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THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES IN ENHANCING HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS FOR CHILDREN OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN SABAH, MALAYSIA

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Abstract

From Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) to the children of IMWs, both have encountered challenges, particularly with regard to the rights of the IMWs' dependents. This research discusses more towards fulfilling the needs of the children of IMWs to access education, especially in Sabah, Malaysia. The paper pursues to reveal the multi-centric actors behind the establishment of community learning centres (CLCs), and secondly to explore and discover the process by which these children access higher education during their stay in Malaysia. Data were collected from six informants through interviews to support this inductive research. This study highlights the importance of non-state actors, such as NGOs and IMWs, also known as *Perantau,* in initiating such educational institutions, especially since the limitation of education access for the children of IMWs following amendments to education policy. The *Perantau*'s roles are particularly valuable in understanding social problems and maintaining connectivity with their motherland and community. An NGO also played a significant role in providing educational opportunities, but a lack of government recognition hindered its efforts. Ultimately, government contributions were crucial in establishing better educational institutions.

Keywords: *children of Indonesian migrant workers, community learning centre, education policy, higher education access, Indonesian migrant workers*

INTRODUCTION

The current international system that embraces the modern nation state emphasises state-security, highlighting state sovereignty, non-interference of the state's domestic affairs, and border conceptualisation (Vietti & Scribner, 2013). This understanding is identical to how migration has been classified into two models, namely domestic migration and international migration. Domestic migration refers to a person's movement that does not involve border crossing. Whereas international migration refers to a person's movement that involve border crossing. In the pre-nation state replication in Nusantara Malay Archipelago, such terms did not exist as there was no nation state, no political border, and the community is free to move from one island to another.

The introduction of the term 'migrant workers' in Malaysia can be traced prior to the establishment of Malaysia and the landing of British North Borneo Company (BNBC) in North Borneo (Sabah). Port of Jolo in North Borneo also known as maritime city was a hub where local and international traders from China, Europe, India, Arabs, Bugis, Berau, Bulungan, and Sulu exchanged products (Tarsat, 2018). 'Slavery' practice happened in the early times was used as an extra workforce to collect forest and marine products in North Borneo (Sajok, 2017). 'Labour' was then begun in 1880s when BNBC introduced new products or colonial products replacing the traditional forest and maritime products by importation of workers mostly among people of Java and Chinese from outside of the Borneo Island to work in plantation sector (Cleary, 1996; Lee, 1962). Chinese labourers reached until 50 per cent of the total labourers in the estates during the said time. The other half total labourers were Javanese, as well as other indigenous people. Despite achieving independent, the pattern of importing migrant workers still continue until present as migrant workers from Indonesia in Sabah remain needed as long as the labour-intensive sectors remain (Kaur, 2015; Kurus, 1998).

Evidence can be seen according to Badan Perlindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia (BP2MI) where the data shows that Malaysia constantly remains as the top 3 country destinations among Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs). The Indonesian workers have started moving a long time, since the movement was a part of their traditional culture named *merantau*. Therefore, they often preferred to as *perantau* (Bustami et al., 2021). Certainly, the historical background of migrant workers in Sabah from the pre-colonial to present period plays an important role as a chain and network to understand why such social phenomena occur. Several IMWs build or bring their family in Sabah. This has escalated into a "social problem" of "invisible children" as Malaysian Immigration Act 1959/63 (Act 155),

which states that low-wage migrant workers are not allowed to bring their families or form new families in Malaysia (Loganathan et al., 2022). However, several IMWs irregularly remain to bring or build their family. As a result, their dependents are unable to access their basic human rights. Due to this negligence, Malaysian regulations and authorities do not cover it.

Apart from this, assess to education, is also one of basic rights that should be provided by the Malaysian state. The state initiative of Jakarta through bilateral agreement with Kuala Lumpur, together with several plantation companies, has begun to build a model of educational institutions, known as community learning centre (CLC) in Sabah. However, various CLC are also found outside the oil palm plantation estates and spread rigorously. The existence of CLC educational institution model for the children of IMWs create an opportunity to continue their higher education studies.

