

Constructivism in Indonesia-Malaysia Relations on the One Channel System

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Abstract

This article explores the implementation of the One Channel System (OCS) in Indonesia-Malaysia bilateral labor migration policy through the lens of constructivism. This study examines how international norms on migrant worker protection, particularly those outlined in ILO conventions, are internalized in migration policies, as well as key challenges in the effective implementation of OCS, such as institutional coordination, economic interests, and technological barriers. Using a qualitative approach, the research analyzes the tension between normative commitments and material considerations faced by both countries. The findings show that while Indonesia prioritizes the protection of its migrant workers, Malaysia's reliance on informal recruitment mechanisms like the Maid Online System (SMO) weakens the achievement of OCS goals. This duality highlights the limitations in norm socialization and the challenges of aligning global labor standards with domestic realities. This study contributes to the understanding of constructivist theory in migration policy by emphasizing the intersection of international norms, state identity, and pragmatic realities. The significance of this research lies in its ability to provide policy recommendations to improve the implementation of OCS and its contribution to the development of constructivism in migration policy, showing how international norms and state identity interact in labor migration governance.

Keywords: *Constructivism, One Channel System, Migration Policy, Labor Protection, International Norms.*



A. INTRODUCTION

International labor migration has become a critical factor in Indonesia-Malaysia bilateral relations, particularly due to Indonesia's status as a major labor-exporting country and Malaysia's position as a primary destination. According to BP2MI (2024) between January and August 2024, Malaysia hosted 36,500 Indonesian migrant workers, primarily in domestic roles such as household helpers and caregivers. While these roles significantly contribute to Malaysia's household economy, they are frequently marred by human rights violations, exploitation, and inadequate wages, straining the bilateral relationship. Kompas reports that, in 2022, Malaysia hosted approximately 1.66 million of the 2.7 million Indonesian migrant workers worldwide (Al-Ayubby, 2024).

Indonesia and Malaysia have long maintained close ties in the field of labor migration, with Indonesia being one of the largest labor-exporting countries in Southeast Asia and Malaysia serving as a primary destination. However, a significant challenge remains the prevalence of illegal recruitment channels, which often lead to human rights violations, exploitation, and substandard working conditions (ILO, 2011). According to an IOM (2023) report, more than 30% of Indonesian migrant

workers in Malaysia in 2022 were engaged in informal or undocumented employment, exposing them to risks such as excessive wage deductions and abuse.

Bilateral labor protection policies often face implementation challenges, particularly in harmonizing technical frameworks. For instance, Malaysia continues to utilize the Maid Online System (SMO), which contradicts the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that prioritizes the One Channel System (OCS) as the sole legal recruitment mechanism (Pramudyani, 2022). This highlights the lack of enforcement and coordination between the two countries to fully integrate protective labor systems.

Moreover, limited awareness of labor rights among migrant workers poses another critical issue. Harahap (2023) found that many prospective workers, particularly in rural areas, lack knowledge about the importance of using formal channels, allowing illegal agents to maintain their dominance in the migrant labor market. On Malaysia's side, the duality in its labor policies—balancing economic priorities with international human rights obligations—further complicates the implementation of OCS (Oktaviandono & Syahputra, 2021).

The One Channel System (OCS) was established as a bilateral mechanism to create a safer, more organized, and transparent labor migration process, aiming to reduce illegal recruitment and enhance worker protection. By integrating all placement processes through an online platform, the OCS connects Indonesian ministries and agencies with Malaysian authorities, ensuring a monitored and legal recruitment pathway (BP2MI, 2022). However, the implementation of the OCS has faced numerous challenges, including Malaysia's continued use of alternative systems such as the System Maid Online (SMO), which undermines the MoU stipulating OCS as the sole legal placement mechanism. This alternative system allows for direct recruitment by converting visitor visas into work visas, increasing workers' vulnerability to exploitation and complicating monitoring efforts by the Indonesian government.

