

SURVEILLANCE AND PREVENTION OF RADICALIZATION AMONG RETIRED INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO NATIONAL SECURITY IN NORTH SULAWESI

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's labor migration creates a huge amount of remittances, but the recall (PMI Purna) is vulnerable. In North Sulawesi, repatriated workers are economically marginalized, face psychosocial loads, geopolitical vulnerabilities, and risk becoming radicalized. This study analyzes the influences of vulnerability, institutional lacunae, and policy options on preventative supervision. A mixed method sequenced explanatory study was adopted, combining normative–normative–juridical analysis and fieldwork in Manado, Sangihe, Talaud, and Bitung. Consultations with stakeholders, focus group discussions, 100 interviews with returnees, and observations, were used for data collection. Thematic analysis identified patterns of deprivation, stigma and institutional fragmentation from repetition across the different case studies. Findings show that there is a regulatory micronucleus between Law No. 18/2017 (labor protection) and Law No. 5/2018 (counter-terrorism), placing ordinary returnees in a "grey zone." The region is succumbing to economic failure, as seen in the 68% unemployment rate and failure of many businesses, psychosocial distress, with 45% depression and anxiety, stigma in 32% exclusion, porous borders, and kinship ties with Mindanao. Reintegration programs focus on entrepreneurship but do little on psychological resilience, and agencies work in silos where there is very little data sharing. This study adds a new proposition to the literature by providing a hybrid model that incorporates economic, psychological, and geopolitical dimensions. Practically, it is necessary to identify psychosocial debriefing, community-based detection, and digital literacy. The policy recommendations include policy coverage, institutional integration, the creation of border economic zones, and the implementation of digital immunization strategies. Hence, effective reintegration is Indonesia's wall against radicalization

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INTRODUCTIONS

International labor migration has long been a mainstay of Indonesia's socio-economic growth. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2024), Indonesia is one of the Asian countries with many migrant workers abroad in ten countries. In 2023, they registered remittances at a value of US\$9.8 billion, thus representing a major source of foreign exchange reserves, in addition to being one of the major components of income for households from rural areas

(World Bank, 2025). In national discourses, Indonesian Migrant Workers (*Pekerja Migran Indonesia, PMI*) are often called "Foreign Exchange Heroes" (*Pahlawan Devisa*) as the money they send home is considered to contribute to the reduction of unemployment and stimulate local economic life (Setijaningrum et al., 2023; Ukhiyani & Indartono, 2020).

However, this economic narrative tends to make the multidimensional challenges of migration invisible, especially in the return phase (PMI Purna). While the issue of departure and placement has become more regulated under Law No. 18 of 2017 on the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, the post-return stage remains underdeveloped. Studies have noted that in certain cases, returnees are said to be faced with the problem of unemployment, failed business ventures, and social stigmatization which often leads to economic poverty and mediating psycho-social stress (Agusmidah & Shalihah, 2023). In addition, this vulnerability is associated with national security issues, especially in the border provinces of North Sulawesi. (Garret, 2021; Helbling, 2022)

The nexus between migration and security has taken center stage in Southeast Asia due to the territorial defeat of ISIS in the Middle East (Harakan et al., 2023). Extremist networks have decentralized operations and moved to areas with porous borders and vulnerable populations (Helbling, 2022). Indonesia for its high number of diasporas as well as for its history of radical movements is assumed to be one of the pivot nodes of this transforming landscape. (Rosser, 2021)

The concern with Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) returning from conflict zones is no longer relevant (Baker-beall, 2023). Non-combatant labor migrants can also experience "cognitive openings" to radical ideologies while abroad, especially in contexts of social alienation and discrimination or the effects of extremist propaganda on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, or Twitter (Klausen et al., 2020). Migrant workers are commonly subjected to humiliation and "second-class citizen" status in the countries where they are working and thus face a "significance deficit" upon their return. If left unresolved by reintegration programs, radical groups that provide a sense of dignity and belonging may take advantage of this (Abbasi, 2025; Gustafson, 2020).

