology viewpoint, while Bae comes from a feminist social science position. The main takeaway from Jeon and Yoon's work is the finding of the significant impact a man's understanding of gender equality plays in their attitude toward

sex work<sup>5</sup>. This was similar with Bae, though the former appears through regression analysis of their data while the latter comes to this conclusion through interviews<sup>6</sup>.

These are the main works consulted throughout the research in supplement to the field research of interview and observations. Their contents allowed for the development of an original research objective and exposed gaps in the existing literature on sex work in Korea.

### **Significance of the Research**

In considering the existing literature, it is clear there is a lack of work done on the demand aspect of the sex trade. Rather, while some work has been done on overall male attitudes, very little concerns the motivations for participation. Moreover, mainland viewpoints have been researched, but Jeju Island remains poorly addressed. As a particular locale differing from previously examined areas of the mainland due to its special administrative status and economic reliance on tourism, Jeju Island could be an important area to analyze in the context of its sex trade industry to better understand social and legal implications of the 2004 special law.

This research does not seek to single out Jeju Island as exceptional; there lacks enough evidence to assert as such. However, as a piece of the puzzle that is the Korean sex trade industry, it is an interesting case to research as it is so rarely considered. Therefore, the presented work looks to understand the Jeju case in its own right but also

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<sup>5</sup> Jeon, et al. "Comparative Study on Factors Affecting the Prostitution Attitude of Men," *Journal of Korea Contents Association*, Vol 15(1), 166, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Baek, Su-jin. "

recognizes the immense similarities with cases studied on the mainland.

### **Structure of the Thesis**

Following the introduction, this thesis will explain the research design with emphasis on how the field research was conducted. Then, explaining the contents of the field research in Jeju City, details on our findings will be discussed. Through our findings, we can begin to shape our framework in conjunction with policy suggestions through its utilization.

The framework takes the following three factors as influencers of demand for the sex trade: embedded misogyny within the local culture, male homosocial behavior or the cultural and social emphasis on strong male bonds as part of the group, and the local law enforcement via police enforcement of the Special Law, as well as the Jeju-specific visa-free policy that extends to nearly 200 countries.

### **Research Design**

The presented research was conducted using interviews, both in depth and short form, observations, data collection and analysis, as well as existing academic and government works conducted on Korea's sex trade. In order to craft the analytical framework, it proved difficult to rely solely on the field research component of the research and thus, external materials were utilized to form the argument.

The field research was carried out over a three-and-a-half-week period, focused on Jeju City located on the northern side of the island. Existing relationships with local organizations like the Jeju Association for Women's Rights were well utilized, along with social relationships via Jeju residents, both local and transplants from the mainland.

Observations were conducted in the neighborhoods of Yeon-dong and Ido-2-dong, both some of the more densely populated neighborhoods of Jeju City as well as home to the island's most thriving sex trade business areas. Entrance to three of the solicitation businesses was obtained with one in Yeon-dong and two in Ido-2-dong. Further details on the contents of the interviews and observations will be discussed in later sections describing the results of the case study.

Using a qualitative research design with a core focus on person-to-person conversation was crucial to properly answering the research question. Due to the illegal nature of the sex trade industry, it can be difficult to find accurate, robust information and data without supplementing it with data obtained in the field. While the presented research has several limitations, the design based on field research proved to be of great importance to the conclusionary analysis.

### **MOGEF 2013 and 2016 Surveys on Prostitution**

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family conducts a survey on prostitution every three years to see the effects of law enforcement and analyze new trends. The 2016 survey was conducted between March and December of that year. 42 red light districts and 174 women were surveyed, along with 1,050 men. Not unlike my own research, it is clear that the Korean government itself struggles to conduct research on the industry with high numbers of participants. This limitation is pointed out by the Korean Women's Development Institute, as well, who published an analysis on the pitfalls of MOGEF's survey. Regardless, there are trends and patterns worth looking at in this research that can aid in our analysis of the industry in Jeju City.

A portion of this research is dedicated to the influx of internet prostitution via

chatting apps and websites. A simple search for prostitution returns countless websites where one can find photos of call girls, forums for discussion of solicitation businesses and phone numbers. More recently, this kind of material is posted on Twitter and prior to the crackdown on child pornography, photo blogging website Tumblr. What MOGEF seems to be most concerned about with this is the lack of necessary confirmation that the site visitor is of age. Only a few websites are returned when Jeju is added to the search terms, however, which could indicate the industry has yet to move online on the island yet, compared to the mainland.

I was most curious about the results on MOGEF's research on brick-and-mortar businesses. Red light districts continue to exist all over Korea, but their number appears to be maintaining around 40. The average cost hovers close to 80,000 Korean won. Moreover, out of the 174 women surveyed, nearly 22% had their first prostitution experience in their teens with 47% of them starting out in red light districts, but 21% and 15.5% having their experiences in host-type solicitation businesses like room salons.

Given this thesis deals primarily with the demand aspect, it is important to look at the data on the John School. The John School is a program adapted from US policy that looks to educate men caught purchasing sex. The amount of men participating in the program has decreased by around 5,000 men since 2011, though this is not indicative of the industry's current state but rather shows fewer men are involved in the education program. Most of the participants are in their 30s, with the rest of the majority falling into the 20s and 40s categories. Further, 37% expressed having purchased sex just once, while 30% had done so between 3 and 9 times. The majority of the John School participants were arrested following their use of massage parlor services, while around 15% were

arrested via use of adult entertainment businesses.

Finally, the survey looks at everyday citizens' response to and view of prostitution. MOGEF notes the decrease of lifetime experience in purchasing sex. There was a 6% drop from the 2013 survey to 50.7%. Reasons for the purchase range from curiosity to military enlistment and as part of drinking parties, with nearly 30% engaging via friends or colleagues influence. This will be important to our analytical framework based on the Jeju case.

Ultimately, the findings through this research make it clear: the commercial sex trade continues to thrive in Korea through embedded cultural and societal phenomenon, which will be examined further in this thesis.

