

Exploring the Dynamics of Recruitment Deception in Global Labor Exploitation: From Policy to Practice

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Abstract. *This qualitative literature review investigates the phenomenon of recruitment deception within the framework of global labor exploitation. It explores the disconnect between existing policies designed to protect workers and the actual practices in recruitment processes across various industries and geographical regions. By analyzing a range of scholarly articles, reports, and case studies, the review identifies prevalent deceptive practices that exploit vulnerable populations, including migrant workers and those in precarious employment situations. The findings reveal significant gaps in the enforcement of protective legislation and highlight the emotional and psychological impacts of deception on affected individuals. Furthermore, the review emphasizes the necessity for collaborative efforts among stakeholders—including governments, non-governmental organizations, and community groups—to create effective interventions that address these injustices. Ultimately, the study calls for a more inclusive policy-making process that incorporates the experiences of survivors, aiming to develop comprehensive strategies to combat recruitment deception and enhance labor market equity.*

Keywords: *Recruitment deception, Labor exploitation, Policy implementation, Migrant workers, Qualitative research*

INTRODUCTION

Labor exploitation continues to be one of the most pressing human rights challenges of the 21st century, as globalization fuels labor migration and the demand for low-cost labor across various industries. Despite the establishment of numerous international labor standards and legal frameworks aimed at combating exploitation, the phenomenon persists, driven by deceptive recruitment practices that trap workers in conditions akin to forced labor. Recruitment deception—where workers are lured under false pretenses regarding their work conditions, wages, and employment terms—plays a crucial role in global labor exploitation, undermining efforts to protect vulnerable populations. This literature review aims to explore the intricate dynamics of recruitment deception, particularly how gaps between policy and practice perpetuate labor exploitation worldwide.

Global Labor Exploitation and the Role of Recruitment Deception

In the context of global labor markets, recruitment deception has become a pervasive problem, especially among migrant workers. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), nearly 25 million people are trapped in forced labor globally, with recruitment fraud and deception being significant drivers of this form of exploitation (ILO, 2017). Migrant workers, who often face language barriers, limited legal knowledge, and desperate economic situations, are particularly susceptible to exploitation during the recruitment process (David, 2020). Recruitment agencies, employers, and intermediaries take

advantage of this vulnerability by providing false information about wages, working conditions, or the legal status of employment, thereby coercing workers into exploitative labor situations (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014).

Despite international labor standards such as the ILO's Forced Labour Protocol (P29), which calls for the elimination of forced labor, deceptive recruitment practices continue to evade regulatory scrutiny. These recruitment processes frequently involve fraudulent contracts, exorbitant recruitment fees, and misrepresentation of job opportunities (Andrees, Nasri, & Swiniarski, 2015). The failure of governments to adequately enforce labor laws or hold recruitment agencies accountable further exacerbates the issue, making it difficult for workers to seek redress (Gammage et al., 2020).

The Gap Between Policy and Practice

While international and national policies aimed at addressing labor exploitation have evolved, there remains a significant gap between policy formulation and implementation. Policies designed to protect workers, such as the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (2011) and various ILO conventions, have yet to fully translate into effective enforcement mechanisms. As a result, the protection afforded to workers on paper often fails to materialize in practice. Many governments and industries lack the infrastructure or political will to ensure that these laws are effectively enforced, leaving workers vulnerable to exploitation through deceptive recruitment (Brennan, 2017).

One of the central issues is the fragmented nature of the global labor market, where multiple actors—including recruitment agencies, employers, and subcontractors—operate across borders with varying levels of regulation. This complexity makes it challenging to enforce labor protections consistently, especially when recruitment agencies in one country are not held accountable for exploitation occurring in another (Ollus, 2016). For instance, research by LeBaron and Phillips (2019) highlights the failure of supply chain governance to adequately address labor exploitation, showing that policies aimed at curbing recruitment deception often fail to protect workers in global supply chains.

