Strategy of Former Indonesian Migrant Workers From Qatar in The Era of The Covid-19 Outbreak

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze and investigate former migrant workers who previously worked in the country of Qatar, after the Covid-19 pandemic hit this country. The Qatar government has cut spending by 30% to shore up its finances amid the stress of the pandemic. The impact of the Qatari government's policy has resulted in the termination of the employment relationship of several Indonesian migrant workers in Qatar, some of the Indonesian migrant workers working in Qatar who brought their families while living in Qatar had to return to their homeland. This study aims to describe how retired Indonesian workers from Qatar have adapted to changing socio-economic conditions after they no longer work as migrant workers and return to Indonesia and their families in a state of not having a job during the COVID-19 outbreak. The method used in this research is qualitative research, which describes the problems to be studied based on actual social facts. The author uses primary data in this study, namely, through direct observation and interviews with retired Indonesian migrant workers from Qatar and their families as informants. The results of the study show that the socio-economic adaptation strategies of retired Indonesian workers from Qatar in the pandemic era are first, reducing expenses or living costs, secondly opening entrepreneurship, thirdly increasing productive assets, fourth working again in domestic and foreign companies.

Keywords: Former Indonesian Migrant Workers, Qatar, The Covid-19

JEL: M12, M54, O15, 017


1. Introduction

Everyone desires his family to live well, and prosper in the present and the future, in order to achieve the welfare of the family, a head of household must have efforts to earn a steady and sufficient income. The thing to do to earn income is one of them by working.

Indonesia is a country rich in natural resources and products, but the reality is that many
people still lack respectable jobs, resulting in economic inequality as the labor force grows faster than the number of jobs available. The current availability of employment in Indonesia has not been balanced compared to the number of job seekers, and the scarcity of employment is one of the factors that encourage the desire of Indonesian people to work abroad. Countries that have diplomatic relations with Indonesia, such as Malaysia and Singapore, as well as countries in the Middle East, are popular destinations for job seekers. Most job seekers are interested in the availability of promising positions with good salaries, (Suseno et al, 2020). Since developed countries can provide high incomes to workers working in their countries, migration of labor from developing countries to developed countries builds profitable connections. (Rusdi, 2018). In 2017 and 2018, Indonesia ranked second only to the Philippines in terms of overseas labor migration, with more than 4 million Indonesians working in countries in Southeast Asia and Middle East (Doi, 2018).

Qatar, one of the countries located in the Middle East is the richest Moslem country in the world, the population of Qatar is about 1.7 million people. Qatar occupies the number one position with per capita income of 129,726 USD or equivalent to Rp. 1.7 billion. The data was posted by the World Bank (2019).

The Government of Qatar and the Government of Indonesia have a cooperation agreement in the field of migrant workers working in Qatar on January 20, 2008. Based on data from the National Agency for The Placement and Protection of Labor in Indonesia (BNP2TKI) in 2015, the number of migrant workers sent to Qatar was 7,380 people (Report on The Working Visit of the House of Representatives Commission IX to the State of Qatar and Saudi Arabia (DPR-RI, 2019). They work in the formal and informal sectors.

By 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected global economic stability. The drop in crude oil prices has damaged the joints of the economy in the gulf state. In order to reduce the spread of new cases of Covid-19, Gulf States impose lock down which also greatly affect economic activities. The Qatari government is asking the entity to cut spending by 30% to shore up its finances amid the pressures of the pandemic. Starting June 1, 2020, Qatar's finance ministry has instructed ministries of state-funded institutions and business enterprises to reduce monthly costs for expatriate workers. As a realization, Qatar's national companies cut and dismissed foreign workers through two-month notices (Kabar 24 Bisnis, 2021). The impact of the Qatari government's policy has resulted in the termination of the employment of some migrant workers working in Qatar, some of the migrant workers who work in Qatar who brought their families during their stay in Qatar must return to their homeland. While working in Qatar with a high income, migrant families fulfilled their living needs, the company facilitated shelter, children's education, bonuses and so on. With that income, TKI has enough power in determining decisions in his extended family in his hometown (Suseno, et al.2021).

The return of migrant workers and their families to the homeland in a pandemic period that is difficult to find a new job or entrepreneurship, making them have to adapt to survive to meet the needs of the household. The negative impact after the return of migrant workers to Indonesia if they do not have skill and business is the increase in the unemployment rate. Adaptation strategies are needed so that Former Indonesian Migrant Workers survive to create opportunities in earning income for the family.

From the background of the problem exposed above, it can be pulled the following problem formulation: (1). What is the socio-economic condition of Former Indonesian Migrant
Workers after no longer working in Qatar?. (2). What is the strategy carried out by Former Indonesian Migrant Workers from Qatar in socio-economic aspects?