### **2004 Special Law on Prostitution**

Following immense pressure from women's and Christian groups across the country, along with international pressure to combat human trafficking through legislature, the Korean government passed the Special Law on Prostitution in 2004. The purpose of the law is "to prevent commercial sex acts, protect victims of commercial sex acts and persons in commercial sex acts, and to assist them in the recovery from victimization, self-reliance, and self-support".<sup>7</sup> The law has drawn critics from feminists and sex workers who dislike the law's assertion that all workers are victims. Moreover, it disregards the notion that sex workers can be male, as well. Further criticisms come from Nordic model supporters, who note the law is written in a way that criminalizes women who are perceived by law enforcement to have chosen their line of work. This is confusing, as

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<sup>7</sup> Article 1.

financial coercion is regarded as a factor in trafficking within the law itself. The content of the law thus makes it difficult for law enforcement to enforce to the full extent of the law, due to the many loopholes in how female workers are to be treated under it. The reason for this contradiction comes from the second piece of the legislature in the Act on the Punishment of Arranging Commercial Sex Acts. Through this, workers can be held culpable for “providing a place for sexual traffic” should they be caught in a motel, hotel or officetel. This also extends to the cycle of abuse involved in the sex trade, wherein workers find themselves becoming intermediaries or madams themselves, which then means the law will hold them accountable, rather than responding to them as victims as per the Act on Prevention.

Further, the law itself stipulates the State and local governments are now responsible for establishing legal and institutional systems for the prevention of the sex trade in all its forms<sup>8</sup>. This includes the conduction of research in the form of surveys, as well as education and other legal revisions necessary to prevent the trade. Articles 8 through 32 all concern the avenues of support for exiting workers. However, the law also maintains that it is up to the State and local governments to discern whether these services are necessary. Thus, the support is legally available, but because counseling centers and women’s shelters are run as non-profits largely detached from the government, it is difficult for them to achieve the funding they need to protect the women who need their services, as local governments have yet to deem them wholly necessary to the

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<sup>8</sup> Article 3.

prevention of the sex trade<sup>9</sup>.

By using the law as a piece of the puzzle regarding demand, we can get a better idea of how the law fails to properly address it with its misunderstandings of what the industry looks like 15 years after the law's enactment. That is to say, the law fulfilled its function to remove a majority of red light districts responsible for abuses and trafficking, however it lacks enough to truly protect the women it attempts to label as victims and prevent the trade from continuing to thrive through other avenues of sex trade.

### **Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with several parties, at varying lengths and depths. I utilized street interview methods and advertised interest in conversation with Jeju residents on platforms such as HelloTalk, a language exchange application, and was also put in touch with interested parties through local acquaintances. In terms of my contact with experts, I was able to use existing connections with local organizations focused on women's rights and providing safe spaces for women exiting the sex trade. Moreover, I spoke with officials at both the Jeju Immigration Office and local police station, located near City Hall in the observed neighborhood of Ido-2-dong.

Through the interviews with residents, we can see an overarching theme regarding the general public view of prostitution and adult nightlife culture on the Island. Initially, there is a bit of shock and uncertainty, but knowledge about the subject is quite common once my questions turn to a more specific nature. There also appears to be a desire for the police to be more proactive. Streets littered with these sorts of businesses

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<sup>9</sup> Ko, SNU Institute for Gender Research.

and a continuance of such a culture seems to be a bit of a pest for Jeju locals. In terms of my interviews with men who have participated in the sex trade as buyers, it became clear from the first questions just how prevalent the practice continues to be. The men I interviewed, a total of three who will remain anonymous in my case study, were between the ages of 28 and 32 and involved in government work on the island. None of them were married, though they frequented solicitation businesses with married friends or superiors. While many of these businesses are frequented by older men, it did prove interesting to hear the perspective of younger men, as it appears that the practice is decreasing in popularity among men on the mainland. In contrast, the interviewees asserted that this was not the case on Jeju. Further details on who was interviewed are expressed in later sections and will be referenced throughout the thesis.

### **Limitations**

It is important to recognize the limitations of the research prior to the analysis of the findings. The field research was conducted over a relatively short amount of time with minimal contact with female workers. Due to the illegal nature of the subject, and the social shame associated with the work, coming into direct contact with female workers to the point they could answer in-depth questions is difficult. However, because the research question addresses demand first and foremost, I feel that the emphasis on the buyer perspective was important to highlight above the worker perspective. Moreover, the research also only focuses on two neighborhoods in Jeju City and makes assumptions about other areas of the island. The findings are most likely true of the rest of Jeju Island; however, things could differ in Seogwipo.

### **Jeju Case: Introduction**

Jeju Island is often overlooked in the discourse on Korea's sex trade industry. Mainland Koreans view the island as a vacation spot, an idyllic destination to rid oneself of the stressors brought upon by fast-paced city life and long working hours.

In both casual conversation and formal interview settings, Jeju residents spoke of how open the sex trade industry is in Jeju City, especially in neighborhoods like Yeondong and Ido-2-dong, colloquially referred to as Jaewon (for a nearby apartment complex) or Baozen (named for a shopping street) and simply City Hall respectively. This is perhaps contrary to mainland Korean perspectives, as various surveys show those who do not participate in the industry are unaware of its magnitude and the extent of its illegality.

It is difficult to say whether Jeju Island simply has a larger industry compared to other areas of Korea, or if another phenomenon is at play. Regardless, across Korea, there remains a high demand for a sex trade industry. After all, without demand, supply would decrease in turn. This simply has not been the case, following expert opinions and the MOGEF survey in both 2013 and 2016. Regardless, through the Nordic perspective, demand is regarded as the root cause of global commercial sex trade industries. Yet unexplored, this thesis takes the question of why demand is high in the specific Jeju City locale through interviews and observations.

Recognizing the complex nature of the sex trade industry, and the limited time and resources of the presented project, there remain many stones unturned with regard to the sex trade on Jeju Island. Still, as we look to answer the question of demand's origin on the island, the conducted interviews and observations in conjunction with previous research done on the mainland Korean peninsula, we may come to a conclusion about what specific factors drive demand and thus, answer our core question.

