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# INSANIYAT

## Journal of Islam and Humanities



### Modern Slavery: A Study of “Bilal: A New Breed of Hero”

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#### Abstract

*Slavery has been a tradition from the Jahiliyyah era to the present. The film “Bilal A New Breed of Hero”, tells the story of the Arab Jahiliyyah model of slavery which can be used as a lesson in the toughness of a Bilal who is eventually crowned a hero. Even though this film tells of slavery in the past, the main message of this film is the desire to eradicate slavery from the face of the earth which can be used as a valuable lesson now and in the future. This paper is dedicated to examining the film “Bilal A New Breed of Hero” from the aspect of its content and main messages that are still relevant today. The issue of slavery still occurs in the modern era, only in different forms and models. This topic is interesting to study because the issue of slavery is still being discussed in various forums and media. The method used in this research is content analysis. Finally, the researcher found that there were 3 categories of data as follows, 3 data which described the beginning of Bilal and Ghufairah as slaves, 3 data which described the slave trafficking, and 8 data which described the treatment of masters towards slaves.*

**Keywords:** Film Bilal; Slavery; Modern; Arab.

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#### Introduction

The practice of slavery in the film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero still occurs in parts of the world in modern times. Slavery in modern times is also called Modern Slavery. Modern slavery is also a global issue that has existed since pre-Islamic times. In the pre-Islamic Arab era, slaves were a symbol of the prosperity and wealth of merchants, even owning large numbers of slaves would raise the social class of their employers, the more slaves they owned, the higher the honor the employer would have within their community (Amanda, 2022). Even though slavery has existed since pre-Islamic times, to this day various forms of slavery practice are still a problem that cannot be resolved ultimately.

Some evidence of the practice of slavery in modern times includes reports that Qatar, which is the host of the 2022 World Cup, has carried out forced labor. Around 6,500 workers have reportedly died since December 2010, when Qatar won the right to host the 2022 World Cup. 2 million migrant workers are coming to Qatar who work for low wages and even



in hot conditions. Human Rights Watch has prepared a report describing how immigrant workers are exploited using the Kafala or forced labor systems. Because it is called forced labor, workers cannot leave their duties or even run away, because if this is done, they will be subject to criminal law in Qatar (Bonauli, 2022).

Besides reporting on forced labor in Qatar, in Indonesia, the practice of slavery often occurs in the fisheries, palm oil, and domestic workers sectors. Even at the ASEAN level, Indonesia ranks first in the occurrence of slavery (Wardanti, 2022). Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT) is estimated to have a very worrying prevalence, the latest being around 40.3 million. This figure is expected to increase due to financial conditions caused by the economic recession as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even this high number is likely to be underestimated, due to the nature of MSHT, in its criminality and secrecy, the variable reporting, and especially the lack of data availability in Arab and American countries (Evans et al., 2022). Hillary Clinton, who served as Secretary of State of the United States (Wicaksono, 2012), said that there are around 27 million people who are still victims of human trafficking which are included in modern slavery (Wahid et al., 2022).

One of the studies that also discusses modern slavery explains that true slavery is still happening in the 21st century. There has been increasing public awareness of the rise of modern slavery practices. The practice of modern slavery that is happening now, is the same as it was 100 years ago. Modern slavery is not a phenomenon of modernity, but an eternal institution and will continue to develop. But, this research by Barbara Degorge, states that the types of slavery and conditions of existence have changed due to increasing globalization and modernization. Barbara Degorge describes some forms of modern slavery as case studies, namely the exploitation of children as camel jockeys, the sexual slavery of women, and immigrant workers who enslave themselves (Degorge, 2006).

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 introduces two separate categories of modern slavery and human trafficking. Modern slavery is defined as slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labor. Whereas human trafficking is recruitment, transportation or transfer, harboring, or receiving or transferring control over individuals (Evans et al., 2022). (Evans et al., 2022). On the Anti-Slavery International page, Human trafficking is included in the kind of modern slavery, not only that, forced labor, debt bondage/bonded labor, descent-based slavery, child slavery, domestic servitude, and forced and early marriage are also included in the kind of modern slavery (What Is Modern Slavery?, n.d.-a). This also aligns with the understanding of modern slavery by Sukawarsini Djelantik in the paper entitled "Globalisasi, Migrasi Tenaga Kerja, Kejahatan Lintas Negara dan Perdagangan Perempuan dan Anak-anak" stated that human trafficking is a form of slavery in modern times (Djelantik, 2010). In addition to the above definition, modern slavery is the severe exploitation of humans for personal or commercial gain (Welsh Government Modern Slavery Statement, 2023). Basically, modern slavery refers to a state of exploitation that a person can't refuse or abandon because of threats, violence, coercion, fraud, and abuse of power (What Is Modern Slavery?, n.d.-b).

