



Studying the Issue of Child Labor in the Oil Palm Plantation Sector

Asri Elies Alamanda^{1,*}, Irma Mangar², Miranda Damayanti³

Universitas Bojonegoro, Indonesia

Email: alamandaelies@gmail.com¹, irmamangar403@gmail.com², mirandamayanti98@gmail.com³

*Corresponding Author

Received: 21 April 2025 | Revised: 27 May 2025 | Accepted: 29 May 2025

Abstract

A significant issue that many nations, including Indonesia, face is child labour, particularly in the oil palm plantation industry. A number of laws and policies, such as Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower, which specifically forbids the employment of child labour, and Law No. 23 of 2002 on Child Protection, have been put into place to safeguard children from exploitation. Furthermore, Indonesia is more committed to ending child labour and dangerous work because it has ratified international treaties including ILO treaties No. 138 and No. 182. Children's safety and sustainable community development are the two main goals of this research. This study's normative research approach focusses on examining laws and policies pertaining to child labour in Indonesia's oil palm plantation industry. Additionally, more and more palm oil companies are implementing sustainability strategies that address kid protection. Government and non-governmental organisation (NGO) programs emphasise access to education and public awareness of the risks associated with child labour. Violations of this rule can result in fines, business licence revocation, and criminal penalties.

Keywords: children, punishment, school, worker

Introduction

Children are priceless jewels bestowed by God Almighty, endowed with innate dignity and humanity. Children represent the next generation of the nation's principles, and they play an important part in ensuring the nation's and state's long-term survival. Every child has the greatest chance to grow and develop ideally, both physically, cognitively, and socially (Ornella Angelia, 2022). Legal protection is also provided to working minors and this is inseparable from children's human rights. Not only in Indonesia but also in several other countries regarding child labor, one of which is in China (Liu et al., 2025). In Indonesia, there are currently many laws and regulations that specifically provide legal protection for child labor, especially child labor.

Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower regulates the rights and protection of underage labour, albeit these restrictions are not without flaws. Furthermore, the Republic of Indonesia's Minister of Manpower and Transmigration's Decree No.Kep.235/MEN/2003 concerning Types of Work that Endanger the Health, Safety, or Morals of Children, as an implementing regulation of Article 74 paragraph (3) of Law No. 13 of 2003, imposes obligations on companies that employ children. A child is defined as any human being under eighteen years old, unless adulthood has been attained sooner according to laws regarding minors. As per the Human Rights Act of 1999 (HAM), "a child refers to any person below the age of eighteen

who is unmarried, encompassing those who are yet to be born." A "child" is defined as "an individual who has not reached 18 years of age, including an unborn child" in Law Number 35 of 2014 amending Law Number 23 of 2002 on Child Protection. Anyone engaged in work for compensation or other advantages is deemed a worker or laborer. In my view, a child labourer is an individual younger than 18 who is employed and has a boss. Article 330 of the Civil Code (KUHPerdata) describes immature children as those who are under the age of 21 and have not been married at any point. According to Article 150 of the Criminal Code, "A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (eighteen) years." Additionally, KHI Article 98 paragraph (1) states, "the age threshold for a child who can be independent or an adult is 21 years, provided that the child is neither physically nor mentally handicapped and has never been married."

A person who is engaged in work for compensation or additional advantages is regarded as a worker or laborer. In my view, a child labourer is a person below 18 years old who is employed and has a boss. Article 330 of the Civil Code (KUHPerdata) classifies immature minors as those who are under 21 years old and have not been married. According to Article 150 of the Criminal Code, "A child is defined as an individual who has not reached 18 (eighteen) years of age." Additionally, as stated in KHI Article 98 paragraph (1), "the maximum age for a child who can be independent or an adult is 21 years, provided the child is neither physically nor mentally disabled and has never been married." Article 1, number 4; A child victim of a crime is an individual under 18 who undergoes physical, emotional, or financial harm due to a criminal offense. Article 1 number 5 Children who witness crimes are individuals under 18 years old who can offer information for investigation, prosecution, and court examination related to a criminal case that they have heard, seen, and/or experienced. In Law No. 39 of 1999 regarding Human Rights, Article 1 number 5 states, "Children are defined as any individual under 18 years of age and not married, including unborn children if it serves their best interests." The 2023 Criminal Code (Law No. 1 of 2023) does not provide an explicit definition of a child. A child is a gift from God, and if their physical development is stunted, it is an important issue that must be addressed to ensure their growth and development. Mental and spiritual development can lead to stress and inconsistencies in daily life. As a result, children may not be able to maintain a strategic mindset for future generations (Fadila & Khayatudin, 2022).

