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How Immigration Policies Have Contributed to the Exploitative Labor Practices in the City of Austin TX.

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How Immigration Policies Have Contributed to the Exploitative Labor Practices in the City of
Austin TX.

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EMPA 396: Research Project in Public Management

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Abstract:

Immigration policies on labor relations between employers and undocumented immigrants as employees is a historical issue that draws attention from academics and policymakers alike. This research proposal strives to explore how immigration policies influence labor market relations in Austin, Texas, with a particular focus on reducing the exploitation of undocumented immigrants. The study will employ a mixed methods approach that entails qualitative and quantitative data. In collecting qualitative data, key online surveys will be utilized. The survey data will be quantitatively analyzed through SPSS software. In analyzing and transcribing the qualitative data, thematic analysis will be used. A comparison and integration of emerging trends and patterns from both quantitative and qualitative data will offer comprehensive insights into the impact of immigration policies on exploitative tendencies by employers of undocumented immigrant workers in the city of Austin. Relevant literature on immigration policies and exploitative labor markets will inform the study findings.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Immigration in Austin, Texas, is not a new phenomenon but has been persistent for years, leading to debates on the policies that govern the process and how they cause exploitative labor practices. Undocumented immigrants use illegal approaches to access United States. Such a migratory approach hurts immigrants as employers tend to take advantage of their desperation to exploit them. The existing policies that regulate the interaction of immigrants with the labor market do not favor them as the states and federal government are keen to discourage illegal entry into the country, making their navigation in the labor market more challenging than others. The study's findings would offer valuable insights into how immigration policies have been contributing to the exploitation of immigrant workers in Austin, Texas, contributing to the ongoing policy debate around immigration reforms. Qualitative and quantitative data methods will be instrumental in collecting and analyzing data. Additionally, the research proposal will help identify the potential barriers and challenges immigrants and employers experience in the job market and offer recommendations for policymakers and community leaders to improve the labor market for all stakeholders.

Background of the Problem.

Immigration has been a persistent phenomenon, with the pull factor being migrant labor in the target destination. The migrants often perceive migration as the only channel to improve their social and economic status, and their inaccessibility to regular migration channels forces them to pursue irregular migration. This approach exposes them to exploitation in the labor market as unscrupulous employers who are aware of their desperate condition take advantage, exposing them to dirty, difficult, and dangerous tasks under exploitative compensation. Such a

trend is typical in Austin, Texas, with the existing policies directing minimal or no resources to minimize the informal sector and sanctioning employers who benefit from exploitative tendencies. Despite changes in how these groups access approval to work in the United States of America, it is vital to understand how the existing policies and legal authorization to work influence the exploitative tendencies in Austin, TX.

The adverse effects of immigration on the labor market in Austin, Texas, encompass challenges that undocumented immigrants experience in obtaining legal authorization to work. Inadequate immigration policies enforcement, limitations experienced by immigrant workers, and the evaluation of such issues will provide insights into the complex relationship between immigration policies, and labor markets exploitation in Austin, TX. Immigration is a worldwide issue with social, economic, and political implications. As of 2020, approximately 281 million people resided in a country different from their nation of birth, accounting for about 3.3 % of the world population (Edo, 2021). In the U.S., and Austin Texas in particular, immigration has been a contagious issue for years, with talks revolving around its effect on labor markets, wages, and the economy. According to U.S. Census Bureau (2021) statistics, Austin has been experiencing a significant increase in its foreign-born population over the past years, with 18.5 % between 2017-2021 and these numbers are significant in influencing labor markets.

The policy models around the effect of immigrants on labor markets are complex and multifaceted. Proponents of immigrants argue that their influx offers essential skills while filling critical gaps in the labor force. However, migrants are at a higher risk of exploitation and abuse in their workplaces because of persistent deceptive recruitment practices by intermediaries and employers coupled with a lack of social support system and language barriers. Other exploitative tendencies include employers restricting them from leaving the workplace, dependence on the

salary from the employer due to migration-related debt, legal status, and reliance by family members for remittances.

Discrimination coupled with fear of being identified, arrested, detained, and deported worsens the scenario. The legal environment does not favor them either, as reflected in high-profile cases such as the *Agri Processors, Inc. v. NLRB*, 2008, and the *Hoffman Plastic Compounds, Inc. v. National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)* of 2002, where aggrieved undocumented workers had sought courts intervention for damages for denial of full rights, only for the courts to argue that they had no legal recourse to enjoy full right even when the employers were culpable (Garcia, 2023). Such rulings offer employers an opportunity to exploit undocumented migrants.

Statement of the problem

This study aims to evaluate how ineffective policies and complex legal authorization expose undocumented immigrants to exploitative labor practices in Austin, Texas. Despite previous studies on the topic, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of the difficulties that immigrant workers experience and the implications of immigration policies on labor market relations, including immigrant experiences and employers in the job market. Therefore, the study seeks to understand such exploitative practices by assessing three key problems:

Purpose of the study

This study aims to offer additional insights into the exploitative labor market tendencies that disadvantage undocumented immigrants in Austin, TX. The study will strive to answer the research question by identifying the implications of immigration policies on the labor market, mainly on immigrants' and employers' experiences in the job market. The study's finding will provide valuable insights into the impact of immigration policies on labor markets and how they

contribute to exploitative practices in Austin, Texas, contributing to the ongoing policy debate around immigration reforms. Also, the research proposal will help identify potential barriers and difficulties immigrants experience in the job market and provide recommendations for policymakers and community leaders to improve the labor market for different stakeholders.