Despite the signing of an MoU in 2022 to reinforce OCS implementation, various obstacles remain. These include coordination issues between institutions, resistance from illegal recruitment agents, and limited awareness among migrant workers about the benefits of formal channels. Institutional differences between Indonesia and Malaysia also hinder effective implementation, with Malaysia prioritizing efficiency and affordability over adherence to protection norms (BP2MI, 2022).

The OCS was designed to integrate the entire placement process through an online system connecting Indonesian ministries and agencies with relevant Malaysian authorities. However, the integration of information technology systems between the two countries still faces technical and coordination challenges, which can disrupt the smooth operation of placement processes and monitoring efforts (Ajeng, 2021).

From a constructivist perspective, the OCS reflects the internalization of global norms regarding labor protection and human rights. This cooperation highlights the influence of shared norms, values, and identity in shaping bilateral relations. However, practical and administrative challenges, coupled with differing national priorities, continue to limit the system's effectiveness. Strengthening institutional capacity, harmonizing policies, and ensuring robust monitoring mechanisms are critical to achieving the OCS's objectives and ensuring sustainable protection for Indonesian Migrant Workers.

This research fills that gap by showing how the values, norms, and identities of both countries shape their migration policies and how international norms are applied in more formal policies, offering new insights into how the bilateral relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia is influenced not only by material aspects but also by normative interactions that develop through the internalization of global labor protection standards.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of international relations traditionally focused on material factors like military power and economic strength. However, constructivism, introduced by Alexander Wendt in *Social Theory of International Politics*, argues that international relations are shaped not only by material forces but by ideas, norms, and social constructs developed through state interactions. Wendt (2003) states, "anarchy is what states make of it," meaning that state behavior is shaped by perceptions and interactions, not a fixed structure.

Wendt's theory categorizes inter-state relations into three cultures of anarchy: Hobbesian (conflict-driven), Lockean (mutual recognition), and Kantian (cooperation). This framework shows that state behavior evolves as norms and relationships change. Martha Finnemore builds on this, highlighting how norms and identities shape state actions. She argues that states act not only based on material interests but also norms that define legitimacy in the international system. Finnemore (1996) explains that norms evolve through interactions, influencing foreign policy and driving change when states internalize new standards, even when they conflict with short-term interests.

In terms of migration policy, constructivism offers insights into how international norms like migrant worker protection are adopted and implemented through state interactions. Finnemore & Sikkink (1998) describe how states internalize international norms, such as human rights, through socialization. For Indonesia and Malaysia, migration policies are shaped by economic needs and international norms demanding better protection for migrant workers.

State Identity Theory, developed by Schimmelfennig (2010), shows that a country's identity, shaped by social norms within the international community, influences policy. Indonesia, which identifies with human rights and migrant worker

protection, promotes policies that protect its citizens, while Malaysia faces conflicts between international norms and its economic reliance on cheap labor from migrants. Social norms also play a crucial role in the implementation of migration policies. In Indonesia, there is strong awareness of migrant worker protection, while in Malaysia, despite awareness of international norms, migrant workers are often seen only as economic assets. Social Norm Theory (Nye & Keohane, 1971) helps explain how social norms can support or hinder the acceptance of international policies.

Studies by Meyer et al. (1997) and Checkel (2005) further explain how international norms, like migrant worker protection, are internalized through complex social processes involving both global norms and local interactions. Risse et al. (1999) show that countries with a strong identity in human rights or worker protection are more likely to adopt these norms, even when political and economic barriers exist.

Integrating constructivist theory and state identity, this research reveals how Indonesia and Malaysia internalize international norms in their migration policies. It highlights how norms and social dynamics influence not only domestic policies but also bilateral relations. The One Channel System (OCS) policy reflects ASEAN's commitment to safe labor migration and workers' rights, but faces challenges in policy implementation due to gaps in perceptions and technical barriers. In the research on Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs) in Malaysia, several previous studies have identified significant challenges faced by migrant workers, especially in terms of legal and social protection during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mabrush et al. (2024) in her study revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the aspirations and job opportunities for Kangean migrant workers in Malaysia. Despite the global uncertainty caused by the pandemic, migrant workers remained determined to pursue employment, whether through legal or illegal channels. This study highlights the role of economic factors as the primary driver for sustaining migration aspirations, despite significant barriers, including stricter international travel policies. This research employs the theory of dependency to examine the relationship between the dependency of migrant workers on Malaysia and their efforts to endure difficult circumstances.

