



The DREAM Act Solving Mexican Immigrant Employment

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Abstract

Employment opportunities continue to be limited for Mexican immigrants. This paper analyzes the responsibility of the government to provide for Mexican immigrants coming into the U.S., concluding that the government has yet to enforce effective action. Considering that wages are inadequate for the limited employment Mexican Immigrants receive, employers should be held more accountable. It is shown that the underlying cause for inadequate employment opportunities stems from a lack of credentials from higher education. This paper highlights that passing and enforcing the DREAM Act is the most effective solution, as it allows for Mexican Immigrants to pay for higher education allowing them the credentials to appeal to employers. In addition, the DREAM Act allows immigrants to be eligible for legal residence, amplifying their appeal to employers. This paper further analyzes why the DREAM Act is effective because of its success in the House of Representatives and its open opportunities for young immigrants.

Keywords: Mexican immigrants, DREAM Act, employment, education, wages, employers, government

Introduction

Through the process of encountering problems repeatedly, the world has built resilience. Dorothea Lange's evocative photograph "Migrant Mother", captures Florence Thompson, a mother surrounded by her children during The Great Depression. Thompson built up resilience by surviving each day as a pea-picker in rough conditions created by the U.S. Guitale J. Rahill argues for similar ideas by describing Haitians searching for jobs after their

houses were destroyed by the 2010 earthquake. With Thompson and Haitians struggling to find ways to survive each day, they display overcoming adversity in a forced environment. The challenges of overcoming adversity do not only pertain to a few people. The United States forces specific standards with employment, particularly for Mexican immigrants. Raquel Rosenbloom, a professor of law at Columbia University presents that as of 2021, Mexican immigrants accounted for 24 percent of the

45.3 million foreign-born residents in the U.S. (1). The immense number of Mexican immigrants often lack employment opportunities because of the few opportunities for higher education. Only 9 percent of Mexican immigrants have a bachelor's degree or higher (Rosenbloom and Batalova 1). If more Mexican Americans were given access to higher degree education, employment rates would increase. The current situation of Mexican immigrants makes it crucial to find the most effective way to address Mexican immigrants seeking employment in the U.S. To understand the complexity of this topic, it is important to study it through government responsibility, wage inequality, and an employer's role. Through this exploration, it will become clear that passing and enforcing the DREAM Act is the most effective solution because it passes in the House of Representatives, provides money for education, and allocates funds for the young.

Government Responsibility

Many experts have studied the connection between the lack of action of the government and the struggle for immigrant employment. Bernard Trujillo, a professor of law at Valparaiso University, emphasizes the role of the government to ensure protection for Mexican immigrants since these immigrants work to provide for their families (Trujillo 428). Matthew Hall, a professor of Public Policy focusing on immigration at Cornell University, elaborates on Trujillo's perspective by addressing a greater need for effective government service. Due to legal constraints many undocumented Mexican immigrants become non-eligible for "government assistance programs" which assist with employment (Hall et al. 14). As a result, employment opportunities decline for immigrants. Kerstin Gentsch, a senior policy analyst, counters Hall's perspective for increased government enforcement,

claiming that already-set laws reduce employment opportunities. Gentsch highlights the Immigration Reform and Control Act. With the Bill, any employer caught hiring undocumented immigrants "knowingly" would face penalties (3). Therefore, many employers avoid hiring immigrants, lowering immigrant employment opportunities. The government has not done enough to provide employment opportunities. While Trujillo supports Hall's perspective on the lack of government enforcement, Gentsch counters with a negative view of current government enforcement. Although experts have varying opinions on the effect of current actions by the U.S. government, they overwhelmingly agree on a need for better action.

Wage Inequality

Experts overwhelmingly agree that the few jobs available to immigrants do not pay significantly. Patricia Taylor, a member of the Social Science Quarterly, examines the low wages of occupations available to Mexican immigrants. There are "fewer positions" available, and those that are open, pay low (Taylor and Shields 7). Taylor emphasizes a need for more employment opportunities with better pay. Francisco Rivera-Batiz, a professor of economics at Columbia University elaborates on Taylor's research, confirming that immigrants are paid 37% lower than an average worker of the same industry (2). Cecilia Rouse, an American economist on the Council of Economic Advisers solidifies Rivera-Batiz's perspective on the low wages of immigrants, by explaining how they are a source of "economic output" with their contribution to the workforce (Rouse et al. 1). An increase in Employment opportunities would benefit the economy. In addition, with Rouse's experience as the 30th Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, she is able to observe, emphasizing the value of her perspective. Taylor and Rivera-Batiz express the need for the improvement of wages for Mexican

workers, which Rouse verifies with an immigrant's contribution to the U.S. economy.

Employers Role

Several experts have recognized that employers play a significant role in immigrant employment. Michael Bernabé Aguilera, a professor in sociology acknowledges employers see those with “formal job training” to be more “valuable” (55). Aguilera concludes workers should increase their skill level, to be more qualified in the eyes of an employer (55). Doug Massey, a professor of sociology and public affairs focusing on international migration, solidifies the lack of chance employers give immigrants. With their exploitation. An employer would often go to extreme lengths, such as controlling an immigrant's rent if their standards were not met (Massey and Gelatt 3). Massey thus urges a study on how workers can avoid exploitation (9). Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes, a Spanish economist, echoes Massey's perspective of employer control. Amuedo-Dorantes assesses the root cause of unemployment, as because “immigration enforcement has tightened” (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2). To avoid the penalty for hiring undocumented immigrants, employers will avoid hiring any Mexican immigrants (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 3). Thus, Amuedo-Dorantes advocates for self-employment, so that immigrants do not have to rely on the requirements set by employers. Amuedo is an immigrant herself and lives in a border region, giving her the ability to observe, highlighting her perspective over other experts. Experts overwhelmingly agree many employers contribute to the unemployment of Mexican immigrants. Aguilera examines the requirements while hiring, which is echoed by Massey, who discusses the effects of the requirements not being reached. Aguilera and Massey's perspective is verified by Amuedo-Dorantes's research of the root cause of immigration enforcement.

