

Bride Trafficking in Southeast Asia: Understanding the Socioeconomic, Legal, and Human Rights

Yolanda Putri Aulia¹, Made Panji Teguh Santoso²

¹Hubungan Internasional, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang, Indonesia

²Hubungan Internasional, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang, Indonesia (corresponding author: madesantoso@staff.unsika.ac.id)

ABSTRACT (English)

Bride trafficking in Southeast Asia is a complex issue influenced by socioeconomic factors such as poverty, gender inequality, and disparities in education and employment. Globalization, migration, and social pressures also contribute to increasing cases. Legal aspects are crucial to understanding and addressing this issue. This research examines the existing legal frameworks in Southeast Asian member countries, including regulations on human trafficking, victim protection, and law enforcement. It reviews the psychological, physical, and social impacts of victims and emphasizes the need for protection, rehabilitation, and access to justice. The research methodology is qualitative with a descriptive approach, based on a literature review and expert responses. The article also highlights the role of ASEAN in addressing this issue, highlighting its potential to facilitate cooperation among member countries. This comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon is expected to serve as a foundation for ongoing efforts to combat bride trafficking and protect human rights in the region.

Keywords: *Bride trafficking, ASEAN, Multidimensional Perspective, Human Rights.*

INTRODUCTION

The problem of human trafficking is a very complex one and is even considered a serious crime because it violates international law. Even Article 3 paragraph 2 of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Crime (UNCTOC) regulates both the definition, location, and protocol of human trafficking. The issue of human trafficking is of deep concern because, given the globalisation factor, the mobility of the human population is increasingly unlimited and makes it easy to move.

The problem that is rampant at this time is not without cause; it was triggered by the crisis that occurred in countries in Southeast Asia. Crises in the form of community welfare are caused by poverty, inequality of education, lack of employment, ongoing social and political crises, migration policies, mixed marriage policies, societies that perpetuate patriarchy, weak legal regulations, and inadequate victim protection, even to the point of lacking. This is an annual problem for Southeast Asian countries, but why does it persist? Experts argue that the problem of bride trafficking continues to be rampant because of the neat trafficking routes carried out, an insensitive society, officials who are not concerned about this, and the many discretions of law enforcement officials that give the impression of freeing bride traffickers. So that this problem never ends like spinning in a vicious circle.

The trafficking of women through marriage is a very serious problem because it involves violence against women and the phenomenon of the commodification of women through manipulation, exploitation, and free trade. The largest bride trafficking network is in Vietnam, where, as of 2018, 1,207 Vietnamese women were recruited, sent, and sold as brides to provide sexual services to Chinese men. This is triggered by the ethnic genealogy of Vietnamese women who are still allied with the Han nation, in addition to the fact that the price of Vietnamese women is cheaper than women from other Greatest Mekong Sub-

region (GMS) countries, and the last reason is because it is easy to recruit because the Vietnam-China area is difficult to reach by Vietnamese security agencies. Apart from Vietnam, Indonesia also has the largest network in the practice of bride trafficking, located in Singkawang, West Kalimantan.

This action is carried out on women of Chinese descent who are married to men who have “ordered” from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The marriages that occur are not once or twice, but have even become a business that earns a turnover of hundreds of millions of rupiah. The forms of marriage trafficking are: (1) the lure of marriage, because it is impossible for them to tell their original purpose. Therefore, they are given the guise of marriage, although in the end, these women are channelled into prostitution. and (2) commercialised marriages; this is also happening where women are “ordered” through online applications, commonly referred to as mail bride orders (MBO).

Why do these individuals work to attract Vietnamese and Indonesian women to work in China under the pretext of marriage? It is because of the huge gender imbalance between men and women in China due to the One Child Policy of the Deng Xiaoping government that, to “fulfil” the thirst of consumers, they are trying hard to find prey from various countries, especially in Southeast Asia. This article was created to illustrate how bride trafficking occurs, what efforts have been taken by law enforcement officials, the effects felt by the victims, and what challenges occur to solve this problem. The picture shows that law enforcement officials in both countries have not been firm and that there is a need for assistance from outside parties, namely ASEAN, to deal with this case.

