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# **The Problem for Foreign Workers in Kurdistan Region (Erbil)**

**Research Project Submitted to the department of (Social Work) in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of B.A or BSc.  
in (Social work)**

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## **Abstract**

Economic development or decline of any country heavily affects, directly and indirectly, the import of foreign manpower or exporting it. Part of authorizing and importing foreign manpower is related to the extent local manpower provide the necessities of the country. The same reason causes too much controversy and critics against the governments, especially where the number of local jobless population is of rising and the government still allows for importing foreign manpower. The collapse of the previous Iraq regime in 2003 and the arrival of big foreign companies were two major factors to expedite a flood of migrant workers into Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. The economic and social developments in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region afterwards caused migration of foreign workers become a phenomenon. We could argue that the rise in the number of foreign workers and the companies of foreign manpower, along with the rise in number of and interest in in-house servants are apparent indications of that phenomenon in the Kurdistan Region.

This research tries to raise three main question to resolve the problem of foreign workers is to ensure whether the rights of migrant workers are protected and that they are treated fairly and equitably in the labor market. This involves addressing the challenges faced by employers when hiring foreign workers, such as difficulty in the recruitment process and cultural adaptation. It also involves addressing the moral concerns of employing foreign workers in substandard conditions compared to national workers.

The research aims to identify the problems, positive and negative impacts induce foreign workers in Kurdistan region to determine strategies to minimize these negative impacts. Data were collected through structured interviews and surveys. The thesis is divided into three chapters, the first chapter is specialized for the theoretical part of the thesis which is about conceptualization of foreign workers,

theorization of foreign workers and the effect of having foreign workers in Kurdistan (negative and positive sides).

The second chapter will be providing data collections and surveys. Foreign workers will be interviewed with some important questions about their lifestyle circumstances, career situation and the difficulties that they face while working with both Kurdish and English languages.

The three and last chapter will be about the result of thesis, recommendation and sources.

**Keywords:** Foreign Workers, Labor Market, Evaluation, Erbil, Kurdistan.

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## **1-1 Introduction**

Foreign workers have become an increasingly important part of the global labor market, with millions of people moving across borders to work in different countries. The employment of foreign workers has both positive and negative effects on the economy and the labor market. While most empirical studies indicate long-term benefits for natives' employment and wages from immigration, some studies suggest that these gains come at the cost of short-term losses from lower wages and higher unemployment. Foreign workers also face difficulties in integrating into the labor market and are often concentrated in certain sectors. However, migrants contribute significantly to labor-market flexibility and innovation, and their employment can make an active contribution during economic upturns. This thesis examines the complex power structures that underscore the migration and employment of foreign workers, with a focus on the challenges faced by employers and policymakers in protecting the rights of migrant workers. The thesis aims to explore the problems related to the human rights of migrant workers and give practicable solutions using a cross-cultural perspective. The study will also examine the educational experience of migrant workers and its impact on their empowerment or suppression. The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues related to foreign workers and to inform policies and practices that balance the benefits and costs of foreign workers, ensuring a sustainable and inclusive economy.

## **1-2: Research Problem**

workers often face various problems when they move to another country. Some of the common issues they face are: Lack of access to services: In some cases, migrant workers may not have access to education, healthcare and other essential services due to their status as foreigners or lack of proper documentation

- Accommodation and living conditions: Migrant workers often struggle with finding suitable Foreign housing and may only have to rent by verbal agreement, leading to poor living conditions
- Economic hardship: Immigrants living in rural areas are more likely to be unemployed and face economic hardship than locals, especially those employed in agriculture
- Language barriers: Foreign workers may struggle with language barriers, which can make it difficult to communicate and navigate their new environment

These issues can significantly affect the welfare and quality of life of foreign workers, prompting governments and communities to address these challenges and create supportive environments for migrant workers.