### **Jeju Case: Field Research**

To evaluate the situation as it stands on Jeju Island, I spent four weeks in Jeju City from June 19, 2019 to July 16, 2019 conducting interviews and observations in diverse areas of the city. Jeju Island is effectively split into two areas: Jeju City and Seogwipo. This research focuses on Jeju City, which is located in the north and has a higher concentration of prostitution solicitation businesses, though they can be found all over the island. Seogwipo used to be home to a thriving red-light district but due to nationwide crackdowns on organized brothel activity, it has shrunk significantly in the last few years.

Jeju City is home to nearly 500,000 people. If we focus on the city center alone, roughly 320,000 people made up the population in 2009. My observations were conducted in the neighborhoods of Yeon-dong and Ido-2-dong and allowed a look into the specifics of how adult entertainment businesses, the main facilitators of prostitution on Jeju Island and in many areas of Korea, are organized in the researched locale.

### **Interview Subjects**

A key expert consulted for the research presented in this thesis was Ko Myeong-hee. Ko is the director of one of Jeju's women's organizations, the Jeju Association for Women's Rights (JWR). JWR's focus is on helping women escape abusive relationships and the sex trade industry, and subsequently assisting them with reacclimating into new jobs via support in job training. Ko has been assisting sex workers looking to exit the industry in Jeju City for over 15 years. She frequents businesses to talk with workers and make sure they are safe, providing them with resources should they feel otherwise. Due to her daily contact with both current and former sex workers, she was crucial to my

research and her experience allowed for a look into the sex trade that would otherwise be impossible as an outsider. Ko's office is comprised of few employees; however, they conduct research via interviews and surveys in addition to their work with providing women an outlet to become self-sufficient after exiting the industry or escaping domestic violence. This includes some teenagers, as well as women well into their 60s or older. The focus of JWR is to protect and empower women and their position on the sex trade focuses on eradicating demand and keeping workers as safe as possible in inherently unsafe environments.

One of my first resident interview subjects, referred to as *A* throughout this thesis, was a male in his late 20s. For most young people living on the island, becoming a public worker is both a coveted and common career path. In 2019 alone, the Jeju Island government looked to recruit over 600 new workers as the baby boomer generation begins to retire in droves. Of those 600, nearly 500 would be regular workers, while 180 and 9 would be recruited for the fire and police department respectively. My first interview was with a police recruit. His family are transplants from the mainland, though *A* had grown up in Jeju City. *A* was one of the most forthcoming of the Jeju residents I spoke to in a formal setting. He also connected me to *B*, another local male resident.

*B* is a friend of *A*, a public worker and local to Jeju. As he was referred to me by *A* due to his frequenting of adult entertainment businesses, the interview was much more pointed than the one I had with *A*. A man in his early 30s, he first went to a singing room with colleagues upon entrance into the workforce. Per the common work culture, accepting a superior's invitation to dinner and the events thereafter are crucial to show you are committed to the team and "atmosphere of the workplace". For *B*, however, the

visits to singing rooms did not stop with the first. Friends who went through a similar first experience with their superiors soon incorporated singing room visits into their regular meetings. If one wants to spend time with friends, it became a guarantee a visit to a singing room would be a part of that quality time. For *B*, the singing rooms are as much about the women as they are about bonding, or maintaining the bond, with his friends. This helped confirm what *A* had told me about the culture as he'd perceived it on the island. The women being purchased were a tool, almost a background prop to the mainstage act of male bonding. With drinking culture as the centerpiece to this behavior, how men act with and around women is just as important for one's friends and colleagues to get to know each other. These ideas will be used in our later analysis to understand the factors driving the sex trade demand in Jeju.

The final man I spoke with, *C*, was the youngest in his mid 20s. Like many Korean men, as found by MOGEF, his first and only experience purchasing sex was in the military. "A lot of people do it," he told me, emphasizing that many will go to a brothel out of curiosity or to lose their virginity. Many of his friends enjoy going to singing rooms and sometimes will go to kiss rooms, massage parlors and other common fronts for prostitution poorly regulated by law enforcement. *C* says he did not enjoy the experience, citing peer pressure and curiosity as the influence. When asked why, he responds saying he was aware of the worker's humanity, which made it difficult to enjoy the encounter. This falls in line with what other men have said in articles like Baek's as discussed in the literature review.

*Claire*, the English pseudonym provided by the woman interviewed, is a transplant from the mainland and aged in her mid 30s. She lives in Jeju City with her

husband and has lived on the island for over ten years. *Claire* discussed some of the reasons for why she believes the sex trade continues to thrive on Jeju Island. As she understood and witnessed over the last decade or so, the sex trade demand originally came from Japanese businessmen arriving on business trips. This then transferred to domestic demand as Japanese tourism trickled off, and is now continuing through Chinese demand. Her husband has been to room salons due to his work environment and she spoke of its effects on their relationship and how it affects her overall view of the sex trade and sex workers. Her perspective is one of a regular Jeju resident who has been affected by the local culture surrounding the sex trade.

Other shorter interviews were conducted with local immigration; two workers were spoken to. Local police were also consulted, though they gave “no comment” answers to many of the specific questions regarding their enforcement practices in the context of the sex trade. However, they did confirm what was learned from immigration; illegal immigration is a problem and it is difficult to find the best course of action to remedy both immigration concerns and the sex trade.

### **Organization of Jeju’s Sex Trade Businesses**

The sex trade in Korea is vast and full of intricacies specific to the locale. This section seeks to explain this in more detail, with emphasis on the Jeju case. Through the conducted interviews with experts such as Ko Myung-hee, we can better understand the function of the sex trade as it stands after the last reenforcement of the Special Law on Prostitution circa 2016.

