

Worker Protection Against Recruitment Fees in Outsourcing Under Indonesia's Job Creation Law

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Article history:

Received in revised form: 28 June 2026

Acceptance date: 17 July 2026

Available online: 12 August 2026

Keywords:

Worker Protection; Outsourcing; Paid Recruitment; Labor Law; Job Creation Law.

How to Cite:

Noor, E. Z., & Zahiriyah, S. U. (2026). Worker Protection Against Recruitment Fees in Outsourcing Under Indonesia's Job Creation Law. *Al-Risalah Jurnal Ilmu Syariah Dan Hukum*, 26(2).

<https://doi.org/10.24252/al-risalah.v26i2.70216>

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Abstract

Paid recruitment practices carried out by several outsourcing companies remain a significant concern within Indonesia's industrial relations system because they place job seekers in a vulnerable position and expose them to economic exploitation. This study aims to examine the conformity of labor recruitment mechanisms in outsourcing arrangements with Indonesian labor regulations and to assess paid recruitment practices from the perspective of worker protection principles. The research employs a normative legal method using statutory, conceptual, case, and comparative approaches. Primary legal materials consist of Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, Law Number 6 of 2023 concerning Job Creation, and implementing regulations governing outsourcing and labor placement. The findings reveal that Indonesian labor law recognizes workers as legal subjects entitled to protection from the recruitment stage onward, indicating that any financial charges imposed on prospective employees are inconsistent with the principles of equal employment opportunity and non-discrimination. Furthermore, paid recruitment practices contradict the principles of worker protection, justice, and good faith because they impose economic burdens before an employment relationship is formally established. Accordingly, stronger supervision mechanisms and more effective law enforcement are required to prevent exploitative recruitment practices within the outsourcing system.

INTRODUCTION

The development of the industrial world and the increasing need for business efficiency encourage the use of the outsourcing system as one of the mechanisms to meet the needs of the workforce in Indonesia. This system provides flexibility for companies that use services in managing human resources, especially for certain jobs that are not directly related to the company's core activities.¹ However, behind these benefits, outsourcing practices still leave various legal issues related to the protection of workers' rights, especially at the recruitment stage.

One of the problems that is increasingly found is the practice of paid recruitment carried out by outsourcing companies to prospective workers. In this practice, job seekers are required to pay a certain amount of money under the pretext of administrative fees, training, uniforms, and job placement before being accepted for work.² Such a condition poses serious problems because it places workers as parties who bear the economic burden even before the employment relationship is legally formed. This situation is contrary to the basic principle of labor law which places workers as parties who must obtain protection from acts of exploitation and abuse of dominant positions by employers.³

Constitutionally, the right to decent work and livelihood is guaranteed in Article 27 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The guarantee was then further elaborated through Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower as amended by Law Number 6 of 2023 concerning the Stipulation of Government Regulations in Lieu of Law Number 2 of 2022 concerning Job Creation into Law. Article 31 and Article 32 of the Labor Law affirm that every worker has the same rights and opportunities to obtain a job, while the placement of labor must be carried out openly, objectively, fairly, and without discrimination.⁴ Thus, any form of levy that burdens job seekers is in principle not in line with the spirit of labor protection in Indonesia's positive law.

This problem is even more relevant when it is associated with the imbalance in the bargaining position between outsourcing companies and job seekers. The high unemployment rate and limited employment cause many job seekers to accept all the requirements set by the company, including the obligation to pay a certain amount of fees

¹ Lalu Husni, *Introduction to Indonesian Employment Law*, revised edition (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2023), 102.

² Rina Yulianti, "Paid Labor Recruitment Practices in Outsourcing Companies and Their Legal Protection," *Legal Arena Journal* 17, no. 1 (2024): 66.

³ Zainal Asikin, *Basics of Labor Law* (Depok: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2022), 87.