The plantation sector has the most important role in Indonesia, because the agricultural sector is considered to contribute greatly to economic activities. Another thing that has emerged is that it can reduce unemployment by providing jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities for rural communities, especially the agricultural sector (Alamanda, 2023). There is a difference between working children and child laborers. Working children are those who work to help their parents. This effort is made to develop children's skills and introduce work that is not exploitative and does not endanger children's health and safety. Meanwhile, child labor is an activity that burdens or exploits children, endangers their safety and health, and denies them the opportunity to attend school.

Indonesia has enacted child labor regulations in the oil palm plantation industry, classifying child work in plantations as one of 13 forms of forbidden labor. This has been distinctly incorporated in the National Action Plan for the Urgent Elimination of the Most Severe Forms of Child Labor via Presidential Decree No. 59 of 200 (Atem, 2016). To achieve quality and competitive Indonesian human resources capable of leading and preserving national unity within the Pancasila framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, ongoing mentoring is essential for the well-being of children grounded in human rights. Emotional, physical, and social progress and advancement, safeguarding against any risks that could harm every child (Scott, 2018). Child labor in the oil palm plantation sector is one of the issues that is receiving increasing attention at the global level. Palm oil is one of the most widely produced and traded commodities in the world, especially in tropical countries such as

Indonesia and Malaysia. Despite making significant contributions to the economy and employment, the practice of using child labor in this industry has generated a lot of controversy. Efforts to prevent and reduce child labor are complex and require the involvement of various parties. These efforts are closely related to the problem of poverty, low educational facilities and quality, limited livelihood options, and weak law enforcement. Children's rights are fragile and cannot be fully protected if they are violated in formal or legal documents. As a result, it is imperative for the government to facilitate the implementation and enforcement of children's rights, as outlined in various laws (Melissa Megalia, 2013).

Access to education is important in this era, as well as the quality of education. Education will be needed and affect the skills needed in the workplace. From the above statement, we can see that children do have to get an education in a formal and informal environment for their mental and psychological development, but again poverty makes this impossible. The remains of children are still so vulnerable that they cannot work to continue their lives (Siadari, 2021). Employer-employee relationships in oil palm plantations are often illegal and have no employment contracts. Employers can avoid their need to respect workers' rights by signing unlawful employment agreements, such as with freelancers and domestic helpers. Meanwhile, some permanent workers, known as SKUs (Basic Conditions of Work), despite having a comprehensive employment letter, are not guaranteed. Groups of irregular workers, as well as seasonal and illegal domestic workers, can be easily moved to other plantations or overcrowded. Seasonal workers and maids are often members of the permanent worker family (SKU) and other members of the seasonal workforce. Palm oil businesses employ at least six types of people: permanent workers, contract workers, day freelancers, day contract workers, subcontractors, and almond or coconut contract workers (Yati Nurhayati & Rina Auliana, 2023).

Currently, if you pay attention, many child workers are still working, especially in the oil palm plantation sector. Employing children is strictly prohibited by Indonesian labor regulations. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) defines workers in Indonesia as those aged 15 years and above. In reality, oil palm plantation companies exclusively employ workers with Identity Cards (KTP). Meanwhile, Indonesian regulations only require Indonesian residents over the age of 17 to have an ID card. In addition to the law, it is technically almost impossible for minors to work on oil palm plantations. Weeding, harvesting, spraying and cleaning of FFB are examples of work on oil palm plantations that require training and physical strength that children cannot acquire. In several villages in Merlung District, Jambi Province, there are still many child laborers in community-owned oil palm plantations where there is no supervision or further action to reduce the number of child laborers in the increasingly rampant oil palm plantation sector.

