

COVID-19 y el trabajo decente: cobertura de los medios de comunicación en línea sobre las trabajadoras domésticas migrantes Indonesias en Malasia y Taiwán

COVID-19 and Decent Work: Online Media Coverage on Indonesian Female Migrant Domestic Workers in Malaysia and Taiwan

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Resumen: Entre todas las demás industrias, la propagación de COVID-19 también afectó el trabajo formal de diferentes industrias, incluidos los trabajadores domésticos en las casas de los empleadores. El objetivo principal de este estudio fue analizar el fenómeno de cómo las trabajadoras domésticas migrantes indonesias de tiempo completo, en Malasia y Taiwán, hicieron frente a las condiciones de empleo inconvenientes durante

Abstract: Among all other industries, the spread of COVID-19 also affected the formal labor of different industries including domestic workers at employers' houses. The main purpose of this study was to analyze the phenomenon that how did full-time Indonesian female migrant domestic workers, in Malaysia and Taiwan, coped with inconvenient employment conditions during the pandemic. This article employed an explanatory qualitative approach. The data sources for this research were from

la pandemia. Este artículo empleó un enfoque cualitativo explicativo. Las fuentes de datos para esta investigación fueron datos secundarios, que en su mayoría examinaron los datos disponibles en los medios en línea relacionados con cuatro dimensiones del trabajo decente que consisten en 1) seguridad en el empleo (perder un trabajo), 2) protección (trabajadores legalmente excluidos / no regulados), 3) vulnerabilidad (maltrato físico y mental), y 4) ingresos (salario bajo). Los datos seleccionados de los medios en línea nacionales e internacionales se analizaron utilizando el software NVivo 12+ para correlacionar entre el COVID-19 y las condiciones laborales de los trabajadores indonesios en Malasia y Taiwán. Esta investigación revela que las trabajadoras domésticas migrantes indonesias a tiempo completo, que viven temporalmente en las casas de los empleadores, se han enfrentado a condiciones laborales inconvenientes durante la pandemia. Los hallazgos han argumentado que COVID-19 causó inseguridad laboral al limitar las posibles trabajadoras domésticas extranjeras para encontrar un nuevo trabajo; Además, también planteó la protección insuficiente que resultó en una mayor vulnerabilidad. En términos de ingresos, COVID-19 también contribuyó a la deducción salarial para las trabajadoras en Malasia y Taiwán.

Palabras clave: COVID-19, Medios en línea, Trabajo decente, Malasia, Taiwán, Trabajadoras domésticas migrantes Indonesias.

secondary data, which mostly examined data available on online media related to four dimensions of decent work consisting of 1) employment security (losing a job), 2) protection (legally excluded/unregulated workers), 3) vulnerability (physical and mental abuse), and 4) income (low salary). The selected data from both national and international online media were analyzed by using NVivo 12+ software to correlate between the COVID-19 and working conditions of the Indonesian workers in Malaysia and Taiwan. This research reveals that full-time Indonesian female migrant domestic workers, temporarily living in employers' houses, have coped with inconvenient employment conditions during the pandemic. The findings have argued that COVID-19 caused employment insecurity by limiting potential foreign female domestic workers to find a new job; further, it also raised the insufficient protection that resulted into more vulnerability. In terms of income, COVID-19 also contributed to salary deduction for female workers in Malaysia and Taiwan.

Keywords: COVID-19; Online media, Decent work, Malaysia, Taiwan, Indonesian Female Migrant Domestic Workers.

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 outbreak is an unprecedented global pandemic of similar respiratory infections such as SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome). SARS-Cov, MERS-Cov, and SARS-Cov-2, identical to COVID-19, are viruses known as zoonosis initially transmitted by bats or other mammals to humans (Mori, Capasso, Carta, Donald, & Supuran, 2020). The unavailability of the vaccine in dealing with COVID-19 between the end of 2019 and 2020 has compelled all countries to strictly limit human mobility, either their citizens or foreign visitors, and to restrict, or even temporarily freeze, operation of factories, companies, and businesses alike requiring several employees to work in the same place and time.

Travel and business restrictions aimed to stop the widespread of the virus, causing an economic slowdown (Nicola et al., 2020). In Asia, the decline of Chinese diverse economic activities such as trading, production, overseas investment, and travel occurred (Asian Development Bank, 2020). Despite profitable income-generating, the Saudis government has forcefully limited or cancelled the annual haj pilgrimage for 2020 (Yaakoubi & Rashad, 2020). Nevertheless, following the Indonesian government decision on cancelation of the 2020 haj pilgrimage and suspension from the Saudis government, the Malaysian authority also asked its citizens to delay the haj (Aljazeera, 2020). The existing two Holy Lands where several people all over the world come to Saudi Arabia for performing the haj is the state's economic advantage of Saudi Arabia.

During the pandemic, the economic slowdown is a common problem faced particularly by virus epicenter countries and generally by other affected ones. Since the rapid spread of COVID-19, employees losing their jobs have been rampant cases. Report and observation prepared by global media, research center, and international organization, such as The Guardian, BBC, Pew Research Centre, Forbes, and International Labour Organization (ILO), demonstrate the escalation of job losses (Allen, 2020; Bialik, 2017; Guardian, 2020; Jones & Palumbo, 2020; Nagarjun, 2020). For example, ILO points out that worldwide losing working hours is regionally diverse due to the extension of lockdown measures. The percentage of workers losing their working hours in the Americas, Europe, and Central Asia, and the rest of regional divisions is 12.4 percent, 11.8 percent, and above 9.5 percent, respectively (Nagarjun, 2020). The need for protection for vulnerable employees is urgent as the job crisis evolves (Nagarjun, 2020).

