

Date: 25 September 2024

Dr. Poey Tiang Peow
Lecturer of International Islamic University Malaysia
Secretary General of Religions for Peace Malaysia

Title:
Exploring the Ways to Overcome Human Trafficking in Malaysia

It is very crucial to combat this issue as it will suffocate every nation, race, background, and religion. According to Valerii et al., (2019), “a joint program to prevent human trafficking and smuggling of migrants up to 2019 has been developed at the initiative of the European Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in partnership with the International Organization for Migration, as well as the United Nations Children’s Fund. This project covers thirty countries in Africa, Asia, Western Europe, and Latin America” (p.4).¹ One Chinese proverb says, "Only when everyone contributes wood will the fire burn brightly." The fact that world powers are united to deal with this specific global issue will aid in somehow reducing its severity. However, a more intense method should be suggested such as addressing individuals who are vulnerable to trafficking as accordance to the United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner stated that deprivation and disproportion of gender and social status in society might victimize the needy as they own higher tendencies to be exposed to trafficking.

Gabriel (2012) elaborated in his writing entitled ‘Root Causes and Solutions to Human Trafficking in Ethiopia:

Pre-trafficking awareness-raising campaigns and warnings are conducted to promote the level of individual and public vigilance. Training and equipping border patrol police and social workers and the provision of anti-trafficking laws, publicizing and enforcing these are also likely to contribute towards the prevention of human trafficking. Educated and economically empowered, the vulnerable are likely to be in a better position to resist any deceptive schemes designed to lure them. Similar campaigns in the countries of destination conducted through mass media, seminars, workshops, and conferences on issues related to human trafficking in communities, universities, and schools will also contribute towards prevention. Public awareness and support in both the countries of origin and destination is likely to make it more difficult for traffickers to conceal their operations.²

Even though these findings is from Ethiopia which is a country with a total different circumstance as compared to Malaysia and it was initially found in almost ten years ago, this method still can be adapt these days in Malaysia as a whole.

Legislation related to trafficking differs for each state in the United States. Generally, all 37 states have found 530 bills to handle domestic sexual abuse against minors. With the enactment of mentioned laws, especially in Colorado and Delaware the amount of human trafficking cases has immensely reduced.

¹ Valerii S., Valerii T., Mykhaylo S., Kostiantyn M., Viktoriia S. (2019). Some Aspects of Foreign Experience in Combating Human Trafficking. [Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.org](http://LawJournalLibrary-HeinOnline.org)

² Temesgen G. (2012). Root Causes and Solutions to Human Trafficking in Ethiopia. [Root Causes and Solutions to Human Trafficking in Ethiopia \(researchgate.net\)](http://RootCausesandSolutions.toHumanTrafficking.inEthiopia.researchgate.net)

Sundstrom (2017-2019).³ This demonstrates that enacting law may be very useful to deal with the wicked conduct of community members for various reasons.

According to Mo Pak-Hung (Nov. 2011):

As long as root causes of illicit migrations, that is, the mass of people in poverty, severe environmental degradation, political stability and unemployment, etc. persist in the source countries, repressive measures cannot stop persons to improve their wellbeing by capturing the potential gains from migration activities. The causes are in turn largely driven by the low stage of development and quality of public governance in the source countries. Other investigators suggest that the structural causes of illicit migrations need to be addressed by eliminating the debts of poor countries and a global redistribution of wealth to lagged economies. However, these initiatives do not generate direct and indirect benefits to leading economies and do not generate extra international wealth, which makes them hardly sustainable. To the best of our knowledge, there are no initiatives to resolve the problem from the perspective of international division of labor, reciprocal investment, and cooperation that can facilitate global development, convergence in living quality, and an explosion of wealth increases to the countries involved.⁴

As has been highlighted by the professor from Hong Kong Baptist University above, it is impossible to reach a drastic reduction in human trafficking cases even if various action was taken place. However, the main venom is still there. Consequently, it is always crucial for authorities to tackle the root causes of how this matter keeps happening instead of going deep into the solution heedlessly.

