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"Expatriate Workers and Its Repercussions on the Economy and Labor Market in Iraq After 2003"

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Abstract

The demand for expatriate labor to Iraq increased after 2003 as a result of the openness that Iraq experienced, but this expatriate labor, which was requested at an increasing rate, has had economic, social, and political effects on the Iraqi economy in general, and the Iraqi labor market in particular. This is due to the high rates of unemployment, as most of these expatriate workers cause competition to local labor, and thus cause repercussions on the Iraqi economy as a whole, except for those expatriate workers coming with companies working in the oil sector. Iraq's GDP.

Keywords:- Expatriate workers, the Iraqi economy, the Iraqi labor market.

1- Introduction

Iraq has suffered from multiple problems as a result of the wars it has fought, and as a result of the economic, social and political conditions it has gone through, which contributed to the poor performance of the human forces working in various public institutions, as a result of the decline in Iraq's interest in education due to the economic embargo, and then the 2003 war. This coincided with Iraq's desire to advance the requirements of development after the devastation of the war, which prompted some private sector institutions to request the import of expatriate workers from abroad to Iraq to carry out some work that the Iraqi citizen is not accustomed to doing, or to work in the oil sector, except the continuation of some of these institutions to demand these expatriate workers, in turn, contributed to the increase in the number of unemployment in Iraq. The problem of the research is represented in the economic, social, and political conditions that Iraq experienced after 2003, the weak performance of the workforce, the weakness of training and professional qualification, and the universities' dependence on humanitarian disciplines at the expense of scientific disciplines, that is, their reliance on quantity rather than quality, which contributed to the demand for the expatriate workers under the pretext of bridging the gap between the needs of the labor market and the qualifications of entrants to that market, which caused a noticeable rise of unemployment as a result of preferring the expatriate worker at the expense of the Iraqi one, as well as their impact on the Iraqi economy through the increase in the frequency of their transfers, in addition to their depletion of hard currency through the high rates of remittances outside Iraq, which put these expatriate workers pressure on the Iraqi economy, and therefore there was a need to take note of this phenomenon and know its related consequences, and how to confront it.

The research problem is the increase in the number of expatriate workers in the Iraqi labor market after 2003 contributed in one way or another to the rise in unemployment in Iraq due to the lack of their qualifications, which leads to a decrease in their wages, which makes their employment more beneficial than local labor, but it contributes to influencing the economy through increasing their transfers of foreign currency to their countries, which is reflected negatively on the Iraqi economy.

The research aims to:

A- Identify the reasons that led to the demand for expatriate workers

B- Clarify the repercussions left by expatriate workers on the Iraqi economy in general, and the labor market in Iraq in particular, after 2003.

1-1 Research Hypothesis

The study starts from the hypothesis that the expatriate workers have repercussions on both the Iraqi economy and the labor market in Iraq after 2003, represented by the high numbers of local unemployment, high levels of external transfers, and that the solution lies in knowing the quality of the incoming labor, so as not to compete with local labor .

2- Theoretical Framework for Expatriate workers

2-1 The concept of expatriate labor and the factors that call for its transfer

Expatriate workers are workers who enter the country legally or illegally, intending to work for a wage in a country of which they are not nationals, whether they are bound by a work contract before or after entering the country, to search for a better standard of living or safety (Mahmoud, 8, 2015).

Expatriate labor is one of the types of international migration, or the so-called external migration, that occurs by the movement of several individuals or groups from one country to another in search of work, escape from persecution, or aspiration for better opportunities in life. Castles classified international migrants (Frank, 1979, 980):

❖ **Migrants, temporary workers:** They are the category of men and women who migrate for a specific period of a few months to a few years to join a job and send their money back to their country.

❖ **Highly skilled migrants:** They are those who have qualifications, such as executives, scientists, doctors, and others who move in the internal labor market space of companies operating across their national borders, international organizations, or those who seek to work in international labor markets looking rare specialties.

