

# Family, Poverty, and Vulnerability: An Analysis of Human Trafficking Prevention Practices in West Java

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## Abstract

This research confronts the persistent conceptual gaps within Indonesia's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) prevention framework. While current strategies fixate heavily on law enforcement and macro-poverty, family mediation during the pre-recruitment phase remains systematically under-synthesized. This blind spot leaves grassroots prevention fragmented, failing to address how risk is produced at the household level. Therefore, this study reconstructs a tiered prevention model tailored for West Java by positioning family protective literacy as an active risk mediator. Methodologically, we conducted a thematic synthesis of literature (2016–2025) harvested from Google Scholar, Garuda, and DOAJ databases, focusing on regional vulnerability, migration pathways, and collaborative governance. The synthesis proves that structural hardships do not automatically dictate exploitation; rather, vulnerability hinges on a household's capacity to audit recruitment claims, decode safe migration tracks, and survive financial shocks. Legal, digital, and financial literacies serve as micro-nodes that intercept macro-pressures before migration choices are finalized, decisions continuously reshaped by village dynamics and policy orchestration. Ultimately, this research introduces the Protective Literacy-Based Tiered Prevention Model to revitalize rigid social welfare frameworks.

## Keywords

Trafficking in Persons, protective literacy, tiered prevention, social vulnerability, collaborative governance.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Trafficking in Persons (TIP) rarely unfolds as a sudden, isolated criminal event; instead, it operates as a deeply entrenched social process driven by systemic poverty, unregulated labor mobility, and severe structural power imbalances (Syamsuddin, 2020; Ariadne et al., 2021). For many marginalized households, migration is far from a symptom of free, rational economic choice. It is a desperate survival strategy dictated by a complete lack of local alternatives (Ariadne et al., 2021). When these structural pressures mount, irregular migration channels quickly emerge as the primary pathway of risk (Wahyudi, 2017). These non-procedural movements systematically bypass state oversight, leaving prospective workers highly exposed to manipulative, informal recruitment networks that weaponize personal social circles and unregistered intermediaries to trap vulnerable individuals (Wahyudi, 2017; Juliawan, 2018). This pervasive chain of vulnerability has pushed Indonesia into a prolonged state of emergency, leaving the country stagnant at Tier 2 due to its failure to meet the minimum international standards for eliminating human trafficking (U.S. Embassy Jakarta, 2025). The contemporary landscape



of Trafficking in Persons (TPPO) reflects a highly adaptive threat, marked by a surge in digital-based online scams across Southeast Asia, social-media-driven illegal adoption syndicates, and egregious exploitation of commercial ship crews facing up to 88% salary cuts (Pusiknas Polri, 2024; U.S. Embassy Jakarta, 2025). Geographically, West Java bears the heaviest burden as the largest domestic source of victims, a crisis that forced the state to engineer the National Action Plan (RAN) on TIP for the 2025–2029 period (Ministry of PPPA, 2024). This provincial crisis is structurally unique; it is fueled by a stark socioeconomic divide between peri-urban industrial hubs like Karawang or Bekasi and the chronically impoverished agrarian communities of the northern coast (Pantura), such as Indramayu, Cirebon, and Subang and southern districts like Cianjur and Sukabumi, which serve as primary supply corridors for illicit recruitment networks.

Crucially, modern trafficking syndicates rarely rely on overt physical violence to maintain dominance; they exploit symbolic and psychological leverage, including manufactured debt bondage, emotional gaslighting, and strict communication blackouts (Chisholm et al., 2022). This reality proves that vulnerability is far more complex than mere financial deprivation; it is deeply intertwined with domestic and communal power imbalances (Chisholm et al., 2022). Gender dynamics exacerbate this entanglement, as women's migration choices are heavily constrained by rigid patriarchal norms, disproportionate domestic expectations, and pressure to alleviate family debts (Nainggolan, 2019; Kresnawati & Imelda, 2020). In rural West Java, these systemic vulnerabilities are routinely commercialized by local informal brokers, known as *calos*. These actors manipulate traditional patron-client trust to bypass formal legal safeguards, turning close-knit community networks into conduits for systematic exploitation. To dissect these convoluted layers, a social ecological approach is indispensable, as it maps how individual vulnerabilities, domestic pressures, community networks, and macro-policies continuously reshape one another (Barner et al., 2017). Unfortunately, the global anti-trafficking apparatus remains highly fragmented, with empirical evidence showing severe disconnects when trying to bridge formal policy design with actual grassroots protection (Harkins, 2017). Trafficking risks cannot be solved by treating them as isolated legal or economic failures. They are the fluid outcome of cross-level friction between micro-level domestic choices, mezzo-level village environments, and macro-level structural gaps (Barner et al., 2017; Harkins, 2017). This friction demands a localized, multi-layered preventive framework that intercepts risk exactly where it is generated.

