

Received : June 30, 2022  
Accepted : July 07, 2022  
Published : August 29, 2022

Conference on Business, Social Sciences and Technology  
<https://journal.uib.ac.id/index.php/conescintech>

## Vulnerability And Government Response To Human Trafficking in Batam During The Pandemic

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### Abstract

This study aims at understanding how the municipal government of Batam addresses human trafficking and its issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research utilizes a qualitative methodology and a descriptive approach to examine how local governments are responding to the mounting number of human trafficking cases, especially those that involve women and children. The Riau Islands Regional Police statistics indicates that there were seven suspects in the TIP case in 2017, seventeen suspects in 2018, six suspects in 2019, and eighteen suspects in 2020. Comparatively, based on the number of cases, there were four cases in 2017, twelve cases in 2018, four cases in 2019, and ten cases in 2020. That which occurs continuously till the lockdown. The results of the study indicate that: (a) The economic downturn, lack of education, lack of information, and socio-cultural conditions are factors that influence the increase in human trafficking during the pandemic; (b) Weak law enforcement and (c) a lack of cross-sectoral cooperation are the most significant factors that contribute to the escalation of human trafficking in Batam.

### Keywords:

Human Trafficking, Government Response, and Illegal Immigration

### Introduction

The pandemic caused by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has not only shed light on existing disparities, but it has also made them worse. Already vulnerable communities are absorbing the lion's share of the negative effects that COVID-19 is having not just on their health but also on their educational and economic opportunities [1]. This heightened impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations has significant repercussions for persons who are at danger of being exploited in human trafficking or who are already being trafficked [1]. Human trafficking is a worldwide and organized crime that is rapidly expanding. Since it seeks to exploit the victims, this offense violates human rights (HAM). In Southeast Asia, Indonesia ranks second only to Thailand as a country with a high rate of human trafficking [2]. Human trafficking cases in Indonesia are handled by the Indonesian National Police (Polri) [3]. As a law enforcement entity in Indonesia, the National Police plays a significant role in handling human trafficking matters before the courts. Indonesia, as a country that will not reject globalization, responds to the evolution of globalization with an open mind. Taking advantage of the momentum of globalization, one of which is the acceleration of human movement between nations, the Indonesian government adopted a visa-free policy for short-term stays (BVKS). This visa-free program is intended to make visiting Indonesia easier for foreigners. This visa-free program is projected to enhance the number of foreign tourists who visit Indonesia. As a result, the ramifications can affect the economic sector, including transportation, lodging, hotels, restaurants, entertainment

