

Salasika

**INDONESIAN JOURNAL OF GENDER, WOMEN,
CHILD, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION'S STUDIES**



**VOL. 6
NO. 2**

**DECEMBER
2023**

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Indonesian Government Policies Regarding Working Hours for Female Migrant Workers Abroad during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has been sending migrant workers since the 1970s, with the majority being women who work in informal and low-skilled sectors such as domestic workers, childcare, elderly care, or factory labors. Economic factors, in addition to social and cultural factors, have become the biggest driving factor for these women to work abroad. During the COVID-19 pandemic, female migrant workers from Indonesia experienced significant challenges, especially changes to prolonged working hours. This research aims to identify the impact of COVID-19 on Indonesian female migrant workers and formulate policy recommendations to safeguard women's labors rights. This research employs a qualitative design utilizing data collected through literature reviews and in-depth interviews with Indonesian female migrant workers residing abroad. Based on the findings, during the pandemic, many Indonesian migrant workers worked longer than the established standard, often exceeding 15 hours per day. However, there is an absence of clear regulations or protective measures guaranteeing the welfare of Indonesian migrant workers when it comes to extending working hours beyond the established standards.

KEYWORDS: *COVID-19, pandemic, female migrant workers, international migration, policies, working hours*

INTRODUCTION

International migration has become an inevitable phenomenon in the era of globalization, facilitating cross-border mobilization. Globally, the number

and proportion of international migrant workers have increased significantly in the last half-century. In 1970, there were approximately 84 million international migrants, constituting about 2.3% of the global

population. Twenty years later, by 2020, the UN estimated that there were approximately 281 million international migrants in the world, accounting for 3.6% of the global population (IOM, 2022).

International migration occurs primarily due to population changes, particularly shifts in age structure. Sustained low fertility in developed countries means that a large proportion of the elderly population requires health and social care. On the other hand, many developing countries benefit from a high demographic dividend driven by a higher fertility rate among the working-age population. This global demographic dynamic is observable in East Asian countries with low fertility such as South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, where Indonesian migrant workers work in the domestic and care sectors, notably providing care for the elderly. Similarly, oil-rich countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, with relatively higher fertility rates, continue to employ unskilled female workers from economically less developed countries such as Indonesia. These workers care for large families and the elderly, with an expanding presence in the service sector. The economic status and age structure of a country's population therefore shape the demand and supply of international labour. In Southeast Asia and the Middle East, unskilled international migration is dominated by female migration due to the nature of employment opportunities in the domestic and care sectors.

Indonesia's history of migration began during the Dutch colonial period (1602 – 1942). In the 1890s,

Dutch business ventures in the South American colonies experienced a labour shortage in the plantation sector. To overcome this, in 1890, the Dutch began sending Indonesian contract labourers to work on plantations in Suriname (Lockard, 1971). Post-independence in 1945, Indonesia sent many Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) to the Middle East in line with the increase in the world oil industry. This growth improved the economy and infrastructure development in the Middle East, creating high employment opportunities there (IOM, 2010). Until 2011, Indonesia sent 137,643 individuals to work in the Middle East (Yuanita, 2016).

In contrast, migration of Indonesian workers to East Asian countries, such as Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong, is mainly driven by uneven economic development (Yeoh & Huang, 1998). For example, due to a shortage of local domestic workers and insufficient public welfare for childcare and elderly care, the demand for domestic workers in Hong Kong has increased (Wee & Sim, 2005; Constable, 2007). In 1973, the Hong Kong Government decided to permit foreign nationals to work as domestic servants with employment contracts (Lai & Li, 2019). By employing female workers, the shortage of domestic workers is expectedly alleviated, especially for family care responsibilities. According to BP2MI data in 2022 (BP2MI, 2023), there were approximately 200,761 new PMI placements, with the majority in Hong Kong (29.93%).