Scholarly discourse surrounding Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in Indonesia generally branches into four distinct analytical trajectories. The first trajectory zeroes in on state regulations and institutional oversight, evaluating how local task forces implement protection policies and manage cross-sectoral coordination (Widiyahseno et al., 2018; Fajri et al., 2021). While this institutional lens is vital for mapping bureaucratic accountability, it routinely reduces the family unit to a passive beneficiary of state intervention. By treating the state as the sole active guardian, this body of research leaves a significant conceptual gap regarding how households actively navigate or resist structural vulnerabilities before formal administrative networks even detect a threat. A second, heavily populated trajectory attributes human trafficking to macroeconomic forces, emphasizing chronic poverty, regional inequality, and deep-seated institutional corruption as the structural catalysts that expand illicit recruitment networks (Absor, 2018; Ariadne et al., 2021). This perspective excels at exposing the macro-level systemic environment that breeds vulnerability. However, it operates on a problematic assumption of economic determinism. By halting its analysis at the structural level, it fails to explain the exact transmission mechanisms within the household that translate macro-economic duress into risky, non-procedural

migration choices.

Shifting from structural causes to human consequences, a third trajectory focuses on the deep psychosocial trauma endured by trafficking survivors (Syamsuddin, 2020). These clinical and psychological inquiries offer profound insights into post-trauma recovery, rehabilitation, and the complex vulnerabilities that persist after exploitation has occurred. Nevertheless, this body of work remains fundamentally reactive. By focusing almost exclusively on post-incident crisis management, it leaves the critical, upstream pre-recruitment phase largely unguarded and theoretically under-investigated. More recently, a fourth trajectory has emerged to address these upstream gaps by examining family resilience and localized migration literacy as primary protective barriers against trafficking networks (Purnama, 2025). This localized lens provides valuable tools for disrupting recruitment rings at the grassroots level. However, current empirical evaluations of these safe-migration programs expose a distinct lack of systematic integration. These resilience strategies are frequently studied in isolation, disconnected from broader institutional frameworks, which severely limits their long-term viability within a fractured social protection landscape.

The escalating volatility of regional migration pathways and the subterranean tactics of informal recruiters indicate that anti-trafficking strategies relying strictly on post-facto law enforcement or clinical victim recovery cannot sever the chain of exploitation at its origin (Harkins, 2017; Widiyahseno et al., 2018). In West Java, a territory structurally defined by massive, hyper-mobile labor displacements which is forging a preventive architecture that operates aggressively during the pre-recruitment phase is no longer optional; it is an absolute necessity. Without shifting the defensive frontline to this nascent stage, acute household financial duress and deep information asymmetries will perpetually feed vulnerable individuals directly into manipulative recruitment pipelines, neutralizing state enforcement efforts before they can even begin (Wahyudi, 2017; Ariadne et al., 2021). To navigate these multi-layered dynamics, this research anchors its analytical lens within a robust social work paradigm, explicitly employing the Person-in-Environment (PiE) framework. From this perspective, human trafficking is conceptualized not merely as a discrete violation of criminal law, but as a catastrophic failure of localized protection systems to safeguard the social functioning of vulnerable families. Individuals do not make migration decisions in isolation; their agency is constantly shaped, constrained, and negotiated within an immediate ecosystem comprising household economic pressures, rigid communal expectations of social mobility, and macro-structural social exclusion. By treating the individual and their surrounding socio-institutional environment as an inseparable analytical unit, the PiE framework allows this study to untangle how macro-structural violence materializes as micro-level risk.

Concurrently, this article rejects moralizing, deficit-driven narratives that treat vulnerable families as passive casualties or, worse, the primary catalyst for their own victimization. Instead, by operationalizing a strength-based approach, this study shifts the analytical focus toward identifying, validating, and reinforcing the inherent capacities and hidden resilience mechanisms already embedded within the household structure. The family is explicitly positioned not as a static locus of blame, but as a dynamic mediation node capable of disrupting the operational space of trafficking syndicates at the very grassroots level. Driven by this theoretical synergy, this article aims to reconstruct a tiered prevention model that systematically links family protective literacy with wider community buffers and collaborative macro-governance orchestration. Conceptually, this integration bridges a long-standing division within social welfare scholarship, which frequently isolates structural macroeconomic critiques from micro-level psychosocial interventions (Harkins, 2017; Absor, 2018). By database-synthesizing the social ecological model (Barner et al., 2017) with a collaborative governance perspective (Fajri et al.,

2021), this paper moves beyond linear, single-layer analyses to explain how cross-level systemic interactions operate in unison. Practically, the proposed multi-layered framework provides policymakers and social work practitioners in West Java with a structured blueprint to deploy targeted, upstream interventions before high-risk migration choices become institutionalized within exploitative networks.

An effective dissection of trafficking risks requires abandoning the rigid, categorical boundaries that traditionally isolate micro, mezzo, and macro systems from one another. While standard applications of the social ecological model map individual, familial, and structural risks into separate, distinct layers (Barner et al., 2017), real-world vulnerability operates as a fluid, cyclical feedback loop. In the Indonesian landscape, complex social crises, ranging from child vulnerability to extreme exploitation prove that individual choices are fundamentally bound to the shifting dynamics of their immediate institutional environments (Setiawan et al., 2020). Macro-pressures like systemic poverty, regional inequality, and bureaucratic corruption (Absor, 2018; Ariadne et al., 2021) do not simply bear down on the individual in a one-way path of causal certainty. Rather, these structural deprivations are actively filtered, interpreted, and reshaped by mezzo-level community spaces and micro-level household capacities before translating into action.

