

## Outsourcing and Employment Standards in Petroleum Logistics Along the Northern Corridor

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### Abstract

This study examined the effects of outsourcing on employment standards in petroleum logistics along the Northern Corridor. A qualitative approach was adopted, employing a desktop research design that reviewed existing literature, policy documents, and industry reports. The findings show that outsourcing in petroleum logistics is primarily driven by organizational objectives of cost reduction and operational efficiency. While these practices enhance performance and flexibility, they have notable adverse implications for employment standards. Outsourced employment is predominantly characterized by fixed-term and project-based contracts, resulting in heightened job and income insecurity. Such insecurity negatively affects workers' psychological well-being, leading to lower organizational commitment, reduced job engagement, and increased burnout. The triangular employment relationship among the worker, the outsourcing agency, and the client firm further creates ambiguity regarding accountability, particularly in cases of occupational injuries or labor rights violations, thereby increasing workers' vulnerability. A major outcome of outsourcing is the widening disparity between core employees of oil and gas companies and contract workers employed by third-party logistics providers. Contract workers frequently experience lower wages, limited benefits, weaker occupational health and safety protections, and fewer opportunities for training and career progression. These disparities undermine employment standards and raise concerns about labour exploitation. The study recommends stronger regulation of outsourcing practices, legally binding worker-protection clauses in contracts, and enhanced labour inspection mechanisms to promote decent work and long-term sector stability.

**Keywords:** *Outsourcing, Employment Standards, Petroleum Logistics, Northern Corridor*

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### 1. Introduction

Employment standards constitute the fundamental legal framework and regulatory principles governing pay, working hours, leave entitlements, and safety that govern the relationship between employers and employees, ensuring fair treatment and workplace protection (International Labour Organization, 2025). In the modern era, these standards have evolved to address contemporary shifts such as digitalization and the rise of the gig economy, while emphasizing the protection of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and temporary workers. International bodies like the ILO continue to refine these benchmarks, recently focusing on biological hazards, social protection for informal workers, and the

transition toward decent work in the platform economy to maintain labor market resilience amidst global economic volatility (Smith & Wood, 2019). Ultimately, compliance with these evolving standards is not only a legal necessity but a strategic priority for fostering trust, organizational justice, and long-term workforce stability (Musinszki, Horváthné Csolák, & Lipták, 2025).

Outsourcing involves procuring materials and services from external sources rather than using internal resources, a practice also known as "outside resourcing" (Paek, Kim, Park, & Lee, 2019). When a business is unable to handle a task in-house or finds a more efficient alternative, it may choose to outsource the task to an outside provider. The rapid advancement of technology, globalization, and competition has made nearly every aspect of running a corporation more complicated. Companies can make better decisions, generate progressive yields, and increase shareholder value by thoroughly examining the reasons, opportunities, and justifications for outsourcing core supply chain functionality (Kivuva, 2018).

Outsourcing in petroleum logistics significantly alters employment standards by shifting operational risks and labor costs from primary oil companies to third-party providers, often leading to a dual-tier workforce in which contracted staff face reduced job security and lower compensation (Iheriohanma & Austin-Egol, 2024). Oriji and Odagme (2025) further indicated that outsourcing remains a strategic lever for organizational agility and access to specialized technical skills; it frequently results in the erosion of traditional labor protections, such as health benefits, pensions, and union representation for outsourced personnel. Iheriohanma and Austin-Egole (2024) indicate that outsourced workers in the energy sector often experience pay disparities, inadequate work-life balance due to high-pressure contract demands, and restricted access to long-term career development. Furthermore, reliance on a diverse set of international vendors complicates regulatory compliance, potentially exposing workers to substandard safety practices and human rights violations if not managed through rigorous ethical auditing and Employer of Record (EOR) frameworks.

Petroleum logistics along the Northern Corridor face critical inefficiencies that compromise both operational resilience and regional trade stability. While outsourcing is widely adopted by oil marketing companies to reduce overhead and leverage specialized expertise, it has introduced significant risks, including a loss of direct control over essential supply chain activities and increased liability exposure (Somuyiwa, Onifade, & Dosunmu, 2021). Current infrastructural gaps, such as the single-carriage design of major transit highways and the lack of designated rest areas, contribute to severe driver fatigue and rising fatal road crashes along key sections of the Mombasa Nairobi Malaba highway. These systemic failures are exacerbated by a reliance on Third-Party Logistics (3PL) providers who often struggle with inadequate documentation and poor maintenance cultures, leading to costly delays and security vulnerabilities in the movement of critical fuel supplies (Ministry of Energy and Petroleum, 2025).