### **1-3: Research Aim**

The aim of the problem of foreign workers thesis is to explore the challenges and issues related to the employment of foreign workers and to provide practicable solutions to protect their human rights. The thesis will use a cross-disciplinary approach to integrate previous and present international situations with the future trend of development of the legal system and the economy. The study will examine the advantages and disadvantages of two main types of frameworks and analyze the ethical problems inherent in the status of foreign workers in the receiving country. The thesis will also explore the impact of the employment of foreigners on the equilibrium and dynamics of the labor market and the challenges faced by employers when hiring foreign workers. The study will examine the legal and ethical obligations of employers when hiring foreign workers, the challenges faced by employers when hiring foreign workers, and the obligations of employers and policymakers to protect the rights of foreign workers. The thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues related to foreign workers and to inform policies and practices that balance the benefits and costs of foreign workers, ensuring a sustainable and inclusive economy.

### **1-4: Research Questions**

1. What are the legal and ethical obligations of employers when hiring foreign workers?
2. What are the challenges faced by employers when hiring foreign workers?
3. What are the obligations of employers and policymakers to protect the rights of foreign workers?

## **Chapter Two: Literature review**

### **2-1: Issuance of work permits to foreign workers**

According to the conditions set by the Kurdistan Regional Government for work permits and bringing foreign workers as follows :

1. Foreign workers must be brought through a specialized recruitment company.
2. The company must have a license to bring foreign workers issued by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Interior.
3. The company must have insurance in the bank.
4. Filling out the employment contract in the Labor Directorate for each worker.
5. The worker must have been previously requested to work in the Kurdistan Region by another party (except the labor recruitment company) and submit the documents to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.



## **2-2: Definition of foreign workers**

Foreign workers can be conceptualized in various ways, depending on the context and perspective. Here are some conceptualizations of foreign workers based on the search results:

1. Immigrant labor: This refers to workers who move from one country to another with the intention of settling there permanently or for an extended period. Immigrant labor can be motivated by various factors, such as economic opportunities, political instability, or family reunification (Koob, 67).
2. Migrant labor: This refers to workers who move from one place to another, either within a country or across borders, to work temporarily or seasonally. Migrant labor can be motivated by various factors, such as economic opportunities, labor shortages, or natural disasters (Koob, 67).
3. Foreign workers: This refers to workers who work in a foreign country without initially intending to settle there and without the benefits of citizenship in the host country. Foreign workers can be recruited to supplement the workforce of a host country for a limited term or to provide skills on a contractual basis that the host country seeks. They can also be recruited directly by a private employer, which may need to certify that it cannot find workers among the country's own citizens (Jacob, 8).
4. International labor migration: This refers to the movement of workers across borders for employment purposes. International labor migration can be motivated by various factors, such as economic opportunities, labor shortages, or political instability. It can have both positive and negative effects on the economies and societies of the countries of origin and destination (International Migration Law No. 34).

As a result, foreign workers can be defined as individuals who work in a country other than the one in which they are citizens. They may be recruited to supplement the workforce of a host country for a limited term or to provide skills on a contractual basis that the host country seeks. They may also be recruited directly by a private employer, which may need to certify that it cannot find workers among the country's own citizens. Foreign workers may be classified as immigrant labor, migrant labor, or international labor migrants, depending on their motivations and the context of their employment. They may face challenges such as competition for jobs, over qualification, concentration in certain sectors, integration difficulties, and exploitation. Policies and practices that balance the benefits and costs of foreign workers are needed to ensure a sustainable and inclusive economy.

### **2-3: International rights for foreign workers**

Foreign workers have become an integral part of the global labor market, with millions of people moving across borders to work in different countries. However, the employment of foreign workers raises important questions about their human rights, including issues such as recruitment fees, remuneration, hours of work, and overtime arrangements. The international community has recognized the importance of protecting the rights of migrant workers and has developed various instruments and mechanisms to ensure their protection. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, for example, contains a comprehensive set of rules with regard to the particular situation of migrant workers. Despite these efforts, foreign workers still face challenges related to their human rights, including exploitation and abuse. This thesis aims to explore the problems related to the human rights of foreign workers and to provide practicable solutions using a cross-cultural perspective. The study will examine the

advantages and disadvantages of two main types of frameworks and analyze the ethical problems inherent in the status of foreign workers in the receiving country. The thesis will also explore the impact of the employment of foreigners on the equilibrium and dynamics of the labor market and the challenges faced by employers when hiring foreign workers. The study will examine the legal and ethical obligations of employers when hiring foreign workers, the challenges faced by employers when hiring foreign workers, and the obligations of employers and policymakers to protect the rights of foreign workers. The thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues related to foreign workers and to inform policies and practices that balance the benefits and costs of foreign workers, ensuring a sustainable and inclusive economy.