Consequently, vulnerability within a social welfare context is never a static, inherent trait of a specific family; it is a dynamic condition produced when macro-structural pressures collide with constrained domestic adaptive capacities. When the state's macro-level formal employment market fails to provide secure livelihoods, the resulting systemic vacuum is immediately felt at the household level. However, this economic pressure does not automatically lead to exploitation. The trajectory of risk depends heavily on whether macro-social protection programs function effectively as an economic cushion to alleviate the sudden urgency of high-risk labor mobility (Habibullah, 2017). Comprehensive state-sponsored social assistance and social security schemes are critical micro-mezzo links; when robust, they reduce the immediate financial desperation that forces households to accept unverified, hazardous job offers. This relational intersection becomes even more pronounced when examining financial inclusion and credit access. A household's capacity to withstand macro-economic shocks is fundamentally conditioned by its access to formal financial services and baseline financial literacy (Habibullah, 2019). When families are structurally excluded from formal banking systems, they are routinely driven into the arms of informal, predatory debt schemes to handle everyday crises. These high-interest informal debts quickly become the primary entry point for trafficking syndicates, who weaponize non-transparent recruitment financing structures to lock prospective workers into debt bondage before they ever leave their villages. Thus, micro-level literacy and macro-level financial architectures are locked in a continuous, reciprocal relationship that either neutralizes or accelerates the production of trafficking risks.

Compounding this systemic entanglement is the deeply ambivalent nature of social capital within local communities. Mezzo-level social networks do not operate as purely protective or purely destructive spaces; they are highly volatile conduits. On one hand, close-knit kinship networks and community forums can serve as powerful survival mechanisms, offering mutual aid, psychosocial solidarity, and critical safe-migration insights learned from returnee migrants (Chawa et al., 2020). On the other hand, these exact same trust networks are easily co-opted and manipulated by informal recruitment pipelines to maintain clientelistic control over desperate families (Muhtar & Noviana, 2016; Wahyudi, 2017). Because information asymmetry is structurally maintained within these informal networks, the family's protective literacy cannot develop in a vacuum. It must be constantly reinforced

by village-level institutional buffers that actively verify recruitment claims. By treating these multi-level interactions as a single relational unit, this article demonstrates that intercepting human trafficking requires reinforcing the family's capacity to navigate the dualities of their social and financial environments.

The overwhelming complexity of trafficking risks which simultaneously cross economic, digital, and legal boundaries means that no single bureaucratic institution or sector can execute effective prevention in isolation. Despite the obvious need for unity, anti-trafficking initiatives in Indonesia are historically plagued by severe institutional fragmentation. Formal law enforcement agencies, regional social service departments, and migrant worker protection boards routinely operate within isolated mandates, cut off from meaningful horizontal data exchange. This structural disconnect creates deep regulatory blind spots, particularly during the critical pre-recruitment phase, which completely escapes formal state surveillance and leaves grassroots communities highly vulnerable to exploitation (Harkins, 2017). To dismantle these institutional silos, a collaborative governance approach is essential for integrating fragmented actors into a cohesive defensive network. While collaborative governance principles are widely discussed, their application within Indonesian social welfare scholarship often requires careful context-specific adaptation. For instance, the multi-sectoral coordination framework developed by Fajri et al. (2021), though originally mapped within the domain of local fishermen empowerment programs that provides an exceptionally transferable analytical blueprint for anti-trafficking governance. This cross-domain application is theoretically justified by the systemic, identical structural pathologies that characterize Indonesia's broader social welfare bureaucracy. Both fishermen empowerment and anti-trafficking networks grapple with the exact same institutional frictions: deep horizontal fragmentation between regional departments, top-down communication bottlenecks, and the marginalization of grassroots community actors. Consequently, the operational mechanisms of role delineation, cross-sectoral dialogue, and resource pooling outlined by Fajri et al. (2021) offer direct, viable strategies for optimizing the Anti-Trafficking Task Force (Satgas TPPO).

This collaborative orchestration aligns perfectly with the shifting paradigm of migrant worker protection in Indonesia. Following recent legislative reforms, state policy has begun to pivot sharply from a purely reactive, administrative approach focused on labor placement toward a comprehensive protection architecture initiated long before departure (Widiyahseno et al., 2018). This structural shift opens a critical institutional corridor for deploying social volunteers (*relawan sosial*) directly into vulnerable communities. Operating as decentralized extensions of the formal social welfare apparatus, these volunteers bridge the gap between state institutions and the private household sphere, providing targeted education and early service referrals to intercept illicit recruitment tactics (Habibullah, 2021). Ultimately, human trafficking prevention cannot survive as a patchwork of disconnected municipal programs. It demands a highly integrated, multi-layered framework where macro-level collaborative governance architectures (Fajri et al., 2021) actively sustain and empower mezzo-level village structures, such as the Migrant Worker-Care Village (DESBUMI) initiatives. These localized village nodes, in turn, serve as safe environments that incubate and reinforce micro-level family protective literacy. By establishing this comprehensive relational framework, this article moves past traditional, single-layer anti-trafficking analyses, equipping social work scholarship and regional policy design in West Java with a structured blueprint to neutralize trafficking vulnerabilities at their true source.