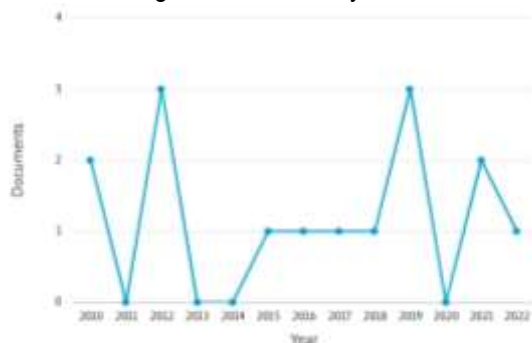
venues, jobs, and several other areas [4]. The Indonesian government issues visa-free permits to 45 countries under the legislative framework of Presidential Regulation (Perpres) No.69 of 2015. Furthermore, the President issued Presidential Decree No. 104 of 2015 in September 2015, expanding the number of visa-free recipient nations to 90. The climax occurred in 2016, when President Joko Widodo signed Presidential Regulation Number 21 of 2016, which repealed the previous Presidential Regulation by expanding the number of countries obtaining visa-free benefits to 169. This visa-free approach, however, is not without drawbacks. Several papers give numerous data that demonstrate the harmful impact of the visa-free regime, particularly in relation to transnational crime. Trafficking is one of the most common transnational crimes, yet it is the most heinous crime against human dignity [5]. Humans, like products and animals, are used as trading objects in this crime. The number of cases of human trafficking in Indonesia is unknown [6]. The data is an iceberg phenomena; many cases are not reported, many cases are difficult to detect, and there are disparities in the handling and number of cases between institutions. These problems are now more dire as a result of COVID-19 [1]. The trafficking of people is an organized crime that can be committed using either traditional or contemporary ways [7]. The most prevalent explanation provided by victims is that they were subjected to legal action because of an agreement. Violations of slavery in the form of deprivation of freedom from someone, which is carried out by a strong economic group against a weaker economic group, is a violation of human rights. Because of this, the prevention of trafficking from the perspective of human rights breaches needs to be carried out in a complete and integrated manner. This can be accomplished at the level of policy through law, implementation, and the courts [8]. Because victims are frequently pre-recruited by illegal recruitment companies or illegal agents who pay individual brokers without permission to recruit workers or arrange documentation for job seekers, it is very difficult to find criminals involved in human trafficking. This is due to the fact that victims are often pre-recruited by illegal recruitment companies [8]. The victims, who had been enticed by recruiters, fine agents, and others, were then taken into custody and exploited in a variety of different ways, including through physical and sexual violence. Recruitment, transportation, residence, transfer, transfer, or acceptance of a person by means of threats of violence, kidnapping, kidnapping, forgery, fraud, abuse of power, or a position of vulnerability, bondage, or payment for payment must obtain the consent of the person who controls it by another person. Another person must obtain the consent of the person who controls it in order to do any of these things [6], [9]. As previously stated, human trafficking is one of the most serious challenges in Indonesia, particularly in border areas such as Batam City. For instance, in the first quarter of 2022, authorities discovered four cases of human trafficking. The unlawful path chosen by migrant workers by crossing the Malacca Strait is extremely perilous, and five migrant worker boats have sunk in the last two months, killing at least 37 people. Six defendants were detained in the four cases, and 50 potential migrant laborers without documents were rescued. The first case uncovered by the authorities involved a boat carrying 13 migrant workers that sunk on January 18, 2022, in the waters of Pontian, Johor, Malaysia. Six migrant workers were killed in that incident. The second instance made public by the police is a follow-up to the arrest of an unauthorized migrant worker smuggler by the Indonesian Navy on January 19. The police then raided a shelter for unregistered migrant laborers in Batam's Bengkong District on January 23, 2022. In addition, on January 23, 2022, police raided a refuge for undocumented migrant workers in Batam's Bengkong District. Finally, on January 26, police discovered the entry of nine unauthorized migrant laborers from various places via Hang Nadim Airport in Batam. Reflecting to all those situation of human trafficking in Indonesia, this research will concentrate on dealing with human trafficking cases in Batam City and will examine the impediments to dealing with human trafficking cases in Batam City during the pandemic (2019-present).

## Literature Review

The literature papers offered were chosen based on abstracts, keywords, conclusions, focus, and the accreditation of publishing journals, with journals accredited by Scopus being emphasized. NVivo was then used to evaluate 15 selected publications relevant to the government's response to human trafficking by using ( TITLE-ABS-

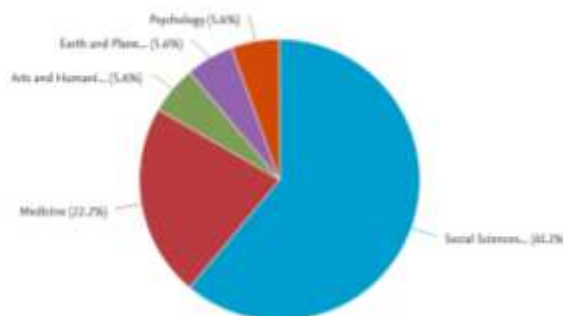
KEY ( "human trafficking" ) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ( government ) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "Southeast asia" ) AND PUBYEAR > 2009 as queries. According to the study's findings, most of the research was undertaken between 2010 and 2022, with the majority of it taking place in Southeast Asia between 2012, 2019 and 2021 (see Fig 1). With 11 articles specifically discussing the government's policy implementation response to human trafficking (see Fig 2).

