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Migration Ecosystem Vulnerability and Protection Gaps: A Critical Policy Analysis of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Saudi Arabia has long been one of the primary destinations for Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI), most of whom are women employed in domestic work. Despite their significant contribution to Indonesia's economy through remittances, they continue to face systemic legal, socio-cultural, and economic vulnerabilities. This study examines these multidimensional challenges through a qualitative case study approach, employing methodological triangulation of field interviews with migrant workers, consular officials, and community leaders, complemented by government documents, bilateral agreements, international reports, and relevant scholarly literature. Unlike previous studies that examine legal, labor, or human rights issues separately, this study employs the migration ecosystem vulnerability framework to explain how legal, institutional, economic, and socio-cultural factors interact throughout the migration cycle. The findings show that migrant vulnerability arises from interconnected governance failures in recruitment, labor regulation, diplomatic protection, and community support. Structural dependency under the *kafāla* system, gendered informal migration pathways, and deficits in human security collectively reinforce migrants' precarious conditions. The study proposes a multi-level governance approach that integrates strengthened bilateral cooperation, recruitment reform through the One Channel Placement System (SPSK), diaspora-based community empowerment, and sustainable reintegration programs. By linking these complementary policy measures, the study contributes to migration scholarship while offering an integrated framework to strengthen migrant protection and promote more preventive, inclusive, and dignified migration governance.

[Arab Saudi telah lama menjadi salah satu negara tujuan utama bagi Pekerja Migran Indonesia (PMI), yang sebagian besar merupakan perempuan yang bekerja di sektor domestik. Meskipun memberikan kontribusi signifikan terhadap perekonomian Indonesia melalui remitansi, mereka masih menghadapi berbagai kerentanan sistemik di bidang hukum, sosial-budaya, dan ekonomi. Penelitian ini mengkaji tantangan multidimensional tersebut dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif melalui triangulasi metodologis, yang mengintegrasikan wawancara lapangan dengan pekerja migran, pejabat perwakilan Indonesia, dan tokoh komunitas, serta didukung oleh dokumen pemerintah, perjanjian bilateral, laporan lembaga internasional, dan literatur ilmiah yang relevan. Berbeda dengan penelitian terdahulu yang umumnya mengkaji aspek hukum, ketenagakerjaan, atau hak asasi manusia secara terpisah, penelitian ini menggunakan kerangka migration ecosystem vulnerability untuk menjelaskan bagaimana faktor hukum, kelembagaan, ekonomi, dan sosial-budaya saling berinteraksi sepanjang siklus migrasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kerentanan pekerja migran muncul

sebagai akibat dari keterkaitan berbagai kelemahan tata kelola dalam sistem rekrutmen, regulasi ketenagakerjaan, perlindungan diplomatik, dan dukungan komunitas. Ketergantungan struktural dalam sistem *kafala*, jalur migrasi informal yang bercorak gender, serta defisit keamanan manusia (*human security*) secara bersama-sama memperkuat kondisi kerentanan pekerja migran. Penelitian ini menawarkan pendekatan multi-level governance yang mengintegrasikan penguatan kerja sama bilateral, reformasi sistem rekrutmen melalui Sistem Penempatan Satu Kanal (SPSK), pemberdayaan organisasi diaspora, dan program reintegrasi ekonomi yang berkelanjutan. Dengan menghubungkan berbagai rekomendasi kebijakan tersebut, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan kajian migrasi sekaligus menawarkan kerangka analitis yang lebih terpadu untuk memperkuat perlindungan pekerja migran dan mewujudkan tata kelola migrasi yang lebih preventif, inklusif, dan bermartabat.]

Keywords: migration ecosystem vulnerability; Indonesian migrant workers; *kafāla* system; multi-level governance

Introduction

Saudi Arabia has remained one of the most significant destinations for Indonesian Migrant Workers (*Pekerja Migran Indonesia*; PMI) for more than three decades. The 2025 statistical report of the Ministry for the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (KP2MI) documented more than 460,000 Indonesians working in Saudi Arabia, predominantly in the domestic sector, including housemaids, caregivers, and drivers. Despite fluctuations caused by policy bans and moratoriums, Saudi Arabia remains the preferred destination due to strong labor demand and the shared Islamic identity, which many migrants perceive as a source of familiarity and cultural comfort.¹

From Indonesia's perspective, remittances from migrant workers in Saudi Arabia constitute an important source of national and household income. The Indonesian Bank reported that in 2023, Indonesia received nearly USD 14.12 billion in remittances from its global migrant workforce, with Saudi Arabia contributing the second-

¹ Neni Kurniati and Soeharyo TS, "Interview," *Interview*, August 2025; Mahrani Mahrani and Afif Wahyudi, "Interview," *Interview*, August 2025; Ahmad Muhlis, Ali Nurdin, and Ikhwan Adi, "Interview," *Interview*, August 2025.

largest share after Malaysia.² These remittances not only support household consumption but also finance education, healthcare, and housing in major migrant-sending regions, including West Java, East Java, and West Nusa Tenggara.³ Despite these economic contributions, remittances also obscure deeper structural vulnerabilities. Indonesian migrant workers remain concentrated in low-skilled and 3D (dirty, dangerous, and difficult) sectors,⁴ exposing them to persistent legal, economic, and social risk.⁵

Numerous studies have shown that Indonesian migrant workers in Saudi Arabia face multidimensional challenges. These challenges include legal insecurity arising from dependency on employers under the *kafāla* (sponsorship) system, socio-cultural discrimination embedded in hierarchical labor relations, and economic exploitation through unpaid wages, excessive deductions, and other unfair employment practices.⁶ Rather than existing as isolated problems, these vulnerabilities interact and reinforce one another, forming what this study conceptualizes as “a migration ecosystem vulnerability.”⁷ For example, the loss of legal residency (*iqama*) not only renders migrant workers vulnerable to immigration enforcement but also restricts their

² Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs Republic of Indonesia, “<https://www.ekon.go.id/publikasi/detail/5695/pemerintah-siapkan-regulasi-penguatan-tata-kelola-penempatan-dan-perlindungan-pekerja-migran-indonesia>,” Press Release, 2024, <https://www.ekon.go.id/publikasi/detail/5695/pemerintah-siapkan-regulasi-penguatan-tata-kelola-penempatan-dan-perlindungan-pekerja-migran-indonesia>.