North Sulawesi is the exception in this case study. Geographically, it is the northernmost frontier of Indonesia, bordering the Philippines at sea. The Sangihe and Talaud Islands are located facing Mindanao Island, which has been the site of several separatist insurgencies and terrorist activities in recent years. Kinship relations between these islands contribute to the movement between countries, while maritime paths are open and logistical for transnational networks. (Norman, 2022; Tatsumi, 2020)

Paradoxically, North Sulawesi is reputed as a place where tolerance and interfaith cohabitation are high. In fact, such a reputation of being reputable can lead to complacency, which serves as a disguise for the underlying risks. Local communities may underestimate the number of returnees who may be radicalized under the presumption of an absolute state of harmony (Malet & Hayes, 2020). The crossover of economic poverty, psychosocial trauma, and geopolitical weakness is an ideal breeding ground that supports the enlistment of militant extremists (Malet & Hayes, 2020).

The main issue lies in the fact that the policy of welfare migrationism is not in sync with security-oriented anti-terrorism efforts. Laws 18/2017 and 5/2018 emphasize labor and economic empowerment and the de-radicalization of convicted terrorists, respectively. Neither law deals with the preventive monitoring of regular returnees without a criminal history but who are subject to a possible risk of mental instability (Atran, 2021).

This regulatory vacuum places returnees in an in-between place: poor, economically, socially, and psychologically stigmatized, and simultaneously a target of early warning systems (Roulet & Bothello, 2023). The reintegration programs by BP2MI are predominantly geared towards entrepreneurial activities; hence, the key attribute of psychosocial resilience is not considered (Widyastuti, 2024). Garret (2021) argues that material deprivation is not the primary factor in radicalization and instead, it is a sociocognitive process that motivates ordinary people when they are drawn to the radicalized narratives that portray themselves as fitting their own commercial grievances (Garret, 2021).

This study aims to:

1. Identify economic, social, and psychological drivers of radicalization among PMI Purna.
2. A unified model of holistic intervention linked with the use of economic reintegration, psychosocial assistance, and monitoring within the community.
3. This is combined with the sensitization of the current systems of playback supervision in North Sulawesi and their focus on manpower and security agencies, as well as the role of civil society coordination.
4. We make policy suggestions for balancing Law No. 18/2017 with Law No. 5/2018.

The study will assist Asta Cita in Indonesia Vision 2045 because national security can be strengthened by human resource protection. It provides a very fine way of looking at preventive supervision, without the violation of civil liberties, as academic research that bridges migration and security studies. In practice, it provides a template for the approach to other border provinces that are confronted with the same dangers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Socio-Economic Paradox of Return Migration

Migration has been viewed as an economic fairytale, where remittances are supposed to drive development. The existence of real facts complicates the story. Ukhiyani and Indartono (2020) demonstrate that remittances in Indonesia are often channeled towards consumption and not productive investment, which exposes households to vulnerability after the migrant's migration. (Ukhiyani & Indartono, 2020) This is consistent with the results in other parts of Asia, where remittances do not lead to sustainable livelihoods but short-term welfare (World Bank, 2025).

Veldman et al. (2025) present the idea of the so-called Migrant Pension Penalty, which emphasizes the disadvantage of old-age security among the migrants in the framework of the structural disadvantage in comparison with non-migrants (Veldman et al., 2025). Returnees usually do not have any pension rights, savings, or long-term assets; thus, poverty increases in old age. In the case of PMI Purna, this is in the form of failed migration syndrome, failure to maintain losses made in the foreign country (King, 2021; Repetti et al., 2018).

According to Agusmidah and Shalihah (2023), reintegration services in Indonesia are not included in a single unit; instead, there is a one-dimensional approach to entrepreneurship training (Agusmidah & Shalihah, 2023). Economic deprivation is a stressor when returnees are unemployed or their businesses fail. Relative Deprivation Theory represents the occurrence of frustration due to the difference between hopes of prosperity and the reality of struggle, which leads to radical groups that radical groups using their advantage by providing funding or infotaining blame of the state (Abbasi, 2025; Franc & Pavlović, 2023).

This is supported by comparative studies. Even with widespread reintegration efforts, in the Philippines, returnees tend to be absorbed in informal activities, which can be used by extremist recruiters in Mindanao (Banlaoi, 2019). Sex-deported migrants are stigmatized and have limited access to welfare, making them more vulnerable to underground networks (Agusmidah & Shalihah, 2023). These curves illustrate that economic instability is a transnational cause of radicalization risk (Ozer et al., 2024; Varaine, 2020).

