The Evolution of Global Recruitment Practices: A Bibliometric Review

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study aims to examine the evolution of global recruitment practices by mapping the intellectual structure, thematic development, and collaboration patterns within the academic literature. A bibliometric approach was employed using publication data retrieved from the Scopus database, covering peer-reviewed articles related to global recruitment, international recruitment, and cross-border labor hiring. The analysis utilized VOSviewer to conduct keyword co-occurrence, overlay and density visualization, co-authorship, institutional collaboration, and country collaboration analyses. The results reveal that early research on global recruitment predominantly focused on employment relations, international labor migration, and legal–institutional frameworks, particularly emphasizing the role of international organizations and labor governance. Over time, recruitment emerged as a central analytical concept connecting governance perspectives with ethical and risk-oriented concerns. Recent research trends demonstrate a strong shift toward issues of fair recruitment, forced labor, sexual exploitation, and the use of administrative data for monitoring and accountability. The collaboration analysis shows that knowledge production is concentrated among a relatively small network of authors and institutions, mainly from developed countries, with limited cross-national collaboration. Overall, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the development and current direction of global recruitment research and highlights opportunities for future studies focusing on ethical governance, data-driven oversight, and more inclusive international collaboration.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Global recruitment practices have undergone significant transformation over the past several decades, driven by globalization, technological advancement, and evolving labor market dynamics [1]. Organizations are no longer constrained by national boundaries when sourcing talent; instead, they operate within a highly interconnected global labor market. This shift has expanded access to diverse skill sets and knowledge bases, enabling firms to enhance competitiveness and innovation. As international business operations increase, recruitment strategies have adapted to

accommodate cross-border hiring, international mobility, and multicultural workforce management [2]. Consequently, recruitment has emerged as a strategic human resource function rather than a purely administrative activity [3].

Technological developments have played a critical role in reshaping global recruitment practices. The introduction of digital platforms, applicant tracking systems, artificial intelligence, and data analytics has revolutionized how organizations attract, assess, and select candidates [4], [5]. Online job portals and professional networking platforms have significantly reduced geographical barriers and recruitment costs while increasing the speed and reach of talent acquisition efforts [6]. More recently, algorithm-driven recruitment tools and social media-based sourcing have enabled employers to target candidates more precisely, raising both opportunities and ethical concerns related to bias, transparency, and data privacy [7].

In parallel with technological change, workforce demographics and employee expectations have also evolved. The rise of knowledge-intensive industries, remote work arrangements, and the gig economy has altered traditional employment relationships. Younger generations of workers increasingly prioritize flexibility, career development, and organizational values when choosing employers [8]. As a result, global recruitment strategies must now balance organizational needs with candidate-centric approaches, employer branding, and inclusive hiring practices. These developments have further complicated recruitment processes, particularly for multinational enterprises operating across diverse cultural, legal, and institutional contexts [9], [10].

Another important dimension influencing global recruitment practices is the regulatory and institutional environment. Labor laws, immigration policies, and professional accreditation requirements vary widely across countries, shaping how organizations design and implement recruitment strategies. Changes in migration policies and geopolitical conditions have

added uncertainty to international hiring, prompting organizations to reconsider their reliance on expatriates and foreign talent [11], [12]. At the same time, increasing attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion has influenced recruitment frameworks, encouraging firms to adopt fair and transparent selection practices on a global scale.

Given the complexity and rapid evolution of global recruitment, scholarly interest in this area has grown substantially. Research has explored topics such as e-recruitment effectiveness, employer branding, cross-cultural selection methods, and strategic talent management. However, the expanding volume of publications has made it difficult to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the field has developed over time. Patterns of collaboration, influential authors, dominant themes, and emerging research trends remain fragmented across disciplines such as human resource management, international business, and organizational psychology. This fragmentation highlights the need for systematic approaches to synthesize existing knowledge.

Despite the growing body of literature on global recruitment practices, there is a lack of comprehensive, quantitative reviews that map the intellectual structure and evolution of this research field. Traditional narrative reviews, while valuable, are often limited by subjectivity and scope, making it challenging to identify long-term trends, key contributors, and knowledge gaps. Without a systematic bibliometric analysis, scholars and practitioners may struggle to understand how global recruitment research has progressed, which themes dominate the discourse, and where future research efforts should be directed. This gap limits the ability of the academic community to build cumulative knowledge and of organizations to apply evidence-based recruitment strategies in a global context. The objective of this study is to analyze the evolution of global recruitment practices through a bibliometric review of relevant academic literature

2. METHODS

This study employed a bibliometric research design to systematically analyze the academic literature on global recruitment practices. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method used to evaluate large volumes of scholarly publications and to identify patterns, trends, and relationships within a research field. This approach was selected due to its ability to provide an objective and reproducible overview of the intellectual structure and evolution of research over time. The analysis focused on peer-reviewed journal articles to ensure academic rigor and relevance. Publications related to global recruitment, international recruitment, e-recruitment, and cross-border talent acquisition were considered for inclusion.