Moreover, the enforcement of recruitment-related labor protections is often undermined by a lack of resources, corruption, and limited cooperation between governments (Verité, 2016). Workers from low-income countries are often unaware of their rights or unable to access legal assistance, further complicating efforts to address recruitment fraud. This gap between policy and practice not only perpetuates exploitation but also weakens the overall integrity of labor governance systems.

Recruitment Deception Across Industries

Recruitment deception is not confined to any single industry but is prevalent across sectors where there is high demand for low-skilled labor, particularly in agriculture, construction, domestic work, and manufacturing. For instance, studies on labor trafficking in the agricultural sector reveal that recruitment deception often involves promises of legal work visas, adequate housing, and fair wages, none of which materialize upon arrival (Barrientos, Kothari, & Phillips, 2013). Similarly, in the construction industry, workers are frequently recruited through intermediaries who promise high wages and safe working conditions, only for the workers to be trapped in exploitative situations, with their passports confiscated and wages withheld (ILO, 2016).

The global supply chain, particularly in industries such as electronics and garment manufacturing, is another area where recruitment deception thrives. In many cases, workers are recruited in their home countries with false promises of good wages and safe working conditions, only to find themselves in sweatshops with low pay and hazardous environments (Crane, 2013). The outsourcing of recruitment to third-party agencies complicates accountability, as these agencies often operate with minimal oversight, creating opportunities for deceptive practices to flourish (LeBaron, Lister, & Dauvergne, 2017).

International Efforts to Combat Recruitment Deception

International organizations have been active in attempting to curb recruitment deception and labor exploitation. The ILO's Fair Recruitment Initiative, launched in 2014, is a key example of global efforts to promote fair recruitment practices and eliminate deception in labor migration (ILO, 2016). This initiative aims to ensure that recruitment is conducted transparently, fairly, and without exploitative practices, thereby reducing the risk of forced labor and human trafficking. However, despite such efforts, implementation remains uneven, and deceptive recruitment practices continue to proliferate in many parts of the world (Andrees et al., 2015).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also played a crucial role in highlighting the issue of recruitment deception and advocating for stronger enforcement of labor protections. For example, Verité's research into recruitment practices in global supply chains has revealed systemic issues that contribute to labor exploitation, including lack of oversight

and the failure of corporate social responsibility initiatives to address recruitment deception (Verité, 2016). These findings underscore the need for more robust legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms that can effectively address the root causes of recruitment fraud.

Recruitment deception plays a pivotal role in global labor exploitation, creating a significant challenge for policymakers, enforcement agencies, and labor rights advocates. Despite the existence of international standards aimed at combating recruitment fraud, the gap between policy and practice continues to undermine efforts to protect vulnerable workers. This qualitative literature review will explore how deceptive recruitment practices are sustained in various industries and how the disconnect between policy and implementation perpetuates labor exploitation on a global scale. By examining the dynamics of recruitment deception and identifying key areas where policy interventions are needed, this review aims to contribute to the ongoing efforts to reduce labor exploitation and promote fair labor practices globally.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recruitment deception is a crucial factor contributing to the exploitation of migrant labor, particularly in the context of global labor supply chains. This phenomenon encompasses various tactics employed by labor recruiters to mislead workers about job opportunities, conditions, and associated costs. The term "recruitment deception" refers to practices such as misinformation, the imposition of recruitment fees, identity document confiscation, and the establishment of debt bondage (Fletcher & Trautrim, 2023). These tactics not only violate ethical standards but also perpetuate cycles of exploitation and coercive control over vulnerable migrant populations (Crane et al., 2019).

Theoretical Perspectives on Recruitment Deception

Despite the critical role of recruitment deception in labor exploitation, it remains under-theorized in management research. Fletcher and Trautrim (2023) highlight the need for a comprehensive theoretical framework that synthesizes insights from social sciences and policy studies to elucidate the dynamics of recruitment deception. This gap in the literature calls for an integrative approach that considers the socio-economic and political contexts shaping labor recruitment practices (Henderson & Nolan, 2022).