Hussin et al., (2020) stated suggestions in their research for how the Malaysian Government may deal with the human trafficking issue in Malaysia:

The Malaysian government should reduce the push and pull factors for supply and demand. This is because as long as these factors exist, the issue of trafficking in persons, especially in terms of sexual exploitation will not be solved completely. The Malaysian government should also reduce corruption among government officials by imposing appropriate penalties on those involved in corruption. Appropriate punishment to offenders should be imposed. Conducting more frequent raids on premises related is also necessary. There should be cooperation with countries that have most victims of trafficking and have discussions on how to restrict the entry of a relatively high number for the country's security and sovereignty. Awareness campaigns should be continuous and not seasonal. The campaign to prevent prostitutes should also be given. This is because as long as the demand for prostitutes exists, the supply will be provided and there will be no end to this humanitarian crime. The authorities are unable to prosecute the leaders of the syndicate, thus making the problem more difficult to overcome.⁵

Furthermore, the cooperation from victims is very difficult to achieve. This is because the victims say, "If I help u (police) and give cooperation to you, when I go back to the village who

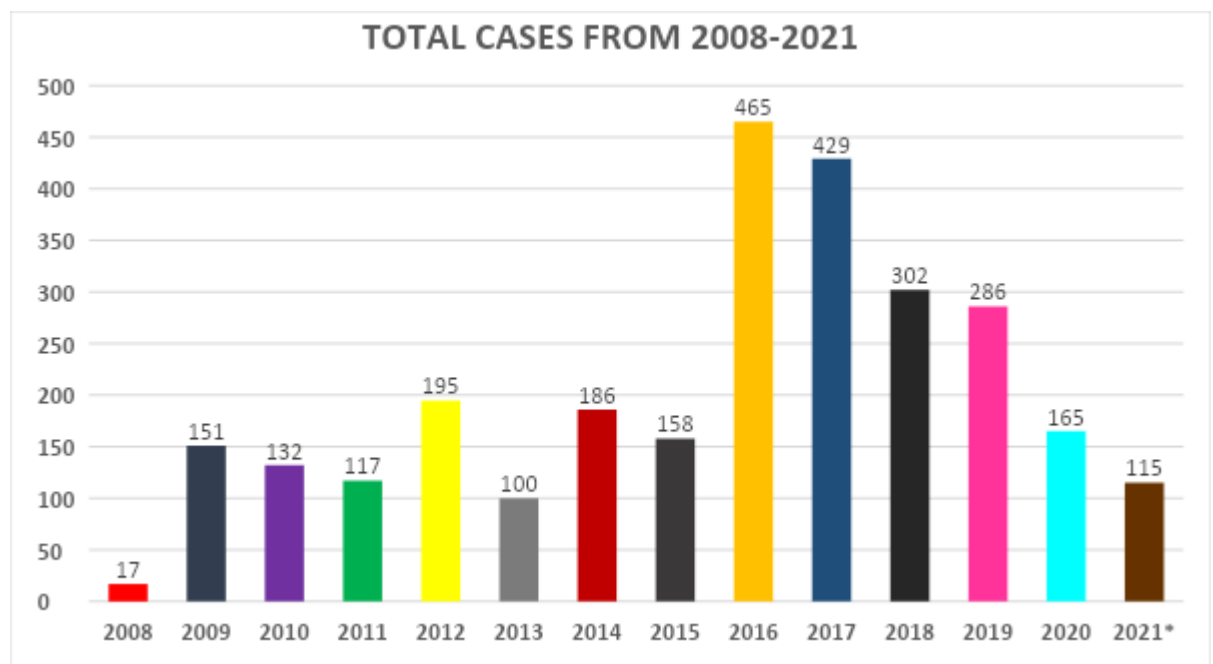
³ Sundstrom C. (2017-2019). IS THERE A SOLUTION TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING? [Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.org](#)

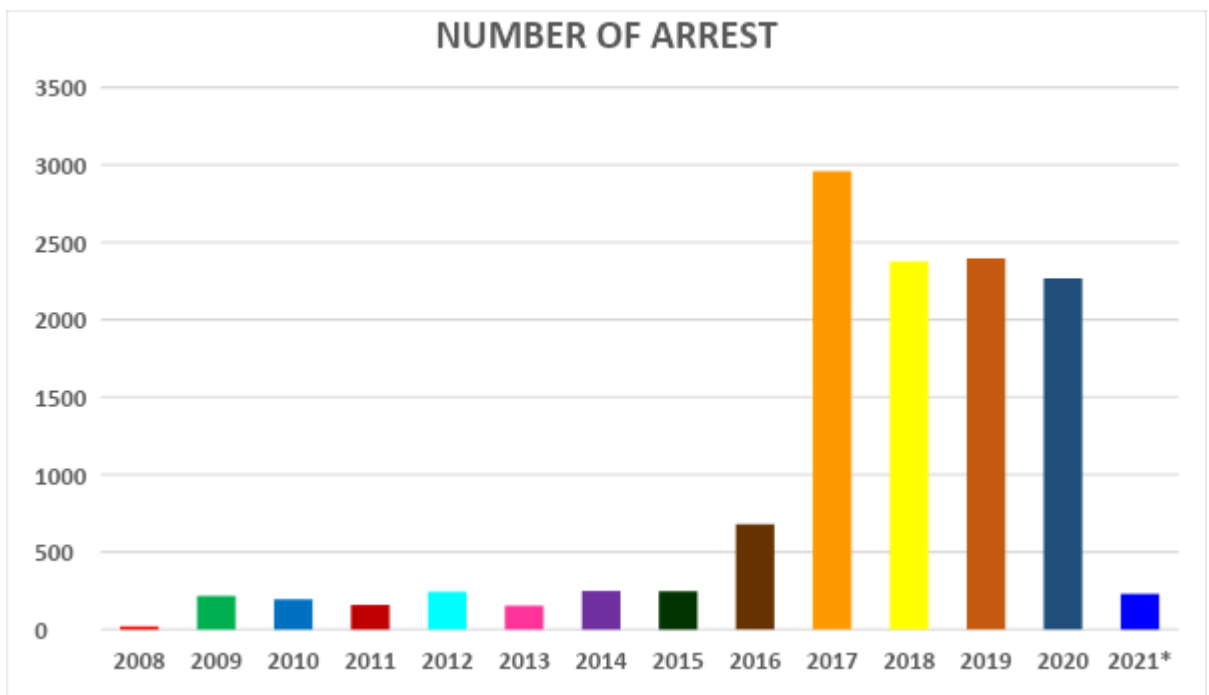
⁴ Mo P.H. (Nov. 2011). International Human Trafficking: Theory and Solution. [International Human Trafficking: Theory and Solution by Pak-Hung Mo :: SSRN](#)

