ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 2| February2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753|| ISI Value: 1.188

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS AND LABOUR PRACTICES OF CONTRACT WORKERS IN SELECTED PUBLIC SECTOR ENTERPRISES: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Contract labour has become a structural feature of modern public sector enterprises, especially in high-capital industries such as oil and gas. Organisations including ***GAIL (India) Limited*** *and* ***Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL)*** *increasingly rely on contract workers for both core and ancillary operations to maintain flexibility and cost efficiency. While contractual engagement expands operational capacity, it simultaneously raises concerns regarding employment equity, occupational safety, and social security among others.*

This paper is an effort to analyse various research articles of scholars based on employment conditions and labour practices affecting contract workers, applying these insights to the context of GAIL and BPCL as representative oil and gas PSEs. The paper explores key variables regarding employment conditions and labour practices which includes wages, health and safety, welfare provisions, and managerial practices through theoretical lenses such as dual labour-market theory, precarious employment, and institutional theory. Evidence from secondary sources indicates persistent wage gaps, limited welfare access, and fragmented accountability within contractor–principal-employer relationships. This research study emphasises the need for stronger regulatory enforcement and inclusive organisational policies that align flexibility with fairness.

KEYWORDS: *Contract Labour; Employment Conditions; Labour Practices; Oil And Gas Sector; Precarious Employment*

1. INTRODUCTION

Public sector enterprises (PSEs) form the backbone of national energy infrastructure, combining commercial operations with social accountability. Within this ecosystem, **GAIL (India) Limited**, the country's largest gas transmission and processing company and **BPCL**, one of the leading refining and marketing corporations, stand out as major employers in the oil and gas value chain. Both enterprises rely extensively on contract labour to execute construction, maintenance, logistics, and support services across geographically dispersed units.

Definition of Contract Workers

Contract workers are individuals who are hired to perform specific tasks or services for an organisation for a fixed period of time, usually through a third-party contractor or agency. Unlike permanent employees, contract workers do not have a direct employment relationship with the principal organisation where they work. Instead, their wages, appointment terms, and employment conditions are managed by a contractor.

Contract workers are generally employed for project-based, temporary, or support roles such as maintenance, construction, logistics, or housekeeping. They often do not receive the same benefits, job security, or career growth opportunities as permanent employees, even when performing similar duties.

In simple terms, a contract worker is someone who works for an organisation but is officially employed and paid by another company or contractor for a limited duration.

The use of contractual workers in these enterprises reflects broader global trends toward labour market flexibilization (Edwards, 2003; Wood & Malone, 2019). Outsourcing enables PSEs to reduce fixed manpower costs and adjust workforce size to project cycles. Yet it has also produced a dual employment structure that distinguishes permanent employees who enjoy stable wages and comprehensive benefits from contract workers whose jobs are insecure and often under-regulated (Rubery et al., 2018).

In the oil and gas sector, the difference between contract and permanent workers had negative implications on organisation and its workers. Contract workers frequently perform the same hazardous tasks as regular employees but under less favourable conditions, with weaker health and safety coverage and minimal social protection (Johnstone & Quinlan, 2015). The contradiction between the public sector's developmental mandate and its increasing reliance on precarious labour arrangements creates a pressing need for scholarly attention.

The objective of this paper is to present an overview of contract workers in GAIL and BPCL within the oil and gas public sector context. The study seeks to examine and underscore the employment conditions of contract labourers, including wages, job security, occupational safety, and welfare provisions. It further aims to identify the prominent labour practices followed in relation to contract workers, particularly in areas such as recruitment, supervision, compliance, and grievance handling.

Finally, the paper intends to highlight the current position and overall status of contract labour in these enterprises, drawing upon conceptual and empirical research to understand existing challenges and suggest areas for improvement.

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Overview of Latest Government Policies

1. Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970

The **Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970** remains the central statute governing the employment of contract workers in India. The Act regulates the engagement, welfare, and conditions of service of contract labour employed in specified establishments and ensures that they receive basic statutory protections such as minimum wages, health and safety measures, canteen facilities, restrooms, and first-aid (Government of India, 1970).

2. Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 (OSH Code)

The OSH Code consolidates and updates multiple labour laws related to workplace safety and health, including provisions for contract workers. It covers risk management, hazardous processes, emergency preparedness, health surveillance, and duty of employers to provide safe workplaces (Government of India, 2020).

Under this Code, principal employers share responsibility with contractors to ensure safety standards, a critical requirement in high-risk industries such as oil and gas. The Code also mandates periodic inspections, reporting of accidents, and exposure control measures.

3. Code on Wages, 2019

The Code on Wages unifies four labour laws relating to minimum wages, overtime, bonus payments, and equal remuneration. It mandates that all categories of workers, regardless of employment type, must be paid at least the statutory minimum wage (Government of India, 2019). This provision is especially relevant for contract workers in large industries.

4. Social Security Code, 2020

The Social Security Code seeks to expand social protection to all workers, including those in non-standard forms of employment such as contract labour. It introduces schemes covering healthcare, old-age pension, disability benefits, and maternity benefits. Importantly, it extends eligibility to workers engaged through contractors, gig workers, and platform workers (Government of India, 2020).

5. Model Standing Orders (MSO) – 2020

The Model Standing Orders provide standardised employment conditions applicable to industrial establishments and seek to bring clarity about work discipline, roles, shifts, and termination norms. The 2020 revision recommends uniform rules for contract workers, including defined working hours, leave structures, and disciplinary procedures.

Policy Implications for Oil and Gas Public Sector Enterprises

- **Enhanced Enforcement:** GAIL and BPCL must ensure their contractors comply with the Act, Codes, and MSO provisions, not just in letter but in implementation.
- **Shared Responsibility:** Given the OSH Code and Social Security Code, principal employers can no longer treat contract labour health and safety as contractor-only duties; they must actively co-design safety and welfare frameworks.
- **Wage Equity:** The Code on Wages supports more equitable pay structures, which can reduce income disparities and improve morale among contract workers.
- **Digital Compliance:** Utilising digital compliance tools (e.g., e-registration, e-wage portals) can help both enterprises strengthen monitoring and reduce violations.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF CONTRACT EMPLOYMENT

2.1 Nature and Structure of Contract Labour

Contract employment involves a **triangular relationship** among three actors:

1. The **principal employer** (GAIL or BPCL),
2. An intermediary **contractor or manpower agency**, and
3. The **contract worker** performing the assigned task.

This triangular structure separates managerial supervision from legal employment responsibility (Barrientos, 2013). While the contractor recruits and remunerates workers, day-to-day control often rests with the principal employer. Such divided accountability increases the risk of wage manipulation, delayed payments, and uneven enforcement of welfare provisions (Berg & De Stefano, 2015).

In PSEs like GAIL and BPCL, contractors typically provide manpower for pipeline construction, refinery overhauls, material handling, and housekeeping. The magnitude of outsourcing is considerable; industry reports estimate that more than half of total manpower in refinery maintenance activities comprises contractual staff (Gahan & Pekarek, 2017).

2.2 Drivers of Contractualisation in Oil and Gas PSEs

Multiple structural and managerial factors explain the growth of contractualisation:

- **Operational Flexibility:** Refining and pipeline operations fluctuate with maintenance schedules; temporary labour provides rapid scalability.
- **Cost Efficiency:** Contracting reduces expenditure on social security, pensions, and training (Marchington et al., 2005).
- **Policy Liberalisation:** Reforms encouraging market competition have prompted PSEs to emulate private-sector workforce models (Holm, 2019).
- **Technological Complexity:** Specialised projects require short-term experts hired through engineering contractors (Kalleberg, 2012).

While these drivers rationalise contractualisation, they also erode internal labour markets and weaken institutional commitment to employee development.

