
HUMAN TRAFFICKING OF INDONESIAN CITIZENS IN CAMBODIA: PERSPECTIVES FROM CRIMINOLOGY, VICTIMOLOGY, AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

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Abstract: Human trafficking involving Indonesian citizens in Cambodia demonstrates the complexity of transnational crime, which requires multidisciplinary analysis to understand the causal factors, patterns of victimization, and the effectiveness of law enforcement mechanisms. This study examines the practice of human trafficking against Indonesian citizens in Cambodia from the perspectives of criminology, victimology, and international law. Using qualitative methods with an empirical juridical approach, this study identifies a number of key issues, including recruitment methods based on job scams, the economic vulnerability of victims, weak cross-border surveillance, and limited law enforcement cooperation between Indonesia and Cambodia. The findings highlight the imbalance between the existing international legal framework and its implementation in the field, which is influenced by bureaucratic obstacles, a lack of inter-agency coordination, and the low capacity of destination countries to protect victims. This study recommends strengthening bilateral cooperation mechanisms, increasing law enforcement capacity, and expanding victim protection and recovery programs. The results of this study are expected to support more comprehensive and equitable efforts to prevent and combat human trafficking.

Keywords: Cambodia; Criminology; Human Trafficking; Indonesian Citizens; Victimology.

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1. Introduction

Human trafficking is a form of transnational crime that continues to grow and exploit complex cross-border networks. In recent years, various reports have shown an increase in cases of human trafficking involving Indonesian citizens in Cambodia, mainly through fraudulent recruitment in the technology sector, online scam centers, and formal industries. Victims are promised high-paying jobs, but in reality are forced to work in exploitative conditions and under strict control. This phenomenon is in line with the regional trend of human trafficking in Southeast Asia, which has been identified as an emerging hotspot by international migration researchers (UNODC 2022).

From a criminological perspective, the trafficking of Indonesian citizens to Cambodia can be explained through strain theory and structural vulnerability frameworks. Economic pressures, poverty, limited employment opportunities, and unequal access to decent work in sending regions create conditions that increase susceptibility to deceptive recruitment practices. Research by Ford and Lyons demonstrates that labor migration from Indonesia is often shaped by structural inequalities and weak labor protections, which traffickers exploit by disguising illegal recruitment as legitimate overseas employment opportunities (Ford & Lyons 2012). These criminogenic conditions contribute to the persistence of trafficking networks that operate across national boundaries (Michele Ford and Lenore Lyons, 2012).

Victimology further highlights that trafficking victims experience multidimensional harm extending beyond economic exploitation. Victims often suffer physical abuse, psychological trauma, coercion, social isolation, and long-term mental health consequences. An observational cross-sectional study conducted by Kiss et al. on post-trafficking services in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam reveals that survivors frequently experience depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and social deprivation as a result of prolonged exploitation and control (Kiss et al. 2015). These findings emphasize the need to view human trafficking not merely as a crime against the state, but also as a severe violation of individual human dignity and well-being (Ligia Kiss, Nicola S Pocock, Varaporn Naisanguansri, Soksreymom Suos, Brett Dickson, Doan Thuy, Jobst Koehler, Kittiphan Sirisup, Nisakorn Pongrungrsee, Van Anh Nguyen, Rosilyne Borland, Poonam Dhavan, 2015).

From a legal standpoint, human trafficking constitutes a serious violation of international law, particularly under the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol), which obligates states to prevent trafficking, prosecute offenders, and protect victims.