Overall, the studies regarding the educational institutions of CLC often conducted by Indonesian scholars, touching the traditional state-centric paradigm in the international relations field, such as state's national interests (Andita et al., 2016; Christie, 2016), bilateral cooperation (Anita et al., 2021; Christie, 2016), soft power in foreign policy (Anita et al., 2021; Hartati & Andawiyah, 2020; Yuvanti, 2021), and educational diplomacy approach (Annisa & Nizar, 2022). Whereas few studies focus beyond the particular paradigm, as Muyamin (2019), in his article contributed advocacy network theory to Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN). Therefore, by using the paradigm of multi-centric as in sociological liberalism, we can dig into the role of the communities within the CLCs and how their contributions and initiatives could influence and lead towards a better future for the children of IMWs. To do so, the first objective of this study is to reveal the multi-centric actors behind the establishment of the CLCs. The second objective is to explore and discover the process of children of Indonesian migrant workers access education during their stay in Malaysia and beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on education institutions and access for children of Indonesian migrant workers in Sabah are integrated with the subject of workers from Indonesia to Sabah. Previous research attached such a co-relation between the large population in Indonesia and the lack of working opportunities available, causing many of them unemployment (Muslihudin et al., 2023). This phenomenon leads them to migrate and to look for working opportunities beyond the territory of their nation-state, which also offers better payment and can reduce the income gap (Andita et al., 2016; Hartati & Andawiyah, 2020; Sholina, 2022). The composition of migration

flow from Indonesia to Malaysia with regards to the discussed subject is significantly dominated by low-educated immigrants as most of the working opportunities in Malaysia, a newly industrialised country, rely heavily on unskilled and semi-skilled workers despite they are not the favourite job for the citizens. Consequently, migrant workers often fill the vacancies. This categorisation of migrant workers refers to unskilled or semi-skilled migrant workers from Indonesia. In Malaysia, the said category is considered foreign workers. How is the existence of migrant workers connected to the issue of children of migrant workers?

The children of migrant workers are not the latest issue, and scholars have discussed it since the late twentieth century, particularly among the earlier established nation states, the European states. Early literature on the particular case (Kvjatkocski, 1996; Steedman, 1979; Steinhausen, 1985) has been discussed in Europe, especially for the states that depend on migrant workers. Another traditional state of immigration in the United States of America through the South-North American migration flow led to a particular discourse in the United States of America. Scholars such as Siegel (1964), Green (2003), and Romanowski (2003) raised the issue of education access for the children of migrant workers in the said state, while Martin et al. (1995) touched on the violent exposure of the children of migrant workers similar to Kupersmidt and Martin (1997) which assessed psychiatric disorder among them and Kilanowski and Ryan-Wenger (2007) touched on their health status. Chinese mainland scholars, meanwhile, often focused on the issue of domestic migration and the rural-urban migration phenomenon (Jin & Jun, 2008; Ka et al., 2011; Qin et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2017).

Causes of the lack of access to education for children of Indonesian migrant workers

The amendment of Akta Perburuhan 2001 and Akta Pendidikan 2001 resulted in undocumented children of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) are no longer being able to attend school as the government of Malaysia. These children, who can enroll in the public schools, are only allowed with the proper documents (Christie, 2016; Fatahillah & Nugroho, 2013). Lasmi et al. (2022) in addition, found that the law is exceptional for children of expatriates, such as children of diplomats and parents, who work with a salary of RM5,000 or above. On account of these challenges, children of Indonesian migrant workers discontinue their education (Husain et al., 2021).

The issue of education access for children of IMWs is also involving parenting issue. Some parents do not understand the importance of education for their children. They prefer their children to help them work rather than go to school (Christie, 2016; Hartati & Andawiyah, 2020). It is preferable as the children's help can increase the family's revenue to cover their family needs. Another different angle was conducted by Asrobudi (2018), who argued that the complexity of the administrative process causes parents who do not prefer to send their children to study. IMWs come to Malaysia to earn money, not to spend their money on documents. In addition, private school costs much higher despite being allowed to have private school education (Arief, 2021).

Major actors involved in accommodating education access for children of Indonesian migrant workers

Muslihudin et al. (2023) in his article specifically studied the role of non-governmental organisation (NGO) named Humana Child Aid Society (hereafter Humana Aid), which was established by the two Danish citizens. In fact, NGOs such as Humana Aid, which was established in 1991, are concerned about the children of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) more than the Indonesian government itself. Besides this, the government of Indonesia also established the Indonesian School of Kota Kinabalu or, locally called Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu (SIKK) in 2008. Other than Humana Aid, informal community associations like Sabah Bridge also play a significant role in facilitating education access by using their social connections in Indonesia to accommodate the CLC graduated students (Muslihudin et al., 2023).

Husain et al. (2021) and Siswanto et al. (2023) discovered the contribution of faith-based organisations in establishing educational institutions for the children of IMWs. While Husain et al. (2021) found that Islamic-based organisations, namely the Indonesian Islamic Foundation Sebatik Island (YIIPS) under the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, and several other religious-based NGOs such as Ar-Rasyid Foundation and As-Adiyah Foundation, which then established Tapal Batas School and Darul Furqan School, Siswanto et al. (2023) noticed the involvement of Catholic-based organisation, known as Basel Church Malaysia which arrived from Switzerland to Sabah in 1881, began to establish educational institution in 2005.

