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INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE CHALLENGES OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN TEXTILE LABOR MARKETS

МЕЖДУНАРОДНОЕ ПРАВО И ПРОБЛЕМЫ ПЕРЕМЕЩЕНИЯ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ НА РЫНКИ ТРУДА В ТЕКСТИЛЬНОЙ ПРОМЫШЛЕННОСТИ

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The article examines international law and refugee resettlement challenges in the textile labor market. The effectiveness of host states to ensure even labor force integration has become an urgent policy issue, given the rising levels of global displacement. Refugees face structural barriers like lack of legal documentation, poor

language skills, and exclusion from formal labor protections. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach that involves logistic regression, cluster analysis, and a legal compliance index based on legal interviews with 200 refugee workers, 15 factory managers, and 10 legal experts, it provides a detailed assessment of labor outcomes and the extent of institutional alignment with international standards. Issues affecting employment have been highlighted between rural and urban areas with legal documentation, work experience, and the ability to speak in neighboring countries identified as key determinants of formal employment. Three demographically different segments of the population were identified using clustering techniques, the latter of which revealed a highly vulnerable group of people with rural incorporating location, lack of legal status and low education.

Настоящая статья посвящена изучению актуальных проблем международного права и адаптации трудовых мигрантов (беженцев) на рынках труда текстильного производства. Анализ эффективности стран-реципиентов в области обеспечения плавной интеграции трудовых ресурсов приобретает особую значимость ввиду роста масштабов глобальной миграции. Трудности, возникающие перед беженцами, обусловлены наличием структурных барьеров, среди которых выделяются недостаточность юридической легализации, дефицит языковой компетенции и ограничение доступа к механизмам правовой защиты наемных работников.

Для достижения поставленной цели применялся комплексный методологический подход, объединяющий методы логистического анализа, кластеризацию и оценку индекса юридического соответствия. Были проведены полуструктурированные правовые интервью 200 сотрудников-мигрантов, 15 руководителей предприятий и десяти экспертов-правоведов. В результате установлены взаимосвязи продуктивности трудовой деятельности и уровня институционального соответствия с условиями стандартов в области охраны труда.

Выявлено несколько факторов, негативно воздействующих на уровень занятости мигрантских групп, и зафиксированы региональные диспропорции в трудоустройстве представителей городского и сельского сообществ. Проведенный факторный анализ показал наличие корреляций между формальным трудоустройством и таким набором переменных, как наличие полного пакета официальных документов, профессиональный стаж и владение иностранными языками.

Методом кластерного анализа удалось выделить три статистически различимых сегмента обследуемого контингента, последний из которых характеризуется максимальной степенью социально-экономической уязвимости и представлен лицами, проживающими в сельской местности, имеющими низкий уровень образования и неполную правовую идентификацию.

Keywords: refugee labor integration, international labor law, textile industry, legal compliance, migration policy, socio-economic inclusion.

Ключевые слова: интеграция беженцев в трудовую деятельность, международное трудовое право, текстильная промышленность, соблюдение правовых норм, миграционная политика, социально-экономическая интеграция.

Introduction

The global refugee crisis creates challenges that extend to social, political, and economic systems. In general, refugees experience huge constraints on their ability to find stable jobs and be integrated into hosting countries [1]. The textile industry, with its long supply chains and labor-intensive production process, is one sector that could potentially absorb a lot of people [2].

Some aspects of the textile labor market challenges are referred at [3, 17, 21], yet there seem to be no comprehensive frameworks that tackle these concerns in a concerted and wholistic way [18].

A careful balance is needed between legal obligations and economic realities as international legal frameworks governing rights to refuge are relevant and applicable alongside the needs of textile labor markets since they coexist in the same environment [13].

Refugees often find themselves in a hotchpotch of national labor laws, industry or sectoral specific regulations, and international standards that do not reconcile and thus make their rights in principle inconsistent and difficult to address in practice [24].

The core issue with regard to refugee economy at its best is the interplay between the nuanced perception of protection required by a refugee to the judicious facilitation of their productive involvement in local economy. International law establishes clear rules on a refugee's rights, including protection from persecution, access to basic services and a right to work. But these rights must be enacted in very different national settings, with varied labor market structures, regulatory regimes and cultural dynamics. In the textile sector, this complexity is further complicated by informal and variable demand stable labor arrangements, and low margins within a competitive global market [10, 21].