## 2. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach; targeted literature review design paired with inductive thematic analysis to reconstruct an integrated analytical model for the prevention of Trafficking in Persons (TIP). Rather than testing empirical hypotheses through primary field data, this methodological choice focuses on synthesizing insights from fragmented intervention research to identify conceptual gaps and map complex argumentative patterns (Harkins, 2017; Syamsuddin, 2020). The literature harvesting was executed across three major academic databases: Google Scholar, Garuda (*Garba Rujukan Digital*), and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). Crucially, dominant international commercial indexes like Scopus and Web of Science were deliberately excluded from the search protocol. While this exclusion represents a definitive scope limitation that narrows our engagement with global trafficking literature, it was a practical necessity to guarantee full-text accessibility and to prioritize peer-reviewed, context-dense domestic research that directly captures the institutional realities of the Indonesian social welfare system.

To ensure the compiled corpus genuinely reflects the regional dynamics promised in the study's title, the search strategy discarded generic formulas in favor of targeted, geographically bounded search strings. The publication timeframe was strictly anchored between 2016 and 2025, a boundary chosen to isolate the most recent shifts in decentralized migrant worker protection laws, digital-based recruitment patterns, and local governance discourses. The search operations utilized multiple boolean configurations, systematically intersecting core thematic keywords, such as "TPPO", "human trafficking", "non-procedural migration", "social protection", "literacy", and "collaborative governance"—with explicit regional qualifiers, including "Jawa Barat", "West Java", "Indramayu", "Cianjur", and "Cirebon". This localized refinement was methodologically vital to prevent single-term selection bias and to guarantee that the synthesized literature directly addresses the distinct socioeconomic and migration profiles of West Javanese communities rather than national abstractions. To guarantee absolute procedural transparency and replicability, the evaluation of the retrieved literature followed a rigorous, multi-stage filtering protocol. The initial database queries across Google Scholar, Garuda, and DOAJ yielded a total of 142 records. After removing duplicates and executing a strict title and abstract screening, 78 articles were winnowed down for full-text evaluation. These remaining studies were systematically audited against three substantive eligibility boundaries: (1) vulnerability factors and risk mechanisms of human trafficking; (2) prevention practices anchored within the family, community, or village ecosystems; and (3) governance approaches and cross-sectoral coordination within the wider social protection framework (Widiyahseno et al., 2018; Habibullah, 2017). Articles failing to directly address the pre-recruitment phase or localized adaptive capacities were excluded. Ultimately, 26 peer-reviewed documents met every criteria and were retained as the definitive corpus for thematic synthesis.

The analytical phase relied on an inductive thematic coding procedure to systematically interpret and organize the qualitative findings from the finalized literature corpus (Syamsuddin, 2020). To minimize individual investigator bias and maximize the validity of the analysis, the entire coding protocol was conducted independently by two separate researchers. Rather than forcing the text into a rigid, pre-constructed theoretical mold, the initial codebook emerged inductively through an iterative, line-by-line reading of the compiled documents. Conceptual disagreements regarding theme assignments, such as separating household debt schemes from community-level broker manipulation that were resolved through recursive consensus dialogues until a unified coding agreement was achieved. A rigorous audit trail was maintained throughout the process, mapping every analytical

transition from raw text segments to synthesized themes like information asymmetry, domestic power relations, and collaborative networks.

Finally, this methodology explicitly cross-applies the collaborative governance framework adapted from Fajri et al. (2021) to operationalize the coordination mechanisms within anti-trafficking networks. While Fajri et al. (2021) originally investigated local fishermen empowerment programs rather than anti-trafficking administration, this cross-domain theoretical application is structurally justified. The institutional architecture of the Indonesian social welfare system exhibits identical bureaucratic pathologies across different marginalized populations. Deep horizontal fragmentation between regional departments, top-down communication bottlenecks, and the exclusion of grassroots community actors are persistent structural challenges shared equally by maritime welfare programs and the Anti-Trafficking Task Force (*Satgas TPPO*). Consequently, utilizing the operational role delineation and cross-sectoral communication parameters from Fajri et al. (2021) provides a highly valid, context-dense domestic framework to counter the institutional fragmentation often criticized in international trafficking scholarship (Harkins, 2017).

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Risk Mechanisms: Structural Pressures and the Production of Vulnerability

The production of vulnerability to Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in West Java cannot be understood through simple, linear chains of cause and effect. Instead, it manifests as a continuous, reciprocal cycle where macro-structural failures, localized communal dynamics, and household financial crises constantly feed into one another. In West Java's high-sending trafficking pockets, this relational friction is intensely visible. The province is defined by a deep socioeconomic paradox: massive peri-urban industrial corridors like Karawang and Bekasi thrive alongside chronically underfunded, declining agrarian zones in the northern Pantura region (such as Indramayu and Cirebon) and the southern highlands (such as Cianjur and Sukabumi). When regional development imbalances shrink local formal employment alternatives (Sukmana, 2018), macro-level poverty and institutional vulnerabilities immediately collapse into the domestic sphere. For these marginalized agrarian households, labor mobility ceases to be a calculated, rational economic choice; it becomes a desperate livelihood strategy forced by structural exclusion (Ariadne et al., 2021; Absor, 2018).