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted international mobility. The closure of

international borders hindered the desire of international migrant workers to return home during the pandemic (Merla et al, 2020). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has estimated that more than 160 million migrant workers faced mobility restrictions in the first half of 2020 (Radu & Balan, 2021). Along with migrant workers losing their jobs due to layoffs, many returnees left their jobs due to concerns about the burden on families left behind at home, the impact of the recession caused by the pandemic, and the risk of being stranded and undocumented in the receiving country (Guha-Khasnobis & Chandna, 2021). For example, in Sri Lanka, 1.5 million migrant workers were reportedly stranded, while thousands of Pakistani workers were also stranded in their destination countries, with their position described as a “double jeopardy,” as they were unable to work due to widespread business closures or return home (Jones et al, 2021). The Bangladesh government reported that a total of 408,000 migrant workers returned to the country in 2020, and several hundred thousand workers who visited Bangladesh were unable to return to their respective workplaces abroad (Islam, 2020). In the Indonesian context, 180,000 migrant workers returned through official channels in 2020, not accounting for those returning through unofficial channels (IOM Indonesia, 2021).

Female migrant workers, especially in the context of a global health emergency like COVID-19, represent one of the most vulnerable groups. Indonesian female migrant workers are generally workers in the

informal sector, with the majority of their work carried out in the household environments. During the lockdown period, these women were ordered to stay indoors and practice social distancing when leaving the house (Fauzi & Paiman, 2021). The workers were forced to work harder than before, whereas many of these women already worked around 16 hours a day without days off (Hubbard & Donovan, 2020). The lockdowns also increased the burden of household maintenance work. Employers adjusted working hours in response to the pandemic, generally increasing the number of working hours. Changes in working hours are considered an indicator of social well-being in the context of international women's migration, directly impacting individual's physical and mental health, as well as their socialization.

Previous research has indicated that 35% of female migrant workers from Indonesia reported longer and longer working hours (Rosalinda, 2022). Such changes were identified as one of the most severe impacts on female migrant workers due to the pandemic. Under normal circumstances, status as a domestic worker places a lack of working hour protection on these workers. In addition, with the COVID-19 conditions requiring people to stay at home, migrant workers had to work longer hours to provide services. This raises questions about the effectiveness of existing Indonesian government policies regulating the protection of female migrant workers' working hours. If such policies exist, there is a need to assess the gap in their

implementation considering ongoing violations of working hours.

METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach that aims to analyse the circumstances surrounding prolonged working hours among Indonesian migrant workers abroad and explaining the strategies that Indonesian government policies should implement to safeguard and protect its citizens.

The qualitative methods were selected to present an in-depth analysis of field data, comprising spoken responses, reactions, and written information from research subjects. Qualitative research is characterized by its method of collecting detailed facts, delivering deep into a problem or symptom to obtain as much of the nature of the problem as possible (Suyono, 1985, p. 307). The data collection involved both primary data (in-depth interviews) and secondary data (literature study).

Data were collected through interviews with 30 Indonesian female migrant workers who were still working abroad and working online and who had retired and returned to their homeland, in Sukowilangun Village, Kalipare District, Malang Regency. Interviews were also conducted at the Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Secondary data was carried out by examining references related to migrant worker issues and working hours.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Migration of Indonesian migrant workers abroad

From 2022 to mid-2023, the number of Indonesian Migrant Workers abroad surpassed 3.5 million people, with over 80% being women (Bank Indonesia, 2023). The majority of those workers worked as household assistants or home nurses in several Asian and Middle Eastern countries, including Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Saudi Arabia. These workers left their families, husbands, and children in Indonesia to work abroad, aiming at meeting their families' economic needs. From a gender perspective, female migrant workers constitute a group of workers who are vulnerable to violence, neglect and unfair treatment. Further, the large number of Indonesian female migrants in the non-formal sector heightens the risk of discrimination and social inequality. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges faced by migrant women, leading to economic, social and health issues such as lack of access to healthcare, salary reductions due to the pandemic, risk of losing their jobs, social discrimination, and financial and legal difficulties as well as logistic complexities in returning to Indonesia (Radu & Balan, 2021; Rosalinda, 2022; Wang & Lin, 2023).