In the Jeju case, we can break up the forms of prostitution into four categories: massage parlors, room salons, singing rooms and offictel call girls. The latter has become

one of the more common methods on the mainland after red light districts were raided in 2004, 2010 and 2015~2016. The focus in this research is on room salons and singing rooms. Due to Jeju's tourism industry and being a common business trip destination for diverse industries, these forms driven by group participation remain exceedingly ubiquitous in comparison to other areas of Korea. According to Ko Myeong-hee, Jeju City is home to not only to this constant stream of tourists, but local demand, as well. Combined with lax visa restrictions, which will be discussed in a later section, these are the main contributors to the current industry in terms of demand.

Room salons are a form of adult entertainment typically frequented by groups of men following business meetings or as a part of office dinners (*hoe-shik*). For many Koreans, room salons are both something of a necessary evil in the larger society, though men who go to them are considered “perverts and misogynists,” and the women who work at them are perceived as “gold diggers”, says one of the female Jeju residents I interviewed. This is the viewpoint one can clearly observe in the fallout of celebrities like former boy band members Park Yoochun or Lee Seungri<sup>10</sup>. Ever the more recently, beloved musician Kim Gun-mo has faced a great amount of scrutiny for his frequent visits to room salons, where he is accused of assaulting and harassing many of the workers on a repeated basis<sup>11</sup>.

Room salons work in a rather simple way. Entering a designated room with your group, often guided by your boss, you will be presented with a group of women referred to by number. You can choose what has been shown, or you can ask to see other options.

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<sup>10</sup> CNN, February 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Yonhap News, December 2019.

From my observations in Ido-2-dong, due to the sheer amount of businesses, it is not uncommon for customers to be dissatisfied with the limited options at their chosen business. Madames from neighboring businesses are in constant contact with each other, able to exchange workers from one place to the other in order to give the customer a satisfactory woman. It becomes a scramble; money is at stake and businesses meant to be competition have no choice but to work with each other to sustain the cycle. In this sense, we might say supply outnumbers demand as time passes and more and more men become either disinterested in purchasing sex all together or looking to do so in a private setting on their own via call girls.

Most of Jeju City's room salons can be found in the Yeon-dong neighborhood nearest to large hotels like Lotte Hotel and Maison Glad. This is exacerbated by the increase in Chinese immigration and investment over the course of the mid to late 2010s, following Ko Myeong-hee's discussion. In my observations of the Yeon-dong neighborhood, many of the room salons, sometimes referred to as business clubs, were labeled with Chinese translations or were outright targeted to a Chinese-speaking clientele. I asked Ko if the reason beyond Jeju's continued open sex trade was the result of the increase in Chinese immigration. She responded this is unlikely; lax immigration rules in general have influence over the phenomenon, and it is not limited to a singular nationality's participation. Moreover, domestic demand from both Jeju locals and mainlanders persists at the same time. Still, it is worth noting the impact of an increase in foreign customers in the local sex trade, as it appears the industry seeks to grow their profits the same as any other aspect of the tourism industry. Adaptation to the market is key to keep the sex trade industry afloat.

To be clear, room salons on their own are not illegal. They are not brothels by description and host culture permeates throughout many aspects of Korean group bonding, even among women. By law, room salons are included under the classification of adult entertainment. They must be registered as such to provide both karaoke and alcohol to patrons and the sale of sex is strictly prohibited due to the Special Law. For higher end room salons, the sale of sex is brought to a different floor of the building. In Jeju, the transaction will take place off the premises and what is referred to as the second round (*ee-cha*), or sexual intercourse, happens at a nearby motel or hotel. This is done to protect the business but can have serious ramifications for the female worker. The individual transaction makes her culpable, even if she has been forced by her pimp or madame, the law perceives the act as initiated by the worker herself. Ko says this leads to many arrests but rarely, if ever, results in the business being shut down or investigated properly. Room salons are one of the most common avenues for the sex trade across Korea and in a tourism-driven economy as found in Jeju, with both domestic and foreign clientele to serve, they continue to be a mainstay in the overall industry.

In the same vein, singing rooms are immensely popular as a low-cost option. Room salons emphasize Western liquor sales, namely whisky. Singing rooms focus on beer and snacks, not unlike their more innocent counterparts. Because hostesses (*doumee*) had become so popular as a means of facilitating prostitution, the Korean government has now made the sale of alcohol in singing rooms illegal. If the business chooses to sell alcohol, they must register as an adult entertainment business. This registration increases the amount of tax paid and is thus an option many business owners do not want to take.

### **Observations**

Across Korea, prostitution takes places at even the most innocuous of locations. Singing rooms, bars, as has been discussed, and even places like virtual golf courses. Nearly 80% of Korea's adult entertainment businesses were found to be providing sex services by the Korean Institute of Criminal Justice Policy. This does not include traditional forms of the sex trade, or call girls. Internet chatting and forums are easily accessible via Google, and any given side street will be littered with call girl cards come sundown. Job advertisements for these entertainment businesses are just as easy to access, even appearing on popular phone applications like Albamon, used to find part-time jobs. These jobs advertise hourly wages between 20,000 and 30,000 Korean won or more. This is enticing for young women and girls who might need money quickly or have a sudden lack of income. What is peculiar is these websites and applications do not outright ban such advertisements. Searches allow one to block "bar" advertisements such as these, and you must be of legal age to access them. These features are helpful, but they do not prevent subsequent exploitation. These jobs are advertised as service jobs, and even during interviews the women are often told prostitution does not take place at the establishment and their only job is to serve food and drink. There is a great deal of manipulation at play that then wraps many women into apparent debts and so begins the cycle of prostitution. Jeju Island thrives on this form of prostitution. While call girls are plentiful, and sometimes service workers end up in that part of the industry, adult entertainment businesses are the mainstay of the sex trade. Because of this, we will recognize the sex trade industry on Jeju Island as being primarily based in these solicitation businesses, rather than focus on call girl activities.