³ Eko Sugeng Prasetyo and R. Joned Raditya Brahmanto, “Interview,” *Interview*, June 2025; Mochammad Khotib, “Interview,” *KP2MI*, 2025; Kurniati and TS, “Interview.”

⁴ Dhanny Safitri and Ali Abdullah Wibisono, “Keamanan Manusia Pekerja Migran Indonesia: Ketidakamanan dan Perlindungannya,” *Intermestic: Journal of International Studies* 7, no. 2 (May 30, 2023): 741–69, <https://doi.org/10.24198/intermestic.v7n2.17>.

⁵ Putri Liana Fauzizah, “Sistem Penempatan Satu Kanal Pemerintah Indonesia dalam Konteks Keamanan Pekerja Migran Indonesia di Arab Saudi Tahun 2018–2023” (Universitas Islam Indonesia, 2024); Safitri and Wibisono, “Keamanan Manusia Pekerja Migran Indonesia: Ketidakamanan dan Perlindungannya.”

⁶ Rachel Silvey and Rhacel Parreñas, “Precarity Chains: Cycles of Domestic Worker Migration from Southeast Asia to the Middle East,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46, no. 16 (September 30, 2020): 3457–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1592398>.

⁷ Nassim Majidi et al., “Migrants Caught in Crises: Contexts, Responses and Innovation,” *World Migration Report* 2020, no. 1 (April 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1002/wom3.20>.

access to education, healthcare, and consular protection, illustrating how legal insecurity generates broader social and institutional consequences.⁸

The Indonesian government has sought to address these challenges through a series of policy reforms, most notably the enactment of Law No. 18/2017 on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers and the establishment of the One Channel Placement System (SPSK: *Sistem Penempatan Satu Kanal*) for recruitment. These reforms mark a shift toward rights-based protection by emphasizing pre-departure training, insurance coverage, and stronger oversight of private recruitment agencies.⁹ However, the implementation of these reforms has remained uneven across different stages of the migration process. Many migrants, especially women, continue to depart through informal brokers, often without adequate documentation or training. As a result, formal legal protection has not been sufficient to prevent recurring patterns of vulnerability, illustrating the gap between policy design and policy implementation within the broader migration governance ecosystem.¹⁰

At the bilateral level, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia have concluded several agreements on the placement and protection of migrant workers, including the 2014 Agreement.¹¹ While these agreements represent important progress in bilateral cooperation, they have not fully addressed the structural conditions that generate migrant vulnerability. Domestic workers remain only partially covered by labor reforms, while mechanisms to monitor employer compliance and enforce labor standards remain limited. Consequently, cases of abuse, excessive working hours, wage theft, and other forms of labor

⁸ Kurniati and TS, "Interview"; Mahrani and Wahyudi, "Interview"; Muhlis, Nurdin, and Adi, "Interview."

⁹ Fauzizah, "Sistem Penempatan Satu Kanal Pemerintah Indonesia dalam Konteks Keamanan Pekerja Migran Indonesia di Arab Saudi Tahun 2018–2023."

¹⁰ Prasetyo and Brahmanto, "Interview"; Kurniati and TS, "Interview"; Khotib, "Interview."

¹¹ Muhammad Khaitam Widad, "Agreement the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Domestic Workers antara Republik Indonesia dengan Arab Saudi dalam Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap TKI di Arab Saudi" (Universitas Brawijaya, 2014).

exploitation continue to occur despite the existence of bilateral protection mechanisms.¹²

The multidimensional vulnerabilities experienced by Indonesian migrant workers in Saudi Arabia can be better understood through three complementary analytical perspectives. First, the structural dependency perspective explains how Gulf economies rely on low-wage migrant labor while maintaining unequal power relations that limit migrant workers' rights.¹³ Second, the concept of global care chains illustrates how Indonesian women's labor in Saudi households sustains transnational care economies while often imposing high social and emotional costs on their own families.¹⁴ Third, the human security paradigm broadens the understanding of migrant protection beyond legal status by emphasizing freedom from fear, want, and indignity.¹⁵ Taken together, these perspectives suggest that existing legal protections alone are insufficient because migrant vulnerability extends beyond legal status to encompass interconnected social, economic, and psychological dimensions. Against this backdrop, this study addresses two central research questions: (1) What are the major legal, socio-cultural, and economic challenges that Indonesian migrant workers in Saudi Arabia face? and (2) What domestic and bilateral policy interventions can provide more sustainable protection and empowerment for Indonesian migrant workers?

¹² Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Labor Reforms Insufficient, Abusive Elements Remain; Changes Exclude Domestic Workers," Human Rights Watch, 2021; Kevin McQue, "Every Day I Cry': 50 Women Talk about Life as a Domestic Worker under the Gulf's Kafāla System," *The Guardian*, 2024.

¹³ Andrew M. Gardner, "Gulf Migration and the Family," *Journal of Arabian Studies* 1, no. 1 (June 21, 2011): 3–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21534764.2011.576043>.

¹⁴ Arlie Russell Hochschild, "Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value," in *Justice, Politics, and the Family* (Routledge, 2015), 249–61, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315633794-21>; Silvey and Parreñas, "Precarity Chains: Cycles of Domestic Worker Migration from Southeast Asia to the Middle East," September 30, 2020.

¹⁵ United Nations, "Human Security in Theory and Practice: An Overview of the Human Security Concept and the UN Trust Fund for Human Security," 2009.