⁴ Indonesia, Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower as amended by Law Number 6 of 2023, Articles 31–32.

to get a job.⁵ From a protection law perspective, this condition indicates a structural vulnerability that places workers in a subordinate position so that it requires state intervention through effective legal instruments.⁶

Several previous studies have discussed the protection of outsourced workers in the Indonesian labor system. Research conducted by Nabila Putri Ananda focuses on the problem of job security of outsourced workers after changes in labor regulations and shows that the flexibility of employment relationships often reduces the certainty of protection for workers.⁷ Meanwhile, Talita Adwa Ardedia and her team examined the implications of the Constitutional Court Decision Number 168/PUU-XXI/2023 on the position of outsourcing workers and emphasized the importance of ensuring the protection of workers' normative rights in the outsourcing system.⁸ Another study conducted by M. Rafiq and Nur Hidayah specifically highlighted the practice of paid recruitment as a form of economic exploitation of job seekers, but the study focused more on the aspect of general protection without analyzing the construction of norms in the Manpower Law after the enactment of Law Number 6 of 2023.⁹

Based on this study, there is a space for novelty in this study. In contrast to previous research that focused on the status of outsourcing employment relations or worker protection in general, this study specifically analyzes the practice of paid recruitment by outsourcing companies as a form of violation of the principle of worker protection in the perspective of Law Number 13 of 2003 in conjunction with Law Number 6 of 2023. This research also places the recruitment stage as an integral part of labor law protection, so that the protection of workers is not only understood after the employment relationship is born, but from the process of obtaining a job takes place.

Departing from this description, this study focuses on two main problems, namely: first, how to regulate labor recruitment in the Indonesian labor law system; and second, whether the practice of paid recruitment by outsourcing companies is contrary to the principle of worker protection as stipulated in the national labor law. Through this discussion, it is hoped that a more comprehensive legal construction will be obtained

⁵ Ridwan HR, *State Administrative Law* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2022), 311.

⁶ Philipus M. Hadjon, *Legal Protection for the Indonesian People* (Surabaya: Bina Ilmu, 2022), 25.

⁷ Nabila Putri Ananda, "The Problem of the Outsourcing System on Labor Job Security," *Nagari Law Review* 7, no. 1 (2024): 98.

⁸ Talita Adwa Ardedia et al., "Analysis of the Position of Outsourcing Workers: A Study of the Constitutional Court Decision Number 168/PUU-XXI/2023," *Media Hukum Indonesia* 2, no. 4 (2024): 214.

⁹ M. Rafiq and Nur Hidayah, "Legal Protection of Workers in Paid Recruitment Practices," *Rechtsvinding Journal* 13, no. 2 (2024): 218.

regarding the protection of workers against exploitative recruitment practices and recommendations to strengthen supervision of outsourcing companies.

METHODS

This research uses a *normative legal research* type, which focuses on the study of legal norms, principles, theories, and doctrines related to worker protection against paid recruitment practices by outsourcing companies. Normative legal research was chosen because the object of study lies in the suitability of labor recruitment practices with the provisions of positive Indonesian law, especially Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower as amended through Law Number 6 of 2023 concerning the Determination of the Job Creation Perppu into Law.¹⁰

The first approach used is the *statute approach*. This approach is carried out by examining various regulations that regulate employment relations, labor placement, outsourcing systems, and the protection of workers, including Law Number 13 of 2003, Law Number 6 of 2023, and Government Regulation Number 35 of 2021.¹¹ This approach aims to identify the legal norms that are the basis for worker protection from the recruitment stage.

Furthermore, this research uses a *conceptual approach* by examining various legal theories and doctrines related to worker protection, the principle of justice, the principle of good faith, and the concept of protection of weak parties in legal relations. This approach is important to build a normative argument regarding the position of outsourced workers who are economically and socially more vulnerable than labor service providers.¹²

This study also applies a *case approach* through the study of paid recruitment practices carried out by outsourcing companies and various decisions and legal developments related to the protection of workers' rights. The case approach is used to understand the implementation of legal norms in practice as well as identify forms of violations of the principle of worker protection in the labor recruitment process.¹³

In addition, a *comparative approach* is also used by comparing the principles of worker protection in Indonesia with practices and regulations in other countries that expressly

¹⁰ Peter Mahmud Marzuki, *Legal Research*, Revised Edition (Jakarta: Kencana, 2022), 55.

¹¹ Indonesia, Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower as amended by Law Number 6 of 2023; Indonesia, Government Regulation Number 35 of 2021 concerning PKWT, Outsourcing, Working Time and Rest Time, and Termination of Employment.

¹² Satjipto Rahardjo, *Law* (Bandung: Citra Aditya Bakti, 2022), 55.

