

COMBATTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT AGAINST WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS OVERSEAS: LOOKING AT THE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

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Abstract

Violence against women is a criminal act. It involves not only in personal domain, but also within social arenas. It could be happened in social life, such as the fact of sexual harassment at work. Through qualitative retrospective cross-sectional methods, the study aimed to explore the contextual factors of sexual harassment which have occurred overseas among women migrant workers from Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia. Several factors altogether were identified as logical elements contributing to the existence of sexual harassment, composed of personal factors, relationship, working environment and structural regulation. The poor mechanism of placing Indonesian workers overseas was also perceived as an exacerbating factor to the presence of the conducts. Sexual harassment was more likely happened for female migrants in young age, low skill, and poor language in host countries. Several kinds of dependencies upon employers, such as administrative dependency, social and economic dependencies, and the existence of conflict at work were identified as other precipitating factors to the malpractice.

Keywords: violence, women migrant, health

Introduction

Currently, sexual harassment against women has been acknowledged as public discourse around the wide worlds as a complex, wide and multiple dimensions phenomena. It exposed women's oppression not only in domestic spheres, but also in public ones. It is strongly related to whole context of human lives, personal, family, social, even cultural realms. Thus, the factors underlying of sexual harassment are intertwining and complex as well. It is inevitably illuminating its contextual factors by combining all aspects related to human lives, not only

due to personal trivial matters, but also associated with others wider context. There are several reasons can be mentioned here why sexual harassment against international women migrant workers is interesting to be addressed in, as follows. Firstly, the importance of sexual harassment issue as a form of violation against women rights; secondly, the complexity of consequences of sexual harassment especially on general health and reproductive health; and thirdly, the significance of sexual harassment issue among international women migrant workers

in Indonesian context. A big question needed to be answer comprehensively is how multiple factors contribute to sexual harassment among women migrants? In this paper, the contextual factors can be demonstrated into four aspects. These are female personal resources, social relation between employers and workers, working environment and structural regulation such as cultural norms, and structural law that condone the existence of social harassment in societies. They altogether and integrally are perceived to be underlying factors toward the phenomena of sexual harassment whether happened at the shelters and at work.

The Contextual Factors of Sexual Harassment against Women Migrant Workers Overseas

A. Female Personal Resources

(1) Age and Education

Age and education are two foremost personal characteristics affecting to human productivities. Theoretically, education is one of two other elements, beside health status and level of nutrient, in which develops human capabilities. In regards to human capabilities, the more time they spent to education the more human resources they had. However, on the other hand, people who spent more time for higher education attainment are liable to postpone the chance to enter working lives (Suroto, 1992). This theory also brought idea that young workers tend to have lower education, particularly for those who are living in the low economic status. The above presumption is apparently occurred in the research sites that many women since at young age have entered the working lives as migrant workers.

It seems likely the trend of indecent conducts in regarding to age in which sexual harassment is more likely facing by young women than of older. At young age, women migrants within these two age groups, very young and young age groups have higher vulnerability to be harassed; more than 50 percent of them experienced sexual harassment. The prevalence decreases in the middle age groups in which its percentage of women who got sexual harassment is the same with those who did not. Through the figure above we also can say that the middle age group is turning point of the incident of sexual harassment. Finally the prevalence changes over at the old age group, then, the percentage of none sexual indecent is higher than of sexual harassment.

Such evidence shows that principally the probability of sexual harassment among women migrants is relatively high for young age groups. It makes sense due to many girls and young women came from low advancement situations, poor families, jobless and with little education. They had usually stopped from continuing higher level of education and even dropped out from secondary and elementary school. Then they entered working lives to support their family income. Some brokers in their homeland then took this advantage by playing on the credulity of the girls and young women, such as provoking them to be migrant workers, luring them with sweet promises of a bright future lives without hard work overseas. Through this mode of operandi, many young women are interesting to work overseas as migrant workers. Logically thinking, they are too young to be aware with some risks overseas, they probably have no enough knowledge about their new jobs there, and even the law and social norms. By these

unbeneficial resources, thus, they will have more vulnerability facing some unwelcome conducts, even sexual violations. Particularly for the first migrant workers, they faced numerous forms of exploitation, hardship and even sexually or physically abused by their employers for not performing desired services. It could be happened since the workers did not understand what they have to do as the impact of language and skill barriers.

Some participants explained as well about higher vulnerability for young women in facing kinds of sexual harassment, as follows:

“I think most of employers really like young girls from Indonesia; they said Indonesian girls are good looking and sexually appealed. Of course they can choose young and beautiful women since at the first time of recruitment all of prospective migrants had to attach their photograph together with other personal documents ... then it is normal if the employers ask for young girls ...” (Sri Utm, 24 years old).

“... as I mentioned earlier, Sir, Indonesian women migrants are beautiful, young and sexy, it is normal if the employers like them very much ... then Sir, they often teased and took sexual favour from women migrants ... besides to control us, some of them said that teasing or seducing young girls is the way to rejuvenate or revitalise their power ... and remember, Sir, Indonesian women are well known in Arabic countries ...” (Dtn, 33 years old).

“I do not know, how it can be happened nowadays, Sir, many teenagers and pure young girls (*gadis kecil-kecil, bau*

kencur) are brave to go abroad ... yes too small, I think they are too small to be migrant workers ... of course it tempts to the employer to seduce them ... what do you think, Sir, due to they are still young, definitely, they are beautiful” (Khams, 45 years old).

“... About my story ... It was happened four years ago, I was 20 years old at that time ... he touched my bottom from the back ... then asked to kiss me, and threatened me will inform it to his mother if I refused. It was my fault ... I had no bravery to reject his conducts ... until one time he wanted to have sex with me ...” (Siti Rmlh, 24 years old).