The definition of human trafficking as a form of modern slavery is also almost similar to what Ilhamul Azis Osmond wrote, in his thesis entitled "Peran International Organization for Migration dalam Menanggung Perdagangan Manusia di Indonesia Tahun 2015-2028" that the early history of entry to the development of human trafficking originated from the process of slavery during the Javanese kingdoms, which made women a complement to the feudal government system (Osmond, 2019). Anatona in a public lecture at UNY also gave a narrative that humans have long been a trading commodity. Then in the 19th century, it was referred to as the slave trade, but at this time the name had changed to trafficking (Editor, 2019). Enslavement is also included in Crimes Against Humanity, namely acts committed as

part of a widespread and systematic attack where it can be seen that the attack was directed directly at the civilian population (Panjaitan, 2012).

In addition to differences of opinion regarding the terms “slavery and human trafficking”, the term “slavery and slaves” also has several definitions including slaves according to Arabic is ‘abd which means making them helpers (Wahid et al., 2022). Meanwhile, according to Allain, slavery is the status of someone who must obey one or all of the orders of the owner (Hafsyari & Faisal, 2021). According to M. Quraish Shihab, slaves are people who have been sold or people who have been captured by enemies, or people who have lost their right to freedom due to persecution (Rised & Roza, 2023). Apart from that, in the book *Nizhâm al-Riqq fî al-‘islâm*, it is stated that slaves were workers who had been trained and included the mainstay of wealth in the Roman and Greek economic systems until the 10th century AD (‘Ulwân, 2003).

While the definition of the crime of “human trafficking” in the Palermo Protocol means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons by threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or giving or receiving payments or benefits to obtain the consent of a person having control over another person, for exploitation (International Labour Organization et al., n.d.). Meanwhile, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, human trafficking is a process in which people are kidnapped or recruited from their home countries, then transferred through transit countries and exploited in destination countries (Rahman & Rabiatuladawiah, 2022). In the Arab world, human trafficking, or trafficking in persons, takes many forms, including slavery, begging, domestic service, forced labor, temporary marriage, child marriage, selling of children for adoption, prostitution, recruitment into the armed forces, and organ trafficking (Y. Mattar, 2011).

Human trafficking is often exacerbated by socioeconomic problems, conflicts, or natural disasters that force people to seek work away from home or migrate to survive (Okech et al., 2018). In addition, lack of education, lack of information, patriarchal understanding that is rooted in people’s culture (Wulandari & Wicaksono, 2014), characteristics of victims and their families, and friendship environment (Oppong, 2012) are also among the causes of human trafficking. Trafficking in human beings is not only seen as a crime that must be resolved by national-scale criminal law but is included as a serious violation of human rights and other legal instruments (Parmentier, 2010). Even issues related to human rights and the protection of freedom have become cosmological icons in the 18th century AD (Flambonita, 2017).

Based on some of the opinions that have been stated above regarding modern slavery and human trafficking, it can be concluded that the two have a strong relationship, especially in origin and practice. So that in explaining the results of this research, the term “slavery” will be used as the main topic, while the term “trafficking in humans” becomes part of the practice of slavery.

Discussions about slavery certainly do not stop at cases that occurred in modern times. However, some articles also discuss slavery in movies including, an article entitled “Revising Slavery, Reissuing Uncle Tom’s Cabin: Interracial Sex and Black Resistance in the Black Power Era Slavery Exploitation Film Cycle”. The article examines the depiction of slavery in Hollywood films during the Black Power era, focusing on the reissuing of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” and its various versions. It discusses the shift from depicting slavery as a benign institution to revealing its oppressive nature. It also explores the intersection of exploitation, sexploitation, and blaxploitation trends in these films, as well as the challenges faced by Hollywood in responding to calls for racial change (Pinkowitz, 2019).

Another article that also discusses slavery in film is “From Uncle Tom to Nat Turner:

A Review of Slavery in American Film, 1903-2016". The article explains that overall, the films "Amistad," "Lincoln," "Django Unchained," and "12 Years a Slave" present slavery in different ways, some of which have been praised for their depiction of historical events, while others have been criticized for various reasons. These recent films ("Amistad," "Lincoln," "Django Unchained," and "12 Years a Slave") aim to present more accurate and critical depictions of slavery, highlighting the brutality, exploitation, and dehumanization that characterize the institution. These films challenge the romanticized and distorted depictions of slavery seen in previous films. However, they also face criticism for various reasons, such as oversimplifying the complexity of slavery or focusing too much on the sadistic aspects, which can mask economic exploitation and contemporary systemic disparities between power and privilege (Stokes, 2018).