Despite working mainly at home and not in the hardest-hit sector, domestic work is quite unsafe. More foreign female domestic workers, such as maids, nannies, and other care works, have become increasingly vulnerable due to complicated schemes and regulations that leads to less protection from either their origin country or recipient country. (Alfajri & Maulidia, 2019) Decent work remains a pivotal issue to which the foreign domestic workers cope with during or pre-pandemic in recipient countries. Several receiving countries have excluded domestic work from their scope of labour protection or employment laws. As a result, domestic work is an employment category with unpleasant working conditions called as precarious employment, referring to the non-standard employment relationship in the Global North (Pape, 2016). Despite no single consensus

of precarious work definition among scholars, Blustein, Olle, Connors-Kellgren, and Diamonti (2016) comprehend it as a multidimensional construct comprising four dimensions, which are

“continuity or employment insecurity, vulnerability like powerlessness/lack of bargaining position or ability to exercise workplace rights, protection such as access to benefits and legal protections, and income (Blustein et al., 2016)”.

Following the Indonesian moratorium policy started in 2011, the mobility of Indonesian female domestic workers (IFDWs) has shifted from the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, to East and Southeast Asian countries. In Southeast Asia, the predominant IFDWs population is in Malaysia. In East Asia, Taiwan is a more preferred destination country than other East Asian countries like Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea. The data below represents the top-ten rank destination countries of IFDWs based on the report of the National Body for Protection of Indonesian Migrant Worker between 2018 and 2020. The table 1 gives an over-view.

Table 1. The top ten destination countries of Indonesian migrant workers 2018-2020

No	Country	2018	2019	2020
		April	April	April
1	Malaysia	8445	7121	0
2	Taiwan	5186	7213	632
3	Hong Kong	4985	6155	1715
4	Singapore	1847	1966	0
5	South Korea	1306	896	0
6	Saudi Arabia	467	664	0
7	Brunei Darussalam	475	510	0
8	Turkey	159	268	0
9	Italy	134	143	0
10	Kuwait	64	140	0

Source: BNP2TKI (2019)

Table 2.
three job
preference

No	Job	2018	2019	2020
		April	April	April
1	Domestic Worker	6636	7622	1716
2	Caregiver	3354	5201	431
3	Operator	3891	2783	0

The top-
for**Indonesian migrant workers 2018-2020****Source: BNP2TKI (2019)**

The above data describe that the population of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia decreased slightly by 18.5 percent from April 2018 to April 2019. In contrast, the population in Taiwan increased around 28.1 percent in vulnerable the same time.

In dealing with domestic workers, the percentage increased slightly by 12.9% from April 2018 to April 2019. Interestingly, despite the zero placement of the worker in April 2020, the population remained high. Domestic workers, as the vast proportion of the migrant workers in both Malaysia and Taiwan, are most probably at risk from worse working conditions during a pandemic. This article evaluates the relationship between COVID-19 and four dimensions of decent work: 1) employment insecurity; 2) vulnerability; 3) protection; and 4) income by looking at online media coverage on IFDWs in both Malaysia and Taiwan. This paper provides a point of view from which the global pandemic could be a remarkable factor in the worsening decent work of foreign female domestic workers in the form of labour market insecurity, protection, vulnerability, as well as income.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As a multi-interpretable concept, decent work emphasizes that the concept of labour has a social dimension rather than a purely economic

orientation. In Australia, people prefer to use fair work and good jobs. Fair work focuses on fairness on a labour contract, referring to harmonizing employee and employer interests (Bletsas & Charlesworth, 2013). Conversely, decent work is more extensive than both fair works and good jobs (job satisfaction) (Burchell, Sehnbruch, Piasna, & Agloni, 2012; Stewart & Stewart, 2016) by including gender equality within labour contract and policy, which transforms the understanding and undertaking of domestic care work (Bletsas & Charlesworth, 2013; Mallett, 2018). As delivered by the ILO, decent work can be understood as an effort to provide an equal chance for both men and women in gaining productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, security, and human dignity (Bletsas & Charlesworth, 2013; Deranty & MacMillan, 2012; Tânia Ferraro, Nuno Rebelo Dos Santos & Mónico, 2016). Di Ruggiero, Cohen, Cole, & Forman (2015) point out that ILO defines decent work as “the sum of people’s aspiration for opportunity income; rights, voice, and recognition; family stability and personal development; and fairness and gender equality” (Di Ruggiero et al., 2015; Gibb, Stephen; Ishaq, Mohammed; Collins, Chik; Pautz, Hartwig; Stuart, 2016).

Therefore, the decent work agenda of the ILO comprises four directions, which are 1) creating jobs; 2) guaranteeing rights at work; 3) extending social protection; and 4) promoting social dialogue (Afonso, Antônio, Teixeira, Augusto, & Ambiel, 2019; Di Ruggiero et al., 2015). According to Deranty and MacMillan (2012), the Declaration of Philadelphia in 1944, stating that “labour is not a commodity”, inspired Juan Somavia, the first director-general of the ILO from the developing world, to initiate decent work in 1999. Decent work is prevention to eliminate any possible inhuman treatment. Then, the ILO convention on decent work for domestic worker requires countries hiring labour to fulfil certain standard, such as minimum hours per day or per week, an amount of minimum wage, protecting the worker from the worse effect of illness, and worker under unpleasant working condition is allowed to exchange in a labour market (Deranty & MacMillan, 2012; Mallett, 2018). Therefore, implementing good decent work governance needs three significant aspects to get involved at once, which are: policy practices, including policymakers, labour market globalization (state and private sector), and human rights principles (Pouyaud, 2016).

Decent work raises in response to workers’ experience on the precarity of the workplace. Their experience occurs because of three broad dimensions: 1) formal aspects, such as the labour contract and benefits due

to the workers; 2) working conditions; and 3) labour relations (C. Chan, Ramírez, & Stefoni, 2019). William (2015) argues that asymmetric power between middle-class employers and their foreign domestic workers, mostly from the lower economic background, is a determinant aspect of negatively stigmatized female domestic workers in destination countries.