Fig 1. Document By Years



Source: Scopus (2022)

Fig2. Document By Subject Area



Source: Scopus (2022)

The VOSviewer software was used to determine the most significant ideas in the literature from 2010 to 2022 based on the indications used in prior studies. The findings indicate that the government's response in the form of intervention and prevention is critical in anti-trafficking efforts. Furthermore, the informal sector, the commercial sector, and public-private partnerships all have an impact on the program's sustainability.

Table 1. VOSviewer Clustering

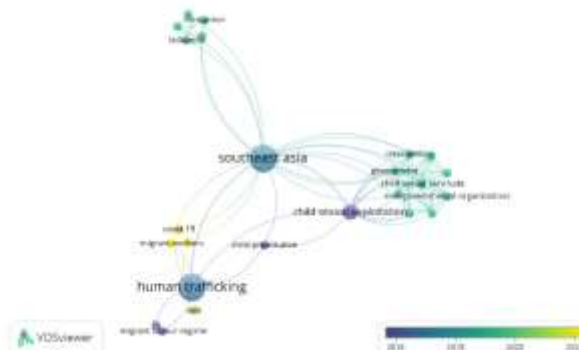
Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Anti-Trafficking	Corruption	Migrant Labour
Child Sexual Exploitation	Vulnerability	Victims
Human Rights	Human Trafficking	Covid-19
Slavery	Victims	

Government		
Intervention		
Prevention		
Non Government Organization		
Social Determinants		

Source: VOSviewer Analysis, 2022

The three analysis clusters generated by the VOSviewer software analysis (see Table 1) show that the majority of the literature reviewed in cluster 1 covers government intervention, government prevention, and non-governmental organizations as social determinants. While in Cluster 2, the majority of the studies focus on how corruption may be one of the main influence variables in human trafficking victim vulnerability. Furthermore, earlier research identified as Cluster 3 tend to focus more on victims of uncontrolled illicit migrant labor during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fig 3. Network Visualization



Source: VOSviewer Analysis (2022)

According to Balckburn, Taylor, and Davis (2010), human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a social problem that has tarnished the image of several Southeast Asian countries including Cambodia and Thailand. There is a wide range of opinions regarding the severity of this issue, and there has been essentially no research conducted on the sexual exploitation of children in these countries. The results of observations made together with interviews conducted with workers at nongovernmental organizations, government officials, and women and children working in the sex business in Cambodia and Thailand are presented in this article. These findings, which were gathered from people who operate in this industry on a daily basis, shed light on the intricate structure of the business and its inner-workings. The findings of this study are used to discuss the ramifications of change [8]. Which was also described in Yea (2015), Recent work in the field of critical geography has brought attention to representations of vulnerable or exploited groups that articulate racist or neocolonial imaginations. This includes instances in which geographical imaginations are implicated in the classification and characterization of groups for the purposes of the law. In the case of vulnerable groups of migrants, such methods might be employed to generate distinctions that justify the socio-spatial exclusion or containment. As a result, these procedures can have serious implications for real people who must navigate the consequences of classification. Additionally, the government's interest in maintaining the current labor/migration regime is equally as significant as racist and

neocolonial imaginations, and they intersect with the latter in productive ways to sort vulnerable migrants into categories of trafficked and non-trafficked. This is done in order to maintain the current labour/migration regime [10].