Regarding legal protection, the Indonesian Government has enacted several regulations concerning the protection of Indonesian migrant workers. However, not much is specifically aimed at protecting the rights and welfare of female migrant workers. Law No. 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of

Indonesian Migrant Workers aligns with the UN Convention regarding the protection of the rights of migrant workers and their families (Hartono & Samsuria, 2021). With the existence of this legal regulation, protecting the rights of Indonesian migrants, including female migrant workers, has become one of the country's legal priorities. However, its implementation faces numerous obstacles and challenges, resulting in its weaker effectiveness, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The spread of the COVID-19 virus between 2020 to 2022 posed challenges for Indonesian migrant workers abroad. Reports from 11 Indonesian Labor Attachés in their placement countries have indicated that more than 500 Indonesian migrant workers were exposed to the virus. In response, both the Indonesian government and the host countries implemented several measures, including lockdowns and social restrictions. These measures affected the socio-economic repercussions on Indonesian migrant workers abroad, notably affecting the implementation of working hours for migrant workers.

Regulations on working hours for Indonesian migrant workers abroad

In Indonesia, regulations pertaining to the determination of working hours for workers are outlined in Law No. 13 of 2003, later amended by Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation. Workers in Indonesia are required to work 40 hours a week with two available schemes. The first involves 7 hours of work per day with spread across 6 working days with one day off. The second scheme comprises 8 hours of

work per day scheduled over 5 working days with two days off. This regulation does not encompass the minimum 30-minute rest period, which is the right of employees. Companies retain the flexibility to adjust these working hours regulations in line with their needs, including determining whether weekly holidays falls on weekends or other days (BPK RI, 2020).

However, not all companies or employers fall under this regulatory framework. Certain continuous operation sectors—such as health services, transportation, tourism, postal and telecommunications, electricity supply, water and oil and gas services, shopping businesses, mass media, security, and conservation institutions—have the authority to employ their workers on official holidays. based on mutual agreement (JDIH Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia, 2003). Regardless, both continuous operation companies and general companies or employers are obligated to provide compensation or overtime pay for employees who work outside the established standard working hours (JDIH Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021).

Meanwhile, in accordance with regulations from the International Labor Organization (ILO), the general standard for working hours is a maximum of 48 hours per week or 8 hours a day, with a minimum of 24 hours off during one week. It could also be said that each worker has standard working hours of 8 hours per day with the provisions of 6 working days and 1 day off a week. This standard applies to all workers, including migrant workers (ILO Qatar, 2023).

In the case of regulating working hours for Indonesian migrant workers abroad, the Indonesian government appears not to have specific regulations apart from adhering to the standard provisions for working hours issued by the ILO. The regulatory framework provided by the government aligns with Law No. 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers and Regulation of the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Agency (BP2MI) No. 1 of 2020 regarding PMI Work Agreements. According to these regulations, every PMI placed abroad is required to have a valid work agreement agreed upon by both the employer and the worker. This agreement includes details regarding the terms of employment, the rights and obligations of the parties involved, as well as working conditions, including working hours, leave entitlements, and rest periods (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). This ensures that PMIs understand their rights through work agreements before commencing work abroad.

Based on work agreements stipulated by several countries such as Malaysia, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, PMIs are obligated to work for 48 hours, with 8 hours per day and a minimum weekly holiday of 24 hours or 1 day a week, according to their work schedule determined by the company or employer. Any excess working hours beyond 8 hours are considered overtime, for which the company or employer must provide additional overtime compensation (KJRI Penang, 2022; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022; ILO Qatar, 2023). However, in general, these

regulations apply to formal workers or migrant workers. For migrant workers employed in the non-formal sector or as domestic workers, there are no clear regulations regarding working hours. The determination of working hours generally relies on direct agreement with the employer. However, in several countries, such as Qatar, employers can extend working hours, provided that the total working hours do not exceed 10 hours per day, excluding rest, meal or worship hours. Additionally, workers are entitled to 3 weeks of annual leave and sick leave with pay for up to 2 weeks after completing 3 months of work (ILO Qatar, 2023).