Employment insecurity is various unsafe contractual arrangements associated with poor working conditions, cheap salary, and minimum social protection, and it mostly occurs in more advanced economic countries (Fiori, Rinesi, Spizzichino, & Di Giorgio, 2016). Strauss (2017) believes that the expansion of high-tech industries and production polarizes professional workers with high standard salary and labourers (temporary workers) with a low wage. The expansion also creates a flexible labour market differing low-paid workers from professionals in dealing with labour law, employment standards, and occupational welfare (Holdcroft, 2013; Strauss, 2017). Lersch and Dewilde (2015) define employment insecurity as the risk of losing a job (job insecurity) and not finding a new job (labour market insecurity). Chan and Tweedie (2015) address more additional aspects of insecurity, income insecurity, and work-time insecurity. Such extra aspects are relevant to a condition faced often by female migrant domestic workers.

More female migrant workers are vulnerable than males (Desouza, 2009; Gottlieb, Grossman, & Robinson, 2018). The workers are at risk of both physical and mental violence (Abu-habib, 2010; Ullah, 2015), such as sexual abuse (Damir-geilsdorf & Pelican, 2018; Desouza, 2009) as well as administrative violence (Parreñas, Kantachote, & Silvey, 2020), not to mention economic exploitation (insufficient nutrition and rest) (Nisrane, Ossewaarde, & Need, 2019). Besides, other forms of worker exploitation at home are human trafficking, and people smuggling (Jureidini, 2010; Lasimbang, Tong, & Low, 2016; Piper, 2004b). The economic crisis at home leading to poverty and knowledge capacity is not only a cause of human trafficking and people smuggling but also private agency (Demetriou, 2018; Palumbo, 2017; Peixoto, 2009).

In dealing with protection, several informal workers, including female domestic workers, have limited access to work-related social security (Lund, 2012). Female domestic workers have experienced different types of abuse and harassment, which are contracts and wages, and physical and psychological abuse (Conceic, 2017). Receiving countries may not appropriately provide legal protection for female domestic workers. For example, the Malaysian government in Sabah does not offer particular

policies or laws for migrant workers related to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Conversely, migrant-related policies and laws aim to prevent the negative impact of migrants for citizens, rather than migrant protection (Lasimbang et al., 2016). Besides, the failure of the Malaysian government to mainly protect female domestic workers is because of weak legal enforcement and abusive practices of numerous stakeholders (Devadason & Meng, 2013).

Another example is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Despite ratifying the United Nations Conventions on the human rights, the KSA excluded the conventions associated with the rights of migrant workers formulated by the UN and the ILO, namely the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), and Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) (Almutairi, 2018). Then, the reason why the KSA is reluctant to ratify and comply with the conventions related to the rights of informal migrant workers and female domestic migrant workers is that those conventions are unsuitable with the Islamic Sharia (Almutairi, 2018). According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report in 2008, the KSA exclude all domestic workers from its labour law. The report also emphasizes the shortcoming of the sponsorship system of the so-called kafala system leading domestic workers to worse working conditions, in which the system allows employers to enormous control over the workers (Silvey, Hwang, & Choi, 2018; Watch, 2008).

In terms of income, the female domestic workers' income remains unsafe because of asymmetric power relationships between employers and employees in the host country (T, Jr, & Naufal, 2016) and inadequate legal protection. Social inequalities based on gender, race, not to mention immigration status, shaping historical diverse precarious employment, have to weaken the workers' bargaining power concerning income and employment security (Siegmann & Schiphorst, 2016). Blofield and Jokela (2018) believe that employer discrimination affects workers' income. Pérez and Llanos (2017), citing human capital theory, argue that income correlates with years of formal education of individuals. Therefore, domestic workers completing secondary studies receive average monthly income (Pérez & Llanos, 2017) higher than that of low-educated domestic workers. In Lebanon, Filipino domestic workers' salary is higher than Ethiopian and Sri Lankan because of their education level, ability to speak English, more

trustworthy, more efficient, and having a good reputation (Jureidini & Moukarbel, 2004).

The following illustration is a model to connect the global pandemic, which is COVID-19, as an independent variable and decent work comprising four elements, as explored in the literature review, which is the dependent variable.

Figure 1. Research model of COVID-19 and decent work of female migrant domestic workers



Source: Author Analysis (2020)

Based on the model, this paper argues that COVID-19 will affect four elements of decent work consisting of employment security, protection, vulnerability, and income. In dealing with employment security, the disease results losing a job (job security) and not finding a new job (labour market insecurity). Then, it also impacts protection, from which female migrant domestic workers remain excluded. After that, the disease rises abuses and exploitation for the workers. The last, the disease is likely to decrease the income of female migrant domestic workers.

3. METHODS

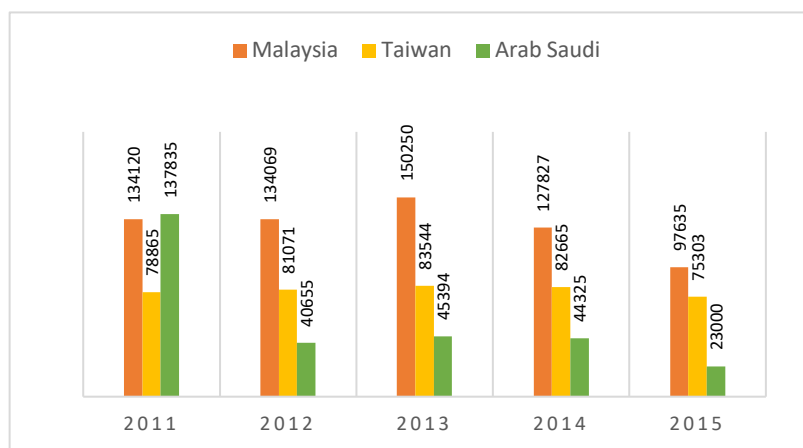
This article employed an explanatory qualitative approach aimed to explain the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the decent work of Indonesian female domestic workers in both Malaysia and Taiwan. Malaysia and Taiwan are major destination countries for most Indonesian female domestic workers, who have no more opportunity to work in the Middle East following the moratorium policy of Indonesian government to stop sending the workers. Concerning decent work dimensions, this paper looked at aspects of losing a job, exclusion/unregulated group, physical and

mental abuse, and low salary experienced by the workers during the pandemic outbreak.