¹³ Constitutional Court Decision Number 91/PUU-XVIII/2020 concerning the Testing of Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation.

prohibit the charging of recruitment fees to job seekers. This approach is intended to gain a broader perspective on the legal protection model that can be adopted to strengthen the national employment system.¹⁴

The legal materials used consist of primary legal materials and secondary legal materials. Primary legal materials include laws and regulations, court decisions, and legal instruments related to employment and outsourcing. The secondary legal materials are obtained from books, scientific articles, legal journals, research results, and the opinions of experts relevant to the research theme. All of these legal materials were collected through *library research* and analyzed qualitatively using the deductive reasoning method, which is drawing conclusions from general legal norms to concrete problems regarding paid recruitment practices by outsourcing companies.¹⁵

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Labor Recruitment Arrangements in the Perspective of Labor Law in Indonesia

Labor recruitment is the initial stage in the formation of employment relationships that determine the fulfillment of citizens' constitutional rights to obtain decent work and livelihood. In the Indonesian legal system, the recruitment process is not seen solely as a company's administrative activity, but rather as an integral part of the protection of human rights in the field of employment. Therefore, every recruitment mechanism must be implemented based on the principles of fairness, openness, objectivity, and non-discriminatory treatment.¹⁶

The guarantee of the right to obtain a job is affirmed in Article 27 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia which states that every citizen has the right to work and a decent livelihood for humanity. These constitutional provisions are the basis for the formation of various labor regulations that regulate the placement of workers in a fair and humane manner.¹⁷ In this context, the state is obliged to ensure that the entire recruitment process does not create economic or social barriers that can reduce people's chances of getting a job.

More specific regulations regarding labor recruitment are regulated in Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower as amended through Law Number 6 of 2023 concerning the Determination of the Job Creation Perppu into Law. Article 31 emphasizes that every

¹⁴ Abdul Khakim, *Introduction to Indonesian Employment Law Based on the Job Creation Law* (Bandung: Citra Aditya Bakti, 2023), 61.

¹⁵ Soerjono Soekanto and Sri Mamudji, *Normative Law Research: A Brief Review* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2021), 14.

¹⁶ Lalu Husni, *Introduction to Indonesian Employment Law*, revised edition (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2023), 102.

¹⁷ Indonesia, Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945, Article 27 paragraph (2).

worker has the same right and opportunity to choose, obtain, or change jobs and earn a decent income at home and abroad.¹⁸ This provision shows that Indonesian labor law prioritizes the principle of equal access to work without distinguishing between economic conditions, social background, and other personal characteristics.

In addition, Article 32 of the Manpower Law stipulates that labor placement must be carried out openly, freely, objectively, fairly, and without discrimination. Workforce placement must also pay attention to the suitability between the worker's abilities, skills, talents, interests, and competencies with the job available.¹⁹ Thus, the recruitment process should not be used as a means to obtain economic benefits through the imposition of costs on job seekers because such actions have the potential to eliminate the principle of equal employment opportunities guaranteed by laws and regulations.

According to Abdul Khakim, labor recruitment is a fundamental stage in the birth of employment relationships so that every procedure carried out must uphold the protection of prospective workers. If at the recruitment stage there has been an act that is detrimental to the worker, then the employment relationship that is formed has the potential to contain injustice from the beginning and can cause violations of the normative rights of workers in the future.²⁰ The opinion emphasizes that legal protection for workers does not begin after the employment agreement is signed, but from the process of finding and placing workers.

In modern employment practices, outsourcing companies play an important role as labor providers for user companies. The outsourcing system is basically recognized and allowed by Indonesian law as long as its implementation meets the provisions of the applicable laws and regulations. Government Regulation Number 35 of 2021 provides a legal framework regarding the implementation of outsourcing, including the obligation of service providers to guarantee the rights of workers placed in user companies.²¹

Nonetheless, the flexibility afforded to outsourcing companies should not be interpreted as freedom to set hiring terms that are detrimental to workers. Asri Wijayanti emphasized that the outsourcing system must continue to be implemented based on the principles of labor protection and respect for human dignity, so that the existence of outsourcing companies should not reduce the basic rights of workers guaranteed by

¹⁸ Indonesia, Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower as amended by Law Number 6 of 2023, Article 31.

¹⁹ Ibid., Article 32.

²⁰ Abdul Khakim, *Introduction to Indonesian Employment Law Based on the Job Creation Law* (Bandung: Citra Aditya Bakti, 2023), 55.

²¹ Indonesia, Government Regulation Number 35 of 2021 concerning Fixed-Time Work Agreements, Outsourcing, Working Time and Rest Time, and Termination of Employment.

law.²² Therefore, any form of recruitment fee levied on prospective workers is contrary to the main purpose of outsourcing arrangements in the Indonesian labor law system.