2.3 Contract Labour and Public Accountability

Public enterprises bear a dual obligation to achieve efficiency and to uphold social responsibility. When contract labour practices lead to wage inequality or unsafe work, they invite public scrutiny and reputational risk (Edwards & Marginson, 2005). Reports of accidents involving contract personnel at refinery sites have intensified debates over whether state-

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owned enterprises are meeting their ethical obligations under labour standards (ILO, 2021).

Hence, analysing contract labour in GAIL and BPCL requires evaluating not only managerial imperatives but also institutional legitimacy: how these enterprises reconcile profit objectives with equitable employment relations.

3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Understanding contract labour dynamics in PSEs demands theoretical grounding that links organisational practices with broader labour-market transformations. The following frameworks provide interpretive depth for the review.

3.1 Dual Labour-Market Theory

Doeringer and Piore (1971) conceptualised the labour market as bifurcated into a **primary segment**, offering stable jobs with career prospects, and a **secondary segment**, characterised by insecurity, low wages, and limited mobility. In oil and gas enterprises, permanent staff occupy the primary segment, while contract workers are confined to the secondary. Despite performing skilled technical functions such as pipeline welding or plant maintenance, they remain outside organisational career ladders.

This segmentation institutionalises inequality within GAIL and BPCL. Studies of European and Asian PSEs reveal similar patterns where contract labour is used to contain labour costs without violating employment ceilings (Gallie, 2007; Rubery et al., 2018). The theory thus elucidates how internal labour markets coexist with peripheral labour pools, reproducing a two-tier system.

3.2 Precarious Employment Framework

Kalleberg (2009, 2011) defines precarious work as insecure employment lacking continuity, control, and social benefits. Standing (2011, 2014) extends the notion to a global "precariat" marked by uncertainty and diminished citizenship rights. Contract workers in GAIL and BPCL exhibit all hallmarks of this precarity like short-term contracts, unpredictable renewal, absence of career progression, and partial inclusion in welfare schemes.

The framework helps explain the paradox within public enterprises: while they operate under formal regulation, their outsourced workforce experiences conditions akin to informal employment. The persistence of precarity underscores institutional rather than purely economic causes reflecting policy choices and managerial ideologies that privilege flexibility over stability.

3.3 Informalisation of Work

Supiot (2001) introduced the concept of informalisation within formal organisations, arguing that deregulation extends informal practices like unrecorded overtime, lack of benefits into formal sectors. The ILO (2015, 2016) confirms that non-standard forms of employment are rising even in state-owned enterprises.

In the oil and gas context, sub-contracting chains amplify this tendency: each layer of subcontract reduces employer accountability for health and safety (Johnstone & Quinlan, 2015). GAIL's multi-tier engineering contracts and BPCL's vendor-based maintenance illustrate how formal enterprises can embed informality through delegation.

3.4 Institutional and Organisational Theories

From an institutional perspective, organisations respond to regulatory pressures through varying degrees of compliance. Oliver (1991) posits that firms may engage in symbolic conformity, adopting policies to appear compliant without altering underlying practices. Public sector enterprises often issue extensive safety and welfare guidelines but fail to ensure implementation at contractor level (Meyers, 2020).

Acker's (2006) concept of inequality regimes further clarifies how organisational hierarchies perpetuate disparities across class and employment status. In PSEs, formal bureaucratic structures coexist with informal distinctions between "core" and "peripheral" workers, reinforcing systemic inequality.

3.5 Integrating Theories

Together, these perspectives reveal a continuum: dual-labour segmentation creates the structural basis for inequality; precarious employment and informalisation explain its lived realities; and institutional theory accounts for its persistence within bureaucratic systems. Applying these frameworks to GAIL and BPCL demonstrates that precariousness in public enterprises is not accidental but an outcome of deliberate organisational design responding to economic and policy imperatives.

4. EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT WORKERS

Employment conditions define the actual experience of contract labour. The employment condition consists of wages, working hours, health and safety, and social-security access. Across oil and gas PSEs, research consistently highlights a structural divide between permanent and contract employees (Rubery et al., 2018).