Significance of the study

The study's findings will be insightful to policymakers, public administrators, community leaders, and researchers interested in immigration policy. The research will offer additional knowledge into the impact of immigration on labor markets and exploitative practices in Austin, TX, contributing to ongoing policy discussions and providing recommendations for improving the labor market for all stakeholders. The study results will be insightful to employers and immigrants in the job market by identifying potential barriers and challenges and providing recommendations to improve their experiences.

Main Research question

What is the impact of immigration policies on employer and undocumented immigrant employee relationships in Austin, Texas?

Sub Questions

Q1. How does the complexity of the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process expose undocumented immigrants to exploitative labor practices in the market across Austin, Texas?

Q2. What is the link between inadequate enforcement of the immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) and exploitative practices in the labor market in Austin, Texas?

Q3. What is the link between the challenges that refugees and asylum seekers experience when navigating the process of obtaining legal authorization to work in Austin, Texas?

Theory of Change and Assumptions

The change level is essential in validating or invalidating my assumptions, and it is based on the specific context and nature of the premises, driving changes in multiple variables closely linked to the assumptions. For instance, in the context of this research, whose focus is on the effect of immigration policies on labor markets in Austin Texas, considerable dynamics in the labor market and the economy would be vital in validating or invalidating the assumptions made in the theory of change. This may involve changes in hiring rates, work growth, and other economic factors.

A1. If the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process is made convenient for undocumented immigrants

A2. If the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) is enforced in Austin, Texas.

A3. If refugees and asylum seekers experience no barriers in obtaining legal authorization to work.

Then there will be a reduction in exploitation of undocumented workers in Austin, TX

Problem Statement

P1. The Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process is not convenient for undocumented immigrants, resulting in exploitation of undocumented workers.

P2. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) is not effectively enforced in Austin, Texas

P3. Refugees and asylum seekers experience barriers in obtaining legal authorization, which can lead to their exploitation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review.

Introduction

The literature review focuses on the prevailing policies at the Federal and state levels, how they have influenced access to legal documentation for work authorization, and how these challenges contribute to exploitative practices in Austin, TX. This focus is critical because policy framework is key in directing resources as well as protecting the rights of all individuals; hence, without proper legal avenues, undocumented immigrants will continue working under exploitative employers without any legal recourse. The areas of focus also include the complexity and lengthy process of Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and Immigrant Reform and Control ACT (IRCA) of 1986, coupled with the barrier's refugees' and asylum seekers' experience in obtaining legal authorization to work, have contributed to the exploitation of undocumented workers.

The complexity of Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and impact on undocumented immigrants' exploitation

The Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process is an instrumental phase for undocumented immigrants seeking entry into the labor market in the U.S. However, the current policies surrounding the EAD process is complex and lengthy, mainly due to its extensive paperwork, lengthy waiting periods and background checks. The process also exposes undocumented immigrants to psychological challenges, mainly fear of possible deportation (Arriaga, 2019). After a prolonged wait time without having the EAD, those with the means have filed lawsuits against the United States Citizens and Immigration Services (USCIS) (Lubna, 2021). While legal representation comes with a cost, the lack of legal representation further complicates the EAD process, making it challenging for undocumented immigrants to

understand all legal requirements and the best way to navigate the process (USCIS, 2022). Therefore, many of the undocumented immigrants in Austin, Texas, fail to access the documentation that would allow them to work legally, exposing them to exploitation by unscrupulous employers.

Challenges to effectiveness of enforcement of the Immigration Reform and Control Act

The Immigrant Reform and Control ACT (IRCA) of 1986 targeted regulating the employment of unauthorized immigrants, providing leeway to legislation for certain undocumented immigrants (Bean & Khuu, 2020). As for this policy (IRCA), the government offered amnesty to millions of unauthorized immigrants in America while increasing border enforcement and establishing employer sanctions (Lin & Weiss, 2019). The implication is that the policy allowed the federal government to fine employers who knowingly hired undocumented workers. As of 1996, Congress raised the bar on border enforcement by amplifying interior enforcement of the Federal Illegal Reform and Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). This move increased Border Patrol agents to 10,000 while requiring the construction of a wall along the Mexico-US border (Apgar, 2017). Therefore, despite the U.S. allowing some undocumented immigrants to be part of the labor force by legalizing their presence in the U.S., the policy framework was keen to restrict any possible increase of immigrants in the United States territory (Bean & Khuu, 2020). The enforcement of IRCA in Austin, Texas, has been inconsistent, like other parts of the country, with some employers still hiring undocumented workers without facing the consequences, while undocumented immigrants qualifying legislation under the policy experiencing challenges in accessing the necessary resources to complete the process (Wang & Lofstrom, 2019). This highlights the vulnerability of undocumented immigrants driven by IRCA, thus, exposing them to exploitative labor practices by employers.

Barriers in obtaining legal authorization for refugees in securing employment

Some undocumented immigrants, asylum seeker and refugees experience barriers such as lack of job opportunities, discrimination, and difficulties in accessing professional licenses and certifications (Garcia, 2017). The process of legal authorization is lengthy, taking a minimum of 180 days to obtain their EAD and even up to ten years for a case to be adjudicated. The waiting period could be due to administrative challenges and concerns that a rapid provision of work could motivate misuse of the asylum process. Additionally, the individual seeking asylum in the US must meet the definition of a refugee as defined in the Immigration and Naturalization Act, meaning those who do not fit such definition are likely not to apply for asylum, which would provide them with work authorization, forcing them to remain as undocumented. Asylum seekers must apply for the process within a year before arrival, exposing them to obstacles. This is because such individuals experience traumatic repercussions from the time they depart their home nations, during the journey, and to the time in detention, making it a challenge for them to know that the deadline exists (USCIS.gov, 2023). Missing the deadline is an adequate reason for denials of admission. Such challenges force some individuals to accept low-paying jobs or work under punitive conditions.

