Forced Labour Trafficking and Human Security from Variegated Perspective

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Abstract

Today’s industrial revolution provides much of the facility to universal humanity. However, the current trend of modern technology has also witnessed non-traditional threats such as drugs and fire arms smuggling, money laundering and other heinous crime notably forced labor trafficking. The aim of this study is to identify the forced labor trafficking from various perspectives across the globe and how it affects human security. The discussions were based on literature which obtained from trusted sources like books, journals, theses/dissertations and monographs. The approach of this study is qualitative in nature meanwhile the concept of human security is used to explicate the link between the crime of forced labor trafficking and human survival. The results of this study will reveal the main motives behind this complex crime, threat to human security and the policy which driven to this unlawful activity. In summary, the results show that trafficking in labor trafficking is rampant and has great implications to the human security. Therefore, in a quest to weather this transnational crime, the government should consider such policies which putting the people’s priorities ahead of the country. The findings of the study is also seen as being able to guide stakeholders in figuring out solutions to this transnational crime that spreading atrociously all over the world and tarnishing human dignity and pride.

Keywords: Human Trafficking; Forced Labour; Human Security.


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INTRODUCTION

Today’s industrial revolution provides much of the facility to universal humanity. However, the current trend of modern technology has also witnessed non-traditional and cross-border threats such as smuggling of firearms and drugs, trafficking in people, piracy, cyber crime, money laundering, economic crime and so forth. An estimated profit of up to USD billion a year was believed to be one of the contributing factors to the skyrocketed number in crime.

The black market of human trafficking, for example, has emerged as the second most lucrative crime in the world after the smuggling of drugs and firearms, earning more than USD 150 billion a year (ILO, 2018). Nevertheless, extreme rights violations that have led to injustice and violence against the victims have made this organized crime a global issue and have received serious attention by all countries of the world.

In other words, trafficking is a global problem and therefore poses a global threat to human security. The situation is worsening as the drastic labor demand in today’s global market indirectly makes trafficking crimes more complex and dynamic as they involve silent victims. They occurred in many perspectives and are difficult to detect (Migration Data Portal, 2019).

The United Nations Trade Protocol (UN, 2000) defines trafficking as the act of recruiting, transporting, protecting, or receiving persons; ways of coercion, fraud, or control; and purposes of exploitation, including sexual exploitation or forced labor. While forced labor having inherent relationship between workers and employers, it creates dangerous and life-threatening working conditions. Figures 1 and 2 respectively show a significant growth in trafficking crimes involving sex and exploitation types worldwide. However, in recent years, the percentage of people engaged in trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes (as shown in Figure 2) has dropped from about 58% in 2005 to 6% in 2014, meanwhile the percentage has been increased with regard to forced labor trafficking from about 34% in 2005 to 74% in 2014. Statistic shows that a higher propensity for trafficking victims for labor exploitation has been identified.

![Figure 1: Rates of trafficking persons based on sex in 2005-2016](image1)
Source: IOM 2017

![Figure 2: Types of exploitation among identified victims of trafficking, 2005-2016](image2)
Source: IOM 2017

Although trafficking crime are widely recognized by all countries and international law, the spread of this grave crime is at an alarming rate (IOM, 2017). By
2019, the perpetrator was estimated to have destroyed at least 24.9 million people’s liberty and dignity, about three (3) times the population of New York City (US TIP Report, 2019). Despite modern slavery not being a new phenomenon, it has existed since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and as the era of globalization has begun to rise, human trafficking has become an unfortunate episode of most international migration. This is because, in this situation, trafficking cases often occur and grow like a dark industry resulting in extreme misery to the victims (Kassim, 2015: 195).