4.1 Wages and Income Security

Wage disparity is the most visible form of inequality. Contract workers in GAIL's compressor stations and BPCL's refineries typically earn 40–60 percent of the salaries in comparison to permanent employees (Gahan & Pekarek, 2017). Contractors often negotiate lump-sum service contracts that obscure individual wage levels, leading to irregular payments (Holm, 2019). Field studies in energy enterprises elsewhere corroborate that contractors delay wage disbursement or deduct service charges from workers' pay (Benach et al., 2014).

Wages are mediated through intermediaries; therefore, contract labourers rarely have access to formal grievance mechanisms for wage claims. The resulting uncertainty fosters income insecurity and indebtedness, which, in turn, reduces bargaining capacity (Bianchi, Henry, & Beggs, 2018). Even when public-sector wage notifications exist, enforcement remains weak due to limited monitoring of subcontractors (ILO, 2016).

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4.2 Working Hours and Work Intensity

The oil and gas industry operates continuously, demanding round-the-clock manpower. Contract workers routinely undertake extended shifts, weekend maintenance, and emergency operations (Quinlan, 2012). During refinery shutdowns at BPCL and maintenance of GAIL's pipeline network, workers often report 10–12-hour shifts without proper rest periods. Overtime compensation, if any, is informal and irregular (Tompa et al., 2017).

Studies on energy enterprises suggest that such intensity stems from production imperatives and manpower shortages rather than contractual obligation (Marchington et al., 2005). The lack of monitoring mechanisms within multi-contractor environments perpetuates excessive workloads. In effect, work intensity becomes a hidden cost of flexibility.

4.3 Occupational Health and Safety

Health and safety (OHS) is particularly salient in oil and gas operations, where tasks involve high temperature, pressure, and flammable substances. Despite comprehensive OHS manuals, contract workers are statistically more prone to accidents (Johnstone & Quinlan, 2015). Typical incidents include gas leaks during pipeline repair or chemical exposure during tank cleaning.

A key issue is the diffusion of responsibility: principal employers assume that contractors handle safety compliance, whereas contractors presume oversight lies with site management (Meyers, 2020). The ILO (2021) identifies this diffusion as a global challenge in subcontracted industries. At BPCL refineries, periodic safety training is usually reserved for direct employees; contract labourers receive brief on-site inductions lasting less than an hour (Standing, 2014). The absence of continuous training and personal protective equipment (PPE) leads to avoidable injuries.

4.4 Welfare and Social Security Provisions

Access to welfare amenities such as canteens, medical care, insurance, transport remains partial for contractual staff (Ghai, 2010; Parker, 2020). Though contractors are legally required to contribute to provident-fund and insurance schemes, compliance is inconsistent. Internal audits at public enterprises rarely extend to third-party employment records. Workers consequently lose accumulated social-security benefits each time a contract changes.

Standing (2011) notes that exclusion from social protection entrenches a "denizenship" status where workers perform essential duties without citizenship-like entitlements within the organisation. GAIL's contractual pipeline technicians, for instance, often lack identity cards granting access to health units or company transport, reinforcing their outsider status (Holm, 2019).

5. LABOUR PRACTICES IN GAIL AND BPCL

Labour practices encompass recruitment, deployment, supervision, training, and grievance handling. In the oil and gas sector, these functions are critical because operations involve specialised technical coordination.

5.1 Recruitment and Deployment

Both GAIL and BPCL source contract labour through registered contractors selected via tenders. Contractors supply welders, fitters, drivers, security, and housekeeping staff for specified durations. However, documentation and verification standards vary widely across regions (Marchington et al., 2011). Contractors frequently rotate labour across projects, preventing continuity of employment records and union affiliation (Heery, 2009).

Recruitment tends to emphasise cost rather than competence. As a result, underqualified workers sometimes handle sensitive operations, increasing the risk of accidents (Tompa et al., 2017). The practice also limits opportunities for local employment, provoking community criticism during large projects (Wood & Malone, 2019).