Prevalence and Mechanisms of Recruitment Deception

Research indicates that recruitment deception is pervasive across various sectors, particularly in industries reliant on migrant labor (Kushnirovich et al., 2019). Studies reveal

that deceptive practices are often embedded within the recruitment processes, facilitated by intermediaries who exploit workers' vulnerabilities (LeBaron, 2021). For instance, Alamgir and Banerjee (2019) demonstrate how compliance regimes in global production networks can contribute to contested labor practices, where deceptive recruitment serves as a mechanism for maintaining exploitative relationships.

Actors Involved in Recruitment Deception

The recruitment ecosystem is characterized by a diverse array of actors, including labor brokers, employers, and regulatory bodies. Each actor plays a distinct role in either perpetuating or challenging recruitment deception (Benstead et al., 2021). Temporary work agencies, for instance, often operate at the intersection of labor supply and demand, navigating complex regulatory environments to maximize profits while undermining workers' rights (Alsos & Evans, 2018). This exploitation is exacerbated by structural factors, such as inadequate labor protections and the lack of enforcement mechanisms (Heller, 2015).

Key Tactics of Exploitation

Fletcher and Trautrim (2023) categorize the tactics of recruitment deception into four exploitative capacities: misinformation, recruitment fees, identity document confiscation, and debt. Each of these tactics constitutes a layer of control that reinforces the vulnerability of migrant workers. Misinformation, for instance, can lead workers to accept unfavorable employment conditions, while recruitment fees can trap them in cycles of debt, making it difficult to escape exploitative situations (Holliday, 2012; Christ & Helliard, 2021).

The Regime of Enmeshment

The concept of a "regime of enmeshment" encapsulates the interplay between various forms of exploitation and coercive control in recruitment practices. This regime begins with the abuse of vulnerability, progresses to recruitment deception, and ultimately results in exploitation and coercive control (Fletcher & Trautrim, 2023). The idea of enmeshment underscores the systemic nature of recruitment deception, highlighting the need for interventions that address the root causes of vulnerability and exploitation (Crane, 2013).

Policy Initiatives and Future Research Directions

In response to the challenges posed by recruitment deception, various policy initiatives aim to promote fair recruitment practices and eradicate recruitment fees. For instance, the

International Labour Organization (ILO) has outlined models and strategies for regulating labor recruitment to prevent human trafficking and foster fair migration (Andrees et al., 2015). However, these initiatives often face significant challenges in implementation, particularly in the context of transnational labor supply chains (Deshingkar, 2021). Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of existing policy frameworks and exploring innovative approaches to foster responsible recruitment practices (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2021).

Recruitment deception represents a significant barrier to achieving equitable labor practices in global supply chains. By synthesizing insights from diverse fields, this literature review highlights the complexities surrounding recruitment deception, the actors involved, and the mechanisms of exploitation. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to create more transparent and ethical recruitment processes that protect the rights of migrant workers.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative literature review aims to explore the dynamics of recruitment deception within the context of global labor exploitation, bridging the gap between policy frameworks and real-world practices. The review will utilize qualitative research principles to gather, synthesize, and analyze existing literature on recruitment practices, labor exploitation, and related policies. The study will adopt a qualitative research design, focusing on thematic analysis as the primary analytical framework. Thematic analysis allows for the identification and interpretation of key themes and patterns within the literature, providing insights into the nuanced dynamics of recruitment deception in labor exploitation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This design is particularly suited for understanding complex social phenomena, making it ideal for this research.

A systematic literature search will be conducted using several academic databases. The search will employ a combination of keywords and phrases such as "recruitment deception," "labor exploitation," "global labor market," "human trafficking," and "employment policies." The search will focus on articles published in the last ten years to ensure relevance and recency in the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The inclusion criteria for this review will consist of: Peer-reviewed articles published in English. Studies addressing the dynamics of recruitment practices, particularly focusing on deception and exploitation. Qualitative studies or mixed-methods research that provides qualitative insights.

Relevant articles identified through the literature search will be subjected to a thorough data extraction process. Key findings, methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and contexts will be documented. A qualitative content analysis approach, as described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), will be employed to categorize and interpret the data. This analysis will facilitate the identification of recurring themes and the relationships between recruitment deception and labor exploitation practices.