Some quoted opinions above support the presumption of higher vulnerability for young women in experiencing some kinds of sexual harassment during their work. When we notice using different angle, the employers certainly ask for the young and beautiful women as migrant workers through the firms. Returning to women power, they of course do not have true bargaining power over their own body. Due to having a lot of money, the employers could choose women migrants as they like, they could choose any who as they desire, any who they love, and of course, women never refused being chosen by them. How pity they are; how weak they are; where is their freedom; who are rob it? These facts show us how women are marginalised and subordinated by patriarchal and capitalist systems. They thus lived under myriad or countless power, being exploited by capitalism in which put them in very weak position. To make it more simply, women migrants faced some kinds of unwanted conducts was not solely due to their false,

but it was engendered by other big powers. It could be part of patriarchal exploitation and capitalist lives.

Based on respondents' education, almost in each class of education level, the percentage of women who got sexual harassment is higher than of none had. The trend slightly increases until the education level Junior High School (Sekolah Menengah Pertama-SMP), then decreases at education level High School (Sekolah Menengah Umum-SMU). There is no striking evidence, no clue to say the exact relation, either positive or negative relation, between sexual harassment and education as in respondents' age. There is no variance of sexual harassment in the low until medium level of formal education. It means that principally sexual harassment is not a function of education; everyone can be harassed regardless of education attainment. Both literate and illiterate people can be subjected to sexual torment. However, education level could be one indicator of personal maturity. Particularly for women who have high level of formal education such as senior high school, college, and even graduated from university, they tend to have stronger bargaining power than of uneducated people. At least, they are easier in adjusting with new or strange conditions. Perhaps, they also have various ways in coping with unwanted or unbeneficial situation when they worked. In regards to sexual harassment at work, the educated women may have numerous kinds of coping behaviour. That is why, the percentage of sexual indecent slightly decrease at level SMU.

When we dig down to respondents' education, most of them were uneducated women, is approximately only 54 percent of respondents in nine-year enrolled school,

whereas elementary school and dropped out from elementary school were for the rests. Particularly for the poor regions and/or remote areas, education is not personal right rather than social products, it is socially determined. It is related to how local government and the community altogether establishing the education access. When the local government did not provide cheap education for people, it will end up with uneducated inhabitants, thus, which in turn affects to lower human resources in the region. As general thumb of the rule, poverty keeps persisting as the product of uneducated inhabitants. It seems like as a circle system of poverty, where poor regions come to uneducated community; uneducated community will affect to low economic competitiveness and then finally it will end up with poverty over and over.

The existences of poor women in the regions have brought chances for the brokers to provoke them to be migrant workers. The brokers persuaded women by promising good salary overseas without hard work. As mentioned by four qualitative participants below.

“Usually the brokers come to women with sweet promises. They pretend to be women's hero by providing good jobs overseas without hard work. They told women not to continue the study because it is only a waste of time. Moreover, they added, if our education just in secondary school, it was difficult to look for job. That is why; many young girls who just graduated from secondary school and even from elementary school are willing to work overseas. Therefore, the women's zest to continue the study becomes low down. I do not blame them, Sir,

we are poor people, we need money to survive, and we need money in keeping our family honour ...” (Khams, 45 years old).

“Many young girls here are fond of working overseas rather than waste money and time in the school. For me, even I am not graduated from elementary school, I am proud enough for helping my family needs. And one more thing, Sir, now we are living in the modern era, we have to retrieve our family status by much money ...” (Sri Utm, 24 years old).

“For me, no problems, it is good for me due to I am still young, I can get a lot of money in Singapore. I sent a lot of money home and my family proud of me very much. I can help them, buying household implements, buying jewellery to my mother and sisters, it is my time to pay it forward” (Erls, 21 years old).

Those quoted statements mention the significance of salary or income rather than education. It has been also mentioned that money is source of modern lives; money is an instrument to keep family honour. Even small evidence, four statements above signify how rural lives in which normally solid with social and togetherness lives are being contaminated by the advent of modern lives. It tends to transform from social lives into economic or consumerism lives. To make it more simply, the advent of modernisation slightly has changed the social relationship into the capitalism one.

Another factor in regard to women migrants’ education is knowledge about

migration process and job information overseas. Sexual harassment are more likely happen if the firms did not provide enough knowledge about procedure of migration, the step of arranging required document and even job information overseas. Consequently, it also contributes to poor personal readiness among women migrants.

(2) The Compatibility of Skill and Language Training

Skill and language training, like formal education, are the fundamental resources to deal with working lives overseas. The low education led to deprive personal resources of women if the labour sending firms did not provide compatible training. As mentioned previously, the training by which had been given by the firms are far away from ideal apprenticeship. It probably put women in a bad position; for example due to language barrier, women migrants tend to have difficulty in communication with their employers. The inappropriate skill has been given during the training is also influencing the work mechanism overseas, such as getting some difficulties in operating mechanical or automatic equipment. These facts definitely will worsen women’s working lives, and then, it brings more vulnerability for getting difficulties overseas.

“What training, Sir ... I told you, Sir ... there is no training at all ... I do not know may be there is some training in other shelters, have you been there, Sir ... yes you will see many women just wait and wait, yeah ... we just clean the room, cook and wash the cloths every day ...” (Srtmi, 21 years old).

“There are some Indonesian Manpower Agency (Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia-PJTKI) that provided inappropriate training, not optimal training, rather than just trickery training. There are at least two reasons for the existence of mismatch between training in the shelter and jobs overseas. Firstly, it is caused by improper equipment in the training time and working lives overseas. Normally the PJTKI used same equipment for all jobs, house helper, baby sitter and adultery nurse in which sometimes different with the working tools overseas. Secondly, some trainers in PJTKI did not give knowledge and language training in a good manner. They just gave training without thinking about trainee’s understanding. They gave it too fast by tutorial method, and by not using participatory one. I have been in some PJTKI, many women just waiting for calling visa, there was no training at all, some women were performing some domestic jobs there such as cleaning and cooking in the name of training ... yes I think so, they tend to get unwelcome conducts such as physical abused even sexual harassment due to the shortage of knowledge” (Gnw, 42 years old).

“... I took a risk working overseas ... because of my fully stupid, it was misery lives (*bodone ngengklek mung ngalor ngidul koyo kebo*)” (Mstn, 45 years old).