Furthermore, the shift toward logistics outsourcing has widened the gap in employment standards and labor protections within the corridor's petroleum sector. In an effort to minimize costs, many logistics providers utilize unskilled or poorly trained personnel, which directly undermines safety standards and increases the risk of accidents and spillages. This trend toward casualization and selective outsourcing frequently results in the erosion of employee benefits, reduced company loyalty, and breaches of the psychological contract between workers and firms. Although new regional policies, such as the National Petroleum Policy (2025) and South Sudan's Revised Transport Sector Policy (2026-2036), aim to harmonize cross-border

operations, there remains a lack of effective enforcement regarding the socio-economic welfare and labor rights of outsourced transport crews. Without addressing these labor-related discrepancies, the Northern Corridor risks continued industrial unrest and a decline in the very service quality that outsourcing was intended to enhance (Kenya Law, 2024; ILO, 2022; World Bank, 2018). This study assessed outsourcing and employment standards in petroleum logistics along the Northern Corridor.

## 2. Literature Review

In his study, Aini (2024) assessed how outsourcing affects workers' well-being in Indonesia. The study applied the normative research method, an approach that seeks to understand the principles at work by analyzing societal norms that govern behavior, particularly as they pertain to the law. Workers' and employers' rights and responsibilities cannot exist apart from a formal contractual arrangement. A work agreement is in place to formalize this partnership between the two companies. With the rights and responsibilities of both employers and employees laid out in writing, the work agreement will serve as the legal foundation for the employment relationship. Law No. 13 of 2003 on Labor provides protections for employees, including outsourced employees, as well as permanent and contract employees.

Further, Austin-Egole and Iheriohanma (2020) examined the latest trends in outsourcing and staffing: A speculative discussion. The study was based on secondary data analysis and a debate that took place in a library. Research shows that companies are using policies like outsourcing and more flexible work schedules to help employees cope with the changes brought about by technological advancements and shifting job trends. Organizations can save money and get the most out of their employees by using technology to outsource tasks that are not core competencies, which helps them combat skill erosion and shortages.

A regulatory and work-ethics perspective was the main focus of Maulana, Septria, and Anggraeni's (2025) critical analysis of outsourcing practices in Indonesia's manufacturing sector. This study used a literature review methodology to conduct its qualitative research. Relevant scholarly articles, reports, and regulatory papers from 2021 to 2024 were part of the data set. The study found that Post-Omnibus Law labor standards are biased in favor of employers and fail to ensure complete fairness for outsourced workers. Unconstitutional outsourcing tactics also undermine workplace morale and impede productive collaboration between employers and employees. According to the results of this research, reformulating labor rules and bolstering ethical procedures in outsourcing are necessary.

Chidinma et al. (2024) conducted a critical evaluation of the effects of outsourcing on Nigeria's workforce development through a Content Analysis. This empirical study examined how outsourcing has affected productivity, loyalty, and competitive advantage in Nigerian businesses. According to the main results, outsourcing can boost organizational performance by reducing costs, increasing efficiency, and providing access to specialist knowledge. Nevertheless, major drawbacks have also been recognized, including low wages, employment instability, violations of rights, reduced employee commitment, and adverse effects on the regional economy. According to the report, there needs to be a balance between the potential benefits of outsourcing, such as cost reduction and technological advancements, and the negative repercussions for workers.

Outsourcing is beneficial for some workers but harmful for others (Hansen, 2025). The study postulates that outsourcing hinders employee engagement and job burnout, with the worst effects felt during periods of high demand and limited resources. The research compares results for public-sector workers with those for outsourced workers, using unique survey and

administrative data. Outsourced workers experience far poorer engagement and greater burnout, according to the data. What's more, when workloads are high, they are worse off, but when workloads are low, they are just as bad, if not worse. Lastly, the results demonstrate that less resourceful workers suffer greatly from outsourcing.

The employment effects of domestic outsourcing were assessed by Felix and Wong (2024). The labor market implications of Brazil's 1993 outsourcing legalization were estimated by comparing security guards to less-affected occupations and by utilizing the North-South difference in pre-legalization court permissiveness. Research shows that legalization through outsourcing consistently shifts employment away from more senior security guards toward younger ones. Both the overall number of guards employed and the percentage of guards who worked informally rose steadily, but average earnings adjusted for demographic changes remained almost the same. Incumbent guards from high-wage firms were displaced by a wave of occupational layoffs. Due to spillovers to non-adopting firms and economies of scale in human resources at the firm level, the evidence indicates that the increase in outsourcing of non-core activities lowered labor market frictions.