Data for the bibliometric analysis were retrieved from Scopus. A structured search strategy was applied using relevant keywords combined with Boolean operators to capture variations of global recruitment-related terminology. Inclusion criteria were defined to limit the dataset to articles published in English within a specified time frame and categorized under relevant subject areas such as human resource management, international business, and organizational studies. Duplicate records and publications not directly related to recruitment practices were excluded to enhance data accuracy and relevance.

The bibliometric data were analyzed using VOSviewer software to examine publication trends, citation patterns, authorship networks, and thematic clusters. Network analysis techniques, including co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence analysis, were applied to identify influential contributors and emerging research themes.

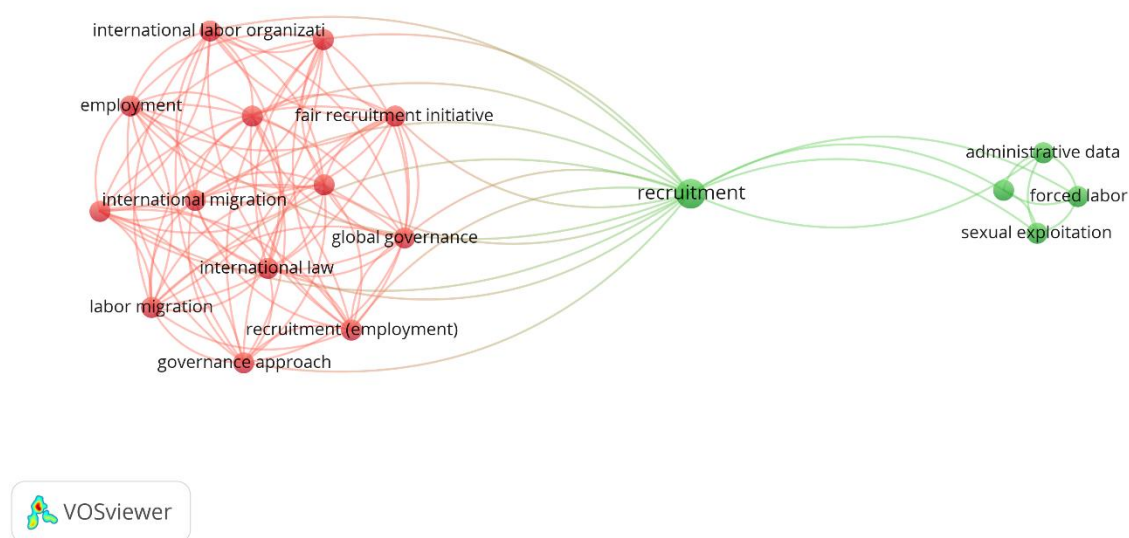## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Keyword Co-Occurrence Network

Figure 1. Network Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual structure of global recruitment research by revealing two dominant and interconnected thematic clusters. The central node, "recruitment," functions as a pivotal bridge linking governance-oriented discourse with

ethical and risk-based concerns. This positioning indicates that recruitment is not merely treated as an operational human resource function, but increasingly framed as a governance-sensitive and policy-regulated activity within global labor systems. The red cluster on the left represents a governance and institutional perspective on recruitment. Key nodes such as international labor organization, international migration, international law, global governance, and fair recruitment initiative suggest that a substantial body of literature focuses on recruitment within the context of cross-border labor mobility and international regulatory frameworks. The dense interconnections among these terms indicate strong thematic cohesion, reflecting sustained scholarly attention to how recruitment practices are shaped by global institutions, labor standards, and migration governance mechanisms.

Within this governance-focused cluster, the presence of terms such as employment, labor migration, and recruitment (employment) highlights the evolution from traditional employment-based recruitment studies toward broader discussions on transnational labor flows. The frequent linkage between recruitment and governance approaches suggests a normative shift in the literature, where recruitment is increasingly examined as a policy-driven process subject to ethical guidelines, international conventions, and multilateral oversight rather than purely market-driven dynamics.