The above factor contributes to their increased exploitation in Austin. Often, the difficulties in accessing legal work authorization influenced by the above policies force undocumented immigrants to accept jobs that pay below the minimum wage, offer no benefits, and offer no protection against workplace abuses and harassment (Lin & Weiss, 2019). Some employers use the threat of deportation to intimidate and control undocumented workers, further exacerbating the cycle of exploitation and abuse (Arriaga, 2019, Garcia, 2017). Therefore, constrained access to legal documentation for immigrants adversely affects their survival in the

job market. The implication is that addressing the challenges immigrants experience in accessing employment opportunities in Austin requires a multifaceted approach (intersection of legal, economic, and social factors) (Anagnostou, 2022). Such approaches may entail revising the existing immigration policies, providing resources to support the EAD process for undocumented immigrants and identifying and addressing cause-effect factors of exploitation and discrimination in the workplace.

Conclusion

Immigration is a complex issue globally with social, economic, and political implications. In the United States, immigration has remained a controversial issue, with discussions revolving around its; policies, effects on labor markets, wages, and the economy. In Austin, TX, the city has experienced a significant surge in foreign-born population across decades, affecting labor markets. Policies aiming at controlling the adverse impact of immigration on labor markets and wages have been multifaceted, and their ineffective and effectiveness varies. The EAD process of undocumented immigrants seeking entry into the labor markets is lengthy and complex, exposing them to diverse challenges and exploitation. The IRCA of 1986 sought to regulate the employment of unauthorized immigrants. However, the IRCA enforcement has been inconsistent, leading to the vulnerability of undocumented immigrants. Refugees and asylum seekers experience employment challenges, increasing the risk of exploitation.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

This research explores the impact of immigration policies on the process of navigating labor markets by undocumented immigrants in Austin, Texas, and how such complexities contribute to exploitative practices. This section details the data gathering and analysis approaches for the study. The study will employ a mixed methods approach, involving qualitative and quantitative methods in gathering and analyzing data. The mixed methods involve quantitative and qualitative research methods, each answering different questions through different data sets and delivering different insights (Wasti et al., 2022). This approach provides a platform where research question answered by mixing data sets, gives a better understanding of the problem while yielding more complete evidence, allowing the researcher to capture both statistical elements while also incorporating soft-core views and experiences (Molina-Azorin & Feters, 2020).

This study will employed quantitative research to answer the following questions:

Independent Variables

1. Convenience of the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process for undocumented immigrants.
2. Enforcement of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in Austin, Texas.
3. Absence of barriers for refugees and asylum seekers in obtaining legal authorization to work.
4. Absence of discrimination faced by refugees and asylum seekers in the labor market due to their immigration status.

Dependent Variable:

- Reduction in the exploitation of undocumented workers in Austin, Texas.

Level of Statistical Significance:

This study sets the confidence level at 95%, providing a threshold for statistical significance. Therefore, a p-value of less than 0.05 will suffice as statistically significant, indicating a strong association between the independent and dependent variables.

Operation Definition:

USCIS, EAD, Complex affair, Undocumented Immigrants, IRCA, Enforced, Naturalized Citizens.

For this study,

- USCIS: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.
- EAD: Employment authorization document availed by USCIS confirming a person who is a non-US citizen to work lawfully in America.
- Complex affair: something that is difficult to understand.
- Undocumented immigrant: someone who does not have a rightful or valid visa that permits them to live and work in the United States.
- IRCA: Immigration Reform and Control ACT, the 1986 policy as part of U.S. immigration legal reform. As for these reforms, it became illegal to hire an unauthorized immigrant knowingly, thus, obligating employers to confirm the identity and suitability of any person seeking employment.
- Enforce: abide to the law
- Naturalize citizens: citizens of the United States not by birth.

Definition of Terms:

- Refugees are people forced to flee their countries of origine due to war, violence or due to persecution.
- Asylum seekers are people who seek protection in countries other than theirs.
- Immigration is the act of people moving from one nation to another, intending to live and work in the new country.
- Labor Market is the place where employers and employees interrelate to exchange labor services for compensation.
- Wages are the monetary reward that employees receive from employers in exchange for their labor services.

Population Sampling Approach

This study adopts a stratified sampling that involves dividing the target population into homogeneous subgroups, or strata, based on their immigration status and then selecting a proportionate sample from each stratum.

Procedure.

In the qualitative data, survey data was collected from participants who must be residents in Austin, TX, over 18 years old and who have worked as undocumented workers. A focus on this group is critical as they have first-hand information on the exploitation experiences undocumented migrants undergo due to their legal status. However, the individuals should not be employed in immigration or legal services. The survey is critical in collecting data that will provide insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences directly impacted by immigration policies in the labor market.

Data Processing and Analysis Approach

The data-gathering process that entails surveys analyzed quantitatively through SPSS software. Descriptive statistics such as standard deviations, means, and frequencies was utilized in data summarization. On the other hand, regression analysis, which is inferential statistics, was use in testing the relationship between the research variables. Conversely, a thematic analysis transcribes and analyzes the qualitative data collected through interviews and focus groups. This involved reading through the data severally, categorizing trends and themes that emerge from responses. Data coding helps identify patterns, themes and categorized, such a grouping of themes and patterns was critical in establishing the implications of inadequate immigration policies on the exploitative labor market practices in Austin, Texas.

Internal and external validity

Linking and integrating the emerging patterns and themes from quantitative and qualitative data provided a holistic understanding of how ineffective immigration policies have contributed to exploitative labor practices. It enabled validation of the assumptions made in the study while detecting gaps in the findings. Quantitative and qualitative analysis facilitate data triangulation, connoting different sources and methods used in data validation, enhancing the reliability and validity of the study findings.