Sholina (2022) included the role of parents and plantation companies in fulfilling children's education access to education other than the government of Indonesia. With arguing that family is the first entry gate of individual's development, the study indicated both positive and negative parenting among

parents of children. Regarding positive parenting, research found that several parents have put effort into completing the documentation for their children to ensure their children can receive their rights. Also, the study found that parents supported the children by supervising their studies and allowing them to join competitions.

Sholina (2022) and Hidayat and Hariyani (2022) found that oil palm plantation companies accommodate the fundamental rights, which include education access for the children of IMWs as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative. Oil palm plantation companies mostly contribute to providing educational infrastructure and collaborating with Guru Bina. Align with this, Consulate General also recruit local teachers, known as guru pamong (Annisa & Nizar, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

This study mainly employs an inductive research strategy as a logic of inquiry of the research. Based on Norman Blaikie's methodology book entitled *Designing social research: The logic of anticipation*, inductive research is among the four research strategies in social research that are referred to in the book (Blaikie, 2000). The inductive research strategy can be considered one of the first door approaches of the researcher, in which the researcher starts the research by exploring the research subjects, that is why this particular research strategy is known as 'exploratory' research (Blaikie, 2000).

The ontological assumption of positivism or inductive is that the universe is made of observable occurrences, in which only the events that can be observed or seen, experienced by the senses, can be treated as real (Blaikie, 2000; Majeed, 2019). This influences the commonsense of social scientists who adopt inductive research as their research strategy, whereby the research relies largely on empirical data as their discoveries after exploring the research subjects rather than the assumption, theorisation, and speculation (Perry, 1927).

Positivism believes that reality or knowledge can be obtained by 'objective' data through the use of human senses, which is empirical methods (Blaikie, 2000; Majeed, 2019). With the objective findings, the findings can be considered for scientific laws or generalisation. The particular statement explains the epistemological understanding of positivism or inductive scholars. In relation to the ontological assumption, where knowledge is diverse and is not stricken by any theory, the epistemological thinking of the inductive scholars says that any data

can be considered as knowledge so long as it is objective and goes through trained observers.

Research data and methods

Qualitative data was taken to complete the research aims. Unlike quantitative research, which tends to conduct test or analysis and requires a certain amount of data, the strength of qualitative data is the focus of the research, in which the researcher deeply dives in explaining the data (Creswell, 2007), emphasising on digging the meanings, regardless the amount or quantity of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The informants, who have participated in this research, are included with informed consent prior to the interview sessions to ensure that the informants are voluntarily agreeing to participate and are fully aware of the research objectives. This research also protects confidentiality and privacy to ensure ethical considerations by not showing the informants' and educational institutions' names.

The involved informants consist of three alumni of educational institutions (Tawau, and Apas Balung), one school headmaster (Tawau), one guru bina (Apas Balung), and one senior manager of private plantation estate (Apas Balung). Choosing these specific informants corresponds to the ability of the researcher to explore the different interpretations from different working positions and complete the management team of community learning centres (CLCs), which are the plantation estate manager (only relevant to CLC Ladang), guru bina, and guru pamong (alumni). Each of these has been given a notice and request letter from the researcher regarding the purpose of the interview prior to the recording. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the informants.

This research involves two CLCs in Tawau, one of which a religious entity owns one CLC, whilst the other CLC is owned by a privately owned plantation estate in Tawau, Sabah, both located at the East Coast of Sabah, Malaysia. Choosing these two particular CLCs follows the existing concept of CLC that are separated into two categories: CLC Ladang and CLC Non-Ladang. CLC Ladang refers to CLC, which is located at the plantation estate and owned by the particular plantation estate. Whereas CLC Non-Ladang described by CLC as any particular plantation estate that does not own. On 13 May 2024, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted in Tawau with one alumni and his/her headmaster, who was also a guru pamong. On 15 May 2024, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were carried out in Apas Balung, including two alumni, who were guru pamong, one manager, and one guru bina.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Informants

Code	Gender	Initial Name	Category	Position	Historical Background
R1	Female	FL	Non-plantation owned	Headmaster	Began since the establishment
R2	Female	RI	Plantation owned	Guru pamong	Alumni of CLC
R3	Male	SK	Plantation owned	Senior manager	Former staff of the plantation estate
R4	Female	NI	Non-plantation owned	Guru pamong	Born and raised in Tawau and an alumni of Christian Association's Kindergarden and Primary school
R5	Female	AR	Plantation owned	Guru bina	Began to teach at CLC in 2022
R6	Female	AF	Plantation owned	Guru pamong	Alumni of CLC

Source: The authors

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into two parts. Part I encompasses findings and analysis for one of the first research objectives, which focuses on exploring the multi-centric actors. Meanwhile, Part II focuses on the second research objective, which discusses the educational path of the children of Indonesian migrant workers in relation to the established educational institutions by the multi-centric actors. Table 2 illustrates actors' differentiations, behaviours, and their contributions to the community learning centres (CLCs) based on the collected data.