The differences between this study and the previous study are as follows; In the previous study, it has been discussed about the Juridical Study of the Protection of Child Labor in Indonesia in the Perspective of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Many 18-year-olds become active workers in the industrial sector due to financial problems and other factors that motivate them to participate in economic activities. Working as a child is a serious problem because it can cause a lower quality of life in Indonesia. Reflections on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) must consider various factors, such as government regulations, local government structures, and government efforts to improve security and stability. The provisions regarding child labor in Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower are consistent with the Indonesian Convention on the Rights of the Child (Fadila & Khayatudin, 2022). Moreover, in the research on Child Labor Exploitation following Law Number 13 of 2003 regarding Employment (Case Study of Tarakan City), findings indicated that employing children is not essential if it complies with legal standards. Nevertheless, if it does not comply with the law, it can constitute a legal breach. Child protection exists within

numerous laws, such as those related to employment, child labor, and immigration. Parents and business owners share the responsibility for the work of their children (Van & Samban, 2022).

Furthermore, in a study entitled Legal Protection of Minors in Legal Review, the results of the study showed; Poverty is one of the factors that contribute to child labor. Working as a child poses a significant risk to their education, health, and well-being, preventing them from achieving optimal growth. According to Article 68 of Law No. 13 of 2003, employers are responsible for their employees. One of the most important ways to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of children is through education and training for those who work with them (Harahap et al., 2023). Furthermore, in a study entitled Child Labor in Indonesia: Supply-Side Determinants, the results of the study show that the characteristics of heads of households have a significant impact on employment opportunities. If the head of the household has a high level of education, the children have fewer opportunities to work. Household leaders with elevated educational levels are less inclined to have their children enter the workforce. We discovered a favorable connection between heads of households and their probability of employment. This happens because many Indonesian families lack a home or land to support their children. Moreover, families tend to thrive when their children oversee their own family enterprises. Comparable results were noted for household heads who were freelancers and unpaid workers, who often worked during the survey timeframe. The impact is significantly larger when contrasted with urban regions. Nonetheless, the chance of employment in the village diminishes if the household head is an employee. As per the Axiom of Luxury, the house's stairs adversely affect work performance. This idea illustrates that children's involvement in economic tasks aims to assist their families in fulfilling financial requirements, particularly in rural regions. Positive recruitment methods are linked to more job opportunities. Older kids are more prone to being sent to work (Haszelinna et al., 2016).

Furthermore, in a study titled Child Labor in Pakistan: Causes, Consequences and Prevention, the results of the study show that child labor not only kills children's lives, but also undermines the existence of humanity and questions the moral framework of society, in addition to having different political, social and economic consequences for the society concerned. However, the phenomenon of child labor prohibits a child from receiving an education, depriving Pakistan of many of the basic rights guaranteed by the constitution, several laws, and international treaties that Pakistan has signed. Child labor manifests itself in a variety of ways. According to one author, the problem of child labor and its roots can be traced back to the industrial revolution, when people began to shift their focus from agriculture to industry. It also marked the beginning of a capitalist economy, which revolved around making money and fixing it. However, various classes emerged early on, with some having access to resources and boasting about the country's wealth to increase their economic influence, while many suffered from various problems, with increased poverty being just one of them. The growth of poverty and the emergence of the underprivileged have resulted in an increase in various social problems (Shah, 2022). Based on the comparison with the previous research above, it can be said that this study has differences with the study. This study specifically discusses children working in the oil palm plantation sector.

Method

The research method used in this study is a normative research method that focuses on the analysis of regulations and policies related to the use of child labor in the oil palm plantation sector in Indonesia (Nurhayati et al., 2021). This research is qualitative, examining existing legal norms, including Law No. 23 of 2002 on Child Protection and Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower, as well as relevant international conventions such as ILO Conventions No. 138 and No. 182. Data was collected through document studies, literature analysis. The analysis was carried out by comparing existing regulations with practices in the field, to identify gaps

between legal norms and implementation. Through this approach, it is hoped that the research can provide recommendations to improve regulations and practices to protect children from exploitation and ensure sustainability in the plantation sector.