RESEARCH METHOD

To analyse the issue of bride trafficking prevalent in the Southeast Asia region, this research will employ a qualitative methodology approach. This

approach was chosen to gain a deep understanding supported by empirical data for analysis. In collecting qualitative data, this study will conduct specific case study analyses involving cross-border marriages, both successful cases and arising issues, to understand the dynamics and consequences of bride trafficking. The research will also review policies, laws, government documents, and academic literature related to cross-border marriages, human trafficking, and cultural integration.

Statistical analysis will be used to assess trends, patterns, and correlations among various factors influencing cross-border marriages. The collected data will be thematically analysed to identify key themes and patterns emerging from interviews and case studies. Researchers are confident that this approach will effectively enable the study to capture the complexity of cross-border marriage issues from various perspectives and provide evidence-based recommendations to relevant stakeholders.

RESULT AND ANALYSES

In this discussion, researchers use the concept of transnational crime. Transnational crime, or transnational crime, is a global threat because it shows human mobility without any time or space restrictions. The concept of transnational crime was first introduced at the United Nations (UN) meeting in 1990 at the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. Forms of transnational crime include terrorism, money laundering, maritime piracy, cultural heritage theft, human smuggling, cybercrime, corruption, drug trafficking, illegal arms trafficking, and human trafficking.

Transnational crimes are generally committed by lawbreakers by breaking the law in two or more countries; transnational crimes are also carried out in an organised manner. Therefore, prevention efforts need to be carried out by many actors and organised as well. The researcher raised this

concept because it is needed for the researcher's analysis of the efforts that can be made by Vietnam and Indonesia in overcoming this problem and the need for a third party in this problem, namely ASEAN, to immediately resolve this very critical issue.

Based on data from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), bride trafficking in ASEAN has increased in recent years. Data from 2016 to 2022 shows that the number of bride trafficking cases in ASEAN increased from 1,700 cases in 2016 to 2,500 cases in 2022. While in Indonesia itself, based on data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA), bride trafficking in Indonesia has increased in recent years. Data from 2016 to 2022 shows that the number of bride trafficking cases in Indonesia increased from 17 cases in 2016 to 43 cases in 2022.

As for Vietnam, according to the Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA) at the Department of Social Vices Prevention, in 2021, it was reported that there were 28 victims of sexual exploitation, and 46 women were victims of illegal marriage and illegal adoption. In 2021, this number will be even higher because the number of unemployed people is increasing as the world is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has actually searched 32,000 places at risk of sexual trafficking, but due to a lack of systematic implementation, the authorities have only arrested two victims.

This can happen very rapidly because of the impact of globalisation. The increasingly uncontrolled globalisation makes it easier for criminals to spread their actions because of the easy access that exists. The rise of this case also makes it easy for the perpetrators to spread the lure of work in the mass media. The jobs offered are easy jobs that do not require many requirements but generate a very large income.

Socio-Economic Issues in Bride Trafficking

Researchers summarised some of the issues that triggered the rampant cases of trafficking in women in several aspects. The first aspect is socio-economic, and they divided it into several discussions below:

1. Poverty and Economic Inequality

One of the most significant socio-economic factors contributing to bride trafficking in Southeast Asia is poverty. In countries like Vietnam and Indonesia, many families live in extreme poverty, making them vulnerable to trafficking schemes. Economic inequality exacerbates the problem, as the gap between the rich and the poor creates desperation among impoverished communities, pushing them towards accepting risky propositions in hopes of a better life.

For example, high levels of poverty in rural areas in the country of Vietnam push many families to seek economic opportunities elsewhere, often through unsafe means. Economic inequality between urban and rural areas exacerbates this problem. For Indonesia itself, poverty remains a major issue, especially for remote areas and areas with limited access to basic services and employment, leaving women and families vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers offering promises of marriage and a better life abroad.