In contrast, the green cluster on the right captures a more problem-oriented and ethical-risk dimension of recruitment research. Keywords such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, and administrative data point to an emerging stream of studies that investigate recruitment as a potential entry point for labor exploitation and human rights violations. The connection between recruitment and these terms indicates growing scholarly concern over unethical recruitment channels, particularly in vulnerable migrant labor contexts, and the use of administrative and governance data to detect and prevent abuses.
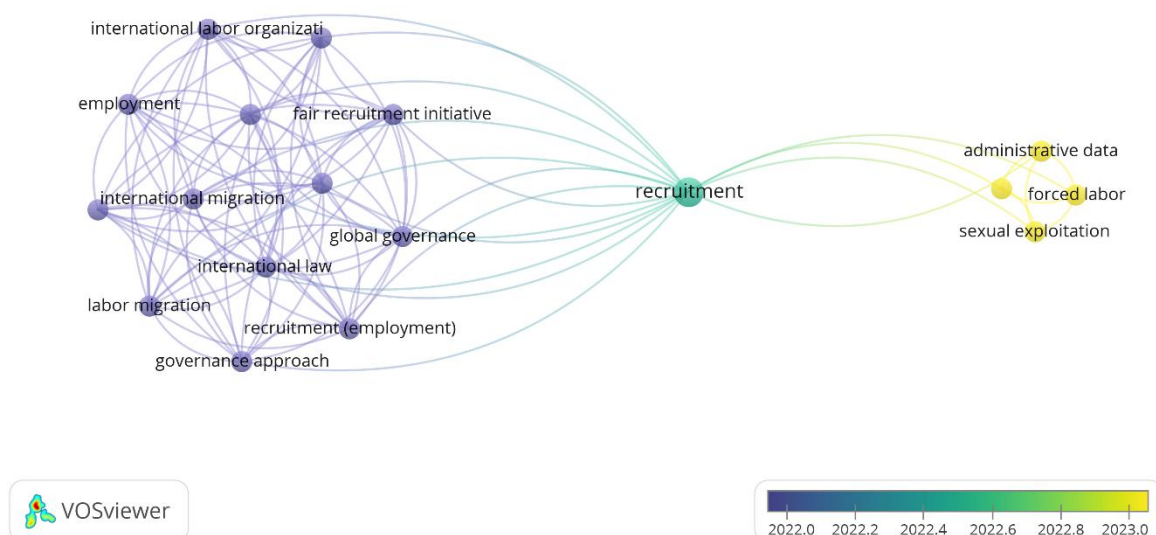

Figure 2. Overlay Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 2 illustrates the temporal evolution of global recruitment research, highlighting how scholarly focus has shifted over time. Earlier studies, represented by darker blue and purple tones, concentrate on foundational themes such as international migration, employment, international law, and the role of institutions like the International Labour Organization. These early contributions emphasize recruitment as part of broader labor migration systems and regulatory frameworks, reflecting initial academic efforts to situate recruitment within global employment governance and international labor standards.

As the color gradient moves toward green, the research focus transitions to more integrative concepts, with "recruitment" emerging as a central and temporally intermediate node. Its position and coloration suggest that recruitment increasingly became the focal concept connecting governance-oriented discussions with more applied and risk-focused themes. During this phase, topics such as fair recruitment initiative and global

governance gained prominence, indicating a growing normative concern with ethical recruitment practices and policy-driven interventions aimed at improving transparency and accountability in cross-border hiring processes.