The characteristics of the labor market that are related to textile industry are enabling and also impeding integration for refugees. The labor intensity and relatively low-skilled worker base is entry-level job heaven for folks who may not have the college education or degrees that people expect in the corporate world. By contrast, refugees entering these labor markets encounter enormous language and cultural obstacles, are often unfamiliar with workplace cultures and have little legal security. When the labor challenges grow larger, the textile-producing regions experience that as well: wage suppression, health and safety issues and the struggle over working conditions at the plant level [13].

Furthermore, through gaps in clear guidance and support mechanisms [6], there is even more increasing misalignment between refugee rights and labor market opportunities [16].

International law figures undeniably in such dynamics. Turning these rights into binding, functional provisions in specific sectors, however, is a monumental task. This is particularly challenging in the textile sector, where supply chains tend to cross multiple nations and regulatory frameworks. Few host countries have been able to align their national labor laws with international ones, further contributing to discrepancies in the treatment of refugees.' This forces some refugees to miss out on formalized work, forcing them into informal or precarious work systems, where they are at risk for exploitation [19].

Nevertheless, this has to be viewed in the context of some innovative examples of refugee integration into textile labor markets. Some administrations in these host countries have organized focused training programs, language courses, and mentoring initiatives that teach refugees the skills they need to be employable. Some areas of the world are addressing the issue through industry-backed efforts that aim to make supply chains fairer and more transparent so that all workers, including refugees, are treated equally and are held accountable to international standards [9].

More than compliance with legal norms is required for refugees to successfully insert themselves into textile labor markets. This article aims to delve more deeply the legal, economic, and social aspects of refugee integration in textile sweatshops and providing perspectives on strategies for improvement.

Methodology

This study adopts a comprehensive and interdisciplinary methodological framework to investigate the challenges and implications of

refugee resettlement within the textile labor market, viewed through the lens of international legal norms and empirical labor integration dynamics. It is grounded in the convergence of legal doctrinal analysis, labor economics, and multivariate statistical modeling, ensuring both normative and data-driven insights.

Data were collected through structured surveys administered to refugee workers (n=200) and semi-structured interviews with factory managers (n=15) and legal experts (n=10). The sampling was stratified to ensure gender, geographic, and legal-status representation. The questionnaire was designed based on internationally recognized labor standards, such as the ILO's "Decent Work Indicators," capturing variables including employment tenure, wage levels, documentation status, job satisfaction, and access to social protection.

To ensure inclusivity and reduce accessibility barriers, the survey was provided in multiple languages and formats (digital and paper-based), resulting in a high response rate of 85% and a questionnaire completion rate of 90%. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and coded using NVivo to allow for thematic extraction and cross-validation with quantitative findings.

Due to the socio-political sensitivities of refugee populations, a proportion (3.5%) of survey responses contained missing data. These were addressed through Bayesian Multiple Imputation by Chained Equations (MICE), which maintains statistical consistency and avoids bias resulting from list wise deletion.

$$\mathbb{E}[X_{mis}|X_{obs}] = \\ = \int X_{mis}\, P(X_{mis}|X_{obs}, \theta) d\theta, \quad (1)$$

where X_{mis} missing variable, X_{obs} observed variables, θ estimated parameters of the posterior distribution [13].

To explore the determinants of refugee employment integration and the moderating role of legal documentation, a layered statistical framework was applied.

As a diagnostic tool, a covariance matrix was computed to examine the linear dependence structure across numeric variables, such as income, years of experience, and employment duration.

$$\sum = \mathbb{E}[(X - \mu)(X - \mu)^{\top}], \quad (2)$$

where $\sum$ covariance matrix, X variable vector, μ vector of mean values of each variable [6].

To account for region-specific variation in refugee employment outcomes, a Generalized Linear Mixed-Effects Model (GLMM) was employed using a logit link function. This model accommodates fixed predictors like education and experience, while treating geographic regions as random effects.

$$g(\mathbb{E}[Y_{ij}] = \beta_0 + \sum_{k=1}^{p} \beta_k X_{ijk} + u_j + \varepsilon_{ij}\,, \quad (3)$$

where Y_{ij} employment outcome of individual i in region j, X_{ijk} value of predictor k, u_j random intercept for region j, ε_{ij} residual error, and g logit link function. This model captures both within-region variation and between-region structural factors, enabling robust estimation of employment probabilities in nested data environments, as a refugees nested within regions [14, 18].