❖ **Illegal immigrants (illegal):** They are those immigrants who enter a country to look for work informally and do not have the necessary documents and permits for that.

❖ **Refugees:** A refugee is a person residing outside the country of his nationality and is unable and unwilling to return to his country of origin, as a result of well-founded fears of persecution based on sex, race, nationality, religion, or political opinion. The signatory States undertake International agreements to protect refugees, by allowing them to reside on their lands, and obtaining permits to reside temporarily or permanently.

❖ **Asylum seekers:** They are cross-border seekers looking for protection.

❖ **Forced migration:** This type does not include refugees and asylum seekers only, but also those who are forced by natural disasters, wars, or development projects to move.

❖ **Returning migrants:** They are migrants who return to their countries of origin, after spending a period in another country. Returning migrants often have a positive view of society, due to what they may bring with them of capital, skill, and useful experience for economic development.

Three types of international labor migration can be distinguished (Salman, 2014: 138):

- ◆ **Migration of competencies:** It means the transfer of highly qualified individuals who are graduates of higher education and above, such as doctors, engineers, scientists, and other experiences from one country to another to work and reside in it, and it is called brain drain.
- ◆ **Labor migration:** It shows the movement of the labor component from one country to another, whether formally or informally.
- ◆ **Bulk Labor Migration (Free Visa):** It is the process of bringing in or importing ten workers or less from abroad, whether they need their services or to make a living through them.

2-2 The factors that call for the movement of expatriate workers

As for the most important factors that call for the influx of expatriate workers, they are as follows (Mahmoud, 2015: 20):

1-The extent of the need for manpower in various professions, specializations, and skills to fill the shortage experienced by the local labor market because the outputs of education do not match the requirements of the labor market.

2- The extent of the problem of the population vacuum that some countries suffer from, as the relatively small population density in some societies plays with the abundance of capital that can be directed to some economic and investment projects until the demand for this expatriate labor is met, as is the case in the Arab Gulf countries.

3- The availability of political and economic instability will encourage immigration.

4- Existence of plans to complete the infrastructure, which means an accelerated business case and plans for economic development and urban expansion.

5- The extent to which wages are high, the standard of living is improved, and a kind of social welfare is achieved.

6- The availability of the legal framework that encourages immigration for job seekers and the extent of society's response to this employment.

7- The existence of societal acceptance in the countries receiving immigration, in other words, the existence of awareness of accepting the other regardless of religious, ethnic, or customs differences.

8- The existence of good job opportunities, with better services and proximity to densely populated areas, as well as good treatment and non-discrimination of any kind.

9- The private sector plays a major role in attracting and spreading expatriate workers, most of whom have low educational qualifications, and they work in the construction and building sectors, wholesale trade, manufacturing industries, and others.

10- The strategic location of some countries is one of the reasons for the delegation of workers to them and they have become the focus of attention of workers from poor countries with a miserable reality and the small population and the licenses of expatriate workers.

Some believe that the reasons for the flow of Asian labor to the countries of the Middle East are represented by three factors, as follows (Al-Qadi, 1990: 29-30):

1- As a result of the harsh and special conditions experienced by the oil peoples before the discovery of oil and the lack of comfort in those countries, and as a result of the flow of oil and the increase in its prices, these cities tried to draw up huge development plans, which prompted them to need trained and skilled technical labor in large numbers, which prompted those countries to use Asian labor.

2- Migrant Asian workers' satisfaction with working in conditions that are not acceptable to local workers and Arabs, including the acceptance of lower wages and more hours of work, all in difficult professions, as well as working in camps to facilitate the work of those who supervise them and facilitate their investment.

3- Most of the conservative countries tend to reduce their dependence on Arab labor, because of their concern, and that the presence of a large number of Arab labor leads to cases of conflict between them and the citizens, and there is a prevailing belief, that relying on the labor of any nationality will be a pressure card on the host countries, due to the economic or social agreements that are concluded, which prompted some of these countries to work on diversifying the nationalities of migrant workers from different countries.