The most recent research trends, highlighted in yellow tones, reveal a clear shift toward ethical risks and data-driven monitoring in recruitment practices. Keywords such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, and administrative data dominate the latest phase of the literature, signaling heightened scholarly attention to recruitment-related vulnerabilities and human rights violations. This temporal progression demonstrates that global recruitment research has evolved from structural and legal discussions toward a more critical and prevention-oriented agenda, emphasizing the use of data, regulation, and governance mechanisms to address exploitation risks in contemporary global labor markets.
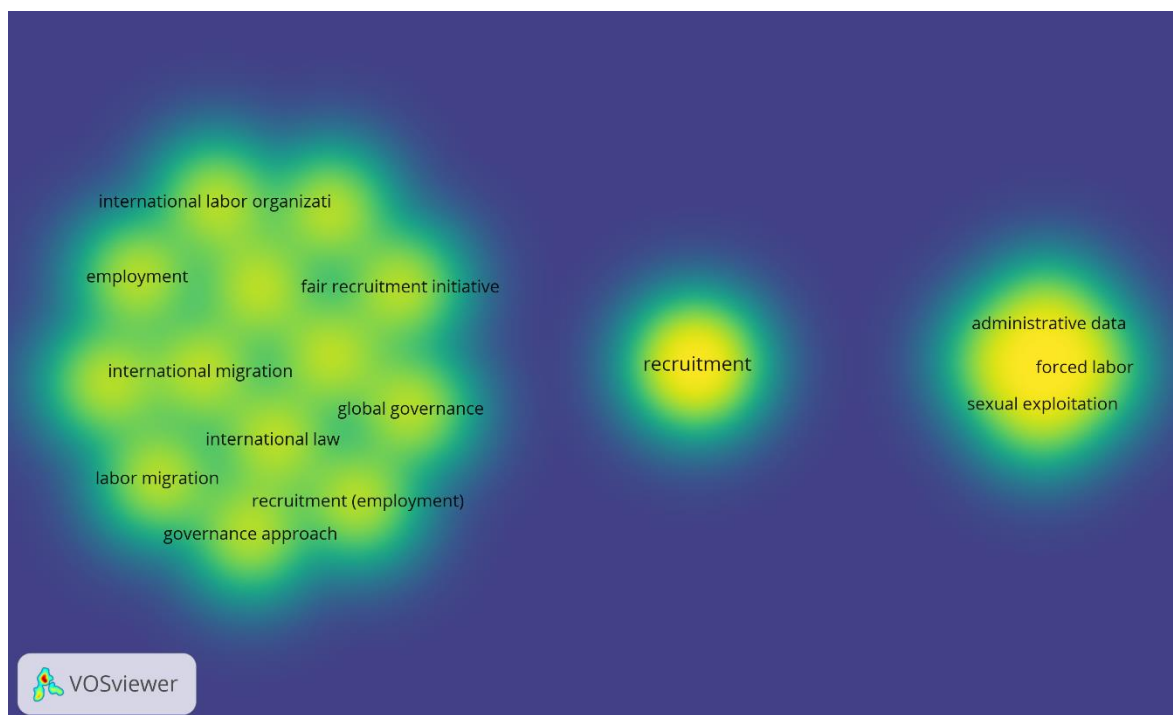

Figure 3. Density Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 3 highlights the core knowledge structure of global recruitment

research by showing areas with the highest concentration of scholarly attention. The left-

hand cluster exhibits the strongest density, centered around themes such as international labor organization, international migration, employment, international law, labor migration, and global governance. This indicates that the dominant body of literature situates recruitment within institutional, legal, and migration-related frameworks, emphasizing the role of international regulations and governance mechanisms in shaping recruitment practices across borders.

In contrast, the visualization also reveals two distinct but highly focused density areas: the central node recruitment and the right-hand cluster comprising forced labor, sexual exploitation, and administrative data. The prominence of these hotspots suggests that recruitment has emerged as an independent analytical focus, while recent studies increasingly concentrate on ethical risks and exploitation associated with recruitment processes.
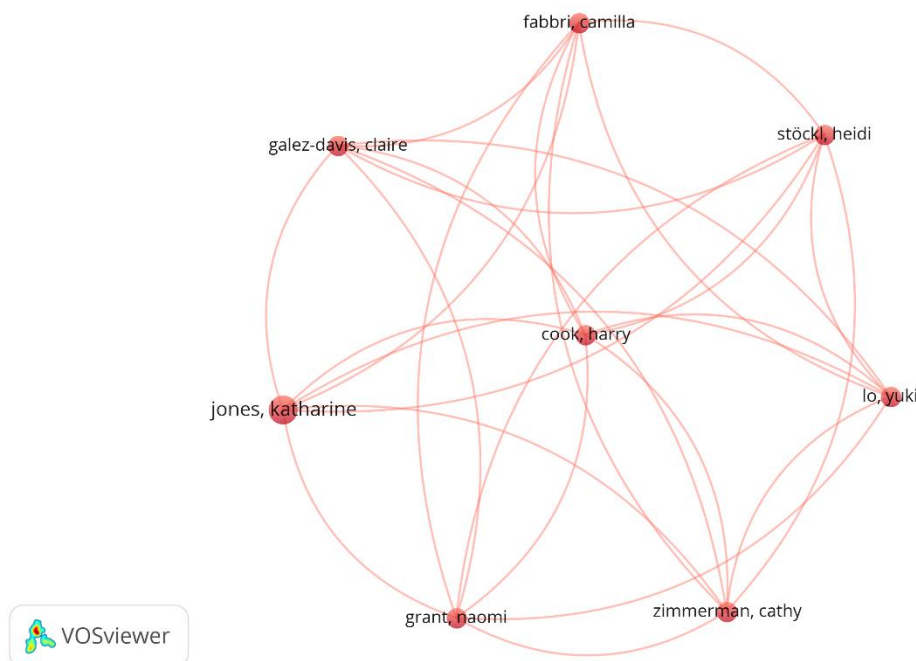
3.2 Co-Authorship Network

