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WOUNDING OR HEALING

THE AMBIVALENT ROLE OF RELIGION IN COPING MECHANISMS OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor of Philosophy aan
de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
prof.dr. J.J.G. Geurts,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie
van de Faculteit Religie en Theologie
op maandag 13 januari 2025 om 11.45 uur
in een bijeenkomst van de universiteit,
De Boelelaan 1105

door

Liliya Febrianty Kurniawati Wetangterah
geboren te Kupang, Indonesië

VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

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WOUNDING OR HEALING: THE AMBIVALENT ROLE OF RELIGION IN COPING MECHANISMS OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Abstract:

Human trafficking remains a significant issue in Indonesia, with East Nusa Tenggara being one of the provinces in Eastern Indonesia, reporting a notably high incidence of human trafficking cases. This study applied a lived religion approach to analyse the role of religion in the experiences of suffering and coping mechanisms among human trafficking victims. Data collection took place on Timor Island in East Nusa Tenggara province, where narratives were gathered through in-depth interviews with 19 human trafficking victims. Data analysis employed grounded theory methodology consisting of coding, conceptual categorization, and thematic interpretation to formulate a theory. This study found that religion significantly influences the entire coping process, encompassing events, coping strategies, meaning-making, and post-traumatic growth. The findings indicate that religion plays an ambivalent role, offering both positive and negative influences at various stages of coping. This research advocates for transformative Christian education as a response to human trafficking. As a contribution to human trafficking studies, this research provides evidence that human trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, exists and has profound impacts on victims, families, and communities. Understanding trauma and healing in the human trafficking context necessitates a comprehensive approach. For religious studies, this research emphasizes the importance of critically analysing religion's role in the context of human trafficking.

Key Words: Human Trafficking, Lived Religion, Coping, Religion, Indonesia

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PROLOGUE

The church is a community of wounded people who can help to heal each other. After engaging in human trafficking advocacy in 2014, I began to understand the church in this way. It was the day I witnessed a human trafficking victim who returned home from Malaysia with tuberculosis and terrible trauma. She sat silently, refusing to share her story, and she refused to be taken to the hospital. Then Maria, a former human trafficking victim who now works as a volunteer in the advocacy against human trafficking, entered the room, sat next to the victim, and hugged her. While Maria had been working as a domestic worker in Malaysia, she had been severely abused; the marks of torture were still visible on her body from head to toe. They both burst into tears. Maria encouraged her by saying, *“I have been through this too; I understand the pain.”* I and the other volunteers stepped back to give them both a safe space to mourn. Their conversation ended with Maria laying hands on the victim, blessing, and strengthening her with a prayer. Afterwards, the victim was willing to tell the story of her abuse and she agreed to be taken to the hospital.

Victims of human trafficking have gone through difficult times and even severe violence. In the midst of poverty and limited public facilities for healing, human trafficking victims find their own ways to empower and heal themselves. Religion is a central, sometimes the only, available and accessible coping tool they have. Encountering the wounds of the victims always prompts me to ask: How do the victims comprehend suffering? How do the victims heal themselves? Does the victim’s comprehension of suffering assist in their healing?

Moreover, as a lecturer teaching prospective religious teachers in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, I struggle with the gap between theology in daily life and institutional theology that emphasises dogma and ethics. The theological reflections of the victims of human trafficking that emerge from suffering and healing experiences should be an essential source for theology. A question that has always bothered me is how theology can learn from the experience of suffering and healing of victims of human trafficking ? This question aims to recognize the suffering experienced by human trafficking victims, acknowledge their resilience in overcoming adversity, and explore the role of religion in both processes.

When I had the opportunity to pursue doctoral studies, I decided it was time to answer the question. Began my studies with the consciousness that a study of theodicy need to provided

not only philosophical or theoretical explanation but contribute to healing process (Horsthuis, 2016). Developing an empirical theodicy is essential, and it needs to be based on the experiences of ordinary people at the grassroots level. A theology of suffering should begin by listening to the voices of victims in order to reconcile experiences of suffering with the experience of faith (Rambo, 2015). Although it is uncommon to talk about the memory of wounds in some cultures, including Indonesia, as people tend to avoid and (try to) forget experiences of suffering, conversations about the memory of wounds are important to raise public awareness and possibly prevent further suffering (B. Pakpahan, 2008). A theology of suffering not only amplifies the voices of the marginalised but also promotes the processes of healing and restoration.

My journey of how to integrate the suffering experiences of human trafficking victims into theology revealed a different aspect of religion. Religion encompasses more than just doctrine and institutional; it also involves meaning-making process that shapes people's thoughts and actions. As a meaning-making process, religion is influenced by various variables, including personal experiences, cultural influences, and socio-political circumstances. I also realised that religion plays an ambivalent role in human trafficking therefore religion should provide enough space to hear the voices of the grassroots people, instead of rushing to identify and judge them. In addition, through this research, I have discovered a new purpose for my life: the aim of theology is social transformation; what I teach in the classroom must be congruent with grassroots outreach. Transforming a society into a resilient community requires comprehending and acknowledging people's suffering experiences.

Beginning my studies in 2019, living away from family, adjusting to a new situation, cold weather, unfamiliar food, and a different educational culture, struggling to improve my language skills, surviving the coronavirus pandemic alone in Amsterdam, and working in a supermarket has given me some insights that allow me to relate to the participants' experience. Undoubtedly, the participants' experience is considerably more challenging than mine. Fortunately, the stories of resiliency, toughness, and endurance shared by the participants inspired me to persevere during the challenging times.

*Watch your life and doctrine closely.
Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.
1 Timothy 4:16*

SUMMARY

WOUNDING OR HEALING THE AMBIVALENT ROLE OF RELIGION IN COPING MECHANISMS OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

This research examines the role of religion in contexts of human trafficking. Through employing a lived religion approach, the current study gathers narratives from human trafficking victims. In particular, this study focuses on the narratives of victims of human trafficking in Timor-Indonesia who had worked in the migrant worker sector. It focuses on investigating the role of religion in the experiences of exploitation and violation, in the coping mechanisms and in the post-traumatic growth, and the implications for religious education.

The initial chapter comprehensively introduces the main themes and framework of this research. It begins by explaining the definition of human trafficking and then provides a brief overview of the human trafficking situation in East Nusa Tenggara. This is followed by explaining lived religion as the chosen approach, then outlines the main theoretical framework, and presents the main research questions guiding the study. This chapter also explains the concepts of delimitation and limitation, which are essential to prevent the research from becoming overly broad.

Chapter Two provides a 'Systematic Review of Research on Human Trafficking and Religion', to investigate research development, and identify gaps. This systematic review gathered all articles published prior to the year 2000 from the following four databases: Atla Religion Databases (Ebsco), Apa PsycInfo (Ebsco), Scopus, and Philosopher's Index (Ovid). The selection procedure resulted in 54 articles on human trafficking and religion. The results were then classified into three distinct groups. The first category contains articles describing how religion is utilised to justify and benefit traffickers. The second category consists of articles explaining religion's role from the victim's side. Religion plays a role in the coping, healing, and reintegration processes. The final category contains articles that examine the bystander role of religion. Through its findings, this systematic review demonstrates the ambivalent role of religion in human trafficking.

The subsequent chapters are more descriptive in nature. Chapter Three explores the methodology employed in the 'Empirical Research'. This study applied in-depth interviews to gather data and interviewed 19 participants who live on the island of Timor, Indonesia. Grounded theory was applied as a data analysis method, and the data analysis revealed six main categories: the recruitment–placement process; violence and exploitation experience; coping means; perspective about God; perspective on suffering; growth in the aftermath.

Chapter Four, which is entitled 'The Fragile Agency and the Role of Religion', explains the participants' experience of exploitation from recruitment to repatriation. Participants' experiences with exploitation and violence alienated them from themselves, their families, and society. Religion plays a significant role in this alienation. The findings of this chapter demonstrate that participants working as Indonesian migrant workers are vulnerable to human trafficking. Moreover, what emerges from the chapter is that human trafficking is also a religious issue and that religion can play a role in the alienation encountered by the participants.

The discussion in Chapter Five on 'Coping with Adversity' describes how participants cope with their experience of being trafficked. This section focuses on the coping strategies employed by participants to endure experiences of alienation. Religion, as the primary belief system, serves as the participants' main point of reference when determining coping tools. Prayer, religious songs, prayer teams, and dreams are religious coping tools that assist participants in enduring and interpreting their adversity. In addition to religion, according to the findings culture and community also influence the participants' coping strategies.

While Chapter Five describes participants' religious coping strategies, Chapter Six on 'The Meaning of Suffering', describes the participants' meaning-making processes, or how the participants comprehend suffering. Participants generally view suffering as related to God, although with various interpretations. The first understanding recognises suffering as being related to God which humans must accept without question. The second interpretation also sees human suffering as related to God, designed by God to punish humans for their errors. The subsequent understanding interprets suffering as a gift from God, as a test to see how close humans are to God. Finally, there is a realisation that their suffering results from the human trafficking mafia in recruiting migrant labourers. This section's findings clarify that religion and culture are the primary references for the participants' meaning-making processes. Most participants viewed their suffering as a personal relationship with God and were unaware of its

connection to the human trafficking syndicate. This meaning then influences the participants' engagement in social transformation. Participants who realised that the trafficking mafia was responsible for their suffering chose to be actively engaged in social transformation. On the other hand, participants who viewed suffering as an intimate relationship with God preferred to remain silent. Family and community support contribute to this difference. Participants who were involved in a supportive community, such as the advocacy movement against human trafficking, were able to comprehend their suffering more critically and clearly. Therefore, social transformation is a crucial component to constructive meaning making in the context of human trafficking. This chapter's findings demonstrate that a religious meaning of suffering can produce different interpretations and lead to different actions and decisions. It also demonstrates the ambivalent role of religion in the participants' meaning-making process.

Chapter Seven on 'Growing in Suffering' analyses participants' post-traumatic growth. This study applied five domains of post-traumatic growth: personal fortitude, interpersonal relationships, new opportunities, life appreciation, and spiritual and existential transformation. An analysis of the five domains revealed the ways in which, and the extent to which, each participant demonstrated indicators of growth. The study findings indicate that participants' comprehension of suffering, which is closely related to their comprehension of God, facilitates their personal development. Most participants' growth is unrelated to their wish to participate in social transformation. Few participants displayed signs of development or were motivated to participate in social transformation. Religious significance influences the development of participants, but it can also act as an obstacle to participation in social transformation. Community support and engagement in advocacy provide novel experiences that enable some participants to generate religious meaning that nurtures their personal development and encourages them to be actively involved in social transformation.

The discussion of Chapter Eight on 'Advocacy as Adult Christian Transformational Education in The Context of Human Trafficking' builds on the findings of the previous chapters. Support and acceptance from communities, such as anti-trafficking advocacy movements, enable some participants to produce a more critical analysis of their experience and religious meaning, encouraging participant involvement in social transformation. The function of advocacy is in line with transformative Christian education, which encourages adults to comprehend reality and religious meaning critically. In comprehending advocacy as Christian adult transformation education in the context of human trafficking, advocacy is understood as a process to empower

victims, victims' families, and communities. It is an empowering process that enables victims, their families, and communities to analyse reality in a critical manner and develop a more profound understanding of religious meaning.

The final chapter, Chapter Nine, forms the conclusion, explaining the implications of the study and suggestions for future research. For human trafficking research, this study clearly demonstrates that participants experience exploitation and abuse from recruitment to repatriation, which has a profound impact on victims, families, and communities. Understanding trauma and recovery in the context of human trafficking requires a comprehensive approach. In terms of implications for religious study, this research found that religion plays a vital role in the events, in the coping tools adopted, in meaning-making processes, and post-traumatic growth but that it also plays an ambivalent role. Further research might concentrate on intergenerational trauma that investigates the impact of trafficking on child victims. Additional topics involve community trauma, researching community perspectives on trafficking victims, and identifying obtainable community support for victims. In terms of research methods, the study found that since religion does not only emphasise cognitive expression, future research could involve singing, music, dancing, painting, and other art forms as research tools.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This current chapter serves as an introduction, explaining the background of the research, including the main concepts, and offering an outline of the dissertation. The explanation of the main issues begins with a concept of human trafficking, which serves as the central concern in this dissertation. Following that, a brief overview of the human trafficking situation in East Nusa Tenggara serves as a research setting. Related to religion, this chapter presents lived religion as the approach that was employed.

As an introduction, this chapter also elucidates the main research question that directs the research. The main research questions of this study are further explained through a series of sub-questions. The following chapters of this dissertation serve as responses to these sub-questions. Furthermore, since the broad nature of the issue encompasses religion and human trafficking, this research determines delimitation and limitations to ensure focused research

1.2 Background of The Research

1.2.1 Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a widespread global phenomenon that poses significant challenges to societies worldwide. The Global Estimates 2021 report indicated that around 50 million individuals, or constituting approximately one in every 150 people, are indicated to be in a condition of contemporary enslavement, encompassing instances of coerced employment or compelled matrimonial unions (ILO, 2022). The report highlights the significant proportion of children and women, comprising more than half (54%), who are affected by modern slavery. Despite the presence of slavery in both prosperous and destitute nations across the globe, it is noteworthy that Asia and the Pacific region have the largest population of individuals currently subjected to modern forms of enslavement (ILO, 2022).

The terms ‘human trafficking’ and ‘modern slavery’ are sometimes used interchangeably or in conjunction with one another. Human trafficking expert Weitzer (2015), uses the word “human trafficking” to emphasise the procedures of recruiting, transfer, and placement, whereas “slavery” refers to the working conditions and surroundings. McCarthy (2014), a political scientist who specialises in human trafficking, notes that recognising human trafficking as a

new type of modern slavery underlines the history of exploitation of vulnerable populations in industries with a high need for cheap labour.

Human trafficking is defined as “trafficking in persons” in the Palermo Agreement (2000), a human rights protocol wwe by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner and initially signed by 120 nations (United Nations, 2000). The term trafficking in person in the Palermo protocol refers to three key elements: acts, means, and purposes (Bauloz et al., 2021). *Acts* refer to action: the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receiving of people. *Means* relates to how it is done: through threat or use of force, deception, coercion, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, abduction, fraud, giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person. *Purpose* is related to exploitation: at a minimum, the exploitation of others through prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or organ removal (United Nations, 2000). The protocol traces its roots back to the League of Nations’ anti-slavery conference in 1924 and the World Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840 (Nestorova, 2019). It is an effort to comprehend human trafficking beyond prostitution, which includes forced labour and other forms of exploitation such as labour exploitation.

The practice of individuals migrating from one geographic region to another in pursuit of economic opportunities is a prevalent phenomenon. Likewise, engaging in employment as a migrant, either domestically or internationally, is considered lawful. Nonetheless, should there be any exploitation during this activity which violates existing legislation or harms the well-being of the labourer, the action can be classified as human trafficking.

Exploitation is the main element of human trafficking; therefore, becoming a victim of human trafficking is likely to be a traumatic experience. There are numerous stages of exploitation, from recruitment to placement through repatriation. Thus, the victims of human trafficking will have gone through several layers of violence by the time they reintegrate into their families and communities (C. Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017). Human trafficking has adverse effects on the victim, the victim’s family, and the community at large (Greenbaum, 2017a).

On a personal level, human trafficking adversely affects psychological, physical, and mental health which requires serious treatment (Cannon et al., 2018; Oram et al., 2012). The treatment

of victims of human trafficking must take into account that each form of exploitation can have distinct outcomes. Different types of exploitation and violence lead to different types of trauma so the trauma experiences of trafficking victims cannot be generalised (Salami et al., 2018).

Human trafficking affects the victims' relation to family. Migrating and working away from family is a choice with consequences. Research on the intergenerational transmission of trauma demonstrates that families, particularly children, benefit economically from remittances, although prolonged separations might cause emotional suffering (Juabsamai & Taylor, 2018). The research also found that the victims' traumatic experiences disrupt relationships with their families. Other research on victims of sex trafficking indicates that shame and guilt discourage victims from reuniting with their families (Pandey et al., 2018). The victim's willingness to reunite with their family is contingent on family acceptance. Acceptance by the family is a crucial aspect of the reintegration process. When a victim's home is no longer a secure place where they feel accepted, it is more probable that they can be exploited again if they refuse to reunite with their families. Moreover, the family's acceptance also influences the reconstruction of the victim's sense of self (Le, 2017).

At the community level, research on human trafficking and public health has been established to investigate the impact of human trafficking on a community or society. According to Greenbaum, there are numerous ways in which human trafficking affects a community or civilization (Greenbaum, 2017b). In practice, the state taxes cover the costs of victims' recovery from the effects of trauma and their physical health and the costs of legal procedures against the perpetrators. Similarly, the community loses the production of human trafficking victims and their future generations due to their exploitation and violence. The community can view the exploitation and violence victims suffer as a normal process resulting from their actions. Moreover, the prevalence of human trafficking can influence public opinion to become indifferent to human rights, with the victims being solely to blame.

Human trafficking is a significant crime that exerts a profound influence on the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. The increase in cases of human trafficking in specific locations indicates the existence of a particularly high level of vulnerable individuals, families, and communities. Moreover, the prevalence of human trafficking in an area heavily influenced by religion prompts inquiries into the role of religion in these vulnerable circumstances.

1.2.2 Human Trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara

The vulnerability of migrant workers to human trafficking is a significant issue in Southeast Asian nations such as the Philippines and Indonesia (Ford et al., 2012). In the Philippines, working as a migrant worker overseas remains a major government initiative since migrant workers have been shown to earn significant remittances for the state. Women are the main segment of migrant workers; raised in a patriarchal society, women are expected to make sacrifices and assume familial responsibilities. (Jabar & Jespersen, 2024). However, the strong desire to work abroad is not matched by adequate protections, as the process of becoming a migrant worker remains vulnerable to the risks of human trafficking.

In Southeast Asia, Indonesia is a source for human trafficking and also a destination country for human traffickers. According to Tirtosudarmo (2013), an Indonesian researcher on the history of Indonesian migrant workers, migration out of Indonesia for employment is not a new phenomenon. After the declaration of independence, there has been a notable phenomenon of voluntary migration by persons to nations such as Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. However, notably after the 1970s, there was an increase in international migration of unskilled labour, mainly to Malaysia and Saudi Arabia (Tirtosudarmo & Mulyani, 2013).¹

After noticing an increase in international migrant workers, particularly those migrating to Middle Eastern countries, the Indonesian government began paying serious attention to migration and migration legislation to establish the formation of policy in the mid-1980s. Tirtosudarmo (2013) emphasises that sending Indonesian workers to work abroad was a way to gain economic benefits and at the same time maintain the country's stability. Up to the present day, the government has continued to transfer Indonesian migrant workers abroad.

In 2004, the Indonesian government issued Indonesian statute number 39/2004 concerning the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers Abroad, which mandates in Article 94 paragraphs (1) and (2) the establishment of the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers. The statute was updated in law number 18 in November 2017, concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers. Two years later in

¹ From the beginning of independence, work migration within and outside the country was independent migration that did not involve the government. In the 1970s, the government started the Inter-Regional Inter-Employment Program (*Program Antarkerja Antar daerah-AKAD*) and Inter-Country Inter-Employment programs (*Program Antar Kerja Antar Negara-AKAN*), and since then the placement of Indonesian migrant workers abroad has involved the private sector.

2019, the statute was renewed by Presidential Regulation Number 90 concerning the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection. Changes to the regulations for the protection of Indonesian migrant workers were subsequently implemented in 2021 with the issuance of government regulation number 59.

Working as a migrant worker is not considered human trafficking as long as the process concerns migrant workers' rights and assures their protection. However, according to my research, the Minister of Politics, Law, and Security, Muhamad Mahfud Mahmodin, stated that in the period from 2019 to 2021, there were 1331 people documented as victims of human trafficking, with 97 percent or around 1291 victims being women and children (*Kementrian Pemberdayaan Perempuan Dan Perlindungan Anak, 2022*). Most of the victims of human trafficking are migrant workers. The ministry acknowledged that the basis of the problem is quite complicated, including poverty, low education, limited career possibilities, and local culture, so the temptation of labouring abroad leads many victims to be exploited. Furthermore, migrant workers are vulnerable to human trafficking due to a lack of legal protection in the region or host country. Excessive working hours, a lack of written contracts, and unpaid salaries are among the consequences that indicate migrant workers are vulnerable or subject to trafficking, with some organisations even withholding identity documents and threatening migrant workers with violence to keep them in forced labour.

The vulnerability of domestic workers does not only occur abroad but also in Indonesia. The Indonesian government has yet to pass a draft law protecting domestic workers. Since 2014, a legislative proposal to regulate the protection of domestic workers in Indonesia has been submitted to the House of Representatives but has not been officially implemented into law. The conditions reinforce the vulnerability of domestic workers within Indonesia. Migrant workers are vulnerable to human trafficking due to a lack of protection.

East Nusa Tenggara, a province in Eastern Indonesia, has been identified as having a high number of human trafficking cases since 2014 (Winadya, 2019). East Nusa Tenggara is an archipelago province located in the eastern region of Indonesia, sharing borders with Timor Leste and Australia. Previously colonised by the Portuguese and the Dutch, the predominant religious affiliations of the people of East Nusa Tenggara are Christian Catholic and Protestant. In East Nusa Tenggara, poverty is a primary motivation for people to work as migrant workers within the country and in neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

The slow circulation of money in the village, a patriarchal culture, traditional agricultural patterns, a lack of school facilities, and a lack of economic prospects cause many people to leave home and work as migrant workers (Wetangterah, 2018). Migrant labourers from East Nusa Tenggara are in high demand since they are reputed to be hardworking, obedient, and willing to work for a low wage (Li, 2017).

Human trafficking is commonly referred to or understood as modern slavery (McCarthy, 2014). Back to past, Timor has had a history of slavery since colonial times, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as narrated by Hans Hägerdal (Hägerdal, 2010). However, slavery existed in Timor before colonial times due to conflict and war between the princedoms. Timor is a community which was fragmented in ethnic and linguistic terms and divided into a large number of minor princedoms. In an assault, it was common for the older villagers to be killed while the others became the slaves of prominent warriors. In other situations, if the older people were kept alive, they owed their lives to the captors and subsequent masters.

Historically, slavery in Timor is related to the demand for labour supply, land availability, and power status. Hägerdal explains that Sandalwood was the initial reason the Dutch East India Company (VOC) intervened on the island of Timor. The VOC required enslaved people to maximize profit from this, and in seeking them out, the VOC took advantage of the conflict of the princedoms. The conflict between the princedoms resulted in many numbers of enslaved people, and the minor princedoms that tended to lean heavily on Dutch support regularly gave enslaved people as part of yearly gifts of homage. Due to the increasing demand for enslaved people, the VOC gathered the enslaved people from surrounding places such as Rote, Sabu, and Solor.

In his account, Hägerdal did not mention clearly and precisely the correlation between religion, Christianity, and slavery. He does emphasise that even though officials in the East Indies purported to uphold Calvinist morals, in reality, enslaved people were often kept as concubines of VOC employees (Hägerdal, 2010). On the other side, Hägerdal does give the example of slave woman being manumitted and baptised in December 1681, who subsequently married a VOC employee. Moreover, one of the effects of slavery was the religious segregation between Catholics and Protestants in Timor which can be seen on the political map today. Besides the local authorities and the VOC, pirates also played an essential role in slavery in Timor

(Sholihah et al., 2019). Since the slave trade had been banned by the Dutch Colonial State (successor to the VOC) in 1818, pirates carried out the trade in secret to avoid monitoring by the colonial government, so the movement of enslaved people became more vulnerable. The lack of resistance to the slave trade was a reason for the continuation of the slave trade. Local rules, Europeans, and pirates were the parties who essentially contributed to the slave trade in Timor.

The phenomenon of slavery persists as a reality experienced by the people of Timor, although today it takes on a different face or form. The existence of this situation raises questions about the relationship of religion to the context of human trafficking and its role in the lives of those who are victims. The victims are, of course, the primary source for answering these questions. It is to the theological approach of this research that the next section will turn.

1.2.3 Lived religion

According to Knibbe and Kupari (2020), lived religion is an approach to religious study pioneered by scholars in religion and sociology. Focus on how ordinary people practice, experience, and express their relationship to the sacred or spiritual daily. Lived religion is defined as the transcending patterns of action and meaning that emerge from and contribute to people's interactions with the sacred in daily life (Ganzevoort and Roeland, 2014).

The aim of this approach is beyond the study of religion solely through the perspective of texts and institutions, recognising that religion encompasses multiple dimensions. Pargament (2001) explains the multidimensional nature of religion by stating that religion includes several dimensions, such as cognitive processes, emotional experiences, behavioural manifestations, and interpersonal relationships (Pargament, 2001). Similarly, Ganzevoort expresses the same viewpoint that religion should be understood comprehensively, beyond beliefs and rituals but also including subjective experiences, interpretations, and behavioural manifestations (Ganzevoort, 1998). In line with them, Paloutzian (2017) further explains the comparable significance, where the multidimensionality of religion includes cognitive aspects (religious ideas), emotional aspects (religious sentiments), and behavioural aspects (religious practices) (Paloutzian, 2017).

Lived religion focuses not just on individuals but on communities. It is essential to note that the community plays a significant role in shaping the individual's experience. Religion is a result of social construction that occurs in a dynamic context. Religion encompasses personal and cultural dimensions that significantly affect individuals' social and personal spheres. Lived religion acknowledges that people construct their religious worldview in connection to others (McGuire, 2008). The sharing of one's experience of the sacred occurs within the community.

As a religious study based on everyday experience, lived religion provides a space for marginalised voices to be heard (Ammerman, 2016; Dillen, 2020). Human life experiences are diverse and dynamic, as is the perception of those experiences. The same event might have diverse meanings for different people. While it can be argued that dogma and rituals of religious institutions are social constructs in specific periods and circumstances, the diversity and dynamics of human experience can be incompatible with religious institutions' dogmas or rituals (R. R. Ganzevoort, 1998a). Lived religion allows space for such diversity and dynamic experiences, which includes those of marginalised people who are often forgotten or overlooked by religious institutions.

Kwok, an Asian feminist theologian, emphasises that one of the Asian theological challenges is to engage with the experience of grassroots, uneducated, and lower-class people (Kwok, 2000). Human trafficking victims experience two forms of marginalisation. The victims of human trafficking are ordinary people who live at the grassroots. It is uncommon for Indonesians to relate their stories of sorrow, illness, or tragedy. Indonesians tend to conceal their sorrow (B. J. Pakpahan, 2017). As a result, victims of human trafficking are silenced and forgotten. Through the applied lived religion approach, this research answers the challenges of providing a space to hear and learn from the victims of human trafficking and their experience. The victims of human trafficking as ordinary people on the margins become a subject and centre of religious study.

This study gathered narratives from human trafficking victims as a marginalized community at the grassroots level. The study participants were human trafficking victims who identified as religious and resided in religious contexts. All participants are affiliated with Christian churches and live in the Christian community. This study investigates the spiritual experiences

of victims as ordinary individuals affiliated with a church within a primarily Christian community.

1.2.4 The Victim

This research prefers to use the term victims rather than survivors. The term victim is derived from the Latin *victima*, a sacrificial animal (Fröchtling, 2004). Fröchtling describes a victim as one who has either lost their life due to a violent act(ion) or a violent structure or who has escaped, is biologically alive or shattered and alive. The victims are the people who are the object of violence and tend to avoid telling the story of their suffering; they cannot articulate the experience of suffering. On the other hand, the term survivor is derived from the Anglo-French *survivre* and from the Latin *supervivere* (*super+vivere*), meaning to live (Merriam-Webster, 2011). According to Derrida, survivor means “over living” or “living on” (Rambo, 2010).

A survivor is a person who can articulate the experience of suffering and continues their life, but it does not mean the trauma is gone. In the trauma context, the trauma is not isolated to an event but an ongoing crisis of living. Furthermore, within the framework of East Nusa Tenggara, human trafficking arises from unjust social and economic systems. In the absence of socio-economic justice, victims persist as victims. This thesis uses the term "victim" to underscore the enduring consequences of trauma and the necessity of accessible healing resources for victims. In conclusion, recognising that a person has become a survivor does not mean abolishing their existence as a victim. In this research, the term victim will be used to emphasise the existence of a victim and to appreciate the struggle to overcome the suffering.

1.2.5 The Main Theory and the Main Research Questions

According to Pargament (2001), people tend to seek solace in religion during times of crisis as a means of coping. Religion is a prevalent coping technique due to its available nature as an orientation system, which offers individuals a sense of purpose during difficult times. Religion has a significant role in various dimensions of coping, which include the experience of the traumatic event, the application of coping strategies, the process of constructing meaning, and the outcome.

Alongside ideas of coping, when dealing with issues of human trafficking, it is also, as articulated by Herman, essential to have an understanding of trauma and the subsequent healing

process as part of the interconnected framework (Herman, 2015). The primary outcome of trauma, as recognised by Herman, is the breakdown of essential human relationships. Individuals who experience traumatic experiences frequently demonstrate a sense of alienation from their environment, as the psychological consequences of such life events tend to compromise the foundational framework of their self-identity. This impairment has the potential to undermine the intricate systems of attachment and meaning that play a crucial role in facilitating an individual's connection to their community. Likewise, it is crucial to understand the concept of healing in the context of interpersonal dynamics, as the healing process requires establishing significant connections with individuals.

Human trafficking is a traumatic life event due to the exploitation and violence experienced by the victim. The consequences of human trafficking affect not only the victim but also the family and community (Greenbaum, 2017a). This research describes human trafficking as an adverse life event and investigates the role religion has within this context.

The main research question is thus formed as follows: How does religion affect the suffering and healing of victims of human trafficking, and what are the implications for empowerment and prevention through Christian education?

In order to address this main question, a series of sub-questions were identified to guide the research:

1. What is the role of religion in the suffering experiences of the victims of human trafficking?
2. What role does religion play in victims' coping with human trafficking?
3. What is the role of religion in the way victims of human trafficking perceive suffering, and how does this perspective influence the process of growth in the aftermath?
4. What is the role of Christian education in human trafficking, based on victims' experiences?

To answer the main research question, this dissertation consists of several chapters. The next chapter, Chapter Two, discusses the role of religion in human trafficking based on a systematic review of academic literature to identify existing literature and the state of knowledge. Chapter Three introduces the empirical research in terms of methodology, geographical context, and the field research process.

Chapter Four explores the research findings about the participants' experience of exploitation and violence, as well as the significance of religion in these experiences. This chapter is linked to the first sub-question. In order to answer the second sub-question, Chapter Five discusses the religious coping tools applied by participants during difficult times. Prayer, religious songs, prayer meetings, and dreams became the main coping tools for participants in facing life's adversities. Furthermore, the analysis of the third sub-question is explained in two chapters: Chapters Six and Seven. Chapter Six describes the meaning-making process of participants, how participants make meaning of their suffering, and the role of religion—chapter Seven figures out whether participants' understanding of suffering facilitates their growth in the aftermath.

Moreover, in response to the fourth sub-question, Chapter Eight explores the role of Christian education in the context of human trafficking. Based on the participants' experience of suffering, coping, and the growth process, this thesis offers advocacy as a transformative Christian education in the context of human trafficking. As an educator responsible for training future religious teachers, the researcher offers the this chapter to ensure that religious education institutions can also serve as a means of transformation for the victims, families, and communities. The final chapter, Chapter Nine, provides the conclusion of this dissertation.

1.2.6 Research Delimitation and Limitation

The systematic study in Chapter Two shows that the issue of religion and human trafficking is broad and complex, encompassing various aspects. Hence, this study delimits focus to investigating the correlation between religion and human trafficking, specifically from the victims' perspective, with a particular emphasis on religious coping.

Related to limitation, this study interviewed the small number of participants and the sole representative of a single religious denomination in East Nusa Tenggara. Since the theme of this research is traumatic experience, some of the participant recruitment process was assisted by a local pastor. The local pastor facilitated and established trust among the participants, increasing their willingness to participate in the interview. However, it is acknowledged that the presence of a pastor in the interview process may have influenced the outcome of the interview.

1.3 Conclusion

The motivation behind this research derives from the prevalence of human trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. This research employs the lived religion approach to provide a victim's perspective on the issue of human trafficking and religion. Investigating the role of religion on the suffering experience and coping process of human trafficking victims. The following chapter addresses the development and mapping of research studies related to human trafficking and religion using a systematic review.

CHAPTER TWO: SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND RELIGION

2.1 Introduction

A systematic review study collects empirical evidence that appropriates certain criteria to answer a specific research question (Higgins & Green, 2008). It identifies the existing literature and state of knowledge in a particular field, evaluates the quality of previous research, and maps the development of an issue. Through a systematic review, this chapter focuses on analysing research development related to human trafficking and religion, also identifying the gap.

The current chapter began with an overview of the systematic review of studies on human trafficking. Following the method description included keywords, time frame, and screening process. Fifty-four articles were generated after the screening process, focusing on the issue of religion and human trafficking. The fifty-four articles were classified into three categories: religion and the trafficker, religion and the victim of human trafficking, and bystander. This systematic review reveals a lack of studies on human trafficking and religion utilising field research, as well as the scarcity of research from the victims' perspective.

2.2 Systematic Review of Research on Human Trafficking

There have been numerous prior studies that employ systematic reviews with regard to human trafficking. Russell (2018) undertook a research synthesis of human trafficking literature in academic journals from 2000–2014. According to Russell, there is a demand for more research involving empirical research on human trafficking and organ trafficking as well as research relating to fundamental need of men and boys as victims. While for theoretical studies, there is still a need for research that organises, predicts, and explains the processes that lead to trafficking (Russell, 2018). Another study focused on the theme of human trafficking and social work between 2000 and 2017, which found more literature focusing on sex trafficking than other forms of trafficking and a lack of evidence-based empirical research (Okech et al., 2018). The research also set out recommendations for social work education. Furthermore, systematic reviews related to anti-human trafficking campaigns found there is an urgent need for evaluations of anti-trafficking social marketing campaigns. The evaluation aims to identify

which tools are practical and to establish a basis for future campaigns (Szablewska & Kubacki, 2018).

In the health field, the systematic reviews of human trafficking emphasise the major impact on health. A systematic research related to the health consequences of human trafficking found sexual exploitation has been linked to violence and a variety of major health issues (Cannon et al., 2018; Oram et al., 2012). In addition, a systematic review of exit and post-exit intervention programmes (psychological, health, and mental health) for survivors of human trafficking reveals that the impact of human trafficking are substantial, have a long-term impact on victims health, and require serious assistance (Dell et al., 2019). In accordance with these findings, there are systematic reviews that highlight the importance of education for care providers and facilitators for victims of human trafficking to better understand the situations and the needs of victims (Albright et al., 2020; Fraley et al., 2020). Another study filled a research gap in therapeutic interventions for victims of human trafficking by synthesising evidence from a similar patient population: namely therapeutic interventions for survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence (Menon et al., 2020). That study conclusions reveal the importance of culturally specific group therapy, the central role of survivor empowerment, and the overwhelming focus on mental health.

Besides the health field, previous studies have indicated that sex trafficking themes have dominated systematic reviews of human trafficking. The most vulnerable groups in sex trafficking are children. A systematic review evaluating sex trafficking aftercare and support services explains the risk factors for children and their vulnerabilities to sex trafficking (Franchino-Olsen, 2021). In addition, there are systematic reviews concerning children that investigate the application of human behaviour theory to domestic child sex trafficking (Twis & Shelton, 2018). A systematic review related to sex trafficking in an armed conflict setting in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East pictures women and girls as highly vulnerable to human trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, forced combatant, and sexual slavery (McAlpine et al., 2016). Furthermore, a systematic review and compilation of resources evaluating sex trafficking aftercare and support services revealed that many studies focused on physical and mental health. While little research has taken a comprehensive approach to wellness (Graham et al., 2019).

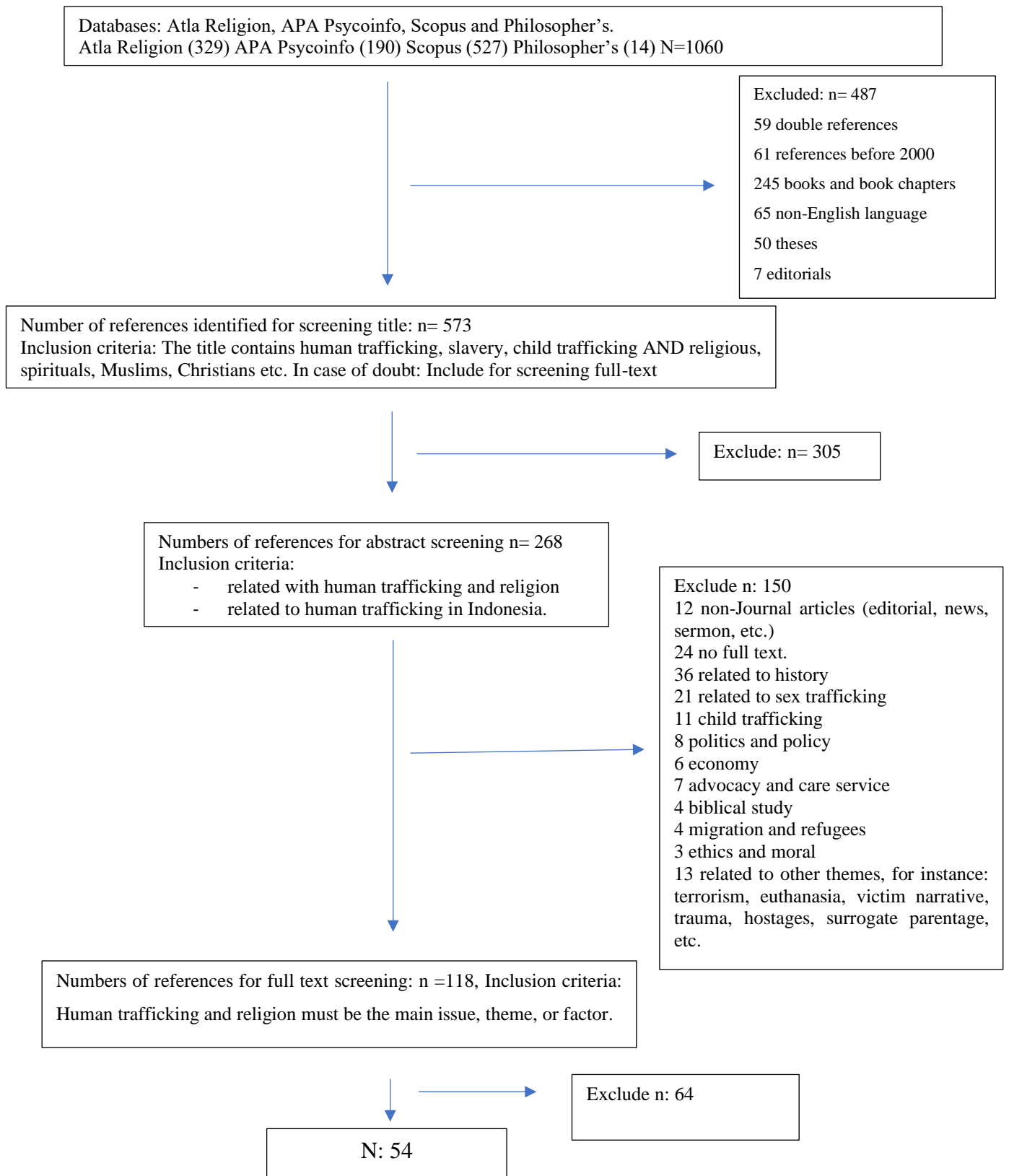
According to previous research, it seems that systematic reviews of human trafficking are dominated by health and sex trafficking issues. Systematic reviews on religion and human trafficking are lacking. This is an area in which the current study can thus offer a valuable contribution. The chapter aims to identify literature in academic research related to human trafficking and religion to identify the critical issues in order to examine more closely the role of religion in human trafficking. The term human trafficking in this research includes a broad category not only of slavery but also of the various exploitations contemplated in the Palermo Protocol. Likewise, the term religion refers to a broad definition of religion, including both institutional and lived religion.

2.3 Method

The search was conducted within the following four databases: Atla Religion Databases (Ebsco), Apa PsycInfo (Ebsco), Scopus, and Philosopher's Index (Ovid). The keywords used were *human trafficking* and *religion*, as well as synonyms and closely related words. The Boolean operator AND was used to combine both terms. The first search occurred on March 10, 2020, and was followed by several updates. The first update was on March 24, 2020, the second on March 30, 2020, and the definitive result on April 15, 2020. Library staff assist in the process of searching in databases.

The screening process began by excluding articles published before 2000, book and book chapters, theses, editorial pieces, and non-English language materials. The second round consisted of screening titles with an inclusion criterion that the titles must contain the terms human trafficking/slavery/child trafficking AND religious/spiritual/Muslim, and so forth. The next round was an abstract screening that included articles related to human trafficking and religion and articles related to human trafficking in Indonesia. In cases of doubt, the article was included in the last round. After that, title screening was again performed, considering only those articles wherein human trafficking and religion were the main issue, factor, or theme.

Figure 1,
Screening process



2.4 Results

The final classification process resulted in fifty-four articles that contained the terms *human trafficking* and *religion* as the main issue, factor, or category. In terms of methodology, 17 of the studies use the empirical method, and 37 use theoretical studies. The final articles were classified into three categories to describe the intersection between human trafficking and religion: religion and traffickers, religion and victims, and bystanders. The categories I have developed are modified from Karpman's theory of the drama triangle.

Stephen Karpman as a psychiatrist, developed the drama triangle as a theory of human interaction describing persecutors, rescuers and victims (Lac & Donaldson, 2020). Karpman develops examples from the Grimm Brothers' fables and fairy tales that are replete with examples of this triangle and its validity, along with many other instances from fiction, movies, religion, politics, and the judicial/legal systems (L'Abate, 2009). The categories I have developed are modified from Karpman's theory of the drama triangle.

2.4.1 Religion and Traffickers

The category titled "religion and traffickers" comprises twenty-three articles that elucidate how religion might potentially contribute to the facilitation or endorsement of human trafficking activities and the ability of religion to exacerbate the adverse effects faced by victims of human trafficking. The first theme under this classification consists of research that elucidates how religion function as a means to justify the act of human trafficking. The utilisation of religious justifications for the practice of slavery is revealed in research within the Mauritanian Arab-Berber population. The study's findings offer evidence that interpretations of Islamic teachings are employed to legitimise the implementation of racial slavery inside the Mauritanian Arab-Berber society (Esseissah, 2016). The possibility of religious teachings being used to justify the practice of trafficking is also explained by Oderinde in the research on girl child trafficking in Nigeria (Oderinde, 2014). Oderinde explained that religious teachings that emphasise respect and submission to religious leaders as representatives of God build an understanding of submission to authority. In the context of Nigeria, this understanding has become a source of trafficking because girls who submit to parental authority are trafficked both within the country and abroad. This culture of submission to authority should enable the leaders and parents to be role models in the fight against trafficking through concrete actions. Within the realm of terrorism, the utilisation of religion as a rationale for engaging in trafficking is

exemplified by a study related to ISIS (Raben, 2018). This research explains the manner in which ISIS employs religious doctrines to rationalise the perpetration of human trafficking and action against non-Muslims.

The second theme of this category consist of research that explains how traffickers exploit religion as tool for coercion. The term ‘exploitation’ is a core concept in the context of human trafficking, as it arises from imbalances in power dynamics between individuals or groups. The trafficker employs diverse strategies to establish unequal connections, one of which involves utilising religion as a means of instilling fear and exerting control over the victims. Research investigations into Juju rituals and human trafficking indicate that traffickers employ religious oaths as a means to promote terror and exert control over their victims (Dunkerley, 2018; Heil, 2017; van der Watt & Kruger, 2017). Similar results were found by Baarda, who conducted a study on victims of sex trafficking. Specifically, Baarda focused on those who were trafficked from Nigeria to Italy to engage in street prostitution. The study revealed that the traffickers employed Voodoo as a means of coercion (Baarda, 2016). The belief system of human trafficking victims can be significantly shaped by religion, leading to potential influences on their actions. Therefore, comprehending trafficking victims necessitates a comprehension of their belief system (Ikeora, 2016).

The third theme in this category comprises of articles that critically evaluate and engage in the discourse surrounding religious practices that may be classified as instances of human trafficking. One notable discovery arising from the classification procedure under this particular category is the recognition of slavery as a significant thematic element within the Bible. Biblical study articles that encompassed the manumission of Hebrew debt-enslaved people. Deuteronomy 15 explains that manumitting the Hebrew debt-enslaved people expanded the population of freedmen available for employment, as the costs associated with maintaining a labour force of debt-enslaved people exceeded the costs associated with hiring free labour (Glass, 2000). Research on the theme of forced labour (*corvée*) in the Kingdom of Israel, particularly involving the Canaanites illustrates that during Solomon’s time, the Canaanites were subjected to forced labour, *corvée*, both by the tribes of Israel and by Solomon. This story of forced labour is related to the story of the rebellion against David’s family in 1 Kings 12 (Houston, 2018). Shullenberger, in an article related to Samson’s story, explains that Samson’s experience of bondage encompasses vulnerability and degradation of his physical, psychological, and social position (Shullenberger, 2019).