Some quoted statements above support the presumption of the association between incompatibility of training and the

occurrence of sexual harassment at work. The inappropriate and not enough training before leaving for overseas tend to put women in the weak position. Since then women migrants will more vulnerable in getting unwanted conducts during their work.

Language barrier between women migrants and the employers is also predicted as contributing factor to sexual harassment at work. Language is the fundamental way in making good relationship between the workers and the employers. The good language will influence to the correctness actions, when the employers asked for the workers to do something. The importance of good language for women migrants had been explained by some participants as follow.

“... We have to be ready being scolded by house owners due to did not match between what they said and what we did ... some bad experiences were happened to me due to I could not speak Arabic fluently ... sometimes my employer scolded me using dirty words that I could not understand” (Mrym, 49 years old).

“... all of my bad experiences overseas were started from my poor in understanding Arabic language, the PJTKI just gave me module and I had to learn by myself. You know, Sir, at the first month, I had already got slap in my face, because of miss-understanding with my employer’s wife. The employer’s son often teased me using some words that I could not even understand. They called me ... (stopped talking) ... using some dirty words ...” (Snwt, 20 years old).

Language barrier, like mismatch between skill training and type of job overseas, it probably places women migrants in hostile working conditions. Several women's opinions above illustrate the likelihood of getting different form of neglects, exploitations and kinds of abuses such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse by reason of language obstacle. The good language does not only associate with women ability to behave or to perform as their employers want, but also relates to the less vulnerability in getting above conducts. Through this reason, it is naïve if PJTKI just gave impromptu or unserious language training. In the similar meaning, it is essential for PJTKI to have a good system to provide language drill for women; and there is no reason for women studying foreign language without any guidance.

Looking back to the way of PJTKI provide language training for women migrants, most of women were disappointed and mentioned that the language training was far away from enough. There are only 16.86 percent from respondents who got proper language training. When we think carefully with this fact, it comes up with idea that actually language barrier is not solely women's fault. Women principally do not want to work overseas by lacking speech, as they do not want to be harassed caused by language barrier. Many of them is also very upset by putting blame to the way of PJTKI provide language training. With refer to the existence of patriarchy system and capitalist ways in the worldwide; the less chance for women migrants to have good language training is one of repercussions of such myriad ideologies in the body of PJTKI.

B. Social Relationship

According to socio-structural theory, social relationship referred to human relations, is not only covering to personal relation but also social relation in the wider level (Bohannan, et al., 1973). It further can be divided into two categories: firstly, personal and/or family relations; and secondly, social and/or structural relations. Personal relations normally take place within family or inheritance connections such as father and daughter, sister and brother, husband and wife and so on. Meanwhile, social or structural relations more accentuate at hierarchical relations as impact of different social position in societies such as men and women, the poor and the riches, lay people and royal or majestic people and the like. It can be happened as well by reason of different structural position in term of economic relation such as workers and employers, or, housemaid and house owner. These kinds of relations are alleged in contributing kinds of neglect, exploitation and violation in societies.

With the discussion of social relationship, these following sub-topics would like to analyse how women behave socially within social living conditions whether in their own family or overseas. Due to patriarchal systems keep vividly prevailing in the broad social lives, it tends to put women in a weak position compared to men. Under the patriarchy system, whether in the domestic or public sphere, men tend to have superior access to, and mediation of, the resources and rewards of authority structures inside and outside the home. Therefore, the sequence sub-topics may disclose kinds of exploitation and violation against women since at their own home such as domestic violence until in their workplace as sexual harassment.

(1) Family Support before Leaving for Overseas

The women willingness to migrate and to work overseas simply cannot be separated from the family approval. In term of decision to migrate overseas, the parents for those who still single, and/or, husband for those who had already married are playing the important role in determining women to be migrant workers or not. Due to strong family relation, it is difficult for women freely make decision to migrate by themselves without parent or husband approval. It is truly influenced by social norms in which parent; particularly father, and husband are the “holy person” as leader of household. As it was being taught socially whether through the family lives, religious lessons, or even in the school, women have to follow their leader, that is, their parent or their husbands. In this sense, father or husband normally has a big power in control or give permission for daughter or wife to work abroad or not.

“I lived in the family which strongly held religious rules. It is compulsory for me asking permission from my father and/or my husband when I want to go outside in a long time or to do the big business, such as buying the luxury goods. It had been taught since I was young. Most of our family members have accepted by those rules. That is why, the family and/or husband support is very important for me prior to leaving for overseas. I will feel free working outside with good mood due to sorts of approval. At the beginning, my father did not allow me to be migrants workers, although my

husband accompanied me abroad. I got consent from my father by some approach. I had to convince and assure him many times. I persuaded him nicely and patiently that our going was not solely seeking money, but also in the purpose of performing religious pilgrimage to Mecca. Yah, finally my father approved us leaving for Saudi Arabia ...” (Ummu Rsydh, 26 years old).

“I discussed a lot with my husband before going to Saudi Arabia. I told him we might be having a better economic life after working from overseas. Yes of course, Sir, I need his permission, yeah ... it is the best thing for me, and it makes me feel free working in Saudi ...” (Ytn, 35 years old).

“I decided to be migrant workers after getting approval from my husband. I had two children already. I need a lot of money to grow and educate them. My husband was a small peasant where the farming products were far away from enough to support all household expenditure ...” (Mrst, 36 years old).

Three statements above signify how parent or husband has significant authority over women in making decision of migration. Apart from the existence of patriarchal system in the community lives, it also mirrors of social support from their families. Some respondents thought that social support was very important for their accomplishment overseas. In a wider context, the concept of social support comes from a concept of *pangestu*¹ in Javanese societies. It refers to family and elderly

¹*Pangestu* literally means “bless, approval”. It refers to the good wish from the superior people to the less superior, such as from the elderly to the younger, from parent to children, from husband to wives and so on. Normally the less superior people ask the good wish to the superior people.

approval which keeps persisting in the heart of villagers. Listening to the traditional leader, the concept of *pangestu* can be understood from the narration below.