This macro-economic pressure does not wait for a family to make an isolated decision; it is immediately intercepted and shaped by the gray areas of informal recruitment networks operating at the mezzo level. Because formal state regulatory and supervisory safeguards frequently fail to protect rural communities, informal labor corridors rapidly expand to fill the institutional vacuum (Ariadne et al., 2021; Absor, 2018). Prospective migrants face massive information asymmetries regarding foreign or off-region employment contracts, driven by the fact that many migration pathways operate in a muddy zone between legal formality and outright informality (Wahyudi, 2017; Juliawan, 2018). In rural West Javanese villages, this lack of transparent information forces families to rely heavily on close-knit kinship circles, neighbors, or local informal brokers, traditionally known as "*calos*" who are perceived as far more accessible and trustworthy than distant official channels (Chawa et al., 2020). Consequently, these intimate trust networks are easily manipulated by trafficking syndicates, turning social capital into an unintended conduit for systematic deception and exploitation.

As the recruitment process moves deeper into the household, these risk mechanisms evolve into systematic, non-physical forms of control that strip individuals of their agency before departure. Illicit recruitment networks in West Java rarely initiate control through overt physical violence; instead, they

exploit household financial desperation by deploying non-transparent placement financing schemes and predatory advance-payment options. These deceptive financial structures lock vulnerable families into severe debt bondage, which is subsequently reinforced through wage deductions, communication blackouts, and emotional manipulation (Syamsuddin, 2020; Chisholm et al., 2022). Once a household becomes financially trapped by a “*calo*”, the risk of exploitation becomes structurally embedded within an asymmetric contractual relationship. This structural trap is significantly worsened by the current state of anti-trafficking programming in Indonesia, which remains overwhelmingly reactive and fixated on post-incident crisis management, leaving the critical pre-recruitment risk production phase at the family level completely unsystematized and unguarded (Harkins, 2017).

Finally, these cross-level systemic pressures collide with internal domestic power relations, particularly along deeply entrenched gender lines. Within rural West Javanese households, women's labor mobility choices are rarely self-determined; they are heavily policed by traditional patriarchal norms, unequal distributions of domestic caregiving expectations, and intense familial pressure to secure immediate economic contributions (Nainggolan, 2019; Kresnawati & Imelda, 2020). Under the weight of mounting predatory debts, women are frequently pushed into high-risk, non-procedural migration pathways as a desperate mechanism to rescue the family unit from financial ruin. Thus, the generation of TIP risks in West Java is the fluid, simultaneous outcome of macro-structural constraints, the manipulation of communal social capital by informal agencies, debt-based household control, and gendered domestic expectations (Barner et al., 2017; Setiawan et al., 2020). By treating these interactions as a single relational framework, it becomes clear that vulnerability is recursively produced, requiring an integrated defensive strategy exactly at the intersection of family choices and communal environments.

### 3.2. Protective Literacy as a Risk Mediator at the Family Level

Rather than treating the household as a passive arena crushed by macroeconomic weight, this framework positions the family as a critical space of cognitive resistance where structural pressures are actively filtered and negotiated. This internal defense operates through what this study conceptualizes as protective literacy. To ensure this concept does not merely relabel old ideas, its operationalization explicitly incorporates survivor-centered perspectives. As demonstrated by Donohue-Dioh et al. (2020), human trafficking prevention achieves true efficacy only when it centers the agency and subjective knowledge of vulnerable individuals rather than imposing top-down, paternalistic state mandates. Survivors conceptualize genuine prevention as the functional capacity to interrogate recruiter motives, audit placement paths, and disrupt manipulative narratives right at the family dinner table (Donohue-Dioh et al., 2020). Thus, protective literacy acts as an active, integrative cognitive shield that intercepts macro-pressures before they solidify into high-risk migration actions.

The first structural pillar of this shield is legal literacy, which directly counters the deceptive charm of informal intermediaries. When a household possesses a high level of legal awareness, family members drop naive reliance on *calos* and instead critically dissect employment contract terms, verify official agency placement permits, and demand alignment with formal protection laws (Widiyahseno et al., 2018). This legal defense is recursively bound to the family's financial literacy. When households encounter sudden financial shocks, baseline financial literacy and access to formal financial inclusion mechanisms change how they manage emergency risks (Habibullah, 2019). Instead of surrendering to the opaque, high-interest advance-payment schemes pushed by informal networks, financially literate families utilize formal credit lines and structured budgeting (Habibullah, 2019). By managing these

financing risks internally, households successfully neutralize the debt-bondage traps that syndicates systematically employ to lock prospective migrants into exploitative labor relations before departure (Habibullah, 2019; Chisholm et al., 2022).