Psychological Mechanisms of Radicalization

It is not only economic problems that can explain why people become radical. Thoughts and feelings are equally important. According to Trip et al. (2019), radicalization occurs when individuals experience cognitive openings, that is, moments of crisis that disturb their convictions (Trip et al., 2019). In the case of migrant workers, returning home frequently produces reverse culture shock, a sense of being disconnected from the family, and the loss of worldly identity, which may provide an ideal environment for new ideas to take root (Adeniyi & Onyeukwu, 2021; Taylor, 2024).

According to Garcet (2021), a social-cognitive model proposes radicalization, which implies the transformation of the self associated with moral neutralization (Garcet, 2021). Ordinary people (including migrant laborers) might adopt extremist beliefs when the messages are connected to their complaints and identity requirements. Trauma, abuse, discrimination, or isolation in a foreign country can cause such changes (Murphy, 2022).

According to Soraya and Chen (2022), the quest for significance is the desire to be significant and respected by everyone (Soraya et al., 2025). Returning migrants are also less dignified following their humiliation in foreign countries (Dhungana, 2020). Unless reintegration can heal such a sense of dignity, radical groups take up the task and provide a sense of belonging and a heroic self (Criminal & Review, 2020; Noor, 2024). This contrasts with Kruglanski et al. (2021), who affirmed that unmet psychological needs are the reasons behind radicalization, rather than ideology (Kruglanski et al., 2021).

These psychosocial processes, such as cognitive openings, identity change with moral neutralization, and the search for significance, are internationally supported as the major causes of radicalization in returnee migrant workers. Many diaspora migrants in Europe report feeling humiliated and excluded in order to become radicalized on the Internet (Renström et al., 2020), and deported Malaysian workers grumble about being betrayed and invisible, which recruiters utilize in the context of religious study groups (Agusmidah & Shalihah, 2023).

The examples demonstrate that trauma, discrimination, and social isolation overseas foster a conducive environment for extremist discourses that are attractive to the identity needs of migrants (Garcet, 2021; Soraya et al., 2025; Trip et al., 2019). Conversely, Kruglanski et al. (2021) focused on the fact that unmet psychological needs, as opposed to ideology, are the determining factors in radicalization. Combined, these results prove once more that psychosocial vulnerability, as opposed to economic destitution alone, is a predictor of radicalization risk among returnees (Kruglanski et al., 2021).

Migration–Terrorism Nexus: Myth vs. Reality

The interdependence of migration and terrorism is a debatable issue. Helbling and Meierrieks (2022) debunk the populist claim that migration directly causes terrorism (Helbling, 2022). Their review shows that migration volume has little correlation with terror incidents, that and integration conditions are decisive. The extremist discourse of marginalization is legitimized through restrictive policies and social exclusion.

In Indonesia, alienation is a threat that can turn returnees into a stigmatized group of failed workers or a possible transmitter of foreign ideologies. This is consistent with the results in Europe, where migrants are treated as suspect communities, which contributes to radicalization (Renström et al., 2020).

The nexus is becoming increasingly digitalized. Lakomy (2023) reported the emergence of so-called virtual caliphates, where isolated migrants were victims of online propaganda (Lakomy, 2023). Employees in Indonesia tend to use social media to connect with the community, making them susceptible to radicalization and extremist recruitment. Therefore, a migrant can return already radicalized without contact with recruiters (Effendi et al., 2021; Huda et al., 2021).

Comparative evidence:

1. Philippines: Radicalization of online workers has been connected to extremist groupings in Mindanao among overseas employees (Rhoades & Helmus, n.d.; Veloso, 2022).
2. Malaysia: Radicalized deportees in foreign countries tend to remain online when they return home (Agusmidah & Shalihah, 2023).
3. European Diaspora radicalization is largely a digital phenomenon, where physical networks have been substituted by online communities (Ponzanesi & Ponzanesi, 2020; Renström et al., 2020).

The results show that migration does not necessarily presuppose the threat of radicalization; it depends on factors such as integration, stigma, and exposure to digital media.

Institutional and Policy Gaps

The available literature shows lapses in preventive supervision. Most counter-terrorism-related research is concerned with convicted terrorists or FTFs, whereas migration research includes victims of trafficking. The grey zone, which consists of ordinary returnees who are susceptible but not yet radicalized, is under-theorized.

