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THE ROLE OF EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES IN ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT RATES IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR: A PATHWAY FOR RESIDENTS OF TASHKENT REGION

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Abstract. Agriculture has long been one of the main sources of employment in the Tashkent region of Uzbekistan. However, economic instability, seasonal employment, relatively low wages for agricultural employees have been driving patterns for residents to seek appropriate vacancies in foreign countries. The article represents the importance of employment agencies both public and private to facilitate international labor migration for potential workers in Tashkent region, focusing on improving employment rates in agriculture. International Labor Organization (ILO), in coordination with the External Labor Migration Agency of Uzbekistan, has deeply examined the implementation of this process. Including, the operation of employment agencies, teaching methods regarding specific skills and language for potential workers abroad, informing employee about their rights and acting based on foreign countries laws and standards, introducing employee endorsing programs such as available incentives, subsidies, loans to establish their business after they have returned to their homeland etc. This article identifies main challenges, unethical employment practices, specific skills and language barriers, policy recommendations under ILO Convention No. 181 on Non-Government Employment Agencies. Through research it is clarified that recruitment agencies not only attractive for transparency, ethically trustworthy and immediate regulation for migration, but also strategic drivers for improvement of employment, reducing poverty and remittance based economic development for residents of Tashkent region.

Keywords. Employment agencies, agricultural sector, labor migration, Tashkent region, international employment, ILO, remittances, AELM, vocational skills and language proficiency.

Annotatsiya. Qishloq xo'jaligi uzoq vaqtdan beri Toshkent viloyati, O'zbekistonda bandlikning asosiy manbalaridan biri bo'lib kelgan. Biroq, iqtisodiy beqarorlik, mavsumiy bandlik, qishloq xo'jaligi xodimlarining nisbatan past ish haqi aholining xorijiy mamlakatlarda munosib bo'sh ish o'rinlarini izlashiga turtki bo'lib kelmoqda. Maqolada Toshkent viloyatidagi potentsial ishchilar uchun xalqaro mehnat



migratsiyasini osonlashtirishda davlat va xususiy bandlik agentliklarining ahamiyati, qishloq xo'jaligida bandlik darajasini oshirishga e'tibor qaratilganligi ta'kidlangan. Xalqaro mehnat tashkiloti (XMT) O'zbekiston Tashqi mehnat migratsiyasi agentligi bilan hamkorlikda ushbu jarayonni amalga oshirishni chuqur o'rganib chiqmoqda. Jumladan, bandlik agentliklarining faoliyati, chet eldagi potentsial ishchilar uchun maxsus ko'nikmalar va tilni o'qitish usullari, xodimlarni ularning huquqlari haqida xabardor qilish va xorijiy davlatlar qonunlari va standartlariga asoslanib harakat qilish, mavjud imtiyozlar, subsidiyalar, vataniga qaytgandan keyin biznesini yo'lga qo'yish uchun kreditlar kabi qo'llab-quvvatlovchi dasturlarni joriy etish va boshqalar ustida ish olib borilmoqda. Ushbu maqolada asosiy to'siqlar, norasmiy ishga yollash amaliyotlari, maxsus ko'nikmalar va til to'siqlari, XMTning 181-sonli Nodavlat bandlik agentliklari to'g'risidagi konventsiyasi bo'yicha siyosat tavsiyalari muhokama qilingan. Tadqiqotlar orqali aniqlanishicha, bandlik agentliklari nafaqat shaffoflik, ahloqiy jihatdan ishonchlilik va migratsiyani darhol tartibga solishga yondashgan bo'lishi kerak, hamda yangi ish o'rinlarini yaratish, qashshoqlikni kamaytirish va Toshkent viloyatidagi aholi uchun pul o'tkazmalariga asoslangan tizimning iqtisodiy rivojlantiruvchi muhim drayveri bo'lib qoladi.