To expand on where the research took place, we can begin with Yeon-dong. Over 40,000 residents call this airport-adjacent neighborhood their home. The area of Jaewon,

named after the apartment complex located within, is also home to a large majority of Chinese immigrants. Jeju Island continues to have separate visa rules from the mainland, where 180 countries are granted visa-free entry. With so many flights coming in and out of Jeju Island and China, the island became an attractive travel destination. Unfortunately, with this visa-free policy, comes those who take great advantage. Though the visa-free period is only 30 days, it has become common to overstay their one month, continuously renew by leaving and reentering, and avoid applying for proper visas. There was a rather public case in 2016 where a Chinese man in his 40s was arrested and charged with attempting to traffic 10 Chinese women via solicitation businesses (Yonhap News, 2016). All of these women were residing in Jeju City illegally. This is a common occurrence. With Yeon-dong being located so close to the airport, and next to many Chinese-invested construction sites, the amount of Chinese women becoming involved in Jeju Island's sex trade has increased. The number is, unfortunately, difficult to measure. However, the number of businesses is clear to see. While I could not count every single one, comparing my number with previous data, it stands at around 230. For a population of just over 40,000, this means there is a solicitation business for every 175 people. Compared to areas of Seoul known for having many solicitation businesses, such as Sillim-dong, this is close to ten times more. Yeon-dong, however, has seemed to begin the transition to call girl methods of prostitution. While the amount of businesses remains high in terms of ratio, the industry appears to be going further underground as time goes on.

Nearly equal in population, Ido-2-dong is located in the city center along with Jeju City Hall. It is a popular place for locals to spend time and is home to much of the island's nightlife. Not dissimilar to Yeon-dong, this area is home to several pockets of entertainment businesses known to facilitate prostitution and other sex services. These

businesses collaborate with each other, and if a customer at one does not like his choice of women at one, they are brought around the other businesses to find one they like.

Despite the outer façade portraying a simple singing room, the interior looks much more like what a typical brothel does. Rooms are individual and well soundproofed. In my observations, the girls were rarely seen though the madams made themselves quite busy, shuffling around from room to room, sometimes leaving the business altogether to speak with madams from other businesses. If a customer is not satisfied with his options at one location, the madam will call around, escorting the customer to other businesses to see their options. The area can best be described as four side streets lined with singing rooms and a few room salons. On each side street is a motel, excessive for the generally quiet, residential area. Each side street has about ten businesses each and there is another similar area in which two side streets run along each side of Jeju City Hall. Though it was the hope interviews could be conducted with madams or workers, many responded with a simple “I’m busy” or simply ignored any requests. Still, observing the behaviors, organization and overall number of adult entertainment businesses proved important to the research into the Jeju case.

### **Existing Policy & Frameworks**

Existing frameworks for understanding and addressing demand for the sex trade are plentiful. This thesis will divide them into three categories based on policy suggestion: prohibition, abolition, and legalization.

If we recognize that this thesis is a feminist work, there is one core perspective we can take in our analysis. We should consider that the rights of the women involved in the sex trade industry take precedence, with the perspective that sex work is, generally,

harmful to women as a class and its existence is inherently of a misogynistic nature. We should also understand that women are autonomous in their decision-making and deserve to have their voices heard. As such, the Nordic model is taken as a sort of ideal policy to undertake. The Korean government is considering making this move, as more and more feminist groups lobby for a change to the existing law. The Nordic model is controversial; its efficacy in terms of reducing overall prostitution is debatable, and groups like Amnesty International advocate against it. I argue, however, that if the goal is to decrease demand, the Nordic model is likely the best option. To explain this model further, we must turn to Sweden, who has embraced it and become its most prominent advocate on the global stage.

Sweden established the Nordic model in 1999. Culturally, prostitution was viewed negatively; it is something to be combated. The law works this way: it is criminal to buy sex services, with the punishment ranging from a fine to a six-month prison term. How this differs from the Korean law will be discussed in depth later in this thesis. The law in Sweden places emphasis on recognizing the “complex needs” of people who have experienced prostitution and preventative measures to keep both demand and supply to a minimum. In 2009, Sweden published a comprehensive assessment on the effectiveness of the policy, stating that street prostitution had been reduced by half. Moreover, because the purchase of sex services is banned, it serves as a barrier to human trafficking and other organized crime. This ultimately appears to be a success, though there is a lack of evidence to suggest prostitution in Sweden has decreased all that much; rather, it simply has not increased and is no longer visible on the street. In comparison with its Northern European neighbors who have seen increases in the amount of prostitution taking place and do not have such a ban, the numbers show that this policy is effective in combating

prostitution.

Cases of legalized prostitution and their effect on both overall demand and increases in human trafficking are quite easy to find and well-studied, especially across Europe. An article by Cho, et al seeks to explain whether legalized prostitution increases human trafficking via regression analysis. In their empirical case studies, they look to Germany due to its available data pre and post radical policy change regarding prostitution. The data here shows an increase in human trafficking post-legalization from a minimum of just under 10,000 trafficking victims in 2001, rising to over 12,000 in 2003. For most, this is enough to deem legalization more dangerous than progressive and instead advocate for the Nordic model of abolition.

Beyond the policies set forth by these European countries, the academia surrounding the sex trade focuses primarily on the women involved in the industry. Exit and entry theories dominate, with various models introduced internationally over the last three or so decades. In terms of demand, the academic literature is greatly lacking, and it continues to dwindle even further when we look to focus on Korea. The framework that sparked this research from Kyoung-ho Shim is a great start, but it fails to emphasize demand and focuses on the international aspect of the Korean sex trade, rather than the function of the industry domestically.

Despite the existence of varied policy and frameworks used to explain and address the sex trade industry both locally and internationally, it is uncommon to look at the subject from the perspective of demand and its influence on the supply-demand cycle. Therefore, with consideration to the existing ideas, the Korean case especially requires emphasis on the demand aspect to better reduce the amount of legal and moral abuses one

can easily find within the sex trade industry.

### **Analytical Framework**

Having presented the research design, its contents and the existing policies and frameworks, we can move on to the final analysis. Through the interviews, observations, and previous literature, a framework to answer the key research question of why demand for the sex trade persists on Jeju Island can be developed. Rather, we can locate the components driving demand as follows: embedded misogyny, male homosocial culture and concerns over the efficacy of local law enforcement. Through each of these, we can begin to understand where demand for the sex trade comes from.