According to Agusmidah and Shalihah (2023), reintegration programs focus more on economic empowerment and ignore psychosocial resilience (Agusmidah & Shalihah, 2023). The policy frameworks are reactive, and the psychological drivers are considered by Garcet (2021) and Trip et al. (2019) Helbling and Meierrieks (2022) caution that non-integrated securitization promotes this alienation (Garcet, 2021; Helbling, 2022; Trip et al., 2019).

Models that aim for integration exist at the international level.

1. Philippines: Balik Probinsya covers psychosocial counseling, although it is not very comprehensive.
2. Malaysia: There is a local leader who is used in community policing and is not given systematic psychological support.
3. European: Interventions that attempt to prevent problems include teaching digital skills and sharing positive stories but do not reach out to many individuals.

The problem facing Indonesia is the need to make welfare and security policies work together with the psychosocial support included in the reintegration process. This study fills this gap by discussing North Sulawesi as a frontline case.

METHODS

Research Design

This study was conducted as a mixed method study, employing both numbers and narratives to learn about the trends and experiences of returned migrant workers (PMI 3 Purna).

The rationale behind this course of action is twofold.

- 1) Data in numbers provide general statistics on overall migration flow, workers reintegration, and their social and economic risks.
- 2) Story data examine the emotional and interpersonal causes of radicalization, institutional gaps, and the community perspective of these challenges.

The primary proposal is a case study of North Sulawesi Province, which is the north coast of Indonesia adjacent to the Philippines. A case study allows us to investigate the local context in detail, as Yin (2018) believes that case studies read well the complicated social and legal issues (Yin, 2018).

Locus of Research

Three strategic sites were used to conduct the research.

1. The provincial capital and the main point of entry into the metropolis returned to Manado.
2. Sangihe and Talaud Islands: The geographical area close to Mindanao that has been located to have a high risk of cross-border infiltration is the Sangihe and Talaud Islands.
3. Bitung: A large port city with a great number of migrants.

These places were selected to indicate not only the problem of urban reintegration but also the vulnerability of refugees to borders.

Sampling and Respondents

A purposive sampling approach was used to ensure that different experiences were represented. Respondents included:

1. 100 PMI Purna: Malaysian, Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and Middle Eastern returnees.
2. Stakeholders: BP2MI, Labor office, Immigration office, social services, provincial police (*Polda Sulut*), military command (*Kodam*), and other local non-governmental institutions.
3. Some of their leaders are village heads (Hukum Tua), religious leaders, and civil society groups.

Triangulation of respondents is necessary because validity is attained through the perspectives of returnees, institutions, and communities.

Data Collection Techniques

There are four major techniques:

1. Standard of Normative-Juridical Document Analysis: Review of legal documents (Law No. 18/2017, Law No. 5/2018, Law No. 6/2011) of the juridical
2. In-Depth Interviews: The interviews to be conducted with both returnees and stakeholders, the issues of reintegration, supervision procedures, and psychosocial life are to be semi-structured.
3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Two FGDs with influencers and religious leaders among people to understand their resilience and views concerning the risk of radicalization.
4. Field Observation: Field observations were conducted on the reintegration training and border control programs in Miangas and Marore cross stations directly.

Ethics were also encouraged, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and sensitivity to exposure to trauma.

Data Analysis

1. **Quantitative Data:** The analysis of the quantitative data included demographics and statistics of recent reintegration through descriptive statistics to determine trends.
2. **Qualitative Data:** Interest groups Transcripts of interviews and FGDs were coded using the thematic analysis method described by Braun and Clarke (2019), revealing the repetition of themes, including economic despair, social alienation, and institutional disconnection.
3. **State-of-the-art Benchmarking:** The results were related to world radicalization theories (Trip et al., 2019; Garcet, 2021) to determine how well local realities comply with international models.

Validity and Reliability

Inter-source cross-validation (data sources (documents, interviews, FGDs, and observations)) leads to the validity of the data. The research involved peering debriefing and member checking to ensure reliability by disseminating the initial findings to stakeholders.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The inquiry shows that the land is intricate, with law safeguards being strong on paper but forming holes within the system, which are exploited by radical components. These findings are classified into four themes, which include but are not limited to: (1) regulatory vacuum, (2) socio-economic susceptibilities, (3) institutional fragmentation, and (4) reintegration failure.