Implementation of working hours for Indonesian female migrant workers abroad

In terms of regulations, the rules for working hours for both domestic and migrant workers have been regulated in the International Labor Organization Convention (ILO Convention). However, in practice, the regulations are often not adhered to properly, especially for female migrant workers engaged in the domestic sector as household assistants or home nurses. According to the results of interviews with 30 Indonesian female migrant workers abroad, the majority indicated that they often worked more than 8 hours per day.

Some migrant women working as household assistants or caregivers for the elderly has an average of 15-24 working hours a day depending on how much work they have to do.

"I work as an elderly nurse in Hong Kong. I wake up in the morning to prepare breakfast then

am tasked with preparing the needs of the grandmother I care for. Even though it looks simple, I can say I work 24 hours. I have to be ready whenever needed, even if I'm sleeping. Usually, I have a holiday once a month and during holidays. But if employers know I have to stay up late at night, they spare me if I get up late."(YL, Taiwan)

"I work as a Household Assistant in Hong Kong, I usually wake up at 6.30 am and go to bed at 10 pm. When my employer works, I will clean the house, wash clothes and iron. Sometimes I go to the market. As for cooking, I usually only cook once a day for my employer's dinner. They like to prepare their breakfast. Sometimes I also cook when their children or grandchildren come on Saturday nights. My employer gives me one day off every week. Sometimes it's Saturday, sometimes it's Monday, depending on what you give it."(K, Hong Kong)

Not infrequently, many of these workers report insufficient rest because of their heavy workloads assigned by their employers. Some even struggle to find time for socializing with fellow migrant workers because of their tight schedules and limited rest periods.

"I worked from 7 am until my employer went to bed at 9-10 pm without rest. I can't sleep before everyone is asleep, even if I have finished all my work. Sometimes I can even wake up until midnight or 1 am, and have to wake up early the next day. But my employer gave me one day off. If I have a holiday, I can leave the house from 7 am to 7 pm" (R, Hong Kong)

"My job in Saudi was as an assistant. I clean the house, cook, look after the children, and wash clothes. Every day I work without holidays. Especially if it's a holiday, work will increase. I lived in a maid's room with other workers. But I rarely chat with other helpers because their working hours and duties are different. When I have a break, I prefer to call my family in Indonesia. And after that, I have to rest quickly because tomorrow I have to work again early in the morning."(LBJ, Saudi Arabia)

"I work as a household member and babysitter. Every day I work from 8 am to 10-12 pm. I can only sleep when all the work is finished. My main job is to cook and take care of my employer's children. My employer's family is large, there are many children and they are still small. I have to prepare food for everyone. So I'm very busy. Most of my time is spent in the kitchen and accompanying my employer's children. Even for family calls, sometimes it only takes a moment."(Ma, Saudi Arabia)

In contrast, female migrant workers employed in the formal sector, such as service providers or factory workers, experience different conditions. Most migrants in the formal sector have clear working hours and appropriate rest periods.

"Now I work as a janitor at Macau University. I work every day from Monday to Saturday, then take Sunday off. Working hours are in accordance with general working hours. Sometimes the campus is closed. If there are overtime hours, I

get an additional salary."(Wi, Macau).

"I work at a vegetable factory in Johor. His job is usually to clean the vegetables, and then put them in the box. In the factory where the working hours are determined, 8 am to 4 pm. And on weekends we get holidays."(AE, Malaysia)

The data above underscores that the application of working hours among female migrant workers abroad deviates from established standards, particularly for those in the non-formal or domestic sectors. The length of working hours for these workers depends on the policies set by their employers, indicating a significant gap in the adherence to international standards for labor protection.