Figure 4. Author Collaboration Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 4 visualization reveals a highly interconnected core group of influential scholars in global recruitment and labor governance research. Authors such as Cook, Harry occupy a central position, indicating a key bridging role that connects multiple researchers across the network, while others—including Fabbri, Camilla, Galezi-Davis, Claire, Stöckl, Heidi, Io, Yuki, Zimmerman, Cathy, Grant, Naomi, and Jones, Katharine—form a tightly linked collaborative structure. The density and reciprocity of connections suggest sustained research collaboration rather than isolated contributions, reflecting the interdisciplinary and policy-oriented nature of recruitment studies.
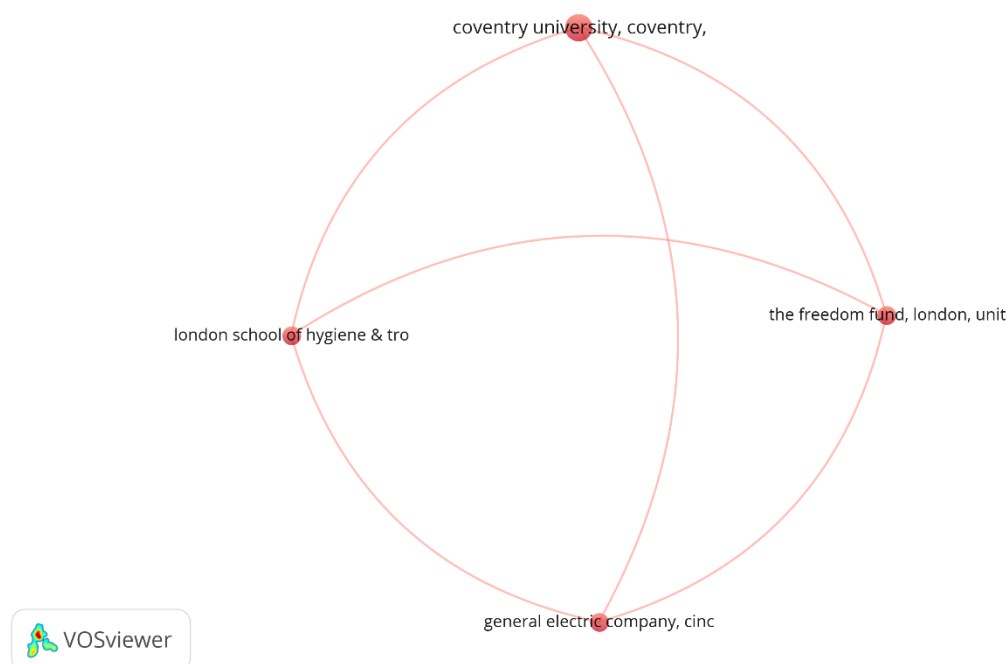
Figure 5. Affiliation Collaboration Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 5 illustrates a small but strategically connected set of organizations that play a central role in global recruitment and labor governance research. Academic institutions such as Coventry University and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine appear prominently, indicating strong scholarly leadership in this field, particularly from the United Kingdom. Their connections with non-academic and practice-oriented organizations, including The Freedom Fund and General Electric Company, suggest that research on global recruitment is not confined to academia but is closely linked to policy advocacy, applied research, and corporate engagement. This pattern reflects the interdisciplinary and impact-driven nature of recruitment studies, where collaboration between universities, NGOs, and multinational corporations contributes to knowledge production aimed at addressing real-world challenges such as fair recruitment, labor exploitation, and ethical governance in global labor markets.