In line with this, Nugrahaningsih et al. (2022) in her study discusses the role of paradiplomacy in the protection of Indonesian migrant workers during the pandemic. This study found that Malaysia's implementation of social distancing and lockdown measures resulted in the mass repatriation of Indonesian migrant workers, but the protection of these workers at the provincial level in West Kalimantan was still not optimal. Nugrahaningsih emphasizes the importance of cooperation between local governments in Indonesia and the destination country, in this case, Malaysia, to improve migrant worker protection. This research uses a paradiplomacy approach to explain the lack of communication and coordination between local governments and

non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as the insufficient commitment from both parties in addressing the challenges that arose during the pandemic.

Additionally, Alfajri M.A & Maulidia (2019) in his study identifies major barriers to the provision of social protection for Indonesian women migrant workers in Malaysia. Alfajri highlights the legal barriers, migration governance issues, and Malaysian immigration policies that do not fully support the protection of migrant workers, especially women workers. This study also emphasizes the importance of a gender perspective in analyzing social protection issues, as female migrant workers often face greater difficulties in accessing their rights, including limited legal protection in the destination country.

Elisabeth Dewi & Yazid (2017) study also provides insights into the challenges faced in managing remittances from Indonesian migrant workers. Dewi reveals that although remittances have the potential to improve the welfare of migrant workers' families, the management and distribution systems are still marred by opaque practices and high transfer fees. Dewi also criticizes the strong patriarchal culture in the use of remittances, which often restricts the financial freedom of female migrant workers. This research offers an important perspective on how the management of remittances is not only related to economics but also to social and cultural structures that influence the decisions and freedom of female migrant workers.

Muhammad Anam et al. (2022), in his study explores the role of non-state actors in the protection of Indonesian migrant workers, particularly through the diaspora diplomacy of Muhammadiyah. This study demonstrates that although diplomacy between Indonesia and Malaysia faces challenges, non-governmental organizations such as Muhammadiyah play an important role in supporting migrant workers through advocacy and mediation. Zahrul Anam highlights that diplomacy involving non-state actors can provide more effective protection for migrant workers, especially when national policies often do not align with the interests of migrant workers.

Meanwhile, Khurun'in (2016) in her study shows how domestic worker protection movements in Malaysia are formed through transnational activism by various civil society organizations. This study highlights how the collective identity of these movements is fragmented and shaped by human rights claims and gender equality, with a focus on the conditions of female migrant workers in the domestic sector. Khurun'in introduces the concept of transnational activism as a way to address the issues faced by migrant workers, which are often overlooked in national policies.

This study offers significant novelty by applying a constructivist perspective to analyze the One Channel System (OCS) within the context of Indonesia-Malaysia bilateral relations. While previous studies have largely focused on the economic and practical challenges faced by migrant workers, such as Mabrurah (2024) highlighting the impact of the pandemic on migrant workers' aspirations, or Nugrahaningsih (2022) examining the role of paradiplomacy in migrant worker protection, few have

discussed how international norms regarding migrant worker protection are internalized in bilateral policies.

Another novelty lies in the in-depth constructivist analysis of the practical challenges in implementing the OCS, including institutional coordination, resistance from illegal agents, and limitations in technological infrastructure, which have not been adequately addressed in previous literature. For example, Alfajri's (2019) research focuses more on legal barriers and social protection for female migrant workers, while Dewi & Yazid (2017) discuss the management of migrant remittances. However, this study contributes by linking constructivist theory to the implementation of the OCS, emphasizing how international norms concerning migrant worker protection can be more effectively applied through more coordinated and technology-driven policies. Thus, this research fills an important gap in the existing literature, offering a new perspective on how international norms influence bilateral policies in regulating migrant worker protection.