Discussion

The spread of the COVID-19 virus presented a new set of challenges for Indonesian migrant workers. According to reports from Labor Attachés in 11 placement countries, the number of Indonesian migrant workers exposed to COVID-19 in May 2020 was 587 people. This included 224 individuals who tested positive, 353 in quarantine, and 10 fatalities. Of the 224 who tested positive, they worked in Malaysia (108), the United Arab Emirates (40), Saudi Arabia (37, consisting of 22 people in Riyadh and 15 people in Jeddah), Qatar (18), Kuwait (13), Singapore (5), Taiwan (2), and Brunei Darussalam (1) (Ministry of Manpower, 2020).

The Indonesian government has initiated various measures to respond to the coronavirus case,

including the establishment of a Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling COVID-19 on March 13 2020. Subsequently, large-scale social restrictions and social distancing rules were introduced on March 30, 2020 to push the containment of COVID-19. In addition, the Government decided to implement a travel ban for foreigners to Indonesia, including transit, effective since April 2, 2020, implemented through Minister of Law and Human Rights Regulation No. 11 of 2020 concerning Temporary Travel Bans for foreigners entering Indonesian territory. On 31 March 2020, a Stimulus package worth 405 trillion Rupiah (USD 26.5 billion) was further introduced through Government Regulation (Perpu) No 1/2020, aimed at legitimizing more state spending and financial assistance (Djalante et al, 2020b).

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, countries adopted restrictive policies to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. One implemented policy is lockdowns which had a significant impact on world economic activities. In countries that implemented lockdowns, almost all economic activities stopped. Shopping centres, companies and institutions closed, and people were restricted from leaving their homes except in urgent cases. This then affected the working hours of employees, including female migrant workers.

In response to the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesian female migrant workers abroad expressed a range of reactions. Some migrants reported no significant changes in their working hours.

"It's no different from before Covid. I work as usual. My salary is also fixed. Maybe because where I am there is no lockdown. My employer is also working as usual."(Su, Hong Kong)

"In Saudi, I think there is no difference between before and during the pandemic. Because I work at home all the time. So I also don't know what conditions will be like on weekends during the pandemic. I only leave the house to throw away the trash and when my employer asks me to leave. Every day I am at home. "The rules here are strict for women if they want to leave the house without their husband."(LBJ, Saudi Arabia)

"When I was in Hong Kong, the pandemic had not yet spread abroad. I was just told that if you want to go out you have to wear a mask. And we weren't allowed to leave unless it was urgent. But I work as usual. I also still go to the market. I just wasn't given permission to go out on weekends. He said he was worried that I might infect people outside. So, if I have a holiday every weekend, I just stay at home and work as usual."(R, Hong Kong)

"I don't think it's any different from before the pandemic. I also work as usual. It's better because I can wake up a little later. Usually before the pandemic, I had to wake up early to prepare breakfast for my employer's children. But because of the pandemic, school is closed. So after dawn, I could sleep again. I also never work overtime. My work is from 8 am to 9 pm. Some migrants said they could work until 2 a.m. But I can rest immediately after the master has dinner."(Et, Saudi Arabia)

These observations highlight that, for some migrants who worked as domestic workers, the work regulations within the employer's household generally did not adhere to the rules mandated by the government. These workers continued to work according to the working hours set by their employers. However, some individuals received overtime pay for their additional working hours during the pandemic.

"Usually, I have a day off once a week. But during the pandemic, I chose not to go anywhere. I prefer to rest and stay at home rather than leave the house. If I don't go out and stay at home on holidays, I will get extra pay because I also keep doing household chores."(Hey, Taiwan)

Conversely, some female migrant workers, primarily in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, admitted that there were differences in their work experiences before and during the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, these workers reported having fewer rest hours because they often served their employers who spent more time at home. Besides that, it was not uncommon for them to encounter situations where additional wages were not provided despite working longer hours.