⁵ Hussin N.I., Shamsudin A.M., Mohd Hed H., Mohamad Razali M. (2020). Human Trafficking For Sexual Exploitation In Malaysia: Issues And Solutions. [11168-2020-12-09-06-21-17.pdf \(upsi.edu.my\)](#)

will help us. We owe the syndicate RM10000. How could we redeem? What about my family’s position and guarantee for their safety?” There are also constraints when the victim changes her statement making it complicated to convict the trafficker. In addition, the enforcement officers involved are often slow in handling the case. This is due to the police personnel who are not specially trained in human trafficking cases. Hence, the Malaysian government needs to establish a special unit to focus on human trafficking cases and cooperation from the shelter occupants. In addition, shelters should also be improved and multiplied by zone. The government also needs closer cooperation from various non-governmental organisation (NGOs), both internal and external not only with selected NGOs.

The suggested solutions by the above researchers are very detailed and reliable as to the current scenario whereby the given elucidation strikes on the reality and sensitivity of our current authority as to their dominance specifically.





Several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed with various countries to combat human trafficking, including an MoU with Saudi Arabia on April 18, 2011; China on August 2, 2012; Bangladesh on November 26, 2012; and Canada on October 6, 2013. The government has also established a Working Group on Human Trafficking and People Smuggling with Australia and signed MoUs on Immigration to include Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and People Smuggling with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Additionally, Malaysia has partnered with the United States for capacity building in prosecution and enforcement. Within Southeast Asia, Malaysia, along with nine other ASEAN member countries, signed the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP) on November 21, 2015, and adopted the ASEAN Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons (APA) on the same date. Malaysia has also actively participated in numerous international

forums and conferences aimed at combatting human trafficking and transnational crime, such as the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), the Bali Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process), and the Asia-Europe Meeting. These efforts are focused on enhancing international cooperation through regional and global information sharing, capacity building for law enforcement, legal harmonization, police cooperation, and intelligence sharing.⁶ (Zarina et al., March 2023).

According to research related to anti-human trafficking, Various government bodies and institutions have taken multiple steps to prevent human trafficking. For instance, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), in collaboration with other ministries, has worked to prevent trafficking by creating a brochure in multiple languages. This brochure aims to educate foreign nationals about the dangers of trafficking, inform them of their rights as victims, and offer guidance on related matters, such as conducting audits of shelters.⁷ (Zuraini, April 2016).

Beyond all the valid research, researchers would like to give personal opinions in combating with this critical issue. As for the individual, we need to be self-conscious whenever things do not seem right we need to have a certain amount of skepticism as to illogically interesting job vacancies, especially for women out there as there is no doubt that women are these people's main target. As for parents, they are highly recommended to take an adequate amount of precaution for their kids. For instance, do provide children with emergency alarms or any related stuff to detect the children's existence as part of precaution. Taking precautions is not only an obligation of the government body or authorities as everyone should be able to take reasonable care of themselves and others. Nowadays, the accessibility of networks such as social networks may increase adversity of the criminal in findings target. Therefore, in enjoying cyberspace we cannot neglect the importance of privacy such as not sharing our current location, workplace, or address with the public as a form of protecting ourselves and loved ones from being a victim.

To summarise, the proposed solutions related to human trafficking might be adapted from international and local regulations as to be expected to aid with the prevalence of this concerning issue. Researchers hope that these gathered suggestions may help our nation combat human trafficking and grant peace to our country as a whole.