Foreign workers are entitled to receive various benefits, depending on the country and the type of employment. Here are some benefits that foreign workers may be entitled to receive based on the search results:

1. Fair wages: Foreign workers are entitled to receive fair wages that are commensurate with their skills and experience. Employers must comply with minimum wage laws and ensure that foreign workers are not paid less than their native counterparts (IOM, 2020).
2. Health and safety protections: Foreign workers are entitled to receive health and safety protections in the workplace, including access to medical care and protection from workplace hazards. Employers must comply with occupational health and safety laws and ensure that foreign workers are not exposed to unsafe working conditions (Tao, 2015).
3. Social security benefits: Foreign workers may be entitled to receive social security benefits, such as retirement, disability, and survivor benefits, depending on the country and the type of employment. Employers must

comply with social security laws and ensure that foreign workers are not excluded from these benefits (Tao, 2015).

4. Training and development opportunities: Foreign workers may be entitled to receive training and development opportunities to enhance their skills and advance their careers. Employers must provide equal opportunities for training and development to foreign workers and ensure that they are not discriminated against based on their nationality or citizenship status (Convention, 2003).
5. Inclusion in workplace culture: Foreign workers are entitled to be included in the workplace culture and to be treated with respect and dignity. Employers must promote a culture of inclusion and diversity and ensure that foreign workers are not subject to discrimination or harassment based on their nationality or citizenship status (International (Convention, 2003).

## **2-4 : The rate of foreign worker’s number in the Kurdistan region per**

The number of foreign workers is increasing gradually. In addition to the workers who are brought to the Kurdistan Region through foreign labor companies and the Ministry of Social Affairs, there are other workers who come through the Ministry of Interior. Interestingly, the number of foreign workers coming through the Ministry of Interior is still unknown. According to a report by the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Kurdistan Regional Government, until the end of 2014, 1639 foreign workers worked in 26 government companies and 2095 foreign workers worked in oil and gas service companies in the Kurdistan Region (Yusuf, S.2018)

<b>2007+2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018(9MONTHS)</b>
<b>1002</b>	<b>1696</b>	<b>2188</b>	<b>31118</b>	<b>7129</b>	<b>6262</b>	<b>8748</b>	<b>9261</b>	<b>5154</b>	<b>3843</b>	<b>1913</b>

## **2-5 : Rules and Regulations for accepting foreign workers in Kurdistan:**

for obtaining information in regards to rules and regulations, researchers interviewed two company owners. first company owner, has mentioned that: -  
Procedures for hiring foreign workers in the company.

1. The worker must know Kurdish language or have a good understanding.
2. Have health insurance.
3. The worker must observe his official work and all his own expenses and transportation to the workplace will be borne by him. If he does not observe his official work, the day will be considered absent.
- 4- Any worker who does not comply with his official work for three days without obtaining permission from the company, the company can dismiss him from work except in one case if the worker has obtained permission from the company provided he has a medical report Money counts.
5. Only Friday is a holiday in the week. In case of emergency, the company can employ its workers.
- 6- Causing any problem will be removed from his job.

And second company owener maintain that: any forigion workers who comes to Kurdistan must have health insurance and understanding Kurdish language so have a place to stay and have a good working ability and have previous work experience.

## **2-6 : What is the difference between migrant workers and foreign workers?**

Migrant workers and foreign workers are often used interchangeably, but there are subtle differences. A migrant worker is someone who moves within or outside their home country in pursuit of work, usually without the intention of staying permanently in the host country.

On the other hand, foreign workers are people who work outside their home country, and may be recruited by the receiving state for specific employment purposes with limited length of stay and types of employees.

## **2-7 : Impact covid-19 on foregion workers in the Kurdistan region :-**

during the outbreak and spread of COVID-19, the world faced new conditions that affected almost all aspects of human life. This new critical situation had various and complex consequences on societies in general and the Kurdistan Region in particular. The community of foreign workers is one of the vulnerable groups who were impacted noticeably by COVID-19.