The data source for this research was from secondary data, which mostly examined online media related to four dimensions of decent work consisting of 1) employment security (losing a job), 2) protection (legally excluded/unregulated workers), 3) vulnerability (physical and mental abuse), and 4) income (low salary). The analysis data collected from 25 online media employed NVivo 12+ with crosstab features.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Indonesian Female Migrant Domestic Workers in Malaysia and Taiwan



Since the first moratorium policy of 2011 and the second of 2015 to the KSA, the influx of IFDWs have might increasingly be shifted to Malaysia and Taiwan. The following data of the National Body for Placement and Protection Indonesian Workers (BNP2TKI) show that Indonesian migrant workers in the KSA dramatically dropped between 2011 and 2015 due to the moratorium policy.

Figure 2. The population of migrant workers of Indonesia 2011-2015

Source: Processed by Author (2020)

Malaysia is the largest importing country for unskilled or low-level educational labours. It divides migrant workers into two different types. The

first is expatriate, who is well-educated and skilled migrant workers. The function of expatriates for Malaysia is complimentary, meaning that expatriates work in a specific area the citizen may not yet carry out. The second is the foreign worker, referring to unskilled migrant workers that often did not have educational, cultural and linguistic skills sufficiently. (Kusuma, York & Wibowo, 2014) hal 56) Then, the function of the foreign worker is substitutive, which means those workers are likely to replace the citizen resisting to do so-called 3D (Dark, Dirty, and Dangerous) vacant works (Wei San Loh, Kenneth Simler, Kershia Tan Wei, 2019) related to construction, plantation, and low-end services, such as security, gas station attendant, and maids (Ismail, 2016).

The existence of unskilled foreign workers has considerably contributed to the national economy of Malaysia. Malaysia pays salaries for unskilled workers cheaper than investing in hi-tech products. Meanwhile, Indonesia, as a sending country, can maximize its national revenue (Ode & Ningrum, 2011; Silvey, 2004; Sim, 2009; Susilowati, 2011; Ullah, 2013) and reduce unemployment issue at home (Yeoh, Platt, Khoo, & Lam, 2016). Despite incompletely safe, more IFDWs prefer to Malaysia due to geographical proximity (Luedtke, 2012). In 2009, the Indonesian government announced a moratorium policy to temporarily stop sending IFDWs to Malaysia because of weak legal protection and abuse. Nonetheless, the moratorium policy to Malaysia was a short period, compared to what the Indonesian government enacted to the KSA. The Malaysian government agreed to improve protection concerning wages, passport (official travel document), and day-off (BBCNews, 2011).

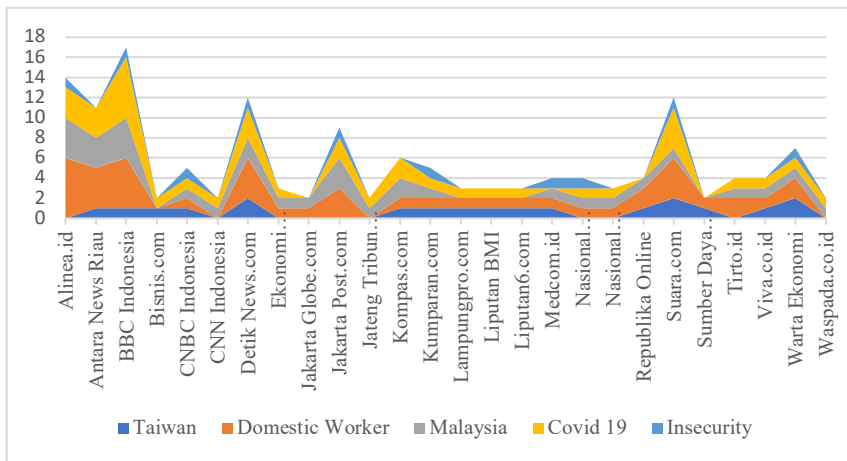
This can be established that Taiwan is one of the major receiving countries for domestic workers, entertainment workers, and marriage migrants. Predominant females migrating to Taiwan are from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam, and their objective is for domestic service or marriage (Malhotra, Misra, & Leal, 2016). Despite promising higher rate of remuneration, Taiwan's Chinese tradition may not strongly attract IFDWs over Malaysia, which has cultural similarities with the Indonesian workers (Spaan & Naerssen, 2017). In terms of protection, Taiwan has better practices for protecting migrant's rights. For example, it allows pregnant migrant domestic workers to stay, whereas Malaysia and Singapore will terminate the workers' contract and return them to their countries of origin (Elias, 2017). Another example, Taiwan is likely to democratically discuss with exporting countries concerning the changes of dispute settlement for migrant domestic labourers (Organization, 2006).

Therefore, IFDWs working in Taiwan are more secure than any importing countries without affirmative legal protection.

4.2. Employment Insecurity

As discussed in scholarly literature, employment security, as part of the decent work concept, comprises job security, which means losing job or job insecurity, and uneasy to find a new job or new labour market insecurity. Due to COVID-19, a massive number of formal workers have been jobless because several businesses and industries collapsed. On the other hand, research on reproductive work, specially IFDWs both in Taiwan and Malaysia of 26-selected media online, discovered a little bit of different employment insecurity.