Table 2: Differentiation of Actors, Behaviours and Contributions to the Community Learning Centres (CLCs)

Actor	*Perantau* and Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMWs)	Non-Governmental Organisation	Indonesian Government
Behaviour	1) Lives not only as migrant workers but as socially active 2) Sustains the transnational relationship	1) Initiating the educational institution model for invisible children, in line with the organisation's purpose to promote 'education for all' agenda (Pertubuhan Bantuan Kanak Kanak Humana, Sabah)	1) Acts passively in establishing an educational institution 2) Ratifies the community learning centres (CLCs)
Contribution to provide education access of children of IMWs	1) Influencing the faith-based organisation to provide education access for the children of IMWs mainly on the IMWs' colleagues' children	1) Establishing the first model of educational institution in plantation estate	1) Designing the community learning centre (CLC) model
Type of community learning centre	1) Non-plantation owned community learning centre (NPOCLC). Often CLC that is established by actors other than plantation estate falls under NPOCLC category	1) Plantation owned community learning centre (POCLC). Often CLC that is established under plantation estate falls under POCLC category	1) Supports both NPOCLC and POCLC

Source: The authors

Part I: The Multi-Centric Actors

This section illustrates the findings and analysis regarding the multi-centric actors. The explanation includes their behaviours and contributions to establishing community learning centres (CLCs).

Indonesian Migrant Workers' Influences toward Community Learning Centre's Establishment

There is a social phenomenon where a handful of Indonesian migrant workers have worked and lived for a long time in Malaysia. They have a strong influence and are even recognised by many people, especially among those in their immediate area. This study shows that Indonesian migrant workers, who migrate and work in neighbouring country, do not only live for the purpose of working but also have a social life and activities beyond their job scope.

The experience of the Indonesian migrant workers and *Perantau* beyond the working life are much more valuable since they can familiarise and be aware

of their surroundings to understand the social problems that occur within the *Perantau*'s surroundings. This description illustrates how the *Perantau* undergoes into a modern setting after leaving their own area. This social mobilisation allows the Indonesian migrant workers to realise the importance of education.

> Considering this importance, it was a first time that a community leader, an Indonesian, initiated CLC. It frequently happened in this church. There were 4 communities, namelyDusun, Filipino, Chinese, and Indonesian. It happened at that time constantly when this father or community leader was the head of the Indonesian community. He worked together with a nun known as a good shepherd nun, who at that time used to reside in Flores or maybe came from. There was a cooperative relationship the church and Indonesian community. They found that many Indonesian children, especially Flores children, who were in the Holy Trinity church and did not get an education. Initially, these children only received school education on Sundays in the church. (I1) (Translated transcript)

Among the interesting findings in this research about the non-state actor of Indonesian migrant workers is sustaining the connectivity of the *Perantau* with their motherland despite having left for many years to go to another land. Such a connection shows how Indonesian migrant workers are able to maintain their relationship with the left community in their homeland even though they have been living abroad for a long time.

The key person of the initiator lies not in the "good shepherd", who travelled and visited the church, but lies significantly in the role of the Indonesian migrant workers. The researcher in this position believes that the *Perantau,* who works and lives in the particular area, has notified the social issue that occurs within his area earlier than the visitors, who came and visited the area. The study also found that there is a tribal spirit that is still embedded in the souls of Indonesian migrant workers. In this context, the data shows that there is a high level of concern by Indonesian migrant workers towards the situation of their fellow tribesmen known as "Flores" which shows the community of Flores from Eastern Indonesia. Hence, the spirit of the tribe influenced the hesitation of the good shepherd to recommend the initiative of opening Sunday school education for the children of Indonesian migrant workers at the churches near their communities' areas.

In comparing the two CLCs included in this study, it was found that the role of an Indonesian migrant worker was more significant and visible in the

model of non-plantation owned CLC (NPOCLC) rather than plantation owned CLC (POCLC). Based on this study, researchers do not see the important role of Indonesian migrant workers as initiators in the POCLC.

Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) as Initiator but Weak Without the Support of State

Community learning centre (CLC) owned by the plantation estate (POCLC) in Sabah is not a new model. Educational institutions in plantation estates lie in the historical background of the involvement of the non-governmental organisation Pertubuhan Bantuan Kanak-Kanak Humana, Sabah (Humana Child Aid Society Sabah). Previous studies regarding CLC have stated Humana participated in promoting "education for all" through commencing educational institutions since 1991 for the invisible children, including children of Indonesian migrant workers, who work under the plantation estates (Muyamin, 2019).