While previous literature has focused on the historical existence of slavery in biblical times, there are also academic works that explore the depiction of slavery in the Bible and its relevance to contemporary society. Cook's article relating to the book of Nahum argues that the book of Nahum accuses Nineveh of multinational human trafficking (Cook, 2015). The article connects the trafficking of women that took place in Nineveh to the UN definition of human trafficking. Other research explores the issue of sex trafficking through the lens of biblical ethical principles derived primarily from the ideals of the institution of *בית אב* (patriarchal home) in the Old Testament (Theocharous, 2016). Following that, there is research that emphasises that the primary resources for discussing the phenomenon of sexual exploitation are the often-overlooked passages of Scripture that speak explicitly of sexual matters (Garber & Stallings, 2008). According to Garber and Stallings, the church should re-evaluate its position on sexuality by closely reading Scripture passages that explicitly address human sexuality issues. Next, the review highlights research that explores the voices of marginalised people (primarily women) from different parts of the African continent who experienced trafficking to or forced labour in Tshwane city, as they discuss this subject of exploitation during a contextual Bible study on 2 Kings 5:1-4 (Mangoedi & Mogashoa, 2014). Miles (2016) explores the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis, in terms of how he was trafficked into Egypt then sexually abused by Potiphar's wife and its correlation with boys and young men who are vulnerable to being trafficked and sexually abused/exploited. The findings of this research highlight the importance of the church and Christian faith-based organisations being motivated by the biblical mandate to serve those most marginalised, and not by donations or the political correctness of the day. The final article in this approach is a research that bring the biblical text of Ruth into dialogue with the experiences of survivors of sexual trafficking in Thailand (Moyo, 2016).

The phenomenon of human trafficking within religions has a significant historical lineage. Religious practices involving human trafficking have persisted from biblical times to the modern era. This particular theme has garnered attention in academic studies. Research conducted in Guinea-Bissau offers a critical perspective to assumptions that classify the activities of *Marabouts* within Muslim communities as child trafficking. *Marabout* practices involve Bissau-Guinean Muslim youth enrolled in Quranic schools in Senegal who engage in begging on behalf of their instructors. International non-governmental organisations (NGOs) classify this activity as trafficking. Einarsdóttir and Boiro attempt to provide a critical analysis of this from the parents' perspective. Parents choose to enrol their children into educational

institutions to facilitate them acquiring knowledge and skills, with the ultimate goal of nurturing their children into *Marabot*/Quran experts (Einarsdóttir & Boiro, 2016). Another study concerning Fundamentalist Mormon polygamy demonstrates that the polygamy practice fulfils the criteria outlined in the Palermo Protocol, which regards trafficking in persons. The article contends that it should be appropriate to classify the practice of Fundamentalist Mormon polygamy as a form of human trafficking (Quek, 2016). The research conducted by Sarson and MacDonald (2008) examines religious practices within the Nova Scotian community that can be classified as human trafficking, as well as their association with Ritual Abuse Torture (RAT) (Sarson & MacDonald, 2008). The research elucidates that the above rituals should not be classified as sexualising adult-child relationships but rather should be classified as acts of torture.

Studies in history reveal that human trafficking and slavery has shaped religion. The practice of ‘slavery’ in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the Punjab in the early nineteenth century found that slavery was defined by sectarian allegiance and governed by religious norms (Hopkins, 2008). Other research has also found that the Basel Mission in colonial Ghana, 1855–1900, mediated the exploitation of child labour through established African institutions such as slavery, pawn shops, and debt bondage (Koonar, 2014).

Finally, the last theme in this category explains how religion contributes to the exacerbation of the adversities experienced by victims of sex trafficking. The study conducted on female victims of human trafficking in Nepal investigates that the victims of sex trafficking are subjected to societal stigmatisation concerning marriage and reproductive health. Patriarchal value systems and the religious beliefs of Hinduism significantly shape the stigmas above (Ong et al., 2019).

The findings in this category explain the continuing historical connection between religion and trafficking. As a system of beliefs, religion exerts influence over the ideas and behaviours of people and communities. Religion is shaped by stories of human trafficking found in the Bible and throughout history, and this influence persists in the present day. This association makes religion either a primary source that directly causes trafficking or a supporting source. Religion can act as a catalyst for human trafficking, providing advantages to traffickers and encompassing rituals that can be categorised as trafficking practices. While religion as a supporting source, encompasses issues such as indirectly exacerbating human trafficking

through the stigmatisation of victims. The findings of this study demonstrate that human trafficking can be regarded as a religious matter due to its involvement with religious aspects. Additionally, it demonstrates the vulnerability of religious communities to human trafficking.

Hence, it is crucial to approach the examination of human trafficking with a sincere consideration of religion. Scriptural narratives of servitude can provide a basis for justifying human trafficking or can produce theological significance that advantages traffickers. However, these narratives can also serve as a foundation for constructing analyses and theological interpretations that have the potential to prevent or combat trafficking

Table 1***Literature Overview of Articles Related to Religion and The Trafficker***

Key issue	No	Author	Title	Objective	Output
Religion as a means to justify the act of human trafficking	1	Esseissah, Khaled (2016)	'Paradise is under the feet of your master': The construction of the religious basis of racial slavery in the Mauritanian Arab-Berber community.	To probes the psychological and religious dimensions of racial slavery in Mauritanian Arab-Berber society.	The religious legitimacy of slavery is being challenged on a daily basis. Religious authority, calling the slavery question into the public sphere, and raising awareness among some slaves and former slaves about their social misery and exploitation.
	2	Oderinde, O. A. (2014)	The religion-cultural context of girl-child trafficking in Nigeria	The religion-cultural context of girl-child trafficking in Nigeria	The study attempts to investigate the experiences of some of the victims of trafficking who have returned to Nigerian and have since been reunited with their families as reported in the various daily newspapers and magazines.
	3	Raben, S. M. (2018)	The ISIS eradication of Christians and Yazidis: Human trafficking, genocide, and the missing international efforts to stop it	To analyse why the U.N. acknowledges the methodical attacks against the Yazidis while there remains a reluctance to assert the same designation in regard to Christians.	Explains the manner in which ISIS employs religious doctrines to rationalise the perpetration of human trafficking and action against non-Muslims.

Religion also as a tool of coercion	4	Dunkerley, Anthony W. (2018)	Exploring the use of juju in Nigerian human trafficking networks: Considerations for criminal investigators	To identify key issues for criminal investigators to consider, throughout the criminal justice process, when managing cases involving Nigerian victims trafficked into the U.K. who have been subjected to juju rituals and undertaken oaths of secrecy.	Results suggest the oath is one of several mechanisms used by traffickers to instil fear. The main recommendations are to empathise with the victim's fear of spiritual retribution; develop trust and rapport; take a joint-agency approach and provide access to psychological and spiritual counselling.
	5	van der Watt, M. & Kruger, B. (2017)	Exploring 'juju' and human trafficking: Towards a demystified perspective and response	To explore juju as a phenomenon, whilst illuminating some of the multi-layered complexities associated with its use as a control mechanism.	The article clarifies how traffickers use juju rituals as an effective control mechanism and catalyst to instil profound fear amongst victims, whilst compounding efforts by response agencies and criminal justice practitioners to combat human trafficking.
	6	Baarda, C. S. (2016)	Human trafficking for sexual exploitation from Nigeria into Western Europe: the role of voodoo rituals in the functioning of a criminal network.	To explore the role of 'voodoo' in the functioning of the organization, applying transaction cost economics and rational choice theory.	Four main categories of voodoo use were found. Firstly, voodoo is a coercive mechanism. Secondly, it is used cynically in cooperation between traffickers. Thirdly, there is non-cynical mention of voodoo as a belief system. A fourth category concerns voodoo priests as independent enforcers of contracts.

7	Heil, E. C. (2017)	It is God's will: Exploiting religious beliefs as a means of human trafficking	1) to establish religion as a tool of coercion at the interpersonal level, (2) to examine specific trafficking cases in which religion was the method of coercion, and (3) to discuss the challenge of prosecuting cases in which the act was the result of religious coercion.	The law must consider how the trafficker has completely stripped the victim of free will when the threat is religious in nature, for the victim already is in a position of unconditional compliance to their belief system.
8	Ikeora, M. (2016)	The role of African traditional religion and 'Juju' in human trafficking: Implications for antitrafficking	To examine the role that African Traditional Religion (ATR) plays in giving ammunition to human trafficking, a role that serves as an emerging perspective in the understanding and critical engagement with this subject area.	Human trafficking should also be understood from the perspective of the belief system of victims, one rooted in ATR rather than being attributed to brainwashing. It is also pertinent that policymakers and practitioners.

Religious practices that it is possible to identify as human	9	Glass, Z. G. 2000	Land, slave labour and law: Engaging ancient Israel's economy.	This paper seeks to provide an alternative inquiry into the manumission laws of Deuteronomy by viewing them	This is paper critiques previous research that sees the laws on manumission as humanitarian provisions or having no practical application. The Deuteronomy 15 laws of manumission were
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trafficking
practices

through the economic conventions of slavery. closely related to economic tactics because manumitting people enslaved by Hebrew debt expanded the population of emancipated people available for employment, as the costs associated with maintaining the labour of people enslaved by debt exceeded the costs associated with employing free labour.

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| 10 | Houston, W. J. (2018) | Corvée in the Kingdom of Israel: Israelites, ‘Canaanites’, and cultural memory. | Proposes that text Judges 1 and 1 Kings 9 should be placed alongside the story of the rebellion against the house of David in 1 Kings 12. | The Canaanites were subjected to forced labour, <i>corvée</i> , both by the tribes of Israel and by Solomon. This story of forced labour is related to the story of the rebellion against David’s family in 1 Kings 12. |
| 11 | Shullenberger, W. (2019) | Samson’s bondage | To examine Samson’s experience and embodiment of the bondage. | Samson’s experience of bondage encompasses vulnerability and degradation of his physical, psychological, and social position |
| 12 | Cook, G. D. (2015) | Human trafficking in Nahum | To argues that the book of Nahum charges Nineveh with multi-national human trafficking | Explains the phenomenon of human trafficking, in particular sex trafficking, among women in the Nineveh region. |
| 13 | Theocharous, Myrto (2016) | Becoming a refuge: sex trafficking and the people of God. | To explores the issue of sex trafficking through the lens of biblical ethical principles | Biblical patriarchy offers values that can inspire both men and women to image God as a refuge for the victims of one of the biggest challenges of our world |

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| | | | derived primarily from the ideals of the institution of the בית אב (patriarchal house”) in the Old Testament | today: human trafficking. The author attempts, at various points of this article, to show how these values can penetrate into the way we think about human trafficking |
| 14 | Garber, David G., Jr.,
Stallings, Daniel
(2008) | Awakening desire before it is season:
Reading biblical texts in response to the sexual exploitation of children | This article attempts to investigate the church’s response to sex trafficking with reference to the Song of Songs and other biblical passages related to sexual exploitation. | The church’s response to sex trafficking can consist of the following proposals: Firstly, the church must be willing to recognise the reality of sexual exploitation of children. Secondly, the church must openly speak out about sexual exploitation. Thirdly, the church needs to express its love for the victims of sex trafficking. |
| 15 | Mangoedi,
Mogashoa, M. H.
(2014) | L. Mission from the margins: a reflection on faith by "women" displaced or trafficked into forced labour in the city of Tshwane | To explore the voices of marginalised people (primarily women) in Tshwane from different parts of the African continent, as they discuss this subject during a Contextual Bible Study on 2 Kings 5:1-4. | The concept of the God mission can be defined as the attempt to dispatch the victims of human trafficking into agents of mission |
| 16 | Miles, Glenn
(2016) | Where are the boys? Where are the men?: A. case study from Cambodia | To examines the vulnerability of boys and young men to trafficking and sexual abuse/exploitation globally as an often-hidden problem. | The paper emphasises the importance of the Church and Christian faith-based organisations being driven not by donors or current political correctness, but instead focusing on a biblical mandate to work with the most marginalised. |

- Exploration of the story of Joseph in Genesis and how he was trafficked to Egypt by his brothers and then sexually harassed by Potiphar's wife challenges a number of assumptions about vulnerability
- 17 Moyo, Fulata Lusungu. (2016) Traffic Violations: Hospitality, foreignness, and exploitation: a contextual biblical study of Ruth. Brings the biblical text of Ruth into dialogue both with the author's own experiences of sexual violation and with the experiences of a survivor of sexual trafficking in Thailand named Sanda. Reading the story of Naomi and Ruth as two vulnerable women involved in sexual trafficking, albeit with asymmetrical power relations and communal resources, is aimed at raising awareness about the injustices trafficked young women face as well as the structural complexities of human/trafficking.
- 18 Einarsdóttir, J. Boiro, H. (2016) Becoming somebody: Bissau-Guinean talibés in Senegal To provide a critical analysis of perspectives that view *Marabout* practices involving Bissau-Guinean Muslim youth enrolled in Quranic schools as human trafficking practices. This analysis explores into the ongoing power dynamics among global agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and local communities in their efforts to delineate *Marabout* practises concerning Bissau-Guinean Muslim children who are enrolled in Quranic schools. It posits that these youth can be categorised as victims of trafficking.

19	Quek, Kaye (2016)	Fundamentalist Mormon polygamy and the traffic in women	To offer a counter-analysis to such works by identifying Mormon polygamy not only as harmful to women but also as constituting a fundamental abuse of human rights.	This article contends that the practice of Fundamentalist Mormon polygamy should be recognised by states and the international human rights community as a form of trafficking in women.
20	Sarson, Jeanne.MacDonald, Linda (2008)	Ritual abuse-torture within families/groups	To identifying 10 violent thematic issues as components of a pattern of family/group ritual abuse /torture (RAT) victimisation.	This article advocates recognising RAT as an emerging form of nonstate actor torture, stopping the use of language that sexualises adult-child relationships, and promoting human rights education.
21	Hopkins, B. D. (2008)	Race, sex and slavery: ‘Forced labour’ in central Asia and Afghanistan in the early 19th century.	To examines the practice of ‘slavery’ in a very different context, looking at Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the Punjab in the early nineteenth century.	The practice takes on the overtly racial character it assumed in the West. However, historically slavery was defined by sectarian allegiance and governed by religious norms. By the nineteenth century, most slaves were women, largely a consequence of the practice’s social and sexual significance
22	Koonar, C. (2014)	Using child labor to save souls: The Basel Mission in colonial Ghana, 1855–1900.	To insert the experiences of young people into the narrative of African history, providing a	The conflict between the missionaries’ philosophical opposition to slavery and their need to support the continued growth of the Mission through trade, led

snapshot of children's experiences and the construction of childhood in the age of abolition.

to a complicated relationship between the missionaries and African children. Despite its opposition to slavery, the Basel Mission was often directly involved in mediating the exploitation of child labour through established African institutions such as slavery, pawn shops, and debt bondage.

Religion as a source of stigma	23	Ong,T. Mellor,D., Chettri, S. (2019)	Multiplicity of stigma: The experiences, fears and knowledge of young, trafficked women in Nepal	To conduct a reproductive health study on young formerly trafficked women in Nepal using a new research method – the Clay Embodiment Research Method – designed with their vulnerability and the cultural context in mind.	Discovered that the victims are subject to religious and cultural stigmas related to sex trafficking, such as menstrual stigma, stigma related to pre-marital sex, stigma related to pregnancy before marriage and stigma for having a female child. As a cultural force, the stigmatisation is generated by both men and women, and has roots that lie in Hinduism and the patriarchal value system in Nepal. The recommendation is for a public health campaign to eliminate the practice of the menstruation and other stigmatising traditions.
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2.4.2 Religion and Victims of Human Trafficking

The current category refers to the connection between religion and victims of human trafficking, explaining the role and impact of religion as perceived by the victims. The first theme under this category encompasses research studies that emphasise the function of religion in aiding victims in coping comprehending their traumatic experiences. A study conducted by Deventer-Noordeloos and Sremac (2018) examines the perceptions of God among Polish female survivors of sex trafficking. It explores the role of these perceptions in facilitating their coping mechanisms in the face of trauma. Other scholarly investigations about men who have been trafficked into the United States underscore the prevalence of religious coping mechanisms, such as prayer, devotion to God, and engagement with the church (Hodge, 2021). The findings show religious practices are crucial elements that contribute to their resilience and perseverance.

Archaeological research of the Early African American Community in Talbot County, Maryland, found that the Wheel symbol as a representation of movement towards God is evidence of how enslaved and free Africans embraced new forms of Christianity (Leone et al., 2018). In addition, a study exploring music and plantation slaves in the United States found that music was a space where the hegemony of the white ruling class could be subverted, adapted, and resisted. The stringent control and control of plantation life resulted in the isolation of slaves from conventional means of social dissent and political articulation. Music served as a medium through which slaves could convey and envision their longing for liberation (Barker, 2015).

The second theme focuses on the significance of religion within the context of therapy. Taliani (2012) describes her therapeutic interventions and research experience in an academic study about young Nigerian women residing in Italy. According to Taliani, the belief system of victims is significantly influenced by religion and culture, thus necessitating the consideration of these factors in the rehabilitation process. The belief system can serve as a mechanism employed by traffickers to exert control over victims, contributing to their experience of trauma. However, it is essential to recognise that the belief system is also capable of a transformative process, wherein it receives new meaning, eventually helping the healing process. The academic investigation into sex trafficking concerning female same-sex attraction also emphasises the importance of integrating religious components into the rehabilitation

process (McTavish, 2017). This article emphasises the possibility that female same-sex attraction who became victims of human trafficking may be subjected to double traumatic experiences. Previous trauma that resulted in a loss of trust in men and the traumatic experience of being a victim of trafficking. Integrating religion into the rehabilitation process is expected to encompass these dually traumatic experiences. Another article aiming to establish a dialogue between Herman's trauma theory and spirituality emphasises the significance of integrating spirituality into rehabilitation. One of the critical phases in Herman's theoretical framework for healing is the stage of remembering or grief. During this phase, individuals who have been victimised and see a lack of meaning in their lives engage in a cognitive process to construct meaning. Spirituality can serve as a framework for belief systems in constructing meaning (Nguyen et al., 2014). Another study developed a rehabilitation method that involving spirituality in cognitive behavioural therapy in the Haitian context. Wang's research focused on children from poor rural families sent to work as domestic servants for wealthy urban families, known as the *Restavek*. Findings showed that the Trauma-Informed Spirituality-Focused Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy intervention significantly reduced post-traumatic stress symptoms. Children who received the treatment benefited from the reduction of trauma symptoms as well as a reduction in spiritual struggles (Wang et al., 2016).

The results presented in the current category demonstrate that religion influences the way victims respond to and comprehend their experiences with exploitation. Simultaneously, the victims' experience also influences their perception of their religious meaning—the comprehension of God and their environment. Within specific situations, such as slavery, religious symbolism is employed, often through songs or other symbolic representations. The religious meaning is transmitted across generations to facilitate communal identity.

The results also indicate that the multifaceted nature of religion, encompassing cognitive and emotional experiences, behavioural patterns, and interpersonal connections, contributes to its role as a facilitator in the therapeutic process. Religion can encompass all facets of human existence.

Table 2***Literature Overview of Articles Related to Religion and The Victim of Human Trafficking***

Key issue	No	Author	Title	Objective	Output
Religion is a primary factor in victims' coping and meaning process	24	Deventer-Noordeloos, F. Sremac, S. (2018)	The lived religion of Polish sex-trafficked survivors: A targeted investigation for practical theological analysis	To analyse about Polish victims of sex trafficking lived religion and how this assists them in coping with their traumatic trafficking experience.	The collective testimonies of the survivors elucidate the main concepts of love and forgiveness, which serve to inspire the potential for a new formation of narrative identity. This research proves that when analysing victims' narratives, it is important to take into account the religious and cultural background.
	25	Hodge, David R. (2020)	How do trafficking survivors cope? Identifying the general and spiritual coping strategies of men trafficked into the United States	To identify the coping strategies—both general and spiritual—used by men who were internationally trafficked.	The most common coping mechanisms were prayer, God, and church. Among those who used spiritual strategies, a plurality reported that the strategies were the most important factor that kept them going.
	26	Leone,M.P. Pruitt,E. Skolnik,B.A. Woehlke,S. Jenkins, T. (2018)	The archaeology of early African American communities in Talbot County, Eastern Shore, Maryland, U.S.A., and their relationship to slavery.	To offer the hypothesis that circles and wheels represent both Cosmograms from West Africa and Ezekiel's chariot from the Bible, and their use has contributed to the founding of the Black church. Afro-Christianity is a product of transatlantic slavery, is a powerful reform within Christianity, and	The symbol of the wheel as representation of the movement to God. This interpretation would allow additional understanding of how enslaved and free Africans embraced new forms of Christianity.

				continues to moderate the effects of slavery now.	
	27	Barker, Thomas P. (2015)	Spatial dialectics: Intimations of freedom in antebellum slave song.	To explore how music provided the US plantation-slaves with a space in which the hegemony of the White ruling class could be subverted, adapted, and resisted.	Slave song is a coping tools, making the meaning of freedom as material practice and freedom as the “aesthetic imagination.” Tensions between these two spheres provided a crucial intimation of a life without slavery.
The significance of religion within the context of therapy.	28	Taliani, S. (2012)	Coercion, fetishes and suffering in the daily lives of young Nigerian women in Italy	To start anthropological discussion related to voodoo and fetishes in the psychiatric and psychological therapeutic process of women victims of trafficking.	The belief system of victims is significantly influenced by religion and culture, thus necessitating the consideration of these factors in the rehabilitation process.
	29	McTavish, F. J. (2017)	Devastating consequences of sex trafficking on women’s health	To describe the importance of integrating religious components into the rehabilitation process related to sex trafficking concerning female same-sex.	Integrating religion into the rehabilitation process is expected to cover the multiple trauma experienced by victims of sex trafficking concerning female same-sex attraction.
	30	Thanh-Tu, Nguyen Bellehumeur, Christian R., Malette, Judith (2014)	Women survivors of sex trafficking: A trauma and recovery model integrating spirituality	To demonstrate how spirituality can enhance a psychological model aiming to help people to	Elaborates Herman’s model by expanding it to include spirituality as a part of the meaning-making process. The paper highlights how survivors may use

recovery from a trauma spirituality to cope in a manner that contributes to experience their recovery.

- 31 Wang, D. C.,
Aten, J. D.,
Boan, D.,
Jean-Charles, W.,
Griff, K. P.,
Valcin, V. C.,
Davis, E. B.,
Hook, J. N.,
Davis, D. E.,
Van Tongeren, D. R.,
Abouezzedine, T.,
Sklar, Q.,
Wang, A.
(2016)
- Culturally adapted spiritually oriented trauma-focused cognitive-behavioural therapy for child survivors of *restavek*
- To explore the effectiveness of a culturally adapted form of Spiritually Oriented Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (SO-TFCBT), a treatment model for assessing and treating religious and spiritual issues within the standard TF-CBT protocol (an evidence-based treatment for childhood trauma
- Indicate that the culturally adapted spiritually oriented TF-CBT intervention significantly reduced symptoms of posttraumatic stress among the children who participated in our study, over and above symptom reductions associated with the natural recovery process, with a medium-to-large effect size.

2.4.3 Bystanders

The last category explains the role of religion among bystanders. The bystander functions a witness to violence, a saviour, a judgement, or simply a witness to something terrible. Twenty-three articles related to the bystander category were classified under several themes: policy, advocacy, and moral ethics.

2.4.3.1 Policy

In order to obtain a comprehensive analysis, slavery and human trafficking must be viewed as structural issues within a country or civilization. Research on human trafficking and religion-related policies illustrates how powerfully religion influences state policies. Research demonstrates the manner in which the Islamic State, for example, implemented a deliberate and structured policy to establish and manage a system of slavery inside the areas under its control from 2014 to 2017. This policy was employed strategically and tactically in its military operations, and served as a means of “state” construction (Al-Dayel et al., 2022). The Islamic State officially presented slavery as being religiously justified. The acceptance and endorsement of slavery as a symbol of triumph is not only deemed permissible, but also regarded as a beneficial aspect.

A study conducted on sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland, examined the policies related to Lord Morrow’s Human Trafficking & Exploitation policy (Ellison, 2017). The study’s findings elucidate that the policies originated from a social anxiety that aligns with Cohen’s theoretical framework. The emergence of social anxiety can be attributed to the significant impact exerted by religious advocacy organizations. The study of the influence of religion on the governmental policy of human trafficking is a topic being investigated within the American context. Zimmerman (2010) asserted that the utilisation of religious discourse under the Bush administration had a substantial influence on the United States’ approach to human trafficking policy. Human trafficking is understood as a reflection of a deficient connection with the divine or an incapacity to meet the duty of worshiping that higher power. Disregarding the instances of violence and exploitation that transpired. The imperative to free persons from unfair and oppressive situations is not a standalone objective, but rather is backed by a distinct theological rationale.

The influence of religion on state policy is likewise apparent in Giordano's investigation of victims of human trafficking within Italy (Giordano, 2015). This article undertakes an analysis of the practical application of migration policy, specifically focusing on the provisions outlined in article 18. The article grants victims of human trafficking the opportunity to acquire temporary residence permits. In order to achieve this outcome, the victims are mandated to engage in a comprehensive rehabilitation procedure, which encompasses both legal proceedings and the pursuit of justice against the offenders. The Catholic group is responsible for providing and facilitating the rehabilitation process. The research discovered that the procedure of conducting investigations or initiating criminal charges bears resemblance to the process of confession in a church setting. A further discovery derived from this study indicates that the execution of governmental policies is significantly impacted by religious factors. Another article written by Giordano (2016) related to the practical application of Italy's migration policy, specifically focusing on the provisions outlined in article 18, explains the involvement of Catholic nuns who run shelters for victims of human trafficking and are involved in state-funded rehabilitation programmes for former foreign prostitutes. Giordano also affirmed that the influence of the church on the state's policies related to human trafficking is quite strong. Furthermore, the nuns acquire a comprehension of redemption as a project aimed at preserving lives within the secular context, aligning with the state's endeavour to acknowledge and consequently incorporate their actions into the biopolitical initiative of life transformation.

Research on human trafficking in Nigeria reveals the use of religious language related to the victims and the execution of policy (Vanderhurst, 2017). The victims are sent to federal authorities that specialise in combating human trafficking in order to get protection and assistance in accordance with relevant regulations. Nevertheless, the implementation of this policy is hindered by the prevailing lack of confidence in the government. In this scenario, employing religious language becomes imperative in order to persuade the individual to develop a desire to participate in the policy.

Research on religion, human trafficking, and policy demonstrates the significant impact of religion on human trafficking at a larger scale, such as within communities or countries. Religion serves as a guiding principle for a community's set of beliefs, shaping their perception and discourse on human trafficking and even translating it into concrete policies. Perceiving trafficking as a religious matter entails comprehending the influence of religion on both an

individual level and within the framework of a community. Therefore, the approach employed for investigating the correlation between religion and trafficking must consider the impact of religion both on an individual basis and throughout the community.

2.4.3.2 Advocacy

Religious engagement in human trafficking advocacy is a crucial issue in several articles. Some studies provide religious meaning as a justification for religious engagement in trafficking advocacy. Research on American evangelicals and human trafficking explains that Christian involvement in human trafficking is based on an understanding of salvation (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2014). Other research identified ‘diakonia’ as the term that best refers to religious involvement in human trafficking (Deifelt, 2012). Diakonia is the capacity to analyse social problems or find quick solutions to them, to have the perseverance to address enduring issues, to assess the role of grace from a human and theological perspective, and to reclaim the divine mandate of dignity for all people.

Moreover, advocacy is also a biblical mandate, according to a study on the church’s participation in the prevention campaign of child and adolescent sexual exploitation before and during the 2014 FIFA World Cup (Neptune, 2016). Another study offers a religious framework for restorative justice in the context of human rights protection of North Korean stateless women as victims of human trafficking. Restorative justice is characterised by restoring the shattered social cohesion between victims, perpetrators, and communities (Yoon, 2019). On the other hand, Gerassi and Nichols (2018) illustrated how different religious understandings impact the issue in their research on “Heterogeneous Perspectives in Coalitions and Community-Based Responses to Sex Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation.” According to the study, various religious identities prove challenging to some service providers when coordinating services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ) communities or women who have had or are considering abortion.

Advocacy against human trafficking is a demanding challenge that necessitates the cooperation of many parties. The cooperation has created various dynamics. Research conducted in the context of human trafficking in Romania emphasises the importance of church and state cooperation (Goschin et al., 2009). In engaging with human trafficking advocacy, religion provides a theological framework but at the same time is also challenged to evaluate religious

perspectives on issues related to human trafficking. Research on American anti-trafficking movements in Southeast Asia suggest that evangelical approaches to social justice that employ the ‘rescue’ lens need to shift towards greater indigeneity and attention to social structures (Swartz, 2019). The same conclusion is shown in research on evangelical social engagement in the United States which emphasises that conservative evangelicals need to move from a familiar cultural script that employs individualist logic to a structural logic that addresses social issues (Bielo, 2014). Benstein (2010) describes the dynamics of two pioneering groups in the anti-trafficking movement in America. Evangelical activist groups directed their efforts towards moral debates over sex trafficking, whilst feminist anti-trafficking groups centred their feminist analysis on the societal constructs that contribute to sex trafficking. While distinct, both movements acknowledge the necessity of political and cultural restructuring. Therefore, the topic of sexual violence in the public domain serves as a shared main point for both groups.

Advocacy requires not only forming partnerships with multiple stakeholders, but also using a creative strategy to advocacy. Research on artistic solidarity and human trafficking demonstrates that advocacy can effectively be conducted by utilising the narratives, symbols, pictures, and experiences that arise from exploited persons and communities. These elements can serve as a tangible means of achieving political empowerment. This theory emphasises the significance of aesthetic experiences in influencing one’s moral imagination, followed by subsequent economic and political empowerment (Flores, 2018).

The results of this sub-theme elucidate that religion plays a role in advocacy across various dimensions. Religion is a source of religious significance, forming the foundation of an advocacy movement. It can be actively engaged as a participant or organisation that conducts advocacy and can also be utilised as a strategy in advocacy efforts. Religion may offer rise to conflicts in advocacy due to different interpretations, particularly concerning issues such as sex trafficking and forced labour.

2.4.3.3 Moral ethics

Discussion related to human trafficking and moral ethics is the final theme in the category of bystander. The intersection between religion, ethics, and sex trafficking is an ongoing discussion. According to Catholic sexual ethics, prostitution is considered a sin due to the belief that sexuality is a sacred and intimate connection between individuals of opposite genders. The

relationship serves as a representation of divine love. Within the realm of sex trafficking, it is imperative to reassess this comprehension as numerous victims of sex trafficking find themselves ensnared in the practice of prostitution. The teachings of the Church should serve as a means to uphold the dignity of victims of sex trafficking and provide a foundation for assisting them as fellow individuals (Haker, 2015).

Moreover, research dealing with harmful tensions between religion and LGBT sex trafficking victims argues that the politics of harm need to be reframed in an attempt to move beyond monolithic understandings to perceive the victim as a victim of the harmful workings of systemic discrimination and inequality (Boukli & Renz, 2019). Another way to move away from binary thinking relating to sexuality and religious harm is provided by the hermeneutics of liberation theology through feminist liberation theology circles (Cooper, 2011). The further intersection between religion, ethics, and sex trafficking appears in research on two distinct perspectives of sex trafficking: free labour and feminist abolitionism (Dempsey, 2012). The study of labour concludes that not all forms of prostitution can be classified as trafficking; only instances of coerced sexual work may be considered as such. Feminist abolitionism argues that all forms of purchasing and selling the bodies of children and women constitute sex trafficking. Dempsey employed Catholic social justice analysis to address these two disparities. Determined that all three viewpoints—free labour, feminist abolitionism, and Catholic social teaching—possess distinct interpretations, however finally come together on the imperative of implementing structural reforms that foster greater justice and equality.

Discussions on moral ethics are closely related to religion, as religious principles are often referenced. This is portrayed in research on Catholic Social Teaching, which emphasises that child slavery and child labour deny children their God-given dignity, freedom, and right to education (McKinney, 2015). Another research describes, according to the black African ethics of work, work is related to God or gods. God, being, and spirituality are work components, but modern slavery avoids the sacramental relationship (Vellem, 2014). Furthermore, a study state that victims' experiences must be considered when using religion as a moral compass to prevent modern slavery (Okyere-Manu, 2015).

The results in this sub-theme illustrate that the debate around sex trafficking remains very contentious in terms of ethical considerations. The evolution of society and the use of scientific approaches, such as the study of gender equality, have contributed to the increased complexity

of this discourse. This intricacy necessitates a comprehensive examination of religious ethics that is intricate and needs to be increasingly expedited. When religion fails to provide these demands, religious ethics can exacerbate the victim's position by introducing additional layers of offenders who impose various ethical judgements that are unfavourable to the victim.

Table 3.

Literature Overview of Articles Related to The Bystander

Key issue		Author	Title	Objective	Output
Policy	32	Al-Dayel,N. Mumford,A. Bales, K. (2019)	Not yet dead: the establishment and regulation of slavery by the Islamic State	To provides the first in-depth analysis of how the Islamic State as an organisation regulated slavery.	Demonstrates the manner in which the Islamic State implemented a deliberate and structured policy to establish and manage a system of slavery inside the areas under its control from 2014 to 2017. This policy was employed strategically and tactically in its military operations, and served as a means of “state” construction.
	33	Ellison, Graham (2017)	Criminalizing the payment for sex in Northern Ireland: Sketching the contours of a moral panic	To examines recent legislative developments in Northern Ireland around Lord Morrow’s Human Trafficking & Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) bill.	Lord Morrow’s Human Trafficking & Exploitation policy as a reaction to social anxiety that aligns with Cohen’s theoretical framework. The emergence of social anxiety can be attributed to the significant impact exerted by religious advocacy organisations.
	34	Zimmerman, Yvonne C. (2010)	From Bush to Obama: Rethinking sex and religion in the United States’ initiative to combat human trafficking	To analyses how the Bush administration used religious rhetoric to legitimate introducing to the United States’ anti-trafficking policies a sexual	While theological claims could highlight the imperative and urgency of anti-trafficking efforts, the ways in which these theological premises were subsequently incorporated into and used to authorise specific anti-

ideology that turns on a trafficking policies seriously debilitated delegitimizing of all nonmarital global anti-trafficking efforts. The problem sexual activity, and the therefore was not ‘religion’ per se, but the paradoxical effects that have ends to which religious discourses were put. been wrought on anti-trafficking efforts by this recourse to religious rhetoric.

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| 35 | Giordano, C. (2015) | Lying the truth | To show confessional practices continue to play a central role in deciding who is admitted legally | Juridical policy related to human trafficking are deeply influenced by the vocabulary of religious morality and vice versa. |
| 36 | Giordano, C. (2016) | Secular redemptions: Biopolitics by example | To analyse the practices of a group of Catholic nuns who run shelters for victims of human trafficking in Italy, and are thus involved in state-funded rehabilitation programmes for former foreign prostitutes. | The legal model for rehabilitating foreign prostitutes is avowedly secular yet also deeply shaped by a Catholic impetus to purify sinners. |
| 37 | Vanderhurst, S. (2017) | Governing with God: Religion, resistance, and the state in Nigeria’s counter-trafficking programs. | To examine the relationship of citizenship and governance as they are forged in real time, particularly in a context in | In a context in which there is distrust in the government, the use of religious terms “find trust in government through trust in God” demonstrates how ad hoc relationships of governance are forged in one fervently |

which the government is otherwise untrusted. contested encounter between citizens and the state in Nigeria.

Advocacy	38	Choi-Fitzpatrick, A. (2014)	To seek and save the lost: Human trafficking and salvation schemas among American evangelicals.	To explore how evangelical and mainline churchgoers conceptualise both the issue of human trafficking and possible solutions.	An evangelical worldview that sees individuals involved in trafficking as victims of individual exploitation and in need of (secular) salvation by the intervention of others.
	39	Deifelt, Wanda (2012)	Displayed bodies, hidden stories: Human trafficking and its challenges for Diaconia	To addresses human trafficking and its challenges for the Diaconia.	Human trafficking is a topic for <i>diaconia</i> or service of others because this is a field that involves not only the analysis of a social problem or an immediate solution for it, but because <i>diaconia</i> has the stamina to engage the enduring question, to evaluate the human component and the theological dimension of grace, and reclaim the divine imperative of dignity for all.
	40	Neptune, R. E. (2016)	Sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, human trafficking and mega sporting events: A case study from Brazil.	To describe the operation of a four-year prevention and awareness campaign organised by an evangelical social action	The problem of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents can be addressed through an enlightened and engaged church

			network that mobilised Brazilian local churches to confront the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents before and during the FIFA 2014 World Cup.	that accepts the biblical mandate to act with justice and mercy to children.
41	Yoon, I. S. (2019)	The impact of theological foundations of restorative justice for the human rights protections of North Korean stateless women as victims of human trafficking	To explore how a theologically grounded restorative justice model, focusing on Christopher Marshall's theological exposition of restorative justice, can contribute to the thought and action of Christians and the larger public in the face of the moral injury caused by human trafficking.	Restorative justice, with its most prominent characteristic being rebuilding social relationships among victims, perpetrators and the community that was damaged by a crime, has been proposed as an alternative to the traditional retributive justice model to treat criminal acts.
42	Gerassi, L. B., & Nichols, A. (2018)	Heterogeneous perspectives in coalitions and community-based responses to sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation: Implications for practice.	To explore 1) coalition members' perspectives on religion, politics, feminism, sex trafficking/sex work, neoliberalism/neo-abolitionism and 2) the impacts of such perspectives on coalition	Various religious identities prove challenging to some service providers when coordinating services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ) communities or women who have had or are considering abortion.

members' anti-trafficking/CSE work.

43

Goschin, Z. Constantin, D. L.,Roman, M. (2009)	The partnership between the state and the church against trafficking in persons	From the Romanian context, to open the room for dialogue among the researchers interested in this topic from an interdisciplinary perspective to discuss the possibilities to establish sustainable partnerships between the state and the church against trafficking in persons.	Both institutional and technical-operational co-operation between religion and state should continue to be combined with efforts to sensitise Romanian society on trafficking.
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44

Swartz, D. R. (2019)	“Rescue Sells”: Narrating human trafficking to evangelical populists	To offers insight into how populists and cosmopolitans negotiate power and imagine authority in starkly divided evangelical networks.	The antitrafficking movement may be vibrant, but it is profoundly incoherent. Indeed, the nature of evangelicalism itself may feed this incoherence. Its decentralised structure inhibits partnerships. Its emphasis on heart religion pushes against the rationalised efforts of NGOs like IJM
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45

Bielo, J. S. (2014)	Act like men: Social engagement and evangelical masculinity	To contributes to ongoing public and scholarly debates about evangelical social	Despite becoming invested in ‘new’ acts of social engagement, the conservative evangelicals continue to rely on a familiar cultural script that uses individualist logics,
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engagement in the United States. rather than structural logics, to address social problems.

46 Benstein, Elizabeth (2010) Militarized humanitarianism meets carceral feminism: the politics of sex, rights, and freedom in contemporary antitrafficking campaigns. To draw upon ethnographic data to trace developing points of intersection on two key political fronts—carceral feminism and militarised humanitarianism—elaborating on the distinctive sexual and gender politics that undergird each of these modes of activist intervention. Evangelical activist groups and feminist anti-trafficking groups develop different perspectives about sex trafficking. While distinct, both movements acknowledge the necessity of political and cultural restructuring. The topic of sexual violence in the public domain serves as a shared main point for both groups.

47 Flores, N. (2018) Beyond consumptive solidarity: an aesthetic response to human trafficking. Proposes a framework for aesthetic solidarity that cultivates affective bonds necessary for building communities of resistance characterised by mutuality, equality, and participation. Aesthetic solidarity offers a framework for engaging the narratives, symbols, images, and experience emerging from exploited individuals and communities as a source for concrete political empowerment.

Moral ethics	48	Haker, H. (2015)	Catholic feminist ethics reconsidered: the case of sex trafficking.	To analyse the Catholic and the liberal feminist frameworks of ethics from a perspective that attends both to the phenomenological	According to Catholic sexual ethics, prostitution is considered a sin. Within the realm of sex trafficking, it is imperative to reassess this comprehension as numerous victims of sex trafficking. The teachings of
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			interpretation of embodied selves and the Kantian normative interpretation of dignity.	the Church should serve as a means to uphold the dignity of victims of sex trafficking and provide a foundation for assisting them as fellow individuals.
49	Boukli,A. Renz, F. (2019)	Deconstructing the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender victim of sex trafficking: Harm, exceptionality and religion–sexuality tensions	To confront some of the complexities and tensions surrounding constructions of LGBT trafficking victims.	That rather than utilising potentially harmful and inherently exclusionary criminalisation measures, stigmatising public health inquiries, and war projects, what is needed is an approach in which the key orienting concepts are not ‘blame’, ‘exceptionality’ and the LGBT trafficking victims themselves, but the harmful workings of systemic discrimination and inequality that operate, pre-exist and post-exist trafficking.
50	Cooper, T. (2011)	Fair trade sex: Reflections on god, sex, and economics.	To provide analysis based on the Feminist liberation theology circle to draw the line between sexual exploitation and the celebration of sex as a way to know God.	The hermeneutic circle provides a comprehensive analysis. Analysing the situation of sexual poverty using academic tools such as economics, politics, sociology, racial, sex and gender analysis, then assists in developing a theological analysis of

				sexuality and determining what concrete actions can be taken.
51	Dempsey,Michelle Madden (2012)	Sex trafficking and worker justice: Insights from Catholic social teaching	To illustrated how the lens of Catholic social teaching can inform our understanding of contemporary debates regarding sex trafficking and its relationship to worker justice.	The concepts of free labour, feminist abolitionism, and Catholic social teaching diverge in their perspectives on the interpretation of sex trafficking. However, they finally converge in their shared belief in the necessity of enacting structural reforms that promote enhanced justice and equality.
52	McKinney, Stephen J.Hill, Robert J.Hania, Honor (2015)	Child slavery and child labour	To discuss the worldwide phenomena of child slavery and child labour in the contemporary world and the response from Catholic Social Teaching.	Child slavery and child labour deny children their God-given dignity and freedom and deny them their right to education.
53	Vellem, V. S. (2014)	Modern slavery in the post-1994 South Africa? A critical ethical analysis of the National Development Plan promises for unemployment in South Africa.	To examine the language and grammar of the NDP to evaluate its response to the violent history of cheap, docile, and migratory labour in South Africa.	Work is associated with God or gods, in accordance with black African work principles. Modern slavery avoids the sacramental link even if God, being, and spirituality are components of employment.

54	Okyere-Manu, Beatrice (2015)	Modern day slavery: Ethical and theological implications for the Christian communities in South Africa.	To discuss the theological and ethical implications of human trafficking with particular reference to Christian communities South Africa.	Any theological and ethical engagement must take the lived experience of victims in to consideration.
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2.5. Additional Articles from 2020–2023.

Because the previous systematic review was conducted in 2020, there is a two-year interval between the 2021 and 2023. Consequently, a brief investigation was carried out utilising Google Scholar and the VU library to discover publications related to religion and human trafficking between 2021 and 2023. The search found fifteen articles which were also categorised into the three groups: religion and traffickers, religion and victims, and bystanders.

The first category is *religion and traffickers*. There were several studies that found religion potentially contributes to the facilitation or support of trafficking activities. Religion, as a belief system, can be exploited by traffickers for their own benefit. Juju rituals used by trafficking networks to keep their victims controlled, exploited, enslaved and in debt in the Nigerian context. A statement by Oba Ewuare II, king of the Benin kingdom, stated that Juju could not be used for trafficking purposes encourage victims to leave the human trafficking ring (Adeyinka et al., 2023). Another research explains how religion benefits traffickers by highlighting the vulnerability of Indonesian migrant labourers to human trafficking (Wetangterah, 2023). In the Indonesian context, religious significance is a motivating factor for people to work as migrant workers. However, the religious meaning does not align with the actual exploitation and violence faced by Indonesian migrant labourers.

The second category is *religion and victims of human trafficking*. Various articles demonstrate the significant impact of religion on victims' coping strategies and resilience. Hodge (2021) researched men who were trafficked from Asia and Latin America to the United States and examined the victims' coping mechanisms, including both general and spiritual approaches. The study revealed that participants utilised conventional coping strategies such as spirituality, work, and family and spiritual coping methods like prayer, God, and church (Hodge, 2021). Religion's impact on coping strategies was identified in a study by Pertek (Pertek, 2022), which focused on the resilience of African migrant women living in Tunisia. Participants utilised faith and religion to establish strategies for resilience, which involved the psychological capacity to endure harsh exploitation.

The final category is *Bystanders*. The articles in this category are divided into several themes. The first theme is the analysis of human trafficking from a religious perspective. Several articles develop an analysis from this perspective. Nkem (Nkem, 2021) developed an analysis of human trafficking in the Nigerian context, exploring the causal factors of human trafficking and offering religion as a solution. According to Nkem, human trafficking is caused by greed, poverty, lack of information, unemployment, and peer pressure. Since religion can influence people's morals as well as actions, it can be a solution for human trafficking. Again from the Nigerian context, research on human trafficking, slavery, and the Bible explores the implication of the concept of slavery in Paul's letter to Philemon (Uwaezuoke & Nwabuisi, 2023). Paul's letter to Philemon concerning Onesimus serves as a means to promote reintegration and recovery. In the presence of God, all humans are considered equal, promoting solidarity, love, and forgiveness. Another article related to human trafficking and the Bible, examines Christian responses to human trafficking in the light of the mission of Jesus as expressed in Luke 4:16-21 (Venter & Semmelink, 2020). The last article in this category explains the analysis of human trafficking in Indonesia and the thoughts of Albert Camus. This article explains that, according to Camus, suffering is part of human life and human life is futile. Camus' view is countered by explaining that God is in suffering. Through seeing God in suffering, victims of trafficking can live in hope.

The next theme is policy, containing articles analysing human trafficking, religion, and policy. Research on human trafficking and Islamic law highlights that the Quran and Sunnah secure the prohibition of human trafficking (Sadia & Abbasi, 2022). The Islamic legal system is compatible and cooperative with worldwide efforts to eliminate human trafficking. Alkharji's (Alkharji, 2023) research on Islamic Sharia and human trafficking also concludes the same findings that Islamic law aligns with international human rights as it upholds human dignity, a core value of Islam. A study on the legal impact of voodoo in Nigeria explains that voodoo is applied as a control mechanism against victims of human trafficking (Oluwatosin, 2023). The study recommends that the Nigerian government should amend the primary legislation of TIPPEAA 2015 by making voodoo explicit in the law and increasing the term of imprisonment from seven years to fifteen years or more to stop traffickers.