The synthesis will involve integrating the extracted themes into a coherent narrative that reflects the current understanding of recruitment deception in global labor exploitation. The findings will be organized into key themes, such as "mechanisms of recruitment deception," "impact of policy on recruitment practices," "victim experiences," and "institutional responses." This thematic organization will provide a structured overview of the literature and highlight areas for future research.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the review, several strategies will be employed. A peer debriefing process will be included, where findings will be discussed with colleagues or experts in the field to ensure soundness in interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, a reflective journal will be maintained throughout the review process to document the researcher's thoughts, decisions, and potential biases. Member checking will also be conducted, inviting some of the included studies to review the synthesized findings to confirm accuracy and relevance.

Given that this research is a literature review, ethical considerations will primarily focus on the ethical use of existing literature. Proper citation and attribution will be ensured to maintain academic integrity. Additionally, ethical considerations will be observed when discussing sensitive topics, ensuring that the portrayal of victim experiences and institutional practices is respectful and accurate.

RESULT

The qualitative literature review conducted under the title "From Policy to Practice: Exploring the Dynamics of Recruitment Deception in Global Labor Exploitation" reveals several critical themes and findings that illustrate the complex interplay between policies, recruitment practices, and labor exploitation. This section synthesizes the key insights derived from the reviewed literature.

Mechanisms of Recruitment Deception

Research indicates that recruitment deception often occurs through various mechanisms, including false job advertisements, misrepresentation of job roles, and coercive recruitment practices (O'Connell & O'Brien, 2021). Deceptive practices frequently exploit vulnerable populations, particularly migrant workers seeking employment opportunities abroad. For example, many workers are led to believe they are entering legitimate job markets, only to find themselves in exploitative conditions upon arrival (Kohli, 2019). These deceptions can take various forms, including misleading information about wages, working conditions, and legal rights.

The Role of Policy Frameworks

The review highlights a significant gap between policy intentions and practical enforcement. While many countries have established laws and regulations aimed at combating labor exploitation and recruitment deception, the enforcement of these policies often falls short (Choudhury & Kahn, 2020). Research shows that regulatory frameworks may exist on paper but lack the necessary resources, training, and political will for effective implementation (Nielsen & Tzvetkova, 2020). As a result, the failure to translate policy into practice allows recruitment deception to thrive.

Victim Experiences

The experiences of victims of recruitment deception are crucial in understanding the dynamics of labor exploitation. Qualitative studies indicate that victims often experience psychological and emotional distress due to deception, leading to feelings of betrayal, isolation, and helplessness (Bales, 2016). Moreover, many victims are unaware of their rights and the resources available to them, which exacerbates their vulnerability (Anderson, 2017). The literature emphasizes the importance of survivor narratives in shedding light on the emotional and social ramifications of recruitment deception.

Institutional Responses

Institutional responses to recruitment deception and labor exploitation vary significantly across regions. While some organizations have developed proactive measures to address these issues, including awareness campaigns and support services for victims, others remain passive or reactive (Fitzgerald, 2018). The effectiveness of institutional responses often depends on collaboration among governmental agencies, NGOs, and community organizations to create a unified approach to tackling recruitment deception (Tzvetkova & Nielsen, 2019). The literature

suggests that fostering partnerships can lead to more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

The findings underscore the need for further research to explore the complexities of recruitment deception and its implications for policy formulation. Specifically, qualitative studies focusing on the voices of marginalized workers can provide invaluable insights into their experiences and needs (Gozdziak & Bump, 2018). Additionally, the development of comprehensive, multi-faceted policies that not only address recruitment practices but also enhance workers' rights and protections is essential for creating equitable labor markets (Martin, 2021). Policymakers should prioritize collaboration with stakeholders, including migrant communities and labor organizations, to develop effective strategies that combat recruitment deception.

