

LICS 2026

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

The Importance of Family Education in Shielding Women and Children from the Threat of Human Trafficking

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Abstract. *Human trafficking is an extraordinary crime that disproportionately victimizes women and children, making them the most vulnerable groups in society. Amid increasingly sophisticated recruitment methods, ranging from fraudulent employment offers to exploitation through digital platforms, preventive efforts can no longer rely solely on state law enforcement mechanisms. This article aims to examine the urgency of family education and its role as the first line of defense in preventing human trafficking. This study employs a normative juridical research method using a library research approach. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively. The findings indicate that the vulnerability of women and children is primarily influenced by economic hardship, limited literacy, and inadequate communication within the family environment. Therefore, strengthening family resilience through open communication, digital literacy education, and the cultivation of critical thinking toward seemingly attractive instant opportunities constitutes the most effective preventive strategy. Empowered and well-informed families are capable of identifying early signs of trafficking-related crimes, thereby disrupting the cycle of human trafficking at its source.*

Keywords: *Crime; Education; Family; Protection; Resilience.*

1. Introduction

Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery that undermines human dignity, worth, and fundamental human rights. This crime continues to evolve through increasingly sophisticated methods, including deceptive promises of high-paying jobs in other regions or abroad, fraudulent scholarship opportunities, and emotional manipulation through social media platforms, commonly known as cyber grooming. Within this criminal network, women and children consistently occupy the most vulnerable positions and are frequently targeted for forced labor, sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse.

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The Indonesian government has established a strong legal framework through Law Number 21 of 2007 concerning the Eradication of the Crime of Human Trafficking. Nevertheless, legal measures are largely repressive in nature, functioning only after victims have been harmed and criminal acts have occurred. Consequently, effective prevention requires a proactive approach rooted in the most fundamental social institution the family. The family serves as the primary environment for character development, value formation, and personal protection. Family disharmony, inadequate supervision, and poor communication often become driving factors that push women and children to seek support, acceptance, or opportunities outside the home, thereby increasing their susceptibility to human trafficking networks. Therefore, this article explores the critical role of family education and its implementation strategies in protecting women and children from the threat of human trafficking.

2. Research Methods

This study employs a normative juridical research method with a library research approach. The research focuses on examining positive legal norms, principles of child protection and human rights, and sociological concepts of family resilience related to the prevention of human trafficking. The data sources used in this study include: a. Primary Legal Materials: Primary legal materials consist of statutory regulations, including the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945, the Child Protection Law, the Law on the Eradication of Human Trafficking, and regulations related to family resilience. b. Secondary Legal Materials: Secondary legal materials were obtained from academic literature, including textbooks, scholarly journals, and previous research relevant to the protection of women and children and the development of family resilience. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively by examining the issue of victim vulnerability and synthesizing it with family education concepts to formulate comprehensive recommendations for preventing human trafficking.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Why Women and Children Are Highly Vulnerable

Human Trafficking (TPPO) never occurs by chance or randomly. These criminal syndicates operate like predators that carefully identify, map, and exploit the vulnerabilities of their potential victims. They fully understand that individuals who are under pressure, lack information, or lack emotional support are the easiest targets to manipulate. Within this criminal landscape, women and children consistently occupy the top positions as the most frequently exploited groups due to their multiple and layered vulnerabilities.

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For women, the primary factor that makes them highly vulnerable to trafficking syndicates is severe economic pressure. Many women, especially those who serve as the main breadwinners or single mothers, are burdened with the responsibility of meeting daily living needs while facing limited access to decent employment opportunities. Under conditions of financial hardship and accumulating expenses, desperation often overrides rational thinking. Job offers outside their region or abroad that promise high salaries, luxurious facilities, and instant recruitment processes may appear as miracles or highly attractive solutions, thereby weakening their ability to think critically and remain cautious.

In addition to economic factors, patriarchal social structures further restrict women's mobility, thereby increasing their vulnerability. In many regions, cultural norms still limit women's access to higher education and equal employment opportunities compared to men. This lack of educational access results in insufficient skills to compete in the formal sector, forcing many women into informal employment that lacks legal protection. In this marginalized position, illegal labor brokers emerge as seemingly helpful figures offering false solutions, ultimately leading women into modern slavery. On the other hand, children's vulnerability stems from their early psychological development stage. Unlike adults, children generally tend to be trusting, inexperienced, and highly curious. They do not yet possess sufficient cognitive capacity to distinguish between genuine goodwill and malicious intent hidden behind smiles or gifts. This innocence and lack of critical reasoning make children the most defenseless targets when facing criminal syndicates skilled in deception.

In the digital era, this innocence is massively exploited through cyberspace. Many children spend a significant amount of time online playing online games or using social media without adequate parental supervision. This borderless environment makes them easy prey for online predators. Perpetrators use fake identities to approach children, build trust, and create artificial emotional bonds through a process known as cyber grooming. Once the child becomes emotionally attached and compliant, perpetrators can easily abduct, sexually exploit, or traffic them.