“*Pangestu* is an honoured Javanese concept. Historically this concept was belonging to royal families and religious leaders. Used to be in the Kingdom era, the *kawula* or lay people in the certain time went to the *punggawa* or the royal people to ask their wish or bestow. The lay people at that moment were perceived by such a good wish then they will have easiness, the luck and good blessed from Allah. It is happening continuously along with the time period. Since then this kind of tradition keep persisting yet, you see now, Sir, it is not only for royal family or religious leaders but also for all of the people such as “visiting tradition” after performing Iedul-Fitri festival ... yes, generally from the lower social status to the higher one, such as from the younger to the older, from wife to husband, from child to parent, from employee to employer and so on. Yes ... this is social rites, even now it becomes national agenda, we can not judge it is right or wrong ... yes Sir, they perceive it is good for their fortune, therefore many prospective migrants came to their older relatives asking the *pangestu* before departing overseas ...”(Sbri, 60 years old).

The relation between social support and sexual harassment may not really clear. There are no enough clues to judge the more social support the less chance of sexual harassment overseas. Since social support is abstract matters; it is difficult to measure

its power in the reality, it truly depends on women’ beliefs. Some women migrants fully took into their soul in accordance to the significance of family and/or social supports to their success abroad. They believed that social support came from the religious leader or the *dukun* (traditional shaman) was useful and had a strong power to protect them from bad evil. It is no doubt if some women tend to put blame on themselves, particularly for those who migrated overseas without asking social supports from their families or relatives.

“... It might be, my failure might be because of my sin to my parent, I determined leaving for overseas by myself. I just wanted a lot of money without thinking of family approval. I made a big mistake. It had happened already, I worked in misery conditions, even I had not finished the contract...I returned home after working in Saudi for 11 months. I begged their forgiveness, my father and my mother, I better stay home, listen to their wisdom...” (Snwt, 20 years old).

“Yet, I have undergone misunderstanding with my husband. Actually since at the beginning my husband disagreed with my decision working in Taiwan. However, I had unwavering conviction, and then I determined overseas by myself. He told me living in Taiwan was not good for my future, a bit free and hedonism lives, he was afraid if I did infidelity to him. Yes, alright, we just got married, my son was still babyhood. It was my fault, I got some bad experiences due to my sin, I want to get back my usual life ...” (Mnjh, 25 years old).

“Sorry Sir, this is my personal clandestine, I do not want they put blame on me when they knew my bad experience overseas. This is all that I could explain to you, yes ... I got some sexual slur, just normal conducts, I think ... but it is my fault due to I decided migrating abroad by chance ...” (End P, 21 years old).

(2) The Experiences of Domestic Violence and Initiation of Migration

The existence of domestic violence such as household disharmony indirectly has association with unwanted conducts at work. It is understandable when we look at the initiation and purpose of migration. For the married women, some conflicts in the household and even broken home can be the initiation of working abroad. When the household tranquility is broken, some women may overcome those problems by being migrant workers. Meanwhile, for the unmarried women, some personal matters such as violence by elderly, broken heart, and separated with boyfriend may become the precipitating factors of migration. Some participants reported as follows.

“... My decision to work overseas started when I had quarrelled frequently with my husband. He was angry frequently, particularly when his money was run out. He told me how good the economic condition for those who returned from overseas, they had many belongings, even a good house. He impelled me to work overseas instead of helping him in the farming land. He imagined one time we could buy motorcycle, land, television and

even build a “pictured-house”. He scolded me loudly, even known by our neighbours when I refused it politely. Thereafter finally I decided to be migrant workers” (Mkt, 37 years old).

“... He left me after having personal affair with other woman when he worked in Saudi Arabia ... Sir, I divorced with my husband soon after he came back from overseas ... (she inhaled deeply, sobbed, silence). It forced me to become migrant workers without fresh consideration, I was leaving for overseas in order to escape from my problems ...” (Dtn, 33 years old).

“I worked overseas due to being abandoned by my husband. I was disappointed with him very much since ... (sighed) ... I heard that he had another woman. By then I often got either physical or emotional abuse from him. The peak of his conducts ... (sobbed) ... he shunned me out home. Since then ... (stopped talking) ... I had no way of lives until my friend introduced me to a middleman ... and then I worked in Saudi, a place that I have never heard before. Can you imagine, Sir, how I lived there; I had no experience and did not understand about Arabic language. I deserved some scolded words from my employer by then ...” (Krm, 30 years old).

Some participants interviewed reported that personal conflicts would have result to the lack of personal readiness when they worked abroad. Except of personal readiness, personal conflicts are also linked with the worse working lives. Under psychological

trauma of personal problems some women migrants might be not able to work freely; felt be guilty, and sometimes got anxious feeling. By such unreadiness, some mistakes during their working mechanism might be happened. As in social support, the migration that have been forced by some personal matters either happening in the household or personal intimacy relation may produce kinds of unwanted behaviour from employers. Several qualitative participants explained sort of correlation below.

“I saw some young women performing repeated migrants with reason of household disharmony, after a couple of months at home, they then migrated abroad again. Some of them might be dislike with the way their husband treated them. I think they became more modern people, having different way of lives, or may be their husband did not give her freedom of thinking after coming back from overseas. When it comes to serious conflicts, it may force women to be migrant workers again. Yes, they might get some unwanted conducts during their work due to personal reluctance” (Sbri, 60 years old).

“... I think ... but it was my fault due to I decided migrating by chance ... I had serious problems overseas. I deserved it due to my sin. I got some sexual offence by my employer during my work. I hated him very much; however, I had no power at that time. He seduced me ... teased me ... I never forgot it ...” (End P, 21 years old).

C. Social Relation at Work

Social relation at work constitutes the valuable aspect involving to working atmosphere. The good social relation intra and/or inter between worker and employer will bring a conducive working lives. However, given that social or structural relations more accentuate within hierarchical relation due to different structural position, thus, it comes to “the weak” and “the strong” at work. Thereafter, the worker is attributed to “the weak” and the employer is recognised to “the strong”. In regard to working relation, the employer has power and authority to oversee and even to control the worker. Within this kind of relation, some unwanted treatments, exploitation and violation might be occurred.

