

(Forced) Labour Supply Chain: Pathways making Migrants vulnerable to Forced Labour in the UK

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Research questions

How do migrant workers in the UK become forced labour?

By what processes are workers' vulnerabilities leveraged to create extreme labour exploitation?

Background

Modern slavery victims in the UK: Around 122,000 people (Source: Walk Free, 2023)

The UK National Referral Mechanism data demonstrates: 25% are British and 75% are migrants; 25% are female and 75% male. (Source: Zhang and Wong, 2024)

Methodology

Research setting:

- Geographical focus: the UK
- Targeted population: migrants
- Gender: both male and female
- Age: adult (18+)
- Nationalities: no limitation

Research strategy: case study

Research method: qualitative interview

Identified concepts and established theories

Diagramme showing:

Top section - Flow chart (from left to right): suppliers, producers, distributors, retailers. These are grouped under "employers in product supply chains." Text to the left reads: Work precarity framework (Allan et al., 2021). Vulnerabilities (David et al., 2019) e.g., fear deportation, wage theft.

Section section – Flow chart showing "recruiters", flowing into "agents" and "sub-agents" down one side, and "lead workers" on the other side.

Text to the left reads: "Organizing labour for exploitation (Fletcher and Trautrim, 2024)

- baiting stage (abuse of vulnerability)
- entrapment stage (recruitment deception)
- switching stage (labour exploitation)
- enmeshment stage (coercive control) Vulnerabilities (David et al., 2019) e.g., without funds, limited ability to get visas legally, lack documentation.

Text to the right: Labour supply chains, which is defined as ‘the sequence of employment relationships that a worker goes through in order to be deployed in a productive capacity’ (Allain et al., 2013, p.42)

Human supply chains, which is defined as ‘a transnational network of labor intermediaries’ (Gordon, 2016, p445).

Third section: Above flow chart flows into last box: “migrant workers”.

Text to the left reads: Migration aspirations-capabilities model (de Haas., 2010) Vulnerabilities (David et al., 2019) e.g., economic pressure, limited ability to access jobs abroad.

Theoretical contribution

Develop a conceptual framework of migrant worker flow alongside the creation and the increase in vulnerabilities to define forced labour supply chain.

References

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