2. Lack of Employment Opportunities

Limited job opportunities in rural and economically disadvantaged areas lead to higher rates of migration and trafficking. In regions where legitimate employment is scarce, individuals are more likely to fall victim to traffickers who promise lucrative jobs abroad. This lack of viable economic options is a critical driver behind the increase in bride trafficking cases.

The reality in Vietnam is that the jobs available are often very low-paying and unstable, which makes the offer of marriage abroad appealing. Similar to Vietnam, many areas in Indonesia suffer from a lack of decent jobs. This poor situation

encourages women to accept marriage offers from foreigners because they are more promising.

3. Educational Disparities

Educational inequality also plays a significant role in the prevalence of bride trafficking. Lower levels of education among women in certain areas make them more susceptible to exploitation. Without adequate education, these women may lack awareness of the dangers of trafficking and may not have the skills necessary to secure stable employment, thereby increasing their vulnerability.

In Vietnam, especially in rural areas, there is still a problem of low levels of education, resulting in women being less aware of the risks and their rights that should be fulfilled. This lack of access exacerbates their inability to evaluate the risks associated with an offer of marriage to a foreigner, in this case a man from China, because they assume men from the country are well established and will provide a decent life for them.

Indonesia itself has the same problem as Vietnam, namely the lack of access to education. Lack of knowledge of the information received means that all information is swallowed raw without filtering or looking for credibility first. The speed of information in this country is not matched by a qualified education, resulting in easy manipulation by traffickers who have targeted uneducated village women from the beginning.

4. Social and Cultural Norms

In some cultures, there is a strong preference for boys, which can lead to gender imbalances. This imbalance creates a higher demand for brides, often leading to bride trafficking as a means to meet this demand. Additionally, cultural practices that devalue women and girls contribute to their exploitation, as they are often seen as less valuable members of society. And women are seen as objects, making it very difficult to break through this stigma that has developed.

The perpetuation of patriarchal culture in Vietnam and Indonesia has contributed greatly to the rise of bride trafficking. In the example of Vietnam, there is a culture that says marriage is an obligation for girls. The exits forcefully encourage their daughters to get married in the hope of helping the family financially, and it is hoped that the marriage of the child can be a golden moment for the family to improve the social status of the family.

Indonesia is not much different; the rise of bride trafficking cases is because marriage is considered a solution to overcome all gaps in life problems such as economy, social strata, and family prestige. Many families force their daughters to get married immediately because they are afraid that the child will become a family disgrace for not getting married.

Not to mention the label “old maid” also continues to be pinned on girls if, at the age of 25, they do not get married. Parents are not selective in choosing prospective sons-in-law for their children; for them, a well-established prospective husband is more than enough. Many parents also think that love is not important; the most important thing is money. In 2019, Indonesia had gender discrimination categorised as “high” in the Asian region with an SIGI of 41.6%, discrimination in the family of 63.1%, limited physical integrity of 21.9%, limited access to productive and financial resources of 36.5%, and limited civil liberties of 40.9%.

5. Migration Patters

Migration, both internal and international, driven by socio-economic factors, is another critical element in the rise of bride trafficking. Economic migrants seeking better opportunities abroad can easily become targets for traffickers. The complexity of migration processes and the lack of protection for migrant workers further exacerbate the risks of trafficking.

Rapid urbanisation and internal migration have taken place across the country, creating social and economic

instability that is often exploited by traffickers. Rural-to-urban migration without solid support often leads to exploitation. Not much different from Vietnam, urbanisation in Indonesia also triggers internal migration. As a result, many people seek a better life by moving to big cities. However, urbanisation is often carried out without sufficient support, causing them to experience economic and social instability, so they choose to take the short cut of accepting job offers to do less difficult but high-paying work, but it is all a misleading trick.