(1) Personal Dependencies

Most of informant reported that their employers retained all of the required documents of migrant workers. There is a simple reason; it has been negotiated between labour users and labour agents both in receiving and sending countries, the labour users have big autonomy over women migrants since they paid for all women expenses. In order to avoid unwanted behaviours, such as women flee outside the home, undertaking disloyal acts, and even performing offensive conducts, the employers thus have to keep women’s documents. It is a gross violation of labour rights, thus, forces women’s dependencies upon their employers.

“Since at the first time women arrived in the host countries, the foreign labour agents asked for their passports. Afterward, the labour agents gave those passports to their employers,

and then the employers kept the passport until finish the job contract. This mechanism is the way to control over women's lives. By then, women migrants always depend on their bosses and no way to escape or run out from the jobs ..." (Gnw, 42 years old).

"Particularly for domestic helper such as housemaid, baby sitter and adultery nurse, they did not keep the passport during their work. Normally their employers stored and retained that document. They would give it after women finished the job contracts. I think this is the strategy to control women's obedient ..." (Khams, 45 years old).

"It is normal, Sir, it has been acknowledged, and many people knew it, housemaid in Saudi never kept their passport. We have to give it to our bosses. It was the rule there ..." (Dtn, 33 years old).

The presence of women's personal dependencies under their employers can also be seen through women's accommodation. Especially for those who worked in domestic sphere as house helper, they tend to live together with their employers. Within this situation, the employers can control women's activities easier. Almost 95 percent of respondents reported that they were living at the same house with their employers. The rest five percent explained that they were living in the rented house or dorm. Most of women who lived together with their employers were working in the Middle East countries; meanwhile those who lived in the rented house or dorm were working in Asian

countries. By looking at their jobs, the later is normally working as entertainment officers and factory workers.

The extent of sexual harassment overseas is presupposed having correlation with women's personal dependencies, whether administrative papers or the place of accommodation. These kinds of dependencies surely put women in lesser status under their employers. They tend to accept whatever conducts they got, since they did not handle the passport and no other places to stay. It is difficult for them to run away from home due to unknown geographically and fear being arrested by police. That is why; some participants endured and struggled in facing some bad experiences abroad.

"... Then he performed some disgusting conducts over me, even not have sex with him ... it made me feel dirty ... really dirty ... yes of course he had big power over me, he kept all of my documents, I had no bravery to react strongly against him at that time ... yes it was my fault" (Yshd, 27 years old).

"... One day, my little boss impelled me to clean his room ... then ... (she stopped talking again) ... he touched my bottom from the back ... then asked to kiss me, and threatened will inform it to his mother if I refused. It was my fault ... I had no bravery to reject his conducts ..." (Siti Rmlh, 24 years old).

The facts above are identical with previous studies of factors influencing to sexual harassment at work. Women migrants gave response against abusive behaviour by keeping silence due to lesser power compared to the perpetrators, personal and economic dependent to the harassers, and

fear of losing their incomes (ILO, 2001). It has been confirmed statistically that the majority of assailants are their employers, person who attributed having superior position compare to women migrants. Women migrant workers tend to accept sexual demeanour as they do not have any other choices, they cannot afford of losing job and income. The situation is more severe particularly for women migrants working in domestic service, in which they have to work at isolated area, high personal and economic dependencies.

(2) Conflict at Work

The existence of conflict at work either within personal relation between employers and their family members or structural relation between the worker and the employers will lead to hostile working conditions. The lateral conflicts between employers and their wives, for example, will be accompanied by some unwanted conducts facing by women migrants. In addition to household problems, those sorts of conflicts might be caused by wives' jealousy due to their husband taking care much to women migrants. A number of participants narrated their experiences as follow.

"I got problems overseas since at the fourth month, used to be all of the house members were very kind. My 'mam' (employer wife) gave some nice cloths when I came at their home. However, it changed when my employer intended to marry again with another woman. Since then my 'mam' often abused me. One day her son spitted on my face, slapped my face due to I got quarreled with my 'mam'. Actually my employer defended me

well, he treated me nicely, and he scolded back to his wife when she scolded me. I never got my salary because my 'mam' asked it back after I received it from my employer. She and her son will scold me, spit on my face, and threaten to kill me if I refused it. I had ever forced to dress off due to put money in my bra ... my 'mam' often expelled me away from her house ..."

(Ytn, 35 years old).

"... I felt something change at the second years ... sorry I did not know actually, but perhaps a problem happened between my big boss and little boss. It brought big impact to me, my little boss seduced me rudely, even almost raped me" (Siti Rmlh, 24 years old).

"Just after getting quarrel with my boss, my 'mam' called me and slapped my face, she scolded me angrily, she knew if her husband taking care much on me, then she did not like if I heard about their matters, my 'mam' asked me away when she clashed with her husband ..."

(Krmj, 30 years old).

Aside of lateral conflict, women migrants mostly faced either physically, emotionally or sexually abuse because of structural conflict. The working lives overseas have been posed women in the low position, thus, unwanted conducts easily happened whether accidentally or by other circumstances. Many women reported that they got unwanted treatments unplanned and accidentally. It directly occurred and women never thought it before, even did not know the reasons behind, why they got such conducts. On the other hand, some of them explained as well

that they had already had internal conflicts with their household members for a long time, and it was followed by abusive conducts. Due to some difficult situations, they endured and tried to keep working in such hostile places. Some participants described as follows.

“... No one cared on me during my work; I had no hoping at that time. Since at the first month, I got violence from my employers. I faced physically and sexually abuse day by day, month by month. I endured there until eleven months ... Sir, they treated me not as human being, they called me not in my real name, when they wanted me to do something then they screamed on me ‘dog do this’, ‘crazy girl do that’ and so on ...” (Snwt, 20 years old).