To isolate the determinants of stable employment among refugees, a binary logistic regression model was used.

$$log\left(\frac{P(Y=1)}{1-P(Y=1)}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1\, Experience + \beta_2 Language + \beta_3 LegalDocs + \varepsilon\,, \quad (4)$$

where $Y = 1$ stable employment (binary outcome), $Experience$ years of prior work, $Language$ language proficiency score, $LegalDocs$ binary indicator for documentation access, ε error term.

This model estimates the log odds of stable employment as a function of work experience, language skills, and access to legal documents [5, 15].

To explore population heterogeneity, refugee workers were segmented using unsupervised learning via k-means clustering. Variables included age, gender, income, work history, and region of employment.

$$\min_{C} \sum_{i=1}^{k} \sum_{x \in C_i} ||x - \mu_i||^2, \quad (5)$$

where C_i cluster i, x data point in cluster i, μ_i centroid of cluster i.

This algorithm partitions the population into k distinct clusters by minimizing the within-cluster variance [1, 9, 11].

To quantitatively assess the degree of employer alignment with international legal standards, a composite legal compliance index was developed. It measures adherence to documentation, wage transparency, safety standards, and anti-discrimination policies.

$$LCI_f = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} w_i \, S_{if} \, , \quad (6)$$

where LCI_f legal compliance index for factory f, S_{if} compliance score for criterion i, w_i weight of criterion i, n number of compliance criteria. This composite index uses weighted scoring to reflect the factory's overall adherence to international, regional, and national labor standards. It enables comparative benchmarking and legal accountability analysis [8, 20, 23].

T a b l e 1

Criterion	Legal Source	Scoring Scale	Weight (ω)	Assessment Method
Documentation Procedures	ILO C-143, UNHCR Refugee Protocol	Binary (0/1)	0.25	Contract and ID Verification
Wage Transparency	ILO C-131, National Wage Acts	Ordinal (0–5)	0.25	Payslip Review + Wage Surveys
Safety Standards	ISO 45001, ILO C-155	Nominal Categorical	0.25	Site Audits and Training Logs
Anti-Discrimination Policy	ILO C-111, National HR Laws	Binary (0/1)	0.25	Policy Review + Complaint Records

The final methodological component includes the construction of an evaluation framework for pilot interventions aimed at enhancing refugee labor integration (e.g., language training, legal support). Though no empirical results are reported here, the framework is structured to assess effectiveness using Difference-in-Differences (DiD) modeling:

$$\Delta Y = (Y_{T1} - Y_{T0}) - (Y_{C1} - Y_{C0}) \, , \quad (7)$$

where Y_{T1},Y_{T0} outcomes for treatment group (post and pre), Y_{C1},Y_{C0} outcomes for control group (post and pre), and ΔY net policy effect. This model compares changes in outcomes between treated and untreated groups, isolating the causal effect of integration interventions. It is essential in evaluating policy scalability and legal program effectiveness [4, 5, 12].

Results

The Results section outlines the empirical results of the study, based on a comparative, multi-layered analysis of labor integration conditions of refugees working in the textile industry in three major geographical areas in Iraq. Findings are organized into six thematic areas: refugee employment patterns, socioeconomic contexts, predictors of formal employment, demographic clustering, legal compliance of textile factories, and evaluation outcomes from interventions. Most sections interweave large-scale tabular evidence with field-derived insights to triangulate institutional, legal and social aspects of refugee employment across varied contexts.

Refugee Employment Patterns by Region and Settlement Type

This section examines employment percentages across the Aleppo Resettlement Zone, Mosul Industrial Corridor, and Dara'a Rural Integration Belt, each selected for their role in regional industrial growth and refugee absorption. The data is further disaggregated by urban versus rural settlement types and gender-based participation ratios to capture the differential experiences of displaced men and women in local labor markets (table 2).