2. Literature Review

In article 1 of Law No. 39 of 2004 concerning the placement and protection of Indonesian Workers Abroad. Indonesian Labor Force (TKI) is any Indonesian citizen who is eligible to work abroad in employment relations for a certain period of time by receiving wages.

Work is a mandatory thing in Islam, the meaning of work in Islam is not only aimed at supporting yourself and family by spending time day and night, continuously tireless, but the work in question is included in all forms of deeds or work that have the value of kindness and blessing for themselves, family and the surrounding community, and the state. In other words, work is to contribute soul and energy to create good for yourself, family, society and country without burdening others (Armansyah, 2018).

Behavioral adaptation strategies according to Ahimsa, 2003 in Safitri, 2018 is a behavior that aims to overcome the problem at hand or to get the desired thing. Adaptation strategies can be interpreted as forms of effort planned by humans to meet the minimum requirements needed and to overcome the problems faced.

Change in society is produced by two elements: internal factors, such as the state of the gap between what is expected and what actually happens, which can be utilized as motivation for society to develop to achieve the desired goal. People in this scenario want to make a more valuable contribution, change, or avoid oppression in their daily lives. External factors are caused by policies enacted by third parties that impact their daily lives. New cultures and environments that have never been encountered before have an impact on external influences (Indraddin at al. 2021).

One of the factors humans become passive and active creatures to create goods and develop their thinking is due to social change. All actions taken by humans aim to develop and expand the potential they have. People seek and discover the economy, producing new things in the hope of a better life in the future. As agents of change, this means that, in addition to being the target of social change, the person can also influence the individual to plan, create, and develop ideas and thoughts to achieve the desired outcome (Suseno, et al. 2021).

The strategies of individuals as agents in change according to Suseno and Dwiatmadja (2019) are:

1. Psychoanalysis Strategies

Individuals have the nature of id, ego and superego. It is a human personality acquired from birth. The ego is the psychological trait responsible for overcoming reality on a conscious, primary, and unconscious level. Internalization of moral and ideal internalization acquired in family and social life is accommodated by superego.

2. Strategy of social psychology

Individuals are social creatures who cannot live alone. The social environment has a certain function towards the individual.

3. Strategy of individual modification

An individual changes the direction he wants if in his life there is a basis of punishment and
reward.

4. Educational Strategy

Understanding this strategy is that the individual is a rational being and acts logically in his life. The individual will act aimed at giving him his own pride.

5. Group Dynamics Strategy

Understanding these strategies is the norm of individual behavior will create group interaction.

The right way or plan to deal with a problem to maintain its survival is referred to as a strategy. The tactics put together should take into account the capabilities and resources available. According to research conducted by Kristiyana and Hamidah (2020), the function of Former Indonesian Migrant Workers in Ponorogo went from labor to self-employment through stages, namely:

1. Saving, the results of work abroad partly on the tube
2. Large-scale investments.
3. It's hard to open a bigger business.
4. Involving the family in running an entrepreneur
5. Add employees when the business begins to grow.

According to (Rusdi, 2015) based on the experience of independent full-time migrant workers, some steps to become a successful entrepreneur are, confident, willing to work hard, can work with others, have an attractive appearance, are good at making decisions, there is a desire to add knowledge, ambitious to advance, good at communicating and can carry out the right management.

The lifestyle of an individual or group in carrying out their daily tasks is referred to as lifestyle. The measure of values and conventions that exist in society is described by lifestyle. The contact patterns pioneered by the group are strongly influenced by lifestyle frequency. Individuals and groups will be at risk due to excessive lifestyle. This means that if they don't have a strong defense, the lifestyle can take its toll. (Suseno, 2018).

Family financial management is the responsibility of the wife and husband. Openness, communication and mutual agreement are principles that must be applied in managing family finances (Yusuf and Suseno, 2020). Islam teaches that every Muslim can always manage income in accordance with the teachings of Allah. Muslim families in managing finances in principle must have an Islamic pattern, namely need-oriented and prioritize benefits (utility), and reduce excessive desire (Rosalia, 2020).

Basic principles of financial management of Muslim households (Rusdi, 2018):

1. Trying to make a living that is halal. Families should remind each other and control the income in the family.
2. Frugal and economical. Parents must educate their children so as not to be consumptive, there needs to be communication and commitment together.
3. Get used to saving the afterlife. Get used to each family member to save and give alms.
in any situation.

The first step that must be done in managing family finances is to record all the wealth owned by the family ranging from current assets (savings, deposits, etc.), uneven assets (gold, cars, land, houses). Of the total amount of assets, is there outstanding debt? If the total amount of assets is greater than the amount of debt then the household is positive (Suseno, 2018). According to Safitri (2018), financial management must have short-term and long-term goals. Planning must be made to produce a goal. The way to go is to save, invest and allocate good funds, which avoid unlimited behavior.

3. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research method, which describes the problem to be investigated based on actual social facts, through direct observation and interaction with informants, reviewing reliable news documents according to the context, discussions with government officials related to former migrant workers. The use of this qualitative research method is to describe and understand the economic adaptation strategy of former Indonesian migrant workers who had worked in Qatar during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The author uses primary data in this study, namely through direct observation and interviews with former Indonesian migrant workers from Qatar and their families as informants. Informants were selected using purposive sampling technique. With this technique, informants are selected based on certain criteria, namely having a family and stopping working from Qatar during the pandemic. The reason for choosing a family is because of the higher economic burden than single people. Informants in the study amounted to 10 people.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. The condition of Sosial Ekonomi Former Indonesian Migrant Workers

The state of Qatar which is rich in gas and petroleum reserves, as well as the high per capita income of its population, amounted to 129,726 USD or equivalent to Rp. 1.7 billion making migrant workers in Qatar live on adequacy. But at the time of the pandemic the Qatari government issued a policy of cutting monthly costs for expatriates, one of which was by laying off foreign workers. As a result of this condition, some migrant workers must stop working in Qatar and return home with their families. The family of retired migrant workers from Qatar underwent changes in social and economic processes. There are no more facilities provided by the company, namely homes, vehicles, education and health costs. The Former Indonesian Migrant Workers family must begin to live in the country in the pandemic period. This is a very heavy burden for all Former Indonesian Migrant Workers. Loss of primary income in times of crisis and health threats in the pandemic covid-19.

Former Indonesian Migrant Workers from Qatar and his family carry out social processes in everyday life. However, this social process is limited in the pandemic period. Restrictions on activities outside the home make all family members stay at home, chatting, chatting, strengthening family relationships (Saefudin, et al. 2019)

The heads of households are no longer doing work activities, because they no longer work. This is a stressor felt by all family members. There is an inner conflict of the head of the family changing his role from a worker to a workless one. There is a gap between what is expected as the head of the family and the reality that is happening. The wives who used to
act as housewives while in Qatar, with all-round conditions, should participate in thinking about how to find solutions to help the husband turn the wheels of the family economy. During working as migrant workers in Qatar, most of the heads of families bear the economic burden of their extended family, both parents, sister-in-law and so on. This condition makes its own moral burden because currently Indonesia Migrant Workers former is no longer working (Suseno, 2019).

Most of the children from Qatar are of school age. Children starting with the new school year at a new school in Indonesia online, must be able to adapt to the national curriculum. Previously they were schools in Qatar with an international curriculum, the language of instruction used English language. There are some obstacles in understanding lessons in Indonesia related to language differences, because most of these children since early education in Qatar. This condition requires parents to accompany extra in learning (Suseno et al. 2021).

For families who experience changes in social and economic roles in the pandemic period is very much a burden that is doubled, amid the health issues of Covid-19 that demand vigilance and health threats, increasing concerns about financial security due to the loss of income of the head of the family as a worker (Suseno, et al. 2020).

The impact of job loss from the head of the family is, reduced self-actualization, which affects the purpose of life (Suseno, et al. 2021). When the job loss suddenly, the head of the family feels there is a part of him that is missing, causing anxiety and loss of security for the family's financial condition.

4.2. The strategy carried out in socio-economic aspects.

The socio-economic condition of the full-time migrant household is no longer like when they became migrant workers in Qatar, the circumstances of this change are a critical condition, which makes them have to carry out various efforts to overcome the economic difficulties faced. Husband and wife work together to develop their thinking to create a creative and active thing with the aim to develop and expand the potential they have (Suseno, 2019). Several strategies are carried out in order to meet the needs of the family.

**First.** Reduce expenses/living expenses. While still working as a Former Indonesian Migrant Workers from Qatar has a high income family is consumptive, at the time of transition at the beginning of return to Indonesia, the Former Indonesian Migrant Workers lost the fixed income that is usually received every month, namely salaries from his company in Qatar. The thing that Former Indonesian Migrant Workers do is suppress the desire to reduce spending that is tertiary, buy something with regard to value and usefulness. Family financial management is open between husband and wife, and is applied to the principle of mutual agreement (Suseno et al. 2020). All full-time migrant workers who become informants have school-age children who require a lot of education costs. In the expenditure prioritized for basic needs and costs of children's education, therefore the strategy carried out by all Former Indonesian Migrant Workers in reducing spending expenditure is to cut costs that are not urgent. All Former Indonesian Migrant Workers is very consensual to the education of children. Although all heads of families no longer have a steady income as workers, in the transition period a few months after returning to Indonesia, the children of Former Indonesian Migrant Workers are sent to a favorite school, which has a good quality of education and the
costs used are mostly from savings or severance from the company (Suseno, 2019). All full-time migrant workers from Qatar have savings as tactical funds that aim to meet the needs when they are no longer working. This is what is utilized by all Former Indonesian Migrant Workers prioritize the cost of education.

