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Empowering Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) in Saudi Arabia: Protection and Empowerment Efforts

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Abstract: This article examines the efforts to support Indonesian migrant workers (TKI) in Saudi Arabia, focusing on protection and empowerment. TKI are crucial to Indonesia's economy through their remittances, yet many face challenges like rights violations, violence, and legal uncertainties. The article highlights the actions taken by the Indonesian government, NGOs, and communities to provide legal and social protection and discusses empowerment programs aimed at enhancing TKI's skills and independence. These efforts aim to mitigate the issues TKI face and improve their overall well-being, offering insights for improving TKI support policies abroad.

Keywords: service, protection of migrant workers (TKI), Saudi Arabia, Indonesia

Introduction

Indonesian migrant workers (TKI) play a vital role in the national economy, contributing significantly through remittances, which exceed \$10 billion annually (Bank Indonesia, 2022). These remittances not only improve their families' well-being but also drive national economic growth. However, the reality on the ground often falls short of expectations. Many TKI, particularly those in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, face severe challenges, including inhumane treatment, sudden termination of employment, and legal issues (Anwartinna, 2019; Azzam N. S. & M. Husni Syam, 2022; Itasari et al., 2021; Jasuli, 2021; Lasim et al., 2021; Venisha, 2023).

The issues TKI encounter in Saudi Arabia are often complex, requiring systematic and sustained intervention. Problematic cases among TKI frequently involve difficulties in securing legal protection and ensuring their rights, necessitating effective support from various stakeholders, including the government, non-governmental organizations, and the community (Kaligis et al., 2020; Windi Aulia S, 2022). Support for troubled TKI includes protection and empowerment efforts aimed at addressing their challenges and improving their quality of life (Febriyanto & Rohman, 2018; Hukum et al., 2007). Legal and social protection is provided to ensure their fundamental rights are met, while empowerment programs focus on enhancing their skills and abilities, enabling them to achieve independence and better future opportunities (Anita, 2017; Hutasoit et al., 2023; Kristina, 2012).

In this context, government institutions and educational entities, such as Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Mataram, actively contribute to providing support and protection for troubled TKI. These efforts include educating TKI about their rights, offering skills training, and providing necessary psychological support to help them adapt and overcome challenges in host countries (Noviasari et al., 2023; Priyono et al., 2016; Purwana, 2016; Sartika et al., 2020). This article reviews the various initiatives undertaken to assist troubled TKI in Saudi Arabia, highlighting effective protection and empowerment strategies. Through a comprehensive approach, it is hoped that the challenges faced by TKI can be minimized, allowing them to work safely and prosperously abroad.

Research Results

Conditions of Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a major destination for Indonesian migrant workers (TKI), particularly in the domestic and construction sectors. However, many TKI face significant challenges, including human rights violations such as physical and mental abuse, wage cuts, and inhumane working conditions. Workers often encounter unfair employment agreements with low wages and long working hours without adequate compensation. Those facing issues frequently struggle to access legal assistance due to limited resources and high costs. Human rights violations, including physical and mental violence, pose serious threats to TKI's well-being. Many domestic workers report abuse from employers, including beatings, confinement, and sexual harassment. Inhumane working conditions, such as excessive hours without rest, unreasonable wage deductions, and lack of access to healthcare, are common problems. Unfair employment contracts are a major issue, with many workers receiving much lower wages than promised, working hours far exceeding reasonable limits, and conditions that fail to meet international standards. Additionally, unilateral termination without fair compensation often leaves TKI in extremely vulnerable situations.

Protection Efforts by the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah

The Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah (KJRI Jeddah) plays a crucial role in protecting and empowering troubled TKI. Key initiatives include consular services, shelters, legal assistance, and education and training programs. KJRI Jeddah offers consular services such as document replacement,

legal aid, and mediation with employers to resolve conflicts faced by TKI. These services are essential in ensuring that TKI receive legal protection and that their rights are upheld. Additionally, KJRI Jeddah provides temporary shelters for workers who have fled abusive employers or are awaiting the resolution of legal cases. These shelters offer temporary protection and basic necessities such as food, housing, and healthcare for TKI in emergency situations. Legal assistance is another critical protection effort by KJRI Jeddah, which collaborates with local lawyers to support TKI involved in criminal or civil cases. This includes legal representation, mediation with employers, and efforts to resolve cases through legal channels.

Education and training are vital components of the protection and empowerment efforts for TKI undertaken by the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah (KJRI Jeddah). KJRI organizes educational and training programs to empower TKI, including skill development courses and job training, enabling them to enhance their abilities and future employment opportunities.

Empowerment of Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI)

Empowering TKI is an integral part of KJRI's efforts to improve the quality of life for these workers. The measures taken include skill education, rights awareness, and reintegration programs. Skill education is a primary focus, with KJRI providing training in language, information technology, and other skills at shelters to improve TKI's job prospects. These courses aim to equip TKI with new skills to help them secure better jobs or start their own businesses upon returning to Indonesia.