Solution

The DREAM Act

The few employment opportunities Mexican immigrants have often stems from their lack of higher education. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM Act) opens opportunities for immigrants. The Bill has been introduced and revised many times but has failed to completely pass. Enacting the bill would repeal section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, which discourages states from providing in-state higher education tuition to immigrants. With a higher education degree, Mexican immigrants have greater employment opportunities. In addition, the bill provides temporary and permanent residence, allowing immigrants to be in the U.S. legally. The DREAM Act is the most effective solution because it passes in the House of Representatives, provides money for education, and allocates funds for the young.

Passes in the House of Representatives

The Bill passed in the House of Representatives, emphasizing its potential to become effective. The National Immigration Law Center specifies that in 2019, the bill passed with the vote of 237-187 in the House of Representatives (1). Seven Republicans voted in favor of the Bill with the Democrats, emphasizing its potential going into the unfavored Republican-controlled Senate. (National Immigration Law Center 1). The Library of Congress addresses that in 2001, the bill only needed sixty more votes in the Senate to pass (1). Passing the DREAM Act in the Senate would provide Mexican immigrants with better opportunities for themselves and their families. After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, many Haitians moved to find jobs for money in other countries. As the Haitians struggled to find stable employment, their government failed to help. Many Haitians described “hope” for action by their

government, but had "not received result" for themselves or their injured families (Rahill et al. 596). The U.S. must not disappoint its immigrants, by denying support as the Haitian government had. The Senate must pass the DREAM Act, to increase employment opportunities for Mexican immigrants.

Provides Money for Education

Mexican immigrants come into the U.S. with little money reducing their opportunities to get into higher education. Without higher education, immigrants lack the credentials to appeal to employers. The DREAM Act allows immigrants to pay a lower price for higher education. Aonghas St-Hilaire, a manager and program analyst for the federal government, expresses that three-quarters of immigrants would like to obtain a college degree or higher, however, less than 30 percent consider higher education within their reach (St-Hilaire 11). Eduardo J. Padrón, a former board director of the U.S. Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute explains how due to this, Mexican immigrants feel that they are in "limbo" because they are seen "at the bottom of the ladder" without higher education credibility (Padrón; St-Hilaire 1). Elisha Barron, a member of the Godfrey firm's Executive Committee, who has secured over one billion in jury verdicts explains that the DREAM Act allows high school graduates the opportunity for federal student loans and other federal education services (23). The National Immigration Law Center highlights that the DREAM Act repeals Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (1). With the repeal, immigrants can pay affordable in-state tuition for higher degree education. Previously if a state gave in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants, they faced an economic penalty. However, with the DREAM Act, states no longer face that penalty. The DREAM Act will allow for employment opportunities through higher education.

Allocates For the Young

Many Mexican immigrants come to the U.S. at a young age because of their parents. The DREAM Act provides an opportunity for young immigrants to be successful in the U.S. Yudhijit Bhattacharjee, an award-winning writer, interviewed Mexican immigrants who had come to the U.S. One immigrant said that "he played no role in his family's decision to move" to the U.S (Bhattacharjee 1). The DREAM Act will allow the young forced to move, opportunities. The American Immigration Council examines that although there were many revisions to the DREAM Act, the main focus of the Bill is providing an opportunity for children. Those that had come to the U.S. as a child will be eligible for temporary and permanent residence. With the residence, children would have the opportunity to pursue higher education and work authorization (American Immigration Council 1). The National Immigration Law Center reveals how by law, a child's immigration status is determined by their parents which is often "undocumented" (1). The DREAM Act allows young Mexican immigrants to clear that status. Florence Thompson had 3 children during The Great Depression. Although the mother could do little to provide for her children, the government could have helped. If Thompson's children were aided in employment for the future, they could be successful through and after The Great Depression. Likewise, young Mexican Immigrants could be helped with the DREAM Act to get legal status for employment.

Limitations and Implications

Although experts have found the DREAM Act to be a source of new opportunities, to be eligible certain criteria must be met. Eduardo J. Padrón specifies

that only children under 17 and who have stayed in the U.S. are eligible (2). The National Immigration Law Center highlights that an immigrant also needs to complete two years of college, a B.A., or serve in the U.S. armed forces (1). However, the implications of the DREAM Act outweigh the limitations. Establishing the DREAM Act increases the labor force, and thus the economy. The White House Archive indicates that the DREAM Act would “cut the deficit by \$1.4 billion” in the U.S. (1). Mexican immigrants play a huge role in expanding the economy with students adding “\$1.4 to \$3.6 trillion in taxable income” (The White House Archive 1). The implications of the DREAM Act prove it to be beneficial to the U.S. economy.

Conclusion

Mexican immigrant employment has been a struggle for many years. With political and legal and economic factors and an employer's contribution, a solution must be found. Many experts have agreed upon the solution of passing and enforcing the DREAM Act to create opportunities for Mexican immigrants to gain access to higher education, permanent residence, and employment opportunities. While the DREAM Act would solve many of the causes of low employment, further research must be done on the best way to pass the DREAM Act and implement it.

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