The final theme in the bystander category is advocacy, which consists of research relating to human trafficking, religion, and advocacy. As human trafficking is a complex crime, advocacy on this issue requires the involvement and cooperation of various parties. The role of the church in human trafficking is emphasised in an article that explores Revd Margaret Fowler's perspective on the relationship between trafficking, slavery, and sex work (Perkins & Lewis, 2023). In the context of the Negril Tourism Industry, sex workers need to be understood as victims of a societal system that exploits women. The church needs to stand up and assist victims of sex trafficking. Another article emphasised the importance of sharing common values between faith communities and social work (Knight et al., 2022). The findings suggest churches are open to collaborating with social work and other sectors for anti-trafficking work based on common social justice goals, shared values, and complementary practices. Similar findings were seen in an article that examined professional and religious approaches to care for West African victims of human trafficking in the Netherlands (ten Kate et al., 2021). Leaders of churches need to learn about assisting victims with recovery and therapy while social workers need to learn about the importance of a collective cultural approach for victims. Symmonds (2023) criticises the anti-trafficking approach overlaid and coded by white evangelicalism in North America, which uses norms of sexual, social, and racial purity in its interaction with and recovery of victims and survivors of human trafficking. Using Eucharistic imagery, the fight against human trafficking needs to be understood as Eucharistic solidarity (Symmonds, 2023). Where victims are not only physically rescued but also their relationships are restructured. The recognition of victims is moral and the vulnerability of victims is recognised equally, regardless of skin colour or ethnicity.

2.6 Conclusion

This systematic review has gathered relevant academic literature on human trafficking and religion to identify critical issues and examine the role of religion in human trafficking. The final classification generated 54 articles and 15 additional articles. The findings demonstrate that religion and human trafficking are close themes. Religion and human trafficking are inextricably linked in all aspects of human trafficking, including prevention, recruitment, placement, criminal investigation, recovery, policy, and reintegration. It influences the victims' willingness to participate in recruitment, in enduring exploitation, in reintegration, in legal proceedings, and even policy making.

The articles finally selected were then further classified into three categories: religion and the trafficker, religion and the victim, and religion and the bystander. The interrelationship of religion and human trafficking issues is noticeable in articles that narrate slavery stories in religious texts, rituals, and perspectives to justify the act. Moreover, some religious rituals can even be recognised as human trafficking actions. The inextricable link between religion and the victim of human trafficking emerges in articles that describes the role of religion in meaning making, becoming a primary factor in coping mechanisms and therapy process. In the final category, ‘bystander’ describes the many ways that religion is involved in human trafficking: policy, advocacy, and ethics. Religion and human trafficking are intertwined themes and have a bidirectional relationship.

The findings also describe the ambivalent role of religion in human trafficking. This is in line with previous research that found ambivalence in the role of religion in violence. Religion has the potential to promote peace, but it can also be used to mobilise people to commit violence and justify it as a duty or privilege (Appleby, 2000). Ambivalence is a prominent feature of religious traditions, manifest in the attitudes exhibited in the beliefs of many religious practitioners and the qualities embodied in conceptions of divinity (Burley, 2021).

In addition, the findings also emphasise that analyses of religion and human trafficking need to pay attention to the relationship between phenomena that occur personally to victims but also to community dynamics. Silberman (2005) highlights how, as a system of meaning, religion influences both an individual’s and a community’s beliefs about the world, contingencies, expectations, goals, actions, and emotions. In community, religion is a collective meaning system that enables groups and group members to make sense of their shared experiences, such as their historical relationships, more recent relationships with other groups, and the factors that have influenced group goals and behaviour. As a meaning system, religion is significant to determine both people and community assistance.

On the other hand, it is argued that religious meaning is a social construction determined by context. This phenomenon triggers religion to continually evaluate the rituals, reinterpret texts, and continue to reform the perspectives. Involving human rights themes in religious education and discussing human trafficking is necessary. Conversely,

discussion and analysis about human trafficking must involve a religious perspective to grasp a more holistic perspective.

Furthermore, the systematic review demonstrates a lack of empirical research, with just a small number of studies incorporating the victim's viewpoint. The victim's viewpoint and empirical research are linked, although the use of empirical research in an article does not necessarily ensure the inclusion of the victim's perspective. In order to obtain a victim's viewpoint, it is necessary for research to make an effort to find out and listen to the victim's own narrative, utilising empirical research methods. Research that focuses on victims' perspectives is an important asset for understanding public opinion and for developing policies that better consider victims' needs.

Empirical research that listens intently to the narratives of victims can incorporate findings from all three categories identified in the systematic review. Researchers can discern victims' encounters with religious roles that either endorse human trafficking or provide advantages to traffickers. However, it can also discern the role of religion that benefits the victim. Similarly, this refers to the impact and authority of religion inside the community, particularly in advocating for specific causes, shaping policies, and determining ethical standards. Likewise, it is essential for research to focus on the intricate dynamics of the interplay between individuals and communities.

CHAPTER THREE: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provides a systematic review of literature on human trafficking and religion. The review demonstrates that religion and human trafficking are inextricably linked and play an ambivalent role. The influence of religion on human trafficking can have both beneficial and detrimental implications. The systematic review also highlights the lack of empirical research on the intersection of religion and human trafficking, specifically concerning the perspectives of victims of human trafficking within the migrant labour sector. Based on the gap, this study aims to contribute to empirical research to investigate the lived religion by victims of human trafficking.

This chapter aims to explain the methodology and process of the field research. The empirical element of the research consisted of three stages: interviews with participants using semi-structured interviews. The second stage was to apply Grounded Theory data analysis to the interviews. The third stage analysed the relationship between each category to determine the participant's lived religion, especially regarding suffering, coping, and the role of religion in it.

The most challenging aspect of the research was conducting the field investigation during the coronavirus pandemic. Due to the sensitivity of the research topics and the unfamiliarity of participants with online meetings, telephone or online interviews could not be substituted for in-person research. Some aspects of the initial research plan had to be modified to accommodate the various restrictions and regulations.

As the researcher, it was imperative to consider the prevailing local culture and practices in addition to implementing health standards. For instance, participants who residing in rural regions who are unaccustomed to wearing masks may interpret engaging in a conversation while wearing a mask as a display of disregard. Consequently, interviews were conducted in locations with good air circulation.

3.2 Empirical Research Methodology

3.2.1 Research Location

The primary area of the empirical research is Timor Island, located among the islands of the East Nusa Tenggara province. The study included participants from various places within Timor Island, namely Kupang City, Kupang District, and North Central East District. The selection of the research location was driven by two reasons: the high number of human trafficking cases in the region and the fact that the researcher has a deep understanding of the social and cultural aspects of the Timorese.

The majority of the participants belong to the main church in East Nusa Tenggara, the Evangelical Church in Timor, to which the researcher also belongs. Religious belief and experience research must also take into account the religious tradition in which the individual is embedded. In addition, knowledge of the participant's religious traditions and narrative of lived experience is required for research (Hermans, 2002). On a more pragmatic note, it is essential to involve local pastors in approaching potential participants for this research, as it involves collecting sensitive narrative.

3.2.2 Participants

Participants are selected with the assumption that they are able to contribute relevant knowledge (Engler & Stausberg, 2013). The criteria for selecting participants in the current study were migrant workers who had experienced victimisation. The study initially aimed to recruit 15 participants, consisting of 10 direct victims (people who personally experienced trafficking) and five indirect victims (relatives of trafficking victims). However, in the actual field research, 19 participants were interviewed, consisting of eleven direct victims and eight indirect victims. Participants increased because some felt more comfortable being interviewed with their husbands or wives.

Through conducting interviews with participants from both categories, the research gained a more complete understanding of the consequences of human trafficking. The investigation captured the narratives of trafficking victims and their family members. Stories from victims' families provide evidence that human trafficking has broader and more complex impacts, even when victims are reunited with their families. The exploitation and violence experienced by individual victims impact their familial

relationships and vice versa. The impact experienced by the victim's family will affect the victim's suffering.

From the beginning of the research, the researcher purposely selected a small number of participants, considering the difficulty of finding human trafficking victims who were willing to open up about their experiences. In Indonesia, individuals tend to avoid sharing their experiences of suffering (Pakpahan, 2017). It takes extra time and a particular approach to build the trust needed to help victims be willing to be interviewed.

In the process of recruiting participants, it was easier to approach female victims than male victims. Researchers only found two male participants who were willing to be interviewed. This situation shows that in addition to the 'silent culture' that makes victims reluctant to share their experiences of suffering, patriarchal culture is also another layer that silences the voices of victims, especially male victims. A patriarchal culture that favours men over women and children makes men appear firmer, so revealing their experiences of violence and exploitation is considered a weakness.

The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 50 years old. Almost all participants had only primary education. They were employed as housewives, performed gardening and odd-job tasks, and lacked regular employment or fixed incomes. The participants' demographics demonstrate that this study listens to the narratives of ordinary people from the grassroots. Tables 4 describes the demographics of participants who personally experienced trafficking and Table 5 describes the demographics of the participants who are relatives of trafficking victims.

Table 4.
Demographic characteristics of the participants

1. Victim²

No	Name		Marital status	Last Education	Type of work	Destination	Working period
1	Bia	Male	Single	Elementary school	Palm Oil Labour	Malaysia	1998–2013.
2	Doroti	Female	Single	Junior High school	Domestic worker	Pekan baru	February – October 2008.
3	Erika	Female	Married	Elementary school	Swallow's nest factory worker ³	Medan	2012–2013
4	Hesky	Female	Married	Senior high school	Domestic worker	Malaysia	2012–2015
5	Leona	Female	Married	Senior high school	Elder Caregiver	Malaysia	2006–2008.
6	Maria	Female	Married	Elementary school	Elder Caregiver	Malaysia	April – December 2015
7	Nio	Male	Single	Elementary school	Palm Oil Labour	Malaysia	1999–2013.
8	Omri	Female	Married	Elementary school	Domestic worker	Malaysia	2012–2016
9	Siti	Female	Single parent	Junior high school	Domestic worker	Malaysia	2008–2011
10	Veronica	Female	Married	Senior high school	Domestic worker	Jakarta	2017–2019
11	Yuka	Female	Married	Senior high school	Domestic worker	Malaysia	2016–2018

² All names in this thesis are anonymised.

³ Erika was employed at a factory that produces swallow nests. Swallow's nest is a home for swallows made from the hardened saliva of swallows. Swallow's nest is a food substance that is believed to be highly nutritious.

2. Family

No	Name		Marital status	Relationship with the victims
1	Melki	Male	Married	Parents
2	Milka	Female	Married	Parents
3	Marthen	Male	Married	Parents
4	Tersia	Female	Married	Parents
5	Yohana	Female	Married	Parents
6	Norma	Female	Single Parent	Parents
7	Silas	Male	Married	Parents
8	Silvia	Female	Married	Parents

3.2.3 Interviews

This research applied semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection. According to Bremborg (2013), the semi-structured interview is an interview process that consists of some central themes that should be touched upon by the interviewer and the participants. However, there is a possibility for new questions and themes (Engler & Stausberg, 2013). The participant becomes a subject who can also co-determine the interview process. It gives space for the participants to tell their stories freely but still makes sure that the main themes based on the research questions are addressed (suffering experience, healing process, and role of religion).

The interview process started in November 2020 and continued until March 2021. There were two methods for approaching participants. For participants who were known to myself and had assisted in the past, a direct approach was made to enquire about their participation. For other participants who were not previously known, local religious pastors assisted in the approach. Before this procedure, an application for research permission was submitted to the Synod Assembly of the Evangelical Church in Timor. The approach by the local pastor was very helpful in gaining the participants' trust.

Covid 19 significantly disrupted the interview process, as researcher had to ensure that the research followed health procedures. In addition to health procedures, applicable local

customs and culture had to be considered. Initially, it was intended for researcher to reside with the participant, but due to health protocols, this was not possible. Some interviews were conducted at the participant's home, while others were conducted outside the house, in a comfortable location for the participant. Some participants chose to be interviewed away from their homes because they did not want other family members to hear about their experiences. Some participants, especially those who chose an interview location different from their place of residence, were participants who hid the incidents of exploitation and abuse they experienced and avoided sharing this information with anyone, including their closest relatives. Some others were participants who had recounted incidents of exploitation and abuse; however, their relatives showed a refusal to acknowledge or accept their narratives. Narratives of violence were seen as a sensitive topic that could potentially bring shame to the family. Therefore, it was advised to refrain from sharing them with strangers.

The interviews occurred in informal daily life settings, thus avoiding the extra stress of a formal setting. I began with an initial introductory discussion to obtain informed consent regarding confidentiality and anonymity. The informed consent also ensures the participant's opportunity to stop the interview when they feel too much pain or sense of trauma to continue the interview.

In an interview, the researcher follows the participant's narrative about their experiences and applies funnel-shaped indirect questions (Kvale, 2007). Kvale (2007) explains that the interview question focuses on producing knowledge and promoting interpersonal relationships as a good interview interaction. Rambo (2010) reminds that in an interview in the context of trauma, the interviewer has an essential role in "co-birthing," an experience in which the participants' past is acknowledged but, in some way, the participants will be transformed through the re-connective presence of an outside witness.

Interview data is regarded as narrative material. The narrative allows a person to integrate their life experiences to discover life's meaning (R. R. Ganzevoort, 2020). When telling a narrative, individuals describe the past event, emotion, or experience and interpret it (Stanley, 2017). In addition, telling and retelling one's life story contributes to forming identity and future planning.

While a narrative represents an individual's life experience, it is essential to recognise that that narrative is influenced and moulded by the person's interactions with others. The life narrative is shaped by a particular location, period, or circumstance. According to social constructionism, narratives construct personal meanings co-determined by social interaction (Hermans, 2002). Social interaction determines the intersubjective interpretation of our personal experience, social structures, knowledge, and relational context (Sremac, 2018). Narratives are factual descriptions and socially constructed articulations of reality through a particular language and context. In other words, individual narratives can also expose the situation of a community.

Related to religion, the narratives show how people relate to God. As a part of the life story, a person's religious beliefs and experiences are an element in an ongoing process of negotiation about meaning. In the context of trauma, Rambo (2010) describes the interaction between experience, biblical and theological texts, and witness literature, underlining the communal dimension of faith and the importance of embodied faith as an essential factor. Relations with others are an integral part of the healing process of trauma. Thus, both the religious life and the healing process are determined by social construction.

3.2.4 Data Analysis

Grounded Theory is a method to systematically develop a theory from data (Engler & Stausberg, 2013). This method was chosen because it suits the purpose of this research, which is to conduct empirical research from the victims' perspective, engaging in listening to the testimonies of those who have experienced human trafficking and formulating theories based on their perspectives. This research explores the lived religion of the participants, including how they experience the sacred in their daily lives in the context of human trafficking. All the analysis process was assisted by ATLAS.ti website

The theory generation followed the three stages of codes, conceptual categories, and interpretative themes (Engler & Stausberg, 2013). Coding is the process of attaching conceptual labels to data (Urquhart, 2013). This research applied bottom-up coding because the codes are suggesting by the data. The coding process began with initial coding through word-by-word coding of essential words such as identity, city, and recruiter. It then continued with line-by-line coding to code meaningful sentences, such as the reasons

for becoming a migrant worker or the participant's comprehension of suffering. It was followed by incident-to-incident coding, such as violence and exploitation experienced by the participant. Examples of coding in this first stage can be seen in appendix 3.

The second stage was a focused coding stage to construct categories in which the codes are more selective, and conceptual. The relations between the codes were described as conceptual categories. Focused coding is a higher level of abstraction than initial coding and used to synthesise large segments of data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010). This stage compared and combined the initial codes to determine the strongest analytical code or new code that captured several initial codes as categories. All codes generated in the first stage were clustered into six categories. This clustering process was assisted by the main research question (see appendix 3)

1. Recruitment, placement process, and repatriation.
2. Violence and exploitation experience
3. Coping means
4. Perspective about God
5. Perspective about suffering
6. Growth in the aftermath

In the next stage, the conceptual categories are developed into the central themes or theory (Charmaz, 2006). The categories that were classified in the second stage were developed into themes that became the main themes in the following chapters of this research. The first and second categories were brought together in one theme that addressed the experiences of exploitation and violence described in Chapter Four, entitled 'Fragile Agency and The Role of Religion'. The third category, coping means, was developed into a theme discussed in Chapter Five, entitled 'Coping in Adversity'. Furthermore, the fourth and fifth categories are united in the theme of meaning construction discussed in Chapter Six, which focuses on explaining the meaning of suffering. The last category, growth in the aftermath, is discussed in Chapter Seven, entitled 'Growing from Suffering', which examines the participants' growth experiences in the aftermath.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter aims to outline the empirical research method which was employed in this study, and how it was employed in order to address the research questions and contribute towards reaching the objectives. The study was conducted on Timor Island and involved interviews with nineteen participants. The interview method involved in-depth interviews to record the participants' narratives. Interview results were analysed using grounded theory as a method of analysis. The interview transcriptions were coded to produce six categories: recruitment, violence and exploitation experience, coping tools, perspective about God, perspective about suffering, and growth in the aftermath. These six categories are discussed and considered in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER FOUR: FRAGILE AGENCY AND THE ROLE OF RELIGION

4.1 Introduction⁴

Based on the six main categories identified by data analysis, this chapter focuses on the first and second categories. Category one explores participant experience as migrant workers, including recruiting, movement, placement, and repatriation. Category two examines the factors that have motivated participants to work as migrant workers and explain their experiences of exploitation and violence. Furthermore, current chapter also attempts to understand the role of religion in the process.

A significant strand that comes to the fore is the significance of interpersonal relationships in trauma as an answer to the question, How did the participants experience human trafficking as a traumatic event? And, What was the role of religion in this suffering? According to Herman (2015), traumatic events damage people's fundamental relationships causing the breakdown of families, friendships, and societal ties. A person's sense of self-worth is developed and shaped through interpersonal relationships. Consequently, when a traumatic event shatters an individual's self-worth and triggers a profound questioning of existence, it disrupts the emotional connection and purpose framework that binds people and communities together. The damaging impacts of traumatic experiences on relationships are not a secondary consequence of trauma but rather the primary outcome.

Likewise, human trafficking is a traumatic event that profoundly affects the victims' relationships with others. It not only damages the victims but has consequences for their families and the community (Greenbaum, 2017b; Juabsamai & Taylor, 2018). The victim's basic psychological framework has been entirely fragmented, along with the complex structure of relationships and significance that unite individuals and societies.

According to Herman's trauma theory related to interpersonal relationships, this chapter indicates that the participants' experiences with exploitation and violence resulted in three

⁴ This chapter is an expansion of an article that published in the journal *Practical Theology*. Liliya Wetangterah, "Fragile agency: the lived religion of human trafficking victims in East Nusa Tenggara," *Practical Theology* (2023): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2023.2221586>.

types of alienation: self-alienation, familial alienation, and communal alienation. Religion is a factor in all three forms of alienation. The chapter concludes with a reflection on alienation that refers to Marx, Seeman, and Tillich.

4.2 Agency in Poverty: God's Way

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees freedom of movement and labour (UN, 1948). The desire to have decent work and improve the quality of life in the future is a universal human desire. In pursuit of this desire, individuals are willing to relocate to alternative geographical locations at home and abroad. They move to alternative geographical locations to obtain gainful employment that enables them to provide for their families and achieve better prospects in the future.

As stated by International Labour Migration (2020), Indonesia serves as a main source country for migrant labour, particularly in sectors characterised by low wages. The presence of migrant labour in rural communities can have a positive impact on economic development through the facilitation of skill enhancement and the inflow of remittances. Particularly, East Nusa Tenggara, an archipelagic province located in the Eastern region of Indonesia, plays a significant role in providing a large labour force to various industries, including domestic work and palm oil production, both within and outside the borders of Indonesia.

Poverty is a major cause of many related problems, including limited access to education, early marriages, domestic violence, and unemployment due to unstable jobs. For people living in areas characterised by poverty, social inequality, inadequate infrastructure, scarce employment opportunities, and sluggish economic activity, the offer to move to urban areas or abroad for better jobs is attractive (Wetangterah, 2018). The participants experience that recruitment occurs in urban and rural areas, recruiters target low-income families, people with low education and unskilled. Recruiters actively focus on regions with high concentrations of migrant labourers.

Participant stories describe that women and children who have suffered from domestic violence are the most vulnerable groups for becoming migratory labourers. They have lost their sense of security in their home environment. Within a society marked by patriarchal

conventions, women consistently find themselves at a disadvantage, especially when they are subjected to domestic violence. Working in a location remote from their home, with the guarantee of a generous remuneration, is a challenging but attractive proposition. They avoid domestic violence and can finance their own needs and those of their families.

Participant willingness to work as a migrant worker is a form of agency within poverty that also intersects with religion. The participants perceived that becoming a migrant worker was God's way to escape from poverty and the social issues around poverty. The belief gives them the courage to take risks.

Maria narrates her main reason to work as a migrant worker:

No one wants to work away from home to be beaten and tortured. I'm always fighting with my husband. My husband constantly beats me, and our lives are never peaceful. My husband and I don't have any issues, but his family constantly interferes with our domestic affairs. His family is always fighting with me, while my husband is always defending his family. I never start fights; it's always my husband's family who does. This is becoming too much for me to bear. I'm already feeling down. We have never been at peace while my husband has been unemployed; we have four children, and their needs are growing. I reasoned that it would be better for me to work away from home to earn money to pay for my children education. Working away from home may be God's way of allowing me to work in peace while providing for my children... I believed in prayer, so I went to work in Malaysia and I prayed in the prayer team for it, that time, I thought it was God's way to rid me from household problems and get money for the needs of my children.
(Maria)

Maria encountered domestic issues inside her marital relationship at the time when the trafficker recruited her. During that period, she was in a marriage with three children, although her marital relationship was characterised by unhappiness. Maria stated that her husband's family consistently intruded on their domestic matters. The presence of interference always led to conflict between Maria and her husband. Frequently, disagreements culminated in instances of physical violence perpetrated by the spouse.

Maria was visited by a recruiter who told her about employment opportunities in Malaysia. The recruiter said in a prayer session with one of the prayer teams, he received a vision from God that Maria was appointed by God to work in Malaysia. Maria, who has been actively participating in prayer communion since childhood, believes that those who are involved in praying are basically honest people. Maria and one of her acquaintances then went to the prayer meeting to ask for God's guidance and participation, with the belief that working as a migrant worker is the way God has laid out to avoid domestic violence and provide an opportunity to earn money for her children.

Like Maria, Omri was recruited to work as a migrant labourer when she found herself in a situation where their home was no longer a conducive environment. Omri is the mother of five children. After the death of her first husband, Omri's family forced her to marry her first husband's brother. Unfortunately, Omri's second marriage was not successful. Her second husband was unemployed, and he had no desire to work on their farm, they were constantly in conflict. Omri had to work to support the children financially and found it hard to meet the growing demands of the family. Under the circumstances, domestic work away from home seemed to be the best option available to her at the time and part of God's plan for her.

At the time, I thought it was the best option God had given me. I frequently became enraged and told my husband that we should simply divorce. I was irritated when I saw the state of my household. I don't feel comfortable at home. My husband's sister also frequently argues with me. Despite the fact that I have returned from Malaysia, I am working in a city far from my village. When the kids call, I come home. I'd rather work from a distance to earn money. (Omri)

Erika, a female woman who has experienced violence, recounted a similar narrative. At the time of her recruitment in Kupang, she was encountering marital difficulties with her husband. Following her marriage and the subsequent birth of three children, Erika discovered that her husband was engaged in an extramarital relationship with her closest friend. According to Erika, in her role as a wife, she consistently exerted much effort in caring for her children and generating income to meet the financial requirements of their family. Because of the extramarital relationship, Erika decided to terminate her marriage

and live alone. During this emotional distress, Erika was offered a work opportunity at a manufacturing facility specialising in swallow's nests in Medan.

At that time, I went to work because I felt hurt. We were married and had three children but my husband had an affair with my best friend until they had children. Our households were not blessed by the church and were not recorded in the civil records, so when my husband and I separated, the children were in husband's custody. When I got married I worked in the fields, cooked, took care of the house, took care of the children, I served my husband's family but what I got was that my husband betrayed me. I chose to leave my husband's house, return to my parents, then go to Medan to work... I pray, God maybe this way so I can be useful for children. (Erika)

Erika believes that working as migrant worker, earning money for her children, was God's way of enhancing her family's well-being.

With the same conviction as Erika, Veronika also thinks that working as a domestic worker away from home is God's way to save her from her husband's betrayal. Veronika's husband had an affair with a close relative after they were married and had had five children. Since then, her husband has always beaten Veronika, and their household has never been peaceful. Finally, Veronika's husband decided to live with a new wife and moved out of the house. As a result, the economic resources of the family were lost and because they could not afford school fees, three of their children were compelled to leave school and find employment. Veronika chose to work as a domestic worker in Jakarta in order to prevent her other two children from dropping out of school. Veronika describes the situation:

At the time, I was desperate to work in Jakarta. After having an affair with a close relative, the husband moved in with a new wife. Who is willing to lend us money? The older children have dropped out of school, and I do not want these two to follow suit. I beg God to assist me in proving to my family, I can support my children even though without my husband help. If he has a good life with his new wife, I will be able to earn my own money so that I

can live a better life with my children... I believe that because this is the way of God, God will bless me. (Veronica)

Sitti, a mother of three children, recounted a similar narrative of family difficulty. Sitti has been married three times and has subsequently given birth to three children, each of whom possesses a different biological father. None of the three matrimonial unions were acknowledged as valid weddings sanctioned by religious establishments and duly registered in accordance with legal protocols.

The circumstances have led to Sitti experiencing familial exclusion, as well as enduring instances of mistreatment, including verbal and physical aggression, inflicted upon her by her parents. Furthermore, Sitti frequently encountered disparaging remarks from her neighbours. Sitti experienced a profound sense of purposelessness because of the humiliation inflicted upon her by her family and underwent a deep depression and a perception of familial disgrace due to the dissolution of three successive marriages. Sitti perceived her employment as a domestic worker in Malaysia as a God's opportunity to restore her family's honour and dignity.

I've seen relatives and neighbours who work in Malaysia return to their homes to build houses and give funds to families. There are relatives in Malaysia who already own homes and land because of their work. So, I believe I can, too. I thought, through the opportunity to work in Malaysia, God opened the opportunity for me, so I could pay for my mistakes to my parents. I have embarrassed my family; my father and my mother are ashamed of me. I hope I can make my parents proud. (Sitti)

Participants were significantly motivated to pursue migrant professions due to the desire for family fulfilment. Rural communities with limited job opportunities encourage people to pursue better work possibilities outside of their local area. Following the demise of his parents, Bia, the eldest among the siblings, assumed the duty of overseeing the well-being and maintenance of his brothers and sisters. Bia's sense of responsibility compelled him to consider working in the palm oil field as a means of generating income to support his siblings. Bia explained that working as a migrant worker was God's answer to the difficulties of life:

At that time, my father and mother had died, and as the first child, I was responsible for three siblings. I ask God how could I live and support my brothers and sisters? Then at the time of working in the garden, at that time, there were people looking for a palm chief worker, many people in this village have also gone to work on the palm plantation. I was also invited by a relative, and we both went to work. (Bia)

For some participants like Leona, the decision to become a migrant worker was a very difficult one. Leona, a mother of three children, decided to take a household job in Malaysia in order to help her husband finance the education of their children. Leona stated that choosing to engage in work that separated her from her partner and children was a challenging choice, especially as her youngest son was just five years old at the time. Leona's belief that working as a migrant job was God's way to make money for the children's education, leads Leona to strengthen herself to go to Malaysia.

I went to Malaysia to help my husband earn money so that my children could attend school. My goal is to support my husband's income... The decision was difficult because I left behind my children, the youngest of whom was still young at the time. According to me, this was God's way of altering our lives... I am strong due to my prayers... My husband and I pray that God will look out for us. Additionally, we pray in a prayer team. Before leaving the house we have family prayers. (Leona)

Additional factors contributing to the willingness of participants to work as a migrant worker were the environmental influences, including the positive outcomes experienced by previous migrant workers. The participants live in a geographical area with a large concentration of migrant workers. Former migrant workers who returned to the village came home with money and recounted the success stories of their work abroad. These success stories are an interesting factor, in that working as a migrant worker seems to be an honourable experience. Hesky was the participant who explained that her desire to work as a migrant worker was influenced in this way. For Heski, if God can help her neighbour to work abroad and succeed in bringing money, then God will help her too. Heski narrates,

I was persuaded by someone to work abroad. But I also wanted to improve the family's economy. I saw many of former migrant workers were already successful and living well... Listening to the stories of the neighbours, I thought if God opened the way for them, God would open the way to me, too.
(Heski)

Yuka has similar narrative to Heski, Yuka explains that

At that time, there were a great number of neighbours and young friends in the village who went abroad to work. Former migrant workers who had returned to their villages shared the experience of boarding an airplane and the excitement of the outside world. At least once in my life, I want to have a similar experience; I've been on a plane once. I was determined to travel to Malaysia without my mother's permission, so I prayed, visited my father's grave, and prayed there. I travelled with only a few articles of clothing and a Bible. I believe that God will protect me if I bring my Bible and pray. I was desperate for cash and wanted to board a plane... After I returned to my home. I saved the plane ticket. (Yuka)

The decision to work as a migrant worker is an intersection of many issues related to poverty and religious meaning. The findings reveal that human trafficking in the participants' contexts is also a religious issue. Religion plays significant role in driving participant willingness to work as migrant workers. The participants perceive being a migrant worker as God's way, as a form of agency in their problems. The religious meaning is manifested through the participants' actions of praying before leaving their families and carrying a Bible. Through praying and bringing the Bible, participants believe that God will take care of them and the families they leave behind.

4.3 Fragile Agency

The religious meaning of the participants who comprehended migrant work as God's way to alleviate their poverty was then confronted with the existing reality. The participants underwent a risky procedure to become migrant workers, a procedure full of traps and vulnerabilities to human trafficking. Exploitation and violence occur in the entire process from recruitment, placement, and through to repatriation. Participant agency within poverty turns out to be a fragile agency.

4.3.1 Recruitment and transport

I used to work in the rice fields, so my feet were usually submerged. At that time, a close family came to the rice fields and asked me to work in Malaysia... At that time they were looking for a lot of people to work in palm oil. (Bia)

I was invited by my neighbours, many young people in our village went to work abroad. (Heski)

There is one acquaintance from the city, he often comes to our village to recruit people who want to work as domestic workers. He asked me to work. (Doroti)

Recruiters visit people's homes to offer them jobs as migrant workers and employ various means of recruitment. Participants reported that the recruiters were neighbours, colleagues, acquaintances, or relatives with whom they already had a close relationship. It is easier for the recruiter to gain trust because they are a well-known person.

The type of recruitment process has negative consequences. Martin and Marla, parents of a migrant worker, spoke of how they chose not to report the recruiter to the police even though they lost contact with their daughter while she was working in Makassar and she subsequently died without a clear explanation. The recruiters were close relatives, the wife of a respected member of the family or community. They do not want their familial ties to be disrupted because the husband of the recruiter is one of the family's decision-makers. Yuka's situation is identical. She was unable to report her situation to the police because

the recruiter was a close relative of her parents. Yuka and her mother remained silent and did not question the exploitation and violence they endured for fear of harming their relationship.

The recruiters commonly promise high salaries, safe living conditions, simple work, and quick processing. In addition, to persuade prospective migrant workers and their families, recruiters utilise a cultural practice known as *Oko mama*.⁵ This is a cultural custom of politely requesting permission. In the process of recruiting prospective migrant workers, *Oko mama* is filled with an amount of 1,000,000– 2,000,000 Rupiah (60–150 Euro). The recruiter manipulates *Oko mama* as a tool to obtain family permission, while prospective migrant workers and families interpret *Oko mama* from a cultural perspective as a sign of respect, appreciation, and proof that recruiters are responsible people (Samdoko & Adhari, 2022). The utilisation of *Oko mama* as a means to obtain permission and establish confidence in the recruitment process places the victim's family in a vulnerable situation. Parents or families avoid reporting cases of their children being subjected to exploitation or violence because the recruiters provide *Oko mama* as evidence of the parent's approval.

After the recruiter has managed to collect the prospective migrant workers, they transport the potential employees from the villages to Kupang, where they are distributed by the migrant worker agent. Recruiters and agents assure a simple, instant, and cost-free process. They employ the bondage debt method in which all costs, including transportation, lodging, and administrative fees from village to destination, are borne by the agent but recorded as debt to be repaid through salary deduction. In other words, migrant workers will work without pay during the wage deduction period, which lasts at least six months. The longer a potential employee remains at the recruiter's or agent's office, the greater the debt and the longer the salary deduction period.

The bondage debt recruitment method benefits prospective employees because they do not have to take care of the necessary documents, nor do they have to spend money on travel and document administration costs. However, at the same time, bondage debt is an agent's

⁵ *Oko mama* is a box filled with betel nuts and decorated with muti or beads based on traditional motifs from the local community. *Oko mama* is a polite way to begin a meeting or conversation. *Oko mama* is usually given to visitors to the house, at the start of any customary conversation, or a conversation that is respected and considered important in the village. *Oko mama* values customs, diversity, unity, and familiarity among the parties involved (Samdoko & Adhari, 2022).

way of controlling prospective employees. With such mechanisms, agents hold power and control so that workers are not only fully dependent on agents but must also submit and obey. This situation makes migrant workers vulnerable to exploitation.

Prospective workers who are eligible to work abroad will be sent abroad. Yuka describes the process.

The recruiter promises an easy process. I was only asked to bring some clothes. The agent handled and paid for the identification card, passport, and visa. From Kupang to Bengkalis. My passport and visa were made in Siak, Bengkalis. I arrived in Bengkalis on 12 June 2016 and entered Malaysia on 16 June 2016; in my opinion, because the agent is giving bribes, the process is easy. During our trip, there are always airport officers who direct us. (Yuka)

During the recruitment process, agents assist in arranging the required documents such as identity cards, passports, and visas. Agents have a distinct network that encompasses multiple parties engaged in the production of all the necessary papers, which enhances the efficiency and expediency of document management for the agents.

Sitti said that she was sent to Semarang and stayed in an agency shelter for a month to attend language training and learn how to use electronic household appliances, as well as to make passport and visa arrangements. Meanwhile, Leona was sent to Jakarta and lived for seven months in an agency shelter for training and document preparation. Maria, Omri, and Heski tell a slightly different story because they lived in an agency shelter in Kupang for several weeks to apply for visas without receiving any training.

Recruiters and agents will attempt to pass potential migrant workers through the selection process by employing various means, including identity fraud. Omri shares her story:

I didn't think I'd be chosen to work abroad. I thought I was too old, so I was sceptical about passing the selection. I obtained a passport at the Kupang immigration office. My place and year of birth on my ID card and passport were falsified by the recruiter. I was born in Amarasi Selatan, but my ID

card and passport state that I was born in Paku Baun. I was born in 1970, but this was written in 1980. When I was in the car going to the immigration office, Andi the recruiter, while driving the car, kept reminding me that I had to say that I was born in 1980. (Omri)

Melki, the father of a child who tragically passed away in Malaysia, mentioned identity fraud. Melki went to several domestic worker distribution agents to look for Linda, his daughter, who ran away from home to work in Malaysia. However, because Linda's name had been changed for the identity documents, they could not find any information about her. Such changes in identity mean that migrant workers are difficult to track down by their parents or families.

When Melki received the news of his daughter's death, he was devastated. The body of his child was returned to him with numerous injuries indicative of violent acts, was severely shattered and unrecognisable. Observing a Y-shaped trace of stitches on the front chest, Melki hypothesised it to be an autopsy mark. Melki initially declined to receive the body because the name and address listed on the passport did not correspond with those of his daughter. Melki subsequently consented to the body after discovering a birthmark. Melki shares the story:

My daughter's name is Linda, but it was spelled Merlin, and her address is also different. So, I refused to sign the letter of acceptance. I was asked to sign the acceptance of the body before the police officers departed. "Sir, hold on, we must report this to the City Police so that this casket can be opened; only then will I be able to confirm whether this is my daughter, as the name on the passport and the letter are clearly different. I refuse to accept the corpse of another person's child." Unfortunately, the police refused. (Melki)

The transport process for potential workers who work in oil palm plantations differs slightly. According to Nio, they were transported to the workplace by recruiters in the absence of appropriate papers. It was expected that these persons would partake in illegal employment to generate income until they could financially attain legal status. They are transported in big groups by ship. Nio describes the journey:

We sailed from Nunukan to Malaysia. We have two groups of 25 people each, for a total of around 50 people. We travelled by ship from Kupang to Maumere and stayed for four nights. We took a boat from Maumere to Nunukan. We stayed in Nunukan for a month. We were promised that we would make passports in Nunukan, but we did not. Our agents and recruiters bring us to work illegally. We must pay debts to agents and collect funds to obtain temporary passports because we work illegally and are paid very little. It was difficult to come to work as illegal workers, but we didn't have a choice, so we just followed the instructions. (Nio)

Prospective employees resided at an agent's shelter or a recruiter's house in Kupang or in the cities they pass through. On departing the village, they are no longer permitted to contact their families or other individuals or leave the shelter to prevent them from escaping or sustaining injuries. These social restrictions apply to both foreign and Indonesian migrant labourers.

In certain instances, even having a telephone number was forbidden for potential migrant labourers, specifically for domestic workers in Malaysia and Singapore. This is exemplified by the narrative of Norma, the mother of a labourer employed in Singapore. As her daughter prepared to depart from the home, Norma assisted in discreetly concealing a telephone number within her underwear.

My daughter informed me that she was prohibited from bringing her cell phone to Singapore. She wrote down the phone numbers of each family member on a piece of paper. Then, we open the bra's stitches to conceal the paper, close them with new stitches, and place the bra in the bag. She marked the bra so it would not be worn or washed. She was not permitted to travel with a suitcase or cell phone. (Norma)

Sitti had the identical experience. She was aware of the prohibition against carrying telephone numbers by a former migrant worker. Before leaving home, Sitti noted down the telephone numbers of her friends and family and hid them in her underwear seams. Sitti explained,

If we want to go to work in Malaysia, we have to follow their rules. We were not allowed to bring cell phones, even cell phone numbers were not allowed. So, what we did was, we tuck our cell phone numbers on our shirts or pants with hidden stitches. But we must not wash the pants or shirts so that if something happens to us, it can be a sign for the family to recognise us. When we arrived in Semarang, we were thoroughly inspected. Sometimes our luggage will be replaced. You can't even take the Bible. We were told that we would be working with employers who were mostly Muslim or Chinese. (Sitti)

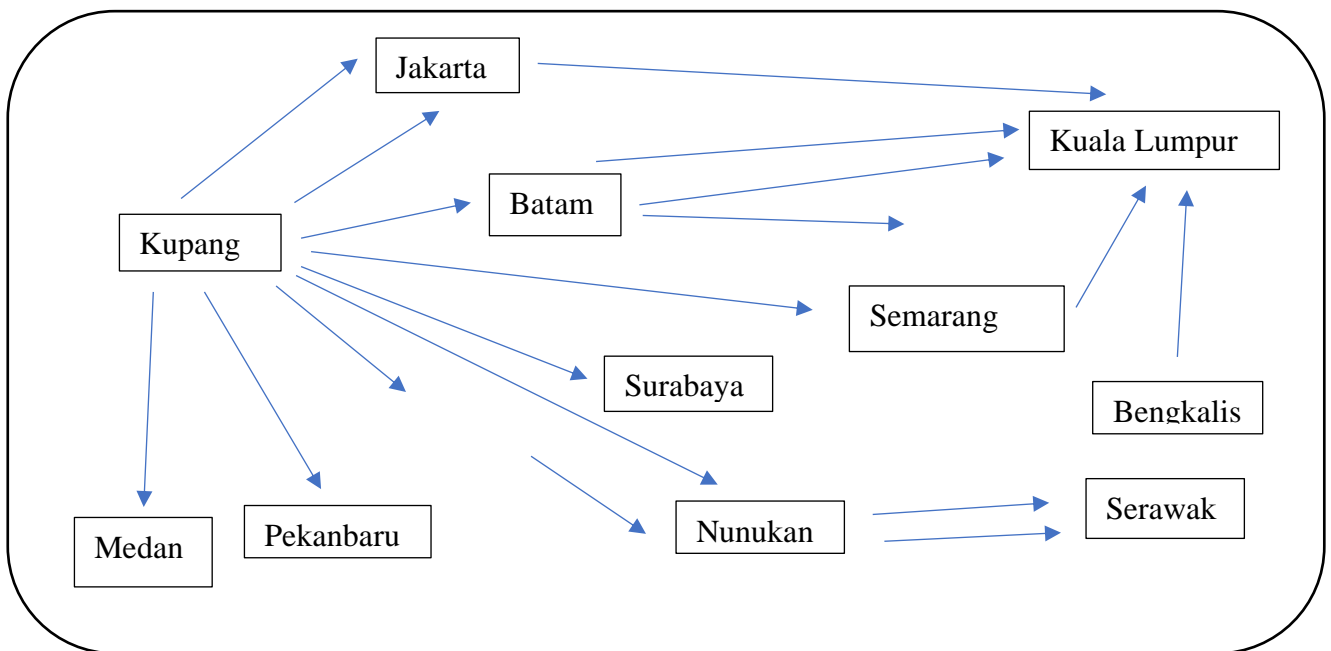
The ban on carrying a family telephone number leads migrant workers to become disconnected from their families. If migrant workers are not allowed to bring cell phones but are able to carry a family telephone number, then migrant workers can contact the family by buying a new cell phone or by borrowing a telephone from the employer or someone else. Any prohibition on contact also prevents migrant workers who are in situations of exploitation and violence from seeking help to get free.

In other cases, the chance for migrant workers to communicate with their families is contingent upon the employer's permission. If a migrant worker is fortunate enough to secure employment under a benevolent employer, they can contact their family. This was the situation for Heski who was granted authorisation to communicate via the telephone, but subject to the supervision of her employer.

Potential migrant workers are transported in groups of at least two by boat or plane, while oil palm plantation migrant workers are transported in groups of approximately 50 individuals. At the airport or port, the agent will prepare individuals who will supervise and direct the workers to assure that the potential migrant workers travel safely and arrive at their destination without incident. Participants working as domestic workers outside of Indonesia were assigned to work in Malaysia, while Jakarta, Medan, and Pekanbaru were among the work locations in Indonesia. Palm oil workers were employed in Malaysian palm oil plantations.

Figure 2.

Shows the departure routes and destinations.



The participants' stories explain that the recruitment and transfer process comprised exploitation traps: recruitment by a known person; manipulation of a cultural practice; bondage debt; identity fraud; prohibition of contacting family; prohibition of carrying a family or known person's phone number. These traps put the participants in ready state of exploitation where they do not have control. Participants were recruited without a clear explanation of the process that they would go through, or that they would need to be provided with training to equip them with practical and valuable skills to the employer.

4.3.2 Placement

Upon arrival at the place of employment, the participants discovered that they were being subjected to a labour process that once again exposed them to exploitation. Bia elucidates that he was employed in Malaysia for fifteen years; nevertheless, he worked under dreadful and cruel conditions throughout the initial two years. Bia and his fellow workers were housed in inadequate accommodation, sleeping on nothing more than a mattress. They were prohibited from interacting with other workers and confined to their quarters. The foreman kept them under strict surveillance. Bia worked without receiving any payment for two years and four months in order to repay the bondage debt.

We stayed in Nunukan for a month before receiving our passports. We took a ship to Malaysia, disembarked at sea, and then rented a car. To repay my agent's debts, I work without pay. Yes, I worked for free for two years and four months. We lived in a long house. One person lived in one room, and we cooked individually. Plantation guards guarded us every day. At night, they'd guard us when we wanted to go to the bathroom. When we were finished, then we'd be escorted back to our room. We lived individually in the room with no company at all. (Bia)

The living conditions were terrible, and the company did not provide sufficient means to secure their livelihoods.

Our boss provided us five kilos of rice per month. I measured the rice so that it would last up to one month. I was very skinny that people could see my ribs and bones. Every morning, I had to cook a little. I ate a half serving of food in the morning, then I would eat the other half as my dinner. We didn't get money so we couldn't buy coffee and sugar. I took a shower using sea water without soap. I also washed my smelly clothes with sea water but they still smelled bad. My friend said that it didn't matter, as long as we survived. (Bia)

Inadequate living conditions, inadequate food, insufficient rest periods, and the absence of life insurance were unsuited to the extremely heavy workload. Bias's working day started at 4:00am, requiring him to wake up at 3:00am. They were employed in a densely populated jungle inhabited by dangerous animals such as monkeys and snakes. Bia describes the situation:

Every 4 o'clock, we were called by name and then got into a long truck. There were many male and female workers. If the women were in charge of picking the fallen fruit, then I'd be in charge of lowering the fruit from the tree. It wasn't an easy kind of work, but if we wanted to get money, then we had to be strong. One bunch of palms worth 7 cents. One large bunch is 50 kilograms that was high as a table and long enough and then it could worth 7 cents. We stuck and hold it up to the cart and then removed it to the main

road to be picked up by the car. At 12 pm, we had a lunch break. After that, we went back to the plantation. At 4 pm, we were picked up by using a car to take us home. It was quite challenging to work there. There were big monkeys, their hair was long and it covered their bodies. I'd seen it but we couldn't see its face. We shouldn't be alone while walking there. We were not allowed to walk separately, and we were not allowed to enter the garden individually due to many challenges in the plantation. I had seen a huge cobra, it was very long, and its saliva is dangerous. However, we shouldn't kill the snake because it would make things worse. We reported to the boss, then he took care of it. Then the snake was never seen again. (Bia)

According to Bia, such inhumane conditions even resulted in the death of many workers.