Figure 3. COVID-19 and employment insecurity of IFDWs in Malaysia and Taiwan in 2020



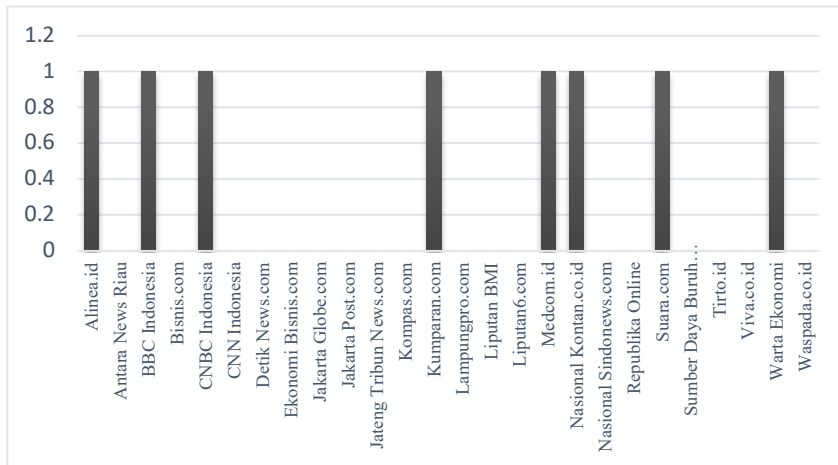
Source: Author Analysis (2020)

The illustration above depicts that employment insecurity, COVID-19 pandemic, and IFDWs were the issues that have caught the attention of several foreign and national online media, such as Alinea.id, AntaraNewsRiau, BBC Indonesia, CNBC Indonesia, DetikNews.com, JakartaPost.com, Kumparan.com, Suara.com, and Warta Ekonomi. In dealing with receiving countries, nearly all media paid much more attention

to Malaysia than Taiwan, but only a few media mentioned Taiwan like DetikNews.com, WartaEkonomi, and Suara.com.

Then, in terms of employment insecurity, losing jobs for IFDWs was meagre, as indicated in the figure below.

Figure 4. Job termination cases during COVID-19 outbreak in Malaysia and Taiwan 2020



Source: Author Analysis (2020)

The figure shows that 32 percent or 8 of 26 online media delivered a few cases of job termination. According to data, the impact of COVID-19 on job security (losing a job) among IFDWs in either Malaysia or Taiwan was rare. On the other hand, both Malaysia and Taiwan were likely to encounter labour market insecurity, which was an insufficient supply chain for informal workers.

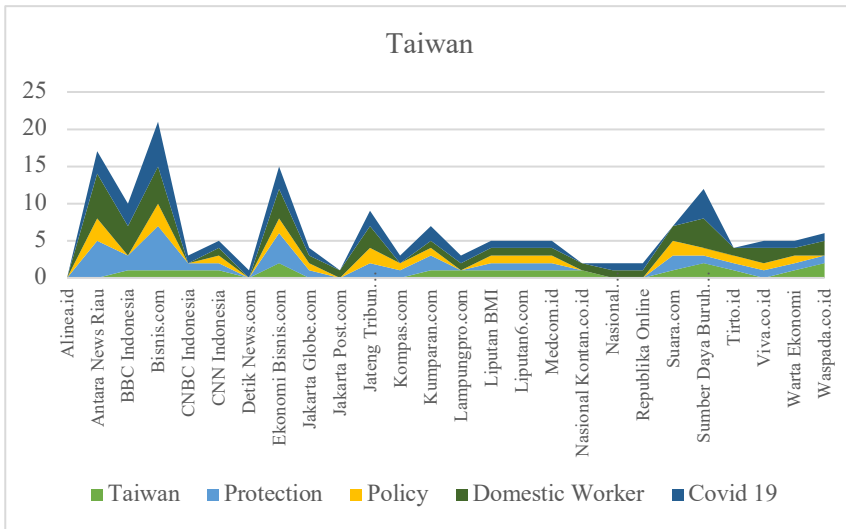
Most Asian countries have implemented a lockdown policy to stop spreading viruses at home by restricting inbound and outbound travel. In Malaysia, the government has immediately announced the Movement Control Order (MCO) to reduce human mobility and crowd. As a result, people in Malaysia are suggested to work, study, and do business remotely. The MCO policy has negatively affected the existing Indonesian informal migrant workers and IFDWs, either documented or undocumented. During the MCO, the workers suffered not only physically but also mentally because of the rise of xenophobia and repatriation campaigns against foreign workers in local social media (Wijaya, 2020). Thus, Indonesian migrant workers, mostly informal workers, returned home, and around 46,000 workers sailed to Indonesia through illegal water routes (A. Pinandita, 2020). In contrast to Malaysia, Taiwan authorities suggested the IFDWs not to return home, and the authority reimburses for tickets the workers already booked (Iswinarno & Tanjung, 2020). However, Taiwan authorities have banned foreigners from coming in unless diplomat, selected workers, and resident visa holders (Sebayang, 2020).

According to ILO, the Malaysian government addresses immediate responses to support industries and small businesses in facing a shortage of workers. For example, it allocates a subsidy for employers to pay salaries for six months (Mitra, 2020). Nevertheless, the subsidy would not have been accessed by IFDWs or undocumented Indonesian workers, frequently underpaid. The hardship condition in Malaysia discouraged several informal Indonesian workers from remaining stayed longer in Malaysia. Malaysian government seems to prevent foreign formal workers in small industries more than those who work informally.

4.3. Protection

Domestic migrant workers, predominantly females, are often excluded from legal and social protection by either receiving or sending countries. Online media reported that Malaysia performed more frequently than Taiwan concerning protection and policy issue for IFDWs during COVID-19, as described in the following figures.

