

The Role of Policy Implementation in Connecting International Labor Standards and Poverty Reduction among Migrant Workers

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of International Labor Standards (ILS) at the local level within the context of integrating international labor law instruments into poverty alleviation strategies for former migrant workers and other vulnerable groups in Indonesia. It highlights how international normative instruments, including the ILO Constitution and the Declaration of Philadelphia, function not only as legal frameworks but also as discursive tools that shape policy agendas and government responses. Using a qualitative approach, this study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of scientific publications published between 2015 and 2025, sourced from the Dimensions and Scopus databases. The inclusion criteria consisted of full-text journal articles in English or Indonesian that addressed local poverty alleviation and labor-related issues. The findings reveal that effective implementation of ILS depends on the harmonization of national regulations with international standards and the capacity of labor inspectorates to enforce labor protections. Evidence from regions such as Central Lombok underscores the importance of intersectoral collaboration and evidence-based policymaking to support the reintegration of former migrant workers into decent employment. The study also highlights the gap between normative commitments and policy implementation at the local level.

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1. Introduction

International Labor Standards (ILS) play a crucial role in protecting workers' rights and in laying the foundation for equitable and inclusive sustainable development. Although many countries have ratified ILO conventions and harmonized their national laws, implementation on the ground remains far from ideal. Some countries, such as Kazakhstan and Bangladesh, have labor legal frameworks that appear to align with ILS, but their implementation does not reflect the actual protection of workers' rights (Khamzina et al., 2022; Chowdhury, 2017). Similar issues exist in Pakistan, particularly in the brick industry, where enforcement of basic workers' rights remains inconsistent (Lanjwani et al., 2020).

A major challenge to implementing ILS in many countries is weak enforcement mechanisms. As seen in Bangladesh, despite formal regulations, ineffective enforcement continues labor rights violations (Syed, 2023). This is exacerbated by the lack of adequate sanctions for labor violations, reflecting the weakness of the existing legal system. Meanwhile, in Ukraine, ratification of ILO conventions demonstrates the country's commitment to global standards but still requires structural reforms within the national institutional system to ensure their effectiveness (Sievidova et al., 2022; Khamzina et al., 2022).

In this context, the Labor Inspectorate plays a central role in ensuring compliance with labor regulations through workplace inspections. Their functions extend beyond administrative duties to include protection against psychosocial risks inherent in the modern workplace (Larion, 2018; Toukas et al., 2015). However, the effectiveness of the Labor Inspectorate is often hampered by a shortage of inspectors, inadequate training, and high rates of unregistered employment (Andreeva et al., 2022; Kovačević, 2021). This situation demonstrates that strengthening institutional capacity is a crucial element in ensuring the implementation of fair labor standards at the local level.

In Indonesia, particularly in areas like Central Lombok Regency, which has a concentration of former migrant workers, this issue is highly relevant. Former migrant workers often return to their hometowns in vulnerable socioeconomic conditions. In this context, strengthening the Labor Inspectorate needs to be a policy priority to

support a fair and productive reintegration process. Effective implementation of labor standards requires not only regulatory revisions but also sectoral synergy and investment in capacity-building for labor inspectors (Gopal & Shyjan, 2024; Prada, 2020).

The link between ILS and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further underscores the urgency of integrating policies that address the needs of vulnerable groups. SDGs 1 and 8, which focus on eradicating poverty and creating decent work, are particularly relevant to former migrant workers (Suliman, 2017; Frey, 2017). Challenges such as discrimination, skills deprivation, and global economic pressures demand more inclusive labor policies. A development approach responsive to persons with disabilities and minority groups is also a crucial part of efforts to build a just labor market (Wickenden et al., 2022; Anjum, 2024; Zamula et al., 2023).

Furthermore, it is important to understand that international normative instruments such as the Declaration of Philadelphia and the ILO Constitution not only serve as legal references but also shape discourse that influences public perception and policy direction (Sengenberger, 2020; Blackett, 2018; Trebilcock, 2023). However, studies in various countries demonstrate a gap between rhetoric and policy reality, where public participation is often merely formal (Stanley et al., 2017; Kahn et al., 2018). Despite these contributions, existing studies tend to examine the implementation of International Labor Standards, institutional enforcement, and global policy agendas in a fragmented manner, without systematically linking legal frameworks, policy processes, and socioeconomic outcomes, particularly in the context of former migrant workers.