> Previously there was no CLC here; there was no school for Indonesian children. If Indonesian children wanted to go to school, they would be guaranteed to enter a national school, but the national school could only go up to grade 6. But after that, an NGO appeared and put Humana here. (I2) (Translated transcript)

The NGO referred in the transcript might refer to Humana because it shows that the NGO stated 'Humana' and how it appeared along with a public school. Due to the result of amendment by Akta Perburuhan 2001 and Akta Pendidikan 2001, undocumented children of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) are no longer able to attend school since the government of Malaysia only allow children with proper documents, who can enrol on public schools (Christie, 2016; Fatahillah & Nugroho, 2013). Lasmi et al. (2022) also found that the law is exceptional for children of expatriates, such as children of diplomats and parents, who work with a salary of RM5,000 or above. These causes deprive the children of Indonesian migrant workers of their school (Husain et al., 2021). Since the study was scant in terms of amendment, which might open the opportunity for Humana, to explore this study, it needs to collaborate with the plantation estate to open the educational institution.

However, this shows the disadvantage of Humana NGO for not collaborating with state actors.

> Humana closed in , early 2016 for CLC construction. (I2) (Translated transcript)

> Yes, all of that was the first time used was the Humana school. (I3) (Translated transcript)

Although, Humana had initiated the educational institution initiative, the researcher found that Humana, which had initially initiated it, was forced to close and was eventually replaced by CLC. In this context, the researcher saw that the cause of Humana's unsustainability in providing educational services to the children of migrant workers is due to the lack of recognition of these educational services neither by the governments of Malaysia nor Indonesia.

With the realisation of this agreement between the Indonesian and Malaysian governments to establish CLC, the plantation estate might accept the offer without difficulty, operating the educational institution as the plantation estate already has experience with Humana in managing this educational institution. Humana did not stop operating because of being forced to close, but it happened naturally in the wake of a decrease in the number of students. Parents and IMWs choose CLC more than Humana because the Indonesian government has ratified the CLC's curriculum and has been accepted in Indonesia. Students, who graduate from CLC, will receive the same certificate if they studied in Indonesia.

State Actor as the Core, Supporter and Developer of the Periphery

This study found that the Indonesian government did not initiate the establishment of a community learning centre (CLC) beyond the plantation estate. Based on Informant 2, it appears that it was not the Indonesian government, which acted actively to realise CLC in one of the churches in Tawau, but rather acted passively.

> …then this voice was brought to the consulate, in 2011 it also received a good response from the consulate. So, on July 1, 2011, this CLC was first confirmed, and we opened registration on July 1, 2011. (I2) (Translated transcript)

Despite non-state actors ing from the beginning, state actors remain the core chunk. The researchers here interpret that the non-state actors take the

opportunity after seeing positive educational progress from the Indonesian government in Sabah, with the existence of the Kota Kinabalu Indonesian School (SIKK) and are followed by CLC under the plantation estate. There is a realisation among the initiators of the educational institutions regarding the importance of getting ratified by the state actor. One of the possible significances of the state actor's legalisation of the educational institution is the attraction capability. The support and ratification of the Indonesian government can attract and provide confidence among the parents to send their children to a particular educational institution, higher than a less support and unratified educational institution. The support of the government towards educational institutions also creates a bigger change in sustainability as it often receives potential students. It was mentioned by Informant 1 regarding the number of students whereby even the numbers of candidates exceed the capacity of the educational institution.

> The number of students increases. In fact, when we accept new students, sir, we adjust to the existing quota. For example, for class 1 we take two classes, for example, one class has twenty-five, and the other has twenty-five. If there are too many, we take thirty, thirty. But those who register are usually more. (I1) (Translated transcript)

Ratification by the government is important to ensure the future of education for the children of Indonesian migrant workers. The establishment of hundreds of CLCs in Sabah highlights that education in the current era is not just education alone but knowing how other institutions can accept the education system. So, the support of the Indonesian government towards educational institutions with the replication of CLC is crucial, and this allows challenge to the existing model of educational institutions without the support of the state actor, which Humana NGO runs. This also explains that it is not critical for the core actor to own the whole infrastructure from the foundation to the final layer of the skin, but it is enough to have a support system. In other words, it is not the state actor who owns the educational institution. However, the state owns the educational system of the educational institution.

Part II: The Educational Access' Experiences of Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia

This section illustrates the thoughts and experiences of the children of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs), who went through the education access before and during the establishment of the community learning centre (CLC) model in Sabah,

Malaysia. The data was taken from those informants currently working at the CLCs. Furthermore, they were previously children of Indonesian migrant workers and also studied in Malaysia at the same time.