Results and Discussion

A. Regulations and policies in Indonesia that regulate and prohibit the use of child labor, especially in the oil palm plantation sector

ILO data shows that in 2016 there were 152 million child laborers globally, 73 million of whom worked in hazardous work (ILO, 2017). In order to provide protection for children as workers, the convention contains several principles consisting of the following principles: Each member must implement a national program to guarantee the successful abolition of child labour laws in accordance with the principle of the elimination of child labour outlined in Article 1. Every member must also increase the minimum age requirement for employment according to the physical and mental growth needs of youth (Bansah & Adonteng-Kissi, 2025). Article 2 states that the Principle of Protection establishes that the minimum working age is a child who is at least 15 years old. As per Article 2, "no individual of mandatory age shall be hired or work in a role within the jurisdiction of a Member State" of the ILO. Article 3 of the Convention also specifies that "any work that could jeopardize the health, safety, or morals of young individuals must have a minimum age requirement of 18 years." Article 3 highlights the importance of national legislation and regulations pertaining to hazardous work. According to Law 52 Number 39 of 1999 on Human Rights, every child has the right to be protected by their parents, family, society, and the state. This piece also mentions that the rights of children are human rights, and to ensure children's well-being, these rights must be acknowledged and protected by laws while the child is still in the womb. The Human Rights Law's Articles 64 and 65 also offer legal safeguards against child labor. Article 64 states: "All children have the right to protection from any economic or employment activities that jeopardize their education, physical health, morals, social life, and mental wellbeing," while Article 65 states: "All children have the right to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, abduction, child trafficking, as well as all types of abuse involving narcotics, psychotropic substances, and other addictive substances."

A child who will become a worker or employee is undoubtedly safeguarded by legislation. This is demonstrated by the requirements that need to be fulfilled before a child can become a worker or engage in light work. Article 69 paragraph (2) specifies that: "Employers hiring children for light work as mentioned in paragraph (1) must fulfill these conditions: written consent from parents or guardians; a work contract between the employer and the parent or guardian; a maximum working duration of 3 (three) hours; performed during daylight hours without interrupting school times; health and safety measures; a distinct employment relationship; and compensation in line with current regulations." Work in oil palm mills, and plantations has characteristics that fall under the criteria of the type of work that endangers the health and safety of children and the worst form of work for children. The presence of children in the garden can pose reputational and legal risks to the company. Article 73 of Law No. 13/2003 also states that children are considered to be working while working, unless it can be proven otherwise.

The existence of the phrase "must be fulfilled" means that the rule is a mandatory rule. This means that for every child employed, the employer must ensure that these requirements are met. The Tenaker Law's Article 69, paragraph (3), clarifies that, particularly for children employed by their family businesses, they are exempt from the requirements pertaining to parental or guardian written consent, employment agreements between the employer and parents or guardians, a clear employment relationship, and payment of wages in compliance with applicable laws. The Manpower Law's Article 69, paragraph (1), does not define "light

work" as work that does not impede children's social, mental, or physical growth or health. Nonetheless, this clause can be interpreted in light of Tenaker Law Article 74, Paragraph 2, which governs the ban on youngsters performing the worst employment. This indicates that light labour, as defined in Article 69 paragraph (1) of the Manpower Law, is work that is in addition to the worst job and does not impede children's development or physical, mental, or social health.

Work in oil palm plantations is considered one of the bad or dangerous jobs for children (Öncü et al., 2025). In the laws and regulations governing labor in Indonesia, it is strictly forbidden to employ children. In addition to the policy, it is also technically almost impossible for children to work in oil palm plantations. Various jobs in oil palm plantations such as weeding, harvesting, spraying and FFB removal are jobs that require training and physical strength beyond the reach of children. Although the exact number of children working in the palm oil industry sector is unknown, there are young people working in the oil palm plantation business. Jobs in the palm oil industry, mentioning that some parties consider the underage workforce in oil palm plantations to be quite concerning. In rural areas, the relationships between family members, including children, are strong. For those who come from the village, it is easy to understand this. The participation of children in the rice fields or rice fields with their parents is part of the socialization of children and the mechanism of protection and education as the responsibility of parents to their children (Izzati & Sitorus, 2021). Even if the peasant children we meet are holding a hoe, it is only a mechanism of education and family joy to understand the responsibilities in the family.