There were some of my friends, if they couldn't stand hunger, they eventually died. We even buried five to seven of our friends who died. We buried them without any prayer at all. We were treated so cruelly but thankfully I survived. I could only pray and wondered why we were being treated like that. I also wondered what I did wrong therefore had to experience that. (Bia)

After working for more than four years in the first workplace, Bia decided to run away and relocate to a different palm plantation. Bia spent an extensive period working at the new farm before finally deciding to return home. However, Bia also mentioned that he continued to face exploitation at his new place of work. The employer maintained possession of all documents and wages until the contract was fulfilled. He diligently worked without taking any holidays and was strictly prohibited from leaving the palm oil premises without being accompanied or supervised by company security.

Nio was a migrant worker who had worked for 14 years before returning to Indonesia due to a work accident that resulted in the amputation of one of his hands. Initially, the agent employed Nio illegally, ignoring the legal document requirements, in the hope that after accumulating sufficient funds, he could apply for the necessary documents to work legally. Nio explains:

The recruiter took us in illegally without a passport, we just followed where the agent took us, even though we didn't know where it was... We entered Malaysia legally. However, we were there as illegal workers so the salary was not normal, the salary was not good enough.. I was sad, because I had no passport and I had to hide often, let alone avoiding the police. I tried not to get sick, because if we were sick, then we should go to the hospital. After that, we would be arrested... We couldn't go out freely because we had no passport. Sometimes we had to walk in secret through the forest or was sleeping in the forest. The police often checked. (Nio)

As an undocumented labourer, Nio received a reduced wage, which additionally decreases to pay bonded debt. The wage Nio received was not commensurate with the magnitude of the work.

I worked to pay a deduction of travel money, pay for a passport. It was all considered a debt. There was a friend who couldn't stand the deduction and then ran away from work. If I worked and there was still a debt, the salary would not be stable. We had to wake up at 3 am. If we woke up late, then we wouldn't be able to prepare our lunchbox. So, we would go to work without bringing our lunchbox. At 3 am, we woke up to cook some food. At 4 am, our attendance would be checked so that if there was a problem at work, then the employer would find out. If we were not there while the attendance was being checked, then the employer would think that we were not working. When they wanted to check our attendance, the employer would call each of our names. After that, we would return to our room while waiting for the pickup car. The time to go home depended on our work. If we finished the work quickly, then we could stop working earlier. We usually went back home at 3 pm or 4 pm. If the fields were near, we would walk by ourselves. If the fields were far away, then we would be escorted and picked up by car. It was such a hard work. We had to take down the heavy palm fruit, then carried it to the front of the road so that it could be transported to the car. So, I thought that I should run, get the new employer to get a better salary so I could apply for passport. (Nio)

The arduous working conditions and lack of a decent home environment ultimately compelled Nio to run away and seek an alternative company. Nio relocated to several employment establishments to accumulate funds to obtain a passport and other official documents, enabling him to engage in lawful employment. He was latterly employed at a company for a decade until he returned to Indonesia. The monthly salary was automatically deposited into the bank account. However, Nio also experienced many forms of exploitation, including the confiscation of essential documents like passports, working without proper authorisation, and being subjected to strict supervision by the plantation, which restricted their freedom to leave the workplace without permission.

The participants, namely Maria, Leona, Omri, Sitti, and Yuka, who were employed in the domestic sector overseas, underwent an interview procedure as part of the placement process. In contrast, participants employed as domestic workers within the country are not subjected to an interview procedure. When they arrived abroad, the participants were accommodated at the shelter provided by the agent. If an employer expresses interest in hiring a domestic worker, the agent will provide the necessary identification information of the potential migrant worker. Employers can choose multiple profiles of domestic workers to interview. During the interview, the prospective employer will engage in direct questioning of the candidate. The potential employee will gain information on the job as either a housekeeper or a carer for the elderly. Upon obtaining consent, the employer can relocate the worker to their residence for employment.

However, on certain occasions, the interview procedure may serve as a procedural requirement. The agent aims to guarantee that all potential employees secure employment, thereby enabling the recovery of the capital funds invested in the prospective workers' bounded debt through salary deductions. Omri explains her interview experience:

When the employer interviewed me, there were actually two people being interviewed. We had both been at the agency for a while, more than three months, and were hoping that an employer would choose us. During the interview, the employer asked us various questions, but we couldn't answer anything. Finally at the last question, the employer pointed to the wall clock and the employer asked: Look at the clock, what time is it? I looked at the

clock and said 4. My friend couldn't answer, so I was chosen. I prayed God help me, I don't want to live in a shelter agent anymore. (Omri)

Having been in the agent's shelter for four months, Omri was finally selected following an interview due to her ability to understand the clock on the wall. Omri expressed profound gratitude, as her duration of stay within the shelter directly correlated with an increase in the bondage debt to the agent.

The labour agreement is drawn up after the interview is completed. Unfortunately, all participants working in Malaysia (Hesky, Omri, Sitti, Maria, Leona, and Yuka) stated that they did not have sufficient knowledge about the details of the employment contract. After the interview, they were asked to sign a contract but the contract was not given to them. When they were picked up by the employer for work, all documents such as passports and labour contracts were handed over by the agent to the employer. For participants, their main goal is to get a job as soon as possible to avoid staying longer in the agent's shelter, which will result in more debt.

The participants have no other choice but to find an employer quickly. The selection process for domestic workers does not consider their skills, which consequently impacts their poor salary. Participants do not have the chance to select employers. Domestic workers are assigned to roles as chosen entities and lack the ability to define their rights.

Prior to getting hired, the participants must trim their hair to a length that is equivalent two centimetres. Maria informs,

When we're going to go to the employer's house, it's required to cut the hair very short, about 2 centimetres. I'm actually ashamed, so embarrassed, we're women so if cut like that we'll be like men. But I saw all those workers have to cut their hair, we were forced so I just went. (Maria)

In addition to Maria, the other participants working in Malaysia (Omri, Leona, and Yuka) also recounted the same story. The purpose of the haircut is to optimise workers' time by eliminating the need to maintain their long hair. Nevertheless, within Timorese tradition,

women's hair serves as a symbolic representation of their dignity and respect. Shaving one's hair may be perceived as a humiliating act towards a woman.

Once the participant arrives at the employer's house, they are subject to the employer's authority. Omri, Leona, Sitti, and Yuka claimed that they were each allocated their own personal bedrooms. The employer provides all necessary sustenance, beverages, and monthly necessities, with the understanding that these expenses will be considered as debts and subsequently deducted from the salary of the worker. Due to their cohabitation with employers, migrant workers are compelled to labour without sufficient intervals for rest and without any holidays. Participants wake at the early hours of 3am or 4am and engage in work until the late morning hours of 11pm or 12pm. Yuka stated that she was compelled to engage in multiple concurrent occupations:

My employer has several businesses, I have to wake up from 3pm or 4am, from 5am-10am I help my employer cook in his restaurant. From 10am-6pm I help my employer wash clothes at the employer's laundry, after 6pm-11pm I return home to cook and clean the employer's house. Sometimes I worked overtime until 12am or even 2am. Although I have a lot of work, I am only paid as a domestic worker. (Yuka)

Heski shares her experience:

I was a housekeeper there. My employer is a Chinese and there are 3 people in the house, namely husband and wife and their youngest child, a son. After I worked there for 1 year, their son got married, so after that I took care of 4 people in the house. I had quite a lot of work, and I hardly ever slept. I woke up at 4 in the morning and went to bed at 12 at night. When I woke up in the morning, I had to sweep the floor, wash the car, prepare breakfast and rest a bit before my employer came down from their room and I had to go up to their room to clean their room before I started cooking for them. The house is quite large with 11 bedrooms; 9 bedrooms on the 1st floor and 2 bedrooms on the 2nd floor. I work alone to clean all the house. Working there for 7 months, I was not paid because of the salary deduction to pay the bondage debt. (Heski)

The arduous labour involved in becoming a domestic worker can have a detrimental impact on one's physical health, as Omri describes.

I usually woke up at 4 am, then when my two employers woke up, I had done all the housework. However, my female employer was very strict that she often complained about the floor not being too clean. Sometimes, I had to iron clothes until 12 pm, then if not all the clothes were ironed, I usually put the rest of the clothes in the closet. On the next day, then I'd continue to iron the clothes. My sleeping hours were irregular and quite short because I often slept in the middle of the night and had to wake up at 4 in the morning. When I came back here, my body was very skinny due to irregular eating habits while I was still in Malaysia. The house is two stories high, there are two bathrooms, three cars, and one puppy, I worked alone in the house. When I got there for the first time, it turned out that the washing machine was broken, so I had all my nails damaged for washing their clothes. They liked to wear white clothes, so when I washed their clothes, I had to use bleach. So, my hands were wounded. Therefore, I had to bleach their clothes. For two years I washed their clothes by hand. (Omri)

Omri, Leona, Sitti, Maria, and Yuka clarified that the salary is not disbursed every month but rather upon the completion of the contract. Each month, they merely endorse the pay slip without receiving compensation. Withholding salary is implemented to deter migrant workers from absconding from their employer's residence. Due to the withholding of passports and salaries, participants must work diligently for their employers. Despite being subjected to brutal treatment, they lack the opportunity to escape.

Like Nio and Bia, participants employed as domestic workers in Malaysia are likewise subject to restrictions preventing them from leaving their residences. They are prohibited from making telephone calls to other family members residing in Indonesia. Access to the external environment is restricted to prevent people from leaving their homes. Participants were subjected to a solitary environment. As a result, they were rendered incapable of seeking assistance from others while enduring acts of abuse and exploitation.

Such was the case for Maria, a domestic worker who worked in Malaysia and experienced inhumane violence and exploitation. Maria worked as a carer for her employer's mother. She was not given a special room but slept with her employer's mother. She slept on the floor with only a mat.

The house was not big. It had only three bedrooms, kitchen, bathroom, and living room. I slept with the grandma, but when the employer was angry with me, I'd sleep in the kitchen, or sometimes in the bathroom. I just did what the employer asked me to do. I didn't say a word, I couldn't speak, I was like a mute. Employee set the alarm for me, and when I woke up, she'd take back the alarm into her room. So, I never slept well because I was afraid that I would wake up late. Sometimes, when she was in a good mood, she'd ask me to stop working at 12 pm or 1 am, so I could sleep earlier. However, when she was in a bad mood, I could only sleep at 4 am and I had to wake up at 5 am. I never slept with a pillow; I sleep on a mat. I had tears as my pillow, I could no longer tell if I was sick or not. She started hitting me when I had worked there for one month. First, I was hit with frozen fish. For one month, I took care of grandmother and the house. I cooked, cleaned the house, I didn't go out. I didn't even know the neighbours either. At first, I slept with the grandmother, I slept on the floor used a mattress. But then the mattress was thrown away and replaced with a plastic mat. (Maria)

Maria experienced very inhumane violence:

She said I was ugly, stupid, and all rude mockery. I didn't reply a word, and she finally got tired and stopped herself. I have two holes in my head, and the scars are still there. The middle part of my nose is broken because I was always hit. It did bleed all over, until the food came out through my nose when I ate. I usually had dinner at 12 o'clock. If I ate, then the food would come out through my nose. It was the same when I drank water too. When I swallowed food, it would come out through the nose. I cried because my nose was broken. My employer didn't take me to the hospital, and my nose healed by itself. Every time my employer hit me, then my body was full of blood. I

just went to the bathroom to wash and clean myself. If I ate, I had to look up so that the food could be swallowed. I couldn't bend down, and it gradually healed on its own. I didn't talk much. If the employer hit me, my blood spilled on the wall of the house. I was told to get up and clean the blood. I had to clean it in five minutes, so I just followed her order. I had a tooth that had fallen out. My tongue was broken, and the blood clotted and dried on my clothes.... She clamped my tongue with pliers, and my teeth were pulled out with pliers. I didn't know where the teeth fell. I could only turn myself in. It did hurt so much that I no longer felt any pain. It felt like the employer was hitting me with some rocks. I could no longer feel the pain. When she pulled my tongue with the pliers, I was told to just stand up. She even clamped my nipples with pliers until they were crushed. My vagina was clamped with pliers until it was crushed. (Maria)

Maria had been working without a salary, and she finally left with the employer with a body full of wounds from head to toe. During the interview, Maria showed several scars on her body.

The placement process, characterised by exploitation and violence, affects not only participants working abroad but also domestic workers working within Indonesia. In the context where the placement of migrant workers who engage in overseas employment necessitates the involvement of an agency, the placement process for migrant workers employed within Indonesia can be facilitated either through a labour export agency or through direct engagement with recruiters. Recruiters use diverse strategies to engage potential migrant labourers for employment opportunities.

Doroti expressed her initial preference for employment in Malaysia, but due to her failure to meet the health requirements, the recruiter redirected her to Pekanbaru. Doroti recounts her experience:

From my village to Kupang, staying at the house of the recruiter. In Kupang. From December 2007 to February 2008, I stayed there. I was referred by recruiters to three domestic worker recruitment agencies, but I failed at each one. I registered under my real name for the first agent, but I used a fictitious name for the second and third agents. I was asked to remove all my clothing

for a medical examination, which included a vaginal examination, but I refused. Because I always declined, I did not pass. The recruiter ultimately decided to send me to Jakarta and then Pekanbaru. The recruiter has been responsible for my transportation from the village, housing, and food for three months, so he must find a way to continue employing me to recoup his investment. (Doroti)

The use of the bondage debt method motivates recruiters and agents to employ various strategies in order to earn back the invested funds. The placement method of prospective migrant workers is thus vulnerable to exploitation.

Because she was not qualified to work abroad, the recruiting agent decided to send Doroti to Jakarta, where she was later transferred to Pekanbaru. In February, she worked as a domestic servant, earning 500,000 rupiah (30 euros) per month. Doroti worked with one other employee. They were both responsible for cleaning, maintaining the two-level house, caring for the children, and cooking. She was not permitted to use a cell phone or contact family, nor was she permitted to leave the house or attend church. If she made a mistake, she was always threatened with a pay cut. Salary is not paid monthly, but rather at the end of the contract time (2 years). The employer provides monthly needs, but they are calculated as debt, which was taken from the salary.

Veronica's placement story is slightly different from Doroti's. In Doroti's story, the recruiter brought Doroti to the agent and the agent then placed Doroti with the employer. In Veronica's story, the employer directly contacted the recruiter in the village, and the recruiter then looked for prospective workers who would be sent straight to the employer. One of Veronica's relatives was a domestic worker recruiter in her village who offered her a job. The recruitment process from employer to recruiter then to Veronica is based on trust rather than skills and abilities. Veronica worked without a contract, based on a verbal agreement.

In Jakarta, Veronica worked as a domestic worker. She lived and worked in her employer's three-storey house. However, she also worked to clean the houses of her employer's children in different places. Veronika recounts that

there were 2 helpers, including me. We worked in two houses. We worked in the other house from Monday to Friday. On Saturday and Sunday, we went to another house to work there. In the three-story house, there were three dogs that we had to feed and bathe. I woke up at half past four or half past three in the morning. Then I started working until 10 am and then took a shower and worked until 10pm or 11 pm. The house where I worked was a three-story house. We were also in charge of cooking and ironing clothes. We were asked to iron clothes, sweep floors, mop floors, clean walls. My employer is a priest and a construction businessman. He has 3 children, but his second child is married so there are 4 people in the house: the employer, his wife and two children. His married child lives in an apartment. We were often asked to come and clean his apartment. I was scared because he lived in an apartment, on the 20th floor to be exact. We used to be picked up by taxi to get there. (Veronica)

The arduous labour was not commensurate with the intervals of rest and food provided by the employer for the workers. Veronika finally fell ill as a result of this situation.

I had gastric pain because I could only eat at midday. In the morning, I only ate one piece of bread and drank only water. We could only eat at certain hours, lunch at 12 pm (midday), dinner at 6 pm sometimes at 8 pm. We couldn't eat at any time because everything had been scheduled. Except on Sundays, when we left to church, I bought some biscuits for me to keep and eat. We couldn't eat as much as we liked. If there were guests, I eat at 9 or 10 pm. I could only have dinner at 9 pm or 10 pm. I had to endure the hunger. (Veronica)

Veronika also said that she did not receive a salary from her employer every month. Her salary was directly transferred to a bank account in her employer's name. If her family in the village needed money, Veronika could ask her employer to transfer the amount needed. But Veronika was not allowed to hold cash money or manage her own salary. All her needs and finances were organised by her employer. Veronika received her salary only after the end of her period of labour .

Regarding communication with her family, Veronika was allowed to contact her family through her employer's mobile phone and make or receive calls when supervised by her employer. Likewise with social restrictions, Veronica worked without holidays and was not allowed to leave the employer's house. She was only allowed to leave the house if she was with her employer. The whole house was monitored by CCTV.

Besides Doroti and Veronica, Erika is a participant who also worked within Indonesia. Erika worked at a swallow's nest factory in Medan. The swallow's nest is one of the most nutritious Asian foods. It is made from the saliva of swallows that hardens into a bird's nest. Erika's placement process was the same as Veronica's. The employer contacted the recruiters in the villages to find workers. Once the recruiter manages to find workers, they are immediately dispatched to the employer in Medan.

The conditions in which Erica worked were inhumane. At the workplace, there were dozens of workers from East Nusa Tenggara who lived and worked like slaves. Erika shared that she was forced to cut her hair very short:

At first, my hair was quite long, but it was cut with a knife. The female employer told her brother to cut my hair, I cried and screamed. The other co-workers were shocked. I could only surrender because I had no choice.
(Erika)

Upon arrival at her employer's home, Erika found that the workplace conditions did not match the promises of the recruiter.

When arrived at the employer's house, on the first floor, I saw everyone was sleeping without any mats, and no coverings either. When I got there, I saw that there were already 24 people. So, there were 26 of us living there. They were in a miserable state, underweight, stressed and some of them were even seriously ill. At that time, my friend Rina brought rice for me to eat on the 4th floor. It was only a little rice, and I didn't want to eat rice with white noodles. I didn't want to eat because I was vomiting. A friend told me, if I didn't eat, the employer would beat me. But I couldn't eat, so the food was brought back to the 4th floor. (Erika)

They slept in a long, stuffy room with very minimal facilities:

I slept on mats without headwear, and we were never exposed to the sunlight. The room was entirely closed, no sunlight Basically, we were trapped in the house. We took a shower by using only 3 buckets of water. When we were on our period, we just used thick cloth instead of sanitary napkins. We brought our own clothes from Kupang. When we were there, we used the liquid soap they bought for us. We were given only a small amount of soap and we mixed it with a lot of water so that it could be used for washing. Still, after washing, our clothes didn't get clean. We could only rinse our clothes 2 times. Our drinking water was also placed in a large container like a barrel. At the bottom of the barrel, there were many small worms. We couldn't drink any other water, and there was nothing we could do because we were locked up. Many of us suffered from illnesses, such as headaches, swollen feet and hands, and many more. We were told that it was a common disease because our job was dealing with birds nests so we must have contracted it from the birds. (Erika)

Erika stated that the adverse working circumstances were worsened by insufficient periods of rest and inadequate nourishment.

We usually woke up at 4 am, and then slept at 11 pm. At 4 am, we had to clean the house. At 8 am, we went to the swallow's nest factory. We worked until 4 pm before going back home to clean the house until 11 pm. We worked without holidays, 7 days a week. I spent 11 months to work there but I didn't get my salary at all. We worked hard but only ate porridge. It was cooked in a large cauldron and the porridge was too runny. One person got two scoops of porridge but it was too runny. I wanted to throw up, I didn't want to eat. I cried every day; we only drank water. My friends told me not to cry because the employer would be mad. When I was there, my friends were thin as birds, small as dried fish. I was afraid that some were like corpses, some couldn't walk. For lunch, we ate rice with only one spoonful of vegetables. We also had the same food as our dinner. We ate rice and noodles. In the morning, we ate runny porridge. In the afternoon, we ate rice

and noodles. At night, we had fried rice and eggs but the eggs were cut into small pieces. (Erika)

They worked under pressure and often experienced physical abuse. This situation is exacerbated by the breakdown of communication with their families and neighbourhoods because their employers did not allow them to call their families nor to leave the house. The necessities of life are provided by the employer but in very minimal amounts.

I accidentally pinched the bird's nest, so the employer hit me in the face. I was beaten on the forehead with swelling. At night, I had a fever, and I had a thought to end my life. I thought that it was better for me to just die. I even surrendered to God and begged Him to release me from that place because I couldn't stand the suffering. I was more than happy if God really wanted to take my life. If we cried, the employer would beat us and cursed us harshly. We asked to call the family, but we were not allowed to make any phone call. Every week, we should drink a potion that tasted like urine. I didn't want to drink it but the employer's nephew forced me to drink it. It was reddish in colour and he said that I should drink the potion to relax me. Finally, I forced myself to drink it with my eyes closed. (Erika)

Based on the narratives provided by the participants, it is evident that they have encountered diverse forms of exploitation and violence. Instances of wage withholding and document retention, excessively long and demanding work hours, substandard housing conditions, isolation from family, and limitations on social interactions.

Both participants who labour internationally and those who work within their own country are subjected to violence and exploitation. Migrant labourers, particularly those employed as domestic workers, lack sufficient safeguards. Indonesia currently lacks legislation governing domestic servants. Without this regulation, labour relationships between employers and workers rely exclusively on mutual consent. Domestic workers lack adequate state protection within their native country and when working overseas.

4.3.3 Repatriation

The contract period for participants is initially set for two years, with a possible extension of one year, making the total length of service for participants about three years. Typically, migrant employees return after three years. The contract duration varies for those working in oil palm plantations, as it can be extended according to the terms mutually agreed between the worker and the employer. At the end of the contract period, remuneration is calculated and then deducted to pay debts or operational costs. Migrant workers employed in the domestic labour sector are usually returned from the employer's residence to the recruitment agency and then transported to their home.

The process of salary payment is executed in multiple variations. Heski said she carried a cheque from Malaysia during the repatriation procedure to redeem it in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Omri found that she did not receive the money immediately from her employer, as her employer requested her to proceed home and establish a savings account, after which the employer transferred the salary directly. In contrast, Yuka decided to entrust her salary to an agency and retrieve it in Indonesia.

Leona shared a unique repatriation process:

I didn't keep the money myself. Everything was kept by the employer. They gave my salary after the contract was over. It was a day before I returned to Indonesia. Then the employer gave me an option whether he would transfer all the money to the bank account or he should give me cash. I said I wanted to bring cash money. The employer was afraid because there was a woman who came back to Indonesia and she was tortured in Jakarta when she was in a taxi. She was returning from Saudi Arabia. The employer was afraid that all my cash would be stolen by pickpockets. I said I wanted to bring cash so I sewed a corset. I asked my friend for help with sewing a long corset to hide the money. I brought home more than 20 million rupiah. All of the money was hidden in the corset, on my body. I wrapped everything on the body from here (pointing to her body) to here, but I walked casually as if I was carrying nothing. After taking a bath, I wore underwear, then the panties with some pockets on. So, I hid all the money on my body. After tying

everything, I just wore a shirt, then wore a jacket, and finally wore trousers.

(Leona)

Several other participants, who were subjected to inhumane and demeaning treatment, returned to their homes without receiving any compensation after attempting to liberate themselves from their state of isolation through various means. Maria provides a detailed account of steps involved in her release from her employer's residence:

I cooked porridge for grandmother while I was writing on a small piece of paper. I rolled the paper into a small size, and I put it in my pants pocket. I just kept quiet until 6 pm. I took care of the grandmother and cleaned the house. There was a voice in my heart telling me to write on the paper. The employer hit me every day so I would not have the strength anymore. When I wrote a message on the letter, I was absolutely sure. I wrote "Help me, I am being tortured by my employer and I am always covered in blood every day. Please, help me." I wrote the message on the paper and then I threw it away. At 6 pm, I heard my neighbours, a lady and her son. The house was opposite, and I heard their voices. I heard them speak Malay, I also heard the children playing badminton downstairs. So, I waved to the lady, and I opened the door a little and threw the paper out in front of her house. I saw the lady took the letter, and brought it into the house. The employer hit me every day so I would not have the strength anymore. When the employer arrived home, she immediately asked why I opened the door. I said I was sweeping. I was pulled into the kitchen, then hit because I opened the door. The employer was angry because I violated her orders not to open the door and should not show my face to others. After being hit, I entered the room to feed the grandmother. When I just entered the room, suddenly the employer told me that there were several policemen coming. I was scared and shocked for that sudden visit. I could only be silent, and it turned out that there were four policemen, three men, and one woman. The policemen shook the door. Before opening the door, the employer told me that when I was asked by the police, I had to answer that all the wounds were caused when I fell alone in the bathroom. I agreed to what she said. Then, the employer opened the door, and the police came in. The employer denied everything while I was

in the kitchen. I was confused and scared too. The police told the employer that they came because there was a call from the maid. I heard that and I was shocked and scared. I just kept quiet. I heard the police talking. The employer insisted that I didn't have a passport, even though my passport was being kept by her. She said my face was injured because I fell in the bathroom. The police asked if I fell, then why I didn't go to the hospital. Suddenly, the female police officer called me to sit with the police. The policewoman came and told me to tell her everything. She tried to calm me down and reassure me that everything was safe because they had come to see me. I felt relieved and then cried. My face was full of wounds and rotten like the face of a dead person. (Maria)

Just like Maria, Erika was also sent home without her salary after she tried to escape from her workplace:

I was so desperate that I wanted to die, and sure that it was the time for me to die. I took three sheets, I tied them on the rod but it turned out that one sheet was shorter. I saw that there was a rod besides, I held it and pushed it and I climbed. I was desperate, but suddenly an Indian beside the house saw me. He shouted and asked me not to jump or he would call the police. He shouted and it was heard by the employer. The employer saw me from the camera that I was already hanging on the fourth floor. I almost fell because I couldn't hold it anymore. I had slippery hands because I was holding onto metal, I was shaking and then I was pulled back inside. The room was entirely closed, no sunlight. When I was back inside, the employer asked me why I wanted to kill myself. I said I couldn't stand the torture, so the employer said that when the police came in later, I had to say that there were only seven employees in there. I was told to claim that we had been working well and eating well. If I told the truth to the police, then the employer would pay the police to torture me. But I said, even if you wanted to kill me, I would tell the truth. Two policemen came in and interrogated me. The police asked why I wanted to throw myself out. I said I couldn't stand the torture. The police asked how many employees there were, and I said there were 26 people and all were from East Nusa Tenggara but the employer said I lied

about it. I told the police I wasn't lying, and then the police asked if I wanted to go home. And I said that I really wanted to go home. Three days later, my employer bought a ticket for me to go home. I weighed 60 kg when she left home to working, but return home weighing only 20 kg. (Erika)

Parents Silas and Silvia tell the story of their daughter returning home showing symptoms indicative of a psychological disorder. Their daughter unexpectedly returned from Malaysia without providing any advance notification. She was unaccompanied when she was sent home, lacking any form of guidance or supervision to clarify what had happened. One of the parents described their reaction thus:

She [Silvia] spent three years working abroad but came home only with 100 thousand cash. However, I was grateful that she came home alive. When she came home, I couldn't understand what she said. She was about to charge her cell phone but I stopped her from doing that. I just asked her to sit down. I was quite shocked when she came. I shut the front door, and I was in the back room. Suddenly, I heard someone called me. I was about to see who called me and then I saw her near the soursop tree. I called to come inside. I immediately hugged her, and I saw she was carrying a doll. I didn't know how she got home. Yes, she didn't act like normal people. I wondered why she was like that. I sat down and made no more sound. (Silvia)

Parents whose children tragically lost their lives whilst working away also described similar experiences. One set of parents were merely sent their daughter's coffin, with no accountable party offering an explanation regarding the precise circumstances behind her demise. In addition to the loss of their daughter, the affected individuals did not get any form of compensation or entitlements. As already recounted above, Melki provided an explanation on the intricate nature of the repatriation of his daughter's coffin, attributing the complexity to the agent's alteration of their daughter's identity.

4.4 Participant Experiences of Alienation

Alienation does not necessarily mean the absence of relationships, but refers to inadequate or lack of interaction with oneself, others, and the world (Jaeggi, 2014). It is characterised by indifference, instrumentalization, reification, absurdity, artificiality, alienation, meaninglessness, and powerlessness.

The existence of various exploitations and abuses in the recruitment, placement, and repatriation process encountered by participants, are evidence of the fragility of their agency. The occurrence of exploitation and violence resulted in the participants feeling alienated. Participants encountered three forms of alienation: alienation from their family, their own selves, and the community. They not only faced physical alienation from their families due to having to work elsewhere, but their experiences as trafficking victims also caused them to undergo psychological alienation from themselves and their communities.

4.4.1 Alienation from Family and Identity

Engaging in migrant labour necessitates the participant to move away from where they live and their loved ones. They undergo physical and psychological alienation from the surroundings, language, lifestyle, and culture that have influenced their sense of self. They are required to adjust to the unfamiliar conditions. The participant becomes detached from their former lifestyles, while they are unable to integrate into new environments due to the prevalence of violence and exploitation.

For participants who are married and have children, it was a difficult decision to leave the family, especially beloved children, to work away from home. The participants were enthusiastic about the work, but they felt guilty about leaving their families and home. Sitti commented,

I missed my family terribly. They are my everything. I miss my parents so much. I also miss my children terribly, as I am a mother. Sometimes I wonder if it was worthwhile for me to work abroad and care for other people's families, when my parents in the village are living alone and in abject poverty. But, what could I do? My employers didn't allow me to make a call or get in touch with my family. (Sitti)

The inability to communicate with relatives exacerbates the alienation. Some participants, including Leona, were ill for months at the agency shelter in Jakarta due to the thought of leaving her children behind. Leaving her young children behind made Leona feel guilty and anxious.

When I was in Jakarta, I stayed in a shelter. I was thinking about the children; I left behind three children, my youngest child was only 5 years old at the time. I was sick for several months because too much thinking about my children. After recovery, I went to Kuala Lumpur. (Leona)

Based on the outcomes of the interviews conducted with parents who are geographically separated from their children due to their children's employment as migrant workers, the parents experience feelings of guilt. The parents feel guilty because according to them, it is their responsibility to earn money to meet the family's needs. Yohana, one of these mothers, was sick for months due to her feelings of guilt and worry over her daughter. Yohana expresses her thoughts as follows:

My daughter, who works in Singapore, is my first child, and despite being a daughter, she works very hard. I'm always guilty because earning money for the family is the job of the parents, but even though she's a woman, she makes sacrifices for the siblings. I'm always overthinking if I don't hear from her. (Yohana)

Yohana, as a parent, feels guilty that her child is forced to work abroad due to her own inability to provide for all the children's needs.

Allowing children to work away from home is sometimes a dilemma. Silas prefers to allow his daughter to do so, so that she does not run away or work without his permission.

When my daughter asked for permission to work abroad, I initially refused. She was irritated that I wouldn't let her go. I can't let her go because she's my only daughter. I even asked her if she wanted to work in this village, but

she declined. I finally gave her permission because I was afraid she would escape without telling me. My family always blames me. (Silas)

His daughter then worked in Malaysia before returning home in a state of mental distress. Silas always felt guilty about granting permission to his daughter.

The deceased's family felt the most guilty in their grief. Melki and Milka expressed their sadness because, as parents, they had never allowed their children to work away from home, but their daughter chose to run away to Malaysia to work. Milka described her daughter's body being returned home with Y scars on it, which they suspected was an autopsy with internal organs dismembered like an animal. It was a humiliating experience because the body is sacred in Timorese culture. Milka narrates,

What saddens me the most is because she's grown up, she's already 15 years old. We parents did not give permission but she chose to leave without us knowing. I feel guilty, hurt, very sad too. I'm sad because I can't imagine what they did to her that some part of her body could be lost like that. This has never happened in our family. The fact that she was being tortured like an animal, that's what makes me sad. (Milka)

Milka needed several years to accept the loss of her daughter. She became ill for a long period before realising she could not change reality.

Tersia, the mother of another deceased victim, felt guilty because she had given her daughter permission to work abroad, but unfortunately the reality did not match expectations. She was sick for three years before she could accept and acknowledge her loss.

I can't stop thinking about my daughter. She left in good health but returned dead. That's what bothers me. I've been unable to bear her death for the past three years. But, in the end, I must be able to accept it... Now all I can do is accept her death. I acknowledge because I do not want to be sick any longer. I'm powerless to help. (Tersia)

Moreover, they are always blamed by other families as parents who let their children go to work to the point that the children had to die.

The participant must work away from home and become estranged from family in order to improve the family's economic situation. While the participants are motivated by a strong sense of purpose to improve their family life, the physical separation from their families causes them to experience feelings of guilt. Similarly, parents also experience feelings of guilt when their children are required to work in other locations and are separated from them. A sense of guilt, according to Herman, is a way of imagining that one could have done better (J. L. Herman, 2015). It is a way of learning a valuable lesson from a disaster and regaining a sense of power and control that is more bearable than facing the reality of complete helplessness. In retrospect, guilt represents the human psyche's longing to understand and find meaning in the world (Janoff-Bulman, 2010).

Working away from home and family alienates the participants from their family, disconnects them from their previous social environment, and uproots their identities. The disconnection from prior circumstances and routines necessitates people to exert significant effort in strange environments and circumstances. They must reside with their employers, adapting to an unfamiliar work environment with a distinct language and lifestyle. An illustrative instance is the adjustment to food. Yuka, a proficient cook with experience as a chef at a catering company, finds solace in cooking and consuming her preferred cuisine to manage stress. While in the new employer's home, Yuka encountered significant challenges adjusting to the unfamiliar cuisine. Engaging in excessive and demanding labour necessitates sufficient consumption of nourishment. Yuka had to adapt to a different cuisine in her new workplace, which caused her to experience feelings of depression.

It was difficult to work there. People who didn't know God would definitely know God because it was hard. Those who didn't pray would definitely be able to pray. In the morning, we only ate bread. In the afternoon, we ate noodles. In the evening, we ate glass noodles. For 6 months, I never ate rice. I have a photo of me when I was very thin. I thought if I had known this, then I would never have come. But I had to keep working. I wanted to work in the agency so that I would have friends. I could only pray to God for strength.

Every time I ate bread, even though it was only one piece of bread, I always prayed. I believe that God would bless me, so that I could be full and strong to work. In the morning, I only ate bread. In the afternoon, I ate noodles, and then I worked until evening. I just ate one plate of glass noodles. The menu was the same for every day. (Yuka)

They are completely reliant on their employer and agent for survival as they reside in a foreign environment. They perform their duties in a state of anxiety, guilt, and desperation. The majority of the participants became ill at work as a result of these circumstances. They lose a sense of belonging and develop insecurity, which reduces their sense of safety

Working as migrant labourers leads the participants into alienation because they are separated from their families and from the social constructs that have long shaped them. They live in liminal spaces where they have been separated from their homeland while at the same time they do not belong to the new environment. In a liminal situation, people negotiate a space of belonging and create cognitive adaptation (Sarwal, 2017)(Berman et al., 2009). Likewise, people in powerless situations alter their state of consciousness (Herman, 2015). The main reason for the participants' perseverance in the situation outlined was their desire to return home. They need to persevere and work hard to fulfil the contract, even if they are very badly exploited.

4.4.2 Self-alienation

Self-alienation refers to the internal conflict experienced by participants. They experience alienation from themselves due to the exploitation and violence which renders them powerless. Violence and exploitation rob participants of their autonomy, causing them to feel hopeless, engage in self-blame, and experience a lack of purpose or meaning.

The relationship between the participants and the agents was unequal from the very beginning of the recruitment procedure. Recruiters utilised the bondage debt method, with the agency arranging paperwork and covering costs as a debt that will be repaid through future payroll deductions. Bondage debt makes participants reliant on the agent and employer. The exploitation they endured during recruitment and transportation is exacerbated as they work. The majority of participants describe common instances of

violence and exploitation, such as document detention, salary deductions exceeding six months, and restrictions on communication, social life, and religious activities. In addition, they endure inadequate rest as well as physical and psychological abuse.

The employer employs a carrot-and-stick approach, rewarding employees for appropriate behaviour and punishing them for mistakes. Employers and their agents have complete authority. Therefore, participants experience self-alienation because they surrender the sense of autonomy and lack control to masters of themselves. Heski told how she slept in the backyard as a consequence of making a small mistake:

When I had only been working for one month, I was once told to sleep on the back porch for one night. I was punished because my employer thought I made a mistake while cooking. The employer accused me of adding a lot of salt, which I didn't do. (Heski)

Due to the presence of imbalanced power dynamics and lack of safeguards, Heski found herself unable to defend herself and was compelled to simply acquiesce to the punishment.

Omri states that she was constantly threatened by her employer, particularly to reduce her salary if she makes a mistake. Therefore, Omri lacks the courage to take the initiative or make her own decisions because she works in a state of fear.

I once broke the lid of a pot. The female master was away for three days at the time, but I told her about it when she returned home. She threatened to reduce my pay. I don't know the amount of the salary deduction because I wasn't informed about my salary agreement from the beginning; if it is deducted, how much will I be paid? Basically, every time I made a mistake, I was threatened with a pay cut. I work in a state of fear, afraid of making mistakes. When I'm depressed, I go to the bathroom and pretend to wash my hands while crying. Regret and angry at myself: why do I want to work in Malaysia? I was depressed because I was always being threatened. (Omri)

Erika shared that she experienced inhumane exploitation and violence. She was subjected to the most heinous forms of punishment:

We sleep only on mats at the swallow's nest factory, we were not allowed to leave the factory, living in isolation, our bedrooms smell damp because the sun doesn't get in, we eat only rice and noodles, we drink dirty water, our bodies are already emaciated, we shower only with a small bucket of water, our bodies stink. Because all the windows were covered with newspapers, it was never exposed to sunlight... Because I accidentally stole a bird's nest, my boss punched me in the face. I was hit on the brow, which caused swelling. I had a fever at night, and I considered suicide. I decided I'd rather die than live. I even surrendered to God and begged Him to release me from that place because I couldn't bear the pain any longer. If God truly wishes to take my life, I am overjoyed. I was desperate to die and convinced that the time had come for me to die. (Erika)

Erika's encounter with violence led to a profound loss of hope, prompting her to consider suicide as the only viable option. She failed to experience a sense of belonging.

Maria, a participant who has suffered extraordinary violence, stated that the violence she experienced made her only able to blame herself, she couldn't even blame anyone else, or her master. She experienced self-alienation because what she endured drained her of any agency, she had no option but to direct blame and anger against herself.

The Employer did what she wants to do to me. Even myself is no longer mine, the employer just orders me to go along with it... When I slept, I just prayed until I woke up. Basically, when my tears fell, I'd just pray. The teardrops were my prayers. I prayed and didn't stop. I never got angry, and I just kept quiet. I was just angry with myself. I was angry with myself for choosing to work there. (Maria)

Bia and Nio, both of whom worked at the oil palm plantation, experienced similar circumstances. They endured a protracted process of wage deductions, substandard living conditions, communication restrictions, and other forms of exploitation. Nio narrated,

I worked on a palm oil plantation in Malaysia. There, I worked for fifteen years. During the first two years and five months, my salary was reduced, and I worked without earning any income. Two years and four months, there is nothing but work, we are given five kilograms of rice for a month, we must rise at 3 a.m. to cook the rice, we are called by name at 4 a.m., then we ride a truck and work in plantation until late afternoon. My body is extremely emaciated; my bones are visible. The plantation keepers cared for us daily. They would look after us when we needed to use the restroom at night. When we are finished, we will be returned to our rooms. We lived alone in a room with no friends and were prohibited from visiting or being visited. Some of my friends, unable to endure their hunger, eventually perished. We even buried between five and seven of our deceased friends. They were interred without a prayer. We were treated horribly, but luckily I managed to survive. I can only pray and ponder the reason for our treatment. I also wonder what I did wrong to have to go through this; am I lazy or what did I do incorrectly? (Nio)

Participants alienate from themselves because unbalanced power relations enforce participants to accept exploitation and violence without question. Even their bodies no longer belonged to them because they had lost control over their lives. They choose to blame themselves because they have no one else to blame in such a situation. They are regretting their decision to work as migrant worker.

Participants who returned home disabled also displayed signs of self-alienation. Doroti is a participant who was employed as a domestic worker at Pekanbaru. She suffered a work-related accident when her body was electrocuted, causing her to lose two hands and one leg. Her physical transformation brought about a total transformation in her life. She is completely dependent on the assistance of others because she cannot move her own body. One week after the amputation, she was sent home with surgical scars that were still moist. She felt she was a burden to her already impoverished family upon her return home in such a condition. She was displeased with herself because she felt useless and a burden to her family. Doroti explained:

When my one leg and two arms had to be amputated, I did not think about anything other than crying. I left intact for work, but was sent home in this condition. I wanted to kill myself when I returned home, but I was unable to. I could not hold the knife in my hand if I wanted to stab myself. Even if I wished to drink poison, I am incapable of holding anything unless someone else does so for me. No one would be interested in assisting me with this endeavour. I believed that it would be best for my family if I were to die, as my circumstances were causing them additional stress. (Doroti)

Doroti felt resentment toward herself, and her life appeared hopeless. It took her several years to accept her new body. She endured a lengthy period of adaptation, learned to use a wheelchair and prosthetic legs, and became less reliant on others.

The feeling of uselessness and worthlessness was also shared by Erika and Bia, the participants who came home without a salary. They believe that their efforts to work far from their families and endure various forms of violence and exploitation have been in vain. Bia explains,

I believed working abroad will be able to improve this life. When I returned home after having endured torture and a difficult existence abroad, I was again betrayed by a close friend. My friends cheated me out of all my money, so I returned home penniless. I'm sorry, I'm truly sorry, but my sacrifice was wasted and was in vain. I no longer wish to recall the past; instead, I am intent on living in the present. (Bia)

The participants reside in communities where a significant number of individuals are employed as migrant workers. Migrant workers who successfully return home with money are celebrated as heroes in their families and communities. Those who return home ill or without funds, however, are deemed failures. Migrant labour is viewed as a gamble; those who are fortunate will return home as winners, while those who are unlucky will return home as losers.

Going home with money from work, however, is not a guarantee that someone will feel useful and successful. Some participants are victims of domestic violence, such as Maria

and Omri, and they described how their husbands spent all their earnings from Malaysia in a frivolous manner, as Omri explained.

This is the one thing I truly regret, as I believe my sacrifice was in vain. My husband was so unreliable. I returned home with more than 40 million rupiah, but they're all gone now. He began a pig farming business, but he made no money. In addition, there are no efforts by my husband to build a house. Now the funds are gone, there is no home and no business. I sincerely apologise. I don't like staying at home. Nothing is valuable. (Omri)

In the patriarchal culture of Timor, men are granted property ownership. This culture places women migrant workers in a vulnerable position. The money they earn through their labour is used to purchase land, establish a business, or construct a home, but the ownership will pass to their brothers or husbands. Even though a daughter's hard work as a migrant worker enables her to build a house for her parents, when she marries she must leave the house because it belongs to her parents and brother.

Another symptom of self-alienation is the silence covering the story of suffering. The participant alienates from their own experience. Participants were unable to recognise and were reluctant to claim their position as victims of trafficking. They seem to be forced to deny their experiences of violence and exploitation by the environment. Suffering experiences are a source of shame, not something to share, so they prefer to only share positive ones. Nio, who worked in the palm oil industry emphasises, “*No, no need to tell my misfortune to others. I enjoy my life now*”. As a male victim who lives in a patriarchal culture that tends to be silent about suffering experiences, sharing the exploitation and violence is unusual.

This applied not only to Nio, but to most of the participants who chose to keep their violent experiences to themselves and did not even share them with their families. They only recount positive experiences. Leona states that she prefers not to share her experience with exploitation and violence even with her children.

The children know that I once worked in Malaysia, but I don't tell them my entire story; they don't need to know about my suffering. If the children are

unwilling to work, I sometimes advise them that we must work diligently. If we recognise that life is full of obstacles, we will work diligently. Neither did my neighbours tell me, so I kept it to myself. (Leona)

The participants belong to societies unaccustomed to sharing narratives of suffering, such as sickness or adversity. In Timorese tradition, suffering is perceived as a manifestation of divine retribution.

In his doctoral research entitled “Curses, Retribution and Hostility,” Middelkoop (1960) draws on his extensive thirty-five years of experience in Timor to explain the strong connection between the Timorese perception of suffering and their understanding of curses. An adverse life occurrence, such as a sickness or accident, is commonly perceived as a curse, attributed to a misdeed performed by the individual. The individual must recognise their wrongdoing and seek reconciliation with the Divine (Middelkoop, 1960).

The participants’ experiences demonstrate the way in which an individual’s self-perception and self-worth are shaped by their connections and interactions with others. Individuals often include communal interpretations when constructing their own personal understanding. Self-alienation is driven by negative interpersonal connections and can be reinforced by a community’s religious meaning such as suffering is a punishment from God.

Self-blame, feelings of uselessness and meaninglessness, and the silence about the story of suffering is a sign of self-alienation. These things are also illustrative of cognitive adaptation when people do not have control over their lives. Janoff-Bulman (2010) notes that thought control over attributes of victimisation is a particular symptom of cognitive adaptability to estrangement and represents meaning creation. Herman (2015) further observes that terror, intermittent reward, isolation, and imposed dependency cause obedient people to violate moral principles and betray basic human attachment.

4.4.3 Alienation from the Community

When the participant is silent about their experience of suffering it is not only a sign of self-alienation but also a sign of alienation from community. When the participant's suffering was silenced, their existence as victims of human trafficking was not acknowledged as a reality or as part of the community. The participant lives side by side with their families, as a church member, and as members of society; they are physically present, but their experiences and existence as victims of human trafficking are ignored.

Community acceptability also influences the shame associated with sharing the experience of suffering with others. Shame is established when people fall below their own or others' expectations, making them feel weak, inadequate, and unworthy. It is a prominent symptom of depression, social anxiety, and social phobia (Yakeley, 2018). The human perspective of self is not only individual identity but also determined by people who have connected such as the family, group, or community (Lickel et al., 2011).