Deibler (2022) examined how outsourcing impacts remaining employees, the distribution of rent, and inequality. It is well-documented that outsourcing lowers the earnings of low-wage workers, but the effects on remaining workers are less well understood. If firms are rent sharing, outsourcing might increase remaining workers' earnings because there are more rents or fewer workers to share them with. This study calculated the effects on employees' wages and separations of companies that engaged in occupational layoff (OL) outsourcing, while outsourcing some jobs. Using a dynamic difference-in-differences approach and employer-employee data from German social security records, it was established that, among 260 OL outsourcing incidents, the remaining workers' long-run incomes increased by 6%. Because outsourcing reduced the likelihood that remainers would transfer firms by 7.5 percentage points, it also increased the likelihood that remainers would remain at the outsourced firm. Rent increases for those who stay put are compatible with rising wages and falling parting rates. For employees at the bottom of the firm's earnings distribution, the gains are more substantial. Employers that have collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) are the only ones whose employees' wages are raised by outsourcing. A 6% boost to remainers' long-term earnings is achieved through outsourcing in companies with CBAs. When companies outsource, their short-term profits drop by 3% without CBAs. This supports a wage-setting paradigm in which outsourcing companies with CBAs are required to pay employees who remain with the company.

Nwosu (2024) explored the effect of outsourcing on employee quality of work life, attitudes, and performance. The study used a content analysis methodology, employing systems theory to analyze secondary data. Findings indicated that outsourcing offers organizational benefits, such as cost savings, but can negatively affect employees through issues such as underpayment, job insecurity, and violations of rights.

Petersen, Houlfort, and Andersen (2023) analyzed the effects of outsourcing on different types of employees through the lens of job demands and resources. The study examined results for outsourced workers and public workers in comparable positions. A Danish trade union provided the writers with administrative data in addition to their own survey data. When compared with their public-sector colleagues, outsourced workers often had far lower levels of engagement with their work and far higher rates of burnout. When the workload was light, there was no discernible difference between public employees and those outsourced. However,

outsourced workers experience significantly decreased engagement and greater burnout as workloads increase.

In their study, Wang, Zhang, and Jia (2023) sought to determine how the employment status and job value of outsourced workers affected their perceptions of insider status and job performance. The study utilized a two-wave, multi-source design. A total of 279 regular employees, 147 outsourced workers, and their managers were the subjects. Employees who were outsourced to a different company felt less of an insider status and performed worse as a result. These negative effects were more pronounced among outsourced workers in core job roles (core-status) than among those in peripheral roles (peripheral-status).

A phenomenological study of outsourcing and employee relations management in the manufacturing industry was conducted by Younis, Javed, and Bashir (2024). A qualitative-phenomenological approach was used to describe the "lived experiences" of employees and managers regarding outsourcing and relations. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to capture nuanced employee perspectives. Strategic outsourcing in manufacturing significantly improved operational efficiency and cost optimization. The success of Employee Relationship Management (ERM) systems depended on perceived usefulness and system quality, rather than on technological implementation alone.

Goldschmidt and Schmieder (2021) examined changes in the German salary structure and the growth of domestic outsourcing. Jobs that were relocated from lead employers to contracting businesses were tracked in the study to determine how this shift affected the pay structure. By mining the German social security record universe, the researchers developed a novel approach to identifying logistical, cleaning, food, and security outsourcing in administrative data. The research showed that domestic outsourcing in Germany had grown significantly since the early 90s. According to event-study assessments, salaries in outsourced jobs fell by 10-15% relative to comparable non-outsourced positions. Firms choose to contract out these services in large part due to the labor cost savings they provide. The study revealed evidence that the wage losses associated with outsourcing arise from a loss of firm-specific rents.

A narrative review of outsourcing in Nigeria during the period of rising petroleum prices was conducted by Ebeh, Etodike, and Ogbonna (2025). The review compiled research and articles to shed light on how rising oil prices affect production costs, which, in turn, force companies to seek cheap outsourcing options that frequently compromise service quality. The study emphasized that outsourcing initiatives in Nigeria are hindered by operational inefficiencies and the risks associated with collaborating with low-cost offshore companies. Inadequate technology, mismatched service quality, and rising logistical expenses are among the major issues highlighted by the assessment as experienced by Nigerian enterprises in the outsourcing arena. Full outsourcing to well-capitalized service providers, just-in-time concepts, improved payment terms, and sustainable communication channels are among the strategic options proposed by the study.