Previous studies have examined Indonesian migrant workers in Saudi Arabia from a legal,¹⁶ labor,¹⁷ and human rights¹⁸ perspectives. However, these issues have largely been examined in isolation, providing only a limited understanding of how legal, institutional, economic, and socio-cultural vulnerabilities interact within the broader migration ecosystem. To address this gap and answer the research questions outlined above, this study adopts the migration ecosystem vulnerability framework as its primary analytical framework. Drawing on primary field interviews, case studies from Indonesian communities in Saudi Arabia, and secondary literature, it examines how these interconnected factors shape migrant workers' vulnerability throughout the migration cycle. Accordingly, this study contributes to migration scholarship by demonstrating how the migration ecosystem vulnerability framework provides an integrated analytical perspective on migrant protection and informs coordinated multi-level governance among the Indonesian government, Saudi authorities, international organizations, and migrant communities.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to investigate the challenges faced by PMI in Saudi Arabia and to evaluate existing and potential policy responses. The lived experiences of migrants are captured through an in-depth exploration of narratives, perceptions, and practices that shape the everyday realities of migrants and their families.¹⁹ The case study method is particularly appropriate for this research, as it enables analysis of context-specific phenomena—in this

¹⁶ Tanti Kirana Utami, "Regulation of Legal Sanctions against Perpetrators of Non-Procedural Placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers: A Human Trafficking Perspective," *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (December 2024): 2421347, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2421347>.

¹⁷ Hafizd Alharomain Lubis, Mohammad Izdiyan Muttaqin, and Nurwahidin Nurwahidin, "The Impact of The 'Saudization' Policy on Indonesian Migrant Workers in Saudi Arabia," *Eduvest - Journal of Universal Studies* 4, no. 12 SE-Articles (December 2024): 11609–20, <https://doi.org/10.59188/eduvest.v4i12.50102>.

¹⁸ Rini Irianti Sundary and Umi Muslikhah, "State Responsibility in Protecting Indonesian Migrant Workers as Fulfillment of Human Rights," *Jurnal Ius Constituendum* 9, no. 3 SE-Articles (2024): 428–45, <https://doi.org/10.26623/jic.v9i3.9183>.

¹⁹ John Creswell, "Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches," *SAGE Publications* 11 (January 2013).

case, the intersection of Saudi Arabia's kafāla system, Indonesia's labor export policies, and the coping strategies of migrant communities. The study aims to provide analytical generalization, offering insights into systemic patterns of vulnerability that may resonate beyond the Saudi context.²⁰

Data Sources and Collection

The research is based on both primary and secondary data, integrated to ensure triangulation and robustness of findings. Primary data is collected through Field Interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with PMI in Jeddah, Madinah, and Makkah, as well as with workers' families in East Java, one of the provinces with high levels of labor outmigration. The interviews included (1) migrant workers who experienced wage withholding, document confiscation, and mobility restrictions under kafāla, (2) male migrants working in semi-skilled sectors such as driving and maintenance, providing comparative perspectives, (3) families of migrants, especially children left behind, to understand the impact of migration on education and household welfare, (4) consular officials from the Indonesian Consulate General (KJRI: *Konsulat Jenderal Republik Indonesia*) in Jeddah, who provided insight into the institutional challenges of protection, (5) representatives of Indonesian community organizations and NGOs active in assisting undocumented migrants. In addition, Observations were conducted in community centers and temporary shelters managed by KJRI. This allowed the researcher to document the everyday struggle, adding a layer of ethnographic richness to the data. Case Studies were also conducted by documenting several individual cases in detail. Their narratives serve as micro-level illustrations of broader structural issues.

Secondary data for this research are sourced from government documents, including reports and statistics from KP2MI and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding migrant deployment and protection cases. Likewise, international Organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the World Bank also provide valuable data on migrant workers' issues. Finally, academic literature provides

²⁰ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (California: Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2018).

peer-reviewed studies on Gulf migration, Indonesian labor policies, feminist perspectives on care work, and human security approaches. These sources provide theoretical grounding and comparative insights.

Sampling Strategy

The study employed purposive sampling to ensure representation across diverse migrant experiences. Participant selection was based on gender (male and female workers), migration status (documented and undocumented), and employment sector (domestic and non-domestic work). A total of 17 participants were interviewed, comprising 2 female domestic workers, 5 male semi-skilled workers, 5 family members in Indonesia, and 5 key informants from Indonesian diplomatic missions and migrant support organizations. This strategy enabled the study to capture multiple perspectives on migrant protection, labor conditions, and governance challenges. Although the sample size was relatively modest, the diversity of participants and the depth of the interviews provided rich qualitative insights into the migration experiences of Indonesian migrant workers in Saudi Arabia. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, as indicated by the recurrence of similar patterns and the absence of substantially new information across successive interviews.

The study adhered to established ethical principles throughout the research process. Prior to each interview, participants were informed of the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to decline answering any question or withdraw from the interview at any stage. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews commenced, and personal identifiers were removed during transcription and reporting to protect participants' confidentiality. Given the sensitivity of participants' legal status and employment experiences, pseudonyms were used where appropriate. All interview data were securely stored and used exclusively for research and academic purposes.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a problem–impact–solution framework, structured as follows: First, problem identification is achieved by coding transcripts to categorize major challenges across three dimensions: legal, socio-cultural, and economic. Secondly, impact assessment is conducted by tracing the consequences of each

problem for migrants and their families, paying attention to cascading effects. Thirdly, policy solutions are synthesized from recommendations drawn from interviews, community practices, and international best practices. Thematic coding was conducted manually, supported by qualitative data analysis software (NVivo 12), to identify recurring themes and patterns. Triangulation between primary and secondary sources was used to enhance validity.

Results

The findings indicate that Indonesian migrant workers in Saudi Arabia face substantial challenges in multiple domains. These challenges fall under three main themes: Legal and Institutional Challenges, Socio-Cultural Challenges, and Economic and Welfare Problems. In response, the study outlines various strategies and recommendations, categorized into Legal and Institutional Reform, Socio-Cultural Empowerment, and Economic Strengthening and Reintegration.