5.2 Supervision and Performance Management

Supervision in GAIL and BPCL follows a hybrid pattern. While plant engineers issue technical instructions, contractors maintain administrative control. This dual chain of command often produces confusion over accountability (Kalleberg, 2012). Supervisory relationships are transactional, with minimal investment in training or appraisal.

In refineries, contract workers seldom participate in formal performance appraisals or suggestion schemes that recognise innovation. This exclusion conveys that they are peripheral contributors rather than organisational stakeholders (Marchington et al., 2005). According to Acker (2006), such exclusion constitutes an "inequality regime" sustaining privilege for core employees.

5.3 Training and Skill Development

Skill development in energy enterprises is crucial for safety and efficiency. However, contractors rarely nominate workers for enterprise-level training programmes due to cost and turnover concerns (Gahan & Pekarek, 2017). BPCL's in-house training centres primarily cater to permanent staff. Contract workers depend on brief vendor-led sessions focused on immediate tasks, not long-term competence (Edwards, 2003).

The lack of continuous learning undermines productivity and increases the probability of procedural errors. From a human-resource perspective, integrating contractual workers into structured training could enhance both safety compliance and organisational reputation (Gallie, 2007).

5.4 Grievance Redressal and Representation

Effective grievance systems are hallmarks of good labour governance. Yet contract workers in GAIL and BPCL remain largely excluded from formal redressal frameworks. Complaints regarding unpaid wages or unsafe conditions must be channelled through contractors who may themselves be implicated in the grievance (Heery & Salmon, 2000).

Union representation is another weak link. Enterprise unions typically restrict membership to permanent employees. Temporary alliances of contract workers are short-lived due to fear of job loss (McKay et al., 2012).

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Consequently, collective voice mechanisms are fragmented. Comparative research by Williams and Lansbury (2016) shows that such fragmentation erodes trust and increases turnover across global public utilities.

5.5 Compliance and Monitoring

Compliance audits in PSEs primarily assess production metrics rather than labour standards (Oliver, 1991). Contractors submit statutory records, attendance, wage registers but verification is sporadic. Without digital integration, discrepancies go unnoticed (Meyers, 2020).

The ILO (2021) recommends joint accountability systems linking contractor compliance to principal-employer responsibility; few PSEs have implemented these fully.

6. CHALLENGES FACED BY CONTRACT WORKERS

6.1 Job Insecurity and Continuity

The most persistent challenge is job insecurity. Contracts are often renewed annually or tied to project completion. Workers performing critical functions may lose employment with every retendering cycle (Kalleberg, 2011). At BPCL refineries, periodic maintenance shutdowns result in mass lay-offs of temporary maintenance staff. GAIL's regional compressor stations exhibit similar turnover, affecting skill retention. Such discontinuity disrupts livelihoods and creates chronic anxiety among workers (Standing, 2014).

6.2 Wage Inequality and Social Exclusion

Two-tier wage systems institutionalise inequality. Contract workers share workspace and tasks with permanent staff but receive markedly lower compensation and fewer allowances (Bianchi et al., 2018). Exclusion from welfare facilities such as medical schemes or holiday bonuses further reinforces perceived social distance. According to Acker (2006), these differential arrangements reproduce workplace hierarchies along employment status lines.

6.3 Occupational Hazards and Safety Deficits

Oil and gas operations expose workers to mechanical, chemical, and environmental hazards. Contract staff often occupy frontline roles such as tank cleaning, gas testing, loading and face heightened exposure. Inadequate PPE, limited rescue training, and lack of insurance coverage magnify vulnerability (Johnstone & Quinlan, 2015). Accident investigations frequently reveal that injured workers were not on the principal employer's rolls, complicating compensation claims (Tompa et al., 2017).

6.4 Limited Access to Welfare and Social Security

Despite statutory mandates, enforcement of provident-fund, pension, and health-insurance schemes is inconsistent (Ghai, 2010; ILO, 2016). Contractors sometimes register workers under temporary codes or omit them from submissions altogether. This deprives workers of cumulative benefits and long-term financial security. For migrant contract workers at remote pipeline sites, absence of social protection deepens vulnerability (Holm, 2019).