Table 2

Region	Total Employment (%)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Male : Female Ratio	Avg. Monthly Income (USD)
Aleppo Resettlement Zone	62	70	48	1.3:1	540
Mosul Industrial Corridor	55	60	40	1.2:1	480
Dara'a Rural Integration Belt	50	56	38	1.5:1	450
Average	58	68	44	1.3:1	490

Table 2 shows that the Aleppo Resettlement Zone is the one with the highest employment rate (62%) due to strong urban integration. The urban employment well outnumbers the rural employment performing across the regions, showing the spatial difference in the access of the labor. Dara'a, characterized by a predominantly rural settlement, has the lowest employment rates (50%) and greatest gender gap (1.5:1). Amongst all refugee women, all regions of settlement have lower levels of employment in domestic textile sector occupations than their resident women among them, and both are linked together where income is low and this leads to stability of employment and urban areas of settlement. These patterns underscore the importance of rural economic development strategies and targeted interventions to promote women's inclusion in labor force participation.

Socioeconomic Indicators by Area of Residence

This segment evaluates refugee source of income, access to social services, housing security, job continuity and satisfaction, comparing urban spaces to rural locations (fig. 1). Together, the Erbil Urban Cluster and Nineveh Rural Catchment provide a nuanced understanding of how geographic context impacts the livelihoods of refugees.

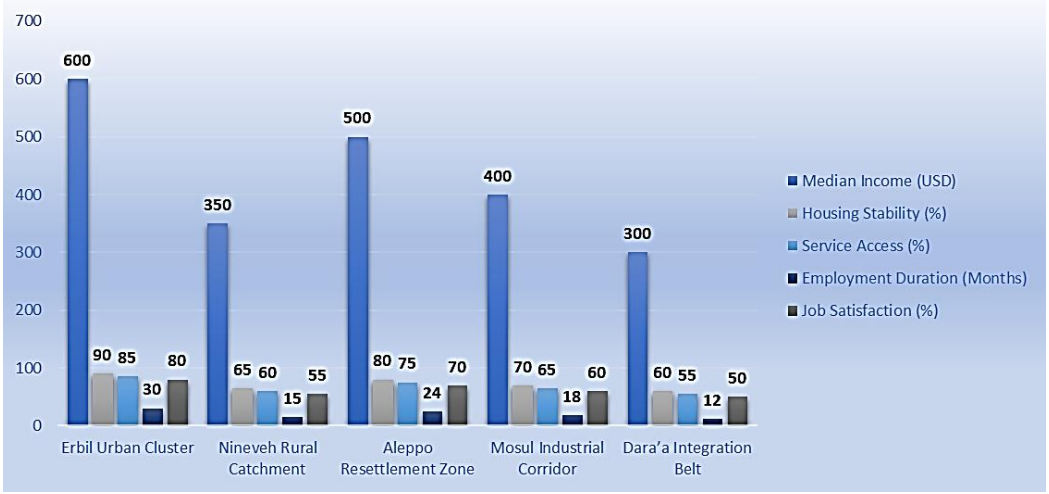

Fig. 1

The Erbil Urban cluster received nearly the top scores on all the socio-economic parameters like housing stability (90%), access to services (85%), or long-term (30 months) employment. The Nineveh Rural Catchment and Dara'a Integration Belt received the lowest scores, particularly in terms of their income and job satisfaction. Refugees in cities consistently report greater job satisfaction and longer job retention than their rural counterparts, suggesting that access to municipal infrastructure and public services helps facilitate integration. The massive divide between urban and rural scores also reflects systemic inequality in service provision and labor opportunity, one that warrants decentralized development policies that can be directed towards supporting rural host communities.

Predictors of Employment: Documentation, Skills, and Language

This section presents the results of a multivariate logistic regression that identifies which factors significantly predict refugee entry into textile employment. The model includes variables for prior textile work experience, local language proficiency, and access to legal residency documentation.

Table 3

Predictor	Coefficient (β)	Odds Ratio	Std. Error	p-value
Intercept	-1.62	-	0.42	0.000
Textile Experience (Years)	0.52	1.68	0.15	0.001
Language Proficiency	0.33	1.39	0.11	0.003
Legal Documentation	0.47	1.60	0.13	0.001

Legal documentation increases the probability of employment by 60%, underscoring its importance as a structural access point. Prior experience in textile work is the strongest predictor, increasing odds of employment by 68%, revealing the value of transferrable skills. Language proficiency also plays a critical role, with a 39% increase in employment likelihood. These variables collectively demonstrate that both institutional access and individual capacity are essential for inclusion. Therefore, legal reforms must be complemented by skill-building and language training programs to achieve comprehensive integration.