### **COVID-19 and Labour Migrants in KRI**

As in many other countries, KRI was very much affected by COVID-19. The pandemic impacted the economy and labour migrants too. Due to COVID-19, many foreign workers, especially service workers in hospitality sectors, were left without a job in the Kurdistan Region. After losing their jobs due to the pandemic, foreign workers in KRI were unable to return home due to travel restrictions. On 14 June 2020, AP News Agency published a short video explaining the circumstances of some migrant workers in the Kurdistan Region who were impacted by the travel restrictions due to COVID-19.5 They were workers from Georgia, India, Bangladesh, and China, among other countries. For the time being, some were left without any possibility of going home because of border and airport closures The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the foreign worker community in the Kurdistan Region, though women domestic workers have been less affected compared to those in the service or hospitality sectors.(irwani , aghapouri , and kofman 2024 )



## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

Qualitative and quantitative research are two different approaches to collecting and analyzing data. Qualitative data is analyzed by grouping the data into categories and themes.

Quantitative research is often focused on answering the questions of "what" or "how" in regards to a phenomenon, correlation or behavior, while qualitative research is often focused on answering the

"why" behind a phenomenon, correlation or behavior. Both types of research have their advantages and disadvantages and often

complement each other. A rule of thumb for deciding whether to use qualitative or quantitative data is to use quantitative research if you want to confirm or test something and use qualitative research if you want to understand something.

In this research we use the Quantitative: Quantitative refers to the measurement of quantity or amount using numerical data. It is a research strategy that focuses on quantifying the collection and analysis of data, and is used to find patterns, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalize results to wider populations. Quantitative research is widely used in the natural and social sciences, such as biology, chemistry, psychology, economics, sociology, marketing, and more. It can be used for descriptive, correlational, or experimental research.

## Chapter four – Finding and Discussing:

This research interviewed 50 migrant workers (23 men and 25 women ) all men from ( bangladish ) and Womens from (Pakistan – Philippine -Bangladesh – and Nepal ).

### Age of Participants:

Gender	18-22	22-26	26-30	Above 30
Male	0	10	13	0
Female	7	8	4	6

### The duration of the Workers :

Gender	2-6	6-10	10-14	Above 14
Men	8	10	5	0
Women	6	10	4	5

**Q1: To What Extend Are Workers Rights Protected by Employers and Companies?**

Gender	Nothing	Very Little	Many	To Some Extend
Male	0	0	23	0
Female	0	0	17	8

Here, workers' rights are protected by employers and companies. 17 women answered (many) and 8 women answered (some). As for men, the majority answered (very) and well Men's rights are protected.

but women's rights should be protected more because women are more vulnerable to torture and rape. Protection of workers' rights varies from place to place.

## Q2: Is there a distinction between foreign and domestic workers?

Gender	No	Some	Many	To Some Extend
Male	0	0	0	23
Female	1	15	0	9

Regarding the difference between foreign workers and domestic workers. Male workers are somewhat discriminated against. This does not mean that their rights are being violated. It may be in the way they work. Everywhere, smart and active workers are different from their colleagues, whether they are foreign workers or local workers. But most women say yes, we are discriminated against in our workplace, long working hours and different jobs.

## Q3: Is There Any Ethnic Discrimination Between Workers When Hiring?

Gender	No	Many	To Some Extend
Male	0	0	23
Female	0	21	4

Here he says whether there is ethnic discrimination in hiring workers. According to male workers, there is sometimes a difference, but women believe there is a big difference. People can be recruited. Here, workers are not discriminated against regardless of their nationality or religion.

**Q4: To what extent has the language problem become an obstacle for the workers in their work?**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Nothing</b>	<b>Many</b>	<b>To Some Extend</b>
<b>Male</b>	0	0	23
<b>Female</b>	6	2	17

Language problems have become a significant barrier for workers in their work, affecting productivity and communication. Most workers who come to work in Kurdistan may have language problems at first, but after patience they will learn the language and even speak it better than us. But in general, language problems pose a real challenge in various work environments Enhance communication and understanding among employees. Language barriers prevent effective orientation, clarification of expectations, and performance feedback, affecting employee training and overall productivity.