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Despite this normative framework, implementation in Southeast Asia remains inconsistent due to limited law enforcement capacity, weak inter-agency coordination, and divergent legal standards among ASEAN member states. Reports by UNODC and ASEAN indicate that cross-border legal cooperation between Indonesia and Cambodia remains insufficient, particularly in victim identification, repatriation, and prosecution of transnational trafficking syndicates (Fadhel 2023). The case of trafficking of Indonesian citizens in Cambodia shows a gap between the international legal framework and its implementation in the field. Research by Mohamed Amine (2025) reveals that coordination between Indonesian agencies and destination countries is often hampered by bureaucracy, differences in jurisdiction, and limitations in the diplomacy of protecting Indonesian citizens (Amine 2025). Given the complexity of the contributing factors, patterns of victimization, and obstacles to international law enforcement, this study aims to analyze the trafficking of Indonesian citizens in Cambodia from the perspectives of criminology, victimology, and international law, with a focus on identifying the root causes and evaluating the effectiveness of protection mechanisms and cross-border cooperation. Against this background, the main added value of this paper lies in its integrated legal perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the causes of trafficking, the pattern of victimization, and challenges in cross-border law enforcement and victim protection. The research aims to identify the root causes of vulnerability, assess the impacts on victims, and evaluate the effectiveness of existing legal and institutional protection mechanisms. Structurally, this paper is organized into five sections: the introduction, a theoretical framework, an analysis of trafficking cases involving Indonesian citizens in Cambodia, a discussion of legal and institutional responses, and a concluding section that presents key findings and policy recommendations.

2. Literature review

Human trafficking has been widely recognized in the literature as a complex form of transnational organized crime rooted in structural inequalities, weak governance, and evolving global labor markets. Studies consistently emphasize that trafficking is not merely an individual criminal act, but a systemic phenomenon shaped by socio-economic vulnerabilities, migration regimes, and international legal gaps. The trafficking of Indonesian citizens in Cambodia exemplifies how these dynamics intersect, necessitating a critical review of criminological, victimological, and legal

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scholarship to identify both theoretical contributions and empirical limitations in existing studies.

- **Criminological Explanations of Human Trafficking:** Criminological literature largely frames human trafficking through push–pull factors, routine activity theory, and strain theory. (Shelley, 2010) argues that poverty, unemployment, and global demand for cheap labor create fertile conditions for trafficking networks. However, while this framework explains structural drivers, critics note that it often underestimates the role of organized crime adaptability and state complicity. In the context of Indonesia and Cambodia, recruiters use social media, illegal agents, and scam companies to lure victims. A UNODC (2022) expands this analysis by demonstrating how trafficking networks in Southeast Asia have shifted toward online recruitment and cybercrime-linked labor exploitation, particularly in scam centers operating in Cambodia and neighboring countries. This evolution challenges earlier criminological models that focused primarily on physical labor and sex trafficking, indicating a need to integrate cybercrime and digital criminology perspectives (Lavorgna 2019).
- **Victim Vulnerability in Victimology:** Victimological scholarship emphasizes that trafficking victims experience layered victimization before, during, and after exploitation. (Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017) demonstrate that vulnerability is socially produced through limited migration literacy, economic dependency, and power asymmetries between recruiters and workers. However, much of the victimology literature has focused disproportionately on women and sexual exploitation, leaving male victims and forced labor underexplored. Empirical research by Kiss et al. (2015), based on post-trafficking services in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam, provides critical evidence that trafficking victims, both male and female, suffer severe psychological harm, including PTSD, depression, and long-term social exclusion. These findings challenge legal systems that prioritize prosecution over rehabilitation. IOM (2023) research on victims of human trafficking in Southeast Asia shows that many victims are unaware that they are being deceived until they reach their destination country. In the case of Indonesian citizens in Cambodia, victims were forced to work in online crime centers, experiencing physical threats, confinement, forced labor, and human rights violations. The literature emphasizes that the approach to handling victims must be rights-based, reject the criminalization of victims, and prioritize psychosocial assistance and long-term recovery.