In Rosa Oktaviani Tanesia's findings, which she wrote in her article entitled "Discourse on Human Trafficking in the Film Jamila and the President", it was stated that Jamila was a victim of the cruelty of her parents who forced her to become a victim of human trafficking, to provide for the family's economy. Even Jamila was forced to become a prostitute to find her sister. Apart from that, Rosa also mentioned that the role of the state was still weak in overcoming cases of human trafficking (Tanesia, 2013). Therefore, the economic factor is one of the factors in the occurrence of human trafficking. It is different from the findings of Alfred, Muhammad Natsir, and Ririn Setyowati in their article entitled "Slavery of The Main Character Solomon Northup in the 12 Years A Slave Movie". Alfred et al stated that Solomon Northup ended up as a slave because he was kidnapped and then forced to become a slave, which gave him a very severe mental disorder (Alfred et al., 2017).

Modern slavery cannot be separated from the influence of slavery in the past. One of the proofs that slavery occurred long before the term modern slavery emerged is the movie Bilal: A New Breed of Hero. The movie was adapted from the true story of one of the slaves who managed to be free during the Jahiliyyah era, Bilal bin Rabah. The movie proves that slavery has occurred in the past, precisely in the era of Jahiliyyah (7th century AD). Since it was first aired, this film has become controversial, including not mentioning who Bilal is in the film, many scenes of violence and fictional stories (Masrul & Adrianda, 2021). Despite the controversy since the beginning of the movie Bilal: A New Breed of Hero, this film has been used as an object of research by several researchers, so this proves that since slavery was born until this modern era it is still an unresolved humanitarian issue and slavery is not new in this modern era, although it has existed since ancient times but ancient slavery has evolved and developed into modern slavery.

Some studies that discuss the phenomenon of slavery in the film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero include, an article entitled "Slavery in 'Bilal: A New Breed of Hero and 12 Years A Slave's Films" by Fitri Hafsyari and Bunyamin Faisal, this research examines whether Karl Max's theory, which says a person will not contemplate mental production such as religion, philosophy, and ethics before fulfilling his basic economics because maintaining economic power is the motive behind it all. However, Bilal in the film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero does not represent this theory because Bilal is not a materialist slave, he even chooses to prioritize religion over economic issues (Hafsyari & Faisal, 2021).

In addition, an article entitled "Analysis of Bilal's Characteristics in Bilal's Film: A New Breed of Hero by Ayman Jamal: Don't Have to Be Noble to Give Meaning", explained that Slavery is depicted in the movie "Bilal: A New Breed of Hero" as a brutal and oppressive system. The article mentions that Bilal and his sister were kidnapped and sold into slavery, where they were subjected to inhumane treatment by their masters. Masters, such as the Umayyads, were portrayed as cruel and arrogant individuals who exploited their slaves for their benefit. Slaves were forced to worship idols and were punished if they refused to obey



their masters' orders. The article also highlights the physical and emotional abuse that Bilal and other slaves endured, including being whipped, tortured, and deprived of basic rights. Despite these difficulties, Bilal's struggle for freedom and justice is portrayed as a powerful and inspiring journey (Darmawan & Simanjuntak, 2022).

Based on the social facts and literary facts that have been mentioned, this research aims at, this research aims to explore whether the movie Bilal: A New Breed of Hero has the same and sustainable slavery practices as the practice of slavery in modern times. In addition, this research also aimed to see if the film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero contained an anti-slavery message relevant to the issue of modern slavery, as well as to complement previous studies on slavery. Thus, this research is expected to significantly contribute to future studies on slavery.

### **Method**

The formal object of this research is slavery relations while the material object is the film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero and Slavery which occurs in parts of the world in modern times. The types of data used are primary data and secondary data. The primary data is the film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero, accessed online on March 13, 2023, at the link <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>. Film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero is an animated film directed by Ayman Jamal and Khurram H. Alavi, released in 2016. This film is about Bilal and Ghufairah (Bilal's sister) who become slaves after their home is attacked and their mother is killed. When they were slaves, Bilal and Ghufairah often received bad treatment from their employers, namely Umayya and Safwan (Umayya's children). Various kinds of torture such as being chained, locked up, whipped, not given food and drink for days and even placing a stone on the body of the slave as experienced by Bilal (P. Wulandari & Rusmana, 2022). Secondary data is in the form of books, papers, journal articles, and online news that are relevant to find out how the phenomenon of slavery is in modern times.

This research uses the content analysis method, which is a research method used to make a replica and its valid translation from the text into the context to be studied. Content analysis requires procedures, it can also be learned and used according to the authority of the researcher. Content analysis methods also provide new perspectives for researchers and improve their understanding of certain phenomena or offer information about practical activities (Krippendorff, 2004). The procedures carried out are First, focus on the concept of slavery in the film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero and then reflect on slavery in modern times. Second, determining the observed unit of analysis, namely the characters, dialogues, and scenes that show slavery.