The “Regulatory Vacuum”: A Comparative Legal Analysis

One important lesson learned is the structural disjuncture between a welfare-oriented migration statute and a security-oriented counter-terrorism statute in Indonesia. Law No. 18 of 2017 is a broad law that secures labor rights and avoids preventive supervision requirements. Law No. 5 of 2018 offers very powerful enforcement mechanisms, but only to those suspects and convicts.

Interviews with stakeholders showed a sense of aggravation: “*We can do nothing until there is proof of a crime. However, what about vulnerable individuals who are yet to offend?*” (Police officer, Manado, 2024).

This lack of connection establishes a grey zone wherein returnees can have extremist ideas without detection.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Legal Frameworks and Identified Gaps

Dimension	Law No. 18/2017 (Protection of PMI)	Law No. 5/2018 (Counter-Terrorism)	The “Grey Zone” Gap
Primary Objective	Welfare, labor rights, empowerment	Security, enforcement, de-radicalization	Preventive supervision absent
Target Population	Migrant workers (victims)	Terrorist suspects/convicts	Vulnerable civilians
Reintegration Focus	Economic/social reintegration	Ideological correction	Psychosocial resilience missing
Institutional Lead	BP2MI, Ministry of Manpower	BNPT, Densus 88, TNI	Coordination failure

Socio-Economic Profile and Vulnerabilities

North Sulawesi Returnees are vulnerable according to the Relative Deprivation and Migrant Pension Penalty theories. Interviews uncovered high amounts of debt bondage, failed businesses, and stigma. One interviewee said, *I came back empty handed. Individuals refer to me as a failed worker. That hurts more than poverty.*”

Table 2. Risk Factors for Radicalization Among PMI Purna in North Sulawesi

Risk Domain	Indicators Observed	Theoretical Linkage	Source
Economic	Mismanaged remittances, unemployment, debt bondage, long-term poverty	Relative Deprivation	Ukhiyani & Indartono, 2020; Veldman et al., 2025
Social	Reverse culture shock, stigma, weakening communal ties (<i>Mapalus</i>)	Quest for Significance	Soraya & Chen, 2022
Psychological	Trauma, cognitive rigidity, search for moral clarity	Sociocognitive Transformation	Garcet, 2021
Geopolitical	Proximity to Mindanao, kinship ties, porous maritime routes	Opportunity Structure	Osman & Abebe, 2023

Table 2 reveals that the holistic risk profile demonstrates that radicalization is not linear but develops as a result of the intersection of economic, social, psychological, and geopolitical stressors.

Institutional Fragmentation

Silos were identified through interviews with institutional representatives. BP2MI covers administration, Manpower Offices cover training, and POLRI covers enforcement. Data sharing is minimal.

One of the BP2MI officers acknowledged that they just write names and addresses. *We do not provide the police with information unless it is a legal case.*

Table 3. Institutional Roles and Coordination Gaps

Institution	Role	Current Limitations
BP2MI	Placement and protection	No security vetting, sporadic reintegration
Manpower Office	Local regulation and training	Siloed data, no intelligence sharing
POLRI (Polda Sulut)	Law enforcement	Reactive, delayed intelligence
Local Government	Grassroots administration	Village heads unaware of detection role

Blind spots are formed because of this dispersion of light. For example, a deportee marked as an extremist patient seeker in Malaysia can be handled as a problem worker without the notice of the police.

Failure of Current Reintegration Models

In North Sulawesi, rehabilitation activities revolve around money management and entrepreneurial activities. They are helpful but ignore emotions and social needs and view people as rational decision-makers.

A survey of 100 returnees indicates that a considerable number of returnees suffer emotionally and socially.

Table 4. Reintegration Challenges Reported by Returnees

Challenge Category	Specific Issues Reported	Percentage of Respondents
Economic	Lack of capital, business failure, unemployment	68%

Psychosocial	Depression, anxiety, feeling “out of place”	45%
Social	Stigma, family conflict	32%
Administrative	Documentation problems, difficulty accessing aid	55%

One of the Hong Kong returnees said, *I had a study group since they heard me. The government simply provided a handout on entrepreneurship.* This illustrates the exploitation of unmet emotional needs by radical groups which state programs fail to satisfy.