Alienation is detrimental to both the individual and the community. Success stories dominated the community and became the primary motivators for people to become migrant labourers. The belief that becoming a migrant worker is God's plan to a better economic life lends support to this situation. The community is unaware of the vulnerability of the migration process to human trafficking. Working as a migrant worker is comparable to gambling with one's own fate; if one's fate is favourable, people will return with money, whereas those with bad luck will return with nothing. The lack of community awareness, the silence of victims, the rising number of people interested in becoming migrant workers, and the absence of protection constitute a revolving circle.

"Life is life, it not only provides a good experience but also a bad experience," says Bia. The exploitation and violence that migrant workers face are not viewed as crimes that are systematically designed to victimise. Exploitation and violence are accepted as undesirable experiences that must be endured, recognised as regular phenomena that do not require opposition. In such settings, the human trafficking business flourishes. The community is unaware that the process of becoming a migrant worker is extremely susceptible to human trafficking, and the trafficker remains unpunished by the law. The trafficker continues to exploit, while victims of human trafficking are vilified and marginalised by society.

In such a community, victims are susceptible to re-victimisation. As noted above, the exploitation and violence experienced are viewed as risks associated with the decision to work as a migrant worker, not as the result of a mafia that aims to benefit consistently from this abuse. Yohana and Norma, mothers of two of the victims, explained that their daughters worked as migrant workers twice. Their daughters worked in Malaysia before moving to Singapore. Yohana explains the situation:

Throughout the nearly two years that my daughter worked in Malaysia, we did not have information from her. The employer did not allow her to call family. She called us when the contract ended, to inform that she will return home. We were really concerned, but there was nothing we could do... upon her return to the village, she remained there for several months. She looks uneasy living in the village since she believes we work hard there: carrying litters of water for miles to drink and bathe, searching for fuel for cooking for ourselves, and the path to the garden is steep and long, but we have no money. The salary from Malaysia is being used to build a house but is not yet complete. Thus, she decided to return to Singapore to work as a migrant worker. First, I was concerned that she would find another bad employment, but she told me to pray for her since she wants to try working in Singapore. She went in order to complete the house. (Yohana)

Working a second time, even in a different nation, necessitates repeating the same recruitment, transportation, and placement procedures, which are vulnerable to exploitation and violation. Moreover, coming home with money does not guarantee a better life; it depends on the individual's capacity to manage the funds. If they spend it on items such as a motorcycle and then the money runs out, they may need to return to work as migratory labourers.

The lack of facilities capable to meet the requirements of victims in the community is another indicator that victims are alienated from the community. Alienation from the community is compounded by alienation from public service facilities such as hospitals, law protection to support the victims, or safe houses. Participants who faced extreme assault, like Maria and Erika, or who returned disabled, like Nio and Doroti, or who also returned home with mental illnesses, like Silas's daughter, must recover by themselves.

There are no mental health services or institutions that can provide assistance to victims. Participants have to devise their own means of survival.

Silas is the father of two children with mental problems; his first child has had a mental illness since high school, and his daughter, who previously worked as a domestic servant, returned home with a mental disorder. Silas chose to seek alternative options due to a lack of health services and limited access to health facilities. Silas decided to bring his children to the prayer team:

For the healing of our children, we have attempted to attend a variety of prayer groups inside and beyond the village. So many requests have been made at the over 20 prayer meetings we have attended: some have prayed for healing using water, some have begged for goats, and some have requested me to smack my child with a broom while praying. I strive diligently to provide for my children's well-being. Once, we took him to the hospital, but the only hospital in the surrounding area is in the city. At the time, we were treated, but the distance prevented us from continuing. (Silas)

Despite the fact that many prayer teams have been visited in the pursuit of healing, the children show no indications of recovery.

Even if the traumatic experience has ended, the participant's body still bears the scars of violence. Omri displayed fractured fingers in an interview because she had to wash her hands daily with diluted bleach, while Maria displayed horrific wounds on her entire body, including a tongue that had been crushed with pliers by her employer. Barely any specialist medical care is available for victims of human trafficking.

Related to law enforcement, most of the participants such as Tersia, tend to avoid law enforcement because it requires time, complicated procedures, and high cost. Tersia has learnt to make the conscious decision to accept her powerlessness and the reality of the situation while believing vengeance belongs to God. Tersia states,

I can only accept my daughter death. There is absolutely nothing I can do. We did not wish to report it to the police because it was a family member

that recruited our child, and filing a report would be costly and time-consuming. We simply give up and have faith that God will recompense us. Revenge belongs to God. (Tersia)

Some participants choose to give up and accept reality as a result of the lack of public acceptance and the absence of public facilities that can support victims of human trafficking.

The participant experience describes, in the context of human trafficking, that the meaning of the community determines its acceptance of victims. The victim's self-acceptance is also contingent upon the community's acceptance. On the other side, the community's meaning will be affected by the victims' willingness to speak out about their exploitation and violence. Relation is the essential term in this process of meaning construction. In other words, to combat human trafficking, intervention must be conducted with a focus on the relationship: changing both the meaning of the community, family, and the victim.

4.5 Reflection

The interview findings reveal that the experience of being a migrant worker, both domestically and internationally, is full of numerous instances of exploitation and abuse, spanning from the recruitment phase to the repatriation process. The participants' vision of migrant working as a method of uplifting their lives from poverty, perceiving themselves as agents of transformation from poverty, ultimately proved to be a fragile agency. The religious meaning of migrant labour as a God's way to enhance people's economic circumstances contrasts with the reality that the process of migrant work is vulnerable to human trafficking. This study indicates that religion plays an ambivalent role; religious meaning can motivate individuals to transform their lives; however, if such meaning lacks a foundation in critical social analysis, it may produce a negative impact.

Violence and exploitation are pervasive throughout the entire process of becoming a migrant worker, including recruitment, placement, and repatriation. The testimonies provided by participants also demonstrate consistent patterns of violence and exploitation. Examples of similarities include the practice of bondage debt, the prohibition of telephone calls, the withholding of IDs and passports, the withholding of pay, the prohibition of

leaving the house, and the prohibition of socialising. These parallels demonstrate the insufficiency of the protection within the system established by the Indonesian state. The migrant labour recruitment system presents significant chances for exploitation and abuse.

Examining the duration of the participants' journey, particularly those who engage in labour overseas, demonstrates that the process entails numerous interconnected entities, spanning from the local village level to the national and international levels. This encompasses the governmental machinery that produces the diverse documentation migratory workers require. This system, which fails to safeguard migrant labour, creates opportunities for several parties to maximise their profits. The exploitation and violence endured by participants are deliberately organised and institutionalised with the sole objective of maximising profits.

The participant's fragility is further enhanced by the sense of alienation they experience. Participants encountered numerous alienations in the context of working as migrant labourers. Physical alienation occurs when the participants encountered numerous alienations in the context of working as migrant labourers, based on the victims' experiences. Physical alienation occurs when migrant workers were separated from their home and families. Separation from family caused participants to feel guilty, lose their sense of belonging, feel alienated and insecure. The second type of alienation is self-alienation as a result of the violence and exploitation. Self-blame, regretting their decision to work away from home, and refusing to share their misery are all examples of self-alienation experienced by participants. Finally, participants experience alienation from the community. Because their existence as victims of human trafficking is not recognised, they become a marginalised population, especially where there are no public facilities to assist or support victims of human trafficking. Moreover, in relation to religion, the interview data describes that religious meaning has played a part in the form of alienation.

Alienation linked to labour is not just a current phenomena. Marx's (1844) idea of alienation is essentially worker-focused, with an emphasis on how the capitalist production process generates alienation (Bennett, 2020). The context for Marx's writing was the particular situation where work on the land became scarce, forcing workers to relocate to cities and work in factories. The workers sold their labour to the factory owner, who

oversaw the entire manufacturing process. Workers were used as objects to achieve capitalist profit aims.

Under capitalism production process, the capital and worker are in an unequal relationship resulting several alienations (Raekstad 2022; Healy 2020; Petrović, 1963). The initial alienation is *alienation from the product* that workers and capitalists create in order to maintain social structures that link them to the impersonal powers of capitalist social relations. Capitalists own both the instruments of production and the consumable items that workers make. Hence, workers do not own the products they produce. This unequal relationship leads to *alienation from the labour process*, in which the worker is not a required component of production. The worker is compelled or unwilling to participate, and the worker's activity belongs to others. The content, aims, means, and execution of production are determined by factors outside and seemingly independent of employees. The third alienation is *the alienation from the species-being*, which alienates the worker from the species-specific power of consciousness in a very forceful and meaningful way. The human species or nature consists of an internal force of conscious self-direction. Alienated from human species or nature, workers work without passion or creativity. The final type is *alienation from others*, as the production process isolates workers from social contacts and connections. The more a worker's accomplishment, the more isolated they are from social life.

Marx's theory demonstrates that alienation in labour results from a system that is deliberately designed and created to exploit workers and generate profits for capitalists. Organisation of the economy has an impact on human interactions with other humans and with nature as a condition for human work (Henriksen, 2023). The participants shared a similar circumstance. Exploitation occurs right from the start of the recruitment process. Migrant workers are placed in an unequal relationship with agents and employers through recruitment techniques involving bondage debt and a range of restrictions. Migrant workers are compelled to adhere to a prescribed procedure, despite being exploited and subjected to violence during that procedure. In such a difficult environment, unmotivated employees work for the purpose of earning money. Moreover, the process of becoming a migrant worker actually places them in a system that distances the participant from their family and community. In essence, the victims of human trafficking in the migrant labour sector are victims of a system that is specifically created for exploitation.

While Marx emphasised the structure of capitalism, during the 1950s important work was carried out by Seeman who employed a social psychology strategy to address alienation (Healy, 2020; Seeman, 1959). Based on the work of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Adorno and Wright (Healy, 2020), Seeman developed five categories to define, quantify, and investigate alienation. These five different alternative meaning of alienation are as follows: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement (Seeman 1959; Chatman, 1990). People experience *powerlessness* when they assume that their actions will not alter the occurrence of the desired outcomes or reinforcements. Powerless refers to a person's ability to appraise the amount of realism in an individual's response to a circumstance. When people are unable to control situational events that occur in their personal or work milieu. The second category of alienation is *meaninglessness*, referring to an individual's sense of understanding of the event in which they are involved. Individuals experience meaninglessness when they are uncertain about what to believe or when their minimum standards for clarity in decision making are not satisfied. The next category is *normlessness*, which refers to a strong expectation that socially unacceptable behaviour is essential to attain specific aims. A condition in which people of a social context fail to act appropriately, or the collapse of suitable behavioural standards held by members of society in general. The fourth category of alienation is *isolation*, which is defined as a situation in which individuals place low value on goals or ideas that are generally highly valued in a given society, which establishes a feeling of separation from society and a desire to push changes that match their own interests and imperatives. *Self-alienation*, the final category, relates to an individual's incapacity to find self-rewarding interests. A person is dependent on anticipated future rewards, working solely for the benefit of others and finding no value in his own efforts.

Examining the participant's experience using Seeman's five markers of alienation reveals that the subject exhibits these five signs of alienation. Participants display powerlessness when they prefer to accept the exploitation and violence without taking the initiative to fight. Due to the exploitation and violence, the participant appears to have no choice but to accept. Participants believe that justice is God's domain, and that revenge is God's prerogative. Meaningless is displayed particularly by participants who returned home in a physically disabled condition, such as Doroti, and participants who returned home without bringing money. Returning home without money made the participants believe that their

decision to become migrant workers was useless because the huge sacrifices they had made were in vain. Similarly, bereaved parents consider that their sacrifices to raise their children are in vain. Furthermore, normlessness is evident when the participant acknowledged exploitation and abuse as common behaviours in the process of becoming a domestic worker. Life was generally accepted as providing individuals with both pleasant and negative experiences. Participants demonstrated isolation when they chose to remain silent and did not report the violence and exploitation they experienced to the police or the required parties. Additional indicators of isolation were displayed by the participants when they refused to inform authorities about their child's death. The lengthy and costly police investigation did not appear to be promising in terms of justice for the participants. Participants experience the final symptom of self-estrangement when they are compelled to endure violence by carrying out commands from their boss, performing given chores, and avoiding mistakes as much as possible in order to return home with money. Acceptance from family and community has an impact on the self-reward for the participants.

Marx's theory assists in showing that victims of human trafficking from migrant worker sector are victims of a system that is indeed structured for the profit of capital owners. Seeman's analysis helps to explain the individuals' psychological state as they become involved with this system. Both theories emphasise that engaging with or relating to other people changes a person's perspective on themselves, their work, and their surroundings. In other words, a positive sense of self, family, and environment necessitates a healthy working environment and system of equitable effort that allows humans to be human.

Having explored alienation from the perspective of the structure of capitalism (Marx) and from a psychological perspective (Seeman), Paul Tillich writes about alienation from a theological and existential standpoint (Koivulahti, 2019). Tillich employs the term "estrangement" rather than "alienation," which he considers to be related to the concept of sin. Sin is considered to be separation, which comprises three types: separation from fellow human beings, separate from oneself, and separation from ground of being (Tillich, 1953). A division between what people should have and what people ought to unite. Separation can occur as a result of fate (natural events), as well as separation that occurs as a result of a shared experience in which someone is actively engaged. Sin can exist as a state or as an action.

The estrangement is marked by unbelief, hubris, and concupiscence (Tillich, 1976). Unbelief is the condition in which individuals manifest knowledge, will, and emotions that deviate from God's will and distance themselves from God. This concept refers to a state of cognitive disconnection with God, a disconnect between human desires and God's desires, while hubris refers to the act of humans elevating themselves to a divine level. Human beings have the ability to elevate themselves due to their inherent greatness.

Humans have an unending drive to absorb all of existence into themselves. This desire can manifest in several forms such as physical, sexual, intellectual, authoritative, material, or spiritual cravings. This human need is the foundation upon which individuals detach themselves from the divine centre (unbelief) and position themselves as the focal point of their own existence and the world around them (hubris).

Tillich's definition of sin, a state of estrangement, might serve as a foundation for a reflection with the participant's experiences. The notion that migrant workers serve as a means for individuals to escape poverty and are seen as a divine mechanism for enhancing their livelihoods needs reconsideration due to the fragility of the process, which involves the exploitation and violence they endure. The presence of exploitation and violence throughout the entire migrant worker employment process exemplifies a system that deviates from God's will. The migrant worker employment process is designed to satisfy the capital owners' objective of maximising profit by exploiting foreign labour, alienating participants from themselves and their environment. The system cannot be classified as a manifestation of God's will, but it can be classified as a manifestation of sin. Sin can also be comprehended as an intentionally constructed system to maximise the desire to gain profit rather than align with God's will.

4.6 Conclusion

Participants believe working as migrant labourers is God's solution to their many issues, particularly poverty and domestic violence. Moreover, the participants are also affected by the surrounding environment. Recruiters are well-known persons, such as relatives, acquaintances, and neighbours. Bondage debt is a recruitment strategy wherein the agency is responsible for all administrative, housing, and travel expenses. All of these expenses are considered as debts that will be repaid after the participants have worked for at least six

months, deducted from the salary. This strategy places participants in a vulnerable position to be exploited, as agents employ various techniques, such as identity falsification and social isolation. Participants are working as palm oil labourers, elder caretakers, and domestic servants both domestically and internationally.

However, migrant workers hold a vulnerable agency. Participants' families and identities are alienated from them. This alienation is marked by guilt and regret for abandoning the family, particularly the children. The parents of deceased children experience the strongest feelings of guilt. Moreover, living away from one's family requires adaptation to a new environment. This process has a negative effect on a person's sense of belonging and discomfort. In addition, participants experience self-alienation because the abuse and exploitation that they endure places them in a position of self-blame, helplessness, meaningless, and hopelessness. Most of the participants did not want to share their stories of suffering with other people, including their own families. Final alienation is alienation from the community. The community is more aware of the success stories of migrant workers than of their exploitation and abuse. There is a lack of community knowledge that the process of working as a migrant worker is susceptible to exploitation. This causes a lack of public facilities that can assist victims of human trafficking.

Exploitation and violence alienated people from their families, themselves, and communities. Religion plays a supportive role in the alienation. Some of the religious meanings that arose from the interviews, such as the belief that working as a migrant worker is God's plan despite their ignorance of the exploitation and violence that are likely to occur. The participants also express the belief that suffering is a divine punishment, which tends to trap participants in self-blame and makes them hesitant to discuss their experiences with violence and exploitation. In addition, when participants consider that God is responsible for justice and vengeance, they choose acceptance over resistance. Furthermore, this finding demonstrates that violence and exploitation impact individuals' religious meaning. Religious meaning in the community in which they live has an impact on them as well.

The participant's experience of the three alienations corresponds to the analyses of Marx, Seeman, and Tillich. In the theory of alienation and labour, Marx characterised alienation in capitalism as the product of a work system geared to favour capital owners; Seeman

describes five signs of alienation in his examination of alienation and psychology: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. Meanwhile, from a religious standpoint, Tillich defines alienation as a person's separation from themselves, others, and the foundation of existence.

CHAPTER FIVE: COPING WITH ADVERSITY

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter describes human trafficking as a religious issue because becoming a migrant worker is a form of agency within poverty that intersects with religion. However, the reality of being a migrant worker contradicts participant expectations that it is God's way to improve their lives. The participants are vulnerable to exploitation and violence, experiencing three types of alienation, namely alienation from family, self-alienation, and alienation from the community.

This chapter explores how the participants cope with adversity and alienation. Pargament (2001) defines coping as the pursuit of significance in times of stress or the actions people take to attain meaning in stressful situations, where significance is a logical construct of consciousness that involves beliefs and feelings about worth, importance, and value. How individuals respond, avoid, anticipate, and appraise the situations in life is determined by what they deem to be of significance, orientated by or based on various frames of reference, including physical, psychological, social, or spiritual frameworks. Means to facilitate the meaning-making process are called coping methods. Coping methods include thoughts, emotions, behaviour, and interactions. In determining coping methods, people also refer to available, accessible, and compelling tools based on their orientation systems. Pargament notes that there is no ideal method of coping because each orientation system has weaknesses and every situation is unique.

The chapter examines the data to discover the ways participants figure out their survival coping mechanisms in the adversity of exploitation and violence, organised in response to two questions: What coping methods do participants employ? What is the role of religion within this? Since religion is a search for significance, it can provide an essential orientation system (Pargament 2001). In turn, as the orientation system is a crucial factor in determining coping methods, religion can offer a key foundation for the coping process and strategies adopted. In Pargament's language (Pargament 2001), religion is a system that enables participants and religious communities to access readily available, approachable, and compelling tools for coping.

The results of the coding process indicate that religion is indeed the primary reference in the coping process of the participants. Participants are individuals who live in a religious community where religion significantly impacts both the individual and communal belief systems. What emerged from the data was that prayer, religious music, prayer teams, and dreams are the four primary religious coping mechanisms employed by participants to deal with alienation. Participants have limited coping tools when they are powerless, isolated from the outside world, and under intense strain. However, praying, and singing religious songs are available and accessible options, since the participants can pray and sing religious songs in their minds at any time and in any place, even under the most adverse conditions. Meanwhile, most victims' families cited team prayer as a coping tool. Team prayer is common in contexts where participants pray and seek healing. Finally, dreams assist participants in expressing and finding meaning in their adversity. While the meaning of their suffering is a key aspect, issues of comprehension will be reserved for the next chapter (Chapter 6), as the focus of this chapter is primarily on the coping method. The following sections examine in turn each of the four strategies that emerged from the data.

5.2 Prayer

According to the participants, prayer is a readily available and accessible method of coping because they can pray at any time and in any location. Through prayer, the participants expressed their emotions, such as their longing for their families, their stress in the face of pressure and violence, their inability to act on their anger and resistance, and their anxiety over an uncertain future.

5.2.1 Prayer as a Means of Coping with Family Alienation

Working as a migrant worker alienates participants from their families. Some participants found it challenging to leave their families to work. Those who were married and had children were the most affected by this because leaving children behind was not a simple choice. Most employers prohibit participants from contacting their families, while a few permit it under strict supervision; employer communication restrictions exacerbated the estrangement from the family. Prayer assists participants in coping with alienation. Prayer can be conducted anywhere and anytime, silently and in isolation. Participants use prayer to express their longings, worries, and anxieties over their families to God, an omnipotent authority transcending time and spatial limitations.

Sitti, a single mother with three small children, described how difficult it was for her to face the longing for her children. Sitti explained,

I missed my family a lot. They are everything to me. I have three children whom I gave birth to and raised alone as single parent, without a husband. But, what could I do? My employers didn't allow me to make a call or get in touch with my family. Once, I asked for their permission to call my family but they did not allow me. So, when I was there, I never heard my family's voice at all. I missed my family but I could only pray for them. I wasn't allowed to call my family. I always prayed in my room. I pray to God to keep my family safe. (Sitti)

Maria tells a similar story. Maria stated that she constantly prayed and spoke her children's names when she missed them. She entrusted the children to God, and to sustain herself as well. Praying for the children reminds her of the reason she works as a migrant worker, which is to secure the future of the children.

I still remembered that I was ready to leave the village because of my children. When I prayed, I'd mention the names of the children. I might be disabled, and my body was damaged. I had to survive all that for the sake of my children. (Maria)

Praying for the children also reminded the participants that the problems they were experiencing were just temporary. When the job contract expires, everything will come to an end, thus patience and tolerance are necessary.

From the family side, the parents interviewed also revealed that they prayed when they thought of their children working outside the region or abroad. Yohana commented,

When I think of my daughter working in Malaysia, all I can do is pray that God will look after her, especially her health. My daughter suffers from headaches on a regular basis. I believe that because we constantly pray, even if she gets sick, it will just be for a few days, not for long. I feel comforted and better after I pray. I cry every time I pray. (Yohana)

Norma testified that before her daughter worked in Malaysia, Norma did not know how to pray. However, before her daughter left Malaysia, she left a letter asking Norma to pray for her constantly. Since then, Norma has been learning the Lord's prayer to say daily for her daughter.

I saw that she had left me a letter. In the letter, she said that she was going to Kupang and then Malaysia. She ask, I shouldn't cry if I didn't see her at home anymore. She asked me to always pray for her. She said that the Lord's Prayer would be of great help. I couldn't even say a word and then I kept the letter. After that, I always pray and say the Lord's Prayer every day. I took the letter, I kept it in the Bible and put it under my pillow. Every time I wake up in the morning I pray our father prayer for her. If I miss her I also pray. I believe, if I always pray, God will always protect my daughter. (Norma)

As religious people, the participants considered that God is omnipotent and capable of controlling the entire universe. However, as humans, the participants have limited authority. The participants surrendered in prayer and begged God to protect their families. Participants were indirectly connected to their families through prayer to the Almighty God and were reminded that neither they nor their families were alone because God was with them.

Living in a new environment far from home and without contact with family causes individuals to feel estranged. It can influence their sense of control and belonging, undermining their sense of safety. They are limited to focusing on the reason they are migrant workers: to provide for their families. They can only control their actions, while everything else appears to be in the hands of God, the greatest authority who can control existence.

The participants determined that prayer could assist them overcome feelings of loneliness and longing for family. This demonstrates that prayer connects not only with the sacred but also with others. Essentially, prayer is a connection via communion with the sacred and with one's neighbour (Dowling & Scarlett, 2012). Through connecting with God, one can not only communicate desires but also comprehend God's will. Moreover, neuroimaging studies on prayer demonstrate that when a person prays to God, the brain responds similarly to when they converse with a loved one (Neubauer, 2014), where in both instances the brain responds as an interpersonal interaction. Hence, via prayer, one can experience God's presence. Feeling the

presence of God through prayer gives an emotional response that reduces loneliness (Levine, 2008).

5.2.2 *Prayer as a Source of Strength in Hard Times*

Exploitation is the primary factor in human trafficking, causing victims to live in adversity. Likewise, the participants are in a position of inferior strength. The coding results indicate that prayer is one of the coping methods that always appears when the participants face various hardships and challenges.

One of the challenges encountered is adapting, particularly to an exploitative environment. Yuka explained how difficult it was for her to adjust to these kinds of circumstances.

It was difficult to work there. People who didn't know God would definitely know God because it was hard. Those who didn't pray would definitely be able to pray. In the morning, we only ate bread. In the afternoon, we ate noodles. In the evening, we ate glass noodles. For 6 months, I never ate rice. I have a photo of me when I was very thin. I thought if I had known this, then I would never have come. But I had to keep working. I could only pray to God for strength. That's why people who went to Malaysia for work usually came back with a thin body. It was because we didn't get enough sleep, we couldn't rest, and had a bad eating habit. After a while, you would get used to it, but it took a long process. (Yuka)

In addition, the participants frequently felt exhausted due to overwork and lack of rest time. Some participants stated that prayer was their method to cope with fatigue and exhaustion. They asked God for both psychological and physical strength through prayer. Leona explains that the amount of work she had to perform left her with little time to rest. She always prayed for fortitude when she was exhausted. Leona did not give up easily because she was constantly reminded that her family was always praying for her.

I feel safe because I believe God is always present. I remember that my husband always prays with me, and when I pray, I feel God's consolation. Whenever I have the chance, I will pray. During working in Malaysia, I did

not attend church for two years, but my relationship with God remained constant. If I had a problem or I felt very tired at work, I would go to the bathroom, and pray in the bathroom. (Leona)

Maria, one of the participants whose employer subjected her to brutal treatment, stated that prayer was her means of survival when she was subjected to assault:

If I were beaten and tortured I would only cry out to God in my heart. I believe God is bigger than my employer, therefore I believe my employer will not be able to torture me to death. I didn't reply and could only stay silent, enduring all the violence until my last day at work. I said even though the master is taller, smarter, more powerful than me, but she will not be more than my God. God is more than all that, we are both human beings who live only because of God's grace. We're both the exact same species. She will not avoid the sight of God. (Maria)

Maria was subjected to various horrific physical, psychological, and sexual abuses. Maria, who was helpless, begged God for strength by praying. She believed, because of God's power, that she would have the strength to live even though she was powerless and had no control over herself. Through prayer, she was reminded that God has all power and authority.

The story of Maria demonstrates that prayer is both a defensive tool and a form of resistance. Maria did not physically resist because she lacked the fortitude to do so; instead, she remained silent and endured the violence. The only form of resistance available to her was to report her employer's behaviour to God and ask for God's intervention. Through prayer, Maria fights in silence. Through prayer, Maria connected with God and regained her power.

Prayer is the primary coping mechanism for participants during difficult times, especially when they had to adapt to a new environment; it is where they find strength when exhausted from doing so much work, when they are experiencing torture, and when they are in a state of hopelessness. When participants are in a condition of powerlessness, they have no control over themselves or their bodies. Exploitation and violence influence people's sense of control and power, reminding people of their limitations as humans.

The participants pray because they are mindful of the existence of a God who does have control and authority. Prayer instils the conviction that life is still worth living by reminding us that there is a power greater than the current difficulty (Spilka & Ladd, 2013). Prayer is a means for individuals to regain a sense of control in challenging circumstances. Prayer has an effect on human emotions because, although it may not alter the challenging circumstances encountered, it can alter one's perspective on those circumstances (Levine, 2008). Therefore, through prayer, participants are able to see that there is still hope in difficult circumstances

5.2.3 *Prayer to Find Solutions: Hope in Times of Hopelessness*

Erika, a participant who endured terrible violence and exploitation, indicated that prayer provided her with the strength and hope to survive. In prayer, she requested God to provide an escape route.

When I slept, I always thought about how to get out of there. I always prayed to be able get out of there. I often cried a lot when I worked there. I always persevered because I believed God will have time to get me out of this tough situation. I didn't think much; work, pray, work, pray waiting for God to provide a way out. (Erika)

Being in a state of helplessness can cause people to lose hope, but Erika is reminded through prayer that there is still hope in God. Erika is reminded of God's omnipotence through prayer and thus retains hope. Through depending on the power of God, life remains meaningful due to the continuous presence of hope.

Leona described her unique praying experience. To work in Malaysia, Leona was required to leave her husband and three children. The employer did not allow Leona to communicate with her family back home; one day, she missed her children so much that she dared ask the employer for permission to contact them. Even though she had permission from her employer to contact her family back home, she could not recall the phone number of any of her family. Then Leona decided to pray, conveying her desire to God. After praying, she could recall one of the families' mobile phone numbers.

If I remember my children, I can only pray. One moment I really miss my children. I miss hearing my children's voices. I asked my employer for favour. Another worker told me that if I wanted to contact my family, I had to ask permission from my employer. I am allowed but must be guarded. My employer allowed me to call the family, but I couldn't remember the phone number of the family in the village. I sat and cried in the bathroom. I prayed for God's help so I could remember my family's phone number. I pray to God that I really miss hearing my children's voices. After I finished praying, I suddenly remembered one of my relatives' phone numbers. My husband didn't have a telephone, so I called one of my relatives and asked if I could talk to my husband and children. (Leona)

Doroti, a participant who had to have two arms and one leg amputated, had to adjust to extremely difficult circumstances. When she returned home disabled, she was at her lowest point, with no hope. Her life is entirely dependent on others. Doroti, who was devastated by the condition of her body at the time of her homecoming, had to adjust to the family's reaction, which accepted her as an additional burden in the midst of their difficulties and poverty.

I felt useless because my condition causes more troubles to my family. They are old (parents) and there is no way I can continue to expect them to support me. I thought, I'd rather just die than trouble them even more. At first, my mother was often angry and that made me feel even more guilty. But finally, she was able to deal with my condition. She never beats me, just the way she spoke is quite irritating. But now, when I started wearing prosthetics, all I could do was pray. Mother would be worried and she would call to check on me. God change my mum, my mum supports me and loves me. I still remember, when I came back here for the first time, there were even relatives who regretted why I didn't just die. Because of course it will be more troublesome for the family to look after me. I'm sad because my parents never talk like that but my other family can say such evil things. (Doroti)

With this new physical state, Doroti needs assistance to eat, drink, sit, use the toilet and all activities for the rest of her life. Doroti's family is her sole source of hope; if the family rejects her, she has no place to live. Doroti could only pray and hope that God would change her

mother's perspective and provide her with the understanding she needed to accept her position. Through praying to God, she retains hope for survival, and with that hope, life is worthwhile.

Adjusting to new physical conditions is a challenging process. After being bedridden for years, Doroti desired a wheelchair so that she could move more independently. Doroti decided to stop living in a hopeless situation and began to cultivate hope by constantly praying to God for a wheelchair.

The accident happened in 2008, but in 2014 I got a wheelchair from social services. At first, I got information that I wouldn't get a prosthetic leg. Then, I went to meet the pastor to pray. I really struggled in prayer. I used to pray with the pastor so that God can bless me with a prosthetic leg. So, when I got the prosthetic leg, I always use it to go to church. Prior to that, I could only sit, and the first practice made me faint because I had been sitting for 6 years. It was painful because the blood just accumulated and didn't flow properly. My leg was amputated below the knee so that the knee can still be used to move the prosthetic leg. Now, I can go to church, and I can go to worship. (Doroti)

The experience of praying for a wheelchair became one of the instances of faith that strengthened Doroti's desire to plan her future once more. She grew eager to train her body in order to lessen her dependence on others. This experience of faith serves as a reminder to live prayerfully. Life is still worthwhile because there is still hope in God, and Doroti expresses that she should continue to pray with diligence. Positive experiences associated with prayer lead participants to prefer to maintain their lives and not give up. Participants decide to focus on positive aspects, such as how God accompanies them through a variety of challenging situations.

According to the *Encyclopaedia of Religious and Spiritual Development*, prayer has multiple functions (Dowling & Scarlett, 2012). Prayer is not only a relationship between people and God but also a transition from a passive to an active approach to life's challenges. Through prayer, asking God for fortitude in times of adversity is understood as a proactive action taken amid hardship. It transfers the focus from the immediate challenge to God's strength and hope.

Additionally, prayer has an empowering effect: through prayer, one feels connected to God, and this sense of connection strengthens and enables one to endure challenging times.

5.2.4 *Praying as a Coping Strategy for Future Uncertainty*

Prayer and hope were prominent in the participants' responses to interview questions concerning the future. The interviews revealed that most participants did not demonstrate an improvement in their family's economic situation after returning home. Several of them went home with no money, and some of those who did bring money spent it on consumer items, quickly depleting the money. They are still highly concerned about their own and their family's futures. Most participants choose to pray to reduce their anxiety regarding the uncertainties of the future.

Doroti trusts God and decides to pray if she feels nervous and concerned about the future. Prayer helps her recall that God exists and will be a husband who contributes to meeting her needs.

Talking about the future, praying is my strength. I don't really think about things beyond my capacity. There are people who ask if I want to get married or not. I can only say that only God can continue to protect and care for me. I don't think about the lusts because they don't matter to me. They say it's a shame because I won't have children but I'm okay with that. People wonder why I look so strong when I face such temptation. I can't say anything other than that God is always there for me. If I run out of money, I won't think too much about it because I believe God will continue to bless me. There are many people out there who are still struggling. There are people who live under the bridge, so they are scavengers or beggars and they can still live. I am lucky enough to be able to sleep in my own house. Therefore, I am always grateful and do not think too much about things that are beyond my capabilities. Just pray God is with me.
(Doroti)

Her new physical condition made her realise she could not live a typical life. Anxiety about the future frequently leads to excessive thought. However, she learned to worry less about the

future and to concentrate on her present life and what she can accomplish. Doroti's apprehension regarding the future was transferred to God through prayer.

Siti also spoke of anxiety about the future. As a single mother with three children, she is also responsible for caring for her parents while unemployed. Siti would love to find a permanent job in the city but must look after her parents in the village. She chooses to reside in the village, where she manages her property while praying to God for a prosperous future. Siti's tale demonstrates that prayer is her life force.

I survived working in Malaysia solely through prayer. I feel God is with me at all times. If not for God, I would not be this way. It was difficult to spend three years as a foreign labourer. Working as a housekeeper in another individual's home is not something to be taken lightly. We didn't sleep well. I am able to survive because of God's grace. I think that God is with me at all times. So, neither I nor my children are overly concerned about the future. The most crucial thing is that we pray fervently. I believe that God will present me with a prosperous future if I pray. (Siti)

Her experience as a migrant worker in Malaysia, where prayer enabled her to endure adversity, served as a source of future fortitude.

In summary, participants express longing, depression, fear, rage, and hopelessness through prayer. Through praying, participants also attempt to understand and accept their lack of control over themselves and their surroundings. Additionally, through prayer, participants also attempt to develop cognitive reasoning to help them remain calm during various challenging situations. They may not be able to change the difficulties they are experiencing, but through prayer, they can shift their perspective on those difficulties, ensuring there is still hope amid diverse stresses and suffering so that life is worth defending.

Participants express longing, depression, fear, rage, and hopelessness through prayer. Through praying, participants also attempt to understand and accept their lack of control over themselves and their surroundings. Next, through prayer, participants also attempt to develop cognitive reasoning to help them remain calm during various challenging situations. They may not be able to change the difficulties they are experiencing, but through prayer, they can shift their

perspective on those difficulties, ensuring there is still hope amid diverse stresses and suffering so that life is worth defending.

5.3 Religious Song

In addition to prayer, the participants indicated that singing religious songs is a readily available and accessible coping method. When the participant is alone and frustrated, they may sing quietly, and songs can spontaneously come to mind. Participants convey their longing for their family through singing. Song serves as a means for individuals to endure and bolster their resilience to the exploitation and violence they encounter. Songs additionally aid participants in providing instructions for managing memories of the past and focusing on the present, all while developing a more promising future.

The participants listed several religious songs that they frequently sing: *Ku Nyanyi Haleluyah* (I Sing Hallelujah); *Allah Kuasa* (God Rules Overall); *Waktu Tuhan Tolong Saya* (When God Saves me); *KasihNya Seperti Sungai* (Peace Like a River); *Mampirlah Dengar Doaku* (Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour); *Anak dari Tuhan* (The Son of God); *Indah Rencanamu Tuhan* (God's Plan is Beautiful); *Maranatha, Kutahu Tuhan Pasti Buka Jalan* (I know the Lord Makes a Way); *Iring Dikau Saja Tuhan* (I Will Follow Thee My Saviour); and *Saya Mau Ikut Yesus* (I Want to Follow Jesus). Several of the songs are from the participants' childhoods, which they have sung during family prayers and at Sunday school. Some of these songs are also hymns sung in church services and are well-known to the participants.

5.3.1 *Singing Religious Songs as a Means of Coping with Alienation from Family*

As already noted, a main characteristic of the participants' experience is that of alienation from their former life and particularly from family. In seeing the only option as enduring their situation for the sake of those families, singing assisted the participants to cope with the alienation, separation, and lack of contact. Sitti, a single parent who left her children and parents behind in the village expressed this as follows:

If I remembered my children and family in the village, I usually sang. I sang Christian songs. My friend and I used to sit and sing together. If the employer was not there, we used to sing together. I had to persevere so I could go home with money, we had left the village and had to go home with money. (Sitti)

Sundays and Christmas were the occasions during which Sitti thought about her family and children most intensely. During those days, they would have attended church as a family. She found solace in singing songs, which were frequently heard in church, as a means of expressing her deep longing. Sitti's greatest longing is for her family; they are also her primary source of strength in navigating numerous challenges. Sitti's primary objective is to sustain her employment to generate income to renovate her family's residence and finance her children's education.

Veronika provides a very similar narrative. She was forced to leave five children with the family in the village. Veronika said,

When I was working, my employer had a guitar at home, so I frequently took the instrument and sang a song. The title of the song is "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour." I began crying when I listened to that song, which I adore. Then I recall my husband and I also recall my children. I frequently shed tears and worry for their daily sustenance. If recall my children, I always sing. (Veronika)

Singing the religious songs from childhood is an expression of their homesickness. It creates a sense of belonging and safety and reminds the participant of the memory of family. Through singing, they feel reunited with their family, assisting participants in processing their perception of reality. They must leave their family to achieve their desire for a better family life.

Singing is an available and accessible coping tool in adversity due to memory, music, and emotion being interrelated. The human right brain is the place for intuitive, emotional, visual, spatial and tactual, while the left brain is linguistic, sequential and analytical (Van der Kolk, 2014). In the right brain, the human deepest emotions, such as song and sound, are stored in the limbic system (Tomaino, 1993). Music is considerably easier to remember because it has more than one element stored in the limbic system as comprehensive and holistic auditory data. The redundancy effect from music assists musical material in storing much more quickly in long-term memory. It stimulates the construction and function of the limbic system, which is involved in emotion processing and memory control (Jäncke, 2008). When the participant sings

a familiar song, recalling an experience and emotion of family creates a sense of belonging and safety.

5.3.2 *Singing Religious Songs as a Means for Coping with Adversity*

Exploitation and violence imposed a lack of control on the participant. They did not own themselves because the employer had ultimate control over their lives. However, although the employer had control over their bodies, they did not have control over the participants' memories or minds. Singing religious songs in the face of adversity is a means for participants to recover their self-authority. Through singing, people's sense of control is defined by the relationship between their bodies and rhythm.

When the adverse life event cannot be described in words, the song assists the participant in articulating reality. The participant sings a religious song that relates to the situation that they have experienced. Omri describes that amidst the worst hardships and trouble, she used to sing a religious song from childhood that she had learned in Sunday school. This song expresses that people can connect with God via prayer through difficult times, and that God bestows patience.

*Son of God, are you in trouble?
Enter the room, be on your knees, call your God, call His name
Don't forget your God's number
God's phone is so amazing
I feel now I have nothing to lose
God will provide if you are patient
Contact with Jesus, what a great fortune
This is a song from childhood. When I was alone or in difficult time I used to
sing this song. (Omri)*

This song serves as a reminder that Omri is not confronting this challenging time alone, as God is faithful to accompany her. God is the source of perseverance and strength.

Another story is told by Erika. She had been subjected to isolation and violence for eight months and treated inhumanely. Every day, Erika tried to find a way to escape; she sang a religious song from childhood as a tool to express this:

In Medan, when I had a hard time, I used to sing the song "I Know the Lord Will Make A Way." I know the Lord will make a way for me. I know the Lord will make a way for me, If I live a holy life, shun the wrong and do the right. Shun the wrong and do the right, I know the Lord will make a way for me. I used to sing the song when I was still in Medan. I also sing the song when I pray with my mum. That song really comforts my mind. (Erika)

Erika is reminded by the song that she is not alone in sorrow since God is beside her. God will not only grant the fortitude to endure sorrow, but God will also provide a way to escape suffering.

Maria, recalled that when her employer beat her, she endured by silently humming religious songs:

I sang Waktu Tuhan Tolong Saya/When God Saves Me. When I was beaten in Malaysia, I sang this song. I kept calling God, and all of my body was broken, and everything seemed dark for me. I asked God to help me out. (Maria)

This hymn proclaims that Jesus is the sole help in times of difficulty. Without Jesus, the human race will perish. This song reminds them that God will eventually deliver them from hardship. Lyrics and rhythms provide an opportunity to express the participants' lives. The participant frequently sings religious songs while crying and praying to God. It is a way to express and connect with God in the face of alienation and adversity, and to acquire a sense of comfort, strength, peace, and endurance. In addition, the songs remind listeners that there is hope in God. There is still a purpose in overcoming adversity, and life is worthwhile because God provides strength and hope.

According to Van der Kolk (2014), a traumatic event is incomprehensible because of its effect on the Broca's area of the human brain, which serve as the brain's speech centre. The function of the Broca's area is to put thoughts and feelings into words. A traumatic life event reduces

the function of the Broca's area, making it difficult for people to articulate or describe their situation. On the other hand, the right half of the brain is still active, which is responsible for music experiences such as crying and singing. Crying and singing are ways to release and express oneself after a traumatic event.

5.3.3 *Singing Religious Songs as Instruction*

Another role of religious song and religious music that emerges is that it encourages participants to acknowledge and embrace their past while also determining their present and future lives. After being released from adversity, the participant has to face a new step in their life and deal with returning home and reuniting with their family. Those who return home with money are frequently regarded as successful individuals whose hard work has paid off. Those who return home with little money or even a disability, on the other hand, are considered as failures.

Singing religious songs helps participants to avoid overthinking and focus on the present moment. After fifteen years of working as a palm oil labourer, Bia returned home without any money having been cheated by a friend. He was sick for years because of unhelpfully dwelling on his thoughts. Religious song assists in helping overcome this and in keeping his focus on the present and future life.

Now, I just need to focus on working in my garden and serve as sexton so that I can keep living. When I'm alone in my garden, I usually sing "Maranatha," and "Iring Dikau." I don't want to waste my time to think about my past. (Bia)

According to Bia, his life's purpose is gardening and working as a sexton in the church. Bia knows that he cannot change the past but can determine the present and the future. Religious song plays a significant role in this process.

Doroti, the participant who returned home as an amputee, had to face the family perceiving her as an additional burden due to poverty and a lack of social security. She has learned to adapt to her new body and is striving for independence. Hearing and singing religious songs help her avoid dwelling on the situation and encourages her to live.

I felt useless because my condition causes more troubles to my family. They are old and there is no way I can continue to expect them to support me. I thought, I'd rather just die than trouble them even more. At first, my mother was often angry and that made me feel even more guilty. But finally, she was able to deal with my condition... If I remember the journey of my life, I sing "Hallelujah, How Great You Are." It's one of my favourite songs. God is at work in all things, God is able to overcome all things, Jesus is able to overcome all your problems, Jesus is greater than all, Jesus is greater than all, he will not leave me alone... Jesus is greater than all, He will not allow the temptation to be more than I can stand. So, yeah, that is one of my favourite songs which always make me contemplate. Another song is "There's Only One God." If I can't sleep at night, I sing the song "God's Working" and it makes me ponder. It is Help me to understand my life. (Doroti)

Because of an imbalance between the rational and emotional brains, the participant experiences traumatic reactions such as overthinking. Knowing how to proceed and what will happen next takes time and effort. Because the emotional brain is the engine of post-traumatic reactions, people must intervene in the limbic system to effect change, repairing "the danger alarm" and re-establishing the proper balance of the rational and emotional brain (Van der Kolk, 2014). Since the limbic system also serves as a storage location for music, singing religious songs can help to release emotions, so that the words in the song can represent those emotions and allow the brain to process them better. Singing is a timely intervention that integrates language and music when word finding and sentence generation are difficult, reducing thinking and communication capacities (Robertson-Gillam, 2018).

The participants are unfamiliar with developing philosophical analysis or difficult contemplation because of their educational backgrounds. Furthermore, the lack of a mental health facility and support system forces the participants to find their own path to recovery. Being a member of a religious community, the participants' participation in religious songs significantly influences their expression and action. Religious song instructs in how to deal with troubled, sick, or downcast people by describing God's power and encouraging people to be faithful and patient with God's ability to solve the problem (Hamilton et al., 2017). The continuity of God's power encourages people to acknowledge the past while maintaining hope for the future.

5.3.4 Integration with the Community

Alienation from the community is an effect of a traumatic experience (J. L. Herman, 2015). Surrounded by a community that was unaware of human trafficking, most of the participants preferred to hide their subjective experience and avoid discussing their suffering with others. Acceptance by the community influences the self-acceptance of participants.

Some participants mentioned their involvement in religious ministry, including participation in a choral/singing group. It is a way to integrate with the community. Doroti is currently an active member of the church choir. She frequently has the opportunity to lead worship during services.

My pastor prefers me to participate in church service because when I sing, I never hold back my voice. I just want to sing with all my heart when I am in the church. When Maria and I are in the church, our voices must be the loudest... But I am still grateful that I can still lead the praises in the church. Usually, I lead the praise with my eyes as a guide. Every time I led the praises in church, I would cry. If I can serve in church, I will do so. (Doroti)

Involvement in a church choral/singing group is a way to be grateful to God, prove that they belong to a community, feel accepted, and that their life is meaningful by contributing to the community.