This research offers a new contribution in understanding the SPSK through the lens of constructivism, which emphasizes how international norms, state identity, and normative commitments interact in influencing migration policy between Indonesia and Malaysia. While many previous studies have dealt more with the practical and technical aspects, this research provides new insights into how social interactions between the two countries and the internalization of international norms can influence the success or failure of policy implementation such as SPSK. By providing a more in-depth analysis of the duality of commitment between economic interests and migrant worker protection norms, this research not only enriches the existing literature, but also provides practical policy recommendations to improve the implementation of a more effective and humane bilateral migration policy.

Significantly, this study not only provides policy recommendations to improve the implementation of the OCS, focusing on strengthening institutional capacity, improving technological infrastructure, and raising awareness among migrant workers, but also has broader implications for ASEAN countries facing similar challenges in labor migration management. These findings can offer a better framework for managing safe and orderly labor migration by strengthening bilateral coordination and improving understanding of international norms. Additionally, this study expands the application of constructivist theory in labor migration governance by showing how norm internalization can strengthen bilateral cooperation and improve migrant worker protection, a perspective that remains underexplored in existing international migration studies.

The importance of constructivism in this study lies in its ability to explain how international norms regarding migrant worker protection are internalized in the bilateral relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia. From a constructivist perspective, migration policies are not just about practical outcomes like reducing illegal migrant workers but also about how both countries negotiate and form a shared

identity that influences policy decisions. In this case, the two countries might have different national interests—Malaysia prioritizing economic needs and access to cheap labor, while Indonesia emphasizes protecting migrant workers' rights.

Through constructivism, we can see how global norms such as migrant worker protection are internalized in the OCS policy and how this is influenced by the roles both countries play in shaping the policy. The collective identity between Indonesia and Malaysia, which develops through their social interactions, will affect how international norms are translated into concrete policies. For example, even though both countries agree on the importance of migrant worker protection, challenges arise in integrating these global norms with national policy realities and economic priorities.

Constructivism also enriches migration policy by offering deeper insights into how norms and identities play a role in policy changes that are more value-driven rather than purely pragmatic. In the case of the OCS, while the policy is implemented to improve migrant worker recruitment systems and reduce illegal practices, the main challenge faced is how this policy is internalized by the various actors involved, including the Indonesian government, the Malaysian government, and migration recruitment agencies.

Constructivism provides a richer understanding of the bilateral relationship, as it does not solely focus on administrative processes or technical aspects of the policy but also on the social and cultural complexities that govern how the policy is accepted, understood, and adapted by the involved parties. In this case, the study reveals that sustainable migration policies depend not only on strong policy instruments but also on the social and cultural agreements between the sending and receiving countries on migrant worker protection.

Thus, the constructivist approach not only provides a new perspective in understanding migration policy but also enriches the handling of migrant migration issues by introducing the normative dimension that is often overlooked in the practical approaches prevalent in previous studies. In earlier studies, migration issues were often seen as administrative or economic, with little attention to the social processes that shape migration policies. However, through a constructivist lens, this study shows how international norms and national identities not only influence policy decisions but also play a crucial role in successful policy implementation, such as the OCS, ultimately providing more effective protection for migrant workers.

C. METHOD

The descriptive qualitative approach is a research method aimed at providing an in-depth description of a phenomenon based on participants' experiences or perspectives, without manipulating variables or seeking complex causal relationships. This approach emphasizes the collection of rich data from various sources, such as interviews, documents, and observations, to understand phenomena within their

specific social, cultural, or political contexts. Data analysis is conducted thematically to identify patterns or key themes, using an interpretative approach where the researcher serves as the primary instrument (Cresswell, 2009).

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to deeply explore and describe the social phenomena associated with the development of the One Channel System (OCS) policy within the context of Indonesia-Malaysia bilateral relations. The primary data source is secondary data, including official government documents (bilateral agreements, national policies), academic journals, NGO reports, and statistical data related to domestic migrant workers.