6.5 Absence of Collective Voice

Union membership among contract workers remains minimal due to fear of blacklisting and contract non-renewal (Heery, 2009; McKay et al., 2012). Consequently, they lack negotiation power on wages and safety. Informal committees or contractor-led liaison groups rarely challenge structural issues. Standing (2011) emphasises that such voicelessness is a defining feature of the global precariat.

6.6 Psychological and Social Impacts

Precarious employment affects not only material welfare but also psychological well-being. Studies link job insecurity to anxiety, depression, and reduced job satisfaction (Benach et al., 2014). Among contract workers in hazardous industries, stress is intensified by exposure to risk and lack of recognition (Gallie, 2007). The resulting disengagement can impair safety compliance and organisational efficiency.

7. RESEARCH GAPS IDENTIFIED IN EXISTING LITERATURE

Despite substantial academic attention to non-standard employment, significant lacunae remain in research on contract labour within public-sector energy enterprises. The following subsections summarise these limitations and future directions.

7.1 Sector-Specific Deficiency

Most empirical studies focus on manufacturing or service sectors, with limited exploration of high-risk, capital-intensive industries such as oil and gas (Holm, 2019). Scholarly work directly analysing GAIL, BPCL, or similar PSEs is scarce. Available data tend to aggregate energy enterprises without differentiating by ownership structure or operational model, making it difficult to evaluate public-sector dynamics (Gahan & Pekarek, 2017).

7.2 Fragmented Variable Analysis

Existing literature typically examines isolated dimensions such as wage disparity, occupational safety, or welfare benefits (Rubery et al., 2018). Few integrate these variables into a comprehensive framework capturing interrelations among working conditions, labour practices, and organisational culture. Holistic analyses are needed to map how one domain e.g., safety affects another e.g., job satisfaction or productivity (Gallie, 2007).

7.3 Methodological Limitations

The dominance of cross-sectional surveys restricts understanding of temporal trends. Longitudinal or mixed-method studies could trace how contractual reforms and safety initiatives influence worker outcomes over time (Benach et al., 2014; Kozlowski et al., 2019). In addition, limited access to PSE data constrains comparative research between enterprises such as GAIL and BPCL.

7.4 Institutional and Governance Focus

Although organisational theories acknowledge symbolic compliance, few studies empirically assess the gap between policy and practice (Oliver, 1991; Meyers, 2020). Future research should evaluate monitoring systems, contractor-

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selection criteria, and the role of digital audits in ensuring fair labour standards.

7.5 Worker Voice and Representation

Union research largely centres on permanent employees. Contract workers collective strategies, informal networks, or digital advocacy remain under-studied (Heery, 2009; McKay et al., 2012). Comparative case analyses of unionised versus non-unionised PSEs could clarify how representation influences working conditions.

8. MEASURES TO BE ADOPTED OR IMPLICATED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Addressing the inequities identified in this review requires coordinated interventions at both regulatory and organisational levels.

8.1 Regulatory Reinforcement and Co-Responsibility

Public enterprises must move from symbolic compliance toward shared accountability with contractors. The ILO (2021) advocates joint-liability frameworks obliging principal employers to guarantee statutory payments and safety standards. Introducing third-party social-audit mechanisms within GAIL and BPCL could verify adherence to wage and welfare laws (Ghai, 2010).

Government agencies can strengthen inspection systems through digital attendance and e-wage portals that trace payments to individual workers (Meyers, 2020). Establishing a unified national registry of contractors would enhance transparency and prevent repeat violations.

8.2 Inclusive Welfare and Safety Integration

Contract workers should be formally included in occupational-health programmes, medical insurance, and emergency-response training (Johnstone & Quinlan, 2015; Tompa et al., 2017). GAIL and BPCL could integrate all site personnel both permanent or contract into the same safety drills and awareness campaigns. Equal access to canteens, transport, and rest facilities would reinforce organisational equity and morale (Standing, 2014).