“I had quarrelled many times with brother’s boss, it had been happened since the second month ... Sir, I was angry when he scolded over me, I did not want such conducts, I scolded him back. By then, almost once a week he seduced me. At first he just touched my hand, and then touched my shoulders. One day he touched my breast when I quitted from the bathroom, I scolded him crazy dog, dirty dog, and afterward he did not come until four months later. After few months did not come, he called me nicely and politely, he asked me to have dinner with him, then I asked for permission from my boss, we were two neighbours. He teased me again in his house, but I did not take it seriously. He came to my boss as usual, touched my hand again when I served him a cup of coffee. He came to my room, lured me by promising

a lot of money if I was ready to have sex with him. I slapped his face rudely and threatened to kill him, then he run away outside of my room ...” (Mstn, 45 years old)

Both lateral and structural conflicts above show us that women face many difficult situations during their work. When we carefully think on some rumours about women migrant workers, some people argued that unwanted conducts facing by women migrants were due to women fault, because women did not work hard, did not obey to the rules, and even performed the offensive conducts against their employers. Some evidences above show the contradicting realities, women are far away from those accusations, in the contrary, women work very hard, obey to all rules, and endure from some abusive conducts. The root of unwanted conducts, including sexual harassment is some dependencies upon their employers which in turn put women in more difficulties. It is necessary to need serious endeavours to empower women migrants by providing social support, advocating programs, and even state interventions.

D. Working Environment

(1) Occupation and Place of Work

Woman who engage in domestic workers usually work in the confined place, have little chance to contact with other people, have no precise of working time and low access of information. The above description shows sexual harassment is more likely happened in the domestic jobs rather than of public one. Even small evidence, the percentage of women facing sexual harassment for factory workers a bit lower

than those of housemaid and baby sitter. Besides being vulnerable for sexual demand, they are also less likely to take action; it is at least caused by two reasons, firstly, far away from their homeland; and secondly, the difficulties in finding alternative work if they are dismissed. As it was described by some participants below.

“Some of my participants reported that they had a tendency to be harassed, to be subjected to sexual demands, because they lived together with their employers, they need jobs there ... I tell you, Sir, most of women just kept silence when they got sexual harassment, it is part of their resistances against difficulties working conditions abroad ...” (Gnw, 42 years old).

Still from the same description, the percentage of survivors for those who worked as baby sitter is quite high. It is almost eight out of ten women which were working as baby sitter having probability to experience sexual harassment during their work. When we elaborate this fact into deeper, it could be understood by two explanations: firstly, the context of work and secondly, intensity of meeting with the perpetrators. Regarding to the context of work, baby sitter is the job that needs a lot of careful actions. Women have to take care very much to the baby, such as feeding, changing the cloths, and even holding or hugging carefully. Most of women had worked as baby sitter reported that they often got sexual seduction by their employers or employer relatives. It was happened at the time when women carried the baby. Some insulting actions, such as touching arms, touching shoulders, touching

waist and even touching women's breast were happened when the employers wanted to take the baby from women's hold. In such situations the employers would take chances to tease women. For the second explanation, women migrants are more likely facing sexual harassment due to intensity of meeting with their employers. Working as baby sitter, women have to be ready night and day, taking care to the baby all the time. Normally the employers would see their baby very often, either in the morning or after coming back from office. Even at night time, when the baby was crying, the employers probably would give their baby to the women. It comes to frequent meeting between the employers and the women, thus, tends to more chances of unwanted sexual conducts toward women migrants.

“According to my job contract, I worked as a housemaid. However I had to do everything overseas such as cleaning, washing, cooking and also as baby sitter. I faced some sexual harassment from my employer and also his father. The father of my employers usually teased me when I worked in the kitchen. He touched my bottom, my body, my hand, and even hugged me from the back when I hold my employer's baby. My employer was also touching my hand, my body when he gave to or took his baby from me. It was difficult for me to run away from my employer and his father ...” (Nnk Wdynti, 18 years old).

“... He had more chances to see me ... he took a chance, teased me when I hold the baby, I just scolded him, it was difficult to away ...” (End P, 21 years old).

Another aspect in regard to context of work place is destination countries. It has been acknowledged that sexual harassment could be happened everywhere. It cannot be determined by different countries. However, due to each countries has different regulation, the different destination may come with various magnitude and contextual factors of sexual conducts.

There is a possibility of domestic harassment in the Middle East countries and public harassment in the Asian countries. Mostly perpetrators of sexual harassment in the Middle East countries are the employers and employer relatives, meanwhile perpetrators in Asian countries are known people and unknown people, but not their employers. Most of respondents reported, it could be happened due to the existence of day off or holiday each weekend in Asian countries. As already explained, women migrants had chance to go outside at the day off, and normally they went to some public space to have relaxation such as shopping, were walking around and sightseeing of the city, went to discotheque and other public entertainments. By that way they tend to get some indecent behaviors outside, and the perpetrator can be their friends and unknown people. They also added that normally sexual harassment happening in the public sphere was minor conducts, such as teasing, wooing, touching hand, touching arms, and giving mobile phone number. Those sorts of conducts were taken place in the street, bus, galleries, mall, supermarket, and the like.

“... when the day off or during weekend sometimes we walked around together, just got relax, avoiding burden mind, and then we could share each other

about our works while taking a walk or sightseeing in the mall or supermarket ... I often got verbal harassment such as whistling, said hallo girl ... pretty girl, teasing and wooing ...” (Stn, 30 years old).

“I prefer works in Asian countries rather than in Arabic countries, when I was in Singapore, I took pleasure in the way of lives there very much, we had day off every week, we could gather with other workers in the public lives ... yes I think it is normal, some guys made jokes, gave mobile phone number to me and also my friends when we took a walk or just sightseeing in the city ... yeah ... part of young lives ...” (Erls, 21 years old).

(2) Access to Social Support

Social support is support accessible or assistance to an individual through socialites to other individual and groups (Sarafino, 1994). Social support can be seen though five major types:

1. Emotional support, such as empathy, caring and concern toward the person. Emotional support will provide a sense of comfort, being loved and sense of belonging to other person.
2. Esteem support, refers to people's expression, positive regard, and encouragement toward others ideas and/or feelings.
3. Instrumental support, refers to kinds of direct help
4. Informational support refers to directions, suggestions, advice to

other person. It normally relates to decision making process.

5. Network support, refers to social relationship such as providing a sense of membership in a group of people who share interests and social activities.