Limitations to the scope of the Study

One of the critical limitations of this study is a limited sample size, which would affect the generalizability of the research findings to the entire labor market in Austin, TX. Also, time constraints may have affected the ability to conduct a comprehensive study. The researcher's bias associated with preconceived notions about immigration or the labor market in Austin, TX, is a possible limitation. The study may not account for confounding factors such as changes in

federal immigration policies or economic conditions that could affect the labor market in Austin, TX.

Conclusion

The proposal employs a mixed methods approach, entailing qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate how ineffective immigration policies on labor markets have exploitative tendencies that affect undocumented immigrants in Austin, Texas. The data collection process encompassed key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Through data integration and linking, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of the implications of immigration policies and the relationship between employers and undocumented immigrants who work for them in Austin, TX. The study may face limitations, including obtaining a representative population sample, generalizability limitations, and the respondents' accuracy and honesty. Such limitation notwithstanding, the study's findings offered critical insights into the challenges and opportunities of immigration policies in the labor market, informing employers, policymakers and immigrants in Austin, TX.

Chapter 4: Results and Findings.

Introduction.

This chapter presents the results of the mixed methods approach; that involved the use of surveys, interviews with subject matter experts, and secondary data. Such analysis will help explain the key findings derived from the emerging trends. The results of the data collection reveal that undocumented immigrants experience barriers to legal authorization to work, leading to exploitation in Austin, Texas. The findings of this study offer insights that will lead to evidence-based conclusions and recommendations, informing ongoing discussions concerning

the impact of reducing barriers to legal authorization to work on worker exploitation as told from the perspectives of undocumented workers on their awareness of immigration policies and the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Austin, Texas.

Results of the Data Collection Process

Survey Data

The survey data was collected across three key populations, encompassing undocumented workers, experts knowledgeable about immigration and labor market issues, and refugees/asylum seekers. There were 150 complete surveys across the three categories of participants, and the responses were collected via online platforms, community forums, and social media.

Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Process

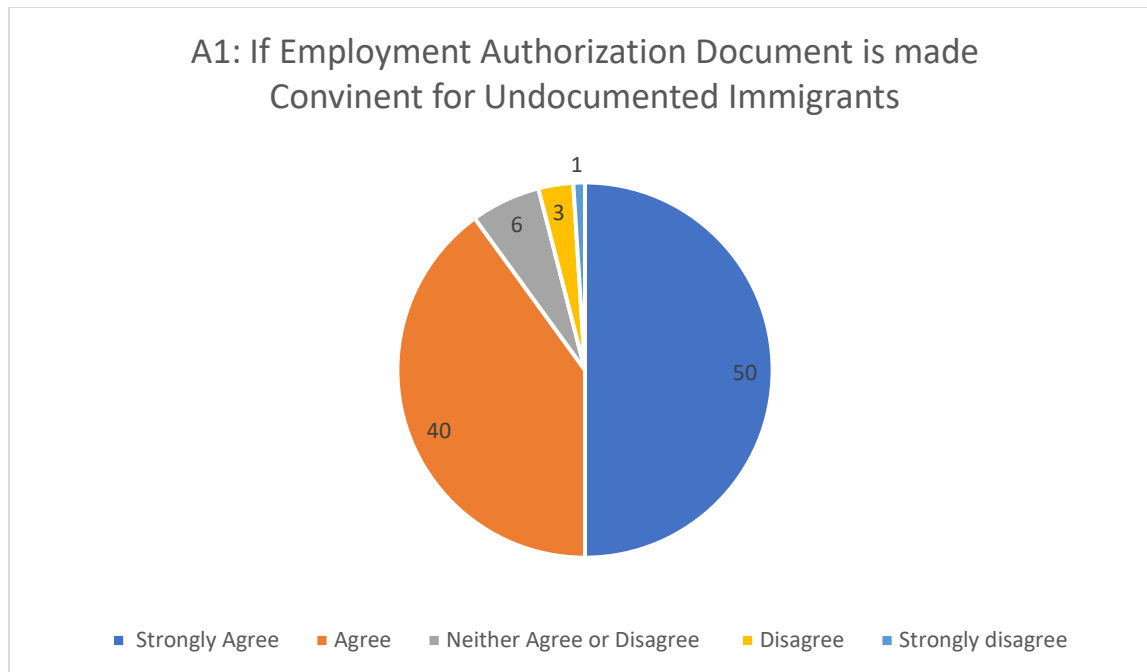
A1: If the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process is made convenient for undocumented immigrants.

Then there will be a reduction in the exploitation of undocumented workers in Austin, TX

Survey Question: I believe the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process is too difficult and causes undocumented workers to be exploited. (A1)

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree.

Most of the participants in the survey expressed challenges with the EAD process. According to the survey data, over 90% of surveyed undocumented workers strongly agreed or agreed that the EAD process is too difficult and contributes to their exploitation due to delays and administrative hurdles. Figure 1 below illustrates these findings.



Comparative Analysis

The quantitative data corresponds with the qualitative data, indicating that undocumented immigrants face difficulties with the EAD process. With almost all participants (90%) in the survey strongly agreeing or agreeing that the EAD process is complex and has been contributing to their exploitation due to delays and administrative hurdles, the qualitative data reveals a similar theme indicating that the EAD process is complex and lengthy, mainly due to its extensive paperwork, long waiting periods and background checks. The qualitative data also reveals that the legal process attached to the EAD process further complicates the EAD process. The interview data validates assumption A#1, revealing a consensus among the experts on the need to streamline the EAD process to ensure it is convenient for undocumented immigrants. Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative data support A1. If the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process is made convenient for undocumented immigrants.

Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) Enforcement

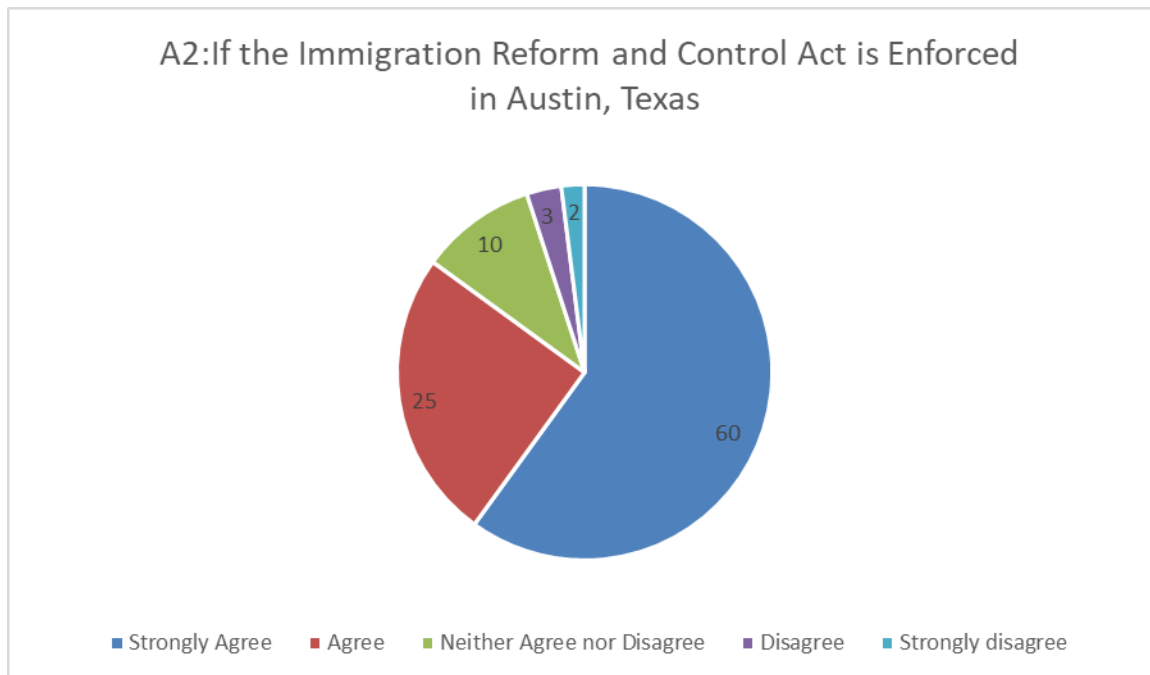
A2: If the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) is enforced in Austin, Texas.

Then there will be a reduction in the exploitation of undocumented workers in Austin, TX

Survey Question: In my opinion, enforcement of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in Austin, Texas would help prevent exploitation of workers. (A2)

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree.

Most of the participants expressed concerns about the poor enforcement of IRCA. The survey data indicate that about 85% of respondents believed that effective enforcement of the IRCA in Austin, Texas, would be vital in preventing exploitation of workers as it will seal the loopholes that unscrupulous employers use to employ and exploit undocumented workers. Figure 2 below illustrates these findings.



Comparative Analysis

The quantitative data and qualitative data indicate that there is poor enforcement of IRCA regulations. The quantitative data reveals that the majority of the participants agreed with

the position that relevant authorities have historically poorly enforced IRCA, a theme that corresponds with qualitative data findings that the enforcement of IRCA in Austin, Texas, has been inconsistent, with some employers still hiring undocumented workers without facing the consequences, creating loopholes for undocumented immigrants who would have otherwise qualified under legislation to become legal migrants opting to continue working without proper legal documents. This highlights the vulnerability of undocumented immigrants driven by IRCA, which exposes them to exploitative labor practices by employers. The interview data validates assumption A #2 with experts emphasizing the importance of robust enforcement mechanisms and collaboration between law enforcement agencies and immigrant advocacy groups to protect undocumented workers from exploitation. Therefore, quantitative, and qualitative data findings are in correspondence, producing a common theme supporting A2. If the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) is enforced in Austin, Texas.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

A3. If refugees and asylum seekers experience no barriers in obtaining legal authorization to work.

Then there will be a reduction in the exploitation of undocumented workers in Austin, TX

Survey Question: If there were no barriers in obtaining legal authorization to work, I believe that the exploitation of workers would be reduced.