The necessity of this multi-layered literacy framework is further accelerated by the rapid tactical shift toward digital-based exploitation across West Java. Modern human trafficking syndicates no longer operate solely through physical recruitment; they heavily co-opt digital spaces to orchestrate transnational online scam rings, cyber-trafficking operations, and illegal adoption syndicates masked as benign social media groups (Pusiknas Polri, 2024; U.S. Embassy Jakarta, 2025). In this high-tech threat environment, digital literacy emerges as an indispensable mediation node within the family unit. It represents the family's collective capacity to independently audit digital job advertisements, cross-verify the electronic credentials of recruiters, and identify manipulative tracking tactics on social media platforms. Without this digital verification layer, the micro-level information asymmetry widens dramatically, allowing syndicates to bypass traditional village geographic boundaries and manipulate vulnerable individuals directly through their smartphones. Ultimately, legal, financial, and digital literacies do not exist as isolated skills; they form a unified relational barrier where structural vulnerabilities are actively dismantled through critical family agency (Widiyahseno et al., 2018; Habibullah, 2019; Donohue-Dioh et al., 2020).

### **3.3. Mezzo-Level Integration: Communities and Villages as Risk Amplifiers or Mitigators**

If the private household acts as the primary node filtering structural pressures, the surrounding community and village networks function as the immediate social ecosystems that either cultivate or crush a family's protective literacy. At this critical mezzo-level, local social norms and daily relational practices construct the immediate frame of reference that dictates how vulnerable households perceive migration opportunities and evaluate risk. In rural West Java, this dynamic is intensely collective. Empirical insights into the empowerment of female returnee migrants demonstrate that localized, survivor-led community spaces can trigger powerful social learning loops, directly correcting overly optimistic, manufactured myths about overseas employment (Chawa et al., 2020; Wafiroh & Septiarti, 2024). When grassroot community forums facilitate the raw, open sharing of exploitation experiences, they break down the information walls built by illicit recruiters, forcing vulnerable neighbor households into a state of heightened risk awareness.

However, these mezzo-level spaces are never inherently safe or neutral; they possess a deeply volatile, ambivalent social architecture. In many agrarian villages across the Pantura corridor, the visible economic success of past migrants is commercialized into a toxic symbol of elevated social status, exerting intense cultural pressure on struggling households to blindly emulate these migration tracks without verifying legal procedures. Here, social capital shifts from a protective buffer into a dangerous conduit for illicit recruitment networks. Traditional, close-knit rural trust networks are easily weaponized by local calos, who leverage kinship ties to peddle non-procedural placement schemes under the guise of neighborly aid (Muhtar & Noviana, 2016). Countering this vulnerability requires active, targeted community-based psychosocial intervention and local mentoring programs. When vulnerable families are anchored by structured local support systems, their collective reflexive capacity expands, allowing them to decode exploitative recruitment traps before finalized choices are made (Tristanto, 2020; Subardhini, 2021).

To institutionalize these protective norms, the village must step up as an active administrative fortress connecting micro-households with the state's formal macro-protection systems. The

operationalization of the Migrant Worker-Care Village (Desa Peduli Buruh Migran/DESBUMI) framework provides a brilliant blueprint for this hulu-to-hilir defensive orchestration (Shodiq et al., 2017). In high-sending West Javanese regencies like Indramayu and Cianjur, implementing the DESBUMI model forces the village government to move past lazy, rubber-stamp administrative habits. It transforms the village office into a strict clearinghouse for independent data collection, rigorous document validation, and localized safe-migration education (Shodiq et al., 2017). This shift fully aligns with Indonesia's decentralized paradigm of migrant worker protection, which demands that village authorities actively intercept non-procedural contracts at the absolute frontline rather than leaving border enforcement to national agencies (Widiyahseno et al., 2018). Furthermore, deploying local social volunteers (relawan sosial) expands this administrative reach, turning the vast, hard-to-reach rural landscape of West Java into an actively monitored network of protection (Habibullah, 2021).

Ultimately, the friction between the family, the community, and the village office operates as a cyclical, reciprocal loop rather than a straight line. A family's internal protective literacy cannot survive in a vacuum; even a highly aware household can be financially trapped if local community norms celebrate informal brokers or if village officials remain blind to illicit recruitment operations. Conversely, a robust village administration backed by active survivor networks can systematically elevate a household's legal and digital verification capacities. Mezzo-level integration is therefore the indispensable connective tissue within this entire architecture. It ensures that protective literacy transcends isolated individual efforts and becomes permanently embedded within the collective, administrative practices of West Javanese rural governance.

### 3.4. Macro-Level Orchestration: Collaborative Governance and the Role of Task Forces

At the macro level, the structural capacity to prevent human trafficking depends entirely on the institutional system's ability to sync disparate actors into a unified defensive front. Unfortunately, anti-trafficking interventions across Indonesia routinely fracture along rigid institutional lines. Formal law enforcement agencies, regional social service departments (*Dinas Sosial*), and migrant protection boards frequently operate within heavily isolated mandates, starved of meaningful horizontal information exchange. This structural disconnect routinely blindspots the critical pre-recruitment phase, as the state's primary focus remains bottlenecked within reactive, post-incident enforcement and crisis management (Harkins, 2017). Silos inevitably produce vulnerability. In a vast, demographically volatile region like West Java, this institutional fragmentation means that early warning signs at the household level are completely lost in bureaucratic translation.