To address this limitation, this study develops a conceptual framework that explicitly explains the causal relationship between international norms, national policy processes, and socioeconomic outcomes. In this framework, international labor standards function as normative and discursive drivers that influence the formulation of national labor policies through legal harmonization and political commitment. These policies are subsequently translated into implementation mechanisms at the local level, particularly through institutional actors such as the Labor Inspectorate and intersectoral service systems. The effectiveness of this implementation determines

the extent to which labor protections are realized in practice, especially for vulnerable groups such as former migrant workers. It ultimately shapes broader outcomes in terms of poverty reduction and access to decent work. By integrating legal-institutional analysis, global policy discourse, and local implementation dynamics within a single analytical model, this study provides a more comprehensive explanation of how international labor norms are translated into tangible development outcomes in Indonesia

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine the integration of international labor standards into poverty alleviation efforts, particularly in the context of former migrant workers. The SLR approach was selected to ensure a structured, transparent, and replicable process in identifying and synthesizing relevant academic literature. Data were collected from two major academic databases, Scopus and Dimensions, covering publications within the last ten years (2015–2025) to maintain relevance and contemporaneity.

The research procedure in this study follows a systematic sequence of stages, starting from problem formulation to data interpretation and conclusion. The overall process is illustrated in Figure 1.

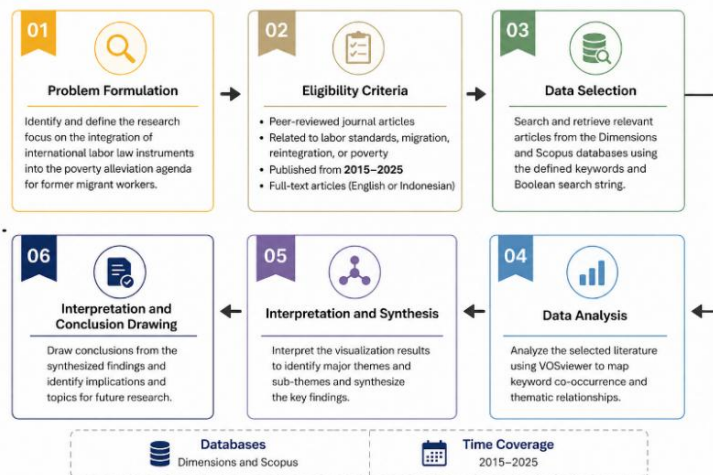


Figure 1. Research Procedure

As shown in Figure 1, the study begins with problem formulation, followed by the establishment of eligibility criteria to define the scope of the literature. Data were then collected from Scopus and Dimensions databases and subjected to a selection process. The selected studies were analyzed using VOSviewer to identify relationships among key variables. The analysis results were subsequently interpreted and synthesized to generate thematic insights that form the basis for the conclusions.

To ensure both inclusiveness and focus, the literature search was conducted using a limited but representative set of keywords combined through Boolean operators. The search string applied in this study was: ("migrant workers" or "labor migration") and ("international labor standards" or "decent work") and ("poverty reduction")

This formulation balances specificity and breadth by capturing key dimensions of migration, labor governance, and socio-economic outcomes without overly restricting the dataset.

The study applied inclusion criteria consisting of: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles; (2) publications related to labor standards, migration, or poverty; (3) articles published between 2015 and 2024; and (4) full-text availability. To avoid unnecessary reduction of the dataset, the criteria were not overly restrictive in terms of thematic scope, allowing relevant studies that indirectly address the research focus to be included. The selection process followed a PRISMA-based approach, including identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. Initial records were identified from both databases, duplicates were removed, and the remaining studies were screened based on titles and abstracts. Full-text assessment was then conducted to determine final inclusion.

The final dataset consisted of a sufficient number of studies to support qualitative synthesis and bibliometric analysis. The selected articles were analyzed using VOSviewer to examine keyword co-occurrence and identify thematic clusters within the literature. This analysis enables the visualization of relationships among key concepts, including governance frameworks, global development discourse, implementation processes, and socio-economic outcomes.