Second. Opening entrepreneurial. Nine out of ten informants have decided to entrepreneurship. Compensation money (Severance) provided by the company, savings and assets owned are partly used for business capital. Some strategies in starting a business of goods and services are to start by utilizing kinship relationships. Business activities were initially run by the family, along with the growing business began to recruit employees. The target market is initially family and close friends, the surrounding community then penetrates through online. Entrepreneurs are run according to the ability of their respective capital and adjusted according to the needs / purchasing power of the community around the place of business. Husband and wife shoulder to shoulder to create business opportunities by exploring each other's talents and abilities, for example when the wife is talented in cooking, then the business pioneered in the culinary field (Resto, Cafe, Coffee shop) In other families the head of the family has a large capital, then it was decided to open a business in the field of property (renting shophouses, houses, boarding houses), contractors. Former Indonesian Migrant Workers whose hometown area is the location of plantations, then the business developed is a palm oil and livestock plantation business (Suseno et al.2019). The results of the analysis that in the time of pandemic, people's purchasing power for basic needs is more stable than other types of goods, then some decide to open wholesale groceries, and minimarkets. Estimate of business opportunities and relationships with health agencies that continue to work in the pandemic period, then the business pioneered is the Office Stationery Store. Various businesses exist that have been started since TKI is still working actively, at the time of retirement is more encouraged and managed by itself, such as the business of buying and selling gold.

Third. Increase product assets. The Former Indonesian Migrant Workers collects productive assets with the aim of useful can in the present and the future. This productive asset is obtained by Former Indonesian Migrant Workers while still working as a migrant worker by managing family finances, managing income or income every month which is routine or internally and regular expenses every month and incidental expenditures. When there is excess funds, it is used for investments to buy productive assets as self-deposits in the future or after no longer working. Managing family finances is important, because family finances must bring benefits to create a prosperous family that meets material and spiritual needs. Good family financial management is able to adjust the existing sources of funds with the use of funds in a balanced manner in accordance with planning and utilization (Suseno, 2018), between realization and targets should be realistic, and it is also necessary to evaluate the extent of the targets that have been achieved, through periodic introspection (Wiyono, et al.2021)

All Former Indonesian Migrant Workers who become informants have fixed assets in the form of land, houses, developed buildings in the form of shop, boarding house and houses for rent, thus increasing income as additional income (Suseno and Salam, 2021). The benefits of productive assets are able to meet the needs in life and do not need to be confused financially, still earn income even though they are not working. The benefits will be felt when you are sick, unable to work anymore, or in old age.
The TKI after entrepreneurship there are those who decide to work again both at home and abroad. Of the ten Former Indonesian Migrant Workers as informants 3 people who have got a job again. 1 person returned to work in Qatar, 2 people worked in business company in Indonesia. The most important motivation that causes full-time migrant workers who decide to work again in the company is to get rewards or wages because of the living needs that must be met to support family finances (Suseno, 2019). Employment is an option, where there is a stable income every month, and there is health insurance, as well as other facilities from the company so as to improve the standard of living. Former Indonesian Migrant Workers principle Islam puts work as worship to seek sustenance from Allah SWT. Working well to get the sustenance that halalan thayiban included into jihad in the path of Allah. In addition, Former Indonesian Migrant Workers who work again principled that by working the head of the family expressed its existence in community life, as a form of self-actualization (Wahyuni, 2021). Work is essentially a fundamental reality, and is the nature of man in every development of his life.

5. Conclusion
The results of this study show that the retired migrant workers from Qatar are experiencing a transition period of the family of Former Indonesian Migrant Workers from Qatar experiencing changes in social and economic processes. The heads of households are no longer doing work activities, because they no longer work. This is a stressor felt by all family members.

To maintain survival after no longer working as a migrant worker, Former Indonesian Migrant Workers perform various strategies. Among others, reduce spending / cost of living, open entrepreneurs, multiply product assets and find job openings for those who are still productive.

Implication. The government through the Cooperative and SME Office should provide a forum or container that aims to accompany, train, foster and facilitate small entrepreneurs or Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). So that small businesses can cooperate with distributors, retail or large companies as suppliers of goods as small business partners.

Migrant worker former in order to be more active in trying to develop his business, always upgrade knowledge and insight in running his business, so that it can survive with fluctuating economic conditions. Migrant workers who are still active, so that can manage family finances, saving and investing, when they no longer work abroad already have a business that can make money or passive income.

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