Third, the results of the observations that have been made are then categorized into 3 categories, namely beginning Bilal and Ghufairah became slaves, the practice of the slave trade, and the employer's treatment of slaves. Each category becomes a coding scheme, namely the data that has been obtained from the primary data of the film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero is grouped. Fourth, identifying differences and similarities between the film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero and modern slavery. Fifth, after coding the data, the next step is to analyze based on the existing patterns. Then, the patterns are discussed with the concept of slavery in Bilal: A New Breed of Hero and modern slavery, and whether some elements are still relevant in the practice of slavery today. Sixth, conclude by explaining how the research contributes to slavery over time, as well as the relevance of this research to see how modern slavery practices.

### **Result and Discussion**

Researchers have found 16 results in this study, then the 16 results were analyzed based on

3 categories, namely: The beginning of Bilal and Ghufairah becoming slaves, the practice of slave trading, and the master's treatment of slaves. The three categories show that the practice of slavery was carried out by wealthy Arab merchants as depicted in the movie. The following is a detailed discussion of the research results, namely:

### **Beginning Bilal and Ghufairah became slaves**

For the first category, 4 data prove the beginning of Bilal and Ghufairah being slaves. Starting with data 1, 2, and 3 tell that horsemen attacked Bilal, Ghufairah, and his mother, then on data 4 Bilal was forcibly pulled by one of the horsemen until Bilal and Ghufairah ended up being prisoners of war. Prisoners of war are one of the reasons a person becomes a slave, where the party that loses legally in war will become a slave for the winning party (Nasution, 2019).



**Figure 1. This scene happens in minute 04.13**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Figure 1 tells of Bilal's mother who was transfixed seeing the cavalry coming to their residence.



**Figure 2. This scene happens in minute 04.15**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Figure 2 tells of a very ferocious cavalry raiding Bilal's residence.



**Figure 3. This scene happens in minute 04.30**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Ghufairah : No!

Bilal and Ghufairah's mother ran into the house while grabbing Bilal's hand and holding Ghufairah

Bilal : Mother, who are they?

Figure 3 tells of Bilal's mother who ran while grabbing Bilal's hand and carrying Ghufairah into their house.



**Figure 4. This scene happens in minute 05.18**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Figure 4 tells of Bilal who is rebelling from being pulled by one of the horsemen who is trying to kidnap him.

### **Slave trafficking practices**

For the second category, 4 data prove the practice of slave trading in the film Bilal: A New Breed of Hero. The slave trade in this film was done by Okba. Okba is a friend of Umayya who is also a wealthy merchant. One of Okba's best-selling merchandise is slaves. Where Okba collected the slaves he owned somewhere and then sold and auctioned them as if they were merchandise. Slaves were considered the most profitable commodity. The markets in the Arabian peninsula were filled with slaves as a superior commodity, and the Quraysh people were one of the people who most got and enjoyed the results of the slave trade. The Quraysh obtained slaves from war prisoners between Arab tribes or those they bought from slave markets in Habsyah for black slaves and the Caucasian area for white slaves (Nasution, 2019).



**Figure 5. This scene happens in minute 14.54**  
Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Seller : Merchant, what do you offer? This special slave could be yours  
Buyer : Is anyone bidding?  
Seller : You're late, it's sold!

Figure 5 tells the process of auctioning slaves in a place, which was carried out by an auctioneer in front of many buyers while displaying his wares, namely a slave dressed in shabby white.



**Figure 6. This scene happens in minute 14.57**  
Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Figure 6 tells of the slaves being detained and locked up in a room that is not suitable for living. Besides that, there was someone who also rebuked the slaves with the phrase "Accept your misery".



**Figure 7. This scene happens in minute 15.14**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Okba : The best slave in the city, he is smart and knows how to read and write. He knows 20 languages. Yes, 20 languages! He can even talk to animals. O my great master, Umayya. There is no better servant, to accompany you in trade.



**Figure 8. This scene happens in minute 15.41**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Okba : He's not big enough, but this one is strong as a bull  
Then the big slave stood up  
Umayya : I take  
Okba : Really? I mean it's a good choice! It's a bit expensive, but I'm sure the gods will approach you, O beginning, Umayya

Figures 7 and 8 tell that Okba is promoting his trade, namely slaves, to Umayya. Data 7, Okba promotes his slaves who have small stature by explaining the ability of these slaves who can speak 20 languages. Meanwhile, data from 8 Okba promoted his slave who had a tall and handsome physique, thus making Umayya want to buy the slave.