This qualitative literature review highlights the intricate dynamics of recruitment deception in global labor exploitation. Despite the existence of policies aimed at safeguarding workers, significant gaps remain in enforcement and practical application. The experiences of victims reveal the emotional toll of deception, while institutional responses vary in effectiveness. Future research and policy efforts should focus on addressing these gaps, amplifying marginalized voices, and fostering collaborative approaches to create a more equitable labor environment.

DISCUSSION

The dynamics of recruitment deception within global labor exploitation reveal complex interrelationships between policy frameworks, recruitment practices, and the lived experiences of workers. This discussion synthesizes the key findings from the qualitative literature review and compares them with eight relevant studies to deepen the understanding of the issues at hand.

Understanding Recruitment Deception

Recruitment deception primarily manifests through misrepresentation and coercive tactics in the labor market. According to O'Connell and O'Brien (2021), deceptive recruitment practices include false advertisements and misleading information regarding job conditions, which are often used to attract vulnerable populations, particularly migrants. This finding aligns with Kohli's (2019) research, which emphasizes the pervasive nature of misleading job descriptions that obscure the realities of labor exploitation. Both studies highlight the need for a clearer understanding of the mechanisms through which recruitment deception operates.

For example, in their comparative analysis, Decker et al. (2020) note that different regions exhibit varying levels of recruitment deception. In Southeast Asia, for instance, the lack of regulation allows unscrupulous recruitment agencies to thrive (Decker et al., 2020). This contrasts sharply with Europe, where legal frameworks, although often insufficiently enforced, provide some degree of protection against deceptive practices (Harris, 2021). Such comparisons underscore the necessity of contextualizing recruitment deception within local and regional labor markets.

The Gap Between Policy and Practice

A significant theme emerging from the review is the disparity between policy intentions and their practical implementation. Choudhury and Kahn (2020) argue that while many countries have established legal frameworks to combat labor exploitation, the enforcement of these laws remains a challenge. This perspective is echoed by Nielsen and Tzvetkova (2020), who found that many workers are unaware of their rights due to insufficient outreach and education on existing labor laws. This lack of awareness creates a fertile ground for exploitation, as individuals may not recognize deceptive practices when they encounter them.

A relevant comparison can be made with the study by Martínez et al. (2021), which examines the effectiveness of anti-trafficking policies in Latin America. They conclude that, despite the presence of comprehensive legislation, the effectiveness of these laws is undermined by inadequate resources and training for enforcement agencies. This situation mirrors findings from the current literature review, where the gap between policy formulation and practical enforcement allows recruitment deception to persist.

Victim Experiences and Psychological Implications

The emotional and psychological toll of recruitment deception on victims is another critical aspect discussed in the literature. Anderson (2017) emphasizes that victims often experience feelings of betrayal and isolation, leading to significant psychological distress. This finding resonates with the work of Bales (2016), who highlights the emotional struggles of individuals who fall prey to deceptive recruitment practices. Together, these studies reveal that recruitment deception is not merely a transactional issue but a profound violation of human dignity, which can have lasting effects on individuals' mental health.

In exploring the narratives of victims, Gozdzia and Bump (2018) provide valuable insights into the specific challenges faced by marginalized workers. Their qualitative study indicates that many victims struggle with feelings of shame and confusion regarding their

exploitation, making it challenging for them to seek help. This aligns with the findings of Fitzgerald (2018), who emphasizes the need for trauma-informed care in support services for victims of labor exploitation. By integrating these perspectives, it becomes evident that addressing the psychological aspects of recruitment deception is crucial for effective intervention and support.

Institutional Responses and Collaborative Approaches

The literature review also highlights the variability of institutional responses to recruitment deception. While some organizations have developed proactive measures to address these issues, others remain passive or reactive (Tzvetkova & Nielsen, 2019). The findings from the review align with those of Martin (2021), who advocates for collaborative approaches among governmental agencies, NGOs, and community organizations to create unified strategies against labor exploitation.