Muindi (2023) focused on the legal regulation of outsourcing triangular employment relationships in Kenya. The overarching goal of this research was to determine whether Kenya's current legislative framework adequately safeguards employees' rights in triangular employment relationships arising from outsourcing, and, if not, to propose reforms to do so. There was a discernible difference in the perceived benefits and drawbacks of outsourcing arrangements between workers with basic skills, workers with professional skills, and those with convenience, short-term outsourced jobs. Because they report to two bosses, outsourced employees also report feeling insecure in their jobs and lacking support from management. By

discussing the risks of outsourcing triangular employment relationships, including employee misclassification and issues with employer status attribution, this paper helps fill a gap in the current literature.

Similarly, Kithuka (2023) examined the risks and performance of logistics outsourcing for manufacturing firms in Kenya. Both descriptive and explanatory research designs were used in tandem. Stratified sampling was conducted across all 1,123 manufacturing firms registered by the Kenya Association of Manufacturers. The findings showed that management risk, supplier relationship risk, cost risk, and contractual risk all had a substantial impact on the performance of Kenyan manufacturing enterprises. Logistics outsourcing risks were positively correlated with manufacturing firm performance, although information flow significantly moderated this association. Manufacturing companies' performance takes a hit due to an increase in logistics outsourcing risks, including contractual, cost, supplier relationship, and management risks.

Additionally, Masago (2021) re-examined outsourcing and operational performance of commercial state corporations in Kenya. A descriptive cross-sectional survey was utilized in the study. The information was gathered from managers responsible for operations, warehousing, and supply chains. The most popular types of outsourced services were information and communication technology (ICT), logistics management, human resources, marketing, and financial management. The majority of the human resources and logistics functions were contracted out. The study demonstrated a positive correlation between outsourcing and operational performance. Research showed that commercial state businesses outsource information and communication technology (ICT) to the maximum extent feasible. Findings indicated a positive correlation between outsourcing and operational performance. Additionally, the study found that the operational performance of commercial state corporations improves through service outsourcing, as operational costs are reduced, hiring costs are lower, quality is improved, on-time delivery is achieved, and productivity increases.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A research design is the plan or technique used to identify respondents and gather information from them to draw conclusions about a research issue (Berman, Jones, & Udry, 2020). This study used a desk research design. Desktop research reviews previous research findings to gain a broader perspective and thus can use large sample sizes to produce bias-free, measurable data about a user population (Wahid et al., 2023).

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

Data collection is the methodical process of obtaining information about a particular subject (Cote et al., 2021). It is a methodical, structured procedure for collecting and evaluating data on factors relevant to a specific study topic or objective. Primary and secondary data are the two categories of data. This study used secondary data because it was a desktop study. Internal desktop research and external desktop research are the two types of desktop research. While external desktop research for this study was conducted online across multiple websites, internal desktop research was conducted through the university library.

#### **3.3 Data Analysis**

According to Van de Vijver and Leung (2021), data analysis entails examining the data and drawing conclusions and inferences, including identifying underlying structures, extracting key variables, identifying anomalies, and evaluating underlying hypotheses. It entails examining

the information obtained and drawing conclusions. This study applied desktop research analysis.

#### **4. Findings**

Outsourcing has a complex and often debated impact on employment standards, with academic literature highlighting both potential benefits and significant negative consequences for workers (Nwosu, 2024; Petersen et al., 2023). While firms pursue outsourcing to reduce costs, access specialized expertise, and focus on core competencies, these gains often come at the expense of the outsourced workers' wages, job security, and overall working conditions (Petersen et al., 2021; Younis et al., 2024). The practice creates a segmented workforce, where outsourced employees often face different, and frequently less favorable, terms compared to permanent, in-house staff, which can lead to disparities in compensation, benefits, and workplace treatment (Goldschmidt & Schmieder, 2021; Petersen et al., 2023).

A primary negative effect is the deterioration of wages and benefits for outsourced employees. Research consistently shows that workers in outsourced roles often receive lower salaries and fewer benefits, such as health insurance, social security, and pension schemes, even when performing the same tasks as their permanent colleagues (Nwosu, 2024; Younis et al., 2024). Firms leverage the "make-or-buy" decision to minimize labor costs, which can result in the use of temporary or casual contracts that fall outside the protective scope of standard employment relations (Deibler, 2021; Iheriohanma & Austin-Egole, 2020; Younis et al., 2024). This cost-saving mechanism can exacerbate wage inequality, although some studies in specific contexts (firms with strong collective bargaining agreements) find that remaining permanent workers may see wage increases due to rent-sharing dynamics (Deibler, 2021).

