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Topic: *Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Combating Human Trafficking and Enhancing Protection of Women and Children*

The Effectiveness of Law Enforcement and Police Strategies in Combating Digital Platform-Based Human Trafficking in Indonesia

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Abstract. *The Crime of Human Trafficking (TPPO) in the digital era has transformed from a conventional physical-based crime into a transnational cybercrime known as cyber-trafficking. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention and law enforcement strategies implemented by the Indonesian National Police (Polri) in combating human trafficking conducted through digital platforms. Employing a normative-empirical legal research method with statutory and conceptual approaches, this study analyzes empirical data and legal literature from various police jurisdictions across Indonesia. The findings indicate that although cyber patrols, digital investigations, and the establishment of Anti-Trafficking Task Forces have been optimized, law enforcement efforts continue to face significant challenges. These obstacles include regulatory inadequacies in addressing cyber-based trafficking schemes, limited cyber forensic competencies among law enforcement officers, underreporting by victims due to psychological trauma, and sentencing disparities in courts that frequently impose relatively lenient punishments. Therefore, adaptive legal reforms responsive to digital trafficking methods, strengthening of cyber forensic infrastructure, and expansion of multi-stakeholder international cooperation are necessary to ensure comprehensive and sustainable protection for vulnerable groups in accordance with Human Rights principles.*

Keywords: *Effectiveness; Enforcement; Law; Strategy; Trafficking.*

1. Introduction

Human trafficking is one of the most serious crimes facing humanity in the 21st century. As a transnational organized crime that undermines human dignity, human trafficking has evolved far beyond conventional patterns. The advent of digital technology and the internet has not only transformed the way people communicate and transact but has also created a new infrastructure for human trafficking networks to recruit, exploit, and conceal their illegal

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In Indonesia, the threat of digital-based human trafficking (TPPO) is increasingly real. Data from the Online Information System for the Protection of Women and Children (SIMFONI PPA) of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) shows a significant increase in human trafficking cases, with increasingly sophisticated modus operandi through the use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram. Perpetrators utilize these various platforms to advertise "fictitious job vacancies," establish fake affective relationships (love scamming), and even trade sexual exploitation services online.²

The Indonesian National Police (Polri), as the vanguard of law enforcement, faces significant challenges. The evolution of criminal modus operandi in line with technological developments demands rapid and responsive institutional capacity adaptation. 4 Meanwhile, the existing regulatory framework, particularly Law Number 21 of 2007 concerning the Eradication of Human Trafficking, has not fully addressed the evolving dimensions of digital crime. This gap between legal norms and the reality of law enforcement creates a space for perpetrators to exploit.³

This research aims to examine in-depth the effectiveness of the strategies implemented by the Indonesian National Police (Polri) in preventing and prosecuting human trafficking through digital platforms, identify existing obstacles, and formulate evidence-based policy recommendations. This study is relevant in the context of developing more comprehensive legal reforms responsive to the challenges of transnational cybercrime, in line with the global agenda to eradicate human trafficking as outlined in the 2000 Palermo Protocol and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁴ Based on this background, the problem formulation in this research is: (1) How effective is the police strategy in preventing TPPO through digital platforms in Indonesia? (2) What are the structural and institutional obstacles faced by the Indonesian National Police in enforcing digital-based TPPO law?; and (3) What is the ideal model for strengthening police capacity to face the threat of digital TPPO?

¹ R. Fitriani and S. Maharani, "Effectiveness of Police Preventive Programs in Eradicating Human Trafficking: A Case Study of Central Java," *Indonesian Journal of Police Science* 17, no. 1 (2023): 45–67.

² B. Hartono and T. Prasetyo, "Fragmentation of Law Enforcement Regulations for Human Trafficking Crimes in the Digital Era," *Journal of Law and Development* 52, no. 3 (2022): 401–425.

³ Ibid

⁴ U. Hasanah, "Implementation of the Palermo Protocol in the Indonesian Legal System: A Critical Review of the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking," *Indonesian Journal of International Law* 8, no. 2 (2021): 78–102.