Normally, immigrants chose to emigrate for job. Also, it is a symptom of economic and social imbalance fueled by globalization forces that compel individuals to move in hope of a better life (Gupta, 2014). It is reported to be approximately 272 million international migrants worldwide in 2019. It represents an increase of 51 million since 2010 and 3.5 per cent of the global population, compared with 2.8 per cent in 2000 (UN Report, 2019). Most of them consist of economic migrants who have migrated abroad voluntarily to improve their families living (Adamson, 2006: 42). However, they are unfortunately exposed to the risks of fraud and exploitation by their recruitment agents. It even made them forced laborers who were tied to debt (ILO, 2015). Malaysia is no exception to the current wave of migration flows as it has been a host country for many trafficking victims from China or Indonesia (Zarina and Azizan, 2015: xxxi).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Human Security Concept

In 1994, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) introduced human security as a people-centered approach in the Human Development Report of 1994. Human security can be categorized into seven (7) key elements namely economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. The concept of human security may consider as the ideal mechanism today as it can convert the world’s concerns into conventional solutions from both a state and people perspective. This is in contrast to the concept of national security that is only inclined to the state. Therefore, looking at the complications involved in addressing trafficking issues, this study adopts a human security approach as it will be able to explain its relationship to the infringement of individual protection rights.

Figure 3 shows the human security concept coined by a team of researchers from the National University of Malaysia research team based in Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia. The new framework represents the element of threat that UNESCO has previously developed, namely social security after taking into account the uniqueness and differences that exist in the region, especially in Southeast Asia.
Human Trafficking from Variegated Perspectives

The phenomenon of forced labor trafficking is often a debate among leading scholars and policy makers from various perspectives around the world, especially in the context of international relations. Although many legal institutions and preventive measures have been implemented by the countries involved, this organized crime is believed to be widespread and has had an impact on human rights abuses.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), an important element of determining a person’s employment is the relationship that exists between workers and employers in addition to dangerous and life-threatening work conditions (ILO, 2005: 46). Forced labor is the most common element of modern slavery. It is a form of extreme exploitation. Despite the fact that many people associate forced labor and slavery with physical violence, it is actually a method used to force people to work more dangerous and this has been organized in some cultures of the world (Ibid; 2005).

Some local and international scholars who have discussed the issue of trafficking in forced labor from various perspectives are including Azad (2018), Aslam (2018), Hulsey (2018), Ruangsuan (2017), Friman and Reich (2014), Mahdavi Pardis (2011) and Stringer, Whittaker and Simmons (2015). Azad (2018) in his study argues that malicious hiring practices have led many Bangladeshi workers to become trafficked workers for labor exploitation under the Bangladesh Trade and Prevention and Suppression Act 2012 and the United Nations Trafficking Protocol. A study entitled Recruitment of Migrant Workers in Bangladesh: Elements of Human Trafficking for Labor Exploitation shows that some of the recruitment agents in Bangladesh are deceiving potential workers during the recruitment process for exploitation purposes.

There are three (3) important aspects that influence trafficking activities especially among foreign workers. It is related to the process of hiring migrants in their home country even though it is often implicated with exploitation in their destination country. Secondly, he found that the prevalence of trafficking involves lawful channels, whereby the victims were gone through legitimate procedures. Lastly, is that it contributes to the legal analysis of intent to commit prohibited acts which is an important factor in making trafficking a criminal offense in a country. All actions were taken by the recruiter legally or illegally with the sole purpose of maximizing profit.

Meanwhile, Aslam (2018) and Belser and Patrick (2005) explore the motivations behind the growth of this traffic syndicate. Trafficking activities which generated millions of dollars a year was believed to support terrorist activities around the world, including in the Southeast Asia region. According to Aslam MMBM (2018), organized crimes such as human smuggling and trafficking, arms smuggling and money laundering are activities committed by terrorists for the purpose of raising funds around Southeast Asia. As an example, abduction activities in Sabah are believed to be one of the motives of militant groups in the Philippines in a quest to collect funds for their terrorism project by earning.
money through ransom they seize. The findings of this study also highlight that geographical factors such as Malaysia’s strategic positioning also led to the emergence of cross-border crime that directly contributed to the financing of terrorist-related activities.

Belser and Patrick, on the other hand, study the major factors of the phenomenon of labor exploitation in the global economic chain. Belser and Patrick through their research had identified that global profits generated by forced labor exploited by agents or private companies could reach USD 44.2 billion a year, of which USD 31.6 billion comes from trafficked victims. This is a huge and appealing number for many, especially for those who want to gain wealth easily and yet has ripped off the future, self-esteem and universal human security. The biggest profit is more than USD 15 billion as a result of people being trafficked and forced to work in industrialized countries.