Similarly, Nio, a participant with one of his hands amputated, is now an active member of the church's choral group. Since early childhood, singing has been a part of his life. Nio describes,

I'm used to work. That's why I can't sit around for too long, and I have to walk a lot. Now, I join a choral/singing group. Sometimes, someone asks if I am embarrassed because I only have one hand. Then, I said that I didn't have to be embarrassed because I didn't ask for any of this. Maybe, if this happened to other people, then they will never dare to do what I have done. I just try to accept the reality. (Nio)

Through participating in the choral group, Nio feels empowered to contribute positively to the community. The fact that he can still contribute to the community makes him feel no different from other people.

Choir singing has been shown in psychology to improve quality of life, reduce anxiety and depression, and promote meaning and purpose (Robertson-Gillam, 2018). Furthermore, therapeutic choirs express and promote acceptance and a spirit of tolerance. Choir singing therapy provides an opportunity for people with social and physical disabilities who are socially isolated and find it difficult to access adequate health care by reducing mental health symptoms and providing coping strategies for dealing with life in new and motivating ways.

Singing religious songs contributes significantly to human resilience and the healing process due to an intersection between religion, singing, and coping mechanisms. As already noted, this intersection occurs in the limbic system, a part of the human brain that stores music and emotional memory. It demonstrates that religion connects to cognitive dimensions such as religious convictions, creeds, and meaning attribution and to limbic, sensory material, and to physical dimensions (Sremac & Ganzevoort, 2019). The pastoral dimension of church rituals such as song, poetry, and dance provide emotional and spiritual healing.

As with religion, the healing process focuses on the cognitive brain and the limbic system. This discovery encourages the use of singing as a tool for the integration and healing of victims of human trafficking, especially in communities with limited access to mental health facilities. Additionally, it can be used to educate the public about human trafficking and prevention.

5.4 Prayer Teams

Prayer teams are the next method of coping noted by the participants, particularly the parents. The prayer team is part of the participants' belief system because most of the participants have been involved in prayer teams since they were children. In writing about the prayer teams in East Nusa Tenggara, Nuban Timo explained that prayer meetings are a common form of worship among local congregations (Timo, 2009). Their presence is frequently debated because some people complain about their existence while others respond positively.

Prayer teams are not a new phenomenon in Timor, as in 1965 and 1966 there was a significant revival of pietism there. Telnoni (2003) explains that almost all the current prayer teams have their roots in the revival movement of 1965–1966. Some of the church members reacted positively to the revival, which resulted in 40 evangelistic groups. During this time, Sunday services were filled with testimonies of visions and healings from God. The evangelistic groups spread the gospel from Timor to other villages and islands, including Rote, Sabu, Flores, and Alor, as well as to the rest of the world. The evangelistic groups are subsequently called and known as prayer teams.

According to Timo, a prayer group is a fellowship where individuals assemble to pray, sing, and study the Bible (Timo, 2009). Typically, the prayer service is led by a person seen as having a special gift from the Holy Spirit rather than a church minister. Prayer services employ more expressive liturgies, allowing members to testify about the daily goodness they experience from God. Prayer teams emphasise piety of life, personal repentance, and spiritual renewal of life. A person who has experienced personal conversion can receive spiritual gifts such as the gift of healing, the gift of speaking in tongues, the gift of prophecy, or the gift of having visions of God.

5.4.1 The Prayer Team as a Tool for Coping with Family Alienation

The participants were estranged from their families for an extended period due to restrictions on communication. Some parents attempted to contact recruiters to discover how their children were getting on in their new location, but recruiters were unable to provide precise information. This is exacerbated by inadequate village communication facilities such as limited mobile phones, provider signals, and limited internet.

Under these conditions, the prayer team became one of the options available for families in the village to seek information. Norma narrates,

When my daughter was working in Jakarta, I simply prayed that I would be called. In the past, there were no cell phones, and employers did not authorise workers to make calls. But, I always pray for my daughter and join a prayer team. Only because of prayers, I think that God protects. Even though I have a cell phone, I continue to pray fervently. The prayer team will provide instructions later on.

If my daughter has not communicated for an extended period of time, I pray with the prayer team to find out where she is. My only strength is prayer, and I think that if I pray, my daughter will be safe. (Norma)

The prayer team is where parents express their worries over their daughters' employment so far away.

Yohana shares her experience related to the prayer team. Yohana and the prayer team prayed for her daughter, who worked in Malaysia and with whom she had lost contact for two years. During the prayer, one of the prayer ministers had a vision from God in which her daughter contacted Yohana a few weeks later. A few weeks later, Yohana's daughter called and told her that her contract had end and she would soon return home. Yohana shared her experience with the prayer team:

There has been no news or information for us since my daughter left Malaysia to work as a domestic worker. All I know is that the contract is for two years in Malaysia. When there was still no news after two years, I went to the prayer team. At the time, in the village, I had a friend who was a member of the prayer team. At our house, the prayer team prayed three times. They assured me that my daughter will contact us. And, as it turned out, my daughter did call me after a few days of praying. That made me extremely happy and sure enough a few weeks later my daughter called to say she was coming home. (Yohana)

Silas shared the same experience; the prayer team was where he prayed to find out the whereabouts of his daughter who was working in Malaysia. Silas told the following story:

We didn't know where she was. We just went to pray to find out whether she was doing good or not but the vision said that she was fine. After two years, I expected her contract to be over so I went to pray again. The prayer team just told us to wait for her. It turned out to be true. A few days later she came home but with an illness, a mental disorder. (Silas)

The experience of the participant is consistent with Timo's analysis. According to Timo, individual expression is one of the advantages of prayer teams over Sunday church services and other worship services (Timo, 2009). In the prayer meeting, everyone is given the

opportunity to share their concerns and happiness. As a common faith struggle, one's anxiety, dread, and experience of suffering are accepted, acknowledged, and prayed for.

Besides offering a comfortable place for individual expression, the prayer team provides communal support. Every problem of every person matters and will get its answer through visions in prayer. The issue is then prayed over together with other members. If the parents are in need, the prayer team is willing to come to their homes and pray for the issues at hand. This kind of support is empowering because parents feel that they are not alone and there is a place in the community that understands their concerns.

Herman emphasises the significance of relationship in trauma (Herman 2015). The way or extent to which people learn about a sense of self, worth, and safety depends in large part on a feeling of connection to others. A support group provides a place where everyone can share their troubles and grieve together. Through exchanging tales and mourning together, each member feels as though they are in the same predicament, thereby establishing an emotional support system. Finding a safe place to express one's trauma is a crucial step to begin on the path to healing.

5.4.2 The Prayer Team as a Place for Healing

The participants mention the prayer team when sharing their healing experiences. When expectations and reality diverge, life is difficult to comprehend. Parents sometimes have to accept the extreme situation that their daughter, who is expected to work far away for a better future, will return home dead. Tersia mentioned in the interview that the prayer team assisted her in processing the loss of her daughter.

I was unable to accept my daughter's death for three years. I am continuously ill as a result. In the end, I was forced to accept it. I always pray whenever I have the chance. I joined a prayer group and also participated in worship. They always bolstered me in the prayer team, telling me that I had to accept my daughter's passing. There was nothing I could have done to revive my daughter. I must be able to accept in order to recover. Because I no longer wish to remain ill, I accept my daughter's death. (Tersia)

Accepting the death of her daughter was painful for Tersia and required time. Tersia feels very guilty because, as a mother, she permitted her daughter to work in a different province. She allowed her daughter to work because the recruiter who offered the job was someone she knew, so she believed the recruiter would protect her daughter. Unfortunately, the reality was different, and Tersia was angry at her daughter's death. However, she could not do anything about it. She could not sue the recruiter because the recruiter was a respected person in her village, both traditionally and religiously. The guilt and inability to seek justice for her daughter made Tersia suffer from high blood pressure for many years due to stress.

She shared her grief and bitterness with the prayer team until she realised she could do nothing to bring her daughter back to life. Tersia was counselled in multiple prayer sessions to embrace her daughter's death willingly so that she could heal. Years of suffering convinced Tersia that her daughter would never return. Due to her wish to recover from her illness, she chose to accept her daughter's death, despite it being so painful.

Bia included the prayer team in the story of his healing from depression. Bia had spent fifteen years labouring on a palm oil plantation but returned home with no money. Bia was profoundly affected by the theft of his salary. He had left his pay check in the account of a close acquaintance who accompanied him home but who vanished with all the money as soon as they arrived in Bia's hometown. Bia felt that his life had been squandered due to this incident, as he had endured difficult labour without gaining anything. Bia had suffered from depression for years, so he pursued healing from a prayer team. Bia narrated,

When I initially arrived home, I felt ill due to the thinking. I migrated to the palm oil industry to get money. A friend swindled me out of tens of millions of rupiah, it turns out. I believed that working abroad would improve my life, but I trusted the wrong persons. I regret having lost so much cash. I went to the prayer team to pray, and the guy praying indicated that the individual who stole my money will one day face the repercussions. I attended another prayer meeting where I received the same message. I was advised not to give it too much thought because God will ultimately repay everything. If I dwell on it too much, I may become ill. I feel that God will return my heartache, thus I no longer wish to consider that money. (Bia)

After attending multiple prayer sessions, Bia always received instructions to let go of the incidents and refrain from recalling them. God will substitute replacement blessings for money. After accepting reality and letting go of the situation, Bia can heal.

Another such story is told by Silas and Silva, a couple who struggle with many problems related to their children. The oldest has suffered from mental illness since senior high school, their second child died in Kalimantan as a palm oil labourer after suffering from an unknown illness for one week. Their third child, the daughter, worked as a migrant worker in Malaysia and returned home with mental illness. The prayer team is where they question why they have all these difficulties and where they seek healing for their two mentally ill children. Silas stated,

I have attended more than 10 prayer meetings to seek healing for my son. When we prayed, there was a prayer meeting that said that we should do a prayer of surrender. Some say that this is the sin of our ancestors. There were prayer meetings that asked us to offer pigs, goats, or chickens as offerings. I always fulfilled what was asked for the healing of my children. I do whatever I have to do to earn money, but my two children still have no signs of recovery. (Silas)

According to Silas and Silva, every prayer team has unique requirements and healing processes. There is a prayer team that uses water to heal. Another prayer team demands fasting from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., a confession prayer at 12 p.m., and the sacrifice of two goats. Another prayer team demanded a certain amount of money and required Silas to beat his mentally ill son with a stick to cast out demons during prayer, while another prayer group demanded the sacrifice of pigs, goats, or chickens during the confession service.

The participants' experiences revealed that the prayer team assisted them in articulating and processing the challenging times they were experiencing. It calms their minds, which has a positive impact on their health. In the psychological field, studies explain the relationship between mind and body, although these studies are more advanced in the Eastern world. According to Mošič (2020), human existence is an ongoing interaction between the mind and body. Mental consciousness determines how individuals experience their bodies, while body consciousness provides mental consciousness with information about the external environment through the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, and taste. Training mental consciousness by researching, contemplating, and meditating on the nature of the mind can transform the human

mind into a healing instrument. Calmness and clarity in the human psyche can affect a person's physical well-being. However, the story from Silas and Silva emphasises that not all physical pain and mental health can be resolved by these mechanisms.

In Timor, it is common for the sick to seek healing from prayer teams. Individuals seek alternative treatments due to the dearth of medical facilities and the high cost of medical care. Rural communities are unfamiliar with receiving care in expensive and modern medical facilities. In their culture, prayer and traditional medication that has been passed down from generation to generation are more prevalent. Moreover, the connection between prayer teams and healing has a lengthy history in the revival movement of 1965–1966 (Rano Baki, 2023). One of the doctrines emphasised by this movement is the power of prayer for healing and at the time of the revival, an estimated 30,000 individuals received healings, including from mental illness.

J. A. Telsoni, one of the Timorese theologians who wrote about the prayer movement, stated that the prayer team's practice of healing through prayer was one of the reasons it became controversial (Telsoni, 2003). Several pastors, including Pastor B. Manuain, attempted to reconcile the contradictions at the time (1960). According to Manuain, prayer and work are complementary activities. God-centred healing prayer must coexist with modern and conventional medical treatment. Modern and traditional medical care is also a divine gift, similar to prayer.

Pursuing healing through prayer at prayer teams is still prevalent today, as evidenced by participant narratives. It means the experience and doctrines of healing through prayer are still preserved in the memory and belief system of Christians in Timor. Moreover, due to the scarcity and high cost of health facilities, this communal memory is the most available, accessible, and compelling option. As long as the development of health facilities remains inadequate, so the community's memory of healing with the prayer team will continue.

5.4.3 The Prayer Team as a Source of Meaning

The prayer team plays a role in the participants' meaning-making process. When participants are in a crisis and have difficulty, they doubt their existence. Some participants prefer prayer meetings as a means of obtaining answers. Sitti was stigmatised because she was a single

mother of three children and because the children were fathered by three different men. In religious communities, the sanctity of married life is emphasised, and those with children outside of marriage are regarded as committing grave sins. In addition to ridicule at the hands of the community, including church members, Siti could not leave the house to go to the city to find a regular job because as a daughter, she had to care for her parents. Meanwhile, she must find stable work to support her children's education and future. But it was challenging to find a regular job in the village. Siti deemed the weight of her existence to be unbearable. The situation prompted Siti to ponder her fate:

I once questioned why my life is so challenging. I consulted a number of prayer teams in looking for answers. My suffering was always attributed to my parents' wrongdoing, according to the prayer team. The burden of sin must be handled, yet it is unclear to me which fault is inherited from my parents. Possibly because my father has two wives or because of other sins, it must continue to be investigated in order to confess. (Siti)

Silas and Silva, who, as noted above had much experience with the prayer team, also make the prayer team a place for pondering the significance of suffering. Silas comments,

We also pray to the prayer team to discover why our family life is suffering. One prayer group claims that our suffering is the result of other people's jealousy, which sends evil power to our children, while another prayer group claims that our suffering is the result of the sins of our ancestors, who worshipped crocodiles. Several other prayer groups say that this sorrow is due to our unresolved sin. Regardless of the answers to prayers and criteria, I constantly endeavour to meet them. (Silas)

While the participants may be unfamiliar with philosophical analysis or complex thought, most participants have had positive interactions with the prayer team. This makes the prayer team a trustworthy place to discover meaning in suffering. When an individual's mind can process and find meaning in the suffering, their physical health is positively affected.

In summary, attending the prayer team is a common practice in Timor, where the prayer meeting is a place to discover solutions to various life issues, including illness, misfortune, and crop

failure. The prayer team is believed to have the divine gift of vision, which enables them to explain the cause of their crisis and what must be done to eliminate it. The prayer team is rooted in the revival movement of 1965–1966, where, according to Telnoni (2003) a key characteristic is the appearance of individuals who receive divine visions and subsequently become evangelical group leaders. The visions may take the form of God’s instructions to bear witness in a particular location or revelations of the sins of ancestors and parents. Visions also signify a future occurrence, such as a disaster or punishment.

5.5 Dreams as a Source of Strength and Meaning

Linked to the visions experienced in and by the prayer teams, are dreams. Maria, Nio, and Bia identified dreaming as one of their coping mechanisms. They had a dream when they felt that they could no longer withstand the violence and exploitation. All three embraced the dream as a sign from God, evidence that God would not abandon them. The dream provided them with fortitude when they were under duress. Whenever they encountered adversity, the dream became a source of solace.

Maria narrates that she had a dream in her troubled and isolated state in Malaysia. She saw hands covering a grave and the Lord Jesus standing there. According to Maria, the dream meant that even if her employer tortured her, she would not perish because Jesus had died in her place.

Once, I had a dream, there was a grave but not mine. There was the hand of Jesus on the tomb. I saw Jesus was wearing white clothes. I thought that I had to be patient but I didn't know how long It was going to last. My kids are growing and my household is quite messy. My husband's family did not accept me but I continued to pray for them. I don't care what they want to do to me because I only care about my children. In difficult time, I remembered the dream I had before. I saw Jesus in my dream. The dream told that I'd almost die but God has died for me first. I saw Him but it was only for a few seconds. God is my saviour. Even though I was tortured by my employer, God's blood saved me from death.
(Maria)

The dream has always given her strength during difficult times in life. It reminded her that she would not face life alone because God was always on her side.

Nio similarly revealed that the lowest point of his life was when he was hospitalised and had to have one of his hands amputated. The incident occurred during Christmas, reminding Nio of Christmas time at home with his family. Nio was depressed after experiencing a severe illness alone in another country on Christmas Day. He dreamt of singing during this time and that his voice reached the heavens:

I wanted to complain but I realised that I was in Malaysia, far from family. I just prayed and surrendered to God. When I was in the hospital, I remembered that it was December 24th when I had the accident. So, I was in the hospital when it was Christmas. There was Christmas Carols there. Every family said their prayers, and some even went from door to door to sing and read the Bible. At that time, they sang for the person beside me, I silently wished that they would also sing for me. One time, I had a dream, I was singing the song "I want to follow Jesus" (Saya Mau Ikut Yesus). When I sang the song, my voice went through to the sky. I keep remembering that dream, if I remember that dream, I'll suddenly get stronger. (Nio)

According to Nio's interpretation, God will hear his prayers if he remains near and continues serving God. Throughout his life's trials, God will always be by his side. He recalls the dream whenever he experiences a difficult period in life. Nio was a church choir member before moving to Malaysia to work in palm oil. Nio chose to return to active ministry in the church as a choir member after returning home. The dream served as a reminder to serve God faithfully because God will always be with him.

Bia too recounted having a dream at a particularly low point. Working illegally without documents in palm oil made Bia vulnerable to exploitation by employers and socially isolated. Bia felt depressed after adjusting to such circumstances, and at this time he had a dream. In the dream, he saw a local congregation's former senior pastor, who reminded him to continue remembering God.

When I was depressed, I just prayed silently. I didn't have a Bible at that time. Once, I dreamed of a priest sent by Ruben. He said that if I remember God, then

God will also be with me. I thought what he said was true. Maybe I was reminded not to forget God. (Bia)

This dream was a sign from God to Bia that he must not neglect to pray. God provides Bia with the strength to endure difficult circumstances.

Humans are a dreaming species due to their ability to recall thoughts, images, and emotions from conscious life during sleep (Pagel, 2014). According to Hartmann (1998), dreams are an integral mechanism of human life as mental reflections of waking-life memories, emotions, and belief systems. Because the dream is associated with memory, it can combine recent and old memories. Moreover, dream imagery can take the form of metaphor, which portrays the dreamer's emotional state of mind, thus trauma can be expressed through dreams.

As noted above, trauma affects Broca's area of the brain, which functions as the speech centre of the brain, causing it to become dysfunctional and often leading to emotions expressed through dreams (Van der Kolk, 2014). Dreams become important in being able to express inarticulate emotions, where the dominant emotion of a person is reflected in their dreams. According to the stories of the three participants, the dream occurred when they were extremely depressed. They could not articulate the emotional pressure; therefore, the dream describes the emotional pressure they were experiencing and intense desire to escape it. Maria explained that her dreams consisted of metaphors, whereas Nio and Bia shared that the images in their dreams were connected to their prior experiences.

In addition, participant descriptions of their dreams demonstrate that dreams mediate their meaning-making process. Religion, which is central to their beliefs, also influences their visions. It gives them meaning so they can comprehend the challenging times they are experiencing and even gives them hope for survival. The meaning attributed to dreams is highly dependent on the culture and belief system in which the participant lives. In some cultural contexts, dreams are understood and accepted as a form of supernatural communication, a way for God to send a direct message to a person (Kracke, 2007). Likewise, in Timorese culture, it is common to understand dreams as part of the meaning-making process. Middelkoop, already a long-serving Dutch missionary in Timor by 1960, recounted that in his ministry experience, he found that to preach the gospel to the Timorese he needed to know their language and way of thinking, including how the Timorese used dreams in meaning-making (Middelkoop, 1960).

However, Western missionaries and church ministers frequently undervalue this way of thinking, holding the perception that dreams do not make sense.

5.6 Reflection

The reality of exploitation and violence confronts participants' belief that working as a migrant worker is God's plan for enhancing economic life. The participant becomes alienated from their family, themselves, and the community. The interviews revealed the primary coping mechanisms as being prayer, songs, prayer teams, and dreams. The coping methods are readily available and accessible to participants. In addition, the coping strategies are consistent with the participants' belief systems, which are influenced by their living environment and context. If violence and exploitation make participants aware of their human limitations, religious coping enables them to connect with the Almighty God.

As a researcher in the field of religion as coping, Park has developed a meaning-making strategy (Park, 2005). This approach defines significance as the perception of two levels of meaning: global significance and the appraised significance of a particular event. Global significance refers to people's fundamental objectives, beliefs, and expectations regarding the world. It influences people's perceptions of the past, the present, and their expectations for the future. At the same time, the appraised meaning of a particular event refers to the interaction between a person's global meaning and the specific person-environment transaction at hand. The disparity between appraised and global significance is a highly unsettling condition involving a loss of control, predictability, or comprehension of the world. In order to navigate this, the disparity between the perceived significance of the event and the fundamental beliefs and objectives it has disrupted must be reduced. During challenging times or adverse life events, when expected expectations and reality do not coincide, individuals make cognitive adjustments to understand what is occurring. Park's analysis provides insight into the experiences of the participants. Their expectation that becoming migrant workers is God's way of transforming their lives is met with an unpleasant reality of exploitation and violence. Prayers, hymns, prayer teams, and dreams serve as instruments for participants to narrow or manage the disparity between their global meaning and the current situation. The participants' inability to control and regulate their lives is replaced by God's ability to control and regulate existence.

In addition, the research findings are in line with the analysis developed by Pargament that in difficult times humans will turn to religion (Pargament, 2001). Pargament argues that religion is involved in all human aspects: thought, behaviour, relationship, and experience. Religion can therefore be well suited to the task of helping people sustain themselves psychologically, socially, physically, and spiritually. Religion is a relatively available orientating system and relatively compelling way of coping. Repeated religious rituals and religious teachings are safe references to rely on during difficult times.

Pargament and colleagues identified five critical functions of religion: searching for meaning, a search for control, the source of comfort, the role of intimacy due to facilitating social cohesiveness, and the role of life transformation (Pargament et al., 2000). Based on these aspects, Pargament develops a multidimensional religious coping method. This comprises religious coping to find the meaning, religious coping to gain control, religious coping to gain comfort and closeness to God, religious coping to gain intimacy with others and closeness to God, and religious coping to achieve a life transformation. The five methods cover cognitive, behavioural, interpersonal, and spiritual domains.

The participants' experiences can be classified into all the religious coping categories as identified by Pargament. Prayer teams and dreams aid participants in comprehending the significance underlying the suffering they endure. Participants employ prayer as a means of coping with the experience of being estranged from their families and feeling powerless. Through prayer, participants connect with the all-powerful God, whose abilities surpass the limitations of space and time. Through praying, the individual experiences a restoration of their sense of control. Despite their profound challenges, their lives and families remain under the divine governance of God, making it worthwhile to persevere. Through prayer and singing, individuals find solace in the circumstances of exploitation and pressure by establishing a connection with God. It aids in the release of the pressure they experience. They gain resilience to withstand diverse stressors. Prayer, prayer teams, and singing serve as a conduit for participants to establish a closer connection with God, symbolising their reliance on God. Similarly, songs assist participants in organising their lives in the future by providing guidance and expressing aspirations for a more promising future.

While being distinct classifications, Pargament's five coping methods are interrelated. The results of this research serve to enrich that analysis, where the participant experience clearly

shows the existence of a relationship between each religious coping mechanism. For example, according to participant experience, religious coping strategies for gaining closeness are related to those for gaining control. Participants understand that their lives are out of control and, particularly in terms of the parents, they cannot govern their families. Thus, they require God's power to take control on behalf of themselves and their families.

The importance of singing, prayer, attending prayer teams, and dreams as coping methods for participants demonstrates that religious rituals and liturgies have a healing function. A study on Filipino migrant workers indicated that religion significantly contributes to resilience. The church serves as a venue for worship and sharing personal experiences (Nakoncz & Shik, 2009). The church serves as a social community, facilitating emotional expression and offering an alternative perspective of lives. Moreover, community prayer is a place for migrant workers to express their burdens and encourage one another through prayer. Other research shows that in the midst of the pressures experienced by migrant workers, songs can be a form of creative resistance (Cruz, 2006). Migrant workers sing folk songs, known in the Philippines for expressing disapproval of upper-class behaviour.

Calitz (2017) has argued that liturgy, such as praising and singing in church, must become a liturgy of life. Liturgy remains one of the most important means of pastoral counselling for the majority of church members. It is supposed to be a place where church members can convey the reality of their daily life. It not only emphasises cognitive understanding but also needs to make room for emotions and feelings. Furthermore, Calitz adds that the liturgy has distinct motivations, including scriptural, ecumenical, conventional, pastoral, and reconciliatory (Calitz, 2017). The pastoral motive of liturgy refers to the liturgical role as an instrument for edification, instruction, reproof, encouragement, consolation, fortification, and healing. The liturgy should provide space for mourning, lament, struggle, question, protest, and silence. Liturgy in terms of pastoral purpose is very similar to transformation and healing.

Participant experience evidenced that religious songs and dreams as coping mechanisms contribute significantly to resilience and the healing process. While this finding can be supported psychologically through explorations particularly of intersections in the limbic system of the brain between music and emotional memory (Van der Kolk, 2014), it also adds weight to arguments to move beyond the predominant connection of religion to the cognitive. As Sremac and Ganzevoort (2019) contend, the connection to the sensory, material, and

physical should be equally acknowledged. Religion's liturgies or rituals must be viewed not only as a means of perpetuating the traditions or teachings of the church but also as a source of resilience, where elements like song, poetry, and movement could be utilised as tools to express emotion and developed as healing instruments. This development will aid the advancement of religious studies, particularly in areas such as the participants' contexts, where individuals are not accustomed to cognitive attention and are not offered educational opportunity to pursue complex thought processes.

In addition, the activity of the prayer teams and dreams as participant coping methods demonstrated that culture and community history significantly impacts religious coping. This discovery also provides the opportunity to investigate whether healing mechanisms are found in local culture or are handed down from generation to generation in a community. In the West, trauma research has advanced considerably. These studies are systematised as theories based on a rational and individualistic Western context. Meanwhile, trauma studies in Indonesia, particularly the psychology of religion, have not developed significantly. Indonesia has its unique context and culture. In addition, culture is still perceived as being in opposition to religion. However, in local culture, there are numerous healing rituals or methods. In Indonesia, a dialogue between culture and religion must be fostered to discover religious coping methods in accordance with the belief system of the people at the grassroots.

5.7 Conclusion

The participants' experiences demonstrated that religion served as a coping mechanism for them during adversity. Religious coping assisted the participant to experience security and support. Through prayer, participants who live distant from their relatives are reunited. Prayer becomes a coping mechanism when individuals require fortitude and patience to adapt to a new situation, when they are exhausted from excessive work, when they are beaten, and when they contemplate an uncertain future. Through praying, the participants who were in a position of helplessness were reminded that they were not alone in battling adversity, but that there was a mighty God. Prayer may not be able to alter circumstances, but it can alter how individuals perceive of the situation. Shifting one's perspective restores a sense of comfort and hope.

Religious songs are also employed as coping mechanisms by participants enduring difficult situations. Through singing religious songs from their childhood, the participants were enabled

to cope with their separation from their families. During difficult moments, when the brain is unable to comprehend negative real-world occurrences, songs serve as a means of expressing the hardships experienced. Similarly, when the traumatised brain cannot identify what to do in the future, songs can potentially provide guidance. Participation in singing groups or choirs as a means of integrating participants into the community represents participants' subsequent experience with religious songs. Through being involved in singing groups and choirs, participants see their lives as becoming valuable because they are able to contribute to the community.

In addition, the prayer team is a coping mechanism that assists people through stressful moments. Parents who have lost contact with their daughters who work far from their villages or even abroad express their concerns and look for clues about their whereabouts at prayer groups. The prayer team is also a resource for those seeking healing from their illness. Besides that, the prayer meeting is a place where the participants can find purpose in their suffering. Finally, three participants revealed that dreams are a religious coping mechanism that strengthens them. Dreams serve as a means for expressing the emotion and meaning of adversity.

The findings are consistent with the theories developed by Pargament and Park, who study trauma and coping, that religion is the primary resource during times of anguish. The process of coping involves all facets of human existence, including interconnected cognitive, emotional, memory, and physical components. It explains that the function of religion is not only as a means of preserving tradition but also as a tool for resiliency. Religion's rituals and liturgies must be designed to provide a safe space for individuals to express their suffering. Consequently, religious communities may become reconciliation communities.

CHAPTER SIX: MEANINGS OF SUFFERING

6.1 Introduction

The desire to find meaning in events is an essential human characteristic of a creature with a brain and the capacity to reason (Van der Kolk, 2014). Negative life experiences are challenging moments that motivate individuals to seek meaning. According to Pargament (2001) meaning is the logical construction of awareness regarding the significance, value, and worth of events, including negative experiences. Meaning will determine how people respond to an event.

According to Folkman and Park's theory of meaning-making (Folkman & Park, 1997), trauma results from disrupting an individual's meaning-making process in response to a traumatic event. The meaning system is the significance of life, including how an individual comprehends themselves and the world. The meaning system of a person is comprised of both global and situational meanings. The values or beliefs of a person regarding the aims and values of life comprise global meaning. It comprises the individual's life experiences, belief systems, and expectations. Situational meaning refers to the interaction between a person's beliefs and particular interactions between people and their environments. Traumatic events create a disparity between global and situational meanings, and meaning-making refers to the process by which individuals reduce this discrepancy.

Janoff-Bulman (2010) likewise explains how traumatic events influence and indeed shatter people's fundamental assumptions of a human world, a meaningful world, and self-worth. Cognitive strategies are required to reconstruct one's perceptions after experiencing a traumatic event. It is an innate human natural mechanism for maintaining balance, a fundamentally healthy system that pursues recovery. In this cognitive strategy, people evaluate and interpret traumatic events, allowing them to regain their belief in a benevolent world, a meaningful world, and rebuild self-worth. In the process of finding meaning, a person might refer to their dominant orientation system.

Park (2005) contends that as a primary meaning system, religion plays a key role in meaning-making. Religion provides a belief system that can serve as a global meaning reference, affecting individuals' global perspectives and goals. Religious beliefs can be among the

fundamental meaning systems that are undermined by traumatic events, even seen as a causative attribute, yet may also instil in a person a way to evaluate the meaning of a stressful experience, allowing them to identify the beneficial outcomes and providing a means to make a more benign reattribution. Religion can similarly be engaged in outcomes as a source of growth or as leading to a negative outcome. The role of religion can thus be somewhat ambiguous.

This chapter aims to analyse participants' comprehension of suffering. Two primary inquiries guide this chapter: How do participants comprehend the adversity they endure? What significance does religion play in it? The participant's comprehension of suffering is closely linked to God. Although this topic can be categorised as a discussion of theodicy, which discusses the existence of God amid human suffering (Vermeer et al., 2008), this chapter does not discuss theodicy philosophically or theoretically. The discussion in this chapter will focus on the empirical theodicy based on participant narratives and the participants' meaning-making process.

6.2 Meanings Associated with Suffering

Participants' comprehension of suffering is closely intertwined with their belief in God, in light of the fact that they live in a religious environment. Their perspectives are shaped by their own experiences and the surrounding environment. There are numerous variations in how participants comprehend and interpret their suffering regarding God.

6.2.1 A Divine Plan

The participants live in a community where religion strongly influences them; therefore, their perspective about suffering is related to God.

God had allowed me to go through this ordeal. My shoulders are not able to carry it all because I am just a human. Only God can lift all the suffering. I am ready to accept it as long as I am with God. We cannot escape the suffering because it happens by God's plan. (Maria)

I thought, I never asked for me to have an accident so that my hand had to be amputated. This is from God, it happened because of God so I surrender to God.
(Nio)

Like Nio and Maria, the participants define God as the Almighty who rules over this world; all life and whatever happens is under God's control. This includes their suffering as victims of human trafficking. Recognising that suffering is part of a divine plan enables participants to comprehend that despite their experience of suffering, they remain subject to God's authority. The divine presence will not forsake them but rather accompany them faithfully throughout suffering.

6.2.2 Acceptance without Questioning

In the interviews, participants struggled to respond to questions about the meaning of suffering. The majority of participants reacted carefully, and some were unable to elucidate. During the interview, Tersia, Bia, Omri, Marthen, and Veronika were silent for a few minutes and seemed confused as how to answer. Tersia responded,

I don't know why I'm suffering. All I know is from God so I don't want to question anymore. I'll just accept it. Three years I was sick, suffering from the death of my daughter. I'm tired of being sick, I don't want it anymore, so I accept that my child can't live anymore. (Tersia)

As a mother, she could not express the meaning of her daughter's death. She was simply conscious of the fact that it was an unavoidable reality. Tersia had hypertension for many years due to her inclination to overthink. Tersia came to the conclusion that she could not recover until she resolved to accept the reality, and it was only through acceptance that she could stay healthy.

Bia shared the same story: the violence and exploitation he endured, as well as a friend's deception, left him stressed and ill for some time. Bia, desiring to avoid a life of tension, decided to attend a prayer meeting to learn what he should do.

Once, I went to a prayer meeting to pray, the person who prayed said, one day the person who took my money away will suffer the consequences. I went to another prayer meeting, and I got the same message. I was asked not to think too much about it because God will repay everything. God knows what happened; everything that occurred was predetermined by God. If I think too much about my suffering, then I can get sick. Yes, it's getting better slowly. I don't want to think too much about what happened in the past. If I do, then I'll get sick easily. I never blame God, I just prayed silently. I always pray for everything. Now, I just need to focus on working in my garden so that I can keep living. I don't want to waste my time to think about my past. (Bia)

Bia chose to concentrate on his future after accepting the suffering and believing that God would avenge the pain and replace all the losses. Bia did not wish to ask many questions about his suffering; instead, he chose to accept everything that occurred because God would remain with him.

Omri has her own story. She was unable to articulate the significance of the suffering she endured in response to questions about the meaning of suffering. Omri only acknowledges suffering as something that occurs with God's permission, and she prefers to be thankful that God continues to accompany her through it.

I didn't learn any lessons. It all happens so I just accept it. God knows everything that happens. Even though I have suffered until now because my husband always tortures me, and I still have to fight for my son who has a mental disorder, I only look to God's goodness. Thank you, God, for still taking care of me, for giving me the strength to be able to work. And thank you for giving me such a nice and loving grandson. (Omri)

Omri preferred to focus on God's goodness. God knew her suffering and comforted her through the grandchildren. Omri chose to focus on God's kindness rather than questioning or constructing complex analyses regarding the suffering.

Marthen and Veronika were likewise unable to articulate the meaning or concept of suffering. They are only aware that they are suffering and that what is occurring is God's reality. This

reality should not be questioned or argued about but instead accepted. When asked what pain is, the five participants were astounded because, in their view, it is the human role to accept God's will without question. Once they comprehend that suffering is an unavoidable and unchangeable part of the universe, they regain faith in the value of life. Indeed, suffering will persist, but life must still be lived because everything occurs unavoidably. This understanding restores a sense of control and comfort because it offers hope even while suffering. They did not describe the meaning of suffering but chose to focus on the strength and provision that God had given them in their lives.

Moreover, their perception of the inevitability and acceptance of suffering affects the participants' conception of justice. Tersia, Bia, Omri, Marthen, Heski, and Veronika decided against fighting for their issues. For them, revenge belongs to God, so it is preferable to embrace whatever occurs. One day, God will exact vengeance for the suffering they have sustained. They are choosing not to notify the police about the perpetrators. God predetermines the course of human existence. Although they could not articulate or define what suffering meant to them, the meaning emerged from their action of enduring and overcoming adversity.

The participant's environment influences such an understanding of suffering. Participants are not accustomed to sophisticated philosophical arguments. They devote most of their time and energy to survival rather than reflection or thinking about analyses. Moreover, they rarely question the existence of God. Something related to dogma, particularly concerning the church and God, is a teaching that must be acknowledged as truth and need not be questioned, discussed, or debated. In addition, the participant is vulnerable due to poverty, limited access to information, lack of social security, difficult/challenging access to law enforcement, and limited health facilities. Religion is the only source of resiliency; therefore, if the participant were to doubt or question the sole source of resilience, they might no longer have a belief system to survive. Understanding the meaning of suffering is not the point of life; what is more essential is knowing that God has not abandoned them and has proven to provide them with strength.

The attitude of participants who embrace the reality of suffering without question is comparable to the findings of Indonesian theologian Yewangoe's study on how Indonesians perceive suffering. Yewangoe explains that Indonesians are commonly believed to be fatalists due to their propensity to embrace reality without complaint (Yewangoe, 1987). There are three words that can be used to characterise how Indonesians perceive suffering: *nrimo* (accepting the reality

that people must accept), *sabar* (patience or perseverance in suffering), and *ikhlas* (placing all things in the hands of God). People in Indonesia tend to avoid resistance to suffering, but they believe the time will come when someone will alter the situation or alleviate their suffering. Suffering is acknowledged as a necessary reality, but there is still hope for change.

6.2.3 *Punishment from God*

For some participants, suffering is given by God for several reasons, including as punishment for mistakes made. According to Doroti, suffering is a punishment from God. She believed that the exploitation and amputations that altered her entire existence were a punishment from God because she had stepped down from the position of Sunday school teacher to become a migrant labourer and had done so without the pastor's permission. Doroti stated,

At first, I didn't think that God punished me that way. But, in 2013, I started to think that it's all His punishment to me. I was a teacher at a Sunday School. Maybe I was too eager to make money by working abroad, then I left without telling them. I should have told them about my departure so that they could find somebody else to teach the kids at Sunday school. No one gave me that perception but I believe that when we chose to serve God, then we should not turn back. Before I left, I should have reported to the pastor so that they could find a substitute teacher for Sunday school. But I chose to leave without telling them, that's why I thought God had avenged me with the accident. But I'm still grateful because even though I don't have hands anymore and I only have one leg, I can still serve God. So now, I just focus on continuing to serve God.
(Doroti)

Yuka, who had worked in Malaysia, also explained that the suffering, exploitation, and violence she experienced during her time there were divine punishments. Her father had passed away, and she lived with her mother as an only child. Yuka was not permitted by her mother to work away from home. However, Yuka abandoned her family, departing for Malaysia without her mother's consent.

When I worked in Malaysia, I always experienced difficulties and violence. I'm also always sick. When I returned from the hospital, the agent asked me if I left

Indonesia with my parents' permission or I ran away. I told her the truth that I ran away to work in Malaysia. She said that she was not surprised that I was always challenged at work. In any case, parental consent is of utmost importance. If we don't get the blessing of our parents, surely, we will always get into trouble in whatever we do. After all, we can exist in this world because of them. I regretted running from home but God is extraordinary. I had been through a lot of things and it made me even closer to God. Usually, I don't really like it when my parents say my name in prayer because it will take a long time to pray. Sometimes, if I wanted to eat quickly, my father would pray for a long time. It might be a punishment for me so that I could know God more and respect my parents. The agent asked me to confess my sins to my mother and asked her to pray for me. I never heard my mother's voice when I was in Malaysia. I brought the priest's cell phone number but when I called, the number was out of reach. Finally, I managed to contact my cousin and asked for help to contact my mother. I apologised to my mother because I ran away from home. (Yuka)

If Yuka, Doroti, and most participants understand suffering as God's punishment for their mistakes, then it is slightly different for Sitti. Sitti, who had worked as a migrant worker in Malaysia, explained that the suffering she experienced, especially being a single parent for her three children, was God's punishment for her parent's mistakes. Sitti's life as a mother of three children from three different men is difficult in a community where religious influence is still strong. She received many negative comments and was stigmatised, which prompted Sitti choose to work in Malaysia for her children's future.

It's probably the parents' fault. I've attended multiple prayer meetings, and the prayers revealed that there are unresolved mistakes of my parents. There is still no resolution; we must Naketi.⁶ (Sitti)

⁶ *Naketi* is a confession ritual in Timorese culture. *Naketi* means to organise or rearrange. Through *Naketi* rituals, it is anticipated that harmony can be restored to life. This ritual is performed when someone suffers from an illness, calamity, crop failure, or difficulty. It is believed that these issues arise because of errors that must be acknowledged and resolved. Through *Naketi*, the source of a problem is identified and then resolved through a process of contrition, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Animals such as chickens, goats, pigs, and cows are used in *Naketi* rituals, depending on the seriousness of the problem. The leader of the ritual will slaughter the animal and then examine the liver of the animal. The presence of a lump or wound indicates that God is furious. This is followed by a joint discussion to determine the nature of the offence. If the discussion has uncovered the solution, the ritual leader will pray for God's forgiveness. Initially, this ritual was performed as a cultural ritual, but the Christian community later modified it (Benu, 2022).

According to Pargament (2001), the belief that suffering is God's punishment is widely accepted and can manifest fear and guilt. Participants acknowledge that suffering as God's punishment is an expression of powerlessness; they have no one but themselves to blame. However, the knowledge that suffering is God's punishment gives them a sense of control, as their lives are still in God's hands. Understanding that suffering is God's punishment enables participants to process their suffering by guiding them in what to do, which promotes a sense of control.

The belief that suffering is God's punishment is strongly influenced by culture. In 1960, Middelkoop, a Dutch missionary assigned to Timor for decades, wrote his thesis on the themes of curses, retribution, and enmity. Middelkoop found that according to Timorese culture, discovering God's will and decree is essential to avoid mistakes that could bring punishment or curses (Middelkoop, 1960). Illness and misfortune occur as God's punishment. When difficulties occur, they must find the cause and God's will to obtain God's forgiveness. They usually pray to God and find the answer by reading the hearts of animals such as chickens or pigs (*Naketi*). Bad events in life are regarded as curses that require confession and reconciliation.

The acceptance of suffering as God's punishment is further influenced by other community cultural meanings. Migrant workers who return home with money to construct a house, purchase a motorbike, or purchase land, have a sense of pride. They are recognised as winners who have successfully returned home or as a hero who has contributed to altering the social standing of the family, a respected individual. Their 'triumph' is considered proof that God has not abandoned them. Comparing oneself to others, according to Bulman, is one manner in which people give their lives significant (Janoff-Bulman, 2010) and so when participants compare themselves to other migrant workers, it can influence their understanding of themselves as individuals subject to God's wrath when their experience seems so different.

6.2.4 *Suffering as A Temptation from God*

In addition to perceiving suffering as punishment for people's mistake, some participants perceive suffering as a test from God to determine the extent of human obedience to God. Maria, the participant who was subject to extreme inhumane violence and exploitation, endured adversity with the belief that suffering is a temptation from God. Maria narrated,

We cannot escape the suffering because it happens by God's permission. This is a test from God, and it is not a simple test; God has made it too difficult. God gave it to us, so we cannot refuse or alter it. I am willing to accept if God is involved. Nothing can alter this torment, not even the desire to let go. God desires to determine whether or not we remain faithful to God. (Maria)

Maria reasoned that if Jesus were required to endure such severe trials that he had to die on the cross, then Maria would also face numerous trials as a human. This realisation compelled Maria to accept the violence she endured without retaliation while she awaited God's redemption.

Like Maria, Leona also defines suffering as a temptation from God:

Difficulty after difficulty is a temptation from God, whether we want to be faithful or not to God. If we are faithful to God there is strength and a way out. If it's not God, I must be miserable. God was always with me whenever I faced any problem. I always went to the bathroom to pray for peace. If anything happened, then I usually surrendered everything to God. (Leona)

Working as a migrant labourer was difficult for Leona. She was required to abandon her family in the village, work with discipline, and accomplish many tasks. That was God's temptation to determine if she would remain faithful. She believes she can endure because her husband and children consistently pray for her and because she always submits herself to God.

Other participants such as Norma, did not say that suffering is a divine temptation but do believe suffering one closer to God. Norma remarks,

If my child is ill or struggling at work, I go to a prayer group to seek direction. My child frequently informs me that I always attend prayer meetings to seek guidance. I informed them that in this life, we must be close to God and understand what God desires for our lives. When we have a problem, it means we have to get closer to God and know what God wants from us. (Norma)

According to Norma, God uses difficulties to remind individuals to get closer to God and discover God's purpose for their lives. Erika also explains that through her adverse experience when working in Medan she realised that suffering is a way of getting closer to God.

I survived from Medan because of God. At that time, I just prayed to God there was nothing else I could do. Therefore, now I want to live close to God, I always pray. I have studied the Lord's prayer and now I rely only on prayer... My experience in the field has allowed me to get through my domestic problems now. With my children and family. God wants me to live with prayer, close to God. I think that God will be with me. We live with God and prayer, then it will not happen the same as in Medan. Now it will not happen again, I believe because there are people who also support me in their prayers. (Erika)

Silas has a slightly different perspective than the others. Silas says suffering is supposed to bring people closer to God, but humans can also inflict it. He feels that his and his family's suffering, particularly their children's mental problems, is the result of the activities of other terrible people. That individual does not want Silas's family to succeed, so they send a supernatural force to torture Silas's family. Therefore, Silas believes he and the family must dwell close to God. Silas explains,

There are people who dislike us and do not want us to be happy. But we can't accuse anyone. Perhaps they don't want our fate to alter for the better. But I told my family, not to worry because if God doesn't want them to win, nothing will happen; we just live close to God. (Silas)

The belief that someone's suffering is caused by the sending of malevolent or magical forces, such as Silas's belief, is commonly held in Timor. If a person experiences illness, crop failure, the death of a pet, or other calamities, it is believed that this is due to the evil power of others who wish to make the victims' lives difficult. Typically, to discover who the perpetrators are, the victim will appeal to the prayer team for guidance. Through prayer, the prayer team will gain insight into who committed the heinous act, how it was perpetrated, and how to respond. Silas also brought his children to various prayer teams in the hope that these prayer teams possessed more significant power than supernatural power so that his children could be healed.