### **Employers' treatment of slaves**

For the third category, 8 data prove the inhumane treatment of masters towards their slaves. The eight data show that employers have ownership rights to treat their slaves as they wish because they regard slaves as the same as other goods they own. Because of this understanding, masters treat slaves like toys and entertainment, even employers position themselves as God who must be worshiped so that slaves are also obliged to kneel before them. In addition, slaves were not given the freedom to choose the religion they wanted to believe in. And when slaves are considered to have contradicted their masters, the slaves will be punished with inhumane punishments such as being chained, locked up, whipped, not given food and drink for days and even placing a stone on the slave's body as experienced

by Bilal.



**Figure 9. This scene happens in minute 12.22**  
Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Safwan : It's a deer, a black deer.  
Friend 1 : Come here, slave!  
Safwan : I said, come here, slave! stop, slave! I command you!  
Friend 2 : The deer thought it was a lion  
Friend 3 : He will immediately pounce on you  
Safwan : You want to be my target, huh?  
Friend 3 : I'm just kidding,  
Safwan : Shut up! Come on take him!  
Ghufairah : Please stop it...

Figure 9 tells about Safwan and his three friends who forced Ghufairah, who was Safwan's slave, to be the target for his arrow experiments.



**Figure 10. This scene happens in minute 18.07**  
Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Umayya : Whose is this apple? Reply me!  
Bilal : Yours sir...  
Umayya : What's the difference between you and this apple?  
Bilal : It makes no difference, sir.  
Umayya : Don't forget that, take him to the backyard and whip him.

Figure 10 shows Umayya scolding Bilal by matching him with an apple because Bilal dared to fight Safwan when defending his sister, Ghufairah.



**Figure 11. This scene happens in minute 23.02**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Ghufairah : Why did they whip you? You didn't do anything!  
Bilal : Never mind, it's okay. Lord Umayya, do whatever he pleases with us.  
Ghufairah : Bilal...

Figure 11 tells the story of Bilal who was sentenced to be whipped on his back for defending Ghufairah, then suddenly Ghufairah is shocked to see the marks of the whip on Bilal's back.



**Figure 12. This scene happens in minute 36.25**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Safwan : How many times must I remind you? Kneel when you are in front of me, slave!  
Then Bilal knelt down  
Safwan : Some are born to lead and others to serve.

Figure 12 tells about Safwan who was ordering Bilal to kneel when Safwan was in front of Bilal.



**Figure 13. This scene happens in minute 39.49**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

- Umayya : Bilal. come sing for us! Calm this mood.  
Okba : Agree, I often hear the slave singing in, a beautiful voice. Let's listen to it.

Figure 13 tells of Bilal who is singing to entertain the rulers. Bilal did this because of an order from his employer, Umayya.



**Figure 14. This scene happens in minute 52.27**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

- Umayya : Is another traitor in my house? Confess! And show who you are!  
Safwan : Maybe you should ask your slave?  
Umayya : What? What do you mean?  
Safwan : Hey slave, why don't you tell my dad about your new friend?  
Umayya : Impossible! You must be wrong! There are no traitors in my house, right Bilal? Say! Safwan accuses you of being a traitor, please defend yourself! Say, O slave! I permit you to speak.  
Bilal : We, born all the same, breathe the same air, our blood is the same red, we will die and be buried, the same, return to the ground. I believe that I am a free man just like you.

Figure 13 tells about Umayya who found Bilal had betrayed her by following the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.





**Figure 15. This scene happens in minute 54.41**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Figure 15 tells about Bilal who was locked up due to following the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Apart from being locked up, Bilal was also deprived of food and drink and he was also often tortured in the form of beatings on his body.



**Figure 16. This scene happens in minute 64.56**

Source: <https://www.bilibili.tv/id/video/2048260419>, 2023

Figure 16 tells about Bilal who remained firm in his stance, namely only worshipping God Almighty, as a result, Bilal was brought to the middle of the city and then laid on the ground with a large stone placed on top of his body and watched by the crowd.

### **The evolution of slavery practices: Slavery in the movie *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* and Modern Slavery**

Slavery in the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* occurred in the 7th century AD, this can be seen in the film section, namely when Bilal converted to Islam and it is proven based on historical literature, that the spread of Islam in Mecca occurred when the Prophet Muhammad SAW. received the first revelation on the 17th of Ramadan 611 AD or to be precise in the 7th century AD (M. Yamin, 2017). Slavery in the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* is a representation of slavery in the Jahiliyyah era, where these practices continue in different forms in modern times, known as modern slavery.

Slavery in the modern era, especially in the 21st century AD, is not a new phenomenon, however, the practice of slavery is also increasingly diverse, even though slavery has been eliminated, its development is still ongoing, albeit on a massive scale (Amalia, 2020). If observed, slavery that occurs in modern times has the same characteristics as slavery in the movie *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero*. There are at least seven things that characterize slavery in the movie *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* that are still relevant in modern slavery practices.

**First, the practice of power over human ownership** (Human Rights Watch July 2008 1, n.d.). This can be seen in Umayya and Safwan's treatment of Bilal and Ghufairah.