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- **Challenges in Cross-Border Law Enforcement:** Legal literature shows that human trafficking as a transnational crime requires cooperation between countries in investigation, prosecution, and victim protection. However, various studies reveal that countries often encounter obstacles such as differences in legal systems, weak data exchange, lack of mutual legal assistance, and limited law enforcement resources (Gallagher, 2010). The case of Indonesian citizens trafficked in Cambodia illustrates how gaps in law enforcement and delays in cross-border responses cause victims to remain trapped in criminal networks for longer periods of time. The literature also highlights that the capacity of police agencies and diplomatic representatives is an important factor in the effective handling of cases.
- **International Legal Instruments in Combating Trafficking in Persons:** A number of international instruments, such as the 2000 Palermo Protocol, the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, form the basis of international law that regulates the obligations of states in preventing, prosecuting, and rehabilitating victims of human trafficking. The literature mentions that although Indonesia and Cambodia are both parties to these protocols and conventions, their implementation is often not optimal due to political, administrative, and institutional limitations (UNODC, 2021). The alignment of national laws with international standards is also an important factor, including the principles of non-punishment, victim protection, and cross-border cooperation in law enforcement.
- **The Role of Technology and the Transformation of TPPO Modus Operandi:** Recent literature shows that human trafficking is increasingly linked to technology-based crimes, particularly online scamming operations commonly found in Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2023). Digital technology is used to recruit victims through social media, manipulate the identity of recruiters, facilitate illegal payments, and control victims through electronic surveillance. Scientific studies confirm that countries must improve their cybercrime investigation capabilities, establish joint data centers, and implement monitoring technologies to break the chain of modern human trafficking.
- **The Importance of a Multi-Disciplinary Approach in Handling Human Trafficking Crimes:** The literature emphasizes that human trafficking cannot

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be viewed solely from a criminal law perspective, but must integrate criminology, victimology, international politics, security studies, and human rights protection. Several studies show that the success of addressing human trafficking crimes is highly dependent on inter-agency coordination, international diplomacy, cross-border legal harmonization, civil society involvement, and a comprehensive victim protection approach.

By understanding these various factors, stakeholders, including the Indonesian government, Cambodian authorities, law enforcement agencies, international organizations such as IOM and UNODC, and civil society communities, can strengthen mechanisms for preventing and handling cases of human trafficking involving Indonesian citizens in Cambodia. Cross-border collaboration is crucial to improve the effectiveness of early detection, victim protection responses, perpetrator prosecution, and comprehensive recovery for survivors. Human trafficking cases in Cambodia highlight the urgency of reforming bilateral coordination systems, enhancing law enforcement capacity, and strengthening data and intelligence sharing mechanisms. In addition, active community participation and increased digital security literacy for prospective migrant workers are important aspects in preventing recruitment through increasingly sophisticated online methods. Thus, efforts to eradicate human trafficking not only require strong law enforcement but also ethical migration governance, government accountability, and respect for human dignity. This approach is in line with the normative principles in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, which mandates the protection of all Indonesian citizens, as well as the values of humanity and social justice in Pancasila. The integration of national policies, international cooperation, and community participation is key to ensuring that the protection of Indonesian citizens abroad is not only reactive but also sustainable and human rights-oriented.

3. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative method with a legal-empirical approach, which aims to analyze the phenomenon of human trafficking of Indonesian citizens in Cambodia based on the perspectives of criminology, victimology, and international law. The legal-empirical approach is used to examine the relationship between applicable legal norms and the reality of their implementation, the dynamics of transnational crime, and the process of victim protection in the context of international cooperation between Indonesia and Cambodia.

3.1 Literature Study: The first step in this study was to conduct a literature review to collect theories, legal concepts, and previous studies related to human trafficking,

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criminological factors, patterns of victimization, cross-border law enforcement, and relevant international legal instruments. The literature sources used include books, indexed scientific journals, academic articles, reports from international organizations such as UNODC, IOM, and ILO, international conventions (Palermo Protocol 2000 and ACTIP), as well as Indonesian laws and regulations such as Law No. 21 of 2007 concerning the Eradication of Trafficking in Persons.

3.2 Analysis of Legislation and Legal Documents: The researchers analyzed various national and international legal instruments relevant to the handling of human trafficking cases, including the 2000 Palermo Protocol, the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP), Law No. 21 of 2007, Law No. 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, and the bilateral memorandum of understanding between Indonesia and Cambodia on the handling of victims of human trafficking. This analysis aims to understand the legal basis, state obligations, international cooperation mechanisms, and victim protection standards based on international human rights law.