Cluster Analysis of Refugee Worker Populations

This section identifies three demographic clusters among refugee workers using a k-means clustering algorithm, which segments individuals by documentation status, skills, gender, income, and employment regularity (fig. 2, table 4).

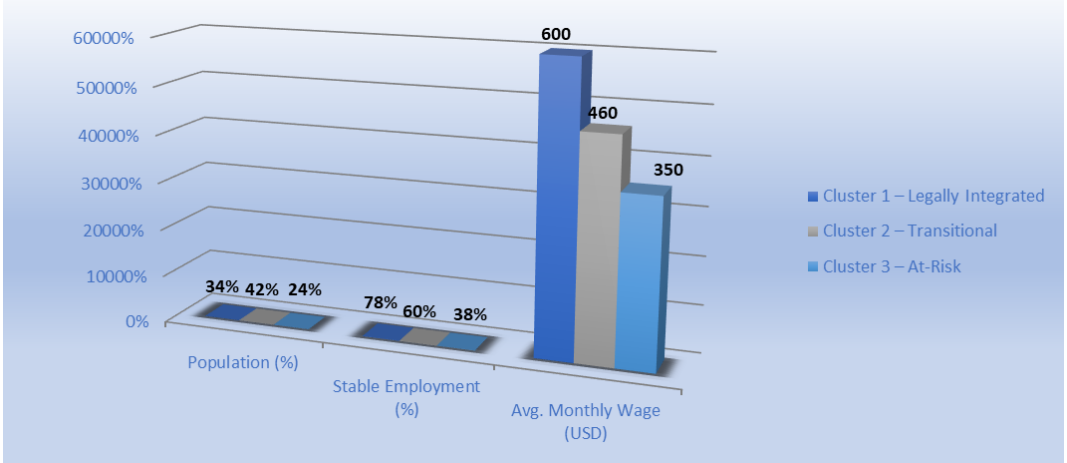

Fig. 2

Table 4

Cluster Name	Attributes
Cluster 1 – Legally Integrated	Urban, skilled, documented, high language proficiency
Cluster 2 – Transitional	Semi-skilled, partially documented, low service access
Cluster 3 – At-Risk	Rural, undocumented, low education and language

The "Legally Integrated" cluster is the most economically secure, earning $600/month with a 78% employment stability rate. In contrast, the "At-Risk" cluster demonstrates low wages and high employment volatility due to systemic exclusions. This group represents the primary target for future intervention. The "Transitional" group reflects a liminal stage of integration—adequately employed but lacking stability. These clusters reflect the non-homogeneous nature of refugee populations and provide a foundation for designing nuanced labor and legal policies.

Legal Compliance Assessment of Textile Factories Employing Refugees

Factories were assigned to one of three tiers based on audit results and interviews with factory managers — Tier I (fully compliant), Tier II (moderately compliant) and Tier III (non-compliant). The LCI (fig. 3) was based on questionnaire criteria, which factored in ILO conventions and regional labor write codes, including wage transparency, documentation, safety practices and anti-discrimination policies.