#### **I) Embedded misogyny**

Embedded misogyny refers to the inherent nature of a local culture. From the onset of Confucian influence from China, which Korea transformed into its own neo-Confucianism, misogyny took hold and its effects have proven to be everlasting.

Jeju Island was initially a matriarchal society, with women being the primary breadwinners (citation). This is largely based in the centuries old culture of *Haenyeo*, female divers who sold their catch for their families' main source of income. Traditional Jeju social culture upholds women as integral to society's function, while mainland Korea's Confucian standards directly contradict such ideas. With the integration of Jeju into the mainland in early modern Korean history, so came the import of these damaging ideas. Jeju traditional culture begins to fade more and more with each passing year, to the point the local language is sparsely spoken in favor of the standard Korean dialect. This is not to say modern Jeju culture is a mirror image of what one might find on the mainland; it has its own quirks due to its geography and history. However, the amount of influence

the mainland and US has had on the island is inarguable and significant.

Based on interviews, general conversation with both Jeju and greater Korean residents, and external research, we can come to find the influence embedded misogyny has on both supply and demand aspects of the local sex trade industry.

Through in-depth interviews with local Jeju residents, primarily men, it became clear that the view of women can be categorized based on the role any given woman plays in relation to a man. Women being purchased are not viewed the same way as other women, one of the men I interviewed told me. Rather, this can take two forms. One, the women are used to reduce stress and achieve sexual gratification missing from their lives at present. Two, the women are part of the background; referring to our discussion on homosociality, participation in the sex trade is also part of male bonding. As such, women are less of the concern and more something of a vehicle through which that bond is achieved. These women are then perceived differently from other women. Some women are for dating, while others are for marriage. Women are thus not viewed as individuals, but rather tools or a means to an end for whatever the men want them for. Because this notion stems from the historical foundation for misogyny both on the mainland Korea and Jeju Island, we can express this as “embedded” misogyny, rooted within the larger society.

## **II) Male homosocial culture**

Following my interviews, it became clear how crucial the male-dominated culture is on Jeju Island, and in Korea as a whole. Homosocial relationships between men take precedence and are built up through engagement in the sex trade. Rather than viewing their behavior as sex buying, it is viewed as male entertainment. It is uncommon for these men to realize the women they purchase for these services could be subject to

physical and sexual violence in their line of work.

It appears that these men have placed women into categories based on their use. Prostitutes are a singular category, followed by wives who are typically sexless post-partum, and perhaps a third category for women men are willing to date, but not marry. This is not a new phenomenon. We can draw from Korea's Confucian past to better understand why this happens. Purity was, and is, a concept key to the continuation of one's family bloodline. The burden of purity was then hoisted upon women to maintain. Men and women are subject to different moral standards. Men were not just allowed to buy sex from prostitutes, but they were encouraged to take on concubines. More than this, men seeking sexual gratification from their wives only to berate them for being sexual at all is a phenomenon that persists in Korean society. Ji Hye Kim writes in her article on "Korea's New Prostitution Policy" that "the hunt for pleasure permeates many parts of Korean males' lives" today, hence the persistent demand for the sex trade. In 2002, a few years prior to the implementation of the special law, Korean men made around 170 million transactions for sex<sup>12</sup>.

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Male homosocial culture does not merely relate to men participating in the activities together, though room salons and singing rooms allow for this phenomenon to flourish. Rather, it can occur as something of peer pressure. In the interviews with all three men, it was clear that, at least the first time, it was less about their individual desires and more about the group: friends, work colleagues or military cohort. Thus, even if a man goes to a brothel or solicitation business on his own, he is likely still engaging as a result of the homosocial culture.

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<sup>12</sup> Kim, 497.

This aspect of demand can also be seen in the interview with *Claire*. Her husband participated in room salon activities as a form of workplace team bonding. Even if he had no desire to engage sexually with the women, such behavior is required to build the relationship with his boss and senior colleagues. Maintaining the relationship and fostering the bonds with other men in his workplace was of utmost importance, even at the potential expense of his marriage.

Male homosocial culture in Jeju could potentially be exacerbated, in comparison to the mainland, by the physical location of the island. Rather, because it is a small community, it is difficult to make and maintain new relationships. This idea is shared by the interview subjects and some scholars. This creates inherent pressure on others to give in; *A* relayed that nearly weekly, his friends ask him to come to the singing room with them. Because he has a romantic partner, he rejects these offers. When asked if he was single, would he accept, he responded that it is likely he would do so, because it means he would have more time to spend with his friends and show he has loyalty to them.

### **III) Concerns of Law Enforcement**

The law is an integral piece to the puzzle of why the sex trade continues to thrive. This is regardless of location; Jeju, Korea and globally. In the Jeju context, it becomes all the more important, as it includes the discussion of local immigration law.

As a part of the field research, a visit was paid to Jeju Immigration Office, located in Jeju City minutes from the airport. Jeju Island has a visa-free policy for the vast majority of countries; there are only 11 exceptions. This allows for greater tourist traffic onto the island, but has shown to have serious ramifications in the way of illegal stays. In

2019, combating this has been a priority for local immigration officials. Illegal immigration has become a serious issue for Jeju. The number of illegal immigrants residing in Jeju spiked from under 500 in 2011 to upwards of 18,000 by 2019<sup>13</sup>. The officer noted the impact of Chinese tourism as a result of the visa-free policy. With the island becoming less of a summertime weekend getaway destination and more of an economic opportunity for many, the amount of illegal immigration has dramatically increased. The officer spoken to said the following in response to a question of what issues the office is currently trying to tackle:

(Jeju Island) has visa-free entry for nearly 200 countries, but they are only allowed to stay for 30 days. Many workers come from China and Southeast Asia and overstay. There are thousands of illegal immigrants here. It is difficult to catch them, but because of the refugee crisis, we are under a lot of pressure.

Moreover, when asked about past incidents involving foreign women in the sex industry, the officer simply said, “they come as tourists; it is difficult to control what happens afterwards because we aren’t local law enforcement”. This is true. According to the 2004 law, foreign women are required to be granted stays on deportation and allowed to continue their stay through the support of women’s shelters and the like, something JWR provides.