3.2. The Family as the First Line of Defense

Indonesian positive law regards the family as a serious institution, not merely a biological or blood relationship. Legally and socially, the family is recognized as the first fundamental institution that carries a major moral and legal responsibility to protect its members, especially children. The state entrusts this protective role to families because the home is the first place where individuals learn values, safety, and affection. If this protective function works properly, family members will possess a strong shield when they enter broader society. From this legal and social perspective, the concept of "family resilience" emerges. Family resilience refers to

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the ability of a household unit to survive, adapt, and protect its members from various threats, whether internal crises or external manipulation. This concept is crucial in preventing human trafficking. Strong families function as effective filters capable of screening false information, rejecting fraudulent job offers, and resisting physical or psychological threats attempting to infiltrate the household.

Conversely, in fragile families marked by extreme poverty, domestic violence (KDRT), or poor communication filled with conflict, the home may feel like a “pressure environment.” In such conditions, women and children may feel unsafe, unappreciated, and emotionally distressed. This sense of neglect often drives them to seek escape, validation, and security outside the home. Unfortunately, this psychological vulnerability is easily detected by human trafficking syndicates, which exploit it by offering false freedom or attention that is absent within the family environment. On the other hand, supportive and loving family environments provide essential emotional security. When children and women feel valued, heard, and cared for, they develop strong self-confidence. Consistent guidance and supervision within the household reduce external risks and limit opportunities for malicious actors. If a family member receives a suspicious offer, they are more likely to discuss it openly at home, enabling early prevention of potential victimization. Therefore, strengthening family resilience should not be underestimated or treated as a mere moral slogan. Building strong, harmonious, and communicative families must be considered the most fundamental, strategic, and systematic preventive measure against human trafficking. As long as the family the first line of defense remains strong and resilient, even international trafficking syndicates will find it difficult to recruit victims from society.

3.3. Effective Family Education Strategies to Prevent Human Trafficking

Preventing human trafficking, even at the international level, can begin with small steps within the household. Prevention does not always depend on large-scale government policies, but can be achieved through practical educational strategies that must be implemented by parents or guardians at home. Family education aims to equip members with a “protective system” or critical thinking ability so they are not easily deceived by outsiders. There are three key strategic steps to build a safe and intelligent family environment. The first and most fundamental step is establishing open two-way communication. Authoritarian parenting styles where parents only give orders and prohibitions without listening should gradually be abandoned. Such an approach only makes children fearful and unwilling to share their experiences or problems. Instead, parents should position themselves as empathetic listeners who do not easily judge. When strong communication is established, children and other family members will feel safe

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discussing anything, including new acquaintances they meet in real life or online who may behave suspiciously.

The second step is to instill critical awareness of unrealistic opportunities or offers. Families must teach basic logic about employment and financial success. The concept of “too good to be true” must be strongly embedded in their thinking. They should understand that legitimate jobs and sustainable success do not come from instant offers. If a job offer promises extremely high salaries without requiring qualifications or skills, it should be treated with suspicion.

This understanding should be strengthened by teaching family members how to verify information. For example, they should be aware that sending workers abroad without official documents (such as passports or work visas) is a serious legal violation. In addition, recruiters without clear office addresses, legal registration, or those who communicate only through social media should be avoided. This form of education is a powerful tool to protect families from online job scams and trafficking schemes. The third step, highly important in the modern era, is improving digital literacy and supervising online activities. In today’s interconnected world, family education is incomplete without cyber safety awareness. Parents must clearly teach children not to share sensitive personal information, including full names, school uniforms, home addresses, or phone numbers on any social media platform. Furthermore, parents should monitor the applications their children use and the people they interact with online, while maintaining a balanced approach that respects privacy as children grow older.

4. Conclusion

The threat of Human Trafficking continues to endanger women and children through various manipulative methods that evolve alongside technological and societal developments. Given the limitations of legal instruments and law enforcement agencies in reaching the private sphere of individuals and families, the most effective form of protection must begin at the source the family. Family resilience and education constitute the strongest and most fundamental line of defense against human trafficking. Families that foster open communication, cultivate critical thinking skills, and promote digital literacy awareness are better equipped to prevent criminal syndicates from exploiting vulnerable family members before victimization occurs. The government, through relevant institutions such as the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection and the National Population and Family Planning Agency, should intensify family resilience programs and parenting education initiatives down to the village level. At the same time, communities are encouraged to revive the spirit of social responsibility and neighborhood vigilance in order to identify and report suspicious activities that may indicate human trafficking recruitment within their surroundings. Ultimately, protecting women and

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children from human trafficking is not solely the responsibility of the state or law enforcement agencies. It is a collective moral responsibility that requires collaboration among families, communities, government institutions, educational organizations, and civil society to create a safe environment where women and children can live, grow, and develop free from the threat of exploitation and human trafficking.

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