Legal and Institutional Challenges

Legal insecurity is one of the most pressing vulnerabilities faced by PMI in Saudi Arabia. According to KP2MI,²¹ a significant proportion of PMI enter Saudi Arabia through irregular channels, often facilitated by pilgrimage visas (*umra* or *haji*) that are later overstayed. Once their residency permits (*iqama*) expire, migrants immediately fall into overstay status, making them vulnerable to detention and deportation (*tarhil*). Saudi immigration authorities conducted several amnesty and deportation campaigns between 2017 and 2021, during which thousands of PMI were detained and repatriated.²²

Central to these challenges is the *kafāla* sponsorship system, which structurally ties a worker's legal status to their employer, who is also their *kafil* (sponsor). This dependency creates an environment where workers' rights are systematically undermined: passports are often confiscated, workers are prohibited from changing jobs, and exit

²¹ Khotib, "Interview."

²² Bram Frouws, "Mass Deportations Looming: Saudi Arabia Gears up to Expel Millions of Migrants... Again," Mixed Migration Center, 2012; Heru Purwanto, "Foreign Affairs Ministry Repatriates 76 Indonesian Citizens from Saudi Arabia," Antara: Indonesian News Agency, 2017.

permits are conditional on employer consent. Even after Saudi Arabia's 2021 Labor Reform Initiative, domestic workers—who comprise the majority of PMI—remain excluded from the reforms, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.²³

Consular data reveals that the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah shelters hundreds of women each year who flee abusive employers. However, capacity is limited: shelters can house only about 60 individuals, forcing many migrants to rely on informal community networks (*paguyuban*). Furthermore, Indonesian legal assistance often prioritizes “pure victims”—those deemed innocent of irregular migration—excluding *kaburan* workers who abscond from employers due to abuse or non-payment of wages. This narrow approach fails to account for the structural coercion inherent in the *kafāla* system.²⁴ For Example, Syifa, a domestic worker from West Java, reported being locked inside her employer's house for over a year, denied wages, and threatened with deportation if she attempted to escape.²⁵ Her case illustrates how the *kafāla* system allows employers to exercise near-total control over migrant workers' lives.

Socio-Cultural Challenges

PMI also faces socio-cultural marginalization in Saudi Arabia. Domestic workers, especially women, are often subjected to strict restrictions by employers, prohibiting them from leaving the house, interacting with neighbors, or communicating freely with their families

²³ Anggita Doramia Lumbanraja and Yusriyadi Yusriyadi, “The Urgency to Reform the Kafāla System in the Sake of Human Rights of Indonesia Domestic Workers,” *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan* 21, no. 2 (December 29, 2021): 213–30, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v21i2.213-230>; Novia Anisawati, “Perlindungan dan Penegakkan Hak Asasi Manusia untuk Tenaga Kerja Indonesia,” *Konstruksi Sosial: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Sosial* 2, no. 4 (April 24, 2024): 129–136, <https://doi.org/10.56393/konstruksisocial.v1i10.1333>.

²⁴ Karin Caroline Kelly, Uliviana Restu, and Ika Arinia Indriyany, “Hegemony of Saudi Arabia's Kafāla System in The Relationship Between Employer and Indonesian Female Domestic Migrant Workers 2018-2020,” *International Journal of Social Sciences Review* 3, no. 1 (September 18, 2022): 18–33, <https://doi.org/10.57266/ijssr.v3i1.83>; Karin Caroline Kelly, “Hegemony Of Saudi Arabia's Kafāla System in The Relationship Between Employer and Indonesian Female Domestic Migrant Workers 2018-2020” 3, no. 1 (2020).

²⁵ Kurniati and TS, “Interview.”

in Indonesia.²⁶ This isolation contributes to psychological stress, loneliness, and depression.²⁷

Cultural and legal norms around marriage further complicate matters for PMI in Saudi Arabia. Many engage in unregistered religious marriages (*nikah siri*), either with fellow migrants or Saudi nationals. While these unions may be religiously valid, they are not recognized by the state, resulting in legal invisibility. According to Indonesian marriage law, children from such marriages are denied paternal lineage and inheritance rights from the father.²⁸ The scale of the problem is reflected in Indonesian consular data from Jeddah, which recorded approximately 6,000 undocumented marriages in 2025. These cases required consular interventions—such as witness affidavits or medical tests—to secure travel documents for affected children.²⁹

Human Rights Watch reported that discrimination based on nationality and class is pervasive.³⁰ PMI, along with other South and Southeast Asian migrants, is often regarded as socially inferior. Amnesty International has also documented instances where employers forbid migrant workers from eating at the same table or deny them regular rest days.³¹ While informal networks of undocumented workers provide solidarity and survival mechanisms, they also expose migrants to new risks. Some community leaders impose fees for “protection,” creating secondary exploitation within migrant communities

²⁶ Human Rights Watch, “As If I Am Not Human”: Abuses against Asian Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia,” Human Rights Watch, 2008; Nurchayati Nurchayati, “Bringing Agency Back In: Indonesian Migrant Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia,” *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 20 (September 2011): 479–502, <https://doi.org/10.1177/011719681102000311>.

²⁷ Rachel Silvey and Rhacel Parreñas, “Precarity Chains: Cycles of Domestic Worker Migration from Southeast Asia to the Middle East,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46 (April 2019): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1592398>.

²⁸ A. Rahmi, N. Warman AB, & Effendi, “Building Legal Compliance: A Study on the Practice of Unregistered Marriages in Tanjung Raya Subdistrict, Agam Regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia,” *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 9, no. 1 (2025): 416–37, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhhk.v9i1.28306>.

²⁹ Arabnews, “6,000 Unofficial Marriages among Indonesians Come to Light,” 2013.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch, “As If I Am Not Human”: Abuses against Asian Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia.”

³¹ Amnesty International, “Saudi Arabia: Migrant Domestic Workers Face Severe Exploitation, Racism and Exclusion from Labor Protections,” Amnesty International, 2025.

themselves.³² Ani, a domestic worker in Jeddah, entered into an unregistered marriage with a Saudi man. Her children were left stateless, unable to claim Saudi nationality or access public education. This demonstrates how cultural and legal barriers intersect, leaving migrant families in limbo.