6. The Involvement of Brokers

The operation of brokers or recruiters in the Vietnam-China border region has been a major cause of the high rate of bride trafficking cases. They have the ability to easily obtain Vietnamese women because the border area is difficult for Vietnamese security agencies to reach. This gives them the opportunity to carry out their activities without significant hindrance from local authorities.

In addition, the brokers also take advantage of the similar situation in the border areas between Vietnam and Indonesia. In Indonesia, especially in remote areas, the long and unmonitored border provides an opening for brokers to conduct their operations with relative ease. They often promise jobs or marriages abroad to vulnerable women in these areas, who are then exploited as brides by their networks.

The Issues of Bride Trafficking from Legal Perspective

For further discussion, the researcher explores the rampant aspects of the bride trade from a legal perspective, as follows:

1. Inadequate Legal Frameworks

The phrase “inadequate legal frameworks” refers to the absence, insufficiency, or comprehensive legal structures specifically designed to address the issue of bride trafficking. In many

ASEAN countries, including Vietnam and Indonesia, existing legal frameworks may lack specific provisions or mechanisms targeting bride trafficking, which leads to difficulties in effectively prosecuting and enforcing laws against this crime.

Lack of a sufficient legal framework means that there could be gaps or inconsistencies in the laws governing bride trafficking. Such deficiencies can include not adequately defining the offence, prescribing appropriate penalties, and creating procedural guidelines for apprehension and prosecution. The law enforcement agencies and judicial systems face problems in identifying, investigating, and prosecuting crimes related to bride trafficking, hence leaving victims without any legal assistance.

It also allows perpetrators to face lesser charges since they cannot be accused under any specific law. Bride trafficking victims could find it difficult to get justice due to various reasons. To address this issue, there is a need for ASEAN countries, including Vietnam and Indonesia, to strengthen their legal frameworks by enacting comprehensive laws and regulations specifically addressing bride trafficking. These laws should include clear definitions of the offence, stringent penalties for perpetrators, and provisions for victim support, rehabilitation, and compensation. Additionally, efforts should be made to enhance coordination and cooperation among law enforcement agencies, judicial systems, and relevant stakeholders to ensure effective implementation and enforcement of these laws.

2. Challenges in Cross-Border Law Enforcement

Bride trafficking often involves crossing international borders, posing challenges to legal cooperation efforts among the countries involved. Effective legal coordination is crucial for investigating, prosecuting, and combating cross-border bride trafficking. Additionally, the extradition process

becomes complex in this context, as perpetrators may hide in other countries to evade legal accountability.

Furthermore, harmonisation of laws between countries becomes essential to ensure consistent and effective law enforcement in addressing bride trafficking. Differences in legal interpretations and variations in laws between countries can hinder the prosecution and enforcement processes in the region. Therefore, efforts to align laws between countries and enhance cross-border legal cooperation are urgently needed to combat bride trafficking at the regional level.

3. Weak Law Enforcement

Bride trafficking has not been effectively mitigated in either Vietnam or Indonesia due to a weak legal enforcement regime. The inability of law enforcement agencies to address this issue is complemented by meagre funding and high levels of corruption. In addition, poor training among law enforcement officers complicates matters even more because they cannot recognise such cases, conduct investigations, or prosecute them. This means that the perpetrators operate with impunity while giving no incentive for deterrence or justice to the victims.

The other problem is that bride trafficking networks are perpetuated due to weak law enforcement response and exploitation of vulnerable people. The traffickers utilise gaps that exist in the police capacity as well as their integrity to continue conducting their illegal business, knowing very well that they have lower chances of facing consequences for their actions. That amplifies a vicious cycle of victimisation and unaccountability, thus deepening the challenge of bride trafficking in both countries.

In addition, a lackadaisical reaction from law enforcers allows the distribution of bride trafficking networks and the exploitation of unprotected victims. They know that they can keep on doing their

illegal businesses because they are not likely to get caught due to weaknesses in law enforcement capacity and integrity. This further embeds bride trafficking as an entrenched problem in Vietnam and Indonesia, thereby perpetuating a cycle of victimisation and impunity.