Kalit so'zlar. Bandlik agentliklari, qishloq xo'jaligi sektori, mehnat migratsiyasi, Toshkent viloyati, xalqaro bandlik, XMT, pul o'tkazmalari, AELM, kasbiy ko'nikmalar va til bilish darajasi

Аннотация. Сельское хозяйство долгое время являлось одним из основных источников занятости в Ташкентской области Узбекистана. Однако экономическая нестабильность, сезонная занятость и относительно низкая заработная плата сельскохозяйственных рабочих побудили население искать достойную работу за границей. В статье подчеркивается важность государственных и частных агентств по трудоустройству в содействии международной трудовой миграции потенциальных работников в Ташкентской области, с акцентом на повышение уровня занятости в сельском хозяйстве. Международная организация труда (МОТ) проводит углубленное исследование реализации этого процесса в сотрудничестве с Агентством Узбекистана по внешней трудовой миграции. В частности, ведется работа по изучению деятельности агентств по трудоустройству, методов обучения потенциальных работников за рубежом конкретным навыкам и языку, информирования работников об их правах и действий в соответствии с законами и стандартами зарубежных стран, внедрения программ поддержки, таких как существующие льготы, субсидии, кредиты на открытие бизнеса после возвращения на родину и т. д. В статье рассматриваются основные препятствия, неформальные методы найма, специфические профессиональные и языковые барьеры, а также рекомендации по политике в отношении Конвенции МОТ № 181 о негосударственных агентствах по трудоустройству. Исследование показало, что агентства по трудоустройству должны не только быть прозрачными, этически безупречными и оперативно регулировать миграцию, но и стать важным двигателем экономического развития системы, основанной на денежных переводах, для населения Ташкентской области.



Ключевые слова. Агентства по трудоустройству, сельскохозяйственный сектор, трудовая миграция, Ташкентская область, международная занятость, МОТ, денежные переводы, АЭММ, профессиональные навыки и знание языка.

INTRODUCTION

The shortage of agricultural employees worldwide is rising, as developed and emerging country's economy requires more and more work force. Strong and emerging economies such as United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and other middle east countries like United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia have been hiring thousands of employee to fill the agricultural gap, food processing, plant cultivation and agri-industrial sector. This demand gives a chance to the residents of Tashkent region with the help of recruitment agencies being employed in above-mentioned countries, receiving high-paying salaries, gain international work experience, learning international standards, which simultaneously reduces regional poverty and enhances household revenue through remittances.

Uzbekistan's population has surpassed more than 38 million people and approximately 25-28 percentage of them have been working in agriculture sector. Most parts of Tashkent region, substantial demographic proportion of residents, have been working in horticulture, viticulture, livestock management and other agri-industrial sector. Although agriculture has a significant role in economy, it distinguishes with low wages in comparison with international standards and stable employment is not ensured due to seasonal works and fulfilling positions with new flows of youth even for less salaries (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2021). Consequently, existing challenges like this stimulate local residents to seek international job offers.

The government of Uzbekistan gradually recognized the significance of structural labor migration as a development strategy for Uzbekistan's economy. Based on Presidential Decree PP-3473 in 2018 the Agency for External Labor Migration (AELM) was established, under the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, and then renamed as the Ministry of Employment a Poverty Reduction. The AELM was dominant driver on regulation of labor migration abroad, licensing private employment agencies, teaching and training potential workers to obtain necessary skills and overcome language barriers, and advocating about the rights of our citizens while working in foreign countries (Government of Uzbekistan, 2018). In 2024, another new presidential decree released to improve transition process of employment abroad regarding facilitation of private employment agencies, representing the government's acknowledgement of the private sector's importance to enhance international labor employment (Ministry of Justice of Uzbekistan, 2024).

Including all these factors, the role of employment agencies to enhance employment rate in agriculture for the residents of Tashkent region is critical, timely and policy-relevant. The article proposes a solution through analyzing five core functions of recruitment agencies: labor market demand, specific skills and language courses, legal and documentary facilitation, potential worker's rights recognition, and economic significance through remittances. Each category is evaluated through both international and national practices to check their functionality. This article represents



also political and economic recommendations to enhance the role of recruitment agencies to maximize employment outcomes for potential workers of Tashkent region.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The dissertation intends to critically investigate the role of public and private recruitment agencies play in improving employing rates in the agricultural sector for the residents of the Tashkent region of Uzbekistan, with spectacular reference to global labor migration.

RQ1: What kind of functions do public and private recruitment agencies carry out in facilitating labor migration in agriculture from the Tashkent region?

RQ2: What kind of challenges and issues have residents of Tashkent region been facing when seeking better positions in agriculture in foreign countries, and how efficiently do licensed recruitment agencies resolve these issues compared with illegal or unlicensed channels?

RQ3: What kind of legislation policy and institutional standards could strengthen the efficiency, transparency and developmental program of recruitment agencies running in the Tashkent region?