Higher education access pre-involvement of Indonesian government in Sabah, Malaysia: The underlying factors

The educational access prior to Education Act 2001 amendment in Malaysia was not a part of the social problem at that time within the community of Indonesian migrant workers in Sabah. Informant 4, as a teacher, said that the presence of children of Indonesian migrant workers in public schools is not a rare phenomenon. Nonetheless, quite a number of them are within the mentioned public school.

Researcher	:	… At that time, you could go to a public school. Was it true that many children of Indonesian immigrant workers went to public schools or what?
Informant 4	:	Yes, there are many, in my time there were indeed many.
Researcher	:	In every class?
Informant 4	:	Indeed, in each class. You only have to pay foreign national school fees

The children of IMWs also go through a similar flow as local children where they also participate in national tests such as Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR), Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), and even up to Sijil Tinggi Pendidikan Malaysia (STPM). One difference, which was noted, is the need to pay school fees for foreigners. The provided education access shows that the children of Indonesian migrant workers also have an academic capability as high as that of the other local children. This phenomenon explains that access to comprehensive education, facilities, and the clarity of the education system can positively affect children regardless of their social status. The rich does not need to be even smarter than the poor.

However, the lack of clarity and the greyness of the educational policy for the children of Indonesian migrant workers prior to Education Act 2001 amendment can be seen in the findings, which show that the students were not able to further the studies to higher education, despite having completed their STPM.

Researcher	:	What are the reasons or other motivations that make you want to serve here?
Informant 4	:	We Indonesian children are the ones who are affected, after finishing SPM there is no way to continue to other schools, unlike children now, if they finish SMP they can go back to Indonesia, if we used to finish SPM it wasn't like that, even though I mean, no matter how smart you are, after SPM, I have so many friends.
Researcher	:	The law still allows Indonesian children to attend state schools. So after SPM they can continue studying or what?
Informant 4	:	The highest STPM, that's the highest time in our time

Interestingly, other findings from Informant 2 earlier stated that the students were only able to study until year 6 (primary school). According to Informant 2, the student completed Year 6 in 2007, which he/she was six years after the amendment.

Informant 2	:	…So if Indonesian children wanted to go to school, previously they would be guaranteed to enter a national school, but most national schools could only go up to grade 6. However, after that, NGOs appeared, which included humana here, humana
Researcher	:	What year was that, ma'am?
Informant 2	:	Year…. I forgot what year
Informant 6	:	Because I graduated, there was that in 2007, there was that in 2006

Other findings from Respondent 4 also mentioned the inability of the children of IMWs to continue the study after completing primary school due to the regulation amendment in 2001.

Researcher	:	Ma'am, do you know that at that time, if I'm not mistaken, in 2001 there was a change in the Education Act, what was the situation like for Indonesian children after they found out that they could no longer go to public schools? What kind of phenomenon do you remember?

Informant 4 : If I'm not mistaken, the impact was on my youngest sibling, so he was previously in a government school. But when he wanted to move up to another level, there was already a law.

The researcher found that there are two phenomenon that can be seen in the following involvement of Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu (SIKK) and community learning centre (CLC) in Sabah. The first social phenomenon is the children of IMWs, who were in the transition period to higher education. The researcher found that indeed, the change of the law affects the educational access of the children of Indonesian migrant workers, but it might not explain the story of access to higher education. What about the fate of students who are children of Indonesian migrant workers and have been in the transition period from high school to higher education before the change of the law? Why did the data show that students are not able to pursue higher education? The researcher found that perhaps geographical factors play a significant role in determining their access to higher education. From the perspective of Sabah, access to higher education is very difficult not only for the children of IMWs but also for the local children. The only public university in Sabah, which is known as Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) was established in 1994. During this time, another public university, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Sabah Branch, came into being in 1973, but this particular university specialises only for "bumiputera" students. In other words, it is true that access to higher education for the children of Indonesian migrant workers was more difficult before the establishment of SIKK and CLC, but perhaps, it is not solely because of the social status. In fact, accessing the higher education in the state of Sabah itself during the particular time was not sufficient even for the local students.

The second social phenomenon is the children of IMWs, who were still in the lower education period. Children of IMWs, who were still in primary school, middle school, and upper-middle school, were affected significantly when the law was amended. Notwithstanding, the researcher notes that the students were not immediately dismissed from the school when the new regulation was implemented. Students can still continue their studies until the final year in each type of school, namely primary school in the 6th year, middle school in the 9th year, upper-middle school in the 11th year, and high school in the 12th year.