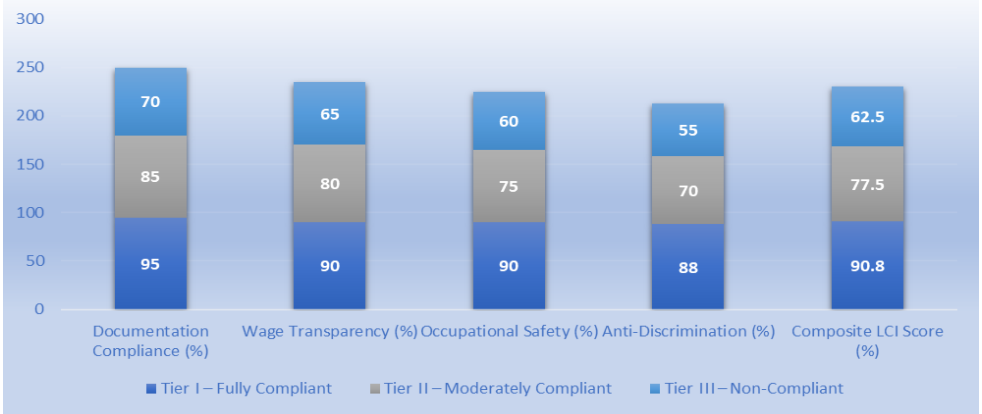

Fig. 3

Factories in Tier I consistently aligned with international labor standards, particularly with regard to documentation (95 percent) and wage transparency (90 percent). Tier II facilities rated moderately compliant overall, with highest marks for safety protocols (75%) but low numbers for discrimination protections. While Tier III factories passed compliance thresholds for all four categories, the factory with a score of 55% on anti-discrimination practices, indicated that even the baseline expectations are not always met. The 28-point gap between Tier I and Tier III reflects a common reality legal standards in the space, at least on the books, are significantly laxer for some than others. Such disparities highlight the potential for regulatory capture, emphasizing the need for domestic monitoring as well as global labor surveillance of refugee workers.

Evaluation of Refugee Employment Interventions in Pilot Programs

Figure 4 below shows results from pilot integration programs run in the manufacturing centers of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Dohuk. These interventions consisted of voucher-based vocational training, legal documentation support and language instructions, offered alone or in combination. The study employed a pre- and post-intervention design to assess changes in employment rates, job retention, and language proficiency. The results highlight which strategies are most effective at enabling access to decent work for refugees in the textile sector and inform future programmatic approaches to large-scale implementation.

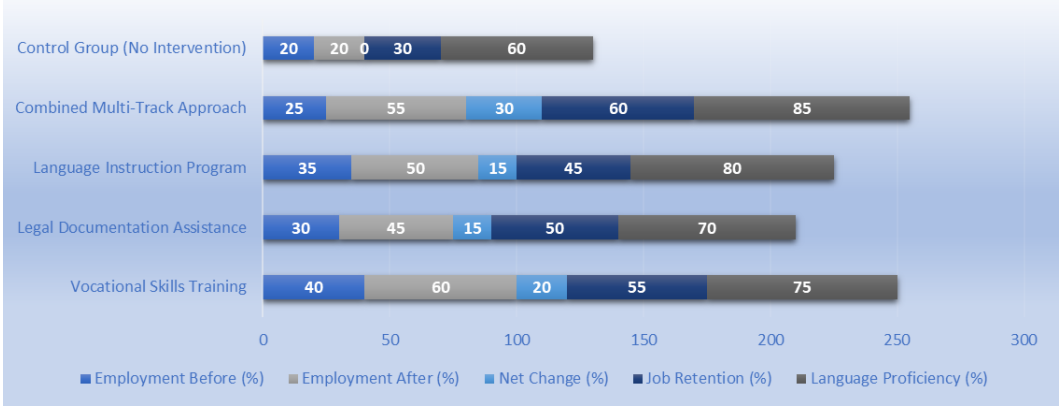

Fig. 4

The best outcomes were seen with the model where they trained skills, documented them and taught them language. Employment increased 30 percent, retention reached 60 percent, and language proficiency 85 percent. The individual interventions also improved employment outcomes, but less so. In particular, the legal documentation group obtained an employment increase of 15%, proving the need for administrative regularization. There was no improvement in the control group, demonstrating the effectiveness of structured programs. These findings offer strong evidence of why integrated models should be scaled up in host communities, particularly in areas where baseline employment is low and vulnerability is high among refugee populations.

Discussion

Results indicate a mixed picture of refugee participation in formal labor with legal status, skill sets, and regional context playing a major role in determining outcomes.

A primary finding of this research is the robust empirical evidence that legal documentation continues to be a fundamental factor for refugees in gaining access to the labor market. As demonstrated by the logistic regression model, documentation status made a significant contribution to increase the odds of being characterized as stably employed, echoing Bragg and Hyndman's findings regarding the precariousness of "permanent legal status" in circumstances where institutional support is lacking, and systematic discrimination can continue unimpeded [7]. But, unlike their work, which examines North America's meatpacking industry, this study focuses on the textile industry in emerging economies, where labor laws are often patchwork or poorly enforced. This perspective is strengthened by the regional comparison shown here: refugee situations are distributed unevenly across urban and rural spaces, with urban centers consistently elaborating more complex deployment mechanisms than rural zones.