It is important to note that this study focuses on identifying patterns of conceptual relationships rather than establishing causal conclusions. The findings are therefore interpreted as indicative of the structure and interconnections of the literature. While this approach enhances analytical

clarity, it also implies that the results should be understood within the scope of bibliometric and qualitative interpretation.

3. Results And Discussion

3.1. Data Selection Results

The indexer database search initially identified 190 records, consisting of 23 open-access documents and the remainder closed-access. Among the accessible records, only two were journal articles, while the rest consisted of books and conference proceedings. Therefore, this study focuses on the analysis of two relevant articles in the subsequent stage. The distribution of publications is presented in Figure 2.

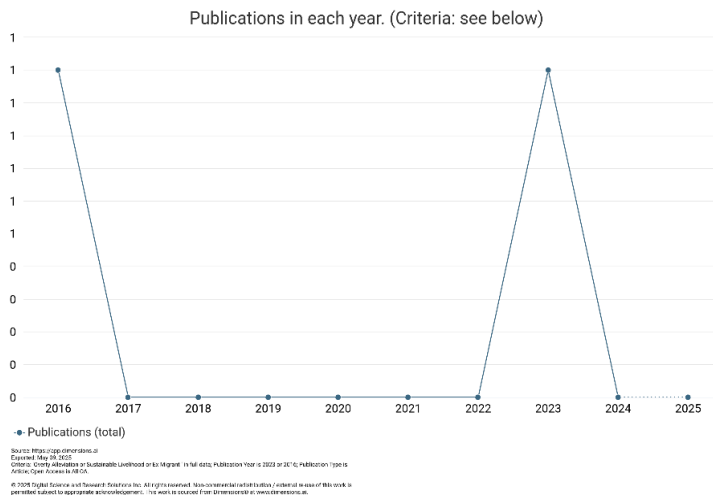


Figure 2. Distribution of the Number of Data Selections Over a Decade

Figure 2 shows that the number of publications related to the topic is limited and fluctuates across the observed period. Publications appear only in 2016 and 2023, with no indexed records in the intervening years. This pattern suggests that the topic has not yet been consistently explored within indexed academic databases. However, this interpretation is limited to the dataset used in this study and does not necessarily reflect the overall volume of global research on the subject. The observed pattern nevertheless indicates a relatively narrow body of indexed literature, which provides a rationale for further investigation using a structured analytical

approach.

3.2. Network Visualization and Cluster Analysis

The selected data were analyzed using VOSviewer to examine the co-occurrence of keywords and the relationships among variables. The network visualization is presented in Figure 3.

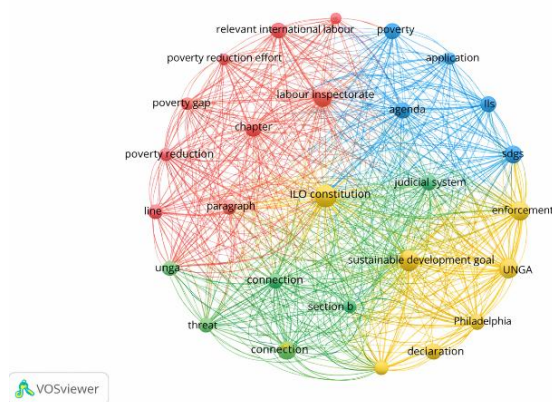


Figure 3. Network Visualization of Research Variables

The visualization shows four clusters, each represented by a different color: red, blue, green, and yellow. These clusters indicate thematic groupings of concepts within the selected literature. The interpretation of each cluster is presented below, with emphasis on patterns derived from the network structure.

1) Red Cluster (Governance and Legal Framework)

The red cluster is associated with terms such as *ILO Constitution*, *labor inspectorate*, *enforcement*, and *judicial system*. The co-occurrence of these terms suggests that the literature emphasizes legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms in the context of labor protection. The proximity between enforcement-related terms and institutional actors indicates that discussions of labor standards are closely linked to governance structures. This pattern reflects a tendency in the literature to frame labor protection in terms of formal regulatory and institutional dimensions.