The Timorese have developed a comprehension of the demonic forces that cause illness and misfortune. In Timorese culture, this entity is known as *Alaut Matmolo* (the bitter with the yellow eye) and the power is understood as part of the cosmic phenomenon (Middelkoop, 1960). It is believed that envious or dissatisfied individuals can send this demonic power. The positive aspect of this belief is that everyone must live in harmony and do good for their neighbour. However, the stronger beliefs that that this practice of sending demonic power is carried out to make the lives of others difficult or even fatal. With the arrival of Christianity, it was deemed that only God's superior power could counter it.

Personal conversion, divine healing, and exorcism are widespread practices and beliefs in Timor, particularly among devotional gatherings. After the revival movement of 1965–1966, such practices expanded significantly, as described by Telnoni (2003). Illness and misfortune were attributed to demonic influence and sin. At that time, prayer groups performed exorcisms not only on persons believed to be possessed by demons but also on locations believed to be possessed by demons or idolatrous. They sang hymns depicting the power of God over demons.

In addition, the movement views illness and failure as sins that require individual confession. Sick people only require healing petitions and do not require medical treatment, as medical treatment would impede God's healing ability. God will restore human life if people dwell near to him. Another characteristic of this movement is that it prioritises the soul's salvation over existence in this world. This perspective also influences how social problems are viewed in society. The importance of religiosity for personal deliverance is more significant than social issues. Because God will provide for our requirements, evangelism, conversion, and faithful service become the essential activities.

6.2.5 *Suffering Caused by Human Trafficking Mafias*

While most participants recognise that suffering related to personal spirituality and necessitating personal confession, Melki holds a different viewpoint. According to Melki, the death of his daughter and the family's suffering were also the consequence of the human trafficking mafia's involvement in recruiting migrant workers. Melki also acknowledged that because God is the All-Powerful God, the death of his child occurred with God's knowledge and under God's control.

My family and I are suffering because of the human trafficking mafia. One of the big mafia were the police who leave the force to work as migrant labour agents. I have no authority to refuse or ask for recompense for my child's death. I can only accept it; yet, I believe God desires that we pray and work. And I will continue to fight for justice if it is founded on the truth. God told me to pray and work, so I can't stop talking. (Melki)

Melki struggled to obtain justice for his daughter's death, but persevered with the help of an alliance of civil society against human trafficking. The alliance is an extensive network that extends from the village to the global level. Melki's campaign for justice eventually reached as far abroad as Malaysia and Saudi Arabia.

Despite numerous ups and downs and a time-consuming and tiring process, Melki continued to actively campaign and even met with the National Police Chief, and President Jokowi to request support for the legal proceedings. This investigation led to the apprehension of a member of one of the mafia's human trafficking networks. Approximately 16 traffickers, including recruiters, migration officials who forged passports, and the main boss in Malaysia, were apprehended and imprisoned.

The head of the Indonesian police ordered 15 people to carry out autopsies, the funds also came from Jakarta. I was there in the autopsy process with his uncle and Pastor. I also met the President, I was quite nervous when I entered the Presidential Palace. Then I met Mr. Jokowi, and he admitted that he was happy to meet ordinary people like me. All the perpetrators were arrested, the last one was a recruiter. He was hiding in the police house, suddenly the house was surrounded by the police from Kupang. They are the mafia. The mafia is an ex-

policeman who works to send people to be IMW (Indonesian Migrant Workers). One of his lawyers is a famous lecturer. His wife, his daughter and his son-in-law also work to send people to become IMW. There were 16 perpetrators including recruiters, travel drivers, people who made documents, people from the Population Service, two people from the immigration office but one was released because he was only in charge of handing over passports but he was not part of the syndicate. (Melki)

Melki's involvement in advocacy gave him first-hand knowledge of the existence of the trafficking syndicate. They intentionally target youth from low-income, uninformed families. Melki realised that the trafficking mafia is a global network that operates from the village to the international community and incorporates many state officials.

I'm strong when I'm in God's grace, because if faith is not strong then the body is weak. Secondly, I am strong because I am accompanied by many people. I believe that we as Christians can only become strong through prayer. God will always help us out. And as long as it is based on the truth, then I will continue to fight for justice. I think it gives me encouragement, for the GMIT Synod to accompany me because I am a church member. God said to pray and work so I can't stop speaking out. As long as there are no threatening parties, I will continue to follow the law. I don't hold grudges. I don't even hold a grudge against the recruiter but God wants us to be active to fight for justice. (Melki)

The different experiences result in different religious meanings. Melki understands that his child's death was unavoidable under God Almighty's power. For Melki, this death was a lesson to work hard and earn money so no more children or their families would have to work as migrant workers. Melki also realises that God has given him the fortitude to speak out to prove the existence of the human trafficking syndicate. As a believer in God, Melki forgives the perpetrators. He does not want to hold grudges, but actively fighting in the process of seeking justice for victims of human trafficking is also part of faith. Praying and working are the central values Melki holds in his life.

If the perpetrator is not arrested, my daughter is dead while they are living well, I will definitely feel hurt. But the perpetrators have followed the existing legal

process. I can only be grateful instead of angry. I've tried to follow all government rules for my daughter's case. I also don't want to do bad things to other people. If there is a case similar to that of my daughter, I will not hesitate to speak up again. As long as there are no threatening parties, I will continue to follow the law. And as long as it is based on the truth, then I will continue to fight for justice. (Melki)

Melki explained that he would suffer if the perpetrators were not brought to justice. The arrest and punishment of the perpetrators provided some relief to Melki. He feels worthwhile because he has fought for justice as a parent despite facing the reality of his daughter's death.

6.3 Reflection

The participants' experience as a victim of human trafficking as a migrant labourer has shaped their conception of God. In addition, their understanding of God influences the meaning of suffering. Religious meaning for the participants occurs in interpersonal interactions. Beside religion, culture and social circumstances are other factors that influence their religious meaning. All participants recognise suffering has a close relation to God. For participants, the meaning they assign to suffering bridges the gap between the expectations of those who view migrant workers as God's method of improving their economic situation and their experience of violence and exploitation. Participants in a state of powerlessness regain a sense of control and solace with such an understanding. Life is still worthwhile because God will continue to accompany them; if they remain faithful to God, there is still hope. However, participants have different opinions regarding the cause and purpose of the suffering.

Humans were designed with the capacity to endure adversity, including the capacity to ascribe meaning to an adverse life events (Van der Kolk, 2014). Seeking the meaning of an event is a natural human mechanism for regaining balance after a crisis (Janoff-Bulman, 2010). Meaning-making is a cognitive strategy that enables traumatised individuals to reformulate reality, review and discover evidence of a benevolent world and meaningful life that promotes self-worth. Cognitive adaptation is significant because what people define in the mind determines their action (Van der Kolk, 2014). Comprehending suffering as related to God is the participants' cognitive adaptation to the meaning of their adversity.

According to Moriarty and Hoffman's (2007) research related to the relationship between neuroscience and the concept of God, various neural networks associated with authority figures are activated when a person considers God. If a person has a positive image of an authority figure, that person will have a subjective emotional experience of God as loving, gracious, and concerned. Meditation, prayer, and scripture meditation can enhance a person's mindset towards their authority figure. In realizing that suffering is related to God, participants are reminded of their limitations as humans and of the significant authority figures who are faithful to accompany them through difficult circumstances and provide hope. Through comprehending suffering as related to God, participants feel less alone because they recognize that God is with them and protects them.

The participants' understanding of God causes them to comprehend that suffering is part of a personal relationship with God. The participants viewed suffering through personal spirituality, that is one's own relationship with God, instead of through a broader social lens. To resolve the suffering situation, one must come to terms with God personally. Their suffering as victims of human trafficking becomes a suffering they must sustain for themselves, not involving others. Improving their relationship with God is the key to overcoming suffering. On the other hand, as described in the first chapter, the participants' difficulties as victims of human trafficking are caused by trafficking organizations that have infiltrated the recruitment process for migrant workers. It involves a mafia structure designed for exploitation and financial advantage. Aspects of social change are neglected or suppressed when suffering is viewed solely as a personal relationship with God. Participants continue to blame themselves while the traffickers continue their actions to exploit more and more migrant workers. This serves as an alert that religious communities are vulnerable to human trafficking. At this point, the ambivalent function of religion becomes clear.

This chapter demonstrates that human trafficking is a religious issue that deserves significant consideration. It is vital to investigate the religious meaning that emerges among the community, especially the victims, to find the way religious meaning advantages the traffickers. Every religious meaning has its occurrence or circumstance and is developed in a context. The same religious meaning can produce different results in different contexts. Religious meanings transmitted from generation to generation must be reinterpreted in new contexts. As the story of Melki illustrates, involvement with advocacy can provide new experiences that assist in processing new religious meanings so the traditional religious

meaning is not simply accepted. Therefore, advocacy offers a way for victims to change their understanding of God by exposing them to new experiences within a safe space where they can begin to fight for their rights. Religion must be directly involved in advocacy rather than acting merely in theory. Evaluating the emerging theological meaning must also be balanced with actual advocacy experience.

The meanings ascribed to suffering that emerged from the data can also be related back to the idea of coping mechanisms. Pargament (2012) delineates three religious coping strategies: self-directing, deferring, and collaboration. In a self-directed coping process, individuals rely on themselves instead of God. This strategy was associated with a larger sense of control over one's life and a higher sense of self-worth. The second approach differs when God is passively deferred to for coping with responsibilities. This approach was associated with several lower feelings of personal control, lower self-esteem, and less competence at problem solving with a deliberate plan – there is dependence on external authority, passivity, and helplessness. The final strategy is collaborative, in which the individual and God actively collaborate in coping. This method involves a reciprocal relationship between the individual and God. Associated with a higher sense of personal control, a reduced sense of control by chance, and a higher self-esteem.

In contexts of human trafficking, religious coping strategies need to encourage victims not only to rely on God during their time of suffering, but also to participate actively in fostering social transformation. Religion is not only a place for the victims to express suffering but also a companion who struggles together in advocacy. Only then does religion become a tool that provides new experiences, enabling victims to see the suffering experienced. Through this process, victims can find religious meaning, leading to social change. Religious meaning can raise public awareness and form a new culture that is expected to be able to fight human trafficking. Herman argues that healing must be interpreted in a broader context, including creating an effective, systematized healing service (Herman 2023). Building an organized advocacy system in line with the victims' requirements is integral to the healing process. Additionally, the advocacy movement serves as a link between relevant state institutions and victims, including training police, medical staff, judges, prosecutors, and other officers with direct contact with victims. Victims must be actively involved in this process because this is their life story.

Participants' religious signification is determined by experience and the environment in which they live. As noted above, Melki's testimony, who understands suffering differently from other participants, proves that being involved in advocacy provides new experiences, and that new experiences result in different religious meanings. The meaning-making process occurs in the relationship between an individual and the community. The religious experiences and meanings of the community shape an individual's religious meaning. Intervening in a person's experience can influence a change in that person's religious meaning. When a person's religious meaning changes, there is a possibility of changes in the community's religious meaning. Advocacy for victims of human trafficking must simultaneously with advocacy for communities, because the meaning-making process takes place in the relationship between individuals and communities.

6.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to investigate the participants' perspective on suffering and the role of religion. Participants commonly refer to their experience in terms of suffering as related to God. Some recognise that suffering must be acknowledged without question. Some participants view suffering as a punishment from God, while others view it as a test from God. Other people believe their suffering is caused by supernatural forces but is under God's control. One participant comprehends the suffering he is experiencing as a consequence of the human trafficking syndicate involved in the recruitment of migrant workers. Religion plays a significant role in meaning-making because the participants' understanding of suffering is closely related to their understanding of God. The way the participants refer to or understand God is a participant's cognitive adaptation, a cognitive strategy to minimise the differences between prior optimistic assumptions and the negative assumptions implied by the traumatic event (Janoff-Bulman, 2010). Even though life is unsafe and uncontrollable due to adverse events, life is still benevolent because they are not alone; life is still under God's control, the ruler of life. God will grant forgiveness and change lives for the better if they draw close, serve faithfully, and surrender. Perceiving suffering as related to God is a social construction shaped by religion, culture, and context.

Other findings in this chapter indicate that participants' conceptions of suffering tend to be in terms of one's own relationship with God and as requiring personal confession. Only one participant comprehends the suffering caused by the trafficking cartel, necessitating a social

transformation in the community. Understanding suffering in relation to God assists participants to bridge the gap between their expectations and reality, but at the same time, this comprehension can make participants unaware of the trafficking mafia that is responsible for their suffering. The ambivalent role of religion appears at this point, because participants understand suffering as their personal matter with God. With this understanding, social transformation will be difficult to achieve.

In this context, the significance of advocacy in religious communities with high cases of human trafficking comes to the fore. Through advocacy, participants gain new experiences and a clearer understanding of the suffering experience, assisting them in developing a critical understanding of the exploitation and violence they endure. In addition, with such awareness, participants can critique religious meanings that have developed and are accepted by the community but provide benefits to traffickers. The advocacy experience enables participants to actively generate religious meaning that enables them to fight for social transformation.

CHAPTER SEVEN: GROWING IN SUFFERING

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapters investigated the role of religion in three components of participant coping mechanisms: the event, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the process of finding meaning. The current chapter now turns to a focus on the outcome. Suffering can have a negative impact by isolating people who have endured trauma from themselves and their communities and impinging on their spiritual well-being. However, suffering can sometimes have a positive outcome. According to Pargament (2001), suffering is a part of human existence that can be advantageous because it can lead to maturation and positive life changes. Suffering can improve an individual's adaptability, creativity, meaning-making, and interpersonal skills (O'Shea Brown, 2021). This chapter investigates whether the participants' experiences with exploitation and violence had a beneficial effect, encouraging personal growth, or the converse.

Post-traumatic Growth (PTG) is a study concerned with an individual's experience of substantial positive change resulting from a severe life crisis. PTG focuses on the positive changes and transformative development of people who appear to change their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours after the event (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). This is not intended to suggest that a person can forget a traumatic experience or that the effects of the traumatic experience have entirely disappeared; the effects of the traumatic experience will remain even if the traumatic event has ended. The word post-traumatic refers to the time after the traumatic event occurred. At the same time, the word growth refers to the condition of a person who develops positively after experiencing severe trauma and not to the effects of the lowering of stress levels. The growth referred to in this study is an actual reality, not just an illusion, nor is it a coping mechanism but an output or an ongoing process. The growth process involves many factors: character, ability to control emotions, support from others, and cognitive processes.

In terms of religion, religion and PTG have a strong connection, as religion can have multiple functions within PTG (Tedeschi et al., 2018). Religion can influence the participants' narratives, definitions, and meanings as it relates to people's belief systems. Religion is also involved in PTG as an outcome when a person experiences a spiritual transformation or when religion becomes one of the mediator variables that facilitate a person's development. A systematic review of religion, spirituality, and post-traumatic development carried out by

Shaw, Joseph, and Linley (2005) details a number of findings. First, religion and spirituality are usually, though not always, beneficial for those grappling with the effects of trauma. Traumatic experiences can result in a decline in religious or spiritual practices; however, positive religious coping, religious openness, readiness to confront existential concerns, religious participation, and intrinsic religiosity are typically associated with post-traumatic development.

There have been numerous studies on PTG and human sex-trafficking. For instance, research was undertaken concerning the potential for post-traumatic growth in Nepali women and girls who have experienced sexual exploitation (Volgin et al., 2019). Another study examined the connection between psychological development and quality of life satisfaction in adult female victims of sex trafficking in the United States of America. The participants were still able to develop psychologically and enhance their quality of life even after going through traumatic experiences. Despite many obstacles, psychological growth and constructive behavioural changes can lead to a satisfactory quality of life after trafficking (Perry & de Castro Pecanha, 2017). Research related to sex trafficking victims who register with problem-solving courts describes that the victims experience significant PTS and PTG. Even though the effects of trauma are undesirable, painful events can also serve as catalysts for personal transformation. Religious coping plays a significant role in the process (Schultz et al., 2020). What previous research does show is that there are insufficient studies on PTG and other forms of human trafficking, particularly relating to the victims from the migrant worker sector.

This chapter aims to offer a contribution to the field by examining whether participants in the current study experienced positive change as a result of their suffering and whether their understanding of suffering as related to God had a positive effect on their growth in the aftermath of exploitation and violence. The PTG inventory is utilized to conduct the analysis. The inventory initially involves three general areas: changing relationships with others, philosophy of life, and view of self. (Taku et al., 2008). Later studies expanded this to five general domains, including personal strength, relationships with others, new possibilities, appreciation of life, and spiritual and existential change (Tedeschi et al., 2018). These five aspects are employed in this study because the domains better describe the multidimensional aspect of PTG in terms of the cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and spiritual realms.

7.2 Post Traumatic Growth

7.2.1 Personal Strength

Personal strength can be signalled by an increased sense of self-reliance, self-acceptance, a sense of strength, self-confidence, and a sense of oneself as a survivor (Tedeschi et al., 2018). It may take the form of behavioural adjustments, like a rekindled interest in the challenge of learning something entirely new. People reconstruct their sense of self in relation to others and under the influence of the common culture (Le, 2017). Individuals tend to conform their self-perception to the expectations of their community in an effort to be accepted and meaningful to others.

The findings show that participants are proud of themselves for having endured and survived the experience of suffering. Although Maria had been subjected to inhumane torment, she exhibited a sense of personal pride as well. Maria was pleased with herself because she had survived the torture. The experience of enduring tremendous suffering in Malaysia made her feel stronger than others because it was uncertain whether others would have survived if they were in her situation. She acknowledged that everything happened as it did due to the presence and might of God because she always prayed and had faith in God.

If this had occurred to someone else, it is doubtful that they would have survived. Possibly, they would have died or even been murdered their employers. However, I survived, and God assisted me in overcoming this adversity. (Maria)

Erika recounts a similar story. She is confident in herself because she has endured adversity since childhood. She has also endured numerous difficult situations, such as her husband's affair within the marriage. Erika views herself as a resilient person due to her experience of enduring the violence she encountered while working at a swallow's nest factory in Medan. Erika stated,

I thanked God and thanked myself for being saved. I always ask God to deliver me from that place. I imagined that if the torture had happened to someone else, they would have died. There were friends who didn't survive, got sick and died. (Erika)

A sense of pride in self was also shown by other participants. During the interview, participants expressed confidence because they had dared to leave their homes and work abroad. Very few people in the participant's community have worked outside the region, particularly abroad. Travelling abroad is only possible for wealthy or highly educated individuals. The experience of boarding a plane, living, and working with people from outside the region demonstrates that they are courageous, persistent, and possess a wealth of experience. The sense of pride in oneself is even more notable when the participant brings home money for the family.

From working abroad I learned about time commitment. Even after I returned home, I am still committed to time. Whenever I work for anything, I am committed to time. I also learned to understand the character and traits of different people. After I returned home, I could understand the different characteristics of my husband and children. Although I only graduated from elementary school, I already had experience working abroad. Other people who went to higher education did not necessarily have work experience abroad. They attend the higher education but their works were not as good as mine. (Leona)

I am proud to myself cause I have experience working abroad. I have hope to renovate the house. The house was small but after I came home, I built this big house. I have disgraced my family by having three children without a husband, with this I hope to do a little good for my family. (Sitti)

Acceptance from family and people around them greatly influences the participant's acceptance of themselves and their personal strength. The participant has sacrificed many things. When they returned home with money, their families regarded them as 'heroes' and community members viewed them as successful or 'victors'. It makes the participant proud of themselves and establishes a sense of meaning.

Moreover, related to culture, there is a shift in role for the women. In the patriarchal culture of the context, women are only responsible for domestic matters, while the men are responsible for earning money to build a house, for providing land, and meeting the families' needs. Due to migrant workers, this role has shifted because women can work away from home and earn money for their families. Women who return home with money to support their families have a sense of pride within their families because they can take over the man's role. They are

regarded as having effectively fulfilled the role of husband, brother, or father by courageously leaving the home and striving to meet the family's needs. Unfortunately, the patriarchal culture continues to give the male ownership. Although it is the women who enable the buying of homes or land, it is the men who will own all the property. These assets are considered a woman's contribution to her family or a child's sacrifice for the sake of the family.

Most of the participants believe that because of God's protection, they have come through God's testing or overcome God's punishment. Their survival was a manifestation of God's love and God hearing them pray and listening to their family petitions. The participant considers the suffering experience is a normal part of life because life is full of both joyful and depressing experiences. Returning home with money and experience from working abroad was seen to be a reward. Since suffering is considered to be related God, people who surrender to God deserve a reward.

The participants who returned home empty-handed needed a longer time to cultivate their inner strength and courage. Those who return home sick and disabled are seen as an additional burden in situations of poverty. Doroti, a participant who had lost both of her arms and one of her legs, tried to adjust to her new body. She devotedly served God and amassed financial freedom, which improved her capacity to support herself. She made all these efforts because she believed that if she committed to serving God, God would forgive her. After all, the trials from God will not exceed her strength.

I have accepted the situation but have not given up hope. Now my parents and family have accepted it. I survived because of God. Other people might have given up and committed suicide. Not everyone can survive and be strong like me. I once wanted to commit suicide but I remembered God. if we ask God for something, the process is long but we will never be disappointed. Now I understand the word of God, God's trials will not exceed my ability. (Doroti)

The parents of deceased victims likewise required a longer period of time to gain personal strength. They have been through a painful process that has led them to an awareness that life cannot be changed and replayed. Tersia needed three years to accept the reality of her daughter's death.

I suffered from high blood pressure for 3 years because of overthinking. But slowly I was able to accept that my daughter had died. I cannot do anything, she cannot live again, she was gone, I'm sincere. Every time I remember my daughter and get hurt, I pray to God. God is in control of our lives. I don't want to be sick anymore that's why I'm sincere. (Tersia)

Tersia made the conscious decision to accept reality because she did not want to continue to be ill. She claimed that the death of their daughter was part of a divine plan that they had no choice but to accept. Marthen and Tersia choose not to pursue justice because it costs money and time, and they believe God is the one who controls life and is the one to enact any retribution. Both accepted reality after acknowledging that their suffering was part of the divine plan and that they could do nothing to change it.

Another factor that contributes to determining personal strength is support from the community. Melki, another parent of a deceased victim of human trafficking, was encouraged by the community he found as he engaged with the law enforcement process.

I am strong because there is an alliance who always speak with me... I will also speak out; the most important thing is I don't do harm to other people. I act on the truth I will go on. As long as I walk straight with God I will continue to fight for justice. (Melki)

In contrast to Marthen and Tersia, who would rather accept their daughter's death and avoid the legal process, Melki chose to prosecute the human trafficking gang that victimised his daughter. Melki stated that the legal system is a component of faith. Melki believes that suffering has given him and his family a new purpose in life, inspiring him to lead the fight for justice on behalf of the families of victims of human trafficking. Active participation in the alliance increases self-assurance and a sense of purpose.

The personal strength of the participants was characterised by a sense of pride in themselves, the courage to accept and acknowledge the reality of losing loved ones, and the courage to fight for victims' justice. Personal strength was influenced by overcoming adversity, by family acceptance, community support, and religious significance. As Pargament (2001) notes, relationships with other people foster personal strength. Positive religious meaning and self-

awareness will result from positive interpersonal relationships. Family and community acceptance is interpreted as evidence of God's mercy and protection. Acceptance, encouragement, and praise from others promote both a positive outlook on God and self-awareness.

7.2.2 Relating to Others

If traumatic events disconnect people from others, a second sign of post traumatic growth is positive change in relationship with others (Tedeschi et al., 2018). It can appear in the willingness to express the emotion, a conscious decision to spend more time with family and friends, or decision to terminate a relationship that is no longer viewed as advantageous or favourable. Moreover, positive relations with others has a close relationship with self-strength.

In terms of relationships with others, the data reveals two types of participants. The first type is participants who have good relationships with family and the community, who are active in church service but tend to hide their subjective experience. Nio, a participant who had to have a hand amputated as a result of a work accident in Malaysia, comments,

Now I am active in a church choral/singing group, sometimes someone asks, aren't you embarrassed with one hand? I said why am I embarrassed, I did not ask to be like this, I choose to accept reality... But I do not tell my difficult story to family or others; no, no need to tell my misfortune. (Nio)

Being proud of self because of having experience working abroad does not always correlate to the willingness to openly share the story of exploitation and violence. Fear of being judged or stigmatised, and struggling with trusting others are obstacles for the victims to open up about their stories. In a community that perceives suffering as punishment from God, people are ashamed to share their story of suffering.

These findings suggest that when victims of human trafficking engage in church ministries but do not share their experiences of suffering, communities can become vulnerable to human trafficking. The community's failure to acknowledge the seriousness of human trafficking risks and enable traffickers to continue their recruitment efforts. Additionally, this lack of

awareness can lead to limited availability of public facilities such as hospitals, safe houses, and legal procedures that cater to the needs of victims.

The second type of participant is those actively involved in the anti-human trafficking alliance and who share their stories in public as part of a prevention campaign. In the alliance, these participants develop networking and experience a new family.

I must continue to testify for people to believe. Like the story of Thomas in the Bible, Thomas believed after he touched Jesus's wound. So, people who do not believe about human trafficking, can come to see scars in my body. There was a priest who came to hear my story and shared it with his congregation... I am happy I can share with other victims, we are family, we always keep in touch.
(Maria)

Maria recognised her suffering as a divine plan and associated her suffering with the suffering of Jesus, and so she had the courage to share her story of suffering.

In advocacy, participants meet and share their experiences with other victims of human trafficking. They are aware that they are not alone in their experience of violence. It enables them to become aware of the human trafficking mafia. Their experience of violation/violence has been accepted and a new family has been formed. The victim's sufferings do not need to be hidden, but rather shared to prevent and encourage other victims of human trafficking. The alliance encouraged and assisted participants to access public facilities such as hospitals, law enforcement, and the government. This allows participants to regain their dignity, showing that they are part of society.

The two types of groups demonstrate that participants' reconnection with others is dependent on their acceptance by others and the community. When narrating a story of anguish, an individual has a tendency to adjust their desired outcomes to gain acceptance from listeners (Ganzevoort, 1998b). Participants have a tendency to adapt to the meaning that develops in the community so that it is accepted by other individuals or the community. Similarly, both groups are motivated by their particular religious meanings. Participants tend to conform to the religious signification of the community in order for their own meanings to be accepted by the community. In a context that emphasises communality, a person's basic core assumptions will

also be influenced by assumptions that develop in the community (Splevins et al., 2010). Religious meaning can drive people to silence their stories of suffering, but it can equally be a reason for people to share them.

Developing religious meanings that favour victims and empower them to be open about their suffering experiences are crucial requirements. This includes reshaping the social definition of shame. In cultures that emphasise community, the definition of shame and the manner in which an individual perceives it depends on social constructs (Yakeley, 2018). The results of this study indicate that involvement in advocacy enabled participants to speak up and become actively involved in the campaign against human trafficking. This finding suggests that shame about suffering is a social construct which has the potential to be reframed. Advocacy provides the participants a new experience, enabling them to create new meanings that can encourage them.

7.2.3 New Possibilities

The identification of new life possibilities, such as the potential to choose a new course of action, discover new interests, or start a new career, is the third sign of post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi et al. 2018). Most participants would prefer not to work as migrant workers or away from their homes any longer. They experienced trauma when alienated from their family, so they prefer to live with them. Some of them shift the focus of their attention:

Now I want to focus on taking care of my parents. I think it's useless for me to work abroad but my parents and my children in the village are still struggling. I believe God is preparing something better for me in the future. (Sitti)

The fact of amputation changed Nio and Doroti's lives. They both recount making a conscious choice to adapt to their new bodies so they can live more independently, although it took time to come to that position. Doroti needed to learn how to use a wheelchair and a prosthetic leg, and then a mobile phone with her remaining arm to be able to engage in online selling:

The accident occurred in 2008, but in 2014 I got a wheelchair from social services. I learned to sit in a wheelchair. I am happy, because I can walk and meet other people. Before that, I just sat in the house. I could only sit on one

place and couldn't go anywhere. I was also fed by other people. But, since I got a wheelchair, I can manage myself... it took such a long time for getting those two things. Prior to that, I could only sit, and the first practice made me fainted because I had been sitting for 6 years. It was painful because the blood just accumulated and didn't flow properly. My leg was amputated below the knee so that the knee can still be used to move the prosthetic leg. Now, I can go to church, and I can go to worship. I used to pray with the pastor so that God can bless me with a prosthetic leg. (Doroti)

Melki, a parent of the deceased victim decided to buy land and manage his rice field:

Now I buy a land and work on my own rice field and keep trying to live a better life. I'm having a hard time because of my daughter's death but I think that maybe it was God's plan for me and I will continue to work as long as I can. I have provided for my family needs so no more children have to go to Malaysia as migrant workers. (Melki)

Other participants learned to develop their skills. Maria learned to weave traditional woven fabrics to sell. Based on her cooking experience in Malaysia, Yuka started preparing her small restaurant. Others learned to make cakes and work in a cake company, while Bia has become a sexton at a local church.

The primary motive for working away is to enhance the family's financial well-being. Consequently, upon reuniting with their families, participants focus on seeking new opportunities to achieve financial autonomy. They desired to avoid imposing a burden on the family. This process highlights the significance of family and community support in allowing participants to discover their abilities. Participants, on the other hand, must also discover their abilities for themselves. They regain their dignity and meaningful life because of this process, which also boosts their confidence in forming relationships with others. When they can develop their skills and become economically independent, they become masters of themselves and their own lives. In terms of religion, they believe that because suffering is related to God, God will provide a better future if they are faithful to God. Religious meaning promotes hope and drives participants to develop new profitability in their life.

Being secure and accepted by others encourages participants to recognise and process their own traumatic experiences, while being empowered and financially independent promotes dignity. Traumatized people develop a sense of pride and self-worth when they create and discover evidence of a benevolent and a meaningful world (Janoff-Bulman, 2010). Community support has a strong influence on how victims of human trafficking perceive their situation, but traumatized people must ultimately determine their own sense of self-worth. Advocacy and psychological therapy should be based on victims' voices in order to empower them; they are the subject of their recovery (Smith & Chambers, 2015).

7.2.4 *A Deeper Appreciation of Life*

Appreciation of life includes a greater appreciation for all of life's offerings, whether small things that were previously taken for granted or a greater appreciation for things that people still have in their lives (Tedeschi et al., 2018). Rather than always complaining about their experiences of suffering, the majority of the participants were thankful for God's inclusion and every way out that God had prepared for them in every difficult time.

I can't imagine because everything I experienced was like a miracle. I'm still alive, despite the torment. It is like a tree that has been cut down but grows again. (Maria)

The participant's appreciation for life became clear when they accepted their experience of subjection as a reality, and recognised themselves as persons with a wealth of life experience who understand both the sweetness and the bitterness of life. They believe that having been through severe situations demonstrates their remarkable resilience. The scars of violation that remain in their body are a sign of their experience of subjection but also their resilience.

What also emerged from the interview data was the way the participants value life as God's second chance. Most participants firmly believe that God has delivered them from the worst possible circumstance, giving them a second chance to live with their family.

That's right. It's better if I live with my family. Even though I was struggling, I was with my family. That is what makes me grateful. I do not focus on problems, and I still ask God for a chance so that I can live my life. I can't imagine because everything I experienced was like a miracle. I'll always be independent when it

comes to working. I won't ask for help, I don't want to be pitied by others. But I often help other people, like helping my family plant in the fields. When my family get in trouble, I'll always help them. (Nio)

Family is the primary motivator for the participant to work away from home, and family is the reason for their ability to persevere through hardship and to value their lives. They are inspired to develop greater empathy and a greater appreciation for the little things in life, developing thankfulness to God for giving them the strength, health, and breath to provide for their family.

Doroti prefers to be grateful for God's breath, despite the physical disabilities her experience has left her with and which have been painful to adapt to:

I'm still grateful that I'm still alive today. For the breath of life that God gave. No matter what even though my life is full of challenges, I didn't think about it and I didn't want to give up either. I think God is amazing. (Doroti)

Although the amputation had a profound effect on Doroti's life, she made a conscious decision to focus on the aspects for which she could express gratitude. Therefore, despite the significant changes in her life, it remains meaningful and worthwhile to continue living.

The two parents of a deceased victim, Melki and Milka, explained that the death of their daughter allowed them to get to know many people in the anti-human trafficking alliance. They learned new things about how to seek justice for victims of trafficking. They found a new purpose in life to fight for justice for the victims.

God walks in front of us, God is beside us, in front and behind. Because of Linda's case, I have had many organisations, know many people, I met people from various ethnic groups, Rote, Alor, Sabu, I did not meet people who belonged to the same ethnic group as me...I am happy because my friends from Belu, Rote, and Sabu were willing to do anything to help me. They seemed tireless... I dare to go through this process because of the name of Allah, so whatever happens I will fight until justice is served. (Milka)

Acceptance from family and community is an important element that drives participants to appreciate their life. The acceptance aids the recovery of people's fundamental assumption that the world is benevolent and meaningful therefore their own self is worthy (Janoff-Bulman, 2010). Moreover, participants' appreciation of life has a close relation to God. Acceptance from family and community is a sign that despite the difficulties and hardships they experienced, God was with them. Adversity is related to God therefore God will never let them walk alone. According to the participants, there will always be a way for God to strengthen and guide them through difficulties. They only need to surrender and rely on God.

7.2.5 *Spiritual and Existential Change*

The final aspect of post-traumatic growth is spiritual and existential change involving religious change and existential philosophical questions (Tedeschi et al., 2018). The participants live in a community with strong religious influence. Therefore, religion is involved not only in the participant process of post-traumatic growth but also as an output.

I regretted leaving home to work in Malaysia, but God is amazing. I have been through a lot and it has brought me closer to God. [Before working in Malaysia] usually, I didn't really like it when my parents mentioned my name in prayer, or when my parents prayed for me, especially with long prayers. Sometimes, if I wanted to eat quickly, my father would pray for a long time. Maybe the suffering I experienced while working in Malaysia was a punishment for me so that I could know God better and honour my parents. Working in Malaysia is not easy, people who are not used to praying will know to pray. That experience made me closer to God. (Yuka)

Like Yuka, most participants explained that adversity brought them closer to God. Their suffering is part of God's plan for them; therefore, their lives will improve if they live obediently and grow closer to God. Maria even found a new meaning of God for herself. She stated that her experience in Malaysia made her view God as a faithful friend. Maria believed only God was with her when she endured cruel torment, violence, and isolation in Malaysia. God was always by her side, hearing cries, giving strength and courage when she felt depressed, and providing a means of escape that saw her rescued her from the employer's home.

God has always been my friend. When I was in Malaysia, I had only God. God was with me all the time. At that time, I remembered the dream I had before. I saw Jesus in my dream and I was told that I'd almost die but God has died for me first. I saw Him but it was only for a few seconds. God is my saviour. Even though I was tortured by my employer, God's blood saved me from death.
(Maria)

Like Maria, Doroti discovered a new meaning of God. She views God as a husband who will accompany her through happiness and suffering. In patriarchal societies, the husband is responsible for providing for his family's needs. She thinks that there is no prospect for her to get married due to her amputation. She would never have a spouse who would provide for her and her future. God is Doroti's husband who will always provide for her daily requirements.

I don't want to think about things beyond my ability. Some say why not get married, I say my husband is the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus will guarantee food and drink and clothing; if it's for lust it doesn't come to mind. Then they say I'm dead with no generation;, I have a lot of nephews and nieces, a lot of family so I don't think about anything. (Doroti)

Silas was the only participant whose understanding was slightly different. Silas stated that he was disappointed with God because God seems not to have answered his prayers.

I'm not angry, I am just disappointed. I've tried every way, we always struggled until I think I've had enough. I think God has given us so much to be thankful for, but we have tried every way to heal my son but it's still fruitless. It's been two weeks people come and pray day and night, at 12 noon, 3 pm and 4 pm. Someone came and told us that there is a mental hospital in Naimata. I took him to the hospital. Now, he is a little better and I am grateful for that. (Silas)

Silas is a father who struggled with numerous family issues, particularly the mental health of his children. To see healing for his children, Silas had prayed in more than ten prayer meetings and given up time, effort, and money, but the children were still not healed. He believed that his prayers had not been heard by God. When a person considers that suffering is part of God's

plan but the reality of the situation is different from what they expected, they become disappointed in God.

When a participant returns home and reunites with their family, the acceptance into their families, involvement in church ministry, participation in anti-trafficking alliances, and economic independence are viewed as evidence of God renewing their lives. Interaction with others influences self-definition and understanding of God. When a participant has a positive experience with God and others, the participant obtains positive religious meaning, which leads to spiritual growth. In other words, religious growth is driven by positive religious meaning, and positive religious meaning is determined by positive experience and relationships with others. It demonstrates that spiritual growth occurs in relationship, both to God and to others.

7.3 Reflection

According to the PTG domains, the participants showed some evidence of positive growth. The participants' strengths included a sense of pride in themselves, the fortitude to accept and grasp the truth of losing a loved one, and the courage to advocate for victims' rights. Participants also demonstrated growth indicators because they reconnect with their families and communities. Participants also demonstrated that they learn about new opportunities in their lives. The participants also showed signs of appreciation for life. Only one participant voiced dissatisfaction with God about spiritual development, although this participant showed evidence of faith development. The participants grew in relationships, influenced by family and community acceptance. Moreover, their religious interpretations of suffering influence participants' development. Participants who comprehend that suffering is connected to God experience spiritual growth. Acceptance from family and community is evidence that God has not forsaken them but rather has forgiven them and remains by their side.

The growth shown by the participants is noteworthy, especially in the second PTG domain relating to interpersonal relationships. For this domain, the participants were divided into two categories. The first group consisted of those who reconnected with family and community but chose not to share their traumatic experiences. The perspective of the second group was different; they were willing to share their experiences of violence and actively involved in advocacy. Although both participants showed personal growth, their impact on social transformation differed.

This finding indicates that participants perceive suffering as a personal matter, as a personal concern between an individual and God, which has an impact on their progress. The five PTG domains reveal that participants are growing, but most are growing personally, which may or may not have an impact on societal transformation. One of the factors influencing participant growth is community acceptance. Participants are more open and even actively fight for social change if they live in a community that supports their identification as victims of human trafficking. In an unsupportive environment, participants are less likely to disclose their stories of suffering.

Post-traumatic growth studies from a cross-cultural viewpoint emphasise that PTG theory originates within an individualistic Western cultural context (Splevins et al., 2010). Individuals are considered as having their own entity in a culture that values individualism. Behaviour is motivated by a person's abilities, ambitions, wants, and personal qualities. This is in contrast to a collective or interconnected society in which a person's entity is inextricably linked to the community. A person's attitudes, feelings, and meaning are influenced by the community. In a context where all five PGT domains are strongly impacted by the influence of the community, the participants' experience of growth also revealed the significance of holistic advocacy. Since the growth of participants aligns with community acceptance, raising community awareness on the issue of human trafficking is important in advocacy besides victim support.

A notable strand that emerged from the interviews was the place of economic freedom or stability as a factor of growth. Advocacy should encompass not only trauma assistance, legal assistance, and promoting public awareness through the development of religious meaning in favour of victims, but also economic empowerment. In Indonesia context, human trafficking advocacy is complex because government does not yet have a comprehensive social security system for migrant worker and human trafficking victim.

The analysis of current chapter shows bidirectional relationship between victim empowerment and social transformation. Advocacy for human trafficking is advocacy that must not only aim to empower victims, but also to transform society, raising public awareness and the availability of public facilities that support the healing process of victims. The process of victim growth is heavily influenced by the community and community acceptance is heavily influenced by the willingness of victims to be open about their story and involved in advocacy to raise public

awareness. Moreover, religious meaning can play an ambivalent role; it can support and encourage victims to raise their voices, but it can also cause victims to remain silent.

According to trauma studies, a traumatic event can influence an individual's identity. When a person embraces a traumatic event, they can discover the meaning and recognise it as a gift for life (Ganzevoort, 2008). A traumatic experience can contribute to forming a unique identity, thereby contributing to self-formation. In societies with an individualized culture, where one's identity is seen as separate from the community, it is easier for people to form their own identity. In the context of human trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara, where public awareness is still low, and the growth of victims in the aftermath is strongly influenced by community influence, embodiment or identity maker theory faces a unique challenge. Participant experiences of growth show that the community significantly influences the process of self-acceptance, self-meaning, relationships with others, and appreciation of life. The community determines the meaning of the individual; if an individual's meaning differs from the community, it can be regarded as something alien to the community.

It is crucial to increase the public's awareness and acceptance towards victims. In specific cases, such as human trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara, it is essential to address the issue due to the lack of public awareness and inadequate infrastructure to support the needs of victims. The victims' openness to share their stories of exploitation and abuse is an essential component of societal transformation. PTG domains in the context of human trafficking in a communal context, such as Indonesia, by including openness to the community and involvement in advocacy, which can be one of the indicators for the PTG domains. Even though the PTG measuring domain or PTG inventory has been determined, it should be recognised that each trauma has its own context, which requires contextual growth measurement indicators (Tedeschi et al., 2018).

7.4 Conclusion

The objective of the present chapter is to investigate whether the participants involved in this study experienced positive transformations in the aftermath of human trafficking traumatic event, as well as to determine whether their perception of suffering is related to God had a positive impact on their personal development. In order to achieve the objective, this chapter employs five domains of post-traumatic growth, including personal strength, interpersonal

relationships, new opportunities, appreciation for life, and the final realm of spiritual and existential transformation. Based on the results obtained, the participants exhibit indications of development. The growth is determined by factors such as religion, familial dynamics, and community acceptability. The participants' understanding of suffering is related to God had an impact on their personal development.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that all participants show indications of growth, the personal development of participants consistently aligns with their desire to actively engage in reforming society through advocacy. Certain participants demonstrate growth and actively engage in advocacy efforts aimed at combating human trafficking. Several participants exhibited indications of growth, but expressed a lack of interest in engaging in advocacy activities.

The ambivalence attitude of participant determined by religious meaning and community acceptance. The findings indicate that the five dimensions of post-traumatic growth prioritise individual development over societal transformation. Involvement in social transformation is important in the context of human trafficking because family and community play a major role in the entire process from the events, coping tools, meaning making, to growth in the aftermath. In contexts such as human trafficking, there is a need to develop a domain within PTG that also measures one's involvement in social transformation. The findings of this study also show that the advocacy needed by victims is a comprehensive advocacy that includes meeting the requirements of victims, including economic empowerment and public awareness.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ADVOCACY AS ADULT TRANSFORMATIVE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

8.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 seeks to bring together the themes addressed in this study, returning to the main research question posed: How does religion affect the suffering and healing of victims of human trafficking, and what are the implications for empowerment and prevention through Christian education? The aim of current chapter is not to engage in an in-depth discussion of the nature of Christian or adult education, which is outside the scope of the study, but to bring the findings of the research into dialogue with a particular methodology employed within adult education – the transformative learning framework – to investigate how this form of Christian education might offer a valuable and grounded way forward in facing the challenges posed by human trafficking to religious communities.

The chapter begins by setting out a summary of the main findings of the research as detailed in Chapters 4–7. It then offers a brief sketch of what is meant by ‘Christian Education’ within the discussion of this chapter, before focusing on the concept of transformative learning. The chapter goes on to argue that advocacy represents a viable and valuable form of transformative Christian education within the context of human trafficking, relating it to the three key groups of the victims themselves, their families, and the community. Integrating advocacy into Christian education presents possibilities for profound transformation, empowering the victims, preventing human trafficking, and reevaluating religious meaning.

8.2 Summary of Findings

The previous chapters findings as to the religious dimension of human trafficking, as evidenced by the participants’ experiences, demonstrate the extensive impact of religion throughout various stages, such as the occurrence of the event, the application of coping strategies, and the making meaning process and personal growth in the aftermath. In the event, the participants’ motivation to engage in migrant labour is significantly influenced by their aspiration to escape poverty. This willingness is further reinforced by a religious meaning that perceives migrant working as a manifestation of God’s way to improve their lives. Regarding religious coping tools in the reality of the situations they subsequently face, participants utilise various religious coping methods, such as prayer, religious songs, prayer teams, and dreams, as primary mechanisms to navigate and endure challenging circumstances. Moreover, religion is involved

in the meaning-making process of the participant with respect to understanding their suffering. Religion constitutes an integral component of an individual's belief system, serving as a primary reference in constructing meaning. Furthermore, the participants exhibit indications of personal development in the aftermath, and religious meaning significantly contributes to participant growth. However, in all the stages and processes, religion plays an ambivalent role, where both positive and negative influences and impacts can be present at the same time.

Another insight derived from the participants' experiences as set out in the previous chapters is that it elucidates the fact that human trafficking not only affects the personal lives of the victims but also has consequences in the lives of their families and communities. The interrelation of these three aspects is evident in each step of coping. The traumatic event, the coping mechanisms, and growth occur within victim, family, and community interactions. The importance of family and community in shaping the participant's coping mechanisms, meaning-making processes, and personal growth is significant due to the participant's life context, namely a communal culture.

8.3 Christian Education: Key Characteristics and Aims

Before exploring the potential that Christian education might hold in the human trafficking context as a response to the themes revealed by the research, this section aims to offer a brief outline of how the chapter interprets Christian education as a framework for the following discussion. Kumalo (2005) defines Christian education as an educational activity that enables the Christian community to be a learning community capable of integrating the Christian tradition with the realities of everyday life. Moore (1987) furthermore maintains that Christian education empowers the community to achieve individual, ecclesial, and social transformation.

According to McKenzie (1986), religious education, including Christian education, enables people to acquire meaning, explore and expand meaning, and express meaning productively. Religious education encompasses a variety of purposes. The primary objective is the establishment of an initial framework. The first phase of religious education for children and individuals who are new to a specific religious tradition involves the introduction of foundational teachings within that tradition, which serves as a continuation of historical practices. The subsequent phase seeks to facilitate individuals in exploring and expanding meaning. Adult learners in particular can acknowledge and appreciate the depth and diversity

inherent in religious traditions, thereby incorporating them into their personal experiences. Furthermore, they can engage in a thoughtful and analytical examination of these religious traditions. The third objective of religious education is to equip learners with the necessary skills to effectively articulate and convey meaning, thereby acknowledging their role as conveyors of significance to the broader society. Religious education aims to promote and inspire individuals to actively contribute to societal transformation while adhering to their religious convictions, enabling individuals to assume the role of a social change agent with the capacity to exert impact on societal transformation. Adult religious education facilitates the attainment of the above three objectives: the ability to embrace religious traditions; the ability to critically analyse, evaluate, such understandings; and to promote and instigate societal transfer.