8.3 Skill Development and Certification

Adopting a modular training and certification system for contract workers would enhance competence and employability across projects (Gallie, 2007). Enterprises can collaborate with sector-skill councils to design short courses on safety, process control, and maintenance. Linking certification to wage premiums would incentivise participation and improve quality standards.

8.4 Strengthening Grievance Mechanisms and Representation

Enterprises should establish independent grievance cells accessible to all workers regardless of employment type. These units can report directly to human-resource or safety heads rather than contractors. Encouraging the formation of joint consultative committees including contract-labour representatives would operationalise social dialogue (Heery & Salmon, 2000).

Collective-voice structures reduce alienation and foster trust, essential for safety compliance in high-risk industries (Williams & Lansbury, 2016).

8.5 Human-Resource Management Reforms

Public sector HR systems can embed equity by:

- integrating contractual staff into performance-feedback sessions;
- recognising exemplary contract workers during safety or quality awards; and
- ensuring transparent communication on contract renewal (Kalleberg, 2012).

These steps align with the decent-work agenda (ILO, 2015) and strengthen enterprise reputation as socially responsible employers.

8.6 Enterprise-Specific Recommendations

- **For GAIL:** It is recommended that the organisation develop an Integrated Labour Compliance Dashboard that digitally links contractor records with the company's human resource and safety management systems. Such a system can track attendance, wage payments, safety training, and social-security contributions in real time. This would improve transparency and reduce the risk of wage irregularities or non-compliance by contractors. In addition, GAIL should formally include contract personnel in gas-safety certification programmes, emergency-response drills, and periodic technical refresher courses.
- **For BPCL:** It is suggested that refinery training centres and technical workshops be opened to contract maintenance staff on a structured basis. Providing access to certified training programmes in safety procedures, equipment handling, and risk management would not only improve worker competence but also reduce accident rates. Furthermore, BPCL may consider introducing contractual clauses that require contractors to allocate a fixed percentage of the total contract value specifically for worker welfare measures, such as safety equipment, insurance coverage, skill development, and basic amenities.

9. CONCLUSION

This review shows that the use of contract workers in oil and gas public sector enterprises such as GAIL and BPCL reflects an important challenge in today's labour system. These organisations use contract labour to reduce costs and increase flexibility, especially for project-based and maintenance work. However, this practice has also created differences between permanent employees and contract workers. Contract workers often receive lower wages, fewer benefits, and less job security, even when they perform similar or risky tasks.

The studies reviewed in this paper clearly indicate that contract workers remain in a weaker position within the organisation. They face uncertainty about contract renewal, limited access to welfare schemes, and fewer opportunities to raise complaints. In industries like oil and gas, where work involves safety risks, this situation becomes more serious. Limited training, lack of

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proper protective equipment, and weak monitoring can increase workplace risks for contract workers.

Theoretical approaches such as dual labour market theory and precarious employment help explain why these problems continue. They show that contract workers are often placed in a secondary position within the workforce structure. This division is not accidental but is shaped by organisational policies and contracting systems. Even though public sector enterprises follow formal rules, gaps in monitoring contractors can lead to poor implementation of labour standards.

There is a need for stronger action from both policymakers and enterprise management. Public sector companies like GAIL and BPCL should ensure that contractors follow wage laws, provide proper safety training, and contribute to social security schemes. Contract workers should be included in safety programs, welfare facilities, and grievance systems. Offering skill development and training opportunities can also improve both safety and productivity.

In summary, contract employment in oil and gas public sector enterprises should not automatically mean insecurity or inequality. With better monitoring, clear accountability, and inclusive policies, these organisations can create a fairer and more balanced work environment. By improving employment conditions for contract workers, GAIL and BPCL can strengthen both organisational performance and social responsibility in the long run.

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ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 2| February2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753|| ISI Value: 1.188

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