3- Expatriate workers to Iraq

3-1 The nature of Expatriate workers to Iraq

The phenomenon of expatriate workers in Iraq continues to be of concern to the Iraqi authorities at a time when several governmental and non-governmental parties are calling for stopping the import of expatriate workers because their presence increases the size of unemployment, but private companies and offices are taking advantage of the confusing conditions in Iraq, and they are entering them without any approvals from the competent authorities due to their low wages compared to what Iraqi workers who work in the same field demand. This phenomenon has affected Iraq's security on the one hand and the increasing number of unemployment on the other hand. Therefore, the dimensions of the influx of foreign workers should be considered so as not to affect national security and also so as not to affect the social and cultural climate.

Some families seek to recruit foreign workers to take care of their children while the housewife is away from her home. Economic experts believe that the increased dependence on foreign labor is a reason for the spread of unemployment in Iraq, which increased significantly after the year (2003). This cheap labor has become preferred in the labor market, and the Iraqi economy is already suffering from chronic unemployment, which is difficult to solve only during the government's direct and effective intervention by legalizing the entry of foreign workers into Iraq, as well as many other measures. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs recorded during the years 2017 and 2018 the presence of more than 100,000 foreign workers who entered the Iraqi labor field legally, compared to (13) thousand Iraqi workers (regarding official immigrant workers). Because of this, the number of the unemployed in Iraq increased, and their rate, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics, during 2018 reached 22.6%, as apparent unemployment only, while the International Monetary Fund announced that the percentage of the unemployed in Iraq exceeds (40%) The Arab Monetary Fund, Miscellaneous Years: Miscellaneous Pages.

Table (1) shows the evolution of the volume of incoming immigration to Iraq after 2003, as the data below shows that the number of immigrants to Iraq for work was (1254520) million people in 2003, at a rate of 4.7% of the population, but in 2014, the number of immigrants increased to Iraq (1883,768) immigrants, at a rate of (5.1) of the total population, and this goes back to the period when ISIS was present in Iraq, where many immigrants came to Iraq to join the ranks of the organization, and others came for work. However, we must not lose sight of the numbers entering Iraq that change the status of their entry, circumvent the law, or enter illegally, whose number in some unofficial

statistics may reach (1.5) each year. The incoming immigration to Iraq in 2020 reached (1254,520) at a rate of (4.7%) of the total population, and Figure (1) illustrates this.

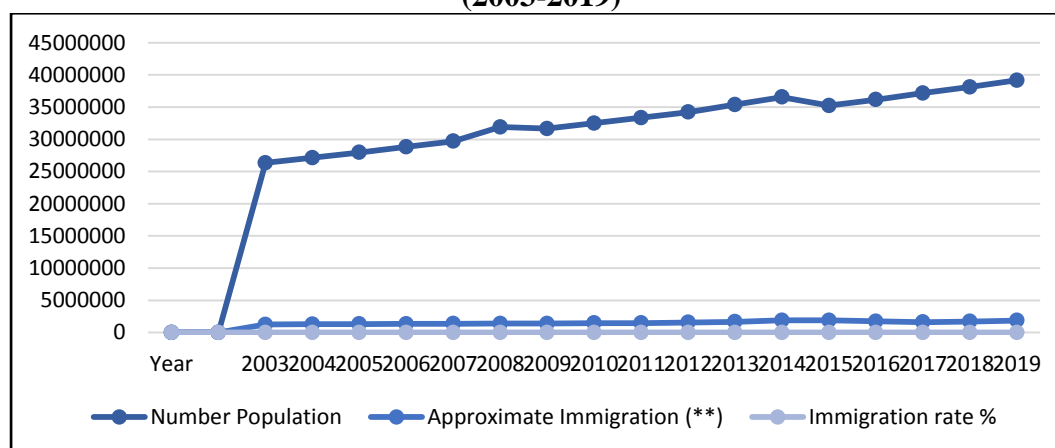
Table (1) Evolution of the volume of incoming immigration to Iraq for the period (2003-2019)