To picturise the two phenomena, Figure 1 is illustrated to visually describe the phenomenon of the children of Indonesian migrant workers' access to education at the time before the existence of SIKK and CLC in Sabah.

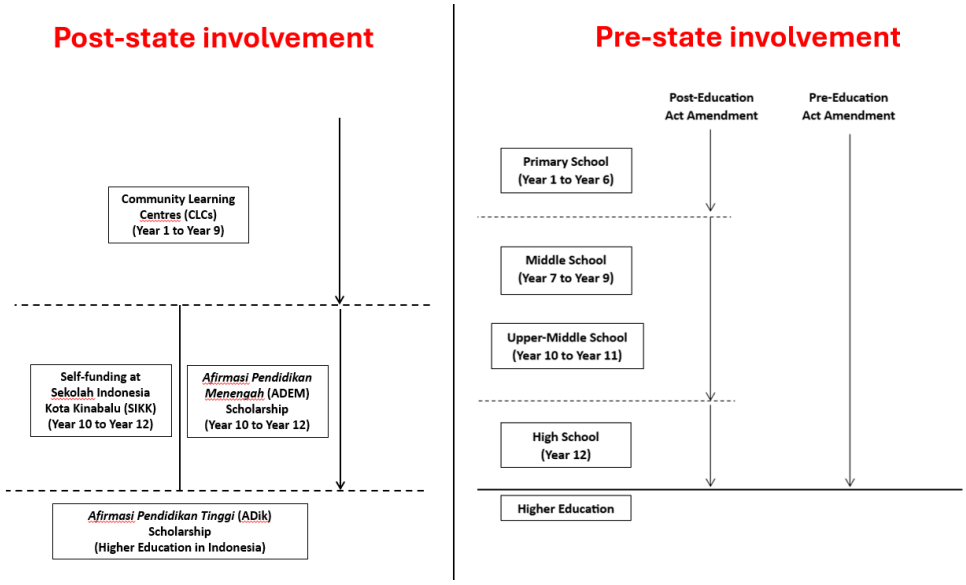

Figure 1: Phenomenon of Children of Indonesian migrant workers' access to higher education prior to establishment of SIKK and CLCs in Sabah
(Source: The authors)

The focus of the present research regarding education access for the children of Indonesian migrant workers often begin when the new social phenomena occurred. In the view of social phenomenon, the existence of SIKK and the beginning of the CLC spread eventually attracted researchers to study this phenomenon. Hence, researchers who study education access for children of IMWs before the amendment of the particular regulation, might still be insufficient as compared to the current context.

Higher education access post-involvement of Indonesian government in Sabah, Malaysia: The two breakthroughs

Access to higher education comes after the formation of Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu (SIKK) and Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in Sabah, Malaysia for the children of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs). The breakthrough to provide access to higher education was made by the initiative of both state and non-state actors. Sabah Bridge is an Indonesian teachers' association in Sabah and Sarawak, which aims to provide opportunities for the children to further their study at the next level of higher education institutions in Indonesia through connections that the Indonesian teachers, who have taught in Sabah previously (Muslihudin et al.,

2023). Meanwhile, the implication of the existence of SIKK and CLCs with government gives wider access for children of Indonesian migrant workers as compared to the previous era.

The ability to improve access to higher education among children of Indonesian migrant workers since the Indonesian government's interference in Sabah through the establishment of SIKK. CLCs is the ratification of certification for the students who went through the educational institutions or took the packages provided by the Indonesian government.

> But if I ever entered a national school, the minus there could only reach level 6. So there is CLC there is Humana sir I also joined the package. Because the Indonesian teacher was there, I joined the package I repeated from package A, Package B, and Package C, and now I have started college. So slowly it also has its positive goodness There is CLC here. So like me who does not return to Indonesia can continue my studies here. (I2) (Translated transcript)

The transcript describes the initial process of the Indonesian government's interference, where the government only began by sending Indonesian teachers to provide special education services to the children of Indonesian migrant workers, who study at Humana schools with certain packages (Paket A, Paket B, Paket C). The packages were educational syllabus specifically designed to provide certificates of completion to students without the need for attending regular classes. Each package has its own equivalency to a certain Indonesian formal education level, e.g. undergoing Paket A program and successfully completing it is equivalent to getting an Indonesian elementary school certificate. During that period, as it was understood that the children of Indonesian migrant workers had already attended either public schools or Humana institutions for several years, the researcher saw the introduction of these packages, which was the first breakthrough for them. Hence, repeating their school journey from the first year might be unreasonable. Though the breakthrough has only managed to provide access to higher education in Indonesia, the initiative has shown significant progress for the children of Indonesian migrant workers. And, this progress align with one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely SDG 4, quality of education. One of the targets of the following SDG 4 is to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university.