Document analysis is utilized to identify key information relevant to constructivist theory, such as the role of global norms in shaping policies, the identities of countries as labor senders and receivers, and patterns of inter-state interaction. The data is analyzed with a focus on grouping major themes, such as labor protection norms and bilateral cooperation. Data validity is ensured through document triangulation from various credible sources to maintain accuracy and consistency. The descriptive approach is used to systematically illustrate the phenomena, providing a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the OCS policy.

D. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1. One Channel System: Background and Implementation

The One Channel System (OCS) represents a collaborative effort between Indonesia and Malaysia to address challenges in the placement and protection of Indonesian migrant workers, particularly in the domestic sector. It was developed in response to longstanding issues such as illegal recruitment, human trafficking, and inadequate legal protection. Previously, informal recruitment channels dominated the process, often leading to exploitation, unpaid wages, workplace abuse, and human rights violations. The OCS aligns with international labor norms, including the ILO Conventions, and global pressure for safer and more transparent recruitment mechanisms.

The OCS centralizes recruitment and placement processes, integrating digital technology to enhance transparency, auditability, and efficiency. This system includes official registration, training, certification, clear employment contracts, and monitoring throughout the workers' tenure in Malaysia. It also aims to reduce recruitment costs inflated by the involvement of illegal agents. Despite these advancements, implementation faces significant challenges, including coordination gaps between Indonesia and Malaysia, resistance from illegal recruitment agents, and low awareness among migrant workers about the benefits of formal channels. Technological infrastructure limitations, particularly in rural areas where many prospective workers reside, further hinder progress.

Indonesia and Malaysia have distinct institutional structures and national priorities. In both countries, numerous agencies are involved in managing migrant

workers, such as Indonesia's Ministry of Manpower (Kemnaker), the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Agency (BP2MI), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, these agencies often operate with poorly integrated procedures, leading to inconsistencies in implementation. Monitoring migrant workers frequently faces obstacles due to the lack of data interoperability between the two countries. Additionally, policies are often misaligned during execution, evident in differences in recruitment procedures and oversight mechanisms.

Illegal recruitment agents gain significant profits from unofficial channels by bypassing formal costs associated with training, certification, and documentation (ILO, 2018). The One Channel System (OCS) restricts these agents' operations by establishing government-supervised formal pathways, prompting resistance as they seek to protect their economic interests. In Indonesia, illegal agents exploit prospective migrant workers' lack of awareness about the benefits of OCS, offering seemingly faster and cheaper informal routes. In Malaysia, the high demand for low-cost labor drives employers to continue relying on illegal agents, who provide workers outside formal processes, often involving exploitative practices.

Indonesia also faces challenges with technological infrastructure, particularly in rural areas where many prospective migrant workers originate (Hidayat et al., 2023). Limited internet access and inadequate digital facilities hinder these workers from registering through the formal OCS channels. Moreover, the integration of information technology systems between Indonesia and Malaysia remains suboptimal, with differing technological standards and capacities. As a result, OCS registration often requires manual assistance for prospective workers in remote areas. Additionally, reporting and monitoring systems between the two countries frequently experience delays or lack synchronization, reducing transparency and accountability.

From a constructivist perspective, the OCS reflects the adoption of global norms regarding migrant worker protection and human rights. However, the practical implementation reveals gaps between theoretical aspirations and reality. Malaysia's continued use of the Maid Online System (SMO), which contradicts the OCS framework, demonstrates the incomplete internalization of these norms. While Indonesia prioritizes worker protection, Malaysia emphasizes economic efficiency, leading to policy misalignment. Dualism in Malaysia's policymaking where the Ministry of Human Resources supports the OCS but the Ministry of Home Affairs maintains the SMO exacerbates these inconsistencies.

Constructivism posits that norms are internalized through socialization and interaction, yet this process has been limited in the OCS context. Many Indonesian migrant workers, particularly those in rural areas, lack awareness of the system's benefits and opt for informal channels perceived as faster and cheaper. Resistance from illegal recruitment agents, who face reduced profits under the OCS, further underscores the challenges of socializing labor protection norms. Coordination gaps

and technological disparities between the two nations also impede the system's integration and effectiveness.