To redress these concerns, there is an imperative for systemic reforms within the law enforcement agencies in both countries. The steps include providing more funds for fighting against bride trafficking, having measures to address corruption, and undertaking frequent law enforcement training programmes and capacity development initiatives. This will enable Vietnam and Indonesia to achieve stronger efforts in law enforcement aimed at investigating, prosecuting, and preventing cases of bride trafficking, resulting in enhanced protection for vulnerable persons while the culprits face justice.

4. Legal Vulnerability of Victims

In both Indonesia and Vietnam, the legal vulnerability of victims makes it difficult to address bride trafficking. These complexities are fueled by the inability of those affected to access the legal aid and support required for navigating through the complicated procedures of prosecuting perpetrators and seeking justice. Their communication with law enforcement or judicial officers may also be limited by language barriers, especially because various languages and dialects are used in such countries as Indonesia and Vietnam. Additionally, victims might fear being victimised again if they report cases to the authorities in communities where they do not trust them or even where traffickers wield a lot of power.

These obstacles have led to a situation where only a few incidents concerning bride trafficking are reported in Indonesia and Vietnam. Most victims prefer to stay silent because they believe that taking legal action will not yield any positive results, while others keep off due to fear of revenge. Consequently, criminals continue with their

activities without being stopped; hence, more people continue suffering as a result of this crime. Furthermore, the lack of protective laws means that these individuals can easily fall into another trap since there is no way they can seek help or claim compensation for the harm inflicted upon them.

Dealing with the exposedness of victims under law demands an all-inclusive approach that will see to it that they are provided with legal representation, language interpretation services, and protection measures being put in place. Such should entail strengthening care systems for the affected persons, creating an environment where people can have trust in justice delivery systems, and empowering them not to be scared of demanding their rights whenever they are violated. The government should address these legal gaps so as to safeguard those at risk from bride trafficking while ensuring that culprits face justice for their actions, thereby ending such forms of exploitation once and for all.

5. Insufficient Victim Protection Measures

The inadequacy of victim protection measures in Vietnam and Indonesia exacerbates the vulnerabilities of individuals who have been trafficked as brides. Both countries face challenges in providing comprehensive support services to victims, including shelters, counselling, and legal assistance, which are crucial for their recovery and rehabilitation. In Vietnam, limited resources and capacity within the social welfare system contribute to the lack of adequate shelters and support services for victims of bride trafficking. Similarly, in Indonesia, the availability of shelters and specialised support programmes for trafficking victims remains insufficient, particularly in rural areas where trafficking is prevalent and resources are scarce.

The absence of effective victim protection measures increases the risk of re-

trafficking and further exploitation for individuals who have already experienced bride trafficking. Without adequate support, victims may struggle to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society, leaving them vulnerable to coercion and manipulation by traffickers. Moreover, the lack of legal assistance and counselling services may hinder victims' ability to access justice and seek redress for the harm they have suffered, perpetuating a cycle of victimisation and impunity.

The Impact on Victims of Bride Trafficking

After examining the factors that have led to the rise of bride trafficking cases, both from a socio-economic and legal perspective. This time, the researcher will discuss the impact on the victims as a result of bride trafficking cases, as follows:

1. Psychological Impact

The impact that occurs for victims of bride trafficking from a psychological perspective is very great. The first is that the victim will experience prolonged trauma; this trauma arises as a result of the violence that continues to befall him while being put into the brothel. The trauma is also exacerbated by the fraud committed by the traffickers, the victims, who were initially lured to become wives but were instead put into brothels. The effects of this trauma will cause prolonged psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Victims also experience excessive fear and anxiety because they are instilled with the thought that they will not be rescued by the authorities and will only be victims of violence for the rest of their lives. In addition, victims will also feel a loss of identity as they are forced to abandon their old identity and adopt a new one. Identity is not only a change of name but also a change of character and personality, thus making victims continue to impersonate and be

dishonest with themselves, so that victims experience victim mentality.