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Labour Migration. Lee's (1966) push-pull model determines unfavorable working conditions at local areas and favorable working conditions in foreign countries as primary reasons for migration decisions; de Haas (2007) confirms this model remains robust for understanding how migration directions upgrade over time. Classical economic hypothesis frames labor migration as a response to the salary gap between sending and receiving labor markets. The New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM), developed by Stark and Bloom (1985) and expanded by Taylor (1999), instead represents migration as a family-based, risk-diversification decision rather than a personal one — a model critically relevant to Tashkent region households facing seasonal income variability and high credit costs. Massey et al. (1993) add that global labor markets shift toward high-income core sectors and insecure peripheral sectors that local workers are reluctant to fill, sustaining demand for agricultural labor in the EU, East Asia and Gulf states; migration systems theory further argues that these sustained flows build socioeconomic bridges between sending and receiving states through remittances (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016).

2.2 Labour Market Intermediaries and the Functionality of Employment Agencies.

Employment agencies increasingly function as labor market intermediaries (LMIs) that organize who migrates, under what circumstances, and to where. Coe et al. (2010) and Mense-Petermann (2020) describe LMIs as performing labor market brokerage, job-bank documentation, skills and language training, and matching employee demand and supply across borders. Van den Broek et al. (2016) note intermediaries are often overlooked despite handling recruitment, selection and contracting for migrants, while Groutsis et al. (2015) argue this reflects a shift from regulative bureaucracy toward network-based administration in which agencies coordinate with international donors to enhance employment.



2.3 Ethical Recruitment, Regulation, and Worker Protection

Governance of employment agencies is anchored in ILO Convention No. 181 (1997), which requires licensing, oversight and complaint mechanisms and forbids charging recruitment fees to migrants under the “Employer Pays Principle” (International Organization of Employers & Responsible Business Alliance, 2018), underpinning the ILO’s Fair Recruitment Initiative against trafficking and exploitation. Matuszczyk (2026) argues the practical value of these principles depends heavily on enforcement rather than the existence of the rules themselves, since an extending “grey economy” of unlicensed brokers remains the main threat to the transparency of licensed agencies — a tension directly relevant to Uzbekistan’s ongoing shift of labor-migration governance from AELM to private agencies.

2.4 Research Gap

The literature establishes the significance of legal-channel documentation, agencies’ intermediary role with donors and governments, pre-departure training, migrant-rights compliance, and remittance-based development, but says less about the operation of illegal agencies and the skills/language gaps migrants continue to face. This article addresses that gap by examining how recruitment agencies in Tashkent region perform across labor-market mediation, skills and language training, legal documentation, migrant-rights protection, and remittance-driven economic development.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research approach based on secondary data analysis — academic literature, government reports, legal documents, publications of international organizations and statistical data — combined with experience-based interviews, to examine the role of employment agencies in expanding agricultural employment abroad for Tashkent region residents. A descriptive and comparative method assesses agency activity against international experience and Uzbek practice, drawing on the ILO, IOM, World Bank and relevant government institutions, alongside document analysis of policies and regulations, to identify key challenges, best practices and policy recommendations.

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection.

A qualitative exploratory design was used, consistent with Creswell and Poth’s (2018) guidance that such designs suit phenomena needing contextual rather than large-scale statistical understanding. Interview data were analysed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, generating codes such as fee amount, working conditions, language proficiency, documentation procedure and salary delays, which structured five recurring themes: labor market intermediation, skills development, legal facilitation, worker’s-rights protection and economic impact. Data collection proceeded in two stages: first, secondary statistical data and policy documents from the ILO, IOM, World Bank and the Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan; second, structured interviews (Appendix B) designed to probe ambiguities or contradictions surfaced by the secondary record, such as the gap between the officially stated cost of AELM documentation and the substantially higher fees reported for private and illegal operators.



3.2 Participant Overview

Characteristic	Detail
Number of named interview participants	22
Additional agency-perspective informants	2 (Madadjon Mamatjonov, Baxodir)
Destination countries represented	United Kingdom, Finland, Russia, Türkiye, Bulgaria
Recruitment channels represented	AELM (official), licensed private agency, unlicensed broker, personal/kinship network
Interview length	20 minutes to 1 hour
Interview format	In-person / phone, personal communications, 2025

3.3 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Respondents were informed of the research aims, gave verbal consent, and could decline or withdraw at any point; only those who explicitly agreed were named, and details that could expose respondents who paid unofficial or unlicensed coordinators were kept confidential. As all respondents are cited as personal communications, self-reported data on wages, fees and working conditions should be read as illustrative rather than as a representative statistical sample, and the ongoing transfer of labor-migration governance from AELM to licensed private agencies means some administrative details may continue to evolve after publication.