While constructivism provides valuable insights into the formation of policies like the OCS, it falls short in addressing material and pragmatic challenges. For instance, Malaysia's preference for economic efficiency, evidenced by its continued use of the SMO, highlights the dominance of material interests over normative commitments. Additionally, constructivism struggles to account for rapid policy changes, such as Indonesia's temporary suspension of migrant worker deployment in 2022 (Rodani, 2022). These limitations suggest the need to supplement constructivist analysis with other perspectives, such as realism to address power asymmetries and material barriers, and liberalism to explore the role of institutions in fostering cooperation.

Bridging the gap between theory and practice requires integrated efforts. Enhancing technological capacity, improving inter-agency coordination, and expanding socialization efforts targeting workers, recruiters, and employers are essential steps. A stronger bilateral commitment to aligning national priorities with international norms can ensure that the OCS achieves its goals of protecting migrant workers and fostering a more humane labor migration system. By addressing these challenges, the OCS can serve as a model for sustainable labor governance in Southeast Asia.

2. Martha Finnemore's Constructivism in the One Channel System

Constructivism, as described by Finnemore, p. (1996, p. 27) emphasizes the social nature of international relations and the evolving nature of state interests through the internalization of norms, identities, and values. Unlike traditional theories like realism and liberalism, which prioritize material aspects, constructivism examines how socially constructed norms influence state behavior and preferences. Finnemore argues that state interests are not fixed but are shaped by interactions within the international system and the adoption of global norms, which evolve through socialization processes.

Finnemore's constructivist theory emphasizes that state interests evolve through the socialization and internalization of international norms. In the context of the One Channel System (OCS) between Indonesia and Malaysia, this framework highlights how labor protection norms, such as those in ILO Convention No. 189, influence bilateral cooperation. Indonesia's adoption of the OCS reflects its identity as a protector of its citizens abroad, positioning migrant worker protection as a moral obligation. Conversely, Malaysia's approach shows a dual commitment: it acknowledges international labor standards but prioritizes economic benefits, which undermines full implementation, as seen in the continued use of the Maid Online System (SMO).

The OCS institutionalizes international labor norms within a bilateral framework, supported by shared regional identities in ASEAN that emphasize human rights. However, the inconsistent application of these norms, especially in Malaysia, reveals the limitations of norm socialization. Indonesia prioritizes worker protection, while Malaysia's preference for cost-efficiency challenges the constructivist assumption that shared values lead to cohesive policy implementation. The SMO bypasses the OCS, showing Malaysia's pragmatic prioritization of economic benefits over norms.

Finnemore's focus on socialization underscores the importance of repeated engagement to internalize shared values. However, the Indonesia-Malaysia relationship shows that this process is uneven. Barriers like resistance from illegal recruitment agents, lack of awareness among workers, and technological disparities hinder effective norm internalization. Power asymmetries, with Indonesia relying on remittances and Malaysia's economic dominance, further complicate the situation, suggesting the need for complementary approaches like realism to analyze material constraints and institutional imbalances.

Despite these challenges, the OCS can serve as a model for sustainable labor governance if both countries commit to closing the gaps in norm adoption and implementation. Strengthening socialization involves raising awareness, integrating norms into national policies, and enhancing bilateral coordination. Establishing a Joint Working Group (JWG) can harmonize policies and resolve inconsistencies, while partnerships with international organizations like the ILO and ASEAN can provide technical assistance to ensure compliance.

Empowering the private sector through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives can align economic interests with ethical labor practices. Employers can contribute to fair working conditions, pre-departure training, and the use of formal recruitment channels. Transparency mechanisms, such as publishing performance metrics related to the OCS, can build trust and demonstrate effectiveness in improving migrant worker protection.

Addressing material and institutional barriers is essential for achieving the OCS's normative goals. Developing a unified digital platform for recruitment and grievance systems can streamline operations and ensure accountability. Phasing out competing mechanisms like the SMO requires firm bilateral commitments and transitional policies to incentivize the adoption of the OCS framework. By combining these practical measures with the OCS's normative foundation, Indonesia and Malaysia can enhance its legitimacy and effectiveness, creating a robust labor migration governance framework in Southeast Asia.