Economic and Welfare Problems

Finally, the economic dimension highlights both the significance of remittances and the precarity of migrant labor. Remittances from PMI in Saudi Arabia play a vital role in sustaining the national economy. In 2023, Bank Indonesia reported that the country received nearly USD 14.12 billion in remittances from its global migrant workforce, with Saudi Arabia contributing the second-largest share after Malaysia.³³ These funds not only support household consumption but also finance education, healthcare, and housing in major migrant-sending regions such as West Java, East Java, and West Nusa Tenggara.³⁴ However, while remittances provide substantial benefits, they also mask deeper structural vulnerabilities: much of the labor exported to Saudi Arabia remains concentrated in low-skilled and 3D sectors, leaving workers exposed to systemic risks.³⁵

The sustainability of remittances is further undermined by systemic exploitation. Many PMI report unpaid or delayed wages, excessive working hours, and the absence of insurance or labor protections. Because domestic workers are excluded from Saudi labor law, they lack access to formal grievance mechanisms.³⁶ Moreover, Saudi Arabia imposes heavy family residency taxes of 400 riyals per month per dependent, which are prohibitive for low-wage workers. Overstay fines can reach 89,000 riyals (approximately USD 24,000),

³² Mahrani and Wahyudi, "Interview."

³³ Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs Republic of Indonesia, "<https://www.ekon.go.id/publikasi/detail/5695/pemerintah-siapkan-regulasi-penguatan-tata-kelola-penempatan-dan-perlindungan-pekerja-migran-indonesia>."

³⁴ Prasetyo and Brahmanto, "Interview"; Kurniati and TS, "Interview"; Khotib, "Interview."

³⁵ Safitri and Wibisono, "Keamanan Manusia Pekerja Migran Indonesia: Ketidakamanan dan Perlindungannya"; Fauzizah, "Sistem Penempatan Satu Kanal Pemerintah Indonesia dalam Konteks Keamanan Pekerja Migran Indonesia di Arab Saudi Tahun 2018–2023."

³⁶ Kurniati and TS, "Interview"; Khotib, "Interview."

effectively trapping workers in debt. The high cost of repatriating deceased workers also forces many families to bury their relatives in Saudi Arabia rather than return them home.³⁷

At the household level, remittances are often directed toward immediate consumption rather than long-term investment, limiting their developmental impact. Many returnee migrants struggle to reintegrate and frequently fall back into cycles of poverty, which in turn drives repeated migration. One migrant worker reported that her employer attempted to “sell” her labor to another household, treating her as a transferable asset. Another family fell into debt after paying fines for overstaying, while simultaneously struggling to finance their children’s education. These cases highlight the deep entanglement of legal, social, and economic vulnerabilities.

Legal and Institutional Reform

The findings of this study reveal that PMI in Saudi Arabia faces systemic vulnerabilities across legal, socio-cultural, and economic domains. Addressing these challenges requires more than piecemeal reforms—it demands a multi-level governance framework that integrates domestic policy reform, bilateral diplomacy, and international cooperation. This section outlines policy recommendations in four interconnected areas, while drawing lessons from comparative experiences in other labor-sending countries.

The most urgent reform lies in addressing the structural dependency created by the *kafāla* system. Indonesia can leverage bilateral agreements to improve protection. The 2014 MoU on Domestic Worker Placement must be revisited and expanded to include enforceable provisions on minimum wages, working hours, and freedom of mobility. The Philippines–Saudi Arabia bilateral agreement, signed in 2013, for example, emphasizes enforceable contract terms for Filipino domestic workers. It requires a standard employment contract binding the employer, worker, and recruitment agencies, mandates salary payments through a bank account in the worker’s name, and provides a 24-hour assistance mechanism.³⁸ The

³⁷ Prasetyo and Brahmento, “Interview.”

³⁸ International Labor Organization, “Agreement on Domestic Worker Recruitment between the Ministry of Labor of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Department

agreement also establishes joint committees to monitor implementation. To strengthen oversight, the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) verifies and authenticates all contracts before deployment, ensuring compliance with both Philippine and Saudi regulations. In Saudi Arabia, POLO offices manage contract verification and notarization with fixed fees, preventing the use of intermediaries. Although not formally called “digital contract verification,” this system offers a centralized and transparent mechanism that makes contracts enforceable—far stronger than the protections provided under Indonesia’s 2014 MoU.

At the domestic level, Indonesia should continue to consolidate and strengthen the SPSK as the backbone of migrant worker governance. Full digitalization is crucial to achieving this goal. The inclusion of biometric registration, electronic contracts, and integrated health insurance within the SPSK would significantly reduce dependency on informal brokers (*calo*), who have long exploited gaps in the recruitment process. International experience underscores the value of such reforms. Evidence from Nepal demonstrates how digitalizing recruitment and incorporating government-to-government (G2G) channels can significantly reduce irregular migration flows. Nepal’s Foreign Employment Information Management System (FEIMS) exemplifies this approach. FEIMS integrates labor migration processes—from recruitment and deployment to employment and return—into a single digital platform that enhances transparency, enables real-time monitoring, manages complaints, and professionalizes recruitment practices. This transformation has effectively helped curb recruitment fraud and irregular migration by reducing administrative burden and empowering workers with better access to information and oversight.³⁹ By following a similar model, Indonesia could establish a transparent and accountable recruitment system that clearly defines recruitment fees, provides standardized worker–employer matching mechanisms, and minimizes opportunities for exploitation.

of Labor and Employment of the Republic of the Philippines, International Labor Organization, 2012.

³⁹ International Labor Organization, “Promising Practices for Fair Recruitment in Nepal: Digitization of Labor Migration Processes for Increased Harmonization and Oversight. Geneva, International Labour Organization.,” 2024.

Beyond recruitment, consular protection must also be expanded and professionalized. The shelters at the Indonesian Consulate General in Jeddah remain vital safe havens, yet their current capacity and resources are insufficient for the scale of need. These facilities should be enlarged and staffed not only with administrators but also with professional psychosocial experts capable of addressing trauma and stress experienced by migrant workers. Legal aid services, moreover, should not be narrowly restricted to “pure victims” of abuse. Many *kaburan* (runaway) workers fall into irregular status not by choice, but as a direct consequence of systemic coercion—such as exploitative contracts, withheld wages, or restrictions on mobility. Recognizing this reality is essential for providing fair and comprehensive protection.