Common work is picking oil palm, collecting brondol and some help transport an average of 10kg within 250 meters. This child labor case is certainly contrary to national and international law. In Indonesia itself, this is contrary to Article 68 of Law No. 2003 on employment, which explains that employers/companies are prohibited from employing children, although there are exceptions for children aged 13-15 years with a record of not interfering with their physical, mental, and social development as well as health. Despite the exceptions, the work done by these palm oil companies for children has crossed the line. In terms of human rights itself, this case has violated the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights, which states that children have the right to be protected by parents, families, society, and the state, as well as the recognition and protection of children's human rights by law from the womb. From the international world, Amnesty International determined that this case has committed several violations, namely failure to wear safety equipment on children, children are employed on unsafe plantations, children are exposed to chemicals such as pesticides and chemical fertilizers, children are employed to lift weights of up to 30 kg, children are at risk of *musculoskeletal* injuries due to carrying heavy goods, as well as lack of training and child protection guarantees in the event of workplace injuries or accidents.

Then it was also explained that Law No. 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower also sets an age limit for workers. Children under the age of 18 are prohibited from working in high-risk sectors, including plantations. Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower sets the age limit for workers, specifically prohibiting children under 18 years of age from working in high-risk sectors, including plantations. These regulations are designed to protect children from work that could endanger their health, safety, and morale. The law contains a strict ban on the recruitment of children for hazardous types of work, reflecting the Indonesian government's commitment to ensuring children have access to education and opportunities for development. Violations of these provisions are subject to sanctions, so law enforcement and oversight by the government are essential to ensure that these regulations are properly implemented and that children are protected from exploitation.

One of the requirements of the state of law is the protection and guarantee of human rights. The state's obligation is to guarantee human rights, ensure a fair legal system, prosper the people and provide social guarantees and protection (Fajar, 2018). Indonesia, as a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO), has ratified several conventions focusing on the protection of children from exploitation in the workplace. One of them is ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age, which stipulates that member states must set a minimum age for work, in order to protect children from the risk of hazardous work. In addition, ILO Convention No. 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Work for Children aims to prohibit any form of work that may endanger the health, safety, or morals of children. By ratifying this convention, Indonesia demonstrates its commitment to protecting children from hazardous work and ensuring that they can enjoy their rights to grow and develop properly (Nasrin, 2013).

Many palm oil companies in Indonesia have adopted sustainable plantation policies that emphasize child protection and avoid the use of child labor in their supply chains. This policy reflects an awareness of the social impact of the palm oil industry and a commitment to meeting higher ethical standards. Within the framework of this policy, companies seek to ensure that their production practices are not only environmentally friendly, but also respect human rights, including children's rights. Measures taken include training for workers and farmers on child protection, as well as cooperation with governments and non-governmental agencies to monitor and ensure that children are not involved in plantation activities. Thus, these policies contribute to reducing child labor and creating a safer environment for children, as well as supporting more sustainable community development (March, 2015). Various programs initiated by the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Indonesia aim to improve education and child protection and increase public awareness about the dangers of child labor. These programs often involve counseling parents, children, and the community about the importance of education and the risks associated with child work. In addition, NGOs work with the government to provide better access to education, so that children can avoid being stuck in jobs in risky sectors. The awareness campaign also includes information about children's rights and legal consequences for those who employ children illegally. Through this initiative, it is hoped that the community can better understand the negative impact of child labor and play an active role in creating a safe environment and supporting child development. (Bansah & Adonteng-Kissi, 2025).

Furthermore, sanctions against the use of child labor in Indonesia are regulated in various laws, including Law No. 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection. Employers who violate this provision may be subject to criminal penalties, including imprisonment and fines, in an effort to provide a deterrent effect. In addition, administrative sanctions such as the revocation of business licenses can be applied by local governments to companies that are proven to employ minors. Fines can also be imposed, varying depending on the type of offense. In addition to legal sanctions, companies involved in the exploitation of child labor risk facing pressure from the public and non-governmental organizations, which can damage their reputations. In addition to sanctions, there are also rehabilitation programs for exploited children, including rehabilitation and access to education, to ensure they are not trapped in a harmful cycle of work (Abdullah et al., 2024). Thus, law enforcement and child protection efforts can run more effectively.

