

HARMONIZATION OF LAW: RAISING LEGAL AWARENESS TO ACHIEVE SUPERIOR HUMAN RESOURCES FOR INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Malaysia often face serious challenges including economic exploitation, arbitrary termination, unsafe working conditions, and a lack of legal awareness. This situation is exacerbated by the limited access PMIs have to legal information and legal aid services, making them vulnerable to abuse and human rights violations. This service aims to increase legal awareness among PMIs to reduce their vulnerability and achieve better legal harmonization. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) method is applied in this service, where PMIs actively participate in all stages of the research, from problem identification to solution implementation. The results from the application of the PAR method show a significant increase in PMI understanding of their legal rights and obligations. There is a decrease in cases of exploitation and human rights violations, as well as an increase in the courage of PMIs to report violations and seek legal aid. PMIs are also more proactive in protecting themselves and more involved in the legal learning process. The conclusion of this service confirms that the PAR approach is effective in producing relevant and sustainable solutions. The resulting recommendations include strengthening legal education programs, developing easily accessible information resources, and improving access to legal aid services. This service makes a significant contribution to legal harmonization and human rights protection for Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia, as well as supporting the development of superior and sustainable human resources.

KEYWORDS: *Indonesian migrant workers (PMI), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Harmonization of Law*

1. INTRODUCTION

The involvement of Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Malaysia has become a significant phenomenon in the dynamics of the Southeast Asian regional workforce (Pandi, 2023). Empirical research reveals the complexity and challenges faced by PMIs in Malaysia, including legal issues, human rights protection, and inequality in access to services and social justice (ILO, 2021). Through an in-depth study of these conditions, this service is based on the urgency to increase legal awareness among PMIs (Wahyudi, 2018), with the ultimate goal of achieving legal harmonization that can optimize the potential of Indonesian human resources working in Malaysia, in line with sustainable development goals and human rights protection.

It is important to examine the legal landscape that governs the relationship between PMIs, the Malaysian government, and employers there (Low, 2021). Legal regulations related to migration and employment in Malaysia play a central role in determining the rights and obligations of PMIs. However, alongside this, weaknesses and gaps in the implementation and understanding of these laws often become challenges for PMIs in seeking protection and justice. Previous research shows a tendency for PMIs to be vulnerable to economic exploitation and human rights violations, such as arbitrary termination, wages that do not meet standards, and unsafe working conditions (Anderson, 2020).

This condition is further exacerbated by the lack of legal awareness among PMIs. In this context, legal awareness not only refers to the understanding of applicable legal regulations in Malaysia but also includes knowledge about their rights and obligations as migrant workers. Previous studies indicate that low legal awareness often makes PMIs more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by employers or intermediary labor agents (Prabaningrum Kusumawati & Khairun Hamrany, 2023). Additionally, the lack of access to legal information and legal aid services also complicates PMIs' efforts to protect themselves and fight for their rights in Malaysia.

In a broader context, it is important to recognize that the issues faced by PMIs are not just individual problems but also structural problems related to systemic inequality in access to social justice and legal protection (Mendis, 2023). This inequality can be reflected in the unfair treatment of PMIs in the legal process, the lack of adequate legal representation for PMIs, and the inability of the legal system to effectively handle cases of human rights violations (Ruhs, 2017).

Therefore, this service is not only aimed at solving individual problems but also at formulating more holistic and sustainable solutions to improve social justice and legal protection for PMIs in Malaysia. This holistic approach includes efforts to strengthen the capacity of individual PMIs in understanding their rights and obligations, improving access to legal information and legal

aid services, and advocating for broader structural changes in the legal system and migration policies in Malaysia. Thus, this service is expected to make a significant contribution to creating more harmonious and just conditions for PMIs while strengthening the foundation for sustainable human resource development based on Pancasila.

2. METHOD

In Participatory Action Research (PAR) for specific situations, researchers and participants work together to establish appropriate data collection methods. Group discussions, participant observation and field notes, interviews, diaries, and personal logs, questionnaires, and surveys are effective data collection methods used in PAR (MacDonald, 2012). However, for this service purpose, the focus was on three methods: group discussions, participant observation, and interviews. The use of these three selected methods was to go beyond each method's limitations, allowing triangulation in data generation and producing more effective problem-solving.