The focus of the chapter is on adult Christian education, and aligns with Marmon's (2013) understanding that adult Christian education pays attention to how adults make meaning through their lived experiences. When adults engage their experiences and dilemmas in the social context, a dialogue begins in which meanings are accepted, criticised, or even established. Within adult education, various methodologies are utilised (Illeris, 2022), and again, it is outside the scope of this study to enter into a wider discussion of a topic that is a field of research in its own right. In terms of addressing the primary question addressed here, namely the role of Christian education within the context of human trafficking, transformative learning is the methodology that forms the framework to the discussion. What this approach comprises and the reason for its suitability is the subject of the next section below.

8.4 Transformative Learning and Christian Education

According to Mezirow (1991), *learning* is defined as constructing meaning, comprehending the context, engaging in critical reflection regarding assumptions, and confirming the derived meaning. During the early developmental stage, a child gains significant knowledge and skills through structured educational systems and the guidance and influence of significant people, such as parents or guardians. The learning process inevitably leads to the development of a specific cognitive framework or schema shaped by the cultural and linguistic elements prevalent within a given context. Establishing a frame of reference or viewpoint of meaning is derived from interpreting one's experiences. A frame of reference consists of a collection of habits of mind and points of view. Habits of mind refer to a collection of underlying

assumptions that serve as a cognitive framework for interpreting the significance of one's experiences. Point of view refers to a distinct set of expectations, ideas, feelings, attitudes, and judgements that strategically guide and influence particular interpretations. Additionally, point of view plays a role in determining how individuals assess and categorise objects and assign cause-and-effect relationships. A habit of mind manifests itself as a point of view. The concept of meaning is a social construction where individual and communal interpretations require ongoing negotiation with life experiences and contexts.

Mezirow explains that adult learning can be defined as the process by which individuals apply their previous understanding to interpret and construct a new or modified understanding of the significance of their experiences, intending to apply this newfound knowledge to guide their future actions (Mezirow, 2000). Learning is a process of producing meaning because it is the essence of learning (Mezirow, 1991). The meaning then influences one's daily decisions and actions. Making sense of experiences, making new experiences explicit, developing schemas, modifying, acting, and validating are all part of the learning process. Adults benefit from self-directing and critically assessing and adjusting existing frames of reference.

Mezirow describes learning that is transformative as including a disorienting dilemma; a self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame; a critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions; recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change; exploration of options for new roles, relationship, and action; planning of a course of action; acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; provisional trying of new roles; building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; a reintegration into one's life based on conditions dictated by one's perspective; and reflection.

In a further development, Mezirow realised that transformative learning emphasises meaning construction but this does not mean it only emphasises cognitive elements (Illeris, 2022). This process involves the role of emotions, intuition, and imagination. The tacit construction of our beliefs may involve implicit values, stereotyping, highly selective attention, limited comprehension, projection, rationalisation, minimisation, or denial. Therefore, we must be able to evaluate and validate assumptions that support our own and others' beliefs and expectations.

Taylor (2017) explains that transformative learning began to be further developed by involving various approaches. Transformative learning adopts a more comprehensive viewpoint towards change, encompassing both individual and social transformation implications. Human beings, as agents, engage in continuous introspection and take action to effectuate transformations within their environment. The objective of learning is to facilitate social transformation. This method promotes the cultivation of critical thought to facilitate the rediscovery of power and foster the development of the learners' sense of agency, both in effecting societal change and shaping their own personal realities. Transformative learning also adopts a pedagogical framework that promotes liberation, prioritising cognitive engagement rather than mere transmission of knowledge. This approach also acknowledges that teachers and learners are mutually engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship as active agents of transformation.

In terms of how this relates to trauma, Kroth and Cranton (2012) posit that a traumatic experience refers to an event or occurrence that leads an individual to engage in transformative learning. Traumatic situations have the potential to instigate introspection, leading individuals to reconsider their expectations, life goals, and deeply ingrained personal values. The experience of bereavement, for example, might prompt individuals to contemplate the existential significance of their existence. This process enables individuals to discover a new purpose in their subsequent life. It enhances individuals' maturity, resilience, and openness to novel experiences. The transformative learning approach as a meaning-making process aligns with the meaning-making approach as a coping mechanism. Constructing meaning can facilitate an individual's beneficial personal development. Likewise, traumatic experiences among various individuals might catalyse initiating social change.

Eun Seung Lee (2011) describes the transformative learning approach as a theoretical foundation for Christian education, supporting the cultivation of critical thinking abilities and fostering a disposition towards active involvement. According to Lee, the primary objective of transformative learning approaches in Christian education is to create learning environments that effectively support individuals in integrating their Christian faith with new perspectives and insights. This integration enables individuals to derive new meaning from their faith, informing their behaviour and empowering them to contribute to social reform. The meaning-making approach facilitates the ability of adults to appreciate and contemplate their personal experiences, participate in significant dialogues concerning their views, and contemplate the broader social and cultural influences that shape their existence. The meaning-making

approach facilitates adults' engagement in discussions about faith during their personal development, encompassing their self-perceptions, interpersonal dynamics, and affiliations with broader social collectives.

Moreover, the transformative learning approach emphasises active engagement, wherein the learning process transcends mere information dissemination. Teachers and learners are encouraged to engage in tangible activities promoting collective experiences. Both entities are actively involved in the facilitation of transformative processes. This approach necessitates a broader understanding of the locus of Christian education, encompassing not only the pedagogical experience within the confines of the classroom but also active engagement in many societal movements aimed at effecting social transformation.

Justitia Hattu has developed a framework for integrating transformative learning as a meaning-making approach into Christian education to facilitate a transformation (Hattu, 2014). According to Hattu, Indonesia is currently confronted with four primary crises: the cultural-religious crisis, the economic crisis, the discrimination against minority groups, and the ecological catastrophe. In Indonesia, the prevailing approach to Christian education continues to be characterised by indoctrination, wherein the primary focus is transmitting knowledge from the teacher to the students. Regarding the teaching content, there remains a notable emphasis on the cognitive dimension entailing the memorisation of biblical texts and church doctrine. This approach engenders a disparity between the veracity of the Bible and the everyday experiences of mature individuals in their daily existence.

Hattu argued that within the Indonesian context, there is a pressing need for a new educational paradigm that fosters critical thinking skills, enabling individuals to engage in a reflective analysis of their life experiences (Hattu, 2014). For an educational approach that has the potential to challenge the culture of silence perpetuated by didactic teaching methods. For an education that is characterised by mutually beneficial interaction and necessitates an enhanced educational environment. The process of Christian adult education encompasses not only acquiring knowledge but also developing practical skills, fostering a sense of community, and cultivating personal growth.

Hattu suggests an alternative approach to adult Christian education in Indonesia, drawing inspiration from Kegan (1982) and Schipani's (1997) focus on critical thinking, mutual

dialogue, and transformation (Hattu, 2014). Hattu presents a model of adult meaning-making centred around the concept of transformation, both personal and social. This would be facilitated through the cultivation of critical thinking skills and the cultivation of self-awareness, as well as an awareness of one's immediate surroundings. The technique would also need to establish a robust and constructive reciprocal discourse centred on fostering interpersonal connections and promoting equitable collaboration.

Furthermore, Hattu proposes that Christian education should not be solely confined to ecclesiastical institutions but extends beyond them, encompassing official and informal settings, and that adult Christian education encompasses three primary narratives: the narratives of everyday life (about personal experiences and communal significance), the narrative of the Bible, and the narrative of Indonesian tradition.

Hattu further underscores the emancipatory function of Christian education by developing initiatives that facilitate adults' voluntary and free participation. Programmes that correspond to the challenges encountered in ordinary life situations empower adult individuals to comprehend their daily experiences through the lens of religious teachings, establish a conducive atmosphere that facilitates this process, and equip adults to apply the insights gained into concrete actions.

8.5 Advocacy as Transformative Adult Christian Education in a Context of Human Trafficking

The discourse presented in this section aims to elucidate the conceptualisation of advocacy as a manifestation of Christian adult transformative learning. To do so, it is first necessary to establish what advocacy is, its particular relation to human trafficking, and its links to and potential within the Indonesian Christian context. Advocacy is defined as defending or promoting a cause (Ezell, 1994). This chapter defines advocacy as a social movement led by civil society to support victims and their families in their efforts to combat the operations of trafficking syndicates. Advocacy encompasses a comprehensive range of support services, encompassing legal and non-legal interventions, aimed at addressing the needs and concerns of individuals or groups. Litigation refers to supporting victims within the legal process, whereas non-litigation assistance encompasses support provided to victims outside of legal proceedings. Advocacy includes many forms of aid, such as healthcare assistance, economic

empowerment initiatives, public awareness campaigns, and advocacy for government rules to safeguard victims. The objective of the advocacy movement is to achieve social transformation throughout diverse domains of human existence, encompassing areas such as public policy. Some participants, Melki, Maria, Mary, and Doroti, are involved in human trafficking advocacy.

The significance of advocacy in human trafficking can be attributed to the way it involves all the main parties who are directly impacted by trafficking: the victims, their families, and the communities. The interrelationship and inseparability of these three parties in the trauma of human trafficking appear in the event, coping mechanisms, constructing meaning, and subsequent post-traumatic growth. Advocacy not only offers support to victims and families but also encompasses the endeavour to foster a community attuned to the issue of human trafficking, thereby facilitating social transformation.

The findings of this research explain that human trafficking is also a religious issue. Religion plays a significant function in the coping mechanism employed by individuals in response to an incident and in their subsequent personal development. Religion is an integral component of individuals' belief systems, serving as a primary framework for navigating and managing various challenges and adversities. Nevertheless, the results of this study also demonstrate that religion can have an ambivalent role. The religious meaning established and embraced by society exerts a substantial influence on the coping strategies employed by victims, yet this religious meaning also plays an essential role in shaping the community's desensitisation towards human trafficking and its inadvertent support of traffickers.

However, despite the clear importance of religion in relation to human trafficking, within the context of East Nusa Tenggara, incorporating church engagement in advocacy efforts has not yet garnered complete acceptance as a fundamental aspect of the church's mission. In the context of East Nusa Tenggara, the government fails to adequately safeguard migrant workers and has not fully implemented effective measures to assist victims of human trafficking. The church plays a crucial role in ensuring that the rights and needs of the victims are fulfilled. There persists a prevailing notion that the responsibility of advocacy lies with the state rather than the church. The church's primary objective is to facilitate individuals' spiritual journey towards attaining salvation in heaven, while effecting societal transformation is not considered within the scope of the church's mission. The concept of emancipation from slavery continues

to be predominantly associated with liberation from the bondage of sin rather than liberation from modern-day forms of slavery, such as human trafficking. The church, particularly the Evangelical Church in Timor, the institutional church where the participants belong, has been working to combat human trafficking. However, the church's engagement with victims and advocacy initiatives has not been maximised and remains contingent upon the perspectives of church officials. If the elected ecclesiastical leaders were to possess a more comprehensive viewpoint on the concept of service, it might result in the church actively engaging in social movements extending beyond the ecclesiastical institution's confines.

Advocacy, when viewed through the lens of transformative learning, aims to introduce novel experiences that prompt victims, families, and communities to critically reevaluate the established frameworks of meaning they have previously accepted as valid. This encompasses religious significance, including both individual and communal religious interpretations. Advocacy as transformative learning provides a space to honour the experiences of exploitation and violence suffered by victims as experiences that can be a source of social transformation. Furthermore, transformative learning through advocacy provides an opportunity to critique religious interpretations with adverse consequences, such as those that induce shame in victims and perpetuate violence and exploitation, enabling traffickers to prosper.

8.5.1 Advocacy and the Transformation of Victims

The individuals who suffer the initial and immediate repercussions of violence and exploitation are the victims. The decision to engage in migrant labour while being motivated by religious convictions results in estrangement from one's identity, familial relationships, and the broader social fabric. Violence and exploitation significantly affect the victim's physical and psychological well-being. The absence of adequate governmental resources to address these requirements necessitates that victims heal their own wounds. Individuals who receive assistance from their family and community are more likely to experience a prompt recovery. In contrast, those lacking familial assistance, such as women who have experienced domestic violence, take longer to progress due to the absence of a support system. Similarly, parents who have experienced the loss of their children require a significant amount of time and undergo a painful process to come to terms with these deaths. Some who receive support from family and community can fight to seek justice for their children, while others learn to accept reality and surrender justice to God alone.

The main principle of adult transformative learning promotes the capacity of adults to construct meaning, critically evaluate their experiences, and deliberately articulate their viewpoints (Mezirow, 2000). The term 'experience' plays a vital role in adult change, serving as the initial catalyst for constructing meaning. Advocacy can serve as a novel experience for individuals who have experienced victimisation, facilitating their construction of meaning. In the realm of advocacy, victims have the opportunity to engage with fellow victims as well as diverse stakeholders who are committed to collaborating to empower victims. The experiences and identities of victims of human trafficking are recognised and embraced as a shared foundation that brings them together.

From a trauma-oriented perspective, Herman emphasises the importance of interpersonal connections in the context of the healing process (Herman, 2015). In the course of the healing journey, persons who have undergone traumatic experiences engage in efforts to regain essential abilities that have been weakened as a result of those events. These capacities encompass a range of psychological attributes, such as trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, and proximity, all of which can manifest themselves within the context of human relationships. The main principle of the rehabilitation process involves empowering survivors, who take on the dual responsibility of authoring and overseeing their own recovery and the imperative to develop or form collectives that empower those who have experienced trauma arises from the acknowledgment that interpersonal relationships play a crucial role in facilitating the process of healing and restoration.

Advocacy as communal assistance is a conducive environment for fostering the empowerment of victims. The victims have the opportunity to connect with fellow victims and engage in the exchange of narratives related to their experiences with exploitation and abuse. It provides a space for the victims to share their story without judgement. Every victim possesses a unique individual experience. However, abuse is also experienced by many other migrant labourers. Through sharing these narratives, the victims can understand that the acts of violence and exploitation they have endured are not an exclusive to their own experiences. Through collectively recounting narratives of difficulties, those who have experienced victimisation might establish a communal environment conducive to the collective mourning process. Victims who experience similar events may consequently experience comparable levels of suffering. According to Herman (2015), individuals who have experienced trauma require a designated space for mourning. Advocacy serves as an accepting environment for victims'

experiences, they can safely express traumatic experiences through the act of sharing narratives and engaging in the grieving process.

Through sharing narratives and engaging in collective mourning, those who have experienced trauma can be supported in their journey of processing their traumatic experiences. The narratives of the victims encompass several elements that, upon compilation and examination, can aid victims in comprehending the fundamental patterns of exploitation and violence employed by traffickers. This facilitates the description of the modus operandi employed to capture the target, the mechanism utilised to exert control and put the target in a state of vulnerability. The presence of typical patterns of exploitation might serve as evidence to victims that traffickers have intentionally organised the perpetration of violence and exploitation to render victims vulnerable to harm. This assertion posits that the exploitation and violence endured by migrant workers can be attributed to a migrant worker recruitment system intentionally structured to exploit them.

The participants' experiences reported in this study reveal the presence of various repetitive patterns of exploitation. For example, some common practices seen include the utilisation of debt bondage as a means of control, the retention of passports and salary until the completion of the contractual period, the imposition of social restrictions, the imposition of excessive working hours, insufficient provision of language training, inadequate provision of skills training, and the provision of substandard accommodation facilities. The consistent recurrence of violence and exploitation among all participants indicates a systematic use of violence for the purpose of exploitation. Additionally, this demonstrates that the current state legislation has not effectively ensured the maximum protection of migrant workers.

Through the identification of shared patterns of abuse and exploitation, victims will gain insight into the underlying causes of their suffering, especially a recruitment system that fails to provide enough protection. Consequently, the victims are afforded the opportunity to critically examine the diverse religious interpretations that support the practice of human trafficking. The religious interpretation that perceives migrant work as a divine means of transforming individuals' lives warrants scrutiny. Similarly, the comprehension of suffering by participants can also be subject to critique. The affliction endured by these individuals is additionally attributable to the infiltration of a trafficking syndicate that has methodically integrated itself into the recruitment of migrant labourers. Likewise, their suffering can be related to the

systemic maximisation of profit over welfare on the part of the employers, and their collusion in slavery for personal benefit and gain. Advocacy facilitates an opportunity for introspection, enabling individuals to critically examine religious interpretations that have been accepted as absolute truths. This process can be facilitated by the exchange of narratives among survivors of trafficking.

In addition to serving as a platform for victims to share their narratives with fellow individuals who have experienced similar circumstances, advocacy initiatives can provide a supportive environment for collective mourning and the facilitation of grief processing. Furthermore, these advocacy communities have the potential to foster a sense of family, strengthen interpersonal bonds and promote mutual empowerment among its members. When individuals who have experienced victimisation recount their narratives of adversity, they concurrently impart their accounts of resilience and endurance, how people derive the fortitude necessary to persevere through adverse circumstances. Through sharing stories of suffering, victims indirectly provide support for and solidarity with one another. Survivors gradually support victims who remain hesitant to communicate, facilitating their willingness to disclose their experiences. The victims serve as a source of inspiration for one another. The narratives of their sufferings are acknowledged and valued and may catalyse inspiration.

In advocacy, the victims who express a willingness to pursue legal avenues for their cases are provided with support and assistance, as in the narrative provided by Melki who officially reported the case to the legal system and subsequently underwent judicial proceedings. A total of 16 individuals, from recruiters to high-ranking officials, were apprehended and subsequently incarcerated in Malaysia. During the pursuit of justice for his daughter, Melki availed himself of the opportunity to engage in meetings with the Chief of Police and President Jokowi, where he reported the demise of his daughter. Through active participation in the litigation process, the victim has to take a more central role, acquiring a new experience that enables them to comprehend the situation in a fresh way and take direct action. Furthermore, the victims who are willing to disclose their narratives to the wider public might actively participate in public campaigns, such as seminars or dialogues. The advocacy process can be understood as a transformative adult Christian education, as it allows victims to become empowered agents of change.

8.5.2 *Advocacy and the Transformation of Families*

The family unit represents the second category that is affected and impacted by human trafficking. Nevertheless, the role of the family can be somewhat ambivalent, where they can assume a crucial function in assisting victims and, conversely, potentially exert a contrasting more negative influence. Family is a primary motivation for the participants' willingness to work as a migrant worker, including the need to pay for the children's education, construct a home, and improve the family's quality of life. In addition, the most vulnerable groups to be recruited as migrant workers are women and girls who are victims of domestic abuse. When the home is no longer safe, working away from home is an attempt to build a better future.

The participants who became migrant workers felt guilty because of being away from their parents, partners, and children. Likewise, the parents or spouses of migrant workers felt guilty about allowing their children or wife work away from their families. They felt guilty because, in a patriarchal culture, the parent and husband are responsible for earning money to provide for the family's needs. Moreover, the families and parents of the deceased victims experience deep guilt for losing the loved one. In the aftermath of the victimisation, close family members frequently blame themselves, believing that the traumatic experience could have been avoided (Janoff-Bulman, 2010).

Conversely, the family has the potential to fulfil a preventive function. In a society characterised by a patriarchal structure, the familial institution assumes a significant role in decision-making. If the family possesses a comprehensive understanding of the susceptibility to human trafficking throughout the recruitment phase of migrant labourers, they might assume a proactive role in prevention. Besides the role of prevention, family acceptance is a crucial role that determines the victims' self-strength and integration with the community in the post-trauma phase. Family acceptance provides safety, belonging, and meaning (Pandey et al., 2018). When migrant workers repatriate as individuals who have experienced harm, their families are impacted. In the context of socioeconomic deprivation, the reintegration of afflicted individuals into their households exacerbates the strain on the family. The absence of adequate healthcare infrastructure and the exorbitant expenses associated with medical care contribute to victims being perceived as an additional burden on their families.

Empowering the victim's family involves offering support and resources to enable them to comprehend and respond effectively to the traumatic event they have experienced. In addition

to the affected individual, the active participation of family members in advocacy efforts is also significant. Advocacy is an opportunity for the victim's family to engage in active listening and gain insight into the encounters of exploitation and abuse shared by fellow victims. This method facilitates families in comprehending the inherent vulnerability of engaging in migrant labour and its susceptibility to human trafficking. Human trafficking is a pervasive issue affecting numerous individuals, necessitating collective efforts to combat it. Recognising that this situation should not be stigmatised or associated with familial disgrace is crucial.

The family, the primary social unit closest to the victim, is significant in facilitating the victim's healing process. Therefore, the family must be adequately prepared. This approach aligns with Hattu's argument, underscoring the significance of establishing a supportive learning community in adult transformative Christian education (Hattu, 2014). Through advocacy efforts, the family can proactively equip themselves to create a nurturing and encouraging atmosphere conducive to the victim's personal growth and change process.

8.5.3 Advocacy and the Transformation of Community

As with the family, the community likewise assumes an ambivalent role. The influence of the community is a significant component that motivates individuals to engage in migrant work. At the same time, the level of acceptance within the community also impacts the subsequent recovery process of these participants. This encompasses the participants' willingness to be open and share experiences of exploitation and violence encountered. After returning home and reuniting with family, some participants reconnect with the community and are actively involved in church or social relations while hiding their experience of being subjected to violence and exploited. When their story is silent, the existence of human trafficking victims is not acknowledged as reality and as part of the community. When the victims are silent about their suffering experience and the success story dominates, the community remains unaware that migrant workers are a fragile agency due to their vulnerability to human trafficking. The victims' exploitation and violent experiences are conceived as a punishment or test from God. In that type of community, working as a migrant worker is seen as a gamble: those who are lucky will return home with money, but those who are unlucky will return home with nothing or scarred physically or mentally by their time away. The suffering and violence experienced by victims are considered normal as processes of life that must be endured.

Because the community does not recognise the existence of human trafficking victims, the community does not provide public facilities for the victims. The victims are alienated from public service facilities such as hospitals, law enforcement to assist victims, and safe houses. Without medical treatment, the victims struggle with their trauma. If they return home sick, the family is additionally burdened amid poverty. Moreover, without law enforcement, the human trafficking mafia continues to operate freely. The community is vulnerable to human trafficking, and the victims are vulnerable to re-victimisation.

Similarly, concerning religious signification, the acceptance of religious meaning as truth within a community significantly impacts the process of meaning construction for the participants. The presence of a supporting community fosters the production of positive religious signification among members, catalysing their engagement in societal transformation. On the other hand, when an individual is situated within a community that lacks support and subjects them to stigmatisation, it impacts the religious meaning that the participant generates. Participants will comprehend that the affliction of exploitation and violence they have endured is attributable to their transgressions against a divine being. This religious belief system, therefore, compels individuals to decide to keep silent and abstain from participating in societal change.

Advocacy can serve as a mechanism for facilitating transformative adult Christian education by allowing communities to critically analyse the susceptibility of migrant workers to trafficking. This process encompasses scrutinising diverse theological interpretations that have emerged and gained societal consensus as valid tenets. It is imperative to raise awareness within communities regarding the systematic exploitation and utilisation of violence by traffickers, which renders migrant labour susceptible to precarious circumstances. Campaigns and public discussions serve as platforms to increase public awareness regarding the issue of human trafficking.

Similarly, theological discussions or Bible studies can serve as a platform for introducing patterns of exploitation and violence while also providing an opportunity to critique the communal religious interpretations that facilitate the interests of traffickers. The participants' narratives elucidated that religious songs emerged as a prominent coping mechanism, serving as a primary reference point and impacting the construction of meaning. Hence, religious songs can serve as a strategic instrument for political campaigns. The victims' experiences further

elucidated the significant role played by the prayer team in the coping mechanisms and process of deriving meaning. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritise the prayer team as a focal point for disseminating awareness.

Advocacy serves a dual purpose in raising awareness about the susceptibility to human trafficking inside the recruiting procedures of migrant labourers and emphasising the significance of public establishments capable of addressing the needs of victims. The ramifications of violence and exploitation significantly influence the individuals involved, leading to profound life transformations. This is exemplified by the case of Doroti, who experienced a complete upheaval in her circumstances upon becoming a victim of human trafficking and had to forge a new way of living. Advocating for victims' rights to the government and other relevant stakeholders about the significance of providing public assistance that caters to the needs of victims is an ongoing process. One indicator of the successful attainment of transformational adult Christian education is the manifestation of social transformation, thus within the realm of human trafficking, the establishment of public services for victims serves as a concrete expression of such transformation as well as a tangible manifestation of community acceptance and support.

8.6 Conclusion

Working away from home as a migrant worker is common in East Nusa Tenggara. It is a fragile agency within poverty because it is vulnerable to human trafficking. The consequences of human trafficking impacts not only the victims but also their families and communities. This chapter has investigated the role of Christian education in the context of human trafficking as a potential way forward in addressing the challenges trafficking presents to religious communities in East Nusa Tenggara by bringing transformative learning, Christian adult education, advocacy, and the human trafficking experience of the participants into dialogue.

Transformative learning is a theoretical framework that conceptualises the process of learning as a means for adults to construct personal meaning and consequently achieve transformation. The chapter has argued that integrating transformational learning principles into adult Christian education can facilitate establishing a conducive learning environment that effectively assists persons in deriving meaning from their experiences in connection to their religion, and that advocacy represents a form of transformative adult Christian education that is a viable and

accessible avenue for this in the context in which this research takes place. Advocacy serves as a platform for empowering individuals who have experienced victimisation, as well as their families and communities, enabling them to assume active roles in transformation.

Advocacy can be understood as transformative Christian education because it allows victims to share their stories, understand the experience of exploitation and violence, critique religious interpretations, and access legal assistance. With this process, victims can understand the reality experienced analytically and fight for their rights. In addition, advocacy can also provide experiences that empower victims' families. The family is the main element in the victim's life, so the family needs to also be made aware of how to critically understand the reality of trafficking, the victim's situation, and the need for assistance to meet the victim's needs. In terms of the community, advocacy can provide a space for community awareness, shaping public opinion to examine the reality of human trafficking. Increased public awareness is expected to influence the availability of regulations that protect migrant workers from exploitation and the provision of public facilities that meet the needs of trafficking victims.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

9.1 Summary of the Implications of the Research Findings

9.1.1 Implications for Human Trafficking Research

The current study investigated the experience of human trafficking victims who suffered exploitation and violence. Conducting human trafficking research from the victim's perspective also aims to fill a gap in research on human trafficking and religion from the victim's point of view. The second chapter of this dissertation provides a systematic overview of human trafficking and religion, highlighting the scarcity of research on human trafficking and religion from the perspective of victims. The findings of the systematic review also point to a deficit in research on human trafficking and religion in Indonesia.

The current research focuses on the realities of human trafficking and religion in Timor-East Nusa Tenggara, where human trafficking is a significant problem in the region. Applied field research, encompassing in-depth interviews with 19 participants, was conducted to find explicate the narratives of trafficking victims who work as migrant workers. Participants engaged in Indonesian migrant work, especially in informal sectors like domestic work and palm oil labour, are vulnerable to human trafficking. The traps are observable throughout the recruitment to the repatriation process. As migrant workers, participants are alienated from their families and a way of life that has influenced their identity. They must adjust to new surroundings, meals, job culture, and living habits. Furthermore, participants feel alienated from themselves due to the exploitation and abuse they endure, leaving them in a state of powerlessness and lacking any self-agency. During their employment, participants were forced into a position where they must obey their employers and agents.

Participants experience estrangement not only from their families and themselves but also from the community. Reintegrating into home and family after being a victim of human trafficking requires the participant to make new life changes. Communities that are unaware of human trafficking fail to appreciate the misery and brutality that participants face despite their physical presence in society. The community's lack of awareness is seen in the absence of public facilities geared to aiding victims of trafficking. It is critical to strengthen protections for Indonesian migrant workers, particularly domestic workers.

Human trafficking has a profound impact on victims, their families, and communities. Understanding trauma and healing in the context of human trafficking necessitates a comprehensive approach. The victim's experience has an impact on both his or her family and the community. Similarly, their family and community influence the victims' coping mechanisms. The victims' recovery depends on the acceptance of their family and community. Family acceptance and public awareness have influenced the victims' readiness to speak out. Advocacy for victims should be coordinated with that for families and communities. The three are intertwined and inseparable.

9.1.2 Religious Studies

Religion had a pivotal influence on how the participants, as victims of human trafficking, dealt with their exploitation and experience of violence. Religion plays an important role in all aspects of the participants' coping mechanisms: the event, coping tools, meaning-making processes, and post-traumatic growth. Religion is an available and accessible coping method that aligns with the participants' belief systems. The current study integrates religious analysis into human trafficking research to explain the role of religion in the participants' coping mechanisms.

This research shows that human trafficking in Timor is also a religious issue because of the central role religion plays in all aspects connected to it. Working as a migrant worker is an agency within poverty that is also driven by religious understanding. Participants interpret working away from home as a migrant worker as God's way of helping them gain a better life. This understanding is not in line with the reality experienced because participants experience various levels of exploitation and violence. It is a fragile agency.

Participants utilised religious coping mechanisms to endure exploitation and violence. Prayer, singing religious music, the prayer team, and dreams are religious coping techniques that allow individuals to express their stress, seek guidance, and maintain hope. Religion also plays an essential role in meaning-making, helping participants name and interpret the suffering they experience. Most participants understand the suffering they experience as something personal between themselves and God: suffering as a Divine plan, something that is just accepted without needing to be questioned. However, some participants understand the suffering they experience as related to human trafficking mafia, which deliberately and systematically makes

the recruitment process of Indonesian migrant workers vulnerable to human trafficking. Suffering is understood as the result of a system that is deliberately built to benefit the owners of capital by exploiting migrant workers. Active involvement in advocacy against human trafficking helps participants understand the suffering they experience as being a result of a system that deliberately exploits.

The participants' understanding of suffering is tied to God, which aids their growth in the aftermath of working as migrant workers. Experiencing God at times of adversity can boost people's resilience. The participants rejoined their families and communities, but some decided to hide their experience of exploitation and violence. They attended religious services but declined to discuss their experiences as victims of human trafficking. Some claimed that God intended for their suffering and physical disabilities to serve as proof of the truth of human trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara.

Furthermore, participants reported finding a new purpose in adapting to their current position, working, and developing tactics for living independently. They respect life, give thanks for God's blessings, and have a deep relationship with God. Despite their being exploited and violently treated as human trafficking victims, God never abandoned them. God's provision is manifested in the families' acceptance, their reintegration into the community, their increased stability, and hope for a future with God.

However, the signs of progress in the participants do not correspond to their readiness to actively engage in human trafficking advocacy. The PTG domain prioritises personal development over societal improvement. When suffering is viewed as divine punishment, personal experiences of suffering become hidden narratives that are not shared with others.

Religion has a significant influence on participants' coping techniques, but it also plays an ambivalent function. Religion shapes people's attitudes towards an understanding of suffering. When religious significance is seen to have a negative impact on growth, it should be questioned. The interpretation of religious meaning is determined by the individual's understanding of a certain event. As a result, criticising pre-existing religious meanings or cultivating new religious viewpoints necessitates new experiences.

This study underscores the transformative potential of advocacy in the context of religion and coping. It proposes advocacy as a form of transformative Christian education that can benefit not just individuals, but also families and communities. By providing a platform for victims, families, and communities to voice, appraise, and understand their suffering experiences, advocacy can help evaluate and potentially redefine contemporary religious meanings. This approach aims to harness the power of religion to empower victims and their families, and to foster communities that are knowledgeable about human trafficking and can provide support to victims.

9.2 Opportunities for Further Research

9.2.1 Themes

The findings of this study shed light on the interconnectedness of trauma in the context of human trafficking. The participants' terrible experiences impacted their families and communities. Similarly, the participants' post-traumatic growth is linked to their family and community. Additional research could focus on family and community perspectives. Future research could examine the perspectives of the second generation, the offspring of trafficking victims. Using an intergenerational trauma approach, such research would seek to investigate the impact of intergenerational trauma on children of trafficking victims, as well as the role of religion in their coping strategies.

Considering the significant number of human trafficking cases in East Nusa Tenggara and the considerable influence of religion on how people react, future research could take a community trauma approach, in which the community's stance on human trafficking victims is investigated, the community's services for victims identified, and the role of religion in this setting is considered.

9.2.2 Methods

In order to investigate the narratives of individuals who have experienced human trafficking, this study decided to use the semi-structured, in-depth interview method. During the interview, it was observed that the participants encountered difficulties to effectively articulate their comprehension of suffering. They struggled to articulate the significance of suffering through language. Due to their lack of familiarity with philosophical language and complex thinking

concepts, participants had difficulty conveying and verbalising their emotions and understanding.

The interviewing process found that people used religious song to cope with and handle difficult situations. Songs allow the participant to express their emotions. Songs help individuals construct meaning, assisting them in comprehending and explaining the significance of pain. This research could serve as a foundation for using song as a method or instrument in conducting in-depth interviews within trauma studies.

The findings also serve as a reminder that religion does not merely emphasise cognitive expression, which is the structured expression of religion in words. However, in certain settings, such as this study, or when adverse lived events impair a person's ability to explain their feelings, religion is represented in a variety of ways, including singing, music, dance, painting, and other forms of art. As a result, using religious research methods that correspond to the participants' particular circumstances would help them express their emotions and comprehend them better.

9.3 Closing Personal Reflection

The central question driving this research is, how do victims perceive and make sense of the suffering inflicted upon them through human trafficking? Additionally, how do they understand and experience the process of self-healing, and does their perception of their pain contribute to their healing journey? This investigation leads to the following conclusion: human trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara is deeply intertwined with religious issues. Religion is pivotal to the coping strategies of the participants, playing a central role across all stages of coping. It shapes their experiences, coping mechanisms, interpretation of events, and post-traumatic growth.

Amidst poverty, weak healthcare facilities, limited educational prospects, and a lack of state protections for victims of human trafficking, religion emerges as a primary source of healing. Religion is a readily available and accessible belief system. It is linked to several aspects of human existence, including cognitive, emotional, and relational components. Furthermore, religion encompasses an individual's personal relationship with God and has an impact on the wider community.

Moreover, this research highlights the complex and often ambivalent role of religion in situations of human trafficking. The data showed that religion has a healing role, but it also showed that religion has a wounding role. The ambiguity of religion emphasises the significance of dialogue between grassroots perspectives, critical scholarly religious analysis, and other fields of knowledge. This dialogue encourages religious communities to maximise the healing role religion while critiquing and addressing the wounding role.

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Appendix 1

Interview Guideline

Human Trafficking and Theology of Suffering: Lessons for Christian Education

Main research question:

The main research question is thus formed as follows: How does religion affect the suffering and healing of victims of human trafficking, and what are the implications for empowerment and prevention through Christian education?

In order to address this main question, a series of sub-questions were identified to guide the research:

1. What is the role of religion in the suffering experiences of the victims of human trafficking?
2. What role does religion play in victims' coping with human trafficking?
3. What is the role of religion in the way victims of human trafficking perceive suffering, and how does the perspective influence the process of growth in the aftermath?
4. What is the role of Christian education in human trafficking, based on victims' experiences?

Participant:

1. Ten direct victims/survivors, i.e., persons who have personally experienced human trafficking.
2. Five indirect victims/survivors, i.e., relatives of deceased victims of human trafficking.
3. The member of Evangelical church in Timor

Key Theme	Important factor	Details
Identity	Personal identity	Status in family, the role in family, education status, religious status in church, job, daily activity.
	Family Identity	social status, religious status in church.
	Village map	School, market, springs, field, transportation access.
Recruitment, placement, and	Experience before become Indonesia Migrant Worker (IMW).	Reason, the recruitment process, permission status from family, transfer process.

repatriation process.		
	Experience as IMW and the process to become victims of human trafficking.	Placement process, Job contract, exploitation, violence, rescue process.
	Experience after repatriation	Repatriation process, legal status in Police or court, health intervention, trauma intervention, family acceptance, social acceptance.
Experience of exploitation and violence	Physical violence Psychological abuse Sexual violence Economic violence Social restrictions experienced Religious restrictions	Causes of violence, the tools used, when the violence occurred, how often the violence occurred, the perceived impact of the violence, whether there was an attempt to retaliate, the most difficult situation experienced, the most painful experienced.
Coping process	Coping tools	Activities done when remembering family, activities done when under stress, feelings after doing these activities.
	Meaning of suffering	What is the meaning of suffering, the source of that meaning, the reasons for experiencing suffering.
	Most stronger experience of hope	Reasons to persevere during difficult times
Current life	Themselves	Self-understanding, current condition, current economic resources, daily activities.
	Family	Family relationship and acceptance
	Community	Community acceptance, involvement in community and church activities, relationships with the community.
	God	Relationship with God, anger or disappointment with God.

Appendix 2

Research Permission Letter

	GEREJA MASEHI INJILI DI TIMOR (GBM GPI dan Anggota PGI) MAJELIS SINODE Jln. S. K. Lerik Kota Baru Telp. (0380) 8438423, Fax. 831182, E-mail: Infokom.gmit@yahoo.com, info@sinodegmit.org Website: www.sinodegmit.or.id
SURAT IJIN PENELITIAN Nomor : 967/GMIT/I/F/Sept/2020 Tanggal: 15 September 2020	
Dari :	Majelis Sinode GMIT, di Kupang
Diberikan kepada :	Liliya F. K. Wetangterah, M.Th
M a k s u d :	Mengadakan penelitian untuk proses tugas akhir studi Doctor Theology berjudul PERDAGANGAN ORANG DAN THEOLOGY PENDERITAAN di wilayah pelayanan GMIT di pulau Timor
Lokasi penelitian :	Wilayah Pelayanan GMIT di Pulau Timor
Keterangan :	Surat ijin ini diberikan berdasarkan surat permohonan Ijin pra penelitian dari Fakultas Agama dan Teologi – Vrije University Amsterdam - Belanda, Tanggal 8 Juli 2020, dengan catatan : 1. Yang bersangkutan wajib melaporkan diri di Klasis yang akan dituju untuk lokasi penelitian. 2. Segala biaya yang timbul akibat kegiatan ini menjadi tanggung jawab yang bersangkutan. Demikian surat ijin ini dibuat dan diberikan kepada yang bersangkutan untuk dipergunakan sebagaimana mestinya.
Majelis Sinode Gereja Maschi Injili di Timor	
 Ketua, Pdt. Dr. Mery L. Y. Kolimon	 Sekretaris, Pdt. Yusuf Nakmofa, M.Th
Tembusan: disampaikan dengan hormat kepada: 1. Majelis Klasis Harian se GMIT 2. Rector of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam ✓ 3. Head of the Faculty of Religion and Theology, Vrije University, The Amsterdam Masing – masing di tempat.	
<small>Susunan Majelis Sinode GMIT Periode 2020-2023 : Ketua: Pdt. Dr. Mery L. Y. Kolimon; Wakil Ketua : Pdt. Gayus D. Polin, S.Th; Sekretaris: Pdt. Yusuf Nakmofa, M.Th; Wakil Sekretaris: Pdt. Elisa Mapiani, M.Si; Bendahara : Pnt. Mariana Rusmono-Rohi Bire, S.Sos, MM. Anggota-Anggota: Pnt. Deddy Manafe, SH, M.Hum; Pnt. Lecky F. Koli, S.TP, M.Si; Pnt. Dr. Godlif Neonufa, MT; Pnt. Ir. Fary Djemi Francis, MM</small>	

Scanned with CamScanner

Appendix 3

Example of coding process:

- *First stage: Line by line coding*

ATLAS.ti Groups Report "V. shape hair like man"

⊖ 1:15 ¶ 112 in maria.docx

Content:

when we went to the master's house, we cut our hair, then learned to wash clothes, clean the house, it was only two days, we cut our hair like a boy, before that we had a medical test first.

⊖ 6:6 ¶ 34 – 35 in Leona Translation.docx

Content:

in Jakarta we learned how to operate electronic devices, how to cook in a rice cooker.

We sleep at night using a sponge, the room was big, like a church. There were many east Nusa Tenggara people, more than 20 people. the bathroom was mixed. Meals and drinks are measured so that we are accustomed to being at the employer's house. our hair was cut like a man, did not matter you like or not, its obligation. From Jakarta, we continue to Kuala Lumpur.

⊖ 11:6 ¶ 32 in Omri.docx

Content:

we were taken to the office, then to the shelter, it was big, we slept on the floor using only mats, there were also old ones there, the room was big without a partition, we showered two or three people at once, our hair was cut like men Boys, everyone has to get their hair cut, so that they don't wake up in the morning busy with their hair, cut the Kupang once, and in Malaysia once.

⊖ 11:29 ¶ 176 in Omri.docx

Content:

sometimes if you have a headache, but look at 4 o'clock you still have to wake up and go down already, wake up from work, don't comb your hair because the hair has been cut, go to the bathroom. but I was determined to go home with the money. I have a two year contract so I go home, the employer is a good person if you speak softly.

⊖ 12:25 ¶ 183 – 185 in erika.docx

Content:

If we are sick, no one takes care of us, I know at first we were 26 people, it was an old factory, the employer must have disposed of the dead Carawan, the employer told me that if I died he would throw it into the sea. I'm hurt, I'm helpless, I want to die.

We wake up at 4 am, sleep at 11 pm. at 4 in the morning we wake up cleaning the house, at 8 in the morning we go to the swallow's nest factory, work until 4 in the afternoon, we go home to work again cleaning the house. During those 11 months I did not receive a salary, did not buy anything, took a shower without soap, I was completely black, we only rinsed water, my hair was also cut short.

At first my hair reached my ass, but it was cut with a knife, cut irregularly, the female employer told her brother to cut my hair, I cried and screamed, the other children were shocked, I could only surrender because I had no choice.

⊖ 12:30 ¶ 215 in erika.docx

Content:

I said I was like everyone else, they thought it wasn't me, I was thin, only bones left, no more hair, until the house all the family cried, I said it's you guys who want me to go so look at me.

- *Result of clustering: six categories*

ATLAS.ti Report

1. Rekrutmen-pleacement

Created: 01/07/21 by liliya wetangterah, Modified: 13/12/23 by liliya wetangterah

Members:

○ accepted the situation ○ Attempt to run out ● body amputated ○ cheated by people ○ debt as a mode of recruitment ● domestic violence ○ Family support
○ feel desperate ○ feel useful ○ feeling down ○ feeling useless ○ forgiveness ○ Identity ○ lost communication with family ○ Mad or blame at self ○
poSittive effect ○ Pride ○ Process of repatriation ○ Process of placement ○ Process of recruitment ○ Process of transport ○ Reason for left ○ Reason to
return home ○ recruiter as a supervisor/foreman ○ release process ● Sexual abuse ○ sick ○ sick due over thinking ○ sleep on the back porch ○ Surrender ●
V. shape hair like man ● forbidden for go to church ● forbidden for have cell phone and make phone call ● forbidden to go out side. ● Identity detention ●
Identity forgery ● inappropriate place to live ● insufficient rest time ● Locked up ● low salary/unstable salary ● V.not paid salary ● Overload work ●
physical abuse ● psychological abuse ● salary deduction ● Salary held by employer ● work overtime ○ Violence effect ○ way to release ○ Working
conditions

2. violence & exploitation

Created: 02/01/24 by liliya wetangterah, Modified: 18/01/24 by liliya wetangterah

Members:

● V. shape hair like man ● forbidden for go to church ● forbidden for have cell phone and make phone call ● Identity detention ● Identity forgery ●
inappropriate place to live ● insufficient rest time ● Locked up ● low salary/unstable salary ● V.not paid salary ● Overload work ● physical abuse ●
psychological abuse ● salary deduction ● Salary held by employer ● work overtime ○ Violence effect

3. Spirituals source of coping

Created: 01/07/21 by liliya wetangterah, Modified: 05/04/24 by liliya wetangterah

Members:

○ Cry ○ Ct gardening ○ CT Pray ○ CT raising chickens ○ CT Song ○ CT Weaving ○ Dream ○ Family support ○ favorite song ○ Important of advocacy ○
Pastor ○ Prayer Tim ● Reason for survive ○ Sharing with other victims ○ support system

4. Perspective about God

Created: 25/06/21 by liliya wetangterah, Modified: 18/01/24 by liliya wetangterah

Members:

● ask God for help ○ Associate the Jesus Wounded Risen ● associate with God Suffering ● Coping meaning ○ Get closer to God ● God control life ○ God
is a friend ○ God is my father ○ God is the source of strength ○ God provide better future ○ God provide revenge ○ God provide the need ○ God
times/hope ○ God's inclusion ○ independent life ○ Jesus as husband ○ Karma concept ○ lesson learn ○ Meaning ○ Meaning behind the accident ○ Only
remember good experience ○ Prayer Tim ●
Suffering as a test from God ○ suffering as punishment from God ○ suffering is challenge from God ○ Suffering is from God ○ Surrender

5.Perspective about suffering

Created: 26/07/21 by liliya wetangterah, Modified: 18/01/24 by liliya wetangterah

Members:

○ Get closer to God ● God control life ○ God is a friend ○ God is my father ○ God is the source of strength ○ God provide better future ○ God provide
revenge ○ God provide the need ○ God times/hope ○ God's inclusion ○ Jesus as husband ● Suffering as a test from God ○ suffering as punishment from
God ○ suffering is challenge from God ○ Suffering is from God

6.Growth In aftermath

Created: 01/07/21 by liliya wetangterah, Modified: 18/01/24 by liliya wetangterah

Members:

○ accepted the situation ○ courage to speak ○ Do not give up ○ economically independent ○ feel useful ○ grateful ○ Hope for future ○ Pride ○ Serve as the
gratitude ○ Sharing ○ Sharing with other victims ○ Transform