2. Physical Impact

Victims of bride trafficking experience tremendous violence and repeated coercion for the fulfilment of their "duties." This coercion is done by the broker and also by the guests who come to the brothel. The physical violence received by the victims is in the form of beatings, harassment, abuse, and many more that cause prolonged physical injuries and even permanent disability.

In addition, the victims of this bride trafficking crime experience neglect as a result of not fulfilling the "target" or because the victim rebelled. This neglect is in the form of not being given proper clothing, not being given proper sanitation facilities, not being given nutritionally balanced food or even no food at all, and worst of all, not being given proper medical care. As a result, these victims experience severe exhaustion, malnutrition, and disease, whether infectious or not.

3. Social Impact

The victims of bride trafficking experience a loss of social context in the form of social isolation because they have to be separated from their families, relatives, and communities. The long-term effects of this loss of social context make the victims experience loneliness, a loss of social support, feel useless, be unable to channel emotions properly, and even lead to a loss of social skills because every day is filled with fear and anxiety.

The next effect in the social context is stigma. Victims will be easily labelled with bad stigma by the community because they are considered unable to take care of themselves properly, considered worthless, considered a disgrace, and worse, considered the scum of society. This stigma also has a long-term effect on the discriminatory behaviour that the victims receive, which hinders the victims' recovery and leads to suicide.

Efforts Made

1. Indonesia

The Indonesian government knows that the rise of bride trafficking cases does not remain silent; this can be seen from the formation of the Task Force for the Prevention and Handling of Trafficking in Persons (GT TPPO), which is a functional task mandated to diplomats to carry out security and protection of Indonesian citizens. Sending the Case Handling Team, consisting of officials and staff of the Directorate of PWNI, West Java Regional Police, and West Java Attorney's Office, to Shanghai in October 2018 and Beijing in March 2019. In addition to meeting with relevant agencies in China, the team also met with victims to provide moral support and support efforts to resolve bride trafficking. The results of the formation of this team can be seen on September 2, 2019, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Indonesian Embassy in Beijing successfully repatriated 18 Indonesian women who have been determined to be victims of mail order brides (MOBs) from China.

In addition to the formation of the team, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also initiated bilateral relations with the Chinese government regarding the issue of MOBs or the like. On August 27, 2019, Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi and the Indonesian Ambassador to China came to a common understanding that MOB cases are very important cases, not ordinary household problems that do not require focus from both countries. In addition, Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi also discussed the MOB on the sidelines of summits or state meetings and urged the Chinese government to act decisively on this case.

The researcher summarised the efforts made by Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi in this bride trafficking issue into three (three) efforts, namely:

- (1) Victims who are already in the Indonesian Embassy in Beijing are

immediately facilitated for repatriation to Indonesia.

- (2) The process of legalising marriages at the Chinese Embassy in Indonesia and the Indonesian Embassy in China must be carried out more thoroughly so that it is not easy to pass these invalid marriages, which lead to acts of exploitation.
- (3) Establish cooperation related to the eradication of trafficking in persons (TPPO).

In addition to the efforts made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPA) has also made efforts domestically by creating the Women's Protection Online Information System (SIMFONI) database to facilitate data-based violence recording services in the regions. Specifically for cases of trafficking in persons, the central task force is working with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and with international organisations for migration regarding updating the database and data collection mechanism for TPPO cases in Indonesia.

The Indonesian government also made "improvements" by implementing the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2009. About the ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime. Indonesia, as a member state of the United Nations, also signed an international legal instrument that specifically regulates efforts to prevent and eradicate transnational criminal acts, namely the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime, on December 15, 2000, in Palermo, Italy.