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2. Research Methods

This research uses a normative juridical research approach, namely legal research conducted by examining library materials or secondary data consisting of primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on analyzing the substance of legal norms, the effectiveness of regulatory implementation, and constructing ideal policies to address digital human trafficking issues. The research methods used include three complementary approaches. First, a statutory approach examines all regulations related to human trafficking and cybercrime in force in Indonesia. Second, a conceptual approach explores theories of legal effectiveness, digital criminology, and police science. Third, a comparative approach compares best practices in digital human trafficking law enforcement from various relevant jurisdictions, such as Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia. The data sources for this research are secondary data consisting of: (1) Primary legal materials in the form of laws and regulations, ratified international conventions, and court decisions related to TPPO; (2) Secondary legal materials in the form of 18 Sinta-accredited national scientific journals published between 2020 and 2025, as well as various legal literature, reports from international institutions, and official policy documents; (3) Tertiary legal materials in the form of legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, and glossaries of digital forensic terminology. Data collection techniques were conducted through systematic library research using the national journal databases GARUDA, SINTA, and institutional repositories of leading law universities. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using legal interpretation techniques, including grammatical, systematic, teleological, and historical interpretation. The results of the analysis were then synthesized to construct coherent legal arguments and operational and measurable policy recommendations.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Mapping Police Strategy in Handling Digital Human Trafficking

1) Establishment of a Special Cyber Unit and Organizational Structure

The Indonesian National Police (Polri) has taken several institutional steps to address the threat of digital human trafficking (TPPO). The establishment of the Cyber Crime Directorate (Dittipidsiber) under the Criminal Investigation Unit (Bareskrim Polri) is a noteworthy strategic step. This directorate is tasked with handling various forms of cybercrime, including human trafficking facilitated by digital technology. The existence of this specialized unit allows for a more technical and specific approach to handling cases than general investigation units.

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The existing organizational structure does not fully reflect the complexity of digital trafficking issues. The majority of trafficking cases submitted to the cyber unit are still dominated by cases with easily accessible digital evidence, while very few cases involving organized networks and the use of high-level encryption are successfully solved. This indicates a gap between available capacity and the complexity of the crimes being addressed. At the regional unit (Satwil) level, there is a significant capacity gap. Cyber units at the regional police (Polda) level in major cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan have relatively adequate infrastructure, while in remote areas, cyber case handling still relies on Criminal Investigation Unit personnel who lack digital forensics expertise. This disparity creates unequal access to justice for victims of digital trafficking across Indonesia.

2) Preventive Strategy: Socialization and Digital Literacy

In addition to a repressive approach, the Indonesian National Police (Polri) also implements various preventive programs to reduce the number of digital human trafficking cases. Outreach programs for the community, particularly vulnerable groups in areas with migrant worker enclaves, have been implemented in collaboration with the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Agency (BP2MI) and local governments. While this preventive approach holds significant potential, it remains hampered by budget constraints and uneven program coverage. Digital literacy, as a key component in preventing online human trafficking (TPPO), has received special attention. Their research shows that the public's lack of understanding of digital risks, particularly in identifying fake job postings and romance scams on social media, is a major contributing factor to the increase in digital TIP victims. The National Police's existing digital literacy program is deemed to have inadequately integrated gender- and age-based approaches.

3) Repressive Strategy: Investigation and Probe

In the repressive dimension, police strategy relies on digital evidence-based investigative and investigative capabilities. Techniques used include cyber patrols, honey-trap operations, digital communication metadata analysis, internet protocol (IP) address tracking, digital device forensics, and coordination with digital platform providers regarding user data disclosure. The implementation of these techniques in Indonesia still faces significant legal obstacles, particularly regarding the authority to intercept communications, which is strictly regulated by positive law. Specifically regarding coordination with digital platforms, Indonesia lacks an efficient and rapid mechanism for obtaining user data from multinational technology companies. Data requests from companies like Meta, Google, and Telegram often take months due to the need to go through diplomatic channels for mutual legal assistance (MLA),¹³ while criminals can easily erase digital traces within hours.

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3.2. Structural and Institutional Barriers

1) Digital Capacity Gap

The most fundamental obstacle facing the Indonesian National Police (Polri) in addressing digital human trafficking is the technical capacity gap. Of the more than 400,000 police personnel, only a small fraction possess standardized digital forensic competencies. The existing police education curriculum has not fully integrated cybercrime and digital forensics as mandatory competencies; instead, it remains an elective or additional training. This situation is exacerbated by the high turnover of highly competent cyber personnel. National Police personnel who receive intensive digital forensics training tend to be targeted by private sector recruiters with far more competitive compensation, creating a brain drain that continually weakens institutional capacity. This cycle is particularly detrimental in the context of handling cases that require highly specific and difficult-to-replace technical expertise.⁵