Rights awareness is another critical aspect of empowerment. KJRI actively conducts sessions to educate TKI about their rights, including fair wages, reasonable working hours, and protection from violence. These sessions are designed to raise awareness among TKI about their rights and inform them of the steps to take if their rights are violated.

Reintegration programs are also part of TKI empowerment efforts. KJRI collaborates with the Indonesian government on reintegration initiatives for returning TKI, helping them adapt and find employment opportunities in Indonesia. These programs include skill training, job search assistance, and psychological support to help TKI adjust to life back in Indonesia after working abroad.

Analysis of Protection and Empowerment Efforts

The analysis indicates that the protection and empowerment programs implemented by the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah (KJRI) have been relatively effective in providing both emergency and long-term assistance to troubled TKI. However, challenges arise due to the limited number of staff and resources compared to the large number of TKI in need of help.

Collaboration between KJRI, NGOs, international organizations, and local communities in Saudi Arabia is crucial for expanding the reach of assistance and empowerment programs. Such partnerships allow KJRI to secure additional support in the form of funding, manpower, and other necessary resources to aid TKI in distress.

Moreover, enhancing the capacity and capabilities of KJRI staff is essential for improving the effectiveness of protection and empowerment programs. Continuous training and development for KJRI staff are necessary to address the dynamic and complex issues faced by TKI. With these capacity improvements, KJRI staff are expected to provide better and more effective services to TKI in need.

Service Implications

This article presents several key implications that provide insights for policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders in enhancing the protection and empowerment of Indonesian migrant workers (TKI) in Saudi Arabia.

1. **Strengthening TKI Protection Policies:** The study highlights that many TKI experience human rights violations and legal issues in Saudi Arabia. Thus, there is a need for more comprehensive and sustainable TKI protection policies. The Indonesian government can strengthen regulations related to TKI protection, including tightening oversight of labor recruitment agencies and ensuring effective mechanisms to address TKI complaints in host countries.
2. **Enhancing International Cooperation:** Collaboration between the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah (KJRI) and international organizations, NGOs, and local communities in Saudi Arabia has proven crucial in expanding assistance and empowerment programs for TKI. This implies that international cooperation should be further enhanced to provide more effective protection for TKI. The Indonesian government can pursue more bilateral and multilateral partnerships with host countries to improve legal and social protection for TKI.
3. **Increasing KJRI Capacity and Resources:** The research indicates challenges related to limited staff and resources at KJRI Jeddah. Therefore, increasing KJRI's capacity and resources is essential for providing better services to TKI. The Indonesian government could allocate a larger budget to support KJRI operations, including adding staff, providing training, and upgrading facilities.
4. **Developing Comprehensive Empowerment Programs:** The empowerment programs conducted by KJRI, such as skill education and rights awareness, have positively impacted TKI. This implies the importance of developing more comprehensive and sustainable empowerment programs. The Indonesian government could expand skill training programs that are more diverse and relevant to labor market needs, as well as broaden reintegration programs for returning TKI.
5. **Advocacy and Education on TKI Rights:** Rights awareness is a crucial aspect of empowering TKI. This implies the need for increased advocacy and education on TKI rights, both before they depart and while working abroad. The government and NGOs can collaborate to provide accessible and comprehensible information to TKI about their rights and the steps they can take if those rights are violated.
6. **Establishing Effective Complaint Mechanisms:** TKI facing problems often struggle to access legal assistance due to limited access and high costs. Thus, there is a need to establish more effective and accessible complaint mechanisms for TKI. The Indonesian government could develop an online complaint system and hotline accessible to TKI wherever they are, as well as provide free or affordable legal aid services.

By implementing these implications, it is hoped that the protection and empowerment efforts for TKI in Saudi Arabia will be more optimal, allowing TKI to work safely and prosperously while contributing more significantly to Indonesia's economy. Additionally, the findings in this article could serve as a reference for other countries facing similar challenges in protecting their migrant workers.

Conclusions

Community service efforts aimed at addressing the challenges faced by Indonesian migrant workers (TKI) in Saudi Arabia have yielded significant results in terms of protection and empowerment. Programs implemented by the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah (KJRI)—including consular services,

temporary shelters, legal assistance, and skill development training—have proven effective in providing both emergency and long-term support for TKI facing various issues. KJRI Jeddah has played a crucial role in offering legal and social protection, helping TKI address human rights violations, unfair employment contracts, and physical and mental abuse.

Moreover, empowerment programs, which include skill education, TKI rights awareness, and reintegration initiatives, have contributed to improving the quality of life for TKI, enabling them to become more independent and competitive. However, the community service efforts also highlight challenges such as limited resources and staff at KJRI and the need to enhance TKI's access to legal assistance. Collaboration with NGOs and local communities in Saudi Arabia is essential to expanding the reach of assistance and empowerment programs.

These efforts underscore the importance of continuous support from the Indonesian government and international cooperation in strengthening the protection and empowerment of TKI. By bolstering protection policies, increasing KJRI's capacity and resources, and developing comprehensive empowerment programs, it is hoped that TKI can work more safely and prosperously abroad. The findings from these community service efforts can serve as a reference for improving TKI protection policies and practices in the future, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

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