DISCUSSION

The Nexus of Economy, Psychology, and Security

The results indicate that it is not the cause itself but the combination of economic deprivation, psychosocial dislocation, and geopolitical exposure that leads to radicalization among returned migrant workers (PMI Purna).

1. Economic deprivation: Table 2 indicates that 68 percent of the respondents had either unemployment or failed businesses. This is associated with the theory of negatives at the structural level of wealth accumulation suggested by Veldman et al. (2025), the Migrant Pension Penalty. This sense of disappointment at not getting what one expects is echoed by the Relative Deprivation Theory (Agusmidah and Shalihah, 2023).
2. Psychological dislocation: 45 percent of the respondents indicated depression or anxiety. The sociocognitive model proposed by Garcat (2021) clarifies how moral neutralization is triggered by trauma and violence seems to be justified. It is important to note that, according to Trip et al. (2019), cognitive openings in crisis situations make people open to radical ideas.
3. Social stigma: 32% of the respondents had experienced community stigma. Soraya and Chen (2022) demonstrated that humiliation in foreign countries produces a lack of dignity. Unless such reintegration is able to enliven dignity, the radical groups take advantage of this by giving the message of heroic struggle.
4. Geopolitical exposure: Due to the proximity of North Sulawesi to Mindanao, the area offers extremist logistic opportunity structures (Yaoren, 2023).

Thus, there is a high risk of radicalization upon the convergence of economic grievances and psychosocial vulnerabilities, which enhances the prospects of geopolitical opportunities. This proves that successful reintegration is the most powerful tool for countering radicalization.

Regulatory Vacuum and Institutional Fragmentation

The comparative legal examination (Table 1) shows a regulatory vacuum. Law No. 18/2017 upholds labor rights but does not introduce preventative supervision. Law No. 5/2018 offers methods of enforcement, but it deals only with suspects and convicts. This is further widened by institutional fragmentation (Table 3). The companies of BP2MI, Manpower Offices, and POLRI exist in dark silos with little data exchange. A deportee camped in a foreign country can be handled without the knowledge of the security agencies.

The interoperability deficiency generates blind spots. One police officer commented: *We can do nothing until there is evidence of a crime.* But what about vulnerable people who are yet to offend? Therefore, hybrid supervision procedures are required.

Foreign comparisons indicate the same difficulties.

1. Philippines: Reintegration is based on low-systematic economic support but not systematic psychological screening (Liao, 2025).
2. Malaysia: The deportees are stigmatized and experience insufficient welfare and a lack of co-ordination between welfare and security departments (Agusmidah & Shalihah (2023)).
3. Europe: Prevention programs focus on making the digital world more literal but find it hard to coordinate institutionally (EPRS, 2025).

Indonesia's novelty is its awareness of the grey zone, where ordinary returnees can be a decisive security issue.

Failure of Current Reintegration Models

Table 4 indicates that the reintegration programs in North Sulawesi do not address psychosocial needs. Although 68 percent of the people interviewed stated that they experienced economic challenges, 45 percent mentioned psychosocial distress. Present-day programs are directed toward entrepreneurship, which presupposes the rational behavior of economic players. However, radicalization is more of an irrational emotional need.

One of the Hong Kong returnees told me, *I entered a study group; they cared to listen to me. The authorities provided me with a booklet on entrepreneurship.* This shows the extent to which groups that operate radically exploit emotional loopholes.

Trip et al. (2019) believe that it is not economic deprivation but rather cognitive openings that lead to radicalization. Garcket (2021) highlights the fact that sociocognitive transformation is triggered by trauma. Therefore, reintegration models must be based on psychosocial counseling and community-based support.

Comparative lessons:

1. Philippines: Psychosocial counseling is only provided in the Balik Probinsya program but is not covered.
2. Community policing in Malaysia includes local leaders but lacks psychological support.
3. This solution involves applying online literacy and counter-narratives to stop online radicalization, especially in Europe.

Indonesia should learn these lessons and make them part of reintegration by incorporating psychosocial resilience into the process.

De-Securitizing Supervision: The Soft Power Approach

Securitization poses the risk of stigmatizing migrants as suspicious communities, which further adds to their alienation (Helbling and Meierrieks, 2022). Rather, the concept of supervision must be presented as care and defense.