Dismantling these administrative barriers requires a robust collaborative governance architecture capable of forcing separate agencies into a single, cohesive network. While collaborative governance models are common, their execution within the Indonesian social welfare apparatus demands distinct, context-dense adaptation. The cross-sectoral coordination parameters developed by Fajri et al. (2021)—though originally mapped to evaluate local fishermen empowerment programs—offer an exceptionally transferable blueprint to optimize the West Java Anti-Trafficking Task Force (*Satgas TPPO*). This cross-domain theoretical application is justified by the identical structural pathologies running through both welfare sectors. Whether managing maritime community welfare or intercepting human trafficking syndicates, the provincial bureaucracy battles the exact same friction: intense horizontal fragmentation, top-down communication bottlenecks, and the structural exclusion of grassroots actors. Consequently, the operational role delineation, joint resource pooling, and shared communication channels outlined

by Fajri et al. (2021) provide direct, pragmatic mechanisms to transform *Satgas TPPO* from a loose collection of distinct offices into a highly responsive, integrated governance body.

Crucially, this collaborative orchestration cannot succeed if it relies on blind coordination; it demands deep empirical visibility through structural data integration. Utilizing unified social welfare indices and targeted vulnerability mapping is essential to identify high-risk regional pockets before exploitation occurs (Setiawan, 2019). By integrating regional poverty metrics with immigration data, *Satgas TPPO* can shift its policy deployment from generic, statewide mandates to highly targeted hulu interventions in explicit trafficking hubs across West Java. Furthermore, this macro-data integration must be operationalized on the ground by actively incorporating social volunteers (*relawan sosial*) into the formal protection system (Habibullah, 2021). Operating as decentralized, human extensions of the social welfare apparatus, these volunteers bridge the deep gap between formal state policy and the hidden, private sphere of vulnerable households (Habibullah, 2021). Ultimately, collaborative governance operates not as an abstract administrative theory, but as a live, multi-level orchestration mechanism. It ensures that micro-level family literacy and mezzo-level village defenses are systematically sustained, funded, and protected by macro-level institutional systems.

### **3.5. A Conceptual Model of Multi-Level Prevention Based on Protective Literacy in West Java**

By synthesizing the structural risk mechanisms at the micro level, community-village integration at the mezzo level, and institutional orchestration at the macro level, this study reconstructs a comprehensive, non-linear prevention framework. Rather than presenting a rigid, top-down sequence where factors merely cascade downward, the proposed framework operates as a relational feedback loop where systems continuously condition and adjust one another. This architecture fundamentally broadens the traditional social ecology model—which often stalls at mapping isolated risk layers (Barner et al., 2017)—by explicitly operationalizing collaborative governance (Fajri et al., 2021) as the connective institutional tissue that binds macro-policies with micro-level family agency. Instead of mispositioning the household as a passive casualty or a site of moral failure, this model treats the family as an active, critical arena of risk negotiation.

At the absolute foundation of this framework sits the concept of family protective literacy, newly reinforced by the inclusion of survivor-centered perspectives. True prevention cannot survive on administrative mandates alone; it requires validating the lived strategies and structural awareness of those who have navigated the recruitment chain. When a household's micro-level protective literacy is high, it actively interrupts the downward transmission of macro-structural pressures. Legal literacy equips families to aggressively audit recruitment documentation (Widiyahseno et al., 2018); financial literacy eliminates dependency on predatory advance-payment schemes by introducing secure formal credit paths (Habibullah, 2019); and digital literacy counters the rapid tactical surge of cyber-trafficking and online scams by deploying independent verification tools directly through personal smartphones (Pusiknas Polri, 2024; U.S. Embassy Jakarta, 2025). These micro-nodes do not develop in a void; they are systematically insulated by mezzo-level village governance structures like the DESBUMI initiatives, which formalize safe-migration norms within collective community practices (Shodiq et al., 2017).

**Table 1. A Multi-Level Prevention Model Based on Protective Literacy in West Java**

| System Level                               | Functions within the Prevention System                                                                                       | Risk Mediation Mechanisms                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Key Actors                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Macro                                      | Policy orchestration, multi-sectoral data integration, and structural resource allocation.                                   | Synchronization of regional social protection programs, cross-sectoral coordination, and data-driven risk mapping using unified welfare indices to dissolve administrative silos (Fajri et al., 2021; Setiawan, 2019; Harkins, 2017).                                                                                             | West Java Anti-Trafficking Task Force ( <i>Satgas TPPO</i> ), provincial regional governments, municipal social services ( <i>Dinas Sosial</i> ), and migrant worker protection agencies. |
| Mezzo                                      | The strengthening of collective precautionary norms and the administrative institutionalization of safe migration practices. | Mobilization of local survivor-led forums, community-based psychosocial education, strict village-level document verification, and the operationalization of Migrant Worker-Care Village ( <i>Desa Peduli Buruh Migran/DESBUMI</i> ) protocols (Shodiq et al., 2017; Chawa et al., 2020; Wafiroh & Septiarti, 2024).              | Village governments, local migrant community leaders, returnee networks, and decentralized social volunteers ( <i>relawan sosial</i> ).                                                   |
| Micro                                      | Active cognitive mediation between macro-structural hardships and household migration decisions.                             | Interception of information asymmetries through integrative capacities: legal contract auditing (Widiyahseno et al., 2018), digital scam validation, financial risk insulation against predatory debt bondage (Habibullah, 2019), and the operationalization of survivor-centered critical awareness (Donohue-Dioh et al., 2020). | Families, prospective migrant workers, and immediate household networks.                                                                                                                  |
| Structural Pressures (Initial Macro-Level) | The production of initial regional vulnerability profiles and structural constraints.                                        | Stark socioeconomic divides, agrarian job contraction in the Pantura and southern corridors, systemic information asymmetry, and the expansion of informal “ <i>calo</i> ” pipelines (Absor, 2018; Ariadne et al., 2021; Wahyudi, 2017; Juliawan, 2018).                                                                          | Provincial macro-economic structures, informal labor recruitment syndicates, and unstable regional labor markets.                                                                         |