2) Blue Cluster (Poverty and Socio-Economic Dynamics)

The blue cluster includes keywords such as *poverty*, *poverty reduction*, *poverty gap*, and *prosperity*. The grouping of these variables

indicates that socio-economic outcomes are an integral component of the discourse. The connections between these terms suggest that poverty is frequently discussed in relation to labor systems and economic conditions. Within the scope of this study, this cluster represents the outcome dimension, where labor policies and institutional arrangements are implicitly linked to broader socio-economic conditions.

3) Green Cluster (Policy Implementation and Service Delivery)

The green cluster contains terms such as *application*, *connection*, and other implementation-related concepts. The presence of these keywords suggests that part of the literature focuses on how policies are translated into practice. The connections among these terms indicate that implementation is not treated as a single process but rather as a set of interconnected mechanisms involving coordination and operationalization. This cluster highlights the importance of examining how formal policies are enacted in practice.

4) Yellow Cluster (Global Discourse and Development Agenda)

The yellow cluster includes terms such as *SDGs*, *sustainable development goals*, *agenda*, *UNGA*, and *Philadelphia Declaration*. The grouping of these concepts indicates that global frameworks and international discourse form a distinct thematic area within the literature. The presence of these variables suggests that labor-related issues are frequently discussed alongside broader global development agendas and normative frameworks.

3.3. Inter Cluster Interpretation

The relationships among clusters suggest a structured pattern of association. The governance cluster (red) is connected to the global discourse cluster (yellow), suggesting that legal frameworks are often discussed in relation to international norms. The implementation cluster (green) is positioned between the governance and socio-economic clusters, suggesting an intermediary role. Meanwhile, the socio-economic cluster (blue) represents outcome-related variables, particularly in relation to poverty.

This pattern reflects a conceptual flow in which global norms are associated with governance structures, which are then linked to implementation processes and ultimately to socio-economic

conditions. However, these relationships represent conceptual associations derived from keyword co-occurrence rather than direct causal evidence.

3.4. Thematic Elaboration Based on Cluster Findings

1) Governance and Legal Framework in Relation to Poverty Alleviation

Consistent with the prominence of governance-related variables in the red cluster, the literature highlights the central role of legal frameworks in shaping labor protection systems. The implementation of International Labor Standards (ILS) at the local level is associated with efforts to ensure labor rights and support sustainable development (Handayani et al., 2022). However, empirical findings indicate that alignment between national regulations and international standards does not necessarily translate into effective protection in practice. This discrepancy is evident in countries such as Kazakhstan and Bangladesh, where legal frameworks appear consistent with ILS but are not fully reflected in everyday labor conditions (Khamzina et al., 2022; Chowdhury, 2017). Similar patterns are observed in Pakistan, particularly in labor-intensive sectors where enforcement remains inconsistent (Lanjwani et al., 2020).

Further studies emphasize that enforcement mechanisms are a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of labor regulations. In Bangladesh, for example, the persistence of labor rights violations has been linked to weak enforcement despite the existence of formal legal provisions (Syed, 2023). Institutional actors, such as the Labor Inspectorate, monitor compliance and ensure that regulations are implemented at the workplace level (Larion, 2018; Andreeva et al., 2022). However, their effectiveness is often constrained by structural limitations, including limited human resources, inadequate training, and high levels of informal employment (Kovačević, 2021). These findings suggest that the effectiveness of legal frameworks is closely tied to institutional capacity and enforcement conditions.

From an analytical perspective, the concentration of governance-related variables in the red cluster suggests that the literature positions legal and institutional arrangements as a foundational dimension in labor-related discussions. However, the network visualization also indicates that the presence of governance variables

does not automatically correspond to strong linkages with socio-economic outcomes. This pattern reflects a gap between regulatory frameworks and their practical implications, where the effectiveness of governance structures depends on how they are connected to implementation processes and broader socio-economic contexts.

2) Alignment between SDGs and National Policy Contexts

In line with the presence of global development variables in the yellow cluster, the literature emphasizes the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 and SDG 8, in addressing labor and poverty-related issues. These goals focus on poverty reduction and the promotion of decent work, which are frequently discussed in relation to vulnerable populations, including former migrant workers (Suliman, 2017; Frey, 2017). The literature highlights that reintegration processes often involve socio-economic challenges, particularly when individuals return to contexts with limited employment opportunities and institutional support.