In the perspective of fairness theory, the labor recruitment process should reflect a balance of rights and obligations between the company and the worker. Gustav Radbruch stated that good law must fulfill three basic values, namely justice, utility, and legal certainty.²³ These three values require that the opportunity to get a job is determined based on the competence and ability of the worker, not on the basis of the financial ability to pay a certain amount of costs to the labor provider.

The principle of legal certainty also requires transparency in the recruitment process. Companies are required to provide clear information about their positions, wage system, working hours, leave rights, social security, and the form of employment relationship to be carried out. According to Lalu Husni, information disclosure in the recruitment process is the main requirement for the realization of a healthy working relationship because workers have the right to fully understand the legal consequences of the job they will receive.²⁴ If the company conceals certain information or charges a fee that has no legal basis, then the action is contrary to the principle of good faith in industrial relations.

Based on the provisions of the constitution, laws, legal theories, and doctrines of experts, it can be understood that the labor recruitment arrangement in Indonesia in principle places workers as legal subjects who must obtain protection from the early stages of recruitment. Therefore, Indonesia's labor law system does not give legitimacy to practices that limit people's access to work through the imposition of certain fees. Instead, the entire recruitment process must be carried out in a professional, transparent, and oriented manner towards respect for workers' rights as part of the protection of human rights in the field of employment.

2. Paid Recruitment Practices as a Violation of the Principles of Worker Protection

The principle of worker protection is one of the fundamental principles in Indonesian labor law which places workers as parties who must obtain legal guarantees because they are in a weaker position than employers. This imbalance is mainly caused by workers' economic dependence on work as a source of livelihood. Therefore, the state is obliged to present legal instruments that are able to protect workers from various forms of

²² Asri Wijayanti, *Post-Job Creation Employment Law* (Surabaya: Airlangga University Press, 2023), 112.

²³ Bernard L. Tanya, *Legal Theory: Strategies for Human Order Across Spaces and Generations* (Yogyakarta: Genta Publishing, 2022), 130.

²⁴ Zainal Asikin, *Basics of Labor Law* (Depok: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2022), 87.

exploitation, including paid recruitment practices carried out by outsourcing companies.²⁵

According to Satjipto Rahardjo, the law must essentially provide protection to the community and protect vulnerable parties from the abuse of power by stronger parties.²⁶ In the context of industrial relations, this principle requires that workers should not be used as objects of economic gain outside of a legitimate employment relationship. The recruitment of labor that requires the payment of a certain amount of money actually shows the use of the social and economic conditions of job seekers who need work to meet their living needs.

The practice of paid recruitment is generally carried out through various forms of levies, such as administrative fees, training fees, uniform fees, job placement fees, and other forms of payment charged to prospective workers before being accepted for employment. Although often packaged as an administrative obligation, the practice essentially creates an economic burden that job seekers should not bear.²⁷ As a result, access to job opportunities is no longer based on competencies and abilities, but on the financial ability of prospective workers to meet the demands of the company.

From the perspective of employment law, this condition is contrary to the principle of equal employment opportunities for every citizen. Article 31 of Law Number 13 of 2003 emphasizes that every worker has the same right and opportunity to obtain a decent job and income without discrimination.²⁸ If outsourcing companies require certain payments as a prerequisite for being hired, then there has been substantive economic discrimination that limits people's access to work.

In addition to violating the principle of equality, the practice of paid recruitment is also contrary to the principle of good faith in employment relations. Agus Yudha Hernoko explained that the principle of good faith requires each party to act honestly, openly, and not take advantage of the weaknesses of the other party to gain unilateral benefits.²⁹ In labor recruitment practices, companies are supposed to carry out the selection process professionally and transparently without charging fees that do not have

²⁵ Satjipto Rahardjo, *Law* (Bandung: Citra Aditya Bakti, 2022), 74.

²⁶ Rina Yulianti, "Paid Labor Recruitment Practices in Outsourcing Companies and Their Legal Protection," *Legal Arena Journal* 17, no. 1 (2024): 66.

²⁷ Indonesia, Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower as amended by Law Number 6 of 2023, Article 31.

²⁸ Indonesia, Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower as amended by Law Number 6 of 2023, Article 31.

²⁹ Agus Yudha Hernoko, *Covenant Law: The Principle of Proportionality in Commercial Contracts* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2023), 75.

a clear legal basis. When companies make the hiring process a source of economic profit, the legal relationship that is formed loses the dimension of justice which is the main goal of labor law.