In prevailing to women migrants, social support is very important mechanism in giving information, knowledge, assistance and encouragements to cope with women's problems. The extent of social support probably gives more power to women when they faced some indecent behaviour. Women migrants working in a place with limited social support tend to endure from kinds of exploitation and violation. Women who work in isolated place have no chance to other place and under employers' authorities, shown by dark bar, tend to have higher prevalence than of those who have chances to social supports, shown by white bar. The limited social support is mostly happened for women migrants in the Middle East countries. It is no doubt since their employers did not allow them to go anyplace without employers' consent.

"At the beginning they just tried to tease women in which it constituted as the way to mark out women's responses ... later on if women did not react strongly ... it increased to other conducts ... such as touching women's hands or women's arms while gave instruction to women migrants ..." (Mstn, 45 years old).

"As I told you, women have no power in front of *majikan* (employers). They controlled us all days, we could not go anyplace. I am sure most of women

keep silence, accept it as normal conducts when they got some kinds of violence. As in my experiences, I did not take seriously for the minor conducts; I did not know the place to stay if I run outside home ..." (Ummu Rsydh, 26 years old).

Two quoted statements above show that the limit of social support also influences to the way women giving response when they faced sexual harassment from their employers. Due to lack of power, women tend to suffer and accept the sexual favours as normal conducts. Thereafter intensity of the conducts perhaps increases into severe abusive actions.

E. Structural Regulation

Sexual harassment in a wider context has been perceived as multiple dimensional issues, encompassing structural and cultural norms as dominant factors contributing to such conducts. In the broad social arenas, the continuation of patriarchy system has condoned kinds of coercion over women in the favour of men superiority for resolving conflict and maintaining family honour. It means that in the worldwide level, the hierarchical gender relations through patriarchal institutions and cultural norms are integrally associated with the perpetuating of sexual harassment in societies.

Several recent cross-cultural studies suggest that hierarchical gender relations such as patriarchal institutions and cultural norms are integrally related to violence against women. There are at least four structure-cultural aspects conspiring to perpetuate abusive behaviour toward women (Heise et al., 1999): firstly, cultural systems

that legitimise violence, male control of female behaviour; secondly, economic structures that disempowering women; thirdly, legal system that discriminate against and fail to protect women; and fourthly, political realities that ensure by which women's needs and concern are marginalised in the corridors of power (see Figure 1).

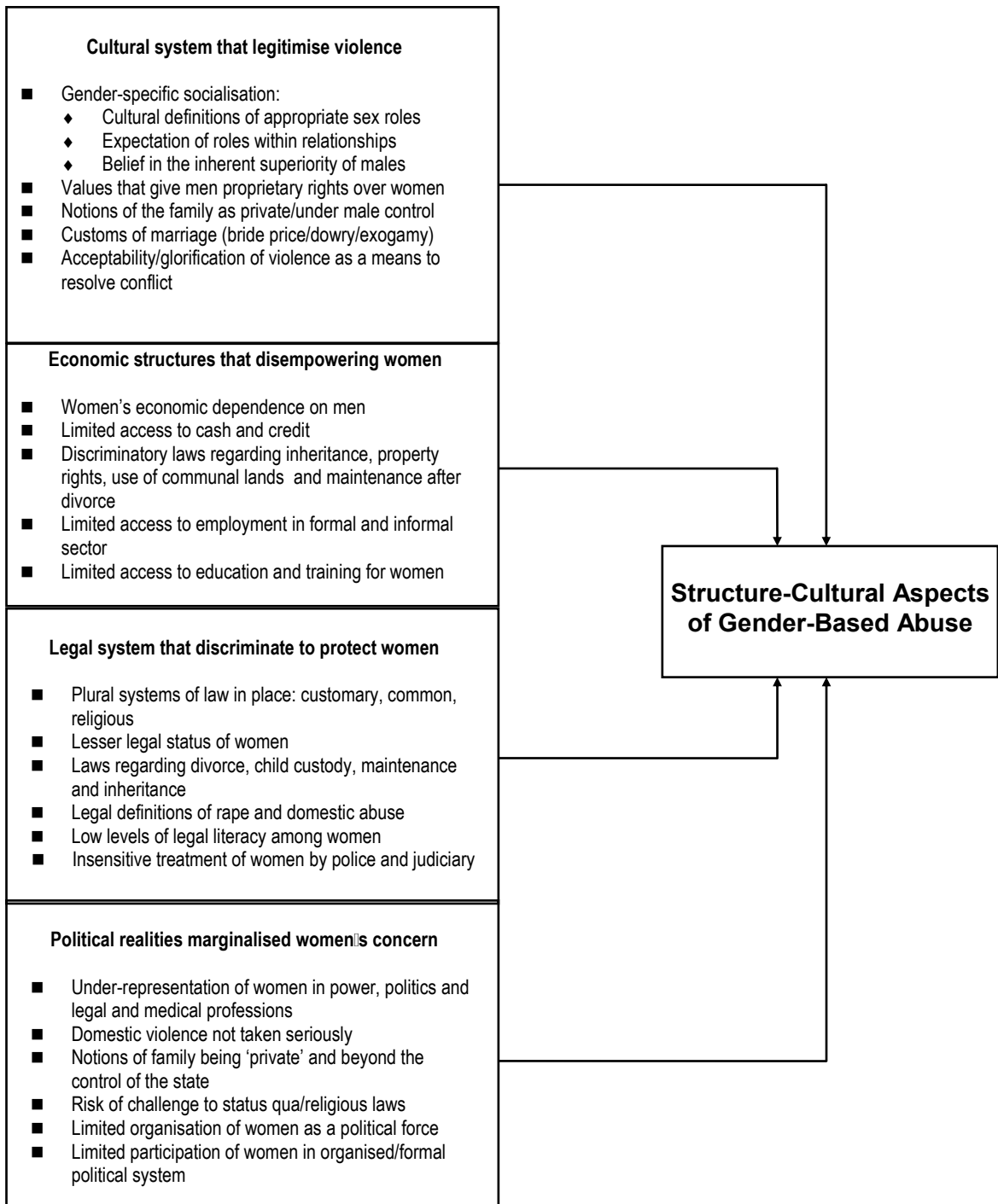
In prevailing to cultural norms in the host countries, especially Arabic societies have normally put family honour in accordance to patriarchy and structural pyramidal relations. About the difference sexes, men are greater and superior to women, whereas, in the social structure, father and/or husband in the top of pyramidal hierarchy, then followed by mother; males children; female children and lastly 'servants or housemaid' in the lowest position. Yet, during social and working lives, women migrant workers working in domestic sphere such as housemaid, baby sitter and nursemaid are perceived as the 'servants'.