To further enhance protection, Indonesia should pursue strategic partnerships with Saudi-based legal aid NGOs and international organizations. Collaborations with entities such as the IOM and its Migrant Resource Centers would expand access to justice, offering workers avenues to seek legal redress, mediation, and counseling beyond the limited reach of consular services. Such partnerships would not only strengthen the safety net for PMI but also demonstrate Indonesia’s proactive commitment to protecting its citizens abroad.

Socio-Cultural Empowerment

Socio-cultural challenges—such as isolation, discrimination, and the marginalization of migrant families—require both grassroots empowerment and cultural diplomacy. Indonesian diaspora organizations and NGOs, such as *Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia* (SBMI), already play a crucial role in assisting migrants, particularly undocumented workers. However, their efforts are often constrained by limited resources, a lack of formal recognition, and inconsistent funding. To address this gap, the government should develop a diaspora partnership scheme that certifies trusted migrant organizations as formal partners in protection efforts and provides microgrants to support advocacy, legal literacy, and psychosocial counseling.

Best practices from Sri Lanka illustrate the value of such partnerships. For instance, Sri Lanka has established Migrant Information Centers (MICs), co-managed by government agencies and civil society partners, which serve as safe spaces where migrants can access counseling, education, and reliable information. Similarly, the Migrant Services Center (MSC) works with Migrant Worker

Associations across multiple districts, offering legal aid, repatriation assistance, and psychosocial support in collaboration with embassies. These examples show how coordinated efforts between governments and diaspora organizations can create trusted, community-based hubs of protection.⁴⁰

Indonesia could replicate this model by supporting Indonesian cultural and religious centers in Saudi Arabia, transforming them into community hubs that not only provide safe spaces for education, cultural activities, and counseling but also strengthen social cohesion among migrants. Embedding diaspora empowerment within official structures would allow these centers to play a dual role: offering grassroots-level protection while also serving as instruments of cultural diplomacy.

At the bilateral level, cultural diplomacy should include negotiations on the recognition of mixed marriages and the legal status of children. Unregistered marriages leave many children stateless. Indonesia should push for Saudi recognition of civil documents issued by Indonesian consulates to prevent statelessness. Public campaigns promoting cross-cultural understanding, possibly in collaboration with Saudi NGOs, could also help counter stigma against PMI.

Economic Strengthening and Reintegration

Economic vulnerabilities underscore the need for stronger protections during employment abroad and more sustainable reintegration upon return. Indonesia should pursue bilateral minimum-wage agreements with Saudi Arabia, modeled on the Philippines' standard minimum wage for overseas domestic workers. To be effective, these agreements must be enforceable and tied to electronic payment systems, reducing the risk of wage theft and ensuring transparency in salary disbursement.

In addition, compulsory insurance coverage should be introduced from the pre-departure stage, encompassing workplace accidents, unpaid wages, and repatriation. A useful model is Nepal's Foreign Employment Welfare Fund, which pools mandatory

⁴⁰ SJ Gunawardana, "Labor Movement Responses to International Labor Migration in Sri Lanka," 2014; International Centre for Migration Policy Development, "Migrant Information Centre Launched in Batticaloa by the Ministry of Labour and Foreign Employment. Sri Lanka," 2024.

contributions from migrants and recruitment agencies to provide financial security in cases of illness, deportation, or death abroad.⁴¹ Replicating such a mechanism in Indonesia would ease the financial burden on migrant families during crises.

At the reintegration stage, programs must go beyond basic financial literacy workshops. Many PMI return from Saudi Arabia with valuable skills—such as caregiving, cooking, or language proficiency—that could be formally certified and matched to domestic labor market needs. Vocational training centers should therefore integrate skills recognition schemes to enable returnees to transition into formal employment or entrepreneurship.

Moreover, targeted microfinance programs for returnee migrants and their families can transform remittances from consumptive to productive investments. The Philippines' Reintegration Program, which combines livelihood loans with business mentoring, illustrates how financial instruments tailored to returnees can reduce dependency and lower the risk of repeated migration.⁴² While Indonesia already has some reintegration initiatives, these remain fragmented. Scaling them into a coherent, nationwide program could foster sustainable economic empowerment and long-term resilience for migrant households.

Discussion

Interpreting Migration Ecosystem Vulnerability

The findings of this study demonstrate that the challenges experienced by Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Saudi Arabia cannot be adequately understood as isolated legal, economic, or socio-cultural issues. Rather, these dimensions are closely interconnected, creating a cumulative pattern of vulnerability that persists throughout the migration cycle—from recruitment and placement to employment and reintegration. The empirical evidence indicates that legal

⁴¹ Fiscal Nepal, "Government Introduces Foreign Employment Welfare Information Management System," 2022; P. Pandey, "Social and Economic Reintegration Programmes for Returnee Migrant Workers Set to Begin," *The Kathmandu Post*, 2023.

⁴² Dovelyn Rannveig A Asis, Maruja Milagros B., A Agunias, "Strengthening Pre-Departure Orientation Programmes in Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines," in *International Organization for Migration and Migration Policy Institute*, 2012.

insecurity, exploitative labor conditions, social marginalization, and limited institutional protection reinforce one another, thereby producing broader vulnerability in the migration ecosystem. This interconnectedness explains why policy reforms targeting a single aspect of migration governance have achieved only limited improvements in the overall protection of migrant workers.⁴³

From the perspective of the migration ecosystem vulnerability framework, migrant vulnerability is produced through the interaction of legal, institutional, socio-cultural, and economic factors rather than by any single risk source.⁴⁴ Informal recruitment, undocumented status, limited access to legal assistance, discrimination, and economic insecurity frequently reinforce one another throughout the migration cycle,⁴⁵ creating cumulative and mutually reinforcing risks for Indonesian migrant workers. This interpretation is also consistent with previous studies that argue that migrant vulnerability should be understood as the outcome of interconnected structural and institutional processes rather than as isolated legal or economic problems.⁴⁶

These findings reinforce the relevance of the migration ecosystem vulnerability framework adopted in this study. Rather than conceptualizing vulnerability as a consequence of individual circumstances or isolated policy failures, the framework highlights how legal, institutional, economic, and socio-cultural factors interact dynamically throughout the migration process. This perspective also complements the structural dependency framework, which explains the continued reliance of Gulf labor markets on low-wage migrant labor while maintaining unequal power relations between employers and migrant workers. Within this structural context, the *kafāla* system functions not only as a labor-management mechanism but also as an institutional arrangement that reproduces asymmetrical authority,

⁴³ Muhlis, Nurdin, and Adi, "Interview."