Additional studies suggest that achieving these goals requires policy frameworks that support inclusive labor markets and equitable access to economic opportunities. The role of employment policies, skill recognition, and economic inclusion is frequently emphasized in this context (Gopal & Shyjan, 2024; Prada, 2020). At the same time, structural challenges such as discrimination and limited institutional responsiveness remain significant barriers to achieving these objectives (Frey, 2017). These findings illustrate how global development agendas are translated into national policy discussions, particularly regarding labor market inclusion.

Analytically, the positioning of SDG-related variables within the yellow cluster and their connections to socio-economic variables in the blue cluster suggest that global development frameworks are conceptually linked to outcome-oriented discussions in the literature. However, the network structure indicates that implementation-related variables do not mediate these connections strongly. This pattern may reflect a gap between global policy commitments and their operationalization at the national or local level, where alignment in principle does not necessarily imply alignment in practice.

3) Discursive Role of International Normative Instruments

The presence of variables related to international normative instruments in the yellow cluster indicates that global labor discourse forms an important component of the literature. Studies highlight that instruments such as the ILO Constitution and the Philadelphia Declaration shape international labor standards and guide policy orientations (Sengenberger, 2020; Blackett, 2018; Trebilcock, 2023). These frameworks are often discussed not only as formal legal references but also as part of a broader discourse that influences how labor issues are framed and understood at different levels of governance.

At the same time, the literature points to challenges in translating these normative frameworks into practical outcomes. Research across contexts shows that there is often a gap between policy rhetoric and implementation, in which formal commitments to international standards do not always translate into substantive changes in labor conditions (Stanley et al., 2017; Kahn et al., 2018). This gap highlights the complexity of policy processes, particularly in relation to how global norms are interpreted and adapted within specific institutional and socio-economic contexts.

From an analytical standpoint, the positioning of discursive and normative variables within the network suggests that global frameworks function as a reference point that shapes the direction of policy discussions. However, their relatively indirect connection to implementation-related variables indicates that their influence may be mediated through institutional and political processes rather than directly observable in practice. This interpretation reinforces the importance of examining not only the existence of normative commitments but also the mechanisms through which these commitments are translated into policy and implementation outcomes.

3.5. Synthesis of Findings

Based on the network visualization and its thematic elaboration, the findings indicate that the literature is structured around four interconnected dimensions: global discourse, governance frameworks, implementation processes, and socio-economic outcomes. The relationships among these dimensions suggest a

conceptual pathway in which international norms are associated with legal and institutional arrangements, which are, in turn, linked to implementation processes and ultimately to socio-economic conditions such as poverty.

These findings do not establish direct causality but provide a structured interpretation of how key concepts are interconnected within the literature. This synthesis contributes to a more integrated understanding of how labor standards, policy processes, and socio-economic outcomes are discussed in relation to one another.

4. Conclusion

This study analyzes the structure of the literature on International Labor Standards (ILS) using network visualization. It identifies four interconnected dimensions: governance and legal frameworks, global development discourse, policy implementation, and socio-economic outcomes. The findings suggest that the literature is organized around the association between international norms, institutional arrangements, implementation processes, and poverty-related outcomes. The main academic contribution of this study lies in offering an integrated conceptual mapping that connects these dimensions within a single analytical framework. Unlike previous studies that tend to examine these aspects separately, this study demonstrates how governance structures (red cluster), global discourse (yellow cluster), implementation mechanisms (green cluster), and socio-economic outcomes (blue cluster) are conceptually linked in the literature, particularly in the context of vulnerable groups such as former migrant workers.

However, this study is subject to several limitations. The analysis is based on a limited dataset comprising only two journal articles, limiting the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the use of bibliometric network visualization captures patterns of conceptual association but does not provide empirical or causal validation. The reliance on indexed databases also limits the scope of the literature included in the analysis. Future research should therefore expand the dataset by incorporating additional databases and a larger body of literature, while also conducting empirical studies to validate the relationships identified in this study. Furthermore, comparative

research across different regions or institutional contexts is needed to understand better how global labor norms are translated into policy implementation and how they influence socio-economic outcomes, such as poverty reduction.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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