"Before the pandemic, I could have more time to rest when my employer's family was at work or school, and my work was finished. But during the pandemic, I only had a little time to rest because I was busy preparing for my employer's family needs. I don't even have much time to call my family in Indonesia

because they are very busy."(Ma, Saudi Arabia)

"Since the pandemic, the grandmother I care for has only stayed at home. So he chatted more. I also became busier because my employers were all at home. Usually, I don't need to cook during the day. But since they were all at home, I had to cook lunch. My rest time has also decreased."(UK, Singapore)

"During the pandemic, I spent almost all my time working. I work from 9 am to 2 am again. Usually before the pandemic I only worked until midnight. My work pattern has changed. Previously, it was easy for me to put the employer's small child to sleep. Because he can play outside and when he comes home he's tired. "But since the pandemic, he's been playing at home all the time, so sometimes it's hard to get him to sleep."(Ho, Saudi Arabia)

One migrant worker highlighted that several of his fellow migrant friends were unable to get salaries during the pandemic because of a reduction in their working hours. This also impacted formal workers who had to experience reduced working hours due to the closure of factories or companies during the pandemic.

"I have two days off a month. Friday and Saturday. But since Covid, I haven't had any holidays at all. There are many workers from Indonesia around here who cannot take time off and have to stay at their employer's house all the time. But luckily I got extra money because I worked more hours. But for some workers who work daily, their working hours are reduced because no one wants to take them. So they

don't have a salary. Indonesian workers here work monthly, weekly and daily. Helpers who work monthly or weekly can still get the same salary and even overtime pay because the hours increase. But daily workers don't have working hours due to the pandemic. So there is no income"(Tr, Qatar)

"Since COVID-19, I now only get paid if I work. My working hours have been reduced. I no longer get paid monthly, I get paid only if I do a job. If there is no work, the company will not pay me. "The boss said, if conditions are completely normal, they will pay me the full salary as before the pandemic."(AE, Malaysia)

The research findings underscore a significant disparity between existing regulations governing working hours for workers, including migrant workers, as stipulated by the ILO, and the practical implementation experienced by domestic migrant workers. Despite international labor standards, the majority of domestic workers still worked exceeding 10 hours per day, both before and during the pandemic. Notably, some domestic workers faced even longer working hours during the pandemic. Formal and non-formal workers who experienced reduced working hours due to the pandemic experienced the predicament, leading to a decrease in their income. It was imperative for the government to ensure the welfare of Indonesian migrant workers abroad.

One contributing factor to why the government still lacked attention to issues related to working hours for Indonesian migrants abroad is the

lack of reported complaints from the workers themselves. Additionally, the absence of standardized rules in domestic migrants' work agreements with their employers meant that many migrants may have been unaware of the existing regulations governing working hours for domestic workers.

"I don't know what the rules from the Indonesian Consulate General are like, but for me, there are rules from my employer but not written rules, usually I work from 7 am to 8 pm. But it depends on each employer. For migrant workers who care for their parents, they can work longer. Because it could be that you wake up every night if your parents need you."(Y, Former migrant worker in Taiwan)

Information provided by the Directorate of Indonesian Citizen Protection and the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed that, so far, complaints from migrants both before and during the pandemic had primarily revolved around issues regarding human trafficking, work and immigration.

"During the pandemic, the main obstacle was mobility, we received many complaints: flights were stopped, and there were countries where there were no flights at all, this had an impact on fishing/commercial ship crews because it hampered the change of crew members on ships where they worked under work contracts. , many are forced to continue working. The most reported cases are human trafficking, employment problems and immigration (overstayers). Before and after the pandemic, the typology of cases did

not change much. "Employment problems generally only include unpaid wages, dissatisfaction with work, or work not complying with the contract."(PWNI-Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

The Indonesian Government had consistently collaborated with relevant ministries and Indonesian representatives abroad to monitor and address the welfare of Indonesian migrant workers, which includes overseeing the regulation of working hours.