As long as it is not the worst job as stipulated in Article 74 paragraph (2) of the Manpower Law and other related regulations that have been described above. The existence of this arrangement shows that the law provides protection for children who have the potential to become workers or work. With this arrangement, every child who due to certain circumstances has to work still gets legal protection, and his rights as a child are maintained. As one example, a study conducted in Merlung District, Jambi Province, there are many minors who should still be of school age who have started working in independent oil palm plantations and the

phenomenon of rampant child labor is consciously carried out by the children themselves, not because of coercion or demands from parents. When children drop out of school, then work is the next step, if the child is in an oil palm plantation environment, then the closest and possible thing to do is to work in oil palm plantations because it does not require minimum education. Many of the regulations prohibiting the hiring of minors for this strenuous work are not heeded by the owners of the Independent Plantations and even by the children themselves. This proves that oil palm plantations are still an emergency for child labor. In addition, it can also be caused by a lack of supervision from law enforcement and the government as well as awareness from plantation owners themselves in order to reduce or eliminate child labor. Regarding supervision, it is carried out to control the implementation of government activities because in essence supervision is the most important part of the implementation of government administration. In order for the administration to run properly and effectively, supervision must also be carried out properly.

Several laws and regulations in Indonesia prohibit and strictly limit the employment of child labor, especially in the oil palm plantation sector. Employers are explicitly forbidden from employing individuals under 18 years old, except for light work that does not hinder children's physical, mental, or social growth. Only youths aged 13 to 15 with certain stipulations can be employed under Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Labor. Labor that endangers children's health and safety, like that found in the plantation sector, is explicitly forbidden. Furthermore, by Presidential Decree Number 36 of 1990, Indonesia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Convention lays out the fundamental rights of children, such as the right to health care, education, and protection from exploitation and violence, as well as the right to develop and grow to their full potential. Given that the palm oil industry frequently entails strenuous labour, extended workdays, and exposure to dangerous chemicals, child labour in this sector is a violation of these rights. Thus, in line with the CRC's tenets, the state is not the only entity responsible for protecting children from labour exploitation; the private sector and the larger community also have a role to play.

B. Factors Driving Child Labour Practices in the Oil Palm Plantation Sector in Indonesia

Work in the oil palm plantation sector can be very dangerous for the children involved. Some of the possible hazards are: First, Exposure to hazardous chemicals: Child workers on oil palm plantations can be exposed to harmful chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides. Exposure to these chemicals can lead to both short-term and long-term health problems, including organ damage, cancer, and reproductive health problems. Second, Injuries: Children involved in the harvesting and processing of oil palm fruit can suffer serious injuries due to the tools and machinery used in the process. Children can also be exposed to the risk of falling or being hit by sharp objects. Third, Heat Poisoning: Children who work in direct sunlight for long hours can experience dehydration, heat exhaustion, and even heat poisoning. Fourth, Forced Labor: There are cases where children are trafficked and forced to work in the oil palm plantation sector. They may be banned from leaving the workplace, beaten, or threatened as a form of coercion. Fifth, developmental disorders: Children who work in oil palm plantations may lose out on learning and developing socially and emotionally just as children of their age who do not work. Factor Poverty is undoubtedly linked to the increase in child labor, but it is not the only relevant factor. Various additional support elements that can also plunge children into the workplace, such as associations and lifestyles that cause them to drop out of school and then choose to work (Maulana & Suryaningrum, 2023).

However, on the one hand, there are many children who are forced to work in oil palm plantations. Of course, this is due to various factors, including poverty, lack of access to education, and the economic needs of the family. Work performed by children often involves

high risks, such as exposure to hazardous chemicals, unsafe working conditions, and long working hours. This negatively impacts their physical and mental health and hinders their access to a decent education.

The desire to aid parents, to earn respect from society, and to enjoy the fruits of their labour are all reasons why children engage in economic activity. However, parental pressures to generate extra money for the family are the main factor that motivates youngsters to work. Youngsters frequently can't avoid doing their work (Setiamandani, 2012). In Indonesia, there are many laws and regulations that regulate the minimum age for work. In general, this rule is very effective in preventing companies from hiring teenagers as employees. However, the regulation only applies to formal businesses that are supervised by the government (Utama & Handayani, 2020).