As mapped out in Table 1, the multi-level prevention model rejects the descriptive, one-way paths of traditional anti-trafficking analyses. Macro-structural hardships—such as the contraction of agricultural livelihoods across the Pantura corridor or weak employment infrastructure in southern

West Javanese regencies (Absor, 2018; Ariadne et al., 2021)—do not deterministically dictate a household's collapse into trafficking pipelines. Instead, the trajectory of risk hinges entirely on the continuous, multi-layered friction between structural duress, institutional responsiveness, and domestic agency. By centering family protective literacy as a dynamic mediator, this model expands the social ecological approach, demonstrating that a household's capacity to audit information is actively conditioned by its environment. Legal, digital, and financial literacies act as critical interpretative filters; they transform the private domestic sphere from a vulnerable target into an active barrier that interrogates, counters, and resists the manipulative offers peddled by informal brokers (Wahyudi, 2017; Widiyahseno et al., 2018; Habibullah, 2019).

Crucially, the sustainability of this internal family defense is completely dependent on the quality of its mezzo-level and macro-level surrounding architectures. A family's capacity to decode cyber-trafficking scams or refuse a *calo's* exploitative financial advances will quickly erode if the local community rewards informal migration or if village governments maintain lazy, rubber-stamp administrative habits. Mezzo-level integration via DESBUMI models in regencies like Indramayu and Cianjur is vital precisely because it institutionalizes protective literacy within collective, daily community practices (Shodiq et al., 2017; Wafiroh & Septiarti, 2024). Concurrently, macro-level collaborative governance functions as the overarching orchestration mechanism that holds the entire system together. By integrating regional poverty mapping with immigration data systems (Setiawan, 2019), and by deploying social volunteers as direct human bridges to the grassroot level (Habibullah, 2021), collaborative governance ensures that local family literacy programs do not operate in isolation. Without this cross-level, horizontal synchronization, individual awareness initiatives will inevitably fracture and fail to connect with formal state protection networks (Harkins, 2017; Fajri et al., 2021). Ultimately, shifting the analytical and policy focus toward this pre-recruitment, relational ecosystem provides social work scholarship with a transformative framework to negotiate and dismantle trafficking risks long before they become institutionalized within exploitative relations.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research shows that Trafficking in Persons (TIP) vulnerability in West Java does not emerge as a deterministic result of structural hardships; rather, it is recursively generated through a multi-layered, fluid feedback loop where macro-economic pressures collide with a household's immediate capacity to negotiate migration choices (Absor, 2018; Ariadne et al., 2021). By operationalizing a relational framework, this study proves that family protective literacy, integrating legal contract auditing, digital scam validation, and financial risk insulation that serves as the primary micro-mediation node that actively intercepts informal recruitment tactics before they solidify into exploitation (Widiyahseno et al., 2018; Habibullah, 2019). Theoretically, this study broadens the traditional social ecological model by shifting the analytical frontline from reactive, post-exploitation responses to the upstream pre-recruitment phase, mapping the exact cross-level connective mechanisms that prior scholarship frequently overlooks (Barner et al., 2017; Harkins, 2017). By incorporating survivor-centered perspectives, this conceptual architecture redefines the family unit not as a passive locus of blame or a site of moral failure, but as an active agent of cognitive resistance capable of disrupting trafficking networks at the absolute grassroots level (Donohue-Dioh et al., 2020). Practically, these findings demand that the West Java provincial government, local social services (*Dinas Sosial*), and the Anti-Trafficking Task Force (*Satgas TPPO*) pivot away from isolated law enforcement to systematically embed targeted protective literacy modules into regional social assistance programs,

while aggressively expanding Migrant Worker-Care Village (DESBUMI) protocols across chronically vulnerable agrarian corridors like Indramayu, Cianjur, and Cirebon (Shodiq et al., 2017; Fajri et al., 2021). Moving forward, the operational scalability of this proposed model requires a clear validation pathway; future empirical research must deploy quantitative Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to statistically measure the causal impact of protective literacy on non-procedural migration intentions, alongside longitudinal ethnographic field studies to track localized cultural resistance against informal *calo* syndicates.

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