The practice can also be analyzed through the theory of legal protection put forward by Philipus M. Hadjon. According to him, legal protection consists of preventive protection and repressive protection. Preventive protection aims to prevent rights violations through the establishment of clear legal norms, while repressive protection is realized through dispute resolution mechanisms and law enforcement after violations occur.³⁰ In the context of paid recruitment, Indonesia's labor law has actually provided preventive protection through regulations regarding labor placement that must be carried out in a fair, objective, and non-discriminatory manner. However, weak supervision has caused the practice to still take place in various business sectors, especially in the outsourcing system.

This phenomenon shows that there is a gap between legal norms (*das sollen*) and practices that develop in society (*das sein*). Normatively, workers are placed as legal subjects that must be protected by the state. However, in practice, job seekers are often forced to accept various conditions that are detrimental due to limited employment and high economic needs.³¹ This condition causes workers to not have a balanced bargaining position in dealing with labor service providers.

Research conducted by M. Rafiq and Nur Hidayah shows that the practice of collecting recruitment fees is a form of economic exploitation that places workers as a source of profit even before the employment relationship is formed.³² The findings reinforce the argument that legal protection of workers should begin at the recruitment stage, not just when the employment relationship is already in place. Preventive protection is important to prevent economic and social losses experienced by job seekers.

In addition, the Constitutional Court through several of its rulings affirmed that the state has a constitutional obligation to guarantee the right to work and decent livelihood as part of the human rights of citizens. The Constitutional Court Decision Number 91/PUU-XVIII/2020 emphasizes the importance of protecting workers' rights in the implementation of labor policies, including in flexible employment relationships such as

³⁰ Ridwan HR, *State Administrative Law* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2022), 311.

³¹ Ridwan HR, *State Administrative Law* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2022), 311

³² M. Rafiq and Nur Hidayah, "Legal Protection of Workers in Paid Recruitment Practices," *Rechtsvinding Journal* 13, no. 2 (2024): 218.

outsourcing.³³ Thus, any company policy that causes exploitation of workers must be seen as contrary to the spirit of constitutional protection.

From the perspective of Gustav Radbruch's theory of justice, law must simultaneously realize justice, utility, and legal certainty.³⁴ Paid recruitment practices clearly do not meet these three values. In terms of justice, workers are burdened with disproportionate economic obligations; In terms of benefits, the practice only benefits the company without providing equal benefits to workers; Meanwhile, in terms of legal certainty, there is no normative basis that justifies the imposition of recruitment fees on job seekers.

Based on this normative analysis, the practice of paid recruitment by outsourcing companies can be qualified as a form of violation of the principle of worker protection because: first, it burdens workers economically before the employment relationship is formed; second, creating an imbalance of bargaining positions between workers and companies; third, contrary to the principle of equal and non-discriminatory employment opportunities; fourth, violating the basis of good faith in industrial relations; and fifth, it has the potential to cause exploitation of economically vulnerable community groups.

Therefore, strengthening labor supervision and law enforcement against outsourcing companies is an urgent need in realizing effective worker protection. The government needs to clarify the prohibition on all forms of recruitment fees and provide strict sanctions to companies that carry out this practice. Thus, the outsourcing system can continue to run as an instrument of business efficiency without sacrificing the basic rights of workers guaranteed by the constitution and laws and regulations.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the labor recruitment arrangement in the Indonesian labor law system has placed workers as legal subjects who are obliged to obtain protection from the recruitment stage. Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower as amended through Law Number 6 of 2023 affirms the principles of equal employment opportunities, openness, objectivity, and the prohibition of discrimination in labor placement. Therefore, the entire recruitment process, including those carried out by outsourcing companies, must be carried out without charging fees to job seekers and ensuring the fulfillment of workers' rights in a fair and proportionate manner.

³³ Constitutional Court Decision Number 91/PUU-XVIII/2020.

³⁴ Bernard L. Tanya, *Legal Theory: Strategies for Human Order Across Spaces and Generations* (Yogyakarta: Genta Publishing, 2022), 130.

Furthermore, the practice of paid recruitment by outsourcing companies is a form of deviation from the principle of worker protection because it creates an economic burden before the employment relationship is formed, weakens the bargaining position of job seekers, and opens up space for labor exploitation. This practice is contrary to the principles of justice, the principle of good faith, and the principle of non-discriminatory employment opportunities as guaranteed in Indonesian labor law. Thus, it is necessary to strengthen labor supervision, more effective law enforcement, and formulate policies that expressly prohibit all forms of recruitment fees so that the outsourcing system continues to run in line with the goals of legal protection of workers and respect for human dignity.

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