In some cases in the palm oil industry, there are children who are found working with their parents, especially in oil palm plantations. Some of them work and do work like adults, some just help pick up brondola, and some don't work and just play in the park. Some of the factors that can cause children to follow their parents to work or simply go to work include: Poverty and high unemployment rate, Local culture and traditions, Lack of adequate numbers and access to educational facilities, Lack of parental awareness, Supervision and law enforcement, and High industrial need for cheap labor in large quantities.

A primary factor that drives child labor in Indonesia's oil palm plantations is poverty and economic constraints faced by families. Numerous families residing near the plantation face tough economic circumstances, leading children to work to assist in fulfilling their daily requirements. The poor education of parents also leads to a lack of understanding regarding the significance of education for children and the potential for exploitation. Moreover, restricted access to education, particularly in rural regions, facilitates children's engagement in low-skill labor in the garden. This activity frequently happens informally and discreetly, like when children assist their parents without a defined employment status. Insufficient company oversight and weak law enforcement are additional contributing factors that allow this practice to persist. Consequently, children forfeit their entitlement to education, safeguarding, and adequate development as outlined in national laws and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Conclusion

Even while Indonesia has enacted a number of laws and policies to shield minors from exploitation, especially in the palm plantation industry, their execution is nevertheless fraught with difficulties. The gap between legal norms and practices on the ground points to the need for stricter law enforcement and support from all parties, including governments, companies, and the public. In addition, education and awareness programs about the dangers of child labor need to be strengthened to ensure children can access education and have a better future. With collaborative efforts and strong commitment from all stakeholders, it is hoped that child protection can be more effective and the use of child labor can be phased out. To overcome the practice of child labor in the oil palm plantation sector, integrated efforts from various parties are needed. The government needs to strengthen supervision and law enforcement against labor violations involving children, as well as ensure the effective implementation of policies that protect children's rights in the field. In addition, expanding access to quality education in rural areas and around plantations is essential for children to have options other than work. Plantation companies must also implement strict sustainability standards, including social audits and workforce training on child labor bans. The community and families need to be educated about the importance of education and the dangers of child work, and encouraged to report exploitative practices. Finally, cooperation with international organizations, such as

UNICEF or the ILO, can strengthen local capacity to eradicate child labor and build sustainable child protection systems.

References

Abdullah, A., Cudjoe, E., Bastian, C., & Jordan, L.P. (2024). Passing the torch or breaking the cycle of intergenerational child labor transmission: Reflections from children's life experiences. *Child and Youth Services Review*, 157, 107430. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2024.107430>

Alma, A. E. (2023). The role of the government in optimizing the implementation of oil palm replanting. *Face of the Law*, 7(1), 73. <https://doi.org/10.33087/wjh.v7i1.1129>

Atem. (2016). The Phenomenon of Child Labor in Oil Palm Plantations in the Border Area of Sambas Regency. West Kalimantan. *Raheema: Journal of Gender and Child Studies*, 137–147.

Bansah, K. J., & Adonteng-Kissi, O. (2025). Child labor in artisanal and small-scale mining: Implications for health, development, and poverty. *Extractive Industry and Society*, 21, 101577. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2024.101577>

Fadila, Y. A., & Khayatudin. (2022). A Juridical Review of Child Labor Protection in Indonesia in the Perspective of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Justiciables*, 8(2), 143–166. <https://doi.org/10.36563/yustitiabelen.v8i2.563>

Harahap, A. M., Sitorus, K. N., Aulia, R., Angriani, D., & Chandra, A. (2023). Legal protection of minors in the review of the law. *QISTIE*, 16(2), 273. <https://doi.org/10.31942/jqi.v16i2.8068>

Haszelinna, D., Ali, A., & Arabsheibani, G.R. (2016). Economics and Finance in Indonesia Economics and Finance in Indonesia Child Labor in Indonesia: Supply-Side Determinants of Child Labor in Indonesia: Supply-Side Determinants of Child Labor in Indonesia: Supply-Side Determinants. *Economics and Finance in Indonesia*, 62(3), 162–179. <https://doi.org/10.47291/efi.v62i3.555>

ILO. (2017). International Labour Organization – Global estimates of child labour: results and trends, 2012-2016. In [Book]. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575499.pdf%0Ahttps://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_575499/lang--en/index.htm

Izzati, F.M., & Sitorus, JRH (2021). *Determinants of Child Labor in the Plantation Sector in North Sumatra Province Susenas Data Analysis 2021*. 2021(2), 633–642.