⁴⁴ Muhlis, Nurdin, and Adi.

⁴⁵ Muhlis, Nurdin, and Adi.

⁴⁶ Stephen Castles, Mark J Miller, and Giuseppe Ammendola, "The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 27, no. 6 (December 2005): 537–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920500434037>; M McAuliffe and L.A. Oucho, "World Migration Report 2024" (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2024).

thereby limiting migrant workers' bargaining power and access to effective legal protection.⁴⁷

The findings likewise resonate with the concept of global care chains, particularly regarding Indonesian women employed as domestic workers.⁴⁸ These findings illustrate that migrant women's labor contributes substantially to transnational care economies while simultaneously exposing them to multiple forms of vulnerability, including excessive working hours, mobility restrictions, social isolation, and limited legal protection. These challenges frequently extend beyond the workers themselves, affecting family cohesion and children's welfare in both Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. This pattern reflects the unequal distribution of reproductive and care responsibilities across transnational households.⁴⁹ Consequently, migrant protection should not be confined to employment relations alone. However, it should also encompass the broader social and familial consequences of labor migration, consistent with the broader human security perspective that emphasizes protection of individual well-being beyond legal and economic dimensions.⁵⁰

These findings demonstrate that migrant security is shaped not only by legal protection but also by access to justice, information, social support, economic stability, and institutional responsiveness. Persistent uncertainty regarding immigration status, dependence on employers, limited legal assistance, and weak institutional coordination collectively undermine migrants' sense of security even where formal legal protections exist. These experiences suggest that migrant well-being depends not only on regulatory frameworks but also on the

⁴⁷ Gardner, "Gulf Migration and the Family," June 21, 2011.

⁴⁸ Gianne Sheena Sabio, Kritika Pandey, and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "Global Care Chains," in *Routledge Handbook of Immigration and Refugee Studies*, 2nd ed. (London: Taylor and Francis, 2022), 172–83; Hochschild, "Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value," 2015; Silvey and Parreñas, "Precarity Chains: Cycles of Domestic Worker Migration from Southeast Asia to the Middle East," September 30, 2020.

⁴⁹ Arlie Hochschild, "Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value," 2015, 249–61, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315633794-21>; Silvey and Parreñas, "Precarity Chains: Cycles of Domestic Worker Migration from Southeast Asia to the Middle East," April 2019.

⁵⁰ United Nations, "Human Security in Theory and Practice: An Overview of the Human Security Concept and the UN Trust Fund for Human Security."

effectiveness of governance institutions in translating legal rights into practical protection.

Taken together, these findings suggest that strengthening migrant protection requires moving beyond fragmented policy interventions toward a more integrated governance approach. The migration ecosystem vulnerability framework provides a comprehensive analytical perspective by demonstrating that legal reform alone cannot eliminate migrant vulnerability without corresponding improvements in recruitment governance, labor protection, diplomatic coordination, community participation, and reintegration policies. This integrated understanding forms the basis for the multi-level governance strategies discussed in the following section.

Toward Multi-Level Governance

The findings indicate that strengthening the protection of Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Saudi Arabia requires a shift from fragmented policy responses toward an integrated multi-level governance approach. The challenges identified in this study demonstrate that migrant vulnerability cannot be effectively addressed through isolated legal reforms or emergency interventions alone. Instead, protection should be understood as a continuous governance process involving multiple actors operating across domestic, bilateral, community, and international levels. This interpretation is consistent with the migration ecosystem vulnerability framework, which emphasizes that institutional failures at one level often generate vulnerabilities that extend throughout the migration process.

At the domestic level, Indonesia has introduced important regulatory reforms, including Law No. 18 of 2017 on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers and the gradual digitalization of migration services. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that implementation gaps remain substantial, particularly in regulating recruitment intermediaries, expanding legal migration pathways, and strengthening reintegration programs for returning migrant workers. Interviews with participants further revealed that many prospective migrants continue to rely on informal brokers because of limited access to accurate information, administrative complexity, and economic pressures, as

proven by many studies⁵¹ and confirmed by testimonies.⁵² These findings suggest that improving governance requires not only stronger regulations but also more effective institutional coordination among national agencies, local governments, and community organizations.

At the bilateral level, the study demonstrates that diplomatic cooperation remains essential but insufficient when agreements primarily focus on labor deployment and lack effective enforcement mechanisms. Although bilateral arrangements have helped improve formal recruitment procedures, participants' experiences indicate that challenges related to contract substitution, wage disputes, mobility restrictions, and access to legal remedies persist.⁵³ Consequently, future bilateral cooperation should prioritize legally binding standards, transparent monitoring mechanisms, and accessible dispute resolution procedures that remain effective throughout the employment period. The findings also highlight the strategic role of migrant communities and diaspora organizations as governance actors rather than merely informal support networks.⁵⁴ Throughout the interviews, participants frequently described how Indonesian community organizations assisted migrant workers by providing information, temporary accommodation, mediation, and practical guidance when formal institutional responses were limited. These experiences demonstrate that community-based organizations constitute an important component of the migration protection ecosystem. Recognizing diaspora organizations as legitimate partners in migrant protection would therefore strengthen collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, and migrant communities while expanding access to assistance for vulnerable workers, including those with irregular migration status.

Beyond national and bilateral initiatives, the findings underscore the importance of international cooperation in addressing structural challenges associated with labor migration to Gulf countries. Because many labor-sending countries face similar governance constraints within destination-country employment systems, greater

⁵¹ Prasetyo and Brahmanto, "Interview"; Kurniati and TS, "Interview"; Khotib, "Interview."