"... according to my own opinion, Sir ... yes ... it is probably because of government law there that actually did not allow men met with women face to face directly or in personal relation, as my experience. I worked as a house cleaner, it was ruled that I could not talk directly with my man-employer (*majikan laki*) ... then if I wanted, and/or said, something I had to pass it through my woman-employer (*majikan putri*). As well, when I would like to serve a cup of coffee to my employer, I had to pass it through or quickly out of his room after being served. Yes ... this is the rule there, but Sir, because they are human being, some of them disobeyed the rule as well. Many employers misinterpreted with the rule,

just because they hardly ever seen women directly ... then when they had chances, for example with their housemaid, moreover, housemaid from Indonesia, it would end up with kinds of sexual harassment ..." (Spn, 37 years old).

A quoted statements above demonstrate that actually patriarchy system vividly exists in Arabic social lives. As it mentioned previously, normally Arabic families are using patriarchy pyramidal hierarchy as a basic concept of social and family relations. The father and/or husband as leader of family usually have big authority to control and manage over their family and social lives. The wife then joins husband's kin group (*patrilocal kinship*) and the children take father's surname (*patrilineal descent*). Husband or father has the top position in the pyramid of authority, as household controller and breadwinner. It reinforced socially and structurally, thus, father and/or husband become the lord of the family. It means that father and/or husband are accessible to play the important role in the "domestic sphere" as well as in "public sphere". By contrast, the mother assigned the role of house wife, and then she has become annexed to her husband. Whereas women migrants as housemaid or 'slaves' assigned to the lowest position in the family structure. Through capitalist mode of production, the slaves could be sold to and be brought from as employers desired. The high incidence of sexual harassment against women migrant workers is the repercussion of their lowest status, due to both of patriarchy system and pyramidal hierarchy.

Different with structural regulation in the Middle East countries, culturally South East Asian countries put complementarily



Source: Heise, et.al., 1994 with some revision

Figure 1 Structure-Cultural Aspects in Societies Perpetuating Gender-Based Abuse

between men and women in societal lives. The relation between men and women was more emphasised on complementarities rather than opposition and authority based on rank rather than gender so-called as “central-

periphery schemes” as product of “political geography of potency” (Blackburn, 2001; Bond and Phillips, 2001). Within marriage tied, traditionally marriage was perceived as “economic partnership” by which wives have

equal status with husbands. Husbands and wives each has their own property, laboured side by side complementarily each other. Societies also gave high dignity and economic power and did not confine women to a “private” sphere. Women had authority to control the household budget, handle household money and their own earnings. Women also inherited paddy fields, land, houses, and agricultural implements. Marriage customs threw further light on the favourable position of women through bridal gifts and wedding expenses to the bride’s parents.

However, the advent of capitalism and modern globalisation has been destroying above schemes. Capitalism and consumerisms lives then forced and drove a wedge between the work place and the home, sending men, as a ‘primary work force’, out into the public sphere and confining women, as a ‘secondary work force’, into the domestic sphere as subordinate position. Social lives by which normally solid with social and togetherness lives are being contaminated by the advent of modern lives. It tends to transform from social lives into economic or consumerism lives and slightly has changed the social relationship into the capitalism one.

In regards to Indonesian culture, Indonesian culture is unique culture that combined a mixture of Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Animistic and Dynamistic traditions in which formed Javanese Culture. Women in Javanese culture are constrained by the traditional feminine ideal that extols the virtues of submission and obedience. Traditionally Javanese culture stated that once a woman gets married to a man, she belongs to her husband and the parents have no more power over her. Once married, a woman is

bound to fulfil the socially prescribed roles of housekeeping, childbearing and support of her husband (Geertz, 1961; Machali, 2001).

The advancement of development in the Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq, Bahrain and others Gulf States is marked by “oil boom” coincides with the booming women migrant workers in Indonesia by 1979-1989. It is understandable when we trace from the ideology of “housewifisation” and “domestication” of women in Indonesia through “Ibuisism concept” in new order era (Machali, 2001). In the “Ibuisism concept”, state gives position of wife depend on husband position, regardless wife’s education, organisational skills, and political inclination. The main duty of a wife as faithful companion is to support the official duties of her husband by creating a harmonious lives atmosphere. Regularly, the wives of all civil servants are expected to join a national organisation so-called *Dharma Wanita*, in which set forth the five duties of women, namely *Panca Dharma Wanita*. These duties are to care for her husband, to care for the household, to care for and educate her children, and to be a good citizen. Women are called the ‘queens of the household’, a symbolic title that does not confer any real power. Becoming a queen of the household is considered by society to be a women’s duty rather than a choice. Therefore, when the job opportunities in most Middle East countries are domestic helpers, Indonesian government through PJTKI places a great number of women migrants overseas.

Closing Remarks

The existence of sexual harassment at work portrays the poor mechanism of international migration process in Indonesia. It is necessary to have favorable mechanisms involving academe, NGOs, labor agencies and government intervention to overcome such problems. Government has to give strong sanction or punishment to illegal labor sending firms. In term of regional political relation, bilateral agreement between Indonesia and receiving countries is crucially needed.

Sexual harassment at work is not merely caused by women's personal resources. The low education, limited knowledge, language barriers and improper information about job opportunities overseas and personal dependencies are the result of patriarchal and capitalist system. Gender inequality is developed and settled in societies which led to mistreatment over women. This big ideology was reinforced from individual, family, society and state levels. It is necessary to build an integrated approach involving community network, legal system, policies, religious elements, NGOs and other community-based groups to implement equal gender empowerment.

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