Smart Supervision was proposed in the model.

1. Intelligent Data-sharing between agencies: Non-mass surveillance of individuals who pose high risks by sharing intelligence information.
2. Community-based detection: This will fortify traditional institutions at the community level, such as Mapalus cooperatives. Together with regular citizens, village heads (Hukum Tua) and religious leaders would have the opportunity to report the first signs of radicalization withdrawal, behavior change, and black-and-white thinking without profiling them based on their appearance.
3. Digitally literate: Reintegration programs should include counter-narrative training that will vaccinate re-entering groups against online propaganda (Widyastuti, 2024).

This soft-power policy is protective and respectful, reduces alienation, and enhances China's power.

Strategic Importance of North Sulawesi

North Sulawesi occupies the first line of defence in the national security set-up in Indonesia. It is geographically close to Mindanao and is logically advantaged, which can be used by the extremist networks. This fact has been recognized by the trilateral cooperation between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, where strategic meetings have been held in Manado (Agusmidah & Shalihah (2023)).

However, the top-down diplomacy strategy should be supported by strong local resilience. Welfare should not be on the priority list of the financial empowerment of border citizens, but security policy has a huge object in that matter. Thus, it is crucial to deny extremist actors the so-called human terrain of discontented returnees to the bigger goals of stabilizing the region.

When our young people are occupied at work and have pride, they will not come over the border to bother, as one of our community members said. This assertion notes the nature of the interrelationships between financial distress and performance in terms of security.

Novelty and Contribution

Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes to the literature on radicalization by combining notions that are typically considered separately.

1. Economic: It supports the Relative Deprivation Theory, which empirically demonstrates that failed reintegration as debt, unemployment, and grievance as migrant pension penalties (Veldman et al., 2025) give fertile grounds for frustration.
2. Psychological: It empirically confirms Cognitive Opening (Trip et al., 2019) and Sociocognitive Transformation (Garcket, 2021) and demonstrates the role of trauma in exploitation abroad and stigma in the homeland in accelerating the process of becoming receptive to extremist narratives.
3. The socio-geopolitical outcomes of the merging of opportunity structure theory with the situationalization of the closeness between North Sulawesi and Mindanao as a particular geopolitical weakness (Banlaoi, 2019; Yaoren, 2023).

These understandings combine to create a hybrid explanatory framework of the process of radicalization of returnees, in which there is a convergence of economic deprivation, psychosocial dislocation, and geopolitical exposure. This is a new theoretical addition to migration and security studies.

Practical Implication

The results present factual evidence that can be applied by institutions and communities.

1. BP2MI and Manpower Offices: Statistics indicating that 45 percent of these returnees experience psychosocial distress indicate the importance of introducing psychosocial debriefing in addition to training on entrepreneurship reintegration programs, rather than training on entrepreneurship only.
2. POLRI and BNPT: Since the identification of the “grey zone population has indicated the need to develop early detection procedures that support returning individuals with criminal records due to lack of cognitive evidence of radicalization, community policing should be trained to identify cognitive manifestations of radicalizing needs.
3. Community Leaders: This paper underscores the significance of the first line of defense, which is played by grassroots actors, that is, village heads (Hukum Tua), religious leaders, and Mapalus cooperatives. The idea of community-based detection can be incorporated into the local culture as non-stigmatization.
4. Digital Literacy: The evidence of online radicalization (so-called radicalization virtual caliphate) is the necessity of digital literacy lessons in the reintegration program to enable the returnee to withstand extremist propaganda.

The practical contributions help to combine theory with real needs and demonstrate how empirical research can be directly applied to enhance the practices of reintegration and supervision.

Policy Recomendation

This research has some direct policy proposals.

- 1) Regulatory Harmonization: Encircle the circle of missing links and gaps in regulations by issuing a Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB) between the Ministry of Manpower, BNPT, and the Ministry of Home Affairs, in which the sharing of information is mandatory as part of the process of risk profiling and privacy is guaranteed.
- 2) Institute Integration: Embark on an Integrated Supervision Protocol between BP2MI, POLRI, and local governments so that they can be interoperable and act collectively.
- 3) Border Economic Zones: Implement economic initiatives in Sangihe Talaud to decrease the relative cases of deprivation and stop returnees from being a part of illegal cross-border networks.
- 4) Psychosocial Resilience Policy: Revise the policies of Law No. 18/2017 by incorporating a formal structure of psychosocial debriefing so that all returned people are subjected to a psychological examination upon arrival.
- 5) Digital Immunization: Go digital: In addition to both pre-departure and post-return orientation, inoculate migrants against online extremist recruitment.