⁶ Othman Z., Ilham Hussein N., Mohd Hed N., (March 2023), EXAMINING HUMAN TRAFFICKING ISSUE IN MALAYSIA'S POST-PANDEMIC ERA: PREVENTIVE MEASURES AND CHALLENGES@https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsinergiukm.my%2Fjou%2Findex.php%2Fsei%2Farticle%2Fdownload%2F36%2F70%2F512&psig=AOvVaw3AgBYK6wimyJzT4_jtDYew&ust=1725526157508000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CAQQn5wMahcKEwjlouD186iIAxUAAAAAHQAAAAAQBA

⁷ Ab Hamid Z. (April 2016). Anti-human Trafficking Laws and Their Implementation in Malaysia chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://studentrepo.iium.edu.my/bitstream/123456789/1393/1/t11100345399Zuraini_SEC_24.pdf

Conclusion

Malaysia actively performs a number of investigations, intensifying the conviction and prosecution of traffickers, increasing the number of prosecutors dedicated to handling trafficking cases, and increasing access to shelters for victims. funding, and publicity programs to improve public awareness as mentioned by our Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Hassan.⁸ These are the approaches made by our country in lobbying and advocating on Human trafficking issues. As a matter of fact, these efforts did contribute a lot to combat with this issue, To illustrate, in the first half of 2024, Malaysian police launched an anti-human trafficking operation that resulted in the rescue of 137 victims, including 52 children who had been exploited as labor.⁹ It is indisputable that this achievement could only be achieved with dedication and great strategy by everyone involved.

Nevertheless, there are various confrontations in dealing with this issue. On September 20, 2024, Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Dato' Sri Haji Fadillah bin Haji Yusof highlighted the country's significant progress in tackling forced labor and human trafficking. He noted that Malaysia had advanced from Level 3 to the Level 2 Observation List in 2023, and in 2024, further improved to Level 2. This achievement, he said, is the result of collective efforts from all stakeholders. Dato' Sri Haji Fadillah emphasized that Malaysia's goal is not just to remain at Level 2 but to ultimately reach Level 1, which represents the nation's broader vision. Although cases of forced labor and human trafficking are relatively low in Malaysia, Dato' Sri Haji Fadillah reminded the public to stay alert, as these issues still persist, particularly in certain regions, for example between January and July 2024, two cases were reported in Peninsular Malaysia. In 2023, 12 cases were recorded, with 11 occurring in Peninsular Malaysia and one in Sarawak. Similarly, in 2022, there were 16 cases—15 in Peninsular Malaysia and one in Sabah.¹⁰

⁸<https://www.orientaldaily.com.my/news/nation/2024/06/25/661157>

⁹ <https://international.caixin.com/2024-09-03/102232808.html>

¹⁰ <https://news.seehua.com/post/1205742>

Bibliography

Valerii S., Valerii T., Mykhaylo S., Kostiantyn M., Viktoriia S. (2019). Some Aspects of Foreign Experience in Combating Human Trafficking. [Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.org](#)

Temesgen G. (2012). Root Causes and Solutions to Human Trafficking in Ethiopia. [Root Causes and Solutions to Human Trafficking in Ethiopia \(researchgate.net\)](#)

Sundstrom C. (2017-2019). IS THERE A SOLUTION TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING? [Law Journal Library - HeinOnline.org](#)

Mo P.H. (Nov. 2011). International Human Trafficking: Theory and Solution. [International Human Trafficking: Theory and Solution by Pak-Hung Mo :: SSRN](#)

Hussin N.I., Shamsudin A.M., Mohd Hed H., Mohamad Razali M. (2020). Human Trafficking For Sexual Exploitation In Malaysia: Issues And Solutions. [11168-2020-12-09-06-21-17.pdf \(upsi.edu.my\)](#)

Othman Z., Ilham Hussein N., Mohd Hed N., (March 2023), EXAMINING HUMAN TRAFFICKING ISSUE IN MALAYSIA'S POST-PANDEMIC ERA: PREVENTIVE MEASURES AND CHALLENGES@https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsinergiukm.my%2Fjou%2Findex.php%2Fsei%2Farticle%2Fdownload%2F36%2F70%2F512&psig=AOvVaw3AgBYK6wimyJzT4_jtDYew&ust=1725526157508000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CAQQn5wMahcKEwjlouD186ilAxUAAAAAHQAAAAAQBA

Ab Hamid Z. (April 2016). Anti-human Trafficking Laws and Their Implementation in Malaysia chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://studentrepo.iium.edu.my/bitstream/123456789/1393/1/t11100345399Zuraini_SEC_24.pdf