A comparative analysis reveals that regions with stronger institutional collaboration tend to have more effective responses to recruitment deception. For example, Decker et al. (2020) found that in areas where NGOs and government agencies worked together, victims were more likely to receive support and resources. In contrast, in regions lacking collaboration, victims often fall through the cracks, receiving little to no assistance (Harris, 2021). This underscores the importance of fostering partnerships to create a comprehensive response to labor exploitation.

The insights gained from this review indicate the need for comprehensive policies that address both the mechanisms of recruitment deception and the emotional well-being of victims. The literature emphasizes the importance of survivor narratives in shaping effective policies (Gozdziak & Bump, 2018). By amplifying the voices of those affected, policymakers can develop more nuanced approaches that address the specific needs of marginalized workers.

Additionally, as indicated by Kohli (2019), there is a pressing need for increased awareness and education surrounding labor rights among vulnerable populations. This finding is echoed by Anderson (2017), who emphasizes the necessity of outreach programs to inform workers of their rights and available resources. Such educational initiatives can empower workers to recognize deceptive practices and seek assistance when necessary.

Furthermore, as seen in the study by Martínez et al. (2021), the evaluation of existing policies is essential to identify gaps and areas for improvement. Policymakers should engage in continuous assessment and adaptation of their strategies to respond effectively to the evolving nature of labor markets and recruitment practices.

In summary, the dynamics of recruitment deception in global labor exploitation are complex and multifaceted, reflecting the interplay between policy frameworks, recruitment practices, and the experiences of victims. This discussion has illuminated key themes derived from the qualitative literature review, highlighting the significant gaps between policy and practice, the emotional toll on victims, and the variability of institutional responses. By integrating comparisons with prior studies, this analysis has underscored the importance of a collaborative approach in developing comprehensive policies to address recruitment deception effectively.

The findings underscore the necessity for future research to focus on the lived experiences of marginalized workers and to prioritize the development of inclusive policies that empower individuals and protect their rights. Only through a concerted effort can we hope to mitigate the impacts of recruitment deception and create equitable labor markets worldwide.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative literature review has illuminated the intricate dynamics of recruitment deception in the context of global labor exploitation. The analysis highlights significant gaps between established policies and their practical implementation, revealing how deceptive recruitment practices continue to thrive in various labor markets. The review underscores the emotional and psychological toll of these practices on vulnerable workers, emphasizing the need for trauma-informed support systems.

Key findings indicate that despite the existence of legal frameworks aimed at protecting workers, enforcement remains a challenge due to a lack of awareness and resources. Additionally, the importance of collaborative approaches among governmental bodies, NGOs, and community organizations emerges as crucial for addressing recruitment deception effectively.

Furthermore, the review emphasizes the necessity of amplifying the voices of victims in shaping more inclusive policies that empower marginalized workers. By prioritizing survivor narratives and addressing the unique challenges faced by diverse populations, policymakers can develop comprehensive strategies to mitigate the impacts of recruitment deception and enhance labor market equity.

LIMITATION

While this review provides valuable insights into recruitment deception and labor exploitation, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations. Firstly, the scope of this

literature review is confined to existing qualitative studies, which may not fully capture the breadth of quantitative data or the complexity of recruitment practices in diverse contexts. Therefore, future research should incorporate mixed-methods approaches to enrich understanding and draw more nuanced conclusions.

Secondly, the review relies on studies primarily published in English, which may overlook significant research conducted in other languages or cultural contexts. This limitation can result in a bias toward specific geographical areas, potentially ignoring critical insights from underrepresented regions.

Additionally, the review does not delve deeply into the intersectionality of factors such as gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status that can further complicate the experiences of workers facing recruitment deception. Future research should aim to explore these dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of labor exploitation.

Lastly, while the review draws comparisons with prior studies, the evolving nature of global labor markets necessitates continuous assessment and adaptation of existing frameworks. As recruitment practices and labor dynamics shift, ongoing research is essential to keep pace with these changes and develop effective interventions.

In conclusion, while this literature review contributes significantly to understanding recruitment deception in global labor exploitation, it also highlights the need for further research to address its limitations and enhance the effectiveness of policy responses.

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