3.3 Identification of Human Trafficking Issues: This study identifies various issues that arise in the trafficking of Indonesian citizens in Cambodia, including complex online recruitment methods, weak migration controls, differences in legal systems between countries, obstacles to cross-jurisdictional law enforcement, poor information exchange, and limited victim protection mechanisms. The identification was carried out through analysis of official government reports, case documents, international organization reports, investigative reports, and other secondary data.

3.4 Theoretical Framework: Based on literature studies and legal analysis, researchers developed a theoretical framework that includes: criminological theory on push and pull factors in human trafficking; victimology theory on victim vulnerability and the impact of victimization; law enforcement effectiveness theory; and international legal concepts related to transnational crime and cross-border cooperation. This theoretical framework serves as the basis for analyzing the dynamics of human trafficking and the state's response to handling cases involving Indonesian citizens in Cambodia.

3.5 Qualitative Methods: Qualitative methods were used to conduct an in-depth analysis of secondary data, including UNODC and IOM reports on human trafficking trends in Southeast Asia, academic publications on transnational TPPO, annual reports from relevant ministries/agencies, and Indonesia-Cambodia bilateral agreement documents. Qualitative analysis allows for a comprehensive

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understanding of crime patterns, victim vulnerability, and law enforcement effectiveness without conducting surveys or questionnaires.

3.6 Data Analysis: The collected data were analyzed using descriptive-qualitative methods, namely grouping findings based on causal factors, forms of victimization, crime patterns, obstacles to law enforcement, the effectiveness of international cooperation, and the level of compliance with international law. These findings were then compared with the theories and legal provisions that had been studied to produce a consistent and scientifically valid understanding.

3.7 Inference: Based on data analysis, researchers drew conclusions regarding: criminological factors that encourage human trafficking of Indonesian citizens in Cambodia, forms of victimization and the effectiveness of victim protection responses, and the level of effectiveness of law enforcement and international cooperation between Indonesia and Cambodia, including from an international law perspective. These conclusions were obtained through a systematic process of interpreting data and theory.

3.8 Recommendation: The study produced recommendations to strengthen the handling of TPPO, through increased legal harmonization, strengthened international cooperation mechanisms, increased capacity for digital crime investigation, accelerated mutual legal assistance, and strengthened victim protection based on international human rights standards, such as the victim-centered approach and the non-punishment principle. These recommendations are expected to improve the effectiveness of law enforcement and strengthen the protection of Indonesian citizens from the crime of human trafficking.

By using the juridical-empirical method and qualitative approach, researchers ensure that all data used comes from official, objective, and relevant sources in order to produce a comprehensive and meaningful analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

Criminological Factors Contributing to Human Trafficking Involving Indonesian Citizens as Victims in Cambodia

Human trafficking involving Indonesian citizens in Cambodia is part of an organized transnational crime that depends on the interaction between social and economic factors and weaknesses in cross-border law enforcement. To fully understand this phenomenon, criminology, victimology, and international law provide an important analytical framework for explaining why victims are recruited, transported, and systematically exploited, as well as the factors that contribute to human trafficking involving Indonesian citizens in Cambodia:

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- Economic Pressure and Structural Vulnerability in the Country of Origin:

Economic factors play a major role in increasing the risk of human trafficking. (Setyawati 2021), in her article "When Work is Violence: The Intersection of Migration and Vulnerability in Southeast Asia," explains that economic pressure, poverty, and low migration literacy make prospective Indonesian workers more vulnerable to recruitment fraud (Setyawati 2021). Social vulnerability also influences and exacerbates the situation. Individuals with low education or without access to information about safe migration procedures tend to be more easily deceived by the lure of high-paying jobs advertised on social media or by informal agents.