While constructivism provides a valuable perspective on the normative evolution of the OCS, its limitations in addressing material and power asymmetries highlight the need for complementary theories. Realism can offer insights into the power dynamics that influence state behavior, while liberalism focuses on

institutional mechanisms for long-term cooperation. Integrating these theories provides a more comprehensive understanding of the OCS, balancing ethical commitments with practical realities, strengthening migrant worker protection, and reinforcing regional solidarity.

3. Constructivist Analysis in Evaluating the One Channel System

In the context of Indonesia-Malaysia bilateral relations, the values and norms developed through the interaction between the two countries play an important role in shaping migration policy. Based on constructivism theory, state policies are not only influenced by material factors, but also by national identities and social norms that develop through interactions between the countries. In this case, Indonesia and Malaysia have different values and norms regarding the protection of migrant workers, which directly affects the way they design and implement migration policies.

Indonesia, which has an identity as the largest migrant worker sending country in Southeast Asia, developed a norm that emphasizes the importance of protecting the rights of migrant workers. This norm reflects Indonesia's commitment to the protection of human rights, which is reflected in migration policies that prioritize the safety and welfare of migrant workers. The country views the protection of migrant workers as a moral and political responsibility, which is reflected in the One Channel Placement System (SPSK) that aims to reduce illegal recruitment and improve the protection of Indonesian migrant workers abroad.

In contrast, Malaysia, as a destination country for migrant workers, prioritizes economic efficiency and cost reduction in the management of migrant workers. The country relies heavily on cheap labor for sectors such as construction and farming, which often involve migrant workers. In this context, Malaysia is more concerned with short-term economic interests, which sometimes conflicts with a commitment to stronger labor rights protection. This difference in values exposes the tension between the evolving norm in Indonesia, which prioritizes worker protection, and Malaysia's need to maintain a cheap labor force that often ignores this aspect of protection.

The One Channel System (OCS) reflects the constructivist approach in shaping Indonesia-Malaysia labor migration policies by institutionalizing international labor norms, such as those outlined in ILO conventions. While the OCS aims to address issues like illegal recruitment and human trafficking, its implementation reveals a gap between normative aspirations and practical realities. Malaysia's reliance on alternative systems like the Maid Online System (SMO) highlights the tension between economic efficiency and worker protection, with the SMO undermining the OCS by bypassing regulatory safeguards.

In Indonesia, migration policies are driven by stronger normative values that emphasize the protection of migrant workers as part of the state's responsibility towards its citizens. Therefore, Indonesia tends to prioritize formal policies, such as the One Channel System (OCS), which guarantees social protection and justice for migrant workers. On the other hand, Malaysia places more emphasis on economic

gains, which often leads to informal recruitment practices, such as the Maid Online System (SMO), which allows migrant workers to work without adequate protection.

The SMO, as a cheaper and more flexible alternative, enables employers to bypass the stricter regulatory procedures under the OCS. This creates legal loopholes that allow the exploitation of migrant workers and reduce the effectiveness of the protection system implemented by Indonesia. In this case, Malaysia faces a dual commitment—on one hand, the country declares its commitment to international standards, but on the other hand, the desire to maintain cost efficiency often leads to the neglect of protection principles.

Constructivist theory explains that states are not only guided by material interests but also by social norms they adhere to and the national identity they form through interactions with other states. In this case, Malaysia's economic priority of keeping costs low often clashes with the migrant worker protection norms enforced by Indonesia. As Finnemore (1996) explains, social norms and values built through inter-state socialization processes greatly influence the policies adopted by each state. However, in this case, Malaysia has not fully internalized migrant worker protection norms due to pragmatic interests that prioritize economic gains over social protection.

Furthermore, constructivism holds that policy change can only occur when international norms are thoroughly internalized by the states involved. In this context, Indonesia has a stronger normative commitment to protecting migrant workers, while Malaysia, although committed to international norms, still faces internal challenges in balancing economic needs with broader social commitments. This duality highlights the limitations in the implementation of the OCS, as despite both countries agreeing on the same norms, domestic realities and material interests hinder consistent implementation.