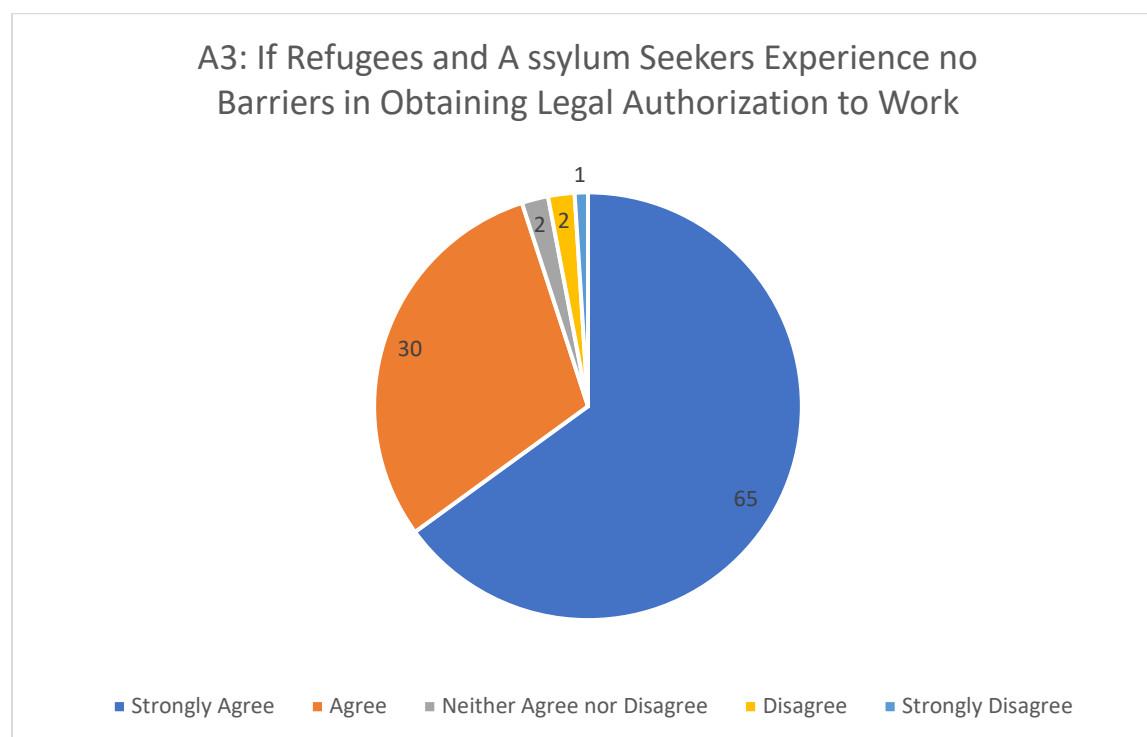
☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree.

The participants strongly agreed on the need to remove barriers to legal authorization.

The survey data reveals that about 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that eliminating barriers to legal authorization for refugees and asylum seekers would lead to a reduction in

exploitation. The participants cited challenges such as language barriers and bureaucratic delays.

Figure 3 below illustrates these findings.



The quantitative and qualitative data reveal common patterns. The quantitative data shows that most of the participants (95%) agreed that eliminating barriers to legal authorization for refugees and asylum seekers would lead to a reduction in exploitation. Challenges such as language barriers and bureaucratic delays were evident in the quantitative data. The qualitative data reveals that the process of legal authorization (change of status) is lengthy, taking a minimum of four years on average and even up to ten years for a case to be adjudicated; also, missed deadlines as specified in the law are associated with lack of familiarity with legal provisions, disqualifies late asylum seekers, with lack of supportive resources making it harder for the undocumented immigrants to access legal authorization. The interviews validate A#3 with the experts supporting the need to provide comprehensive support services to refugees and asylum seekers through language assistance and legal guidance. Therefore, the quantitative and

qualitative data supports A3. If refugees and asylum seekers experience no barriers in obtaining legal authorization to work.

Interview with Subject Matter Experts

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from subject matter experts who were considered to harbor a vast array of knowledge about immigration policies, labor laws, and the experiences of immigrant communities in Austin, Texas. 10 interviews were conducted in this study, and they offered qualitative insights into the impact of policy changes on worker exploitation.

EAD Process Convenience

There was a consensus among the experts on the need to streamline the EAD process to ensure it is convenient for undocumented immigrants. The participating experts felt that such improvements take shape through the introduction of initiatives such as online application systems and increased human capital to serve the surging numbers of immigrants.

IRCA Enforcement

Experts emphasized the importance of robust enforcement mechanisms and collaboration between law enforcement agencies and immigrant advocacy groups to protect undocumented workers from exploitation.

Refugees and Asylum Seeker

The experts also supported the need to provide comprehensive support services to refugees and asylum seekers through language assistance and legal guidance. They feel such assistance would enhance the refugee's and asylum seekers' ability to maneuver challenges in the system with ease.

Significant Findings

Barriers to Employment Authorization Document Process

Undocumented immigrants have lived through the process of immigration, and their experience is key in providing firsthand information. According to the survey responses, there is a widespread belief among undocumented workers that the EAD process is overly burdensome, which makes even undocumented workers stay in the country without employment authorization documents, exposing them to exploitation in the labor market. With only 10% of respondents disagreeing with this position, it is evident that most undocumented workers experience difficulties with the EAD process, contributing to their vulnerability. One key challenge the expert participants cite as a hindrance is; for those that filed for asylum, they are required to wait for 150 before applying for their EAD. After filing a decision won't be made by USCIS unit after an additional 30 days hence making it a total of 180 days. However, due to backlog this is not guarantee that they will receive the to receive the EAD after 180 days which is quite a lengthy time without a source of income.

Impact of Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) Enforcement.

The survey respondents and subject matter experts highlighted the role of IRCA enforcement in shaping labor market dynamics. There was consensus that poor enforcement of IRCA creates opportunities for exploitation by unscrupulous employers, particularly targeting undocumented workers. According to the experts participating in the interview process, employers hire undocumented immigrants to work in the US against the IRCA, and although the law requires an employer violating IRCA regulations to pay a fine of up to \$1000 for each hire coupled with a possible jail term, lack of enforcement has seen some employers offer job opportunities to undocumented immigrants, subsequently exploiting them because they know the undocumented workers have no legal recourse.

Challenges Face by Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Survey responses from refugees and asylum seekers revealed that they face significant barriers in obtaining legal authorization to work, with only 5% disagreeing with the position. The expert responses also underscore such undertones, arguing that the undocumented immigrants are non-naïve English speakers and many of them may not be fluent in the English language. Hence, they experience language barriers, coupled with bureaucratic delays and a lack of awareness about the process.

Conclusion.