⁵² Kurniati and TS, "Interview"; Mahrani and Wahyudi, "Interview"; Muhlis, Nurdin, and Adi, "Interview."

⁵³ Kurniati and TS, "Interview"; Mahrani and Wahyudi, "Interview"; Muhlis, Nurdin, and Adi, "Interview."

⁵⁴ Muhlis, Nurdin, and Adi, "Interview."

regional collaboration could facilitate the development of common protection standards, coordinated diplomatic strategies, and the exchange of best practices. Indonesia should therefore continue to strengthen its engagement through regional platforms such as the Colombo Process and relevant ILO conventions, while encouraging greater international cooperation on ethical recruitment, the protection of labor rights, and migrant welfare.

Taken together, these findings suggest that effective migrant protection depends not on isolated policy interventions but on the integration of governance across interconnected institutional levels. Only by coordinating reforms in recruitment governance, labor regulation, diplomatic protection, community participation, and reintegration policies can Indonesia move beyond reactive crisis management toward a preventive, adaptive, and rights-based migration governance model. Such an integrated approach would not only strengthen the protection of Indonesian migrant workers abroad but also reinforce Indonesia's position as a regional leader in migration governance.

Contribution to Migration Studies

Beyond its policy implications, this study contributes to the broader literature on labor migration and migrant protection by advancing a more integrated understanding of migrant vulnerability in Gulf migration corridors. Previous studies have primarily examined legal protection, labor rights, recruitment practices, or socio-cultural challenges as separate dimensions of migrant experiences.⁵⁵ While these studies have generated valuable insights, they often offer only a

⁵⁵ Aysel Heeren, "Migration, Work and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia and UAE: How the Dynamics of Exclusion, Labor Dependency, and Religious Radicalization of Foreign Workers in Gulf Countries Operate," Universidad de Navarra, 2025; Pebria Prakarsa Renta and Arie Kusuma Paksi, "Efforts of Migrant Care and the Indonesian Government in Realizing the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) Facing the Death Penalty in Saudi Arabia (2015 – 2018)," *Sociología y Tecnociencia* 13, no. 1 (April 1, 2023): 89–101, <https://doi.org/10.24197/st.1.2023.89-101>; Fauzizah, "Sistem Penempatan Satu Kanal Pemerintah Indonesia Dalam Konteks Keamanan Pekerja Migran Indonesia di Arab Saudi Tahun 2018–2023"; Lubis, Muttaqin, and Nurwahidin, "The Impact of the 'Saudization' Policy on Indonesian Migrant Workers in Saudi Arabia"; Nurchayati, "Bringing Agency Back in: Indonesian Migrant Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia."

partial explanation of the complex factors that shape migrant workers' vulnerability.

By employing the migration ecosystem vulnerability framework, this study demonstrates that migrant vulnerability is produced not by isolated legal, economic, or socio-cultural factors, but by the interaction of multiple governance failures operating throughout the migration cycle. The findings illustrate how weaknesses in recruitment governance, labor regulation, diplomatic protection, community support, and reintegration policies reinforce one another, creating cumulative vulnerabilities that cannot be effectively addressed through sector-specific interventions alone.

This integrated perspective extends existing scholarship by linking structural dependency, global care chains, and human security within a single analytical framework.⁵⁶ Rather than treating these perspectives as competing explanations, the study demonstrates their complementarity in explaining how structural inequalities, gendered labor relations, and institutional protection gaps interact within the broader migration ecosystem. Consequently, the migration ecosystem vulnerability framework offers a more comprehensive analytical lens for understanding migrant protection in labor migration between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. It may also apply to other Gulf migration corridors characterized by similar governance structures.

The study also contributes methodologically by integrating primary field interviews, community-based observations, and policy document analysis to examine migrant protection from multiple institutional perspectives. This triangulated approach enables a more contextualized understanding of migrant experiences while strengthening the credibility of the findings. Future research may further develop this ecosystem perspective through comparative studies involving other labor-sending countries or mixed-method designs that examine the interaction between migration governance and migrant well-being across different destination contexts.

⁵⁶ Gardner, "Gulf Migration and the Family," June 21, 2011; Hochschild, "Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value," 2015; United Nations, "Human Security in Theory and Practice: An Overview of the Human Security Concept and the UN Trust Fund for Human Security."

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the vulnerability of Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) in Saudi Arabia cannot be adequately understood through isolated legal, economic, or socio-cultural perspectives. Instead, these dimensions interact throughout the migration process, creating a vulnerability in the migration ecosystem in which weaknesses in recruitment governance, labor regulation, diplomatic protection, and community support reinforce one another. Despite Indonesia's regulatory reforms, significant governance gaps continue to limit the effectiveness of migrant protection, particularly for workers experiencing irregular migration status, exploitative labor conditions, and restricted access to institutional assistance.

By employing the migration ecosystem vulnerability framework, this study contributes to the broader literature on labor migration by providing a more integrated understanding of migrant protection. The findings demonstrate that migrant vulnerability is shaped by interconnected governance gaps operating across the migration cycle rather than by isolated policy failures. This integrated perspective highlights the importance of addressing legal, institutional, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions simultaneously when designing policies for migrant protection.

The findings further suggest that strengthening migrant protection requires coordinated, multi-level governance that involves domestic institutions, bilateral cooperation, migrant communities, and international organizations. Rather than relying on fragmented interventions, an integrated governance approach is essential for promoting preventive, sustainable, and rights-based protection throughout the migration process.

This study is subject to several limitations. As a qualitative inquiry, it prioritizes contextual depth over statistical generalization and is based on selected Indonesian migrant communities in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, the triangulation of interviews, field observations, and policy documents provides a credible empirical basis for understanding the governance challenges surrounding Indonesian labor migration. Future research may further develop the migration ecosystem vulnerability framework through comparative or mixed-method studies involving different destination countries. Ultimately, strengthening an integrated migration governance ecosystem will be essential to ensuring

that labor migration promotes not only economic development but also the dignity, rights, and well-being of migrant workers.

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