The contributions made by these policies make the study a blueprint for changing the migration and security architecture in Indonesia, with implications for other border provinces and similar situations worldwide.

Limitations and Future Direction

This study had several limitations. Its one-case study of North Sulawesi limits the extrapolation of its results to other provinces, and purposive sampling can be harmful to concealed or more threatening populations, such as illegal or deported migrants. Self-reported interviews and FGDs may result in a biased method, and the cross-sectional design will only capture a single point in time without following up on changes that occurred post-return. Risks associated with psychosocial factors were measured qualitatively and not through standardized measures, which decreases accuracy. There was also limited access by institutions: diluted systems of data, confidentiality, and heterogeneity of programs, which made triangulation difficult. Analytically, although the research spreads a convergence theory of economic, psychological, and geopolitical variables, it did not create strict causality streams and did not measure digital radicalization or border crossing in detail.

The role of another study in the future is to increase the breadth of reference by studying a multi-province approach, border versus non-border settings, and longitudinal cohort studies that will identify reintegration trajectories. Refinements to the methodology are required, such as psychometric instruments and advanced warning signs for the frontline. Digital ecosystems are valuable places that should be examined further using social network analysis and by testing literacy and counter-narrative modules.

This should also apply to policy experimentation for joint data-sharing protocols, integrated supervision pilot programs, and specific border economic programs. Everything must be ethically grounded and contain participatory

control, whereas regional coordination of efforts with the Philippines and Malaysia can enhance the response to transnational recruitment.

By considering such limitations and developing such directions, the study can become a powerful piece of advice to the national policy and practice by relating rigorous measurement, ethical governance, and scalable interventions and improvements to resilience in returned migrant workers.

CONCLUSION AND FINAL REFLECTION

Conclusion

This research concludes that the surveillance of returned Indonesian migrant workers (PMI Purna) in North Sulawesi is carried out under the conditions of a dangerous regulatory and institutional vacuum. Although Law No. 18/2017 allows for a structure of labor protection and Law No. 5/2018 provides terrorism control, both lack sufficient anticipatory controls over vulnerable returnees.

The results show that the convergence of: results in the risk of radicalization.

1. Economic marginalization (debt, unemployment, failed businesses, pension penalty),
2. Psychosocial dislocation (trauma, stigma, cognitive openings, quest for significance), and
3. Geopolitical chance structures (permeable borders, blood relations, campusness to supporters, Mindanao closeness).
4. Institutional voids (scattered institutional requirements, a lack of preventative control at Learning Law No. 18/2017 and Law No. 5/2018, poor inter-agency coordination)

These vulnerabilities are further enhanced by institutional fragmentation, whereby all three institutions, BP2MI, Manpower Offices, and POLRI, are silos, and little data are shared among them. Research indicates that reintegration programs are still biased towards entrepreneurship and do not focus on psychosocial resilience.

Conceptually, the current research presents a composite concept of radicalization in which economic, psychological, and geopolitical influences are considered. In practice, it offers empirical evidence to support reintegration and improvement of supervision. It provides a realistic guide through which welfare and security systems can be integrated.

Finally, in the best approach to counter radicalization, the paradigm shift should be based on enforcing models for reintegration-oriented comprehensive resilience, whereby the complete reintegration of extremists should be considered the ultimate protection against extremism.

Final Reflection

Through these interventions, Indonesia will be in a position to reverse the fact that the population of returning migrants can be viewed as a source of national vulnerability to national strength. The foreign exchange heroes will not only come back with capital but also with dignity, stability, and the ability to invest in a safe and successful country.

Therefore, this study fills the gap between the migration and security fields and provides academic value by introducing theoretical concepts and providing practical applications. It makes Indonesia a frontrunner as regards preventive radicalization measures with regard to the return migrants, which can be transferred to other border areas, as well as, to other global platforms.

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