

# Uncovering the Shadows: Forensic and Criminological Perspectives on Human Trafficking in Indonesia

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*This chapter explores the intricate facets of human trafficking in Indonesia, focusing on the role of forensic science and criminology in addressing this critical issue. It examines the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies and the effectiveness of digital forensics in combating trafficking. Additionally, the chapter delves into the importance of victim support and trafficking prevention strategies, discussing the impact of socio-economic factors and the necessity of robust legal frameworks. Emphasis is placed on the development of comprehensive rehabilitation programs, fostering international cooperation for a transboundary approach to this crime. The chapter also highlights the evolving nature of cybercrime in the context of trafficking, underscoring the need for proactive policy development and enhanced transboundary crime management strategies.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

We live in a time of modern-day slavery. The shackles put on by slaveowners of the past are replaced by a network of criminals that prey upon the vulnerable in parts of the world where human lives take time to be missed. The result is an indelible stain on our collective conscience, with ongoing efforts to combat this heinous crime seemingly thwarted at every corner.

Human trafficking, defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons by means of threat, use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, or vulnerability for the purpose of exploitation, is a grave violation of human rights and a significant global challenge (UNODC, 2020). The International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 (TIP) indicate that, despite ongoing prevention efforts and empirical studies, incidents of human trafficking continue to rise, placing it among the fastest growing illegal industries globally (ILO, 2017; TIP, 2023). With annual revenues exceeding \$150 billion, human trafficking impacts an estimated 40.293 million people, with women comprising 75% of this total.

This chapter examines the human trafficking crisis in Indonesia, especially given that in recent decades the prevalence of this issue has escalated substantially (Parinama, 2018; TIP, 2023).

Indonesia's history of colonialism, internal conflict, and economic disparities has created conditions conducive to modern-day exploitation and vulnerability (Klooster, 2019). Human trafficking in Indonesia takes various forms, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and organ trafficking (UNODC, 2020). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), an estimated 1.6 million people are subjected to forced labour in the Asia-Pacific region, with Indonesia being a significant contributor to this figure (ILO, 2017). Globalisation and the rise of transnational criminal networks have facilitated the expansion of human trafficking operations, making it a lucrative and pervasive phenomenon in contemporary Indonesian society.

The scope and scale of human trafficking in Indonesia are substantial, with the country serving as both a source and transit point for victims. Indonesia's geographical location, porous borders, and complex migration patterns contribute to the prevalence of trafficking within and across its borders. Its status as the world's fourth most populous country positions it as a crucial hub in the global human trafficking network (Piper, 2005; Astrid, 2011; TIP, 2017;2018;2021;2023). Despite the government's efforts, including the enactment of Law no. 21 of 2007 targeting human trafficking and additional legislation focusing on child protection<sup>123</sup>, the challenges in countering this issue remain daunting (KPPDP, 2016; Renaldi, 2019). These challenges are rooted in socio-economic and political dysfunctions such as poverty, lack of education, and corruption (KPPDP, 2016; Renaldi, 2019; Dipa, 2018; Yuniarti, 2015), with the promise of employment and improved living standards often leading victims into situations characterised by exploitation and abuse (Wismayanti, 2013).

Ranking 17th among 28 countries in the frequency of modern slavery, according to the 2018 Global Slavery Index, Indonesia experienced a notable increase in the trafficking of women and children during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, driven

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