Moreover, Thu (2018) in his research explain that trafficking in persons, both on a global and national scale, is a growing problem that is affecting all of the countries that are located in the Asia-Pacific area. As a result of the strengthening of regional cooperation and integration, Southeast Asia in particular faces a significant challenge posed by trafficking. Transnational mobility and the ease with which people can move around, along with the development of information and technology, all contribute to the facilitation of illegal activities like trafficking. The fast urbanization and economic development contribute to an increase in the demand for exploitative labor practices such as illicit commercial sex and other deprivations. The governments of all of the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as the ASEAN organization as a whole, have acknowledged the problem and committed to finding a solution to it. Currently, there are several multinational projects under place that have the purpose of addressing the problem of human trafficking [11]. On the other hand, Ford and Lyons (2012) state that the global anti-trafficking agenda has resulted in an enormous growth in the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government organizations, and international agencies that are working to prevent human trafficking, assist in the prosecution of traffickers, and aid in the rescue and return of so-called "victims." The nation of Indonesia is not an exception. There, as in other parts of Southeast Asia, international organizations and donor nations have played an important part in determining the measures that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governments take to combating human trafficking. In order to establish policy and legislative solutions, as well as treatment and mitigation programs, international non-governmental organizations and cross - functional and cross organizations have teamed with local non-governmental organizations and municipal governments [6]. In instance, the practice of trafficking people for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a serious societal issue that has soiled the reputation of a number of countries in Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia and Thailand. Research into the sexual exploitation of children in these nations has, for the most part, been nonexistent. The results of this research are analyzed and discussed in terms of the implications of transformation. Together with advances in information and communication technology, factors like as international movement as well as the accessibility in which people can travel around contributes to the ease of unlawful activities. Rapid urbanization and economic growth both lead to an increase in the need for abusive labor practices such as illegal commercial sex and other forms of deprivation. These practices include: The governments of every nation that is a part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have collectively acknowledged the issue at hand and declared their intention to work together to find a solution [6], [8], [10], [11].

## **Research Methods**

A descriptive research method with a qualitative approach is used in this study. According to Aspers (2019), data collection techniques qualitative approaches refer to how researchers gather accurate data according to the procedure so that there are no errors in the data collecting strategy [12]. With the data source, secondary data sources are sources that do not directly supply data, such as the agency's official website or other data sources. Then, as tools, a systematic literature review, evaluation synthesizing, and meta-analysis are used to accurately and reliably summarize various evidences that are extremely useful for researchers, academics, governments, non-governmental organizations, and others to stay up to date in following the associated with the research topic [13]. Literature reviews are distinguished by the fact that they collect information on a certain subject from a variety of sources, are well written, and include little particular prejudice [12]. As a result, a precise search and selection approach is required when gathering related research publications.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Human Trafficking in Batam***

Batam, being a Free Trade Zone between Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia, has been identified as a source, destination, and transit point for trafficking activities. The way trafficking is framed at the national level effects



national trafficking policies [14]. Furthermore, the emergence of diverse national frames can influence whether or not there is a widely accepted international meaning. National framing determines the types of policy and program responses. Human trafficking in Batam Indonesia has been classified as sex trafficking, servitude, and forced labor. While working to secure the trafficking problem, the Indonesian government prioritizes trafficking in women and children, the Malaysian government prioritizes immigrant problems in order to solve trafficking in person, and Singapore protects its borders from illegal migrants and asylum seekers with trafficking problems [15]. However, the Batam Free Trade Zone's human trafficking problem is mostly focused on women and children trafficked for sexual exploitation. Since 2009, the Government of Indonesia, and particularly the Government of Batam, have been proactive in carrying out different steps to prevent and combat human trafficking [16]. This endeavor is split into two categories: internal efforts and external efforts. Internal efforts take the form of the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare Regulation No. 25 of 2009 concerning the National Action Plan for the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Exploitation of Children, as well as the issuance of Batam City Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2013 concerning the Prevention and Handling of Trafficking in Persons Victims [16]. In terms of external activities, the Indonesian government collaborates with Australia in the Bali Process to provide law enforcement training on human trafficking. Indonesia is also a member of the Working Group on Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Human Trafficking, particularly of Women and Children. Batam City Regulation No. 5 of 2013, which comprises legislation regarding the prevention and treatment of victims of human trafficking, emphasizes prevention measures over punitive efforts against perpetrators of these crimes. This is intended to avoid duplication of authority between levels of government, but it is hoped that it will foster collaborations between multiple areas and lines of government, with the expectation that if prevention can be carried out optimally, it will also be able to reduce the number of victims of human trafficking [17]. The Mayor of Batam established the Task Force for the Eradication and Handling of Human Trafficking in Persons (TPPO) and the Batam City Level Regional Action Plan (RAD), allowing for a better coordinated effort to combat trafficking in Batam.