From a constructivist perspective, the OCS represents an effort to internalize global norms into bilateral policies. However, the partial commitment from both countries underscores the limitations of norm socialization when conflicting domestic priorities exist. Indonesia's focus on migrant worker protection aligns with its national identity but faces challenges in institutional coordination and technological infrastructure. Conversely, Malaysia's cost-driven approach reflects a pragmatic prioritization of economic interests over the full adoption of international labor standards.

The internalization of norms, as described by Finnemore (1996), is strengthened through repeated socialization and institutional reinforcement. However, the OCS's inconsistent application reveals that norm adoption is not automatic. Resistance from illegal recruitment agents, limited awareness among workers, and technological disparities hinder the effective internalization of labor protection norms. These challenges highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach to strengthen bilateral coordination and enhance public engagement.

A key implication of this study is the need for a multifaceted strategy to address these challenges. Strengthening the Joint Working Group (JWG) can improve coordination between Indonesia and Malaysia and resolve inconsistencies between their labor frameworks. Additionally, leveraging technology, such as a unified digital platform for recruitment and grievance resolution, can enhance transparency and efficiency. Integrating international organizations like the ILO can help harmonize policies and ensure compliance with global labor standards.

Furthermore, the private sector plays a critical role in supporting the OCS through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Employers can contribute to pre-departure training and ensure fair working conditions, aligning economic interests with ethical labor practices. Transparency mechanisms, such as publishing OCS performance metrics, can also build public trust and improve system effectiveness.

To bridge the gap between the OCS's normative goals and operational realities, addressing material and institutional barriers is essential. This includes developing a secure digital platform, improving coordination among key stakeholders, and phasing out informal recruitment systems like the SMO. A joint crisis management framework could also be established to protect workers during emergencies.

Ultimately, while the OCS holds the potential to be a model for sustainable labor migration governance, its success depends on overcoming the barriers posed by technological, institutional, and social factors. By addressing these challenges and enhancing bilateral cooperation, the OCS can better align with global labor norms, strengthen worker protection, and reinforce regional solidarity.

E. CONCLUSION

This study investigates the One Channel System (OCS) between Indonesia and Malaysia through the lens of constructivism, exploring how international labor protection norms, particularly those outlined in ILO conventions, are internalized within bilateral migration policies. The OCS was designed to address critical issues in the labor migration sector, such as illegal recruitment, exploitation, and human rights violations, while fostering a safer and more transparent recruitment process. However, despite the significant potential of OCS, its implementation has revealed persistent challenges, particularly in institutional coordination, resistance from illegal agents, and technological barriers.

The study finds that while Indonesia has committed to prioritizing migrant worker protection, aligning its national identity with global labor standards, Malaysia's focus on economic efficiency sometimes undermines these protective norms. The dual use of alternative mechanisms, such as the Maid Online System (SMO), highlights the gap between normative aspirations and the pragmatic priorities of the states involved. This duality underscores the limitations of norm socialization, as shared values often clash with material interests.

From a constructivist perspective, the study emphasizes the importance of repeated engagement and socialization to internalize norms. However, the inconsistent application of the OCS, particularly in Malaysia, reflects the complex interplay of national priorities and international pressures. To address these challenges, the study suggests enhancing bilateral coordination through the establishment of a Joint Working Group (JWG), improving technological infrastructure, and increasing awareness among migrant workers about the benefits of formal recruitment channels.

Ultimately, the OCS holds promise as a model for sustainable labor governance in Southeast Asia, but its success hinges on overcoming technical, institutional, and social barriers. By addressing these gaps and integrating both normative and material considerations, the OCS can be strengthened to better align with global labor norms, ensuring improved protections for migrant workers and reinforcing bilateral relations between Indonesia and Malaysia. This study contributes to the broader understanding of how constructivism can offer valuable insights into the internalization of international norms in migration policy, providing a more comprehensive framework for managing labor migration in a way that balances ethical commitments with practical realities.

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