Figure 5. Protection of Taiwan for Indonesian female domestic workers during COVID-19 in 2020



Source: Author Analysis (2020)

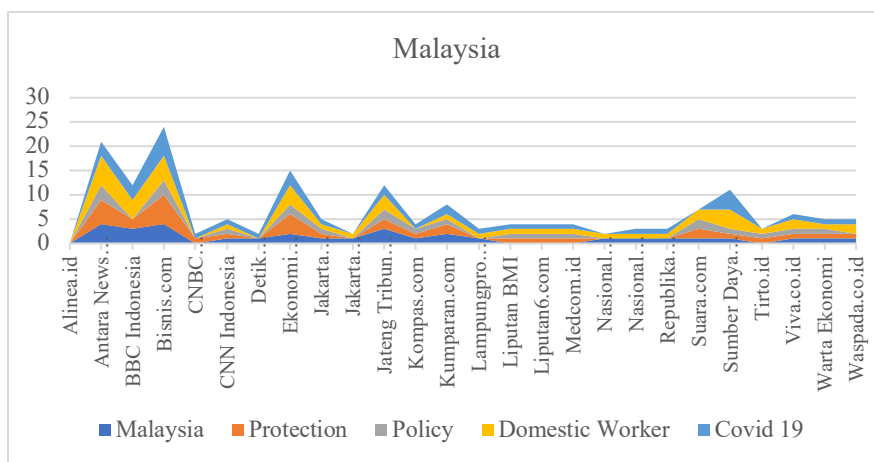
The data above indicate that COVID-19, domestic migrant workers, and policy were the top issues all online media. On the other hand, the figure informs that protection, policy, and Taiwan are lower than the three former issues. In terms of protection, Taiwan excluded workers from its national labour law and lacked legal protection for domestic migrant workers (Cheng, 1996). However, Taiwan revised its regulation system regarding

foreign domestic workers (Piper, 2004a). Wang, Hwang, and Ning (2018) argue that Taiwan has regulated wages and work hours of foreign domestic workers by establishing a labour contract; it should be negotiated in advance between the employer, the worker, the domestic and the foreign employment agencies. In this regard, foreign domestic workers are no longer excluded from national labour law of Taiwan.

Both Taiwan and Indonesia signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) on protecting migrant workers aimed to enhance the quality, protection, and welfare of the Indonesian migrant workers in all sectors, including domestic one (Bhwana, 2018; Purwanto, 2018). This agreement seems to drive Taiwan authorities in providing equal medical treatment for IFDWs in facing COVID-19. Wang, Chun, and Brook (2020) point out that Taiwan authority identifies the case of coronavirus for both its citizens and foreigners by developing an internet-based system to track travel history and monitor quarantine for the individuals at high risk. For example, the authorities isolate an undocumented Indonesian female care worker infected by a coronavirus in the hospital (B. S. and A. Pinandita, 2020). In the case of coronavirus, health protection is, to some extent, equal between citizens and foreigners, who are temporary guests or migrant workers.

On the other hand, in Malaysia, protection for either IFDWs or other informal workers was weak. The following figure reveals that the word of Malaysia appears more frequently regarding less protection for Indonesian migrant informal workers.

Figure 6. Protection of Malaysia for Indonesian female domestic workers during COVID-19 in 2020



Source: Author Analysis (2020)

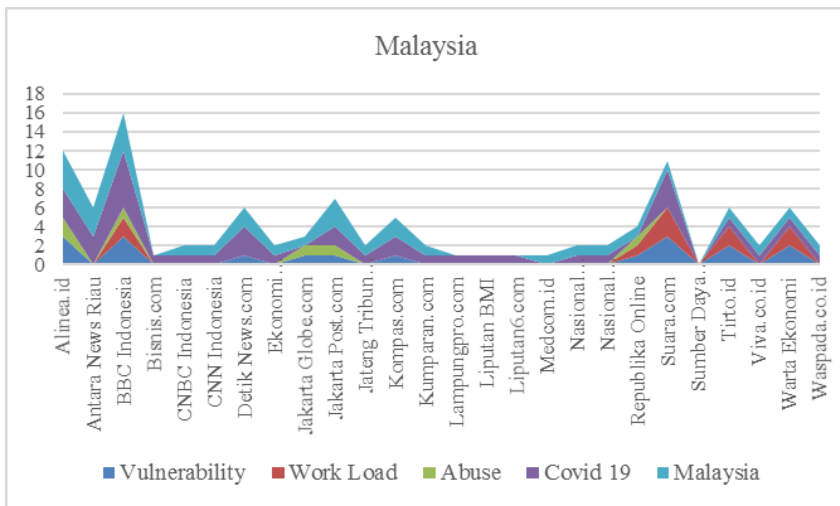
In Malaysia, it was difficult for IFDWs and other Indonesian informal migrant workers to access social protection during MCO, including health services. Those Indonesian informal migrant workers working as construction workers, factory workers, waitresses, and janitors were unable to access government assistance in primary livelihood and medicine. Then, the workers, in turn, contacted NGO and charity organizations alike to call for food aid. However, the Malaysian government allocated a certain amount of assistance for local workers only, excluding migrant workers, to survive such as rice, flour, sugar, and cooking oil. At the same time, the Indonesian embassy was not responsive to overcome the Indonesian migrant workers in need (Wijaya, 2020), whereas the Foreign Ministry of Indonesia had actively delivered logistical assistance, which was supposed to be a successful endeavour to prevent the workers from going home (A. Pinandita, 2020). In response to the hardship living condition of the Indonesian migrant workers, Commission I of the Indonesian House proposed the government to gradual repatriation (DPR-RI, 2020). By and large, foreign domestic workers remain excluded from having social protection access during MCO in Malaysia, such as food and health services.

4.4 Vulnerability

In numerous studies, female migrant domestic workers are commonly vulnerable to physical and mental abuses and economic exploitation. The workers are economically exploited due to several reasons. The first reason is the procedure and administration. The second one is a particular factor, where most workers live in their employers' houses. The last is the racial aspect closely related to the ethnic background (Williams, 2015). Moreover, the economic exploitation among female domestic workers is based on social class (Bullock, 2017) and state policy supporting high-level social class (Bernardino-costa, 2014; Campbell & Burgess, 2018; Piper & Uhlin, 2002).

The primary issues of economic exploitation resulting from the relationship between employers, who have high-level social class, and their overseas female domestic workers, structurally put into a low social class category, are workload and working hours. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the issues collected from online media are presented in the following figure.