Immigration rate %	Number Approximate Immigration(**)	Number Population(*)	Year
4.7	1254520	26340000	2003
4.7	1289807	27139000	2004
4.6	1309879	27963000	2005
4.6	1332457	28810000	2006
4.6	1378775	29682000	2007
4.3	1392601	31895000	2008
4.4	1402015	31664000	2009
4.4	1459339	32490000	2010
4.4	1475144	33338000	2011
4.5	1568883	34208000	2012
4.7	1667350	35377000	2013
5.1	1883768	36561000	2014
5.3	1897055	35233000	2015
4.8	1740711	36156600	2016
4.3	1628003	37176800	2017
4.5	1717636	38124000	2018
4.7	1855892	39145600	2019

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on:

- (*) The Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, Central Agency for Statistics and Information Technology, Annual Statistical Collection for the Years (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019), multiple pages, Baghdad.
- (**) The Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Loans and Employment Department, Statistics Division, number of expatriate workers to Iraq for the period (2003-2019).

Figure (1) The evolution of the incoming immigration rate to Iraq for the period (2003-2019)



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on data from Table (1).

3-2 The reasons for hiring expatriate workers

Several reasons led to the need for expatriate workers, especially Asian ones, and these reasons are (Al-Sabah, 2014: 8):

- ❖ At the beginning, expatriate workers were recruited to work within the Green Zone, based on contracts concluded with the multinational forces.
- ❖ The reluctance of national workers to work in some professions.
- ❖ National workers prefer to work in the administrative field and government departments, due to the excellence of government work with job stability.
- ❖ Low level of wages, as the foreign worker are more obedient, and perhaps more skilled than his Iraqi counterpart in technical works, more tolerant of working conditions, and more receptive to performing various service work, and the cash wage of the foreign worker is less, especially in building and construction works, and the jobs in which foreign workers are concentrated, especially Asians, may not require high skills, as the illiteracy rate among Asian workers exceeds its Iraqi counterpart.
- ❖ Some private employment offices specialized in importing Asian labor.
- ❖ The Iraqi worker lacks skills, efficient training, and experience in operating and managing modern mechanization, which he has stopped dealing with for two decades.
- ❖ The relatively low wages of expatriate workers play a major role in importing them, as their wages range between (400-600 dollars) except for workers in the oil sector, as their wages are much higher so that some of them receive a salary equal to twice the salary of the Iraqi worker for the same specialty, except their social cost will not necessarily be the same, as the jobs in which expatriate workers are concentrated do not require high skills. Illiteracy rates among expatriate workers, especially Asians, are higher than those of their Iraqi counterparts.
- ❖ The proximity of expatriate workers to the worksite, which leads to them not being late on the way to the workplace, unlike the Iraqi workers who invoke social concerns, the difficulty of access, or pretending to waste working times, and this, in turn, contributes to reduced productivity, as well as increasing costs on employer.
- ❖ Expatriate workers are distinguished by their obedience to the employer, and they work long hours ranging from (12-14) hours per day.
- ❖ The presence of employment agencies in Asian countries, especially labor-sending agencies such as the Philippines and Bangladesh, whether governmental or private, has contributed to the employment of thousands of Asian workers, in addition to the fact that largely Asian companies are working to recruit thousands of Asian workers from their workers and then build the establishment of camps or gatherings for workers at the worksite.
- ❖ Recruiting Asian workers is easier and faster in various domestic and personal occupations. As the recruitment of these workers is not carried out according to a prior plan supervised by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, but rather the matter is left to the private sector, which operates according to the market mechanism that includes the wages paid to them, and their arrival as soon as possible.
- ❖ Women went out to work or study, as women became more ambitious than before to develop themselves and participate in economic life, which led to dependence on servants and nannies to raise and take care of children.