- Modus Operandi of Transnational Criminal Networks:

Recruitment methods have evolved with technological advances. The 2022 UNODC report on Trafficking in Persons in Southeast Asia notes that recruitment through digital media has become the dominant method, especially for bringing victims to scam compounds in Cambodia (UNODC 2023). The modus operandi includes: online recruitment through fake job vacancies, falsification of employment identities, control of identity documents, and exploitation based on violence and intimidation. UNODC also found that criminal networks exploit weak cross-border surveillance and the ease of digital movement to expand recruitment (UNODC 2023)

- Lack of Oversight and Education on Safe Migration in Indonesia:

The lack of supervision and education on safe migration in Indonesia is also a contributing factor to human trafficking. This is due to the Indonesian migration supervision system, which still faces structural obstacles, including a lack of inter-agency coordination and weak verification of illegal recruitment agencies. The lack of socialization on safe migration also makes it difficult for the public to distinguish between legal and illegal recruitment. In criminology, this condition is classified as an opportunity structure, which is a situation where criminals have ample opportunities due to the weakness of the state control system (Lukas, Agid, Pardede, Sri, Aninda Mastur, and Jannah 2025).

- Structural Conditions in Cambodia That Open Up Opportunities for Exploitation:

The ASEAN ACTIP Implementation Review Report (2021) shows that Cambodia faces major challenges in tackling human trafficking, including weak law enforcement, limited investigation capabilities, and high levels of institutional corruption. These factors make Cambodia a strategic location for criminal networks to operate. These conditions also enable perpetrators to detain victims, control their

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identity documents, and force them to work in closed environments, especially in cyber scam centers (Pramuda and Ayunindya 2023).

- **Victimological Vulnerability of Victims During Exploitation:**

According to Cathy Zimmerman, Ligia Kiss (2017), in her study entitled *Human Trafficking and Exploitation: A Global Health Concern*, victims of human trafficking experience significant physical, emotional, and psychological stress, including depression, PTSD, and helplessness due to ongoing threats. This condition reinforces the cycle of victimization, which is a situation where victims are unable to escape even though they realize that they are being exploited (Cathy Zimmerman 2017).

Forms of Victimization and Protective Responses for Indonesian Citizens Who Are Victims of Human Trafficking in Cambodia

The forms of victimization experienced by Indonesian citizens as victims of human trafficking in Cambodia reflect a pattern of systemic and layered exploitation. Victims are generally recruited through fake job offers on social media, then illegally transferred to digital forced labor centers operating under cyber fraud schemes. As explained by the Asia Foundation (2023) in its report on human trafficking in cyber scam operations, many victims are forced to work 14-20 hours per day, are closely monitored, and are subjected to physical punishment and unrealistic fines when they do not meet certain targets. This form of victimization includes physical violence, psychological control, extortion, and identity erasure through the confiscation of passports and personal documents (Hermawan and Muthia 2025).

Psychologically, victims experience severe pressure in the form of threats, emotional manipulation, and coercive control, which hinder their ability to escape or seek help. A study by Human Rights Watch (2022) on human trafficking for online fraud in Southeast Asia found that victims often experienced deep depression, chronic fear, and complex trauma due to repeated intimidation and inhumane working conditions. The study shows how perpetrators use threats of violence against victims' families in Indonesia as an additional means of control, thereby deepening the victims' dependence and helplessness (Siti Hadriyani, Eka Santi Simarmata, Gita Jesica Panjaitan, Gusnadi Nugraha Muhammad Diki Alfiandra, 2025).

In addition to physical and psychological violence, another form of victimization is economic exploitation that traps victims in situations similar to modern slavery. As described by the International Crisis Group (2023), victims are usually promised high salaries, but once in Cambodia, they are forced to work without pay or receive wages that do not match the fake contracts created by the perpetrators. When victims

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refuse, they are threatened with being sold to other criminal companies, a pattern that the Crisis Group refers to as the "commodification of labor," where victims are treated as commodities that can be traded between syndicates (Skivo Marcelino Mandey 2022).