Figure 7. The vulnerability of Indonesian female domestic workers in Malaysia in 2020



Source: Author Analysis (2020)

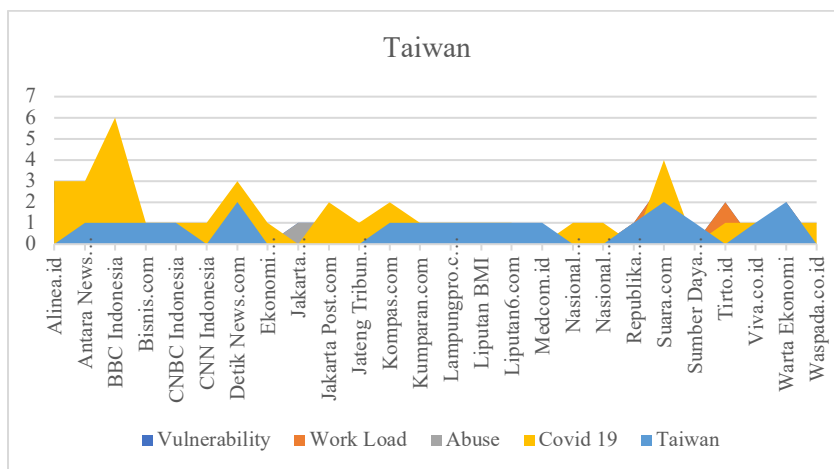
Figure 7 depicts that the case of workload is more frequent than abuse, but to some extent, the workload is lower than abuse, indicating that female domestic workers may not only be exploited but also be abused physically or mentally during COVID-19 in Malaysia. BBC Indonesia

(2020) reported that Malaysian authorities arrested several undocumented foreigners who mostly worked informally to ensure that they did not travel and spread the disease. Nevertheless, the detention endangered Malaysia for a potential pandemic outbreak in the detention camps (Popular, 2020). Prior to the pandemic, the raids are a means of systematically reducing unregistered foreign migrant workers employed in all Malaysian economic sectors (Mazlan, Manaf, Rahman, & Saad, 2017). Unfortunately, foreign domestic workers abused and ran away from their employers could be recognized as irregular workers and put into detention centers (Kaur, 2014). Therefore, the foreign female workers' vulnerabilities remain high during COVID-19 outbreak in Malaysia.

According to the Tenaganita, a Malaysian NGO providing advocacy services to foreign domestic workers has called for the Malaysian authorities to improve legal protection for female domestic workers (Saputro, 2020). In Malaysia, female migrant domestic workers are at high risk of various abuses such as working hours, minimum wage, freedom of expression, and precise dispute settlement mechanism (Saputro, 2020). In 2012, Tenaganita, the NGO activist for migrant workers, emphasized that Malaysian employers treated their domestic workers servants, utterly different from the workers. The rights of workers are guaranteed by the legal framework, while a servant relies on the mercy of employers (Kuppusamy, 2012).

Unlike Malaysia, IFDWs and most probably other informal workers in Taiwan, have suffered additional workload during the pandemic, as seen in the following figure.

Figure 8. The vulnerability of Indonesian female domestic workers in Taiwan 2020



Source: Author Analysis (2020)

According to the Warta Ekonomi report, the Indonesian caregiver in Taiwan must work harder to take care of additional elderly, about 40 or 50 people following the Taiwan authorities’ instruction to work from home (Prayogo, 2020). Before the pandemic, they used to take care of nine elderly (Prayogo, 2020). Besides, the Work From Home (WFH) policy, in which employers spend much time at home, is a disadvantage for many IFDWs in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong and elsewhere, the excessive workload had affected insufficient rest hours for many female domestic workers (Prayogo, 2020). Similarly, Sembiring (2020) argues that more than 50 percent of 50,000 domestic workers in Hong Kong have heavier workloads, cleaning chore and childcare. Therefore, Wang and Wu (2017) assert that domestic helpers (caregiver) for elder care may no longer sustain because several young female migrants are not interested in the demanding job of domestic helpers, especially elder care, leading to a severe shortage of domestic helpers stock in China. Lim and Oishi (1996) have identified that domestic helpers experienced various maltreatment, disproportionate workload, and extra household work. Therefore, the workers in Malaysia are more vulnerable physically during COVID-19, while in Taiwan the workers are mostly forced to work excessively.

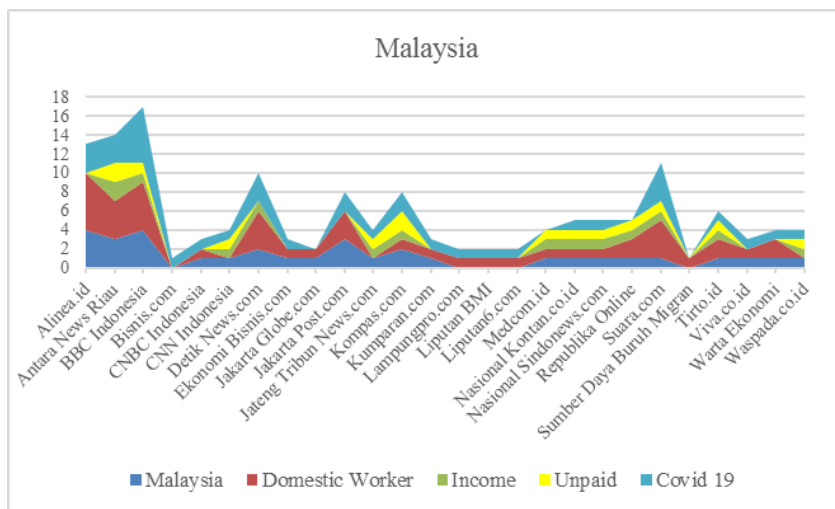
4.5. Income

The monthly salary of both domestic helpers or workers is not necessarily determined by working hours and heavy workload. According to the ILO, the salary received by the helpers or workers depends on the duration spent by the workers with the same family, the workers' nationality, and the degree of employers' satisfaction (Esim & Smith, 2004). In dealing with the domestic worker in Malaysia, employers deducted monthly salary because they had already paid all costs recruitment in advance containing training, visa, and travel (Kaur, 2014). Furthermore, Malaysian employers keep hired domestic workers' passports to prevent flight and limit their mobility or freedom (Kaur, 2014).