**Q5: Is The Worker's Health Insurance Provided by The Company In Case Of any Health Problems?**

Gender	Yes	No	To Some Extend
Male	23	0	0
Female	9	4	12

In response to this question, all male workers answered yes, yes, health insurance is provided and in case of any health problems in the company that they encounter help to recover, but on the contrary, women were not provided with health insurance This is clear when a worker becomes ill and is not provided with any health insurance by the company or employer. Not as health insurance, but as an assistance and care when a worker becomes ill. However, small employers often voluntarily offer health insurance to attract and retain employees. Employees are not entitled to request health care but if offered, it must meet special needs coverage but the decision to provide health insurance is the employer’s, legal obligations vary depending on the size of the company and the employee’s specific circumstances.

**Q6: Is There a Distinction Between Foreign and Domestic Workers During Work?**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Many</b>	<b>To Some Extent</b>
<b>Male</b>	23	0	0
<b>Female</b>	6	4	15

The difference between foreign and domestic workers is not discriminated against, but depends on who is smarter and more experienced in the field. Labor laws apply equally to both foreign and domestic workers, ensuring equal treatment of working hours and rest periods. They illustrate an understanding of local regulations and contractual agreements to ensure rights and obligations regarding working hours for foreign and local workers across different jurisdictions.

## Q7: Does The Company Fulfill Its Obligation to Provide Clothes And Working Equipment For The Workers?

Gender	No	Yes	To Some Extent
Male	0	0	23
Female	3	18	4

Workers who come here to work for employers or companies are obliged to provide appropriate work clothing and personal protective equipment for workers as part of their safety responsibilities. This requirement ensures that workers have the necessary clothing and equipment to perform their duties safely and effectively, in compliance with health and safety regulations. Providing protective equipment, such as safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high visibility clothing, safety boots and respirators, is essential to protect workers from potential hazards in the workplace in addition, employers must ensure that workers work clothes appropriate wear appropriate for their activities to maintain a safe work environment. Finally In this research we found that out of 25 women, most of the women working here are between 18-22 years old who have been working here for 6 to 10 years and each of them migrated from their country for different reasons A company's rights are usually protected by the employer, whether in the form of documents or witnesses. Whether there is a distinction between foreign and domestic workers varies according to the place where they work and the experience, expertise and intelligence of the people. However, there is no difference of nationality in the recruitment of workers. They have some language problems at first, but over time they have learned the language very well. Also, when workers become ill, most companies provide assistance, not as health insurance. And most companies provide the worker's clothes and supplies.



## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

### **5-1 Conclusion:**

As a result of this research , we found that the problem of foreign workers in the Kurdistan Region (Erbil) is multifaceted, including challenges such as lack of specialized human skills, inadequate infrastructure, restrictions on financial and banking services, an inefficient tax system It leads to issues such as language barriers with employment contracts issued in Arabic and Kurdish, lack of rights awareness, poor working conditions for low-skilled workers, instances of sexual harassment in workplaces and public spaces, and cultural challenges affecting social interactions and crises Identity exists among foreign workers. These factors collectively contribute to creating a challenging environment for foreign workers in the Kurdistan Region.

And Our study also aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of issues related to foreign workers to guide policies and practices for a sustainable and inclusive economy and recognized the role of the international community in the importance of protecting the rights of migrant workers The main examines the context and analyzes the ethical problems inherent in the situation of foreign workers in the recipient country. The study examines the legal and ethical obligations of employers when hiring foreign workers, the challenges employers face when hiring foreign workers.

## **5-2 Recommendations:**

1. Foreign workers face obstacles such as lack of opportunities and exploitation by employment agencies and decreasing their numbers.
2. It is also important to improve workplace monitoring mechanisms.
3. Organize employment agencies to protect workers' rights and create more job opportunities for both foreign and native workers
4. Promotion of safety and security measures can attract more foreign workers to the region thus increasing new jobs
5. The Kurdistan Region by improving working conditions, ensuring fair treatment and fostering a safe environment to work in peace.
6. The Kurdistan Region can become a more attractive and welcoming place for foreign workers, participate in economic development and cultural diversity and bring foreign workers

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