***Inhibiting Factors For The Implementation Of Handling The Problem Of Human Trafficking*** According to research, one of the main causes for the growth in trafficking of women and children is poverty; they try to improve their economic status by looking for job [18], [19]. However, because of the suffering they are experiencing, their quest to find job is not as straightforward as it appears. Employers will entice them to take a good job, but they are unaware that they would be trafficked. As previously said, there are various factors which influence the prevalence of human trafficking [5], [20]. Whether you like it or not, poverty is a role in human trafficking, particularly among women and children. This description is supported by data on human trafficking victims in the city of Batam, which demonstrate that the victims are women who are vulnerable and come from a weak economic background. As a consequence, human trafficking frequently takes the shape of job offers in consideration for significant sums of money, with the intention of attracting victims with enough promises [6]. The provisions of Law Number 21 of 2007 concerning the Eradication of Human Trafficking are said to have a positive nature, according to human trafficking. This law was passed in 2007. However, we are not yet at the stage of actual implementation. can be carried out as effectively as possible, which is why, in the context of measures to combat trafficking, human beings have not demonstrated the level of performance that they are capable of. In the context of handling, there are not many examples to choose from in terms of the amount of potential problems that the legal system could resolve. It is generally agreed that the Indonesian legal system's preference for insider trading does not provide nearly enough protection against a lack of knowledge. The lack of knowledge and understanding of human trafficking among the cops makes them less progressive in their approach to dealing with the crimes associated with trafficking [16]. This, of course, makes it more challenging to investigate and prosecute incidents of human trafficking. There are not yet any institutions that can work together to combat human trafficking, and the general public's awareness of the issue is not nearly as widespread as it should be [14]. In point of fact, there are a lot of roadblocks in the way of providing support to victims of human trafficking and their families. There were no roadblocks, not only from the families of the victims or law enforcement, but also from either

side of the conflict. In most cases, members of the family are reticent to discuss the matter publicly for a variety of different reasons. Apprehension regarding particular elements, such as criminal organizations involved in human trafficking. There are many obstacles to overcome when it comes to human trafficking, particularly trafficking in women and trafficking in minors. Throughout the years, a great number of endeavors have been undertaken. In this scenario, there are three (three) primary challenges that must be overcome in order to move forward with a project that involves the penal legislation of the Indonesian judicial system (Sistem Peradilan Penjarangan). These challenges are as follows:

1. The culture of the community
2. Policies enacted by the government, including laws and regulations
3. And those who work in law enforcement

The illegal trade in people is known as a transnational or cross-border crime. In light of the circumstances, law enforcement authorities are carrying out their duties and upholding the law. The law stipulates that the government must collaborate with a variety of different organizations. In the majority of instances, laws can be made to function properly once the criminals have been apprehended. However, in practice, it is extremely challenging to apprehend criminals because the person responsible for the crime often lives a significant distance from the location where the crime was committed. frequently located in a distant location from where the case investigation is taking place. There is a reduction in the capacity of law enforcement authorities to carry out their duties. as a result of the cops not providing any help or aid. In light of this, it can be deduced that the investigation into the alleged human trafficking is proceeding very slowly.

## Conclusions

Poverty, a lack of education, a lack of information, and poor socio-cultural situations that are detrimental to their development are all factors that contribute to trafficking in persons, particularly women and children. These factors make it more likely that victims of trafficking will be women and children. In patriarchal societies, women are viewed and treated as a subordinate group, which places them in a position where they are extremely susceptible to all types of abuse as well as human trafficking. In addition to a lack of information among law enforcement officers, there are obstacles in the process of handling cases of trafficking in persons in the enforcement of Law Number 21 of 2007 concerning the Eradication of the Crime of Trafficking in Persons. On top of this, there is a lack of coordination across the case management sector. In order to combat human trafficking and transnational organized crime, governments need to strengthen their relationships not just with other local and state authorities, but also with international organizations. There will be stricter legal penalties taken against traffickers in order to generate a deterrent impact, and the government will pay special attention to the objective of securing victims through the expansion of the apparatus and the community. To protect vulnerable populations from becoming victims of human trafficking, it is important to organize a number of different outreach initiatives and to also reach out to the local community. Participation of children and women in commercial activities.

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