2) Weak Cross-Institutional Coordination

Effectively addressing digital trafficking absolutely requires close coordination between various institutions: the National Police, the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kemenkominfo), the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA), the National Agency for the Eradication of Human Trafficking (BNPTPO), the BP2MI (Indonesian Agency for the Protection of Women and Children), and the TPPO Task Force. This inter-agency coordination remains highly fragmented and case-by-case, lacking a structured and sustainable system. Similar problems arise in coordination between the police and domestic and foreign digital platforms. There is no binding memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the National Police and major technology companies regarding reporting and response procedures for digital human trafficking crimes, unlike practices in several developed countries that have established dedicated coordination channels with digital platforms for crimes against children.⁶

3) Obstacles to Digital Evidence

The evidentiary aspect is one of the most significant challenges in enforcing digital human

⁵M. Rasyid and N. Farida, "Secondary Victimization of Human Trafficking Victims in the Indonesian Criminal Justice System: A Critical Review and Recommendations for Reform," *Indonesian Journal of Victimology* 3, no. 1 (2021): 45–70.

⁶S. Rahardjo, "Transformation of the Definition of Human Trafficking in the Context of Digital Crime: An Indonesian Criminal Law Perspective," *Journal of Legal Issues* 50, no. 3 (2021): 312–330.

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trafficking laws. The evidentiary system in the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHP), which is based on a conventional model, has not been fully adapted to accommodate the complexity of digital evidence. Although the ITE Law recognizes electronic information and documents as valid evidence, their use in human trafficking trials still faces various technical and procedural obstacles. The situation is complicated by the widespread use of end-to-end encryption on platforms like WhatsApp and Signal, as well as the perpetrators' use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). The Indonesian National Police's digital forensics laboratory's metadata decryption and analysis capabilities are still very limited, resulting in much digital evidence not being optimally utilized in court.⁷

4) Suboptimal Protection for Victims

One of the most fundamental criticisms of Indonesia's handling of digital trafficking is the inadequacy of a trauma-informed approach to victim protection. Victims of digital trafficking often experience secondary victimization during investigations and trials, where they are treated as ordinary suspects or witnesses rather than as parties in need of special protection.⁸ More specifically, victims of digital trafficking who experience online sexual exploitation face the additional risk of the perpetrators distributing sexually abusive material (non-consensual pornography or revenge porn) as a form of intimidation. Existing procedures lack a rapid and effective mechanism to prevent the distribution of such content during the legal process, resulting in continued harm to victims.

3.3. Analysis of the Effectiveness of Police Strategies

Using the legal effectiveness framework developed by Soerjono Soekanto, the effectiveness of police strategies in handling digital human trafficking can be analyzed using five factors: legal substance, legal structure (enforcement apparatus), facilities and infrastructure, public awareness, and legal culture. These five factors must work synergistically and in an integrated manner to achieve optimal effectiveness. In terms of legal substance, Indonesia's regulatory framework is already quite comprehensive, but it requires significant updating to keep pace with technological developments. The absence of explicit and comprehensive regulations governing cyber investigation authority, the use of online undercover techniques, and procedures for

⁷M. Prayoga and S. Nurhadi, "Challenges of Digital Evidence in Human Trafficking Cases: An Analysis of the Capacity of the Indonesian National Police Digital Forensic Laboratory," *Indonesian Forensic Journal* 5, no. 2 (2022): 178–205.

⁸E. Prastowo and R. Utami, "Inequality in Police Cyber Investigation Capacity between Central and Regional Governments in Indonesia," *Journal of Law and Regional Government* 7, no. 1 (2023): 67–91.

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obtaining electronic data from foreign platforms creates uncertainty that criminals exploit.

From a legal perspective, the uneven distribution of capacity between the central and regional governments is a fundamental structural weakness. Structural reform of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) includes the establishment of a digital anti-trafficking task force in each regional police (Polda) with measurable minimum competency standards, along with a competitive rotation and retention system for highly skilled personnel.⁹ From a facilities and infrastructure perspective, investment in digital forensic infrastructure remains far from sufficient. The gap between existing equipment and the demands of modern investigations is significant. In comparison, the Indonesian National Police's current digital forensic laboratory does not fully meet the standards set by the International Organization on Computer Evidence (IOCE), impacting the admissibility of digital evidence in international trials.