Because Umayya had bought Bilal, Umayya felt a sense of “ownership” of Bilal, so she was free to do anything to Bilal, such as ordering Bilal to sing to calm Umayya’s heart, punishing Bilal by whipping him, locking him up, depriving him of food and drink, even placing stones over Bilal’s body. The practice of power over human ownership is still happening in modern times.

Sense of ownership often creates conditions such as slavery. Cases regarding the practice of power often occur with domestic workers. Domestic workers perceive their employers as “owners”, or their experience as “sold”. According to a senior consulate official, Saudi Arabian citizens treat domestic workers like goods, slaves, and even cattle. Domestic workers are like slaves and slaves have no rights. Therefore, domestic workers are not protected by labor law. Some employers even justify their actions, namely withholding passports and restricting the movements of domestic workers because of the large amount of money paid to recruit domestic workers. In addition, employers also do not want domestic workers to run away, because if they run away, they will the same goes for losing their “investment”. (Human Rights Watch July 2008 1, n.d.)

Based on interviews Human Rights Watch conducted with recruitment agencies and embassy officials, employers usually pay around 6,000-9,000 Riyals to employ domestic workers. It is the same with the case of Haima G. who is a domestic worker in Saudi Arabia who comes from the Philippines, where she was “bought” by her employer for 10,000 Riyals so that her employer feels she has ownership rights over Haima. Based on these ownership rights, Haima often gets bad treatment from her employer, such as being repeatedly harassed (Human Rights Watch July 2008 1, n.d.).

**Second, depriving honor** (Nasution, 2019). Honor is not only related to the sanctity of a woman but honor can be referred to as a good name, and self-esteem (*Arti Kata Kehormatan Menurut KBBI*, n.d.). If you pay attention, slavery in the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* also robs honor. Bilal, who was originally an independent human being, but after his village was attacked and his mother died made Bilal and his sister orphans who were then taken prisoner and sold until they became Umayya’s slaves. The status of slaves pinned on Bilal and Ghufairah made them lose the honor of their good name. Slavery made Bilal and Ghufairah lower class and they were only seen as commodities, no longer as human beings.

Honor deprivation in modern times also still occurs. Even in certain cases, there are those who deliberately commit honor deprivation such as rape to conquer a certain area. As published in an online media, that the United Nations and human rights activist groups have accused the ISIS group of kidnapping and raping hundreds of women and children. Most of the victims came from the Yazidi tribe, which is a minority in Iraq. Most were given or sold to fighters as rewards or sex slaves (Lismartini, 2015). In fact, some girls as young as 14 to 15 years old, or even younger have been used as sex slaves. The rape of these women and girls was used as a weapon against the Yazidi community in the ISIS attack (Abdulah et al., 2023). This shows that the deprivation of honor has also evolved into a strategy for war.

It’s different in the Bay Country which is known to be rich, but in reality, it is still minimal in handling human trafficking, especially regarding sexual exploitation. The Bay Area is also one of the regions that has the largest overseas workforce worldwide. Many women are forced to become sex workers and experience sexual abuse while working as domestic workers. Kuwait which is included in the Gulf countries is also known as “sex tourism”. Meanwhile, the UAE is referred to as “the Las Vegas in the Middle East”, especially Dubai, because Dubai is still a transit point and destination for illegal workers and prostitution. (Nizmi, 2015). The same is true of the Al-Jazeera report, that men, women, and children are sold by gangs to become sex workers and unskilled laborers (Nasution, 2019). Actions carried out by individuals who employ women and children to be sex workers in

various nightlife venues are included in the modern slavery mode.

**Third, seizing freedom** (Nasution, 2019). Slavery in the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* also deprives freedom. Bilal's slave status makes him lose freedom, for example, freedom in choosing a religion. Because Umayya was one of those who hated the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, so he did not allow Bilal to believe in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. As a result, Bilal was locked up and tortured by placing a large stone on top of his body. Such practices still occur in modern times, not only within the scope of religious freedom, but within the scope of the economic structure of the contemporary world. One example is human trafficking, which has become a commercial transaction in the twenty-first century. Human trafficking results in victims being unfree and often exploited for profit. This is contrary to human rights, which deny individual freedom or limit the rights of individuals to make or take decisions according to their will (Mwemezi, 2023). For example, in Africa, some people claim that they are victims of human trafficking in their own country (Hakkoumi, 2021).