These figures show that the benefits may be much greater than those recognized by other national or international organizations. They also support the view that human trafficking is flourishing because it is profitable and that policy measures to combat these challenges must include confiscation of their financial assets involved in trafficking across borders. This require countries to put in place and implement as soon as possible a serious financial investigation system. There are reasons for this labor exploitation including the large number of foreign workers. Meanwhile, according to Ruangsuwan, C. (2017), influx of foreign workers and unauthorized statuses are highly vulnerable to exploitation in trafficking. The situation is aided by factors such as significant economic differences between the country of origin of foreign workers and their destination countries.

According to Ruangsuwan, the fisheries industry has become commercial and fisheries products have grown to become the most important export products in the global and open market growth, other sectors such as services and industrial are also experiencing a huge change in demand. This phenomenon has led many local workers to move to other sectors of interest and has led to a shortage of workers in the fishing industry. In an effort to ensure that the operations in the sector continue to operate, migrant workers, especially those from Myanmar, were offered to fill the gap in the sector and eventually, boost the growth of the fishing sector in Thailand.

However, when migrant workers are brought into the system, strict laws have been enacted that do not allow foreign workers who do not have legal documents to work in the fisheries sector. This situation creates a circumstances in which the agent is drastically unofficial or illegal as a mediator between demand and supply. The presence of unofficial agents and illegal foreign workers is closely linked to the fishing sector in Thailand. Thus, as a precautionary measure and prevention, Ruangsuwan believes that foreign workers and informal agents should be reduced through formal migrant worker management along with improving the working environment as a way to address trafficking activities from spreading in the country.

The similarities between the studies conducted by Azad and Ruangsuwan were that both were concerned about agent involvement. The only difference in terms of agent status is that it is legal and illegal in managing overseas recruitment. Azad’s research has identified major problems at the grassroots level, which are closely linked to the poor management of agents in Bangladesh who recruited foreign workers before they were deported. Labor exploitation occurs when the victim is handed over to the unsuitable employer and forced to do a job that was not agreed upon in the home country. Agents are also said to have taken advantage of victims who
had no educational background and did not understand the substance of the agreement stated in the signed document. Likewise, the Ruangsuwan in his research found out the presence of a huge number of foreigners in a country stemmed from the emergence of an illegal recruitment agent. In addition, there is a view through the study that human security approach is the best way to combat trafficking problems.

Hulsey (2018), in his study has identified that the human security is a unique approach because it is a people-centered that focuses on the individual rather than on traditional security theory in international relations that emphasizes the state as a central. According to Hulsey, as a developed nation, the issue of trafficking in the U.S. is very importance because there are still many local communities who do not clearly fathom the issue. The objective of the study was to examine the movement of people trafficked through airways and the detailed actions taken to overcome this issue. In spite of the fact that the world relies on air routes to cross over the globe and because it depends on one another, the same transportation system and flow to bring in legitimate people and business goods, it can also be used as a gateway to illicit business, including trafficking activities. Therefore, researchers evaluate aviation staff in various industry sectors, governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and survivors through online surveillance platforms and using social media to gain insight into potential participants. The data collection procedures and results used in this research are designed to identify gaps in security protection that enable trafficked persons to pass through the security phase and successfully board the aircraft.

Hulsey has presented strategies that can be used to reduce, if not eliminate, the human trafficking process through air transportation in the United States. This study reveals seven key findings. These include, the definition of human trafficking is not fully understood, the level of public awareness of trafficking crimes, the number of trafficking cases identified, the characteristics of ordinary respondents, the aviation sector have placed minimal emphasis on misunderstandings such as human trafficking, the lack of popularity of trafficking is understood differently by ordinary respondents and the absence of rules and training on dealing with trafficking. Finally, this study introduces a holistic human training training curriculum entitled, Operation Safe House: Human Trafficking Training for Aviation Professionals.

Trafficking in person occurs in many types of employment sectors including the low-skilled industries. According to Pocock et. al (2016), men comprise nearly two-thirds of forced labor trafficked in the low-skilled sector including fishing, agriculture and factory jobs. However, most studies on trafficking focus more on women and girls for sex work or work, but less attention is given to male (male) forced labor. Their study found that 446 men aged 10-58 were identified as trafficking in the fisheries sector (61.7%), manufacturing (19.1%) and begging (5.2%). The fisheries sector involves overtime of 18.8 hours a day and factory workers work an average of 11.9 hours. 35.5% of the survivors were injured during trafficking while the remaining 29.4% did not receive protective equipment such as gloves. The most frequently reported injury among all male workers was weight loss of 61.8% and skin injury of 36.7%.