The results of the three data sources are in consensus, producing affirmative findings for the study. The findings of this research affirm the hypothesis that reducing barriers to legal authorization to work can lead to a reduction in worker exploitation in Austin, Texas. Therefore, Subject matter experts argue that it is critical for relevant stakeholders to institute policy reforms so as to streamline the EAD process, enhance IRCA enforcement, and improve support services for refugees and asylum seekers. The expert participants assert similar recommendations as traced in the literature, highlighting the need to increase funding for immigrant services, public awareness campaigns, and enhanced collaboration between government agencies and community organizations. Also, by addressing systemic challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles, language barriers, and ineffective enforcement, policymakers can create a more equitable and just labor market for undocumented workers and immigrant communities.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendation

Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion drawn from the results and findings chapter concerning the impact of immigration policies on labor market exploitation in Austin, Texas. It also provides recommendations for action based on the identified issues and findings.

Conclusion

The results and findings support the Theory of Change assumptions. The key findings suggest that the existing immigration policies and enforcement mechanisms contribute significantly to the exploitation of undocumented workers in Austin, Texas. The findings reveal that the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process is cumbersome, exposing undocumented immigrants to vulnerabilities and exploitation. Similarly, ineffective enforcement of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) creates opportunities for unscrupulous employers to exploit undocumented workers, as poor implementation of this policy imparts no consequences. Refugees and asylum seekers have been facing barriers in obtaining legal authorization to work, further exacerbating their vulnerability to exploitation. The results of the study underscore policy gaps that have contributed to the exploitation of undocumented immigrants, highlighting the need for reforms to address these issues and mitigate labor market exploitation. It is evident that streamlining the EAD process, enhancing IRCA enforcement, and improving support services for refugees and asylum seekers are crucial steps towards reducing exploitation in the labor market. However, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations of the data analysis. A sample size constraint affects the generalizability of the results to other settings, not ignoring the potential biases associated with the subjectivity of data collected as it depended on interviewees' feedback, affecting the reliability of the results. Therefore, future

studies should focus on more robust study designs to enhance the reliability of the results while using larger sample sizes to enhance generalizability.

The implications of the findings suggest both short-term and long-term considerations. In the short term, stakeholders should institute immediate policy changes to address the identified issues and protect undocumented workers and immigrant communities from exploitation. In the long term, sustained efforts are necessary to overhaul the immigration system and create a more equitable and just labor market for all stakeholders. The policy framework remains instrumental in bringing changes; as such, it would be critical to address policy gaps and develop enforcement mechanisms that will follow up on all suggested improvements.

Recommendation

This section draws its impetus from the study conclusion and proposes the following recommendations:

Streamline the EAD Process

It would be critical for the government to undertake initiatives to simplify and expedite the EAD process for undocumented immigrants. Such initiatives may encompass but are not limited to implementing online application systems, increasing staffing to reduce processing times, and providing clearer guidance on eligibility criteria. Developing an online platform for EAD applications will help reduce the processing times by almost 50% by the end of physical year 2025.

Enhancing IRCA Enforcement

Law enforcement agencies should strengthen efforts to enforce IRCA regulations, particularly targeting employers who exploit undocumented workers. This should involve increased monitoring, inspections, and penalties for non-compliance. Increasing funding for

IRCA enforcement efforts by 20% over the next two years will lead to a 30% increase in the number of inspections conducted annually.

Improving Support Service for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Government and non-profit organizations should work in collaboration to enhance support services for refugees and asylum seekers through initiatives such as language assistance and legal guidance. Increasing the number of immigration judges and asylum officers that adjudicate asylum by 30 % will reduce the asylum backlog significantly within a year. Expand language assistance programs for refugees and asylum seekers by partnering with community organizations reaching 80% coverage within one year, will help undocumented immigrants learn English language and United states laws easily hence be able to contribute to the growth of the country.

Areas for Further Research

Although this study offers unprecedented insights into the topic of interest, several areas for further research warrant exploration:

Long-term Impact of Policy Reforms

Future research should explore the long-term impact of streamlining the EAD process, enhancing IRCA enforcement, and improving support services on labor market dynamics and exploitation rates. This would produce insights necessary for addressing emerging issues and, ultimately, developing, and sustaining policy operations in the long run.

Comparative Analysis

Future studies should conduct a comparative analysis of immigration policies and their enforcement across different states to identify best practices and areas for improvement. This is critical to ensure the generalizability of the policies to a wider scope beyond Austin, Texas.

Intersectional Perspectives

Future researchers should explore the intersectionality of immigration status with other factors such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status to understand how multiple dimensions of identity intersect to shape experiences of exploitation in the labor market. This would offer insights critical for designing comprehensive policies that are responsive to the needs and expectations of the target demographics.

Employer Perspectives

Future study also should investigate the perspectives and behaviors of employers towards undocumented workers and their compliance with immigration regulations. This would be critical to access their feedback on the issue to ensure the emergent policy is comprehensive by considering the interests of different stakeholders.

Therefore, addressing these research gaps in future studies would further contribute to the understanding of the complex relationship between immigration policies and labor market exploitation, ultimately informing evidence-based policy interventions and advocacy efforts.

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Appendices.

Research Title: How Immigration Policies Have Contributed to Exploitative Labor Practices in the City of Austin TX.

Golden Gate University, San Francisco

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Christian, a graduate student in the Masters in Public Administration program at Golden Gate University in San Francisco. The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of reducing barriers to legal authorization to work on worker exploitation.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the potential effects of reducing barriers to legal authorization to work on the prevalence of worker exploitation. Your participation in this survey will contribute to understanding this important issue and may help inform policies and interventions aimed at protecting vulnerable workers.

Procedure

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief anonymous survey. The survey will take approximately 2 minutes to complete. The questions will inquire about your perspectives and experiences related to worker exploitation and legal authorization to work.