In addition, forced labor is also a deprivation of liberty in modern slavery. It is called forced labor if a person is forced or intimidated to offer labor or services and is not free to quit. If they are not citizens of the country, their passports or other identification cards are confiscated and they are forced to live in poor conditions and work under constant intimidation (Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, 2017). For example, the treatment of employers against domestic workers by forcibly employing them, even resulting in death, is included in the mode of modern slavery which is rife (Nasution, 2019). In 2005, the International Labor Organization (ILO), produced its first estimate of victims of forced labor, both men, women, and children, including forced labor resulting from human trafficking, amounting to 12,300,000 for forced labor and 2,440. 000 to trade (Andrees, 2008). Apart from presenting data on forced labor, the ILO has also established two conventions on forced labor, namely the Forced Labor Convention and the Abolition of Forced Labor (Puspitasari et al., 2016).

**Fourth, seizing rights** (Nasution, 2019). Apart from having the obligation to serve his employer, a slave certainly also has rights, for example having the right to eat and drink properly and not be burdened with work that is beyond his means (Yusuf, 2020). The deprivation of slave rights also happened to Bilal in the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero*, this happened when Bilal was locked up for days in a bound condition, was not given food and drink, and did not get a proper bed. The deprivation of rights in the movie *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero*, is also ongoing and evolving to this day.

There are many deprivations of the rights of workers or domestic workers by employers, complaints of workers who do not get paid what they should or are not even paid at all even though they have worked for many years. This is also included in the mode of modern slavery (Nasution, 2019). The women who usually come from the Philippines, Indonesia, or Malaysia who work as domestic servants in Arab families, have almost no rights at all, such as being locked up in the house where they work and rarely receiving wages (Degorge, 2006).

**Fifth, seize welfare and security** (Nasution, 2019). Bilal and Ghufairah also experienced the loss of welfare and security in living their daily lives in the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero*. For example, when Ghufairah was carrying out her duties as a slave, Safwan and his three friends forced her to become an arrow target. If you look at it, of course, there is no guaranteed security for slaves, because, at any time anywhere, slaves can be made fun of because of the slave status they have. Deprivation of welfare and security is still happening today, especially to children. Those who should be able to enjoy their childhood by playing and learning, are instead forced to work which can endanger their health and safety.

One of the slavery practices that deprives children of welfare and security is the use of children as camel jockeys. UNICEF and *Inter-Parliamentary* explained that there are several reasons for the practice of trafficked children, one of which is sports competitions, in this case including the use of underage boys as camel jockeys (Fahmi, n.d.). In Arab countries, boys are smuggled and then used as jockeys to race camels for the pleasure of wealthy Arab sheiks (Irianto et al., 2005). Three-year-old children are used to riding camels because of their small size and lightweight. These children are tied to the camel's back to avoid falling over during the race. These children were sold into slavery because their families were poor to support them (Degorge, 2006).

An estimated 5,000 children, from the age of two and up, have been kidnapped or bought to become camel jockeys. These children have to get up in the middle of the night to clean up camel dung with their bare hands, they are also beaten until they are injured and even killed or maimed during camel races. These children also do not get an Education and do not know about their family origins. It's a very dangerous situation for these children as they grow up in the Middle East because if they don't have legal residency status, they can be fined or detained as a result. (Degorge, 2006)

The exploitation of children is perhaps the most shocking form of slavery the world has witnessed in recent times (Degorge, 2006). In essence, the practice of trafficking children has violated their rights to security protection, and good education, and exposed them to things that threaten them physically, for example, HIV, disability, and chronic diseases. Trafficking in children has posed a threat to the existence and dignity of humanity which is dangerous for the future of children (Fahmi, n.d.).

**Sixth, committing acts of torture** (Nasution, 2019). The torture of slaves in the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* often occurs. From the beginning Bilal and Ghufairah are shown as slaves in this film, and they are often subjected to various forms of torture, for example, Ghufairah is forced to become the target of Safwan's arrows, Bilal who is pushed and then pulled by his collar by Umayya, whipped, locked up, deprived of food and drink and even placed stones big on Bilal's body. The practice of torturing slaves does not only occur in the movie *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero*, but this practice still occurs in modern times, with various forms of torture.

Some of the most common acts of torture in modern times fall under the practice of modern slavery, including child laborers who are victims of forced labor. Children are required to work long hours, or are subjected to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse, with no means of escape from their employers (International Labour Organization (ILO) et al., 2022). Besides that, acts of torture in modern times that often occur are included in the practice of modern slavery. One of the domestic workers in Jordan experienced the horrific experience of being cruelly tortured and assaulted with dangerous objects by a recruitment agency. There are also frequent acts of torture by employers, as experienced by migrant workers from the Philippines in Jordan. The day after his arrival, he was pushed from the second floor of the house by his employer. The woman survived but received serious injuries, which left her permanently paralyzed. (International Labour Organization et al., n.d.)