❖ Simulation and imitation, as a result of the high standard of living of the family in Iraq, prompted some families to switch from basic needs to luxury needs, as well as the desire to imitate and imitate some Gulf countries through the use of expatriate workers, ignoring the repercussions that they may have on society first and on the economy second.

4- The repercussions left by expatriate workers on the Iraqi economy and the labor market in Iraq after 2003

4-1 The repercussions left by expatriate workers on the labor market in Iraq after 2003

As a result of the conditions that Iraq is going through, the numbers and rates of unemployment continued to record high numbers after 2003, and these numbers increased significantly. It is unambiguous that they are associated with the delegations of workers from abroad, and their use in some cases of some marginal services that the Iraqi citizen can accomplish if made available. It has the opportunity, and accordingly, the data of Table (3) shows that the percentage of the unemployed, when compared to the numbers of expatriates, is high, as the year 2013 recorded its highest percentage, which amounted to (32.9%), while the lowest percentage reached in 2019 where it reached (12.1). Table (2) and Figure (2) illustrate this.

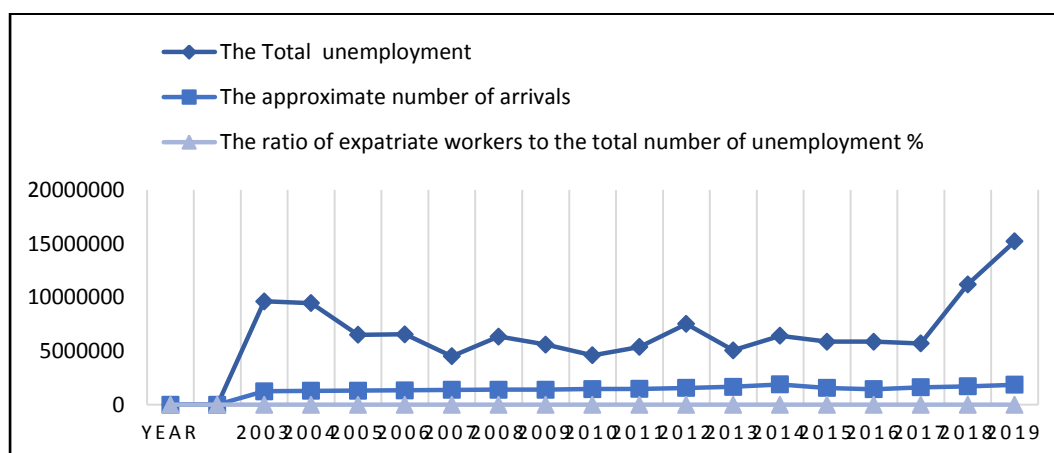
Table (2) The evolution of the number of the unemployed in Iraq concerning the number of arrivals for the period (2003-2019)

The ratio of expatriate workers to the total number of unemployment%	The approximate number of arrivals	The unemployment total	Year
13.0	1254520	9622002	2003
13.6	1289807	9455227	2004
20.1	1309879	6506990	2005
20.3	1332457	6554275	2006
30.5	1378775	4514632	2007
21.9	1392601	6343915	2008
25.0	1402015	5598195	2009
31.6	1459339	4603833	2010
27.4	1475144	5374085	2011
20.8	1568883	7515497	2012
32.9	1667350	5058911	2013
29.3	1883768	6416455	2014
32.3	1897055	5862771	2015
29.6	1740711	5862771	2016
28.5	1628003	5702920	2017
15.3	1717636	11200831	2018
12.1	1855892	15215894	2019

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on:

▪ Arab Monetary Fund, Unified Arab Economic Report for the years (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019), Abu Dhabi - UAE United Arab Emirates, and table (1).

Figure (2) The evolution of the number of the unemployed in Iraq concerning the number of arrivals for the period (2003-2019)



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on data from Table (2).