Risks and Benefits

Participation in this study involves minimal risks. However, you may experience discomfort or emotional distress when responding to questions related to sensitive topics such as exploitation. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, your

contribution will advance knowledge in the field and potentially benefit society by informing policies aimed at protecting workers' rights.

Confidentiality

Your participation in this survey is entirely anonymous. No personally identifiable information will be collected. All data will be stored securely and only accessed by the researcher for the purpose of analysis. Your responses will be aggregated and reported in a manner that ensures confidentiality.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Your decision to participate or withdraw will not affect your relationship with Golden Gate University or any other entities associated with this research.

Questions and Concerns

If you have any questions, concerns, or require further information about this study, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Christian Chifor, at fruchristian@yahoo.com.

Consent:

By proceeding to the survey, you indicate that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent form. You voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Theory of Change and Assumption

A1. If the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process is made convenient for undocumented immigrants

A2. If the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) is enforced in Austin, Texas.

A3. If refugees and asylum seekers experience no barriers in obtaining legal authorization to work.

Then there will be a reduction in the exploitation of undocumented workers in Austin, TX

Problem statements

P1: The Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process is not convenient for undocumented immigrants, resulting in exploitation of undocumented workers.

P2 The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) is not effectively enforced in Austin, Texas leads to the exploitation of undocumented workers.

P3 Refugees and asylum seekers experience barriers in obtaining legal authorization, which leads to exploitation.

Themes of sub chapters for your review of literature:

T1. The complexity of Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and impact on worker exploitation

T2. Challenges to effectiveness of enforcement of the Immigration Reform and Control Act

T3. Barriers in obtaining legal authorization for refugees in securing employment

Survey Sample Population and Data Collection.

Participants must be residents in Austin, TX, who are over 18 years old and have worked as undocumented workers. A focus on this group is critical as they have first-hand information on the exploitation experiences undocumented migrants undergo due to their legal status.

However, individuals should not be employed in immigration or legal services. The survey targets a minimum of 50 completed surveys, and participants will be recruited through online channels such as social media platforms and community forums. This approach is plausible as it will allow for a wide reach of a diverse group of respondents.

Survey Questions and Informed Consent Statement.

Informed Consent Statement

My name is Christian Chifor and I am a graduate student in the Masters in Public Administration program at Golden Gate University in San Francisco. I am conducting research on how immigration policies have contributed to the exploitative labor practices in the city of Austin, TX. I am kindly asking that you take two to three minutes to complete the following anonymous survey. If you have any questions, I can be reached at fruchirstian@yahoo.com.

If the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process is made convenient for undocumented immigrants.

Survey Questions:

A. I believe the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process is too difficult and causes undocumented workers to be exploited.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree.

B. Do you believe delays in the authorization process affect the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to secure favorable employment in Austin, TX, which would limit the possibility of exploitation?

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree.

C. Do you believe working as undocumented migrant exposes me into instances of unfair treatment or exploitation in the workplace due to my undocumented status?

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree.

D. Do you believe some jobs in which I and my peers worked as undocumented workers made us more vulnerable to exploitation?

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree.

If the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) is enforced in Austin, Texas.

Survey Questions:

A. In my opinion, enforcement of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in Austin, Texas would help prevent exploitation of workers.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree.

B. Does poor enforcement of the IRCA offers unscrupulous employers an upper hand over undocumented immigrants, contributing to the exploitation of undocumented groups of workers in Austin, TX?

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree.

C. Are changes in IRCA policy that will address the loopholes unscrupulous employers explore to take advantage of undocumented workers would help mitigate exploitative practices in Austin, TX?

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree.

D. Does ineffective enforcement of IRCA policy contribute to discrimination in the hiring process based on immigration status in the local job market?

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree.

If Refugees and asylum seekers experience no barriers in obtaining legal authorization to work.

Survey Question:

A. If there were no barriers in obtaining legal authorization to work, do you believe that the exploitation of workers would be reduced?

☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree.

B. I believe that if the legal authorization process was streamlined to allow for faster processing of refugees and asylum seekers in Austin, TX, it will minimize exploitation of undocumented workers?

☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree.

C. Dose failure to fully understand the process of obtaining legal authorization contribute to challenge of undocumented workers, and their subsequent exploitation.

☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree.

D. Dose psychological strain that immigrants undergo due to long wait before obtaining legal authorization contributes to their giving in to exploitative employers.

☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree.

Informed Consent Statement for Interviewers.

My name is Christian Chifor, and I am a graduate student in the Masters in Public Administration program at Golden Gate University in San Francisco. I am currently conducting research on the impact of reducing barriers to legal authorization to work on worker exploitation. I would greatly appreciate your participation in a 10-minute interview. The information provided to me is for research purposes only and will not be disclosed to any law enforcement or government officials. If you have any questions, I can be reached at fruchristian@yahoo.com

Questions

A. What impact does making the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process convenient for undocumented immigrants have on the exploitation of workers?

- B. What departments and stakeholders do you feel should lead the campaign and advocacy role in advancing changes in the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process to ensure it is convenient for undocumented immigrants?
- C. How does enforcement of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in Austin, Texas, influence the potential exploitation of undocumented workers?
- D. What changes do you think must be introduced in enforcing the IRCA process to drive its efficiency and eliminate rampant exploitation of undocumented migrants? (A2)
- E. The challenges refugees and asylum seekers encounter in obtaining legal authorization to work, coupled with potential discrimination in the labor market, can significantly impact the exploitation of workers. How do you perceive this dynamic influencing worker exploitation?
- F. The lack of awareness by immigrants on the rules regulating the legal process of authorization to work contributes to delayed or missed opportunities for some to become legal residents. What are your recommendations that the federal and state agencies can institute to raise awareness at the point of entry and before they are released into the community?