Figure 6. Country Collaboration Visualization
Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 6 shows a fragmented pattern of international research engagement in the study of global recruitment practices. Countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States appear as prominent contributors, reflecting their strong research capacity and institutional focus on labor governance, migration, and recruitment ethics. However, the spatial separation and absence of dense connecting links among countries like France, Australia, Austria, Ukraine, and the Syrian Arab Republic suggest that much of the research is conducted within national or regionally bounded contexts rather than through extensive cross-country collaboration. This pattern indicates that, despite the inherently global nature of recruitment and labor mobility, scholarly cooperation across countries remains limited, highlighting an opportunity for more integrated and comparative international research to advance the global recruitment literature.

3.3 Citation Analysis

Table 1. Top Cited Research

Citations	Authors and year	Title
1345	[13]	Social work in the UK and the global labour market: Recruitment, practice and ethical considerations
962	[14]	Labor Recruitment and Human Trafficking: Analysis of a Global Trafficking Survivor Database
729	[15]	A 'north star' in governing global labour migration? The ILO and the Fair Recruitment Initiative
461	[16]	Racial assumptions in global labor recruitment and supply
448	[17]	Power, production and racialization in global labor recruitment and supply

Citations	Authors and year	Title
407	[18]	Restructuring global labor markets: Recruitment agencies and work relations in the wild berry commodity Chain
404	[19]	Labour Recruitment Systems in Global Production Networks: The Ruralisation of Labour Regimes in South India's Garment and Textile Industries
395	[20]	Principles of Ethical Recrutment of Global Nurses in a Bilateral Labor Agreement – A Rawlsian Contract Approach

Source: Scopus, 2025

Discussion

The findings of this bibliometric review reveal that global recruitment research has undergone a clear conceptual evolution, shifting from traditional employment and migration perspectives toward a more governance- and ethics-oriented framework. Early literature primarily framed recruitment within international labor migration, employment relations, and legal regulation, with strong emphasis on institutions such as the International Labour Organization and international labor law. Over time, recruitment has emerged as a central analytical construct that connects labor mobility with global governance mechanisms, reflecting growing recognition that recruitment practices are not neutral operational activities but institutional processes shaped by policy, regulation, and international norms.

More recent research trends highlight a pronounced shift toward ethical risks and human rights concerns embedded in recruitment processes. The overlay and density visualizations indicate that contemporary scholarship increasingly focuses on issues such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, and the use of administrative data to monitor recruitment-related abuses. This evolution suggests a normative turn in the literature, where recruitment is conceptualized as a critical intervention point for preventing labor exploitation and improving transparency in global labor markets. The prominence of themes related to fair recruitment initiatives and data-driven governance reflects broader debates on responsible business conduct, corporate accountability, and the role of digital tools in strengthening recruitment oversight.

From a collaboration perspective, the results show that knowledge production in global recruitment research is driven by a relatively small but cohesive network of authors and institutions, primarily concentrated in developed economies, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States. While partnerships between universities, NGOs, and corporate actors demonstrate the applied and interdisciplinary nature of the field, the country-level collaboration network remains fragmented. This suggests that future research would benefit from stronger international and comparative collaboration, particularly involving labor-sending countries and developing economies. Expanding cross-national research efforts could enhance the global relevance of recruitment studies and support the development of more inclusive, context-sensitive, and effective recruitment governance frameworks.

4. CONCLUSION

Studi bibliometrik ini menyimpulkan bahwa penelitian tentang praktik rekrutmen global telah berkembang secara signifikan baik dari sisi tema, pendekatan, maupun orientasi normatifnya. Awalnya, rekrutmen lebih banyak dibahas dalam kerangka migrasi tenaga kerja, ketenagakerjaan, dan regulasi hukum internasional, namun dalam perkembangannya bergeser menjadi isu strategis yang terkait erat dengan tata kelola global, etika, dan perlindungan hak asasi

manusia. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa rekrutmen kini dipahami sebagai titik kritis dalam pencegahan eksploitasi tenaga kerja, dengan meningkatnya perhatian pada isu seperti kerja paksa, eksploitasi seksual, serta pemanfaatan data administratif untuk pengawasan dan akuntabilitas. Meskipun produksi pengetahuan didominasi oleh peneliti dan institusi dari negara maju dengan jejaring kolaborasi yang relatif terbatas, studi ini menegaskan pentingnya penguatan kolaborasi internasional yang lebih inklusif. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini memberikan gambaran komprehensif mengenai lanskap, dinamika, dan arah masa depan riset rekrutmen global, serta menjadi dasar konseptual bagi pengembangan kebijakan dan praktik rekrutmen yang lebih adil, transparan, dan berkelanjutan di tingkat global.

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