In terms of female migrant domestic workers in Taiwan, Indonesia and the Philippines, as two major sending countries, have successfully negotiated with Taiwan through diplomatic pressure to raise minimum remuneration for the workers (Chien, 2018). As a result, salary increased from NT \$15,850 to NT \$17,000 in 2015 despite lower than the regular minimum wage of NT \$22,000 (Chien, 2018). Then, Ministry of Labour of Taiwan has protected the rights and interests of foreign workers by enacting based on Employment Services Act in which both employer and foreign worker must agree to sign an affidavit of wages (C. Wang, Chung, Hwang, Ning, & Wang, 2018)

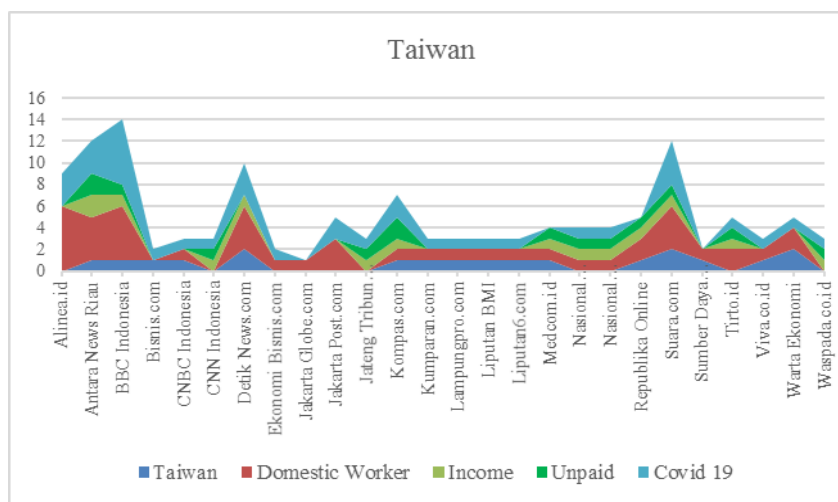
Unexpected COVID-19 hitting Malaysia and Taiwan have forced employers to severely deduct income for foreign workers, including female domestic workers. These following two illustrations show such a problem faced by nearly all IFDWs in Malaysia and Taiwan.

Figure 8. COVID-19-affected income of IFDWs in Malaysia of 2020



Source: Author Analysis (2020)

Figure 9. COVID-19-affected income of IFDWs in Taiwan of 2020



Source: Author Analysis (2020)

According to the BBC report, Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan were still paid during the COVID-19 outbreak, while they did not receive incentives for overtime work (Lumbanrau, 2020). In Malaysia, income insecurity was a severe issue among Indonesian migrant workers, either

male or female. The MCO policy between March 18th and 31st delayed payment for the workers. Perhaps, documented Indonesian migrant workers remain paid regularly with a lower amount. However, the daily- or weekly-paid workers have received any assistance from the authorities (Lumbanrau, 2020). In Sarawak, Malaysia, illegal Indonesian workers suffered from inadequate food supply (Yahya, 2020). Despite under uncertain conditions, few Malaysian employers of Sarawak paid salaries for Indonesian informal workers, but many did not (Waspada.co.id, 2020). The Indonesian Commission for Human Rights strongly recommended the Indonesian government to take immediate response to help Indonesian migrant workers in COVID-19-affected-recipient countries like Malaysia. In Malaysia, starvation would be a prominent threat for the Indonesian informal workers due to a lack of meal distribution during MCO (Hayatun, 2020).

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the impact of COVID-19 toward decent work of IFDWs, as covered by several online media, has resulted in various forms. More online media covered labour market insecurity in dealing with employment security, even though job sustainability for IFDWs was quite uncertain. Following the MCO policy enacted by the Malaysian government and the scrutiny procedure of Taiwan authorities to strictly control the influx of migrant workers, both countries may not have a new labour force in informal sectors. Despite having similar challenges of declining informal migrant workers, Malaysia would not quickly recover from the challenges because of hate speech, xenophobia, and repatriation petition, to which Malaysian citizens addressed to migrant workers.

In terms of protection, female migrant informal workers and citizens have equal treatment from Taiwan authorities to prevent coronavirus disease. An infected informal migrant worker would be quarantined in the hospital. Meanwhile, several Indonesia informal migrant workers found it difficult to access social protection in the form of primary livelihood and medicine provided by either Malaysian authorities or the Indonesian government. Therefore, to some extent, female migrant domestic workers, were included in the prevention program of Taiwan against COVID-19, whereas they remained excluded from having social protection in Malaysia.

Concerning vulnerability, female domestic workers were physically and mentally abused, also exploited in both receiving and sending countries. During the COVID-19 outbreak, they remained exploited and abused. The

case of exploitation occurred, as covered by selected online media in Taiwan. The workers in Taiwan had insufficient rest hours due to the heavier workload. For example, domestic helpers who used to care for nine elderly each day had to handle more people, about 40 to 50 persons during COVID-19. Meanwhile, Malaysian authorities applied a security approach to stop spreading the disease. They would detain foreign informal migrant workers who could not show legal work permits. Besides, female domestic workers were treated as servants instead of workers. Therefore, during COVID-19, physical and psychological abuse was a significant vulnerability of informal migrant workers, predominantly female domestic migrant workers.

In terms of income, both Malaysian and Taiwanese employers deducted their employees' salaries. Besides, some Indonesian informal migrant workers paid daily or weekly had not received food supply from Malaysian authorities or the Indonesian embassy.

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