Recalling the conversation with Ko, she asserts this is a key difference between Jeju and the mainland. Rather, trafficking can happen all the more easily as a result of the visa-free policy. Compared with the mainland, there is no need for pimps and recruiters to

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<sup>13</sup> Korean Immigration. 2012, 2019.

falsify documents that enable foreign workers to enter under the guise of legality. Instead, the women can simply be flown in without questions being asked. No one is questioning why they are not leaving, either.

This exposes a gap in the enforcement on a local level, in terms of immigration. The women are viewed as victims under the law on principle but there is no recourse for immigration officials to aid in the prevention of the expansion or maintenance of the local sex trade. To put it more succinctly, law enforcement and immigration are unable to work together on the same page due to contradictions in how each party is able to respond to illegal immigration and illegal sex work.

Ko also sees discrepancies in how law enforcement ultimately enforces the law. I asked if the law was simply too relaxed, or if it somehow emphasized women too much in comparison to male buyers. She says the law is written quite well, and upon reading it in detail, the law does not seem to punish men severely for purchasing women but instead, it focuses on women as victims and how law enforcement should respond to protect them. This then raises the question of where things go wrong when the law is meant to be utilized in real life situations. Following figures I and II, the number of arrests for violations of sex trade law in Jeju proves rather inconsistent. Between 2008 and 2009 there was heavy enforcement, resulting in the arrests of between 140 and 150 people, a majority men. This drops off heavily in 2010 with a vast increase of over 100 arrests in 2012. This could be explained by the State's decision in 2011 to uphold the law, rather than abolish it as had been protested. However, again by 2013, there is another large drop in the number of arrests, increasing again the following year up until 2017. By 2018, the drop reappears. This inconsistency shows that the sex trade persists. If the law's

enforcement were affecting its ability to continue, drops in arrests would remain consistent. However, it appears that law enforcement makes arbitrary decisions regarding its focus on enforcing the Special Law. Therefore, while the law is written in a way for law enforcement to fully punish all actors in the sex trade and reduce demand by doing so, in Jeju they have simply chosen not to do so and instead fluctuate their enforcement depending on political and social climate, such as in response to protests or amendments to the law, or perhaps just on the police chief's whim.

Ko provides a few important reasons that explain this contradiction:

1) **Law enforcement does not properly investigate businesses that could be participating in the sex trade.**

It is not uncommon for police to conduct regular checks on adult entertainment businesses to check they are following not just the law regarding sex work, but to make sure they are properly registered and conducting business in line with their registration. However, as Ko recalls and the other JWR employees corroborate, the local police in Jeju often schedule these checks during the early afternoon hours. This is generally the time of day businesses are closed. This means a check on illegal sex work cannot truly occur and businesses illegally selling alcohol are given fines. Because sex work is happening underground with extreme efforts taken to keep any paper trails to a minimum, these individual checks are all the more important to combating illegal behavior.

2) **Law enforcement has no incentive.**

Jeju lacks red light districts. The small ones that existed prior to the 2004 law were promptly raided along with the others on the mainland and likewise, sex work moved to

adult entertainment businesses and officetels. Since the red light districts have been effectively eradicated and the new avenues for sex work are not illegal on the surface, law enforcement has little incentive to continue concentrated efforts. Spikes in arrests can be seen as the law saw amendments, but the law will likely not be amended again unless it is rewritten all together. Thus, lack of incentive has become a part of why the sex trade persists.

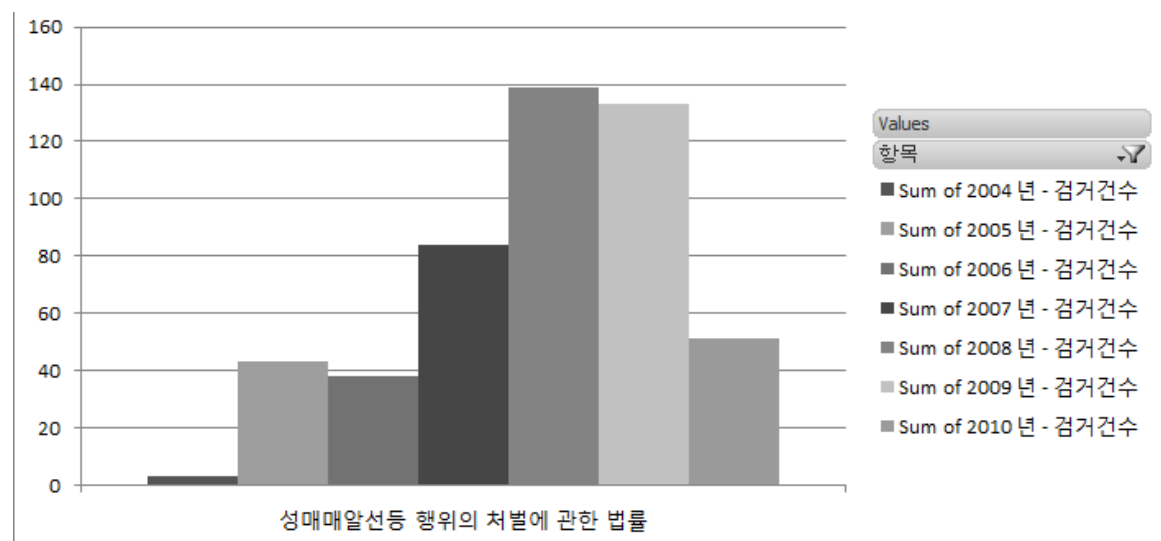
### 3) **Law enforcement lacks education.**

General attitudes toward sex work among the public are lacking. It took several years for residents to recognize the laws surrounding sex work, something corroborated by Baek's research in Busan. The law stipulates that workers are victims. However, because many of these women are caught off the premises of their place of employment, they are assumed to be engaging in commercial sex trade of their own accord, as something of freelancers. Many of these women do not operate this way; they are directed by the madame or pimp to take a customer for second round as it makes them, the business, more money. In this sense, law enforcement appears to lack a full understanding of how the law is written regarding how workers are to be treated when caught engaging.