In this service process, researchers focused on Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Malaysia as the main subjects. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis and comparative analysis methods to uncover relevant and reliable findings. Thus, community participation is reflected in every aspect of this service, ensuring that the solutions produced are relevant, sustainable, and empower PMIs to increase legal awareness, protect their rights, and improve their welfare in Malaysia.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Through focus group discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews with Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Malaysia conducted online, it was found that the main issues faced by PMIs are economic exploitation, arbitrary termination, unsafe working conditions, and lack of legal awareness. PMIs often experience payment of wages that do not meet standards, excessive working hours without adequate compensation, and the withholding of documents by employers. Furthermore, many PMIs are terminated without clear reasons or adequate compensation and often work in conditions that endanger their safety without adequate protection. PMIs' legal awareness is very limited, making them vulnerable to exploitation and human rights violations.



Figure 1. Virtual Speaker at Community Service Activity

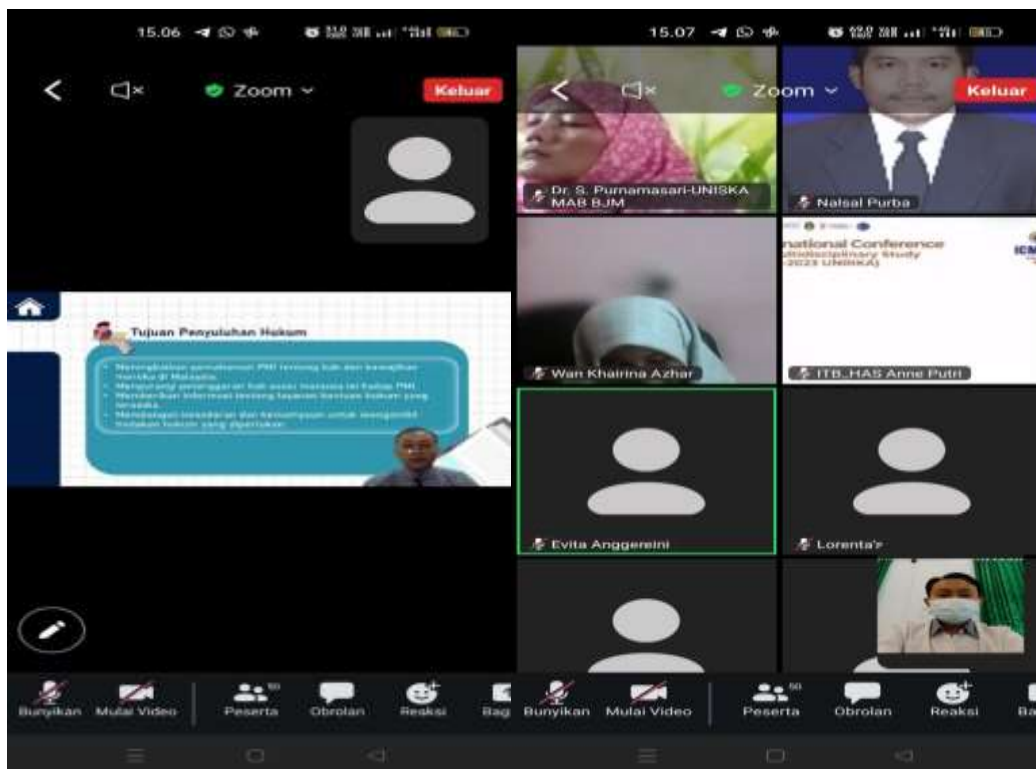


Figure 2. Audience at Online Activity

In response to these issues, PMIs actively participated in formulating solutions. Some of the proposed steps include creating legal training programs tailored to PMIs' needs, developing information resources in various easily accessible formats, and improving access to legal services through cooperation networks with local and international NGOs. These solutions were implemented through regular training and workshops in PMI communities with easily understood materials, distribution of legal education materials through social media and online platforms, and providing contact information and procedures for accessing legal aid from collaborating NGOs.

Evaluation was conducted by collecting feedback from PMIs and measuring the impact of the program on their legal awareness and rights protection. The evaluation results showed a significant increase in PMIs' understanding of their legal rights and obligations, a decrease in reported cases of economic exploitation and human rights violations, and an increase in PMIs' courage to report violations and seek legal aid. PMIs were also more proactive in seeking legal information and engaging in training and workshops held. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) method successfully identified the fundamental issues faced by PMIs in Malaysia and actively involved them in formulating and implementing solutions. Increasing legal awareness among PMIs not only helps them protect themselves from exploitation and human rights violations but also encourages structural changes in legal protection and social justice in Malaysia. This participatory approach shows that relevant and sustainable solutions can be achieved in improving PMIs' welfare.