4-2 The second requirement: the repercussions left by expatriate workers on the Iraqi economy after 2003

Remittances play a crucial role in the formation of national savings and in financing the currents of private consumption spending, capital formation, and all kinds of imports (Saad El-Din and Al-Fadil, 1983, 75), where the Central Bank of Iraq remittances are estimated daily at \$170 million, which leads to the weakening of the Iraqi economy, and it becomes clear to us from Table (3) that the percentage of transfers from the gross domestic product has varied after it was in 2005 (4.2%), this percentage increased in 2008; it reached (5.1%), then decreased to reach (1.4%) in 2013 due to the deficit in the government budget, then increased in 2015 to reach (23.5%) and this percentage continued to rise until it reached its highest level in 2017 to reach (30.5%). Then, it gradually decreased until it reached its percentage in 2018 (29%) and then declined in 2019 to reach (20.3%), and Figure (3) illustrates this.

Table (3) Expatriate workers transfers outside Iraq and their percentage of GDP for the period (2003-2019)

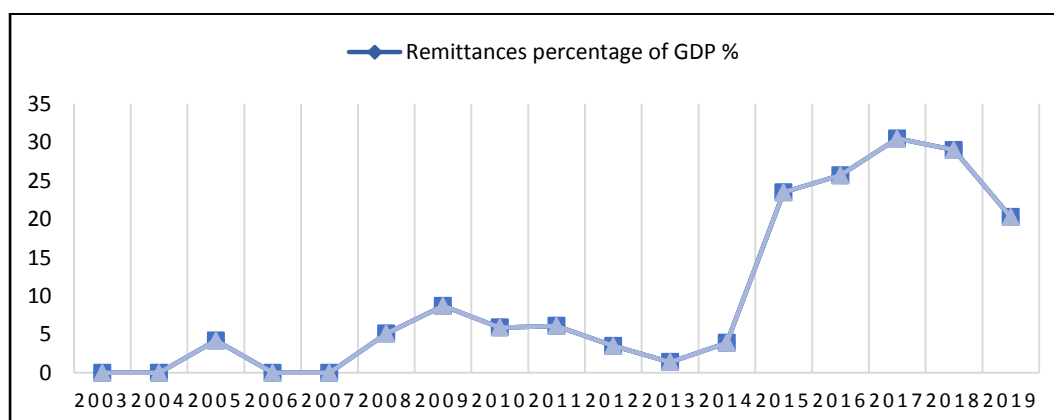
Remittances percentage of GDP % (****)	GDP at constant prices (trillion dinars) 2007 = 100(***)	Transfers one billion Dinar(***)	Iraqi dinar exchange rate (**)	GDP (billion) dollars (*)	Transfers (Million) dollars(*)	Year
-	-	87540	1459	-	60	2003
-	5318676	-	1452	3663	-	2004
4.2	7337655	310987.3	1469	4995	211.7	2005
-	9556038	-	1467	6514	-	2006
-	11149420	-	1255	8884	-	2007
5.1	1569988	80169.6	1193	1316	67.2	2008
8.7	1306890	114309	1170	1117	97.7	2009
5.9	1620450	96057	1170	1385	82.1	2010
6.1	2170350	134550	1170	1855	115	2011

3.5	2539548	90948	1166	2178	78	2012
1.4	2902002	42923.9	1237	2346	34.7	2013
3.9	2838660	111199	1210	2346	91.9	2014
23.5	2231175	524671.8	1257	1775	417.4	2015
25.7	2086557	537923.7	1193	1749	450.9	2016
30.5	2508265	767362.3	1283	1955	598.1	2017
29	2683674	780444	1197	2242	652	2018
20.3	2785790	567035	1190	2341	476.5	2019

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on:

- (*) World Bank: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/home>.
- (**) Central Bank of Iraq, Directorate General of Statistics and Research, "Annual Bulletin for the years (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011)", Baghdad.
- (**) Central Bank of Iraq, Directorate General of Statistics and Research, "Annual Statistical Bulletin for the years (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019)", Baghdad.
- (***) Arab Monetary Fund, Unified Arab Economic Report for the years (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019), Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- (***) International Migration Report 2015, United Nations and International Organization for Migration, 2015.
- (****) Percentages from the researcher's calculation.