RESULTS

The Agricultural Workforce and Labour Migration Trends in Tashkent Region Tashkent region borders the capital and encircles a large fertile area where cotton, wheat, fruits and vegetables are cultivated (Statistics Agency, 2023). The sector employs a substantial share of residents, but seasonal work and locally-regulated wages leave earnings well below what comparable agricultural jobs pay abroad. In 2024, approximately 6.2 million Uzbek residents worked abroad — a 29% rise on 2023 — and remittances reached \$14.9 billion, a 30% increase, confirming remittances (not foreign investment, at \$7.2 billion in 2023) as the country's dominant external revenue source (Statistics Agency, 2023; Development Strategy Center, 2025).

Indicator	2023	2024
Labor migrants working in foreign countries	~4.8 million (implied)	6.2 million
Remittance inflows (USD)	>\$11.4 billion	\$14.9 billion
Foreign investment amount (USD)	\$7.2 billion	not reported in cited sources
Agricultural placements through legal channels (Jan–Mar)	not reported	6,858

Table 1. Key Labor-Migration Indicators, Uzbekistan, 2023–2024. Source: Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan (2023, 2025); Development Strategy Center (2025); IOM Uzbekistan (2024).

Russia remains the dominant destination (78% of 2024 remittances), but EU markets are growing — Poland (21%), Lithuania (17%) and Germany (16%) of 2023 EU visa issuance — and 4,094 UK seasonal-worker visas went to Uzbeks (13% of all UK seasonal visas that year), pointing to a shift toward better-paid markets that agencies can accelerate (Statistics Agency, 2025). Agriculture was the second-largest



sector for legally deployed workers in early 2024, with 6,858 placements in the first quarter alone, behind only manufacturing (IOM Uzbekistan, 2024; Kun.uz, 2025). Tashkent region does not send the highest volume of migrants nationally (Andijan, Fergana and Samarkand rank higher), but its proximity to the capital gives residents comparatively better access to consulting, language and skills training, and document facilitation.

4.2 Updated National Indicators (2025–2026)

These trends continued into 2025: total remittances reached \$18.9 billion, a 28% rise on 2024 and more than triple the 2020 figure, with particularly fast growth from the UK (+39%) and the EU (+37%), including Ireland (2.6-fold) and Slovakia (+67%) (UzDaily.uz, 2026; Kun.uz, 2026). At the same time, the World Bank (2025) reports that the total number of Uzbek migrants working abroad fell 34% year-on-year to 1.35 million by early 2025, driven by a sharp fall in Russia-bound migration amid tightening conditions there — meaning migrants are earning more overall while relying less on the traditional Russian market, a shift directly relevant to RQ3. Meanwhile, the share of Uzbekistan's workforce in agriculture has continued a slow, steady decline (25.71% in 2019 to 25.2% in 2025; Statbase.org, 2025; World Bank Group, 2025b), so the workers who remain in the sector represent a proportionally more significant pool of candidates for the overseas placements agencies facilitate.

4.3 Interview Findings: Experiences of Labour Migrants from Tashkent Region

Fee structures diverge sharply by channel. Official AELM postings for UK, German and Finnish jobs typically require only visa costs, tickets and under \$100 in documentation fees, while private agencies can charge \$1,000–3,000 for the same service. Aziz Anvarov, interviewed for this study, paid around \$80 in documentation fees and \$600 for his visa through AELM before travelling to the UK, where he has earned \$2,200–2,500 monthly on a six-month fruit-cutting contract (early departure carries an \$18,000 penalty). He described organized housing and transport, weekend access to language classes and social activities with migrants from Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania and Moldova, but also named language proficiency and a tight budget in high-cost cities as recurring difficulties, alongside physically demanding conditions in wet weather that some employers pushed staff to work through regardless. A second respondent, Almazov Shakhzod, took an unofficial family-arranged job at an olive-oil factory in Bursa, Türkiye (2020–2022) without any agency involvement; when his seasonal contract could not be renewed, he continued working without a valid visa, was arrested and deported in 2022, and is now barred from re-entering Türkiye for five years — an outcome neither public nor private agencies could help him avoid, and a cautionary case agencies should proactively disseminate to migrants considering informal channels.