About one-quarter of trafficked workers receive medical treatment. Six fishermen lost their limbs and found no one was receiving medical attention. Most men or 80.5% had no rest. About a third or 37.8% of them experience severe violence. In conclusion, the impact of being a forced laborer demonstrates the detriment of health. Unscrupulous employers will avoid providing treatment to employees as they may worry about their actions being
detected by authorities body such as a clinic or hospital. The same situation was experienced by forced laborers involved in the New Zealand fisheries sector.

Besides, the study by Stringer, Whittaker and Simmons (2015), provides empirical and conceptual contributions to the emerging debate on free labor in the context of the global labor and value chain. The results of their study found that foreign crew fishing on New Zealand waters had a frightening phase or practice in which most of them were forced labor and exploited. In addition, the study also found that the crew on board also consisted of workers who had been forced to keep working without given enough time to rest. They find it difficult to escape from their current job despite their unwillingness to continue working in poor and deplorable conditions. As a result of the surveys and interviews, Stringer, Whittaker and Simmons were recognized that international bodies such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) should take the issue of labor exploitation more seriously and find the best way to help victims out of adverse employment situations.

In particular, fraudulent, exploitative and coercive work by the employer or agent involved must be completed efficiently and effectively. This study, among other things, emphasizes the importance of employee recruitment process from the initial phases until the termination of the job. This step is taken to avoid any oppression and free laborer whereby the workers can choose a favourable field and not be tied to any inhumane global chain that wants to gain profit alone.

In this regard, studies by Friman & Reich (2014) and Mahdavi Pardis (2011) touched on the formation of a human trafficking policy institution that is not in line with the real life of foreign workers working abroad. Many of the policies enacted are rhetorical and do not portray the actual situation faced by migrant workers. According to Friman and Reich, after four wars in Yugoslavia, ongoing efforts in reconstruction in South-Eastern Europe have focused relatively little on human security dimensions as a means of enhancing the protection of the most vulnerable populations in the region and helping them survive everyday life.

In this context, South East Asia, especially the Western Balkans, has a close relationship with human trafficking. Human trafficking, human security and the Balkans brought together leading scholars, NGOs and government officials to analyze and offer solutions to these challenges. Scientists have described human trafficking as a dynamic economic field in an era of globalization. The rise of this modernization edge not only capable to move commodities, but also the human trafficking activity. They also examine the effectiveness of international policies and practices, the impact of security forces, the emergence of national and regional action plans in the Western Balkans and more broadly in South-Eastern Europe. The results of the Friman and Reich studies show that there is a gap between human security rhetoric and policy institution initiative towards trafficking.

Friman and Reich argue the initiatives taken by international policy makers to emphasize on the human security aspects of victims. Meanwhile, Mahdavi sees this policy issue from a different context. Mahdavi is of the view that the world’s society is often been exposed a same story by the international mass media that trafficking victims were helpless and weak young women abducted by black men with strong muscles, but in reality, they are very different from this stereotype. The country of Dubai, for example, is the main location of his study and often implicated with trafficking cases. However, according to surveys, not all foreign workers are caught, tricked and abused by their agents or employers. Like many others, these foreign workers are free to make choices for the

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betterment of their lives, despite the high risk of dealing with adverse situations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the issues raised by local and international scholars through their research were from various context. Lacking of monitoring or management of hiring agents, little knowledge about human trafficking activities among public communities and less effective anti-trafficking policy by a country are few examples of contributing factors to this continuous profitable inhuman activities across the globe. Thus, following to its impact to the human life and rights, all parties and countries must mobilize their energy and efforts to curb this vicious crime from continuing to threaten the deteriorating human values of the greedy attitude of an internationally-organized syndicate that looks solely on benefits gained instead of individual security. The findings are also expected to give the government some ideas on how to act more effectively in addressing this 'underground business' which is in direct violation of the laws of this country besides dragging many innocent victims into gloomy lives.

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