Liu, K., Wang, X., & Zhang, T. (2025). Liberalization of Import Tariffs and Child Labor: Evidence from China. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 73(2), 679–715. <https://doi.org/10.1086/728095>

Small, A. (2015). The effect of joint custody laws on the future outcome of the child labor market. *International Review of Law and Economics*, 43, 22–31 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.irle.2015.04.001>

Maulana, A., & Suryaningrum, N. (2023). THE EFFECT OF POVERTY ON INDONESIAN CHILD LABOUR: MICRO DATA ANALYSIS. *JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENT ECONOMIC DYNAMICS*, 5(3), 258–269. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jdep.5.3.258-269>

Nasrin, S. (2013). PP015 IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN AND CHILD LABOUR LAWS IN THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY IN BANGLADESH. *Respiratory Medicine*, 107, S19. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0954-6111\(13\)70071-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0954-6111(13)70071-4)

Nurhayati, Y., Ifrani, I., & Said, M.Y. (2021). Normative and Empirical Methodology in the Perspective of Legal Science. *Indonesian Law Enforcement Journal*, 2(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.51749/jphi.v2i1.14>

Öncü, E., Oke, E., Çelik, Y., & Uçar, K. (2025). Youth in the workplace: Exploring the

relationship between social status, a history of child labor, and health. *Social Sciences & Medicine*, 365, 117579. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.117579>

Ornella Angelia, RR (2022). LEGAL PROTECTION OF CHILD LABOR RIGHTS IN INDONESIA. *Journal of Healthy Justice UNES*, 5(4), 485. <https://doi.org/10.31933/ujsj.v5i4.237>

Mr. Megalia. (2013). Legal Protection against Child Exploitation (Law Study Number 23 of 2002). *Lex Administratum*, 1(2), 25–41. <https://ejournal.unsrat.ac.id/v3/index.php/administratum/article/view/3013>

Said, MF (2018). LEGAL PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE. *JCH (Journal of Legal Scholars)*, 4(1), 141. <https://doi.org/10.33760/jch.v4i1.97>

Setiamandani, E. D. (2012). LEGAL PROTECTION OF CHILD LABOR AND ITS COUNTERMEASURES, FACULTY OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF MUHAMMADIYAH MALANG. *Reformation*, 2, 74–81. <https://jurnal.unitri.ac.id/index.php/reformasi/article/view/22>

Shah, R. (2022). Child Labor in Pakistan: Causes, Consequences and Prevention. *Pakistan Social Science Review*, 6(II), 197–208. [https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2022\(6-ii\)18](https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2022(6-ii)18)

Siadari, H. (2021). *CHILD LABOUR PROTECTION AND SAFETY EFFORTS IN JERMAL*. 1 (November).

Duncan, LCO (2018). Legal Protection of Child Labor, Review of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Science*, 24(1), 40. <https://doi.org/10.47268/sasi.v24i1.117>

Utama, RS, & Handayani, D. (2020). Child Labor in Indonesia: The Role of Labor Supply and Demand. *Journal of Applied Quantitative Economics*, February, 145. <https://doi.org/10.24843/jekt.2020.v13.i01.p07>

Van, M., & Samban, B. (2022). *Exploitation of Child Labor Based on Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower (Tarakan City Case Study)*.

Yati Nurhayati, S., & Rina Auliana, R. (2023). *OIL PALM PLANTATIONS AFTER THE BIRTH OF GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS IN LIEU OF LAW NUMBER 2 OF 2022 CONCERNING JOB CREATION oil palm for the contribution of the oil palm plantation industry. This is reflected in the neglect*. 8(1), 23–36.