In the first phase of problem identification through FGD and in-depth interviews, it was revealed that economic exploitation is the most significant issue. PMIs often experience injustice in wage payments and inhumane working hours. Arbitrary termination is also a major issue, where many PMIs are terminated without clear reasons or adequate compensation. Unsafe working conditions with minimal safety protection also pose challenges for PMIs. The lack of legal awareness among PMIs adds to the complexity of the problem as they do not know their basic rights and the regulations that protect them.

In the solution design phase, PMIs actively participated in formulating solutions that suit their needs. A structured legal training program was designed to provide understanding about legal regulations in Malaysia, their rights and obligations as PMIs, and how to access legal aid services. Information resource development was conducted by creating legal education materials in various formats such as brochures, videos, and mobile applications that are easily accessible to PMIs. To improve legal aid access, a network of cooperation with local and international NGOs was established.

Solution implementation was conducted through regular training and workshops in PMI communities. The materials provided were adjusted to the context and needs of PMIs to make them

more relevant and easier to understand. Distribution of legal education materials was done through channels often accessed by PMIs, including social media, online platforms, and community networks. Information about contact details and procedures for accessing legal aid from cooperating NGOs was also disseminated.

In the evaluation and reflection phase, regular monitoring and evaluation were conducted to assess the effectiveness of the legal education program and identify areas needing improvement. Feedback from PMIs was collected to evaluate their experiences with the legal education program and legal aid services provided. The evaluation results showed a significant increase in PMIs' understanding of their legal rights and obligations. Many PMIs started taking preventive measures to protect themselves, such as requesting written employment contracts and keeping copies of important documents. There was a decrease in reported cases of economic exploitation and human rights violations due to increased courage among PMIs to report violations and seek legal aid. PMIs were also more active in seeking legal information and participating in training and workshops held.

Overall, the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method successfully identified the fundamental issues faced by PMIs in Malaysia and actively involved them in formulating and implementing solutions. Increasing legal awareness among PMIs not only helps them protect themselves from exploitation and human rights violations but also encourages structural changes in legal protection and social justice in Malaysia. This participatory approach shows that relevant and sustainable solutions can be achieved in improving PMIs' welfare, which in turn supports sustainable development goals and human rights protection.

Experience from implementing the PAR method also shows that active participation from PMIs in all stages of the research is crucial for the program's success. Through active participation, PMIs feel ownership and responsibility towards the solutions formulated, thus increasing their commitment to implementing them. Additionally, active participation allows researchers to formulate solutions that are more relevant and suitable to the context and needs of PMIs.

Continuous evaluation and reflection conducted regularly are also very important to ensure that the legal education program and legal aid services provided are truly effective and relevant to the needs of PMIs. Feedback from PMIs is valuable for identifying areas needing improvement and ensuring that the program continues to evolve and adapt to changes in context and PMIs' needs.

In the long term, this service is expected to make a significant contribution to improving the welfare of PMIs in Malaysia and supporting legal harmonization that can optimize the potential of Indonesian human resources working in Malaysia. Through a holistic and participatory approach, this service is expected to create more harmonious and just conditions for PMIs while strengthening the foundation for sustainable human resource development based on Pancasila.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method in increasing legal awareness among Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Malaysia has shown positive and significant results. Through a participatory approach, PMIs can better understand their legal rights and obligations and obtain better access to legal information and legal aid. The legal outreach programs implemented have successfully empowered PMIs, reducing their vulnerability to exploitation and increasing their courage to report violations and seek legal aid.

This increase in legal awareness also impacts structural changes in the legal system and migration policies in Malaysia, creating a fairer and more conducive environment for PMIs. The PAR method proves that active collaboration between researchers and PMIs in formulating and implementing solutions can result in sustainable and relevant changes. Thus, this service not only provides direct benefits to PMIs but also contributes to the development of superior and sustainable human resources in line with sustainable development goals and human rights protection. This participatory approach has strengthened the foundation for better legal harmonization and created safer and fairer working conditions for Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia.

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