Figure (3)
Percentage of transfers from GDP in Iraq for the period (2003-2019)



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on data from Table (3).

Foreign exchange remittances have had negative effects in the short term in financing development needs and society as basic resources, and a small percentage of them were used to build and operate some factories and factories, especially in cities. As for the long-term, it becomes clear that the high demand and excessive import of manufactured foodstuffs, consumer goods, and luxury, which was accompanied by the increase in debts, loans, and foreign aid that the Iraqi government relied on to pay import bills (National Center for Research and Studies, 2008: 7).

5- Conclusions

A- The low wages of expatriate workers contributed to their spread in Iraq, where the low wages of expatriate workers to Iraq is considered an advantage that supported their spread, in addition to the poor economic conditions and the spread of unemployment in the countries exporting these workers. Therefore, Iraq was a source of attraction for these different nationalities to work in Iraq, as a result of its high wages compared to their countries, the availability of job opportunities, and the high level of services they receive.

B- The poor skill of local workers has led to their replacement by foreign workers. Young people look down on work and refuse to join professions and manual work that requires physical effort and prefer looking for a government job even if it comes after a long period.

C- The spread of expatriate labor in the country is causing harm to the national economy, as this labor drains a large part of the country's financial resources through foreign transfers to their countries, which negatively affects the national economy.

D- The spread of expatriate workers in the country leads to the emergence of multiple crimes such as theft and murder. As well as the possibility of using it for the benefit of a foreign power and the entry of foreign migration within the colonial schemes.

E- The spread of expatriate workers in the country leads to an increase in the percentage of unemployed youth, as well as a reduction in wages as a result of the increase in supply in the labor market.

F- The increase in the number of graduate students contributes to a significant part of the change in unemployment rates, as well as the increase in the number of private universities that have contributed significantly to this increase, and the trend towards vocational and training studies have been weakened due to the low view of learners.

6- Recommendations

A- The necessity of enacting laws to prevent expatriate workers from entering the country until after the full use of all Iraqi human capabilities is achieved.

B- Emphasis on building an accurate information base that contains labor market surveys and its needs of specialties and professions.

C- Supporting the private sector to provide job opportunities for the unemployed.

D- Work to encourage the establishment of labor-intensive projects and grant more privileges and exemptions to these projects because of their importance in providing many job opportunities that contribute to reducing unemployment.

E- Educating citizens that some members of the expatriate workforce have ideas, cultures, and religions that are different from our society, our customs, and our traditions, and therefore their danger will be greater than their benefit in the long run.

F- Rationalizing the use of expatriate workers and limiting this to professions, crafts, and specializations that there are no national workers to do.

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(العمالة الوافدة وانعكاسها على الإقتصاد العراقي وسوق العمل في العراق
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مستخلص البحث:

لقد تزايد الطلب على العمالة الوافدة في العراق بعد عام 2003 نتيجة الإنفتاح الذي مرّ به العراق، إلا ان هذه العمالة الوافدة والتي تم طلبها بوتائر متصاعدة، قد خلّقت آثار اقتصادية، واجتماعية، وسياسية على الإقتصاد العراقي بشكل عام، وسوق العمل العراقي بشكل خاص، وقد تجلّى ذلك بارتفاع معدلات البطالة، حيث ان معظم تلك العمالة الوافدة تتسبب في منافسة العمالة المحلية، وبالتالي تُسبب تداعيات على الإقتصاد العراقي ككل، عدا تلك العمالة الوافدة القادمة مع الشركات التي تعمل في قطاع النفط، وتتمثل تلك التداعيات بارتفاع اعداد البطالة، وارتفاع نسبة التحويلات من الناتج المحلي الإجمالي العراقي.

المصطلحات الرئيسية للبحث: العمالة الوافدة، الإقتصاد العراقي ، سوق العمل العراقي.

* البحث مُستل من رسالة ماجستير.