4.3.1 The UK Seasonal Worker Route in National Context

Anvarov's experience matches the national pattern: 35,561 UK Seasonal Worker visas were issued in 2024, 78% to four Central Asian countries (Uzbekistan 18%, Kyrgyzstan 18%, Kazakhstan 16%, Tajikistan 16%), almost all (98.7%) in horticulture (GOV.UK, 2025a, 2025b; Migration Observatory, 2025) — confirming his low-cost,



AELM-driven placement reflects a genuine, fast-growing channel available at scale to other Tashkent region residents who have not yet used it.

4.4 The Functions of Employment Agencies in Agricultural Labour Placement Abroad. As **labor market intermediaries**, agencies match candidates to vetted vacancies abroad; since November 2024 the AELM has run a data-driven platform where job seekers can browse openings and submit applications online, widening access for rural residents previously excluded by physical distance (Alliancerecruitmentagency.com, 2025; Ministry of Justice of Uzbekistan, 2024). On **skills and language training**, the AELM was mandated in January 2024 to train 100,000 workers in vocational skills and foreign languages within a year, reflecting recognition that language proficiency (Korean, Japanese, Polish, German, English) is as essential as physical farming skill (IOM Uzbekistan, 2024). For **legal and documentary facilitation**, licensed private agencies now hold full authority to conclude contracts and prepare visas and documentation, and migrants can apply to the AELM migration fund to cover visa, language and medical costs (Ministry of Justice of Uzbekistan, 2024). On **protection of workers' rights**, properly managed agencies act as a bulwark against exploitation, extra fees and contract breaches under ILO Convention No. 181's licensing and complaint-handling requirements (ILO, 2023). Finally, the **economic impact** is substantial: 2024 remittances of \$14.9 billion far exceeded foreign investment, disproportionately benefiting low-income and rural households — the same demographic as most Tashkent region agricultural workers (Development Strategy Center, 2025). The earnings gap is stark: local agricultural work pays roughly \$300–600 a month against \$2,000–2,500 for seasonal placements in the UK, Germany or South Korea (Table 2), a difference that, net of pre-departure costs, still funds local consumption, housing, training and small business investment in line with the “Uzbekistan-2030” development strategy (Global Voices, 2025).

Employment location	Approx. monthly earnings (USD)
Tashkent region (local farms and plantations)	300–600
United Kingdom (seasonal work, fruit-picking)	2,000–2,500
Germany (food-processing sector)	2,000–2,500
South Korea (greenhouse cultivation)	2,000–2,500

Table 2. Indicative Monthly Earnings: Local Agricultural Employment vs. Selected Overseas Placements (USD). Source: Author's compilation from interview data.

DISCUSSION

Information asymmetries leave many residents unaware of legitimate recruitment pathways despite official announcements, creating an opening for informal brokers and, in some cases, exploitation, forced work or debt bondage (The Diplomat, 2024); agencies could close this gap through local webinars, partnerships with district authorities and active use of social media. **Skills mismatches and credential non-recognition** persist because foreign employers often require certifications (occupational safety, driving, food safety) that Uzbek training does not automatically satisfy (IOM Uzbekistan, 2024); the AELM's 100,000-worker training target is a step toward closing this gap but needs more funding and stronger links to vocational institutions to reach full capacity. **Language barriers** remain the most consistently cited obstacle: most Uzbeks speak functional Russian but lack the A2/B1 proficiency



in English, German, Polish, Korean or Japanese that higher-paid roles require, and agencies that treat language training as core rather than optional — as the AELM’s Xorijda ish platform partly does by subsidizing certification costs — produce better outcomes (The Diplomat, 2024). Finally, **regulatory capacity** has not kept pace with the shift of placement responsibility from AELM to private agencies (mandated for completion by January 2026): in 2023 the AELM placed only 38,000 of a 200,000 target, reflecting dissemination and staffing gaps rather than lack of demand (Global Voices, 2025), and continuous audits, feedback platforms and clear sanctions will be needed to keep pace with a rapidly growing number of licensed operators (ILO, 2023; Ministry of Justice of Uzbekistan, 2024).