In addition, the Indonesian government also acts decisively, especially on immigration; this is evidenced by the enactment of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2011 concerning immigration. Because of the mobility of the

world's population, which has various impacts, both beneficial and detrimental to the interests and lives of the nation and state of the Republic of Indonesia, the authorities are increasingly tightening immigration channels so that this case does not continue to be repeated.

2. Vietnam

Vietnam, which is dubbed the number one country in Southeast Asia, is among the top 10 countries in the world victimised by bride trafficking, so the government does not remain silent. The Vietnamese government progressively acted to overcome this problem by making laws. The Vietnam National Action Programme against Trafficking in Children and Women 2004–2010 (VNAP) is a law that contains a series of action plans that focus on eliminating the trafficking of women and children for prostitution, forced marriage, and other purposes.

In addition to the law, the Vietnamese government also educates the public on the prevention and eradication of trafficking in women and children. A further effort is for the government to provide support to victims of women and children returning from abroad so that they can return to the country safely.

In addition, the Vietnamese government also issued the Vietnamese Marriage and Family Law in 2014. Article 4 on the protection of marriage and family emphasises several prohibitions, one of which is the prohibition of taking advantage of marriage for sexual exploitation, slavery, and other activities that violate basic human rights.

Looking further, the Vietnamese government also made agreements regarding the handling of human trafficking with other countries and international organizations. The first is by signing an agreement with GMS countries, namely the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking Memorandum of Understanding (COMMIT MoU), which came into force in 2005. Secondly, Vietnam

approved the Treaties on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Among Like-minded ASEAN Member Countries (ASEAN MLAT) in 2004.

Further efforts made by the Vietnamese government were to cooperate with the local community, namely the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU), which was seen in the formation of clubs for trafficking prevention. In addition, the government also strengthened legal witnesses for traffickers by amending the Penal Code in 2015. The content of the Penal Code is that perpetrators who trade in women will be prosecuted for 5 to 10 years in prison and a fine of VND 20 million to 100 million.

3. ASEAN

ASEAN, as a regional organisation in the Southeast Asian region, has a crucial role in the occurrence of bride trafficking cases. ASEAN is responsible for issuing:

- (1) ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP). This convention is made to be legally binding and requires all member states to cooperate in preventing, prosecuting, and punishing human trafficking, and most importantly, protecting victims. To eradicate bride trafficking, it requires maximum efforts from all member countries, not just some countries that participate.
- (2) Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC). This meeting was initiated by ASEAN as a means of communication for member states to provide the best solution regarding the resolution of this annual problem.
- (3) Treaties on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Among Like-minded ASEAN Member Countries (ASEAN MLAT). This is a treaty agreed upon by several ASEAN member

countries to provide mutual legal assistance in handling crimes across national borders. In addition, this agreement was established to strengthen cooperation between ASEAN countries in combating transnational crimes by providing mutual legal assistance in the form of information, evidence, and the execution of court decisions that have permanent legal force.

- (4) and the ASEAN Association of Chiefs of Police (ASEANAPOL). Is a regional police organisation established to enhance cooperation among police in ASEAN countries in combating transnational crimes and enhancing regional security.

CONCLUSION

The research highlights socio-economic factors such as poverty, economic inequality, lack of employment opportunities, educational disparities, social and cultural norms, migration patterns, and broker involvement as key drivers of bride trafficking. In Vietnam and Indonesia, poverty and economic inequality lead to risky marriages, while lack of employment opportunities increase the risk of trafficking. Educational disparities and cultural norms that look down on women exacerbate the situation. Migration patterns and border brokerage operations further complicate the problem, with perpetrators exploiting gaps in law enforcement and social protection. The governments of Vietnam and Indonesia have implemented various measures, including the establishment of a Task Force in Indonesia, a response team in China, and international diplomacy. However, both countries face challenges in law enforcement, inadequate legal frameworks, and limited victim protection. To address these issues, systemic reforms, increased international cooperation, and comprehensive support for victims are needed.

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