

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

4.1. Conclusion

This research aims to examine the extent to which Malaysia's response to the Global Ikhwan Services and Business Holdings (GISBH) case reflects the internalization of international child and labor rights norms. By applying Finnemore and Sikkink's norm life cycle (NLC) framework and operationalizing it through the indicators of norm acknowledgement, policy responses, and internalization consistency, this study provides an analytical understanding of how human rights norms are recognized, implemented, and institutionalized within Malaysia's domestic context. Beyond mapping Malaysia's normative trajectory, this research also uses the GISBH case as a least likely case to examine the explanatory limits of the NLC model, specifically, its assumption that norm diffusion progresses linearly from emergence toward full internalization.

The findings indicate that Malaysia occupies a transitional position between the late norm cascade stage and the early stage of norm internalization. At the stage of norm acknowledgement, the Malaysian government demonstrated clear recognition of the GISBH violations through investigations, public exposure of abuses, and multi-institutional responses, driven significantly by whistleblowers, media coverage, and public pressure. This recognition was further translated into concrete cascade-stage actions, including large-scale operations such as Op Global, victim rehabilitation, and labor enforcement measures. However, both the acknowledgement and the policy

responses share a critical characteristic: they were activated by crisis rather than by routine governance. The violations persisted for years before public pressure triggered formal action, and enforcement subsided once visibility faded, a pattern the NLC model's linear sequence does not account for.

The analysis of internalization consistency reveals that full internalization has not been achieved. Enforcement remains largely reactive, complaint-driven, and contingent on political visibility rather than functioning as a preventive system. The reliance on large-scale interventions and the gaps highlighted by SUHAKAM confirm that compliance has not yet acquired the taken-for-granted quality characteristic of true internalization. This is analytically significant because the GISBH case represents conditions under which the NLC model predicts internalization should occur: treaty ratification, domestic legislation, active norm entrepreneurship, and sustained international pressure were all present. Their insufficiency points to structural factors the model does not theorize, namely, Malaysia's reactive enforcement culture, GISBH's religious-organizational opacity, the jurisdictional complexity of Malaysia's dual civil and Islamic legal system, and complaint-driven labor oversight. Together, these conditions explain why Malaysia remains structurally stalled between cascade and internalization, and why this finding constitutes a limitation of the NLC framework, not merely a description of Malaysia's governance.

Therefore, Malaysia's position can be understood as transitional, situated between the late stage of norm cascade and the early stage of norm internalization. This conclusion is consistent with critiques by Frantz and Pigozzi (2018), who argue norm diffusion is neither linear nor irreversible, and Richter (2018), who demonstrates

that cascade conditions do not guarantee routinized compliance. The GISBH case contributes to this literature by identifying the structural mechanisms through which internalization stalls in complex domestic contexts, and by demonstrating that the NLC model's explanatory reach requires supplementation when applied to cases involving competing normative frameworks and reactive enforcement environments.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen the internalization of child and labor rights norms within Malaysia.

First, the Malaysian government should prioritize preventive monitoring mechanisms to reduce reliance on reactive enforcement, including routine inspections and early detection systems for welfare institutions and labor practices. Second, institutional consistency should be enhanced through stronger inter-agency coordination, ensuring that the collaborative capacity demonstrated in the GISBH case is applied uniformly across different cases. Third, the legal and regulatory framework should be continuously strengthened, particularly to address jurisdictional gaps between civil and Islamic law jurisdictions in child welfare and labor protection. Finally, civil society and public awareness efforts should be further supported, while reducing over-reliance on whistleblowers and media exposure through stronger institutional safeguards.

For scholars, this research recommends that future applications of the NLC model incorporate structural contextual variables, particularly enforcement culture, religious-legal complexity, and organizational opacity, when analyzing norm

internalization in multi-jurisdictional governance environments. The GISBH case demonstrates that cascade-stage conditions do not guarantee linear progression toward internalization, and that the model benefits from supplementary frameworks, such as Acharya's (2004) norm localization, in cases where competing local normative orders visibly condition the depth of international norm adoption.