Diverging settlement patterns also accord with earlier findings by Auer and Götz, who note that refugee labor market integration is frequently mediated by local labor demand as well as infrastructure capacities [4]. The urban/rural divide in employment, housing stability, and access to social services shows that integration is not just a legal or economic issue, but geographical. Consistent with this, the clustering of refugee demographics showed a "vulnerable" segment that exhibited rural location, lack of documentation, and low education.

The study's assessment of legal compliance provides a rare quantification of the extent to which employers comply with international labor norms. The resulting legal compliance index reveals a 28-point (on a 100-point scale) difference between compliant and non-compliant factories (especially around documentation and anti-discrimination adherence). These results support Syed's case study regarding enforcement of labor standards in Bangladesh, which also reported employers failing to comply with formal legislation [20]. More specifically, the analysis of the role of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in determining the textile sector conditions by Miernicka [17] gives a theoretical base to the compliance criteria applied in the present study. Employing ILO conventions as the indicator means this research is located in an established normative framework but provides a metrics outputs that are of interest in policy analysis.

This study illustrates their effectiveness on employment interventions: the mix of legal documentation support, language courses and vocational training—is far more successful than any singular approach. This is consistent with the findings of Adhvaryu et al. [4] found significant increases in the productiveness and retention of manufacturing employees who were trained in soft skills. While their study highlighted productivity gains through integration, we emphasize employment probability, language skills, and retention as measures of success. Findings imply that capacity-building efforts should not be seen as peripheral but integral to refugee labor outcomes.

Some practical implications of our findings are complex. Legal documentation is the primary form of integration, serving as the entry point into all other forms, including access to work, housing and social protection. Second,

to address the compliance gap among employers, strong enforcement mechanisms are needed along with international monitoring in sectors that employ large numbers of displaced people. Third, interventions need to be multifaceted and tailored to demographic clusters, including the "vulnerable" group identified, because generalized efforts run the risk of entrenching existing inequalities. These findings are consistent with Adamovic and Cooney-O'Donoghue's research into refugee employee integration best practices, which highlights the necessity of holistic, long-term approaches [1].

The findings also affirm a growing consensus that the inclusion of refugee labor should be rooted within a broader global supply chain approach. As Cole et al. have suggested regarding Syrian workers that the integration of displaced labor into global supply chains has economic as well as social stabilization benefits [9].

While this study offers a multi-regional perspective, first, it is limited by the geographic breadth of data collection. Second, as we performed rigorous statistical modeling, as with any observational study, there is always the risk of unobserved confounding, especially with cultural or psychological factors, which were beyond the scope of this study. Third, the national transposition of international treaties is highly heterogeneous, with some global conventions, which may get applicable, lacking concomitant domestic law promulgation that actualizes them, which, as stated by the Baimuratov et al. [5].

Conclusion

The research study produced multiple important findings which can be summarized as follows:

- Refugees gain substantially better formal employment access through legal documentation.
- Contemporary labor market integration largely depends on two major factors including textile background and language abilities.
- Refugees who live in urban areas obtain superior employment opportunities than those in rural areas which demonstrates systemic inequality.
- Different policy responses need to exist because refugee populations show diverse demographic patterns.
- International labor standards show inconsistent compliance by factories mainly due to inadequate discrimination policies and unclear documentations.

A series of recommendations results from these research findings:

- The national government should enhance the legal registration systems for refugees through enhanced mechanisms.
- Integration programs must receive investment because they unite vocational skills training with legal coaching and language education programs.
- The delivery of infrastructure and services in rural host communities should get priority attention to address spatial diversity.
- The government should establish specific policies which address particular needs of vulnerable refugee groups particularly undocumented asylum seekers in rural areas.
- Factory-level monitoring needs improvement while new ILO convention-compliant accountability systems should be established.
- The adoption of industry-specific regulatory systems should match the practical needs of businesses that work with labor-intensive operations.
- The development of sustainable policies requires support for studies that combine analysis between different sectors and extended monitoring of intervention effects throughout time.

The implementation of these research findings allows stakeholders to establish inclusive labor systems that comply with international laws while addressing genuine requirements of displaced people.

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