**Seventh, buying and selling humans** (Nasution, 2019). Human trafficking in the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* is visible. This can be seen from Okba's role, where Okba is a trader who also sells slaves. The slaves were not only sold but auctioned like goods for sale. The practice of buying and selling slaves was carried out by Okba, namely by collecting slaves in one place and then selling them to the rulers. When offering slaves to prospective buyers, Okba would tell the advantages possessed by the slaves, starting from language skills to body posture.

The practice of buying and selling slaves in the movie *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero*, is

not something new. From ancient times until modern times, slaves were considered property and commodities, so slaves could be sold and bought freely. However, along with the times, the purchase of slaves in modern times can be done online through applications, one of which is the 4Sale application. This application allows for the practice of buying and selling domestic workers which are categorized by race so there is a price list from lowest to highest. Apart from being treated like a commodity, these domestic workers often receive treatment that violates human rights, such as being given inappropriate working hours. (Amalia, 2020)

Thus, the movie *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* is not only a historical spectacle but also educates and reminds us that the challenges that the world still faces in fighting the practice of slavery still continue in this modern era. The movie also conveys that since ancient times, slavery has been a gross violation of human rights. This practice illustrates moral decay and does not positively contribute to the victim or the wider community.

The movie *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* also provides a very relevant message to modern slavery, especially regarding humanity and equality. Every human being with various backgrounds, be it religion, race, culture, social and economic status has their rights and needs to be treated fairly and respected. In modern times, many workers and children are not treated humanely. Thus, this 2016 movie reminds us that every human being has the right to be free from all forms of oppression and violence.

In addition, the movie *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* is also a symbol of courage. During his time as a slave, Bilal not only endured difficult conditions but also fought for freedom and justice. As such, it can inspire any individual trapped in modern-day slavery to stand up against their situation and seek support from others. It also emphasizes that solidarity and courage in fighting oppression are essential in driving change. The movie *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* also brings awareness to the reality of slavery that is still active in modern times, which is a shared responsibility, including through film. Thus, we need to raise social awareness, contributing to efforts to deal with modern slavery.

### **Efforts to Overcome Modern Slavery**

Various attempts were made to abolish the practice of slavery, the evidence in America and Europe carried out the abolition of slaves and ended with the liberation of slaves in the late 18th or early 19th centuries. Denmark in 1792 also abolished the slave trade. This was also followed by the British Parliament in 1833, and the United States on January 31, 1864, officially announced the liberation of slaves (Nasution, 2019). In addition, the United Nations also took part in fighting human trafficking, namely by formulating the UNTOC (United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime), this convention was attended by more than one hundred countries, as a form that organized crime including human trafficking is a problem for everyone so that cooperation on an international scale is urgently needed in overcoming this problem (Milala, 2021).

Apart from countries in the Americas and Europe as well as the United Nations, Saudi Arabia is also making efforts to overcome these crimes by establishing NRM. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) was formed in 2020 by the National Committee on Combating Human Trafficking (NCCHT) under the Human Rights Commission (HRC). NRM provides services to victims of crime in 6 stages, namely identifying trafficking in persons, storing and protecting, conducting investigations and prosecutions, providing protection and assisting, voluntary return to victims of trafficking in persons, and finally social reintegration (Aisyah, 2022).

### **Conclusion**

The researcher found that the practice of slavery as was described in the film is still happening

now in the modern form. This paper argued at the outset that the issue of slavery is there today. The movie *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* depicts slavery by focusing on the injustices experienced by the characters Bilal and Ghufairah from the beginning. This is reinforced by scenes that show human trafficking and cruel treatment from employers that represent exploitation and dehumanization. So this film succeeds in presenting a critical perspective on the practice of slavery, both in the historical context of the Jahiliyyah period and its relevance to this modern era. Thus, it can be concluded that there are seven characteristics of slavery practices in Bilal's film: A New Breed of Hero which are still happening in Arab countries in modern times, namely (1) the practice of power over human ownership, (2) depriving of honor, (3) depriving freedom, (4) depriving rights, (5) depriving welfare and security, (6) committing acts of torture, and (7) trading human beings. Slavery in modern times or Modern Slavery, has become a global concern.

This is important to research because in the end, we know about slavery, it turns out that slavery in the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* also exists in the countries in this world which is called modern slavery. This research raises an important question about whether the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* as a medium needs to be studied carefully, to provide good knowledge and impact on the abolition of slavery. As a result of the research, this paper proposes to research films with the theme of modern slavery to see in terms of the conditions of modern slavery in this world. However, this research still has drawbacks, namely researchers did not conduct field observations in the Arab region which is the setting in the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero*, therefore the researcher hopes to conduct further research to prove that slavery similar to what is told in this film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* still occurs. Finally, the researcher provides recommendations so that all parties concerned can take lessons from the film *Bilal: A New Breed of Hero* so that slavery in any form on this earth can be abolished because it is not by the values of freedom and humanity and is contrary to the teachings of any religion.

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