Job insecurity and reduced psychological well-being are other significant impacts of outsourcing. The nature of outsourced employment, often characterized by fixed-term or project-based contracts, leads to high levels of job and financial insecurity (Cooke, 2014, as cited in Wang et al., 2023). This lack of stability can lead to lower perceived insider status, diminished organizational commitment, higher burnout, and lower job engagement among outsourced workers (Petersen et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). The triangular employment relationship, involving the worker, the outsourcing agency, and the client company, can also create confusion over accountability and support, particularly in cases of workplace injuries or when seeking redress for rights violations, further contributing to a sense of vulnerability.

The effectiveness of legal and institutional protections for outsourced workers is a critical concern. While labor laws may exist to ensure fair treatment, their application and enforcement can be challenging due to the complex nature of outsourcing arrangements and discrepancies in legal interpretations (IJBEL, 2021; Nwosu, 2024). The lack of specific legislation in some regions leaves outsourced employees vulnerable to exploitation, and the structure of their employment often makes it difficult for them to join labor unions, thereby diminishing their collective bargaining power (DennisLaw, 2025; Younis et al., 2024). The academic consensus highlights the need for stronger legal frameworks and better enforcement mechanisms to balance the economic incentives of outsourcing with the imperative of protecting fundamental worker rights and ensuring equitable employment standards (Nwosu, 2024; Younis et al., 2024).

#### **5. Conclusion**

The study concluded that outsourcing in petroleum logistics is primarily driven by the pursuit of organizational performance enhancement, specifically through cost reduction and increased

efficiency. In addition, the key impact on employment standards is the creation of a disparity between core employees of oil and gas companies and contract workers of third-party logistics (3PL) providers. Logistics service providers often compete on price, which can lead them to minimize labor costs, sometimes through employing unskilled personnel or using precarious employment contracts. This results in a workforce that is often less trained, less motivated, and potentially subject to exploitation or non-compliance with labor laws, which can ultimately pose operational and reputational risks to the primary petroleum companies.

In addition, the success of the outsourcing model for the oil and gas firms is undeniable from a business performance perspective, leading to the conclusion that the practice will continue and likely increase. The substantial cost savings and ability to focus on core competencies reinforce the business case for outsourcing non-core logistics functions. This suggests that the negative employment impacts are often a known, though perhaps unaddressed, consequence of a strategy designed for competitive advantage in a volatile global market. Further, the effect of outsourcing on employment standards in petroleum logistics is a classic double-edged sword, highly beneficial for the organizational performance and profitability of the main oil and gas firms, but detrimental to the working conditions and security of a significant portion of the logistics workforce.

## 6. Recommendations

Recommendations should prioritize mandating detailed, legally binding clauses in outsourcing contracts that explicitly protect workers' rights, including fair wages, working hours, and health & safety, in accordance with international labor standards. Strengthen national labor inspectorates along the Northern Corridor to monitor compliance, particularly among third-party logistics providers, and to counter tendencies toward cost-cutting at the expense of employee welfare, given the literature's potential for exploitation.

Invest heavily in skills development and retraining programs for logistics workers to enable them to transition into higher-value roles within the sector or related industries, rather than being displaced. Establish joint industry-government initiatives to create career pathways, thereby reducing job insecurity, fostering a more skilled and adaptable local workforce, and mitigating negative impacts on employee morale and productivity.

Policymakers should mandate robust contractual clauses and monitoring for logistics outsourcing along the Northern Corridor, focusing on enforcing fair wages, safe conditions, and training for petroleum logistics workers to counteract cost-cutting pressures that erode standards; requiring transparent, audited labor practices from third-party logistics providers (3PLs) and ensuring main operators remain accountable for their subcontractors' compliance with national labor laws is crucial to prevent a race to the bottom and protect employment standards while still gaining efficiency.

The National Government should regulate outsourcing in Northern Corridor petroleum logistics by enforcing strict labor laws, mandating fair wages, ensuring safe working conditions (PPE, training), promoting permanent employment over casualization, and requiring transparent contracts with subcontractors to prevent exploitation and job insecurity, balancing cost-cutting with worker rights to uphold standards and long-term sector stability.

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