"In implementing the policy, we continue to coordinate with BP2MI and representatives with related ministries (Ministry of Transportation, Minister of Foreign Affairs, etc.) We also coordinate with the Ministry of Manpower in the placement country to provide policies so that there are no layoffs for our PMI, even if working hours are reduced. Also, a picket team was formed and there was a circular for placement agents and employers in the placement country to at least discuss special arrangements for PMI such as working time and holiday time. During the pandemic, we ensure that the implementation of Health Protocols during the pandemic in the workplace is carried out correctly. "It is hoped that our PMI will not be invited to China, which is the centre of the outbreak." (PPTKLN-RI Ministry of Manpower)

The present research explained that the rules governing working hours for migrants were outlined in the laws of the Republic of Indonesia, the ILO Convention, and the laws of each respective

placement country. The pocketbook Guide to Indonesian Migrant Workers published by the ILO even underscores that the standard working hours for migrant workers should not exceed 48 hours per week or a maximum of 8 hours per day. Therefore, PMIs has the right to obtain reasonable working hours, breaks and holidays (ILO Indonesia, 2015).

However, in practical implementation, many migrant workers, engaged in roles such as household assistants or elderly caregivers, worked beyond the established standard working hours. Discussions surrounding working hours for domestic workers are contentious. In Indonesia, a domestic worker can work up to 16 hours per day. The typical 8-hour working norm often does not apply to domestic workers, not only in Indonesia but also overseas. Domestic workers are often excluded from applicable standards (ILO Indonesia, 2023). What underlies the variation in standard working hours for domestic workers is the argument that domestic workers have different work standards from factory or office workers. Domestic workers are characterized by greater flexibility than other jobs because their work takes place in private homes and their tasks are contingent on the specific needs of each household served. These workers' duties vary greatly from day to day, both in terms of the length of time they work and the workload they receive. Therefore, it is challenging to measure the actual working time (ILO Indonesia, 2023). For this reason, appropriate policies regarding the working hours of

domestic workers are needed to safeguard the welfare of Indonesian migrant workers abroad.

CONCLUSION

The lack of job opportunities locally and nationally, particularly for women, encourages many to seek employment abroad as migrant workers to also support their family's economy. Economic hardships and lower educational backgrounds often lead to migrant women's generally working in the non-formal or domestic work sector, performing roles such as household assistants or elderly caregivers.

Domestic work emerges as a sector vulnerable to social discrimination and protection because of uncertain nature of the work, particularly related to working hours. Regulations, including Law No. 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation and the 1919 (Industrial) Working Hours Convention No. 1 issued by the International Labor Organization (ILO), have established a standard working time of 48 hours per week or a maximum of 8 hours per day for workers. However, this standard did not extend to migrant workers in the domestic sector.

Migrant workers in domestic roles often find themselves working more than 10 hours per day. Further, some female Indonesian migrant workers abroad generally work 12 to 16 hours per day. It is not uncommon for them to work almost 24 hours if required. This condition worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the closure and temporary suspension of economic activities extended their working hours to serve their employers' families at home. Conversely, some

migrants experienced a reduction in working hours and subsequent forced wage cuts as companies or factories cut operations. Unfortunately, the government's attention to regulations governing working hours for migrant workers remained lacking.

The issue surrounding working hours for domestic or household workers is complex and contentious, involving considerations from both employers and workers, specifically regarding the flexibility of working time and the associated workload. So far, the protection of working hours has not received special attention from the Indonesian government because negotiations on its implementation with recipient countries have not been carried out. Ideally, if Indonesia seeks to change the scheme of sending migrant workers abroad, especially women, towards a professional worker model, the issue of working hours should also be a major concern.

Migrant workers have the right to work according to the portion of time regulated by law. Deviation of working hour standards will risk the rights and health conditions of Indonesian migrant workers. If the Indonesian government enforces regulations regarding this matter, on the one hand, it will harm the stereotype of Indonesian workers who have been known to adhere to various conditions imposed in the workplace. On the other hand, protecting citizens is the state's obligation. The government is obliged to protect the right to a decent life for its citizens.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors wish to sincerely appreciate the contribution of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya, through the Pendanaan Internal FISIP 2023 scheme, as the funder of this research.

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