> …It's different with today's children, when they finish middle school, they are allowed to go home to Indonesia. … (I4) (Translated transcript)

The existence of SIKK and CLCs in Sabah eventually allowed the second breakthrough, in which educational institutions could offer regular classes from primary to middle school. The selected students have the chance to continue their high school or vocational school in Indonesia through the existing program, such as Afirmasi Pendidikan Menengah (ADEM) from Education Financing Service Center or also known as Pusat Layanan Pembiayaan Pendidikan (PUSLAPDIK). At the beginning of 2013, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology states that ADEM is a high school or vocational scholarship only for children of Papua, and West Papua before it was enlarged to other categories like in 2014 with the introduction of *Wilayah 3T* (3 specific locations) which are frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged, and 2016 reaching the children of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) in Sabah and Sarawak (Jatnika, 2023). Students, who are not selected still have the opportunity to continue their high school or vocational school at SIKK. In continuing their further education, the children of IMWs currently have the chance to obtain an Afirmasi Pendidikan Tinggi (ADik) scholarship. ADik is one of the Indonesian government's initiatives to face certain factors that lead the students to discontinue their education due to economy, social and geography factors in the shape of scholarships to increase the number of Indonesian citizens who can reach a higher education level (Jatnika, 2024). Figure 2 shows the categories of students eligible to apply for ADik scholarship. Children of Indonesian migrant workers fall into "ADik Repatriasi" category.

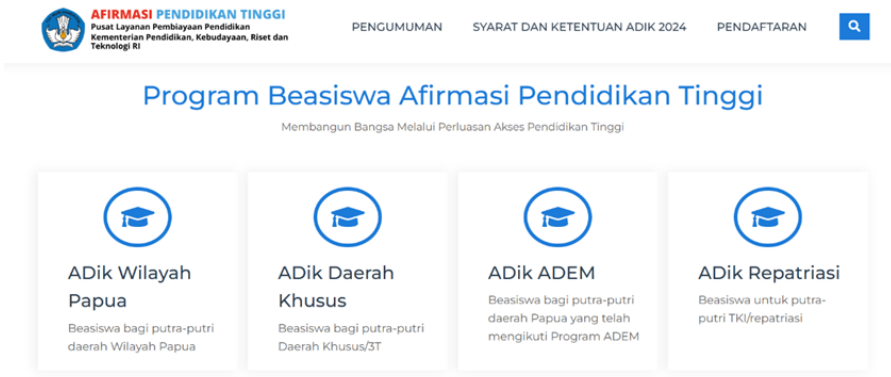

Figure 2: Categories of students who are eligible to apply ADik scholarship
(Source: Afirmasi Pendidikan Tinggi [ADik] [n.d.].)

To sum up, both state actors have given these initiatives through scholarship and non-state actors through connection to provide wider access to higher education, such as universities and vocational institutions, which have become approachable after the namely 2 breakthroughs. Both breakthroughs actually emphasise the importance of ratification. Because the current international system is based on the concept of the nation state that each nation state is independent, ratification or acceptance by one country of another is very important.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study elucidates the multifaceted challenges and opportunities encountered by children of Indonesian migrant workers (IMWs) in Sabah, Malaysia, pursuing higher education. The Community Learning Centre (CLC) model's designation plays a key role in bridging educational gaps for Indonesian migrant workers' children.

This research also highlights the importance of the non-state actors' influence and the contribution to initiating those educational institutions, in this case, the NGO and Indonesian migrant workers and *Perantau*. The *Perantau*'s roles were valuable, especially in the spirit of understanding the social problems surrounding, also how they sustain their connectivity with the motherland and community, started by their concern for Flores community through the church institution. An NGO, Humana, played an important role in providing educational opportunities, but the movement ended due to lack of recognition, especially from government. By the support of the state, finally the better educational institutions could be established.

Another one that was underlined in this research is state actors' role in the process of CLCs and SIKK's establishment through ratification, legalisation, and scholarships. This could be an outstanding breakthrough for the educational access problems that emerged as an impact of Education Act 2001. This ratification opens a wide opportunity for the children of IMWs to access formal education through various mechanisms. Furthermore, the scholarships, which the Indonesian government provided, would also support the continuity of the education process for the Indonesian migrant workers' children.

Indeed, the researchers understand phenomenon of lack of access to education for children of migrant workers as complicated. Because of the contradictions with other policies related to migrant workers, this might appear when policymakers re-enact the existing regulation. In other words, there is a need for significant policy changes towards migrant workers if the government

seriously wants to handle the issue of access to education. However, there might be some political, economic, and social considerations if the change occurs. The Malaysian government at the moment chooses the middle ground as there has yet a policy for the Malaysian government that is better in dealing with the issue.

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