These patterns are consistent with the New Economics of Labor Migration (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Taylor, 1999): Tashkent region households appear to treat overseas agricultural placement as a income-diversification strategy against seasonal local risk rather than a simple wage-maximizing choice. The gap between legal AELM fees (under \$100) and the \$1,000–3,000 charged by unlicensed channels illustrates the enforcement problem identified by Matuszczyk (2026) and Sadovskeya (2024): the ILO’s “Employer Pays Principle” has force on paper, but its real effect depends on enforcement against a persistent grey economy of brokers. At the same time, these findings coincide with an institutional transition: the former AELM became the Agency for Migration in 2024, gained inspection authority over private agencies from January 2025, and is due to hand over overseas vacancy allocation entirely to licensed private agencies by January 2026, alongside a reduced licensing capital requirement intended to widen access for new operators (Ministry of Justice of Uzbekistan, 2024; UzDaily.uz, 2024). By late 2025, however, only 17 licensed private agencies were registered against 6.2 million Uzbeks who migrated in 2024 (Statistics Agency, 2023; Private Employment Agencies Association of Uzbekistan, 2025) — a capacity gap that will determine how quickly the sector can absorb this handover, and one that sharpens rather than resolves the ethical-recruitment debate framed by the ILO’s Employer Pays Principle (International Labor Organization, 1997; International Organization of Employers & Responsible Business Alliance, 2018). The findings also point to a three-tier system — compliant official channel, inconsistent licensed private channel, and non-compliant unofficial channel — that is more granular than the “licensed versus unlicensed” binary common in the literature (Sha, 2024; Van den Broek et al., 2016), suggesting oversight should target agency-level rather than sector-level compliance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

6.1 Recommendations for Practice

- Establish a dedicated agricultural labor-migration union that builds up-to-date databases of labor demand abroad, concludes bilateral agreements, and accredits agencies for agriculture-specific placement.
- Require agencies to bundle occupational-skills certification, A2/B1 language training, visa and documentation support, rights information, and migrant-community contacts into a single pre-departure package, with preferential licensing and financial support for agencies that do so.



- Prioritize public-awareness campaigns — through AELM’s website, the Xorijda ish platform, local webinars and social media — that clearly distinguish licensed agencies from fraudulent ones.
- Require the Agency for Migration to publish a yearly, publicly accessible register of licensed agencies together with per-agency complaint rates, consistent with ILO Convention No. 181’s transparency provisions (International Labor Organization, 1997, Art. 10; 2024), giving Tashkent region residents a verifiable reference point before they pay any fees.
- Disaggregate the Agency for Migration’s planned yearly licensing and inspection reporting by gender: all interviewees in this study were men, consistent with World Bank (2025) findings on the male-dominated profile of Central Asian short-term labor migration, and future research should specifically examine the risks facing women migrants from Tashkent region, who are not represented in these findings.

6.2 Recommendations for Theory

Future labor-market-intermediary research would benefit from a typology distinguishing formal-licensed, formal-unlicensed and informal kinship-based operators, since this study finds these three categories differ substantially in cost, risk and protection (Coe et al., 2010; Mense-Petermann, 2020). The New Economics of Labor Migration framework could also be extended to explicitly model channel choice (legal versus illegal) as part of a household’s risk-diversification decision, alongside its existing focus on the migration decision itself.

CONCLUSION

Employment agencies play a strategic, multifaceted role in improving agricultural employment outcomes for Tashkent region residents abroad — coordinating with foreign enterprises, building skills and language capacity, ensuring legal and documentary compliance, protecting migrants from exploitation, and generating remittance income that supports rural and suburban households. Realizing this potential fully will require continued public-awareness investment, stronger agency governance, and integration of overseas experience into regional agricultural development, so that properly governed agencies can connect more Tashkent region migrants to high-demand, well-paid positions abroad.

7.1 Limitations and Future Research

As noted in the Methodology, interviewees were drawn largely from Kibray district and the author’s own social network, self-reported financial data could not be independently verified, and the AELM-to-private-agency transition was still underway while writing. Future research should (a) survey a larger, randomly sampled population of Tashkent region agricultural workers, (b) track individual migrants across a full migration-and-return cycle, and (c) compare Tashkent region findings with those of other major sending regions (Samarkand, Andijan, Fergana) to test whether the drivers and barriers identified here are regional or national in scope.

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Data Availability Statement

The statistical data supporting this study are openly available from the cited sources (Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan, IOM Uzbekistan, World Bank). Interview data are not publicly available in order to protect participant confidentiality. If readers are curious to communicate with any of these interview respondents they could ask phone numbers or emails of these candidates from the author.

Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

AI language-model assistant was used (Claude, Chatgpt) to restructure and condense data from the author's master's dissertation into a journal-article format — reorganising sections, cutting non-essential content, and building summary tables — under the author's direction. All substantive materials including, text, findings, and interpretations originate from the author's original dissertation research; no new claims, data, or citations were generated by the AI tool. The author reviewed and edited all content and takes full responsibility for the final manuscript, consistent with COPE and ICMJE requirements that AI tools are not listed as authors and cannot bear accountability for published work.

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