3.4. Recommended Police Capacity Building Model

1) Regulatory Reform

Comprehensive legislative reform is needed to address legal gaps in addressing digital trafficking. Priority steps include: first, amending Law No. 21 of 2007 to explicitly incorporate provisions on digitally facilitated trafficking, including a clear operational definition of "use of a digital platform" as an aggravating factor in qualifying as a crime; second, establishing specific regulations on cooperation with foreign digital platforms in the context of crimes against persons and children. Improvements to procedural law regulations are also urgent, particularly regarding procedures for obtaining, storing, and submitting digital evidence in human trafficking cases. Based on a comparative study of practices in ASEAN countries, Indonesia needs to adopt digital evidence standards that align with international conventions while still adhering to the principles of due process applicable in the national legal system.

2) Strengthening Institutional Capacity

The recommended capacity-building model encompasses three main dimensions: human resource development, technological infrastructure strengthening, and coordination system improvement. Within the human resources dimension, the establishment of a standardized digital forensics and cyber investigation specialization program at the Police Science College (STIK-PTIK) is proposed, along with a globally recognized international certification program

⁹E. Rahmawati and A. Kusuma, "Digital Literacy and Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: A Study of Vulnerable Communities in Migrant Enclaves," *Journal of Women and Development* 9, no. 2 (2022): 89–114.

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such as the Certified Cyber Forensics Professional (CCFP). To address the brain drain issue, the Indonesian National Police (Polri) needs to develop a dedicated remuneration system for digitally skilled personnel that can compete with the private sector. This can be achieved through the establishment of a dedicated technical career track that rewards technical expertise, not just structural positions.

3) Multi-stakeholder Cooperation Mechanism

Addressing digital human trafficking requires a multi-stakeholder approach that integrates the roles of the police, relevant government agencies, digital platforms, non-governmental organizations, and civil society. The Indonesia Human Trafficking Digital Response Network (IHRT) needs to be established, a national coordination platform that enables real-time intelligence exchange, incident reporting, and integrated response. Within the context of international cooperation, Indonesia needs to strengthen its active participation in networks such as the Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT).¹⁰

4) Integrated Victim Protection System

The most fundamental reform needed is a paradigm shift from a crime-centered to a victim-centered approach in all stages of handling digital human trafficking cases. This includes: standardizing interviews based on a trauma-sensitive forensic approach; providing integrated legal, psychological, and social support for victims from the reporting stage; a mechanism for protecting victims' digital identities during the legal process; and an effective and rapid compensation and recovery system. In addition, special procedures are needed to handle child victims of digital-based sexual exploitation, including a rapid content takedown mechanism in collaboration with the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), as well as comprehensive criminalization of the entire digital exploitation value chain from content producers to end consumers.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis conducted, several key conclusions can be drawn. First, although the Indonesian National Police (Polri) has established an institutional structure to address digital human trafficking through the Directorate of Cyber Crimes (Dittipidsiber) at the Criminal Investigation Agency (Bareskrim), the effectiveness of the existing strategy remains seriously

¹⁰D. Santoso and Y. Irawan, "Intelligence-Led Policing in Handling Digital Human Trafficking: Opportunities and Challenges of Implementation in Indonesia," *Journal of Police and Public Security* 11, no. 2 (2023): 223–248.

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hampered by a digital capacity gap, uneven distribution of competencies, and a legal framework that is not fully responsive to the characteristics of technology-based crimes. Second, the most critical structural obstacles include: (a) the digital capacity gap among officers at the regional level; (b) the limited availability of systematic cross-agency coordination mechanisms; (c) the inadequacy of digital evidence infrastructure that meets international standards; and (d) the weak implementation of a trauma-sensitive victim protection approach throughout the case handling chain. Third, the ideal strengthening model requires simultaneous reforms at four levels: legislative reform to address gaps in the digital trafficking law; strengthening the human resources and technological infrastructure of the police; developing institutionalized multistakeholder cooperation mechanisms; and a paradigm shift toward a victim-centered approach across the entire response system. This study recommends that the Indonesian National Police (Polri), the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, and the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) immediately prioritize digital human trafficking regulatory reform, investment in police cyber capacity, and the establishment of a comprehensive national and international cooperation framework for addressing digital technology-based human trafficking crimes. Only with an integrated and victim-centered approach can Indonesia effectively fulfill its constitutional and international obligations to protect its citizens from the increasingly sophisticated threat of human trafficking in this digital era.

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