In terms of protection, the Indonesian government has responded at multiple levels through diplomatic mechanisms, law enforcement, and victim recovery. A report by Migrant CARE (2023) shows that the Indonesian Embassy in Phnom Penh has collaborated with the Cambodian police to conduct raids on locations where victims are being held, followed by repatriation and needs assessment after their return to Indonesia. Migrant CARE also highlights the need for improved coordination between the central government, local governments, and civil society organizations to strengthen community-based protection systems and prevent risky migration (Media 2023).

Protection efforts also take place during the rehabilitation phase. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in its Reintegration Handbook (2021) report, victims need long-term psychosocial assistance, legal support, vocational training, and economic stabilization to prevent revictimization. A trauma-informed care approach is needed to ensure the effective mental recovery of victims, especially those who have experienced torture or extreme violence ((IOM, 2021).

Internationally, protection mechanisms are strengthened through the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP), particularly in the article on the protection of victims across borders. A study by Charoensuthipan (2022) in the Journal of Human Trafficking confirms that the implementation of ACTIP still faces obstacles such as a lack of data exchange between countries, differences in victim protection standards, and the lack of capacity of officials to understand new patterns of digital-based human trafficking. This has resulted in victim protection not being fully effective, especially at the identification and rescue stages in Cambodia (Made Wirawan 2024).

Overall, the victimization experienced by Indonesian citizens as victims in Cambodia is multifaceted, including physical, psychological, economic, and identity-based violence. On the other hand, the response to protect them requires a comprehensive, sustainable, and coordinated cross-border approach. For effective protection, Indonesia needs to strengthen its diplomacy, law enforcement systems that are responsive to new modes of digital and non-digital human trafficking, and strengthen recovery and reintegration services for victims. The combination of structural factors, weak regulatory systems, and the complexity of transnational

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criminal networks shows that human trafficking of Indonesian citizens in Cambodia is a phenomenon that requires a strong and sustainable multidisciplinary response.

The Effectiveness of Law Enforcement and International Cooperation between Indonesia and Cambodia in Handling Cases of Trafficking in Persons Against Indonesian Citizens

The effectiveness of law enforcement against trafficking in persons affecting Indonesian citizens in Cambodia depends not only on the capacity of law enforcement agencies in both countries, but also on the implementation of international legal standards governing transnational crimes. In this context, the 2000 Palermo Protocol is the most important instrument because it defines human trafficking, regulates cooperation between countries, and establishes victim protection obligations. Although Indonesia and Cambodia are both parties to the Palermo Protocol, an evaluation by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Nations 2024) shows that the implementation of these international provisions is still not optimal, especially in terms of harmonizing national laws, information exchange mechanisms, and transnational investigations. The report states that law enforcement agencies in Southeast Asia still face obstacles in harmonizing criminal definitions, evidence, and victim protection standards with international provisions, thereby limiting the effectiveness of human trafficking cases.

Cooperation between Indonesia and Cambodia in tackling human trafficking is essentially based on the principle of international cooperation as stipulated in Articles 27-30 of the Palermo Protocol. This cooperation includes mutual legal assistance, extradition, and coordination in rescuing victims. However, research by Anne T. Gallagher (2011) in *The International Law of Human Trafficking* explains that countries in Southeast Asia seem to have difficulty in consistently implementing international legal obligations. One of the obstacles mentioned is the inequality in law enforcement capacity between countries. Indonesia already has a fairly strong national legal framework, but Cambodia still faces technical obstacles, internal corruption, and a weak investigation system. These differences in capacity reduce the operational effectiveness of bilateral cooperation because the victims' countries of origin depend on the authorities of the destination countries to access the locations of exploitation, secure evidence, and arrest the main perpetrators (Gallagher 2011). In addition, the effectiveness of law enforcement is also influenced by the implementation of the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP) as a legally binding regional instrument. Although ACTIP is designed to strengthen ASEAN cooperation in combating human trafficking, its implementation is

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considered not yet fully in line with international standards. One of the main problems is the weak enforcement mechanisms and the lack of regulations that explicitly require member states to conduct joint investigations in cases of transnational crimes. In the case of trafficking of Indonesian citizens in Cambodia, the lack of strong regional oversight mechanisms, such as the absence of a supranational ASEAN body authorized to conduct investigations, means that cooperation is only coordinative in nature and depends on the political will of each country (Setyoningsih and Madjid 2025).