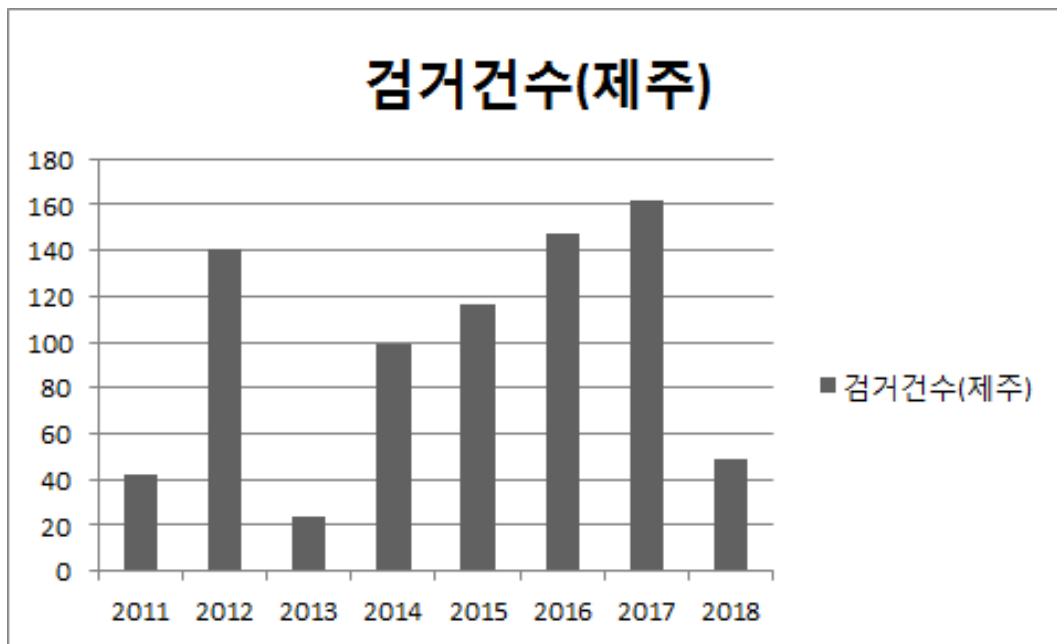
### 4) **Law enforcement is also involved.**

With an exceedingly large amount of men having experience with purchasing sex, it is not surprising that many of those men would also be working in law enforcement. The documentary *Save My Seoul* takes this information directly from the source, verifying that police are given monetary bribes or free services in exchange for neglecting to enforce the Special Law in their locale.

Through these four reasons, we can see there are many obstacles involved in increasing the cooperation of local law enforcement in protecting workers and enforcing the law as passed by National Parliament in 2004. Demand will naturally persist if local law fails to deter the industry from ever evolving to meet the desires of its customers.



**Figure I : Arrest Statistics from 2004 to 2010, Jeju Island**



**Figure II: Arrest Statistics from 2011 to 2018, Jeju Island**

## **Conclusion**

Through interviews, observations and analysis of previous literature, this thesis seeks to explain why the demand for the sex trade continues on Jeju Island, despite the illegal nature of the industry. The analysis brought us to three factors that seem to influence demand: embedded misogyny, male homosocial culture and contradictory law enforcement comprised of legislature that has grown increasingly irrelevant to prevent the current organization of the industry from expanding.

Despite Jeju Island's traditional culture being of a matriarchal nature, outside forces changed this drastically in a rather short amount of time. With more and more influence from the mainland and other foreign entities, it is difficult to say whether Jeju Island will be able to recover its roots. Misogyny has become embedded in the social

culture, with mainland norms regarding gender insisting women are either homemakers or tools to be used. Homosocial relationships between men are important to mainland culture, as well, but are amplified on Jeju Island due to its close-knit social structure and island culture's proclivity to ostracize those who are different or reject accepted norms. Moreover, inconsistent and contradictory law enforcement draws many concerns over whether demand can be decreased through the Special Law alone. Thus, it is imperative that these aspects of demand be addressed given their embeddedness within the social culture and the government's desire to eradicate the sex trade all together.

Through the proposed framework, it is clear policy change is necessary to meet government's expressed goals regarding the sex trade. Following the suggestion of the JWR, both the national and local governments must do more to support women looking to leave the industry. With the law stipulating that both State and local governments use their own discretion in creating and funding shelters, centers and other support avenues for exiting women. Such organizations that exist receive little aid from the government, despite MOGEF insisting on the severity of the issue. When women are leaving the industry without enough support, the likelihood they return is high. Further, with inconsistent enforcement of the law, as seen in arrest statistics, deterring men from purchasing women and hence, decreasing demand, is difficult to achieve. Education is scarce, and even still, without proper enforcement, men will continue to participate knowing it is unlikely they will face punishment.

What can be suggested is this: The State and local governments must acknowledge the incredible changes that have been made to the sex trade industry following the elimination of most red-light districts. The local Jeju government and law

enforcement must cooperate to find solutions to illegal immigration and apply the law consistently over time. Moreover, law enforcement requires further education on what the sex trade looks like and how to support women who might not fit the expected profile of a trafficking victim. In terms of addressing cultural concerns at the hands of male homosociality and embedded misogyny, education is necessary. John School education provided by MOGEF has its impacts, but it must be expanded to include men who have not yet purchased women for sex or been arrested for such. There are many options for the State and local government to address the sex trade in both the Jeju locale and nationwide; acknowledgment of the law's pitfalls in a very different environment compared to that of the early 2000s is pivotal. Demand should be emphasized much more, as its prevention weakens the industry. In turn, the law's details regarding support for exiting women must be given equal importance. It is possible to prevent the sex trade's expansion; Sweden shows how. Curbing demand through an understanding of the social, cultural and legal contributors and indiscriminate support for workers will allow for Jeju, and Korea, to meet the goal of eradicating the local and domestic sex trade.

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