From the perspective of international law on victim protection, both countries are also obliged to implement victim-centered protection as stipulated in various instruments such as the UN Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking. However, a report by Anti-Slavery International (2021) found that many countries in Southeast Asia, including Cambodia, have not fully adopted this approach. The report documents a number of cases in which victims of human trafficking who were involved in online fraud schemes were detained as perpetrators of fraud before their status was verified. This practice contravenes international human rights law and the Palermo Protocol, which requires states to identify and protect victims before placing them in criminal proceedings (Rights 2010).

To improve the effectiveness of law enforcement, international cooperation should focus on strengthening digital investigation capabilities, increasing the speed of intelligence data exchange, and standardizing procedures in cross-border rescue operations. An analysis by the OECD (2023) emphasizes that digital-based human trafficking, such as online scam trafficking, requires a more dynamic model of cooperation that utilizes digital crime analysis technology. The OECD found that one of the biggest challenges is the absence of an integrated regional platform that countries can use to share electronic evidence quickly and securely. This gap hinders investigations into the financial structures of syndicates operating in Cambodia (Puspawati 2025)

Overall, the effectiveness of law enforcement and international cooperation between Indonesia and Cambodia in handling human trafficking of Indonesian citizens has shown progress, particularly in rescuing victims and dismantling some exploitation facilities. However, from an international law perspective, this effectiveness is still not optimal because it is not yet fully in line with international standards in terms of cross-border investigations, victim protection, and the prosecution of transnational crimes. Efforts to improve effectiveness require legal harmonization, increased mutual legal assistance, optimization of regional instruments such as ACTIP, and

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full implementation of international legal principles regarding the rights of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators.

5. Conclusions

Human trafficking of Indonesian citizens in Cambodia represents a complex form of transnational crime driven by the interaction of criminological factors such as economic pressure, structural vulnerability, and the increasing use of digital-based recruitment by organized criminal networks, further exacerbated by weak oversight and disparities in law enforcement capacity between sending and destination countries. The main added value of this paper lies in its integrated analytical framework that combines criminological, victimological, and international legal perspectives to reveal how structural causes, patterns of victimization, and enforcement gaps reinforce one another. The findings demonstrate that effective reduction of human trafficking requires concrete measures, including the strengthening of cross-border investigations, improved data and intelligence sharing, enhanced cybercrime and digital recruitment monitoring, and the consistent application of victim-centered and non-punishment principles. The Cambodian case applies to other countries facing similar challenges, such as Laos, Myanmar, and the Philippines, where online scam industries and weak regulatory environments facilitate forced labor trafficking. However, this study is limited by reliance on secondary data and reported cases, which may not fully capture the hidden nature of trafficking networks. Despite these limitations, the research contributes significantly to the legal community by offering normative and practical insights into improving international cooperation, harmonizing national legislation with international standards, and reinforcing diplomatic protection mechanisms for trafficking victims. In the international context, comparative lessons from jurisdictions with stronger joint task forces and mutual legal assistance frameworks illustrate that enhanced regional cooperation can reduce trafficking prevalence. Accordingly, policy recommendations include strengthening bilateral and ASEAN-based operational cooperation, expanding victim identification and long-term rehabilitation programs, increasing digital literacy and safe migration awareness, and integrating anti-trafficking strategies with future-oriented crime prevention policies, recognizing that unchecked human trafficking will continue to fuel organized crime, cybercrime, and regional insecurity if not addressed through coordinated, rights-based, and internationally aligned legal responses.

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