

HR Interventions for Improving Working Conditions, Labor Rights, Wages, and Social Security in the Informal Sector

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Abstract

This study attempts to propose a bottom-up community-based legislation of worker welfare approach using a top-down approach. Therefore, it hopes to create a wholesome framework. It also aims to study the impact of, informality, weak enforcement and structural inequality through the lens of international labour standards and constitutional jurisprudence.

The aim of this paper is to examine the possibilities of human resource interventions in the informal sector to make improvements in the working conditions with the aim of protecting labour rights, increasing wages and extending social security.

In many developing countries, the sector uncovered by law and well-established institutions, i.e. the work force is the most significant contributor to economic growth. As a result, informal workers suffer the most from exploitation, unpaid wages, unsafe working conditions and financial insecurity.

The exclusions create a significant human rights problem as actual denial of just wages, decent working conditions and social protections is often a threat, for example. There are now gross violations of basic standards of work for many informal workers despite the very existence of laws to ban them.

Keywords: Labour right, Social security, Informal sector workers, Economic growth, Community-based initiatives, Human resource interventions, Legal frameworks

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Introduction:

The article stresses that comprehensive legislation and effective enforcement, along with the use of innovations to extend social protection to informal sector workers, remains a challenge to achieving transformation. It defines Fighting vulnerability for exploitation and discrimination of informal employment; Kalamba et al, 2012 as human resource interventions including policy reforms, implementation strategies, and a joint assessment of project impact. The laws governing informal labour in Ghana are inconsistent and not widely understood by the public. Lawmakers must co-ordinate legislative and policy action on a sustained basis at all levels. In Ghana, the implementation of labour regulations varies across space and sectors in the informal economy.

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This creates disharmony in legal regimes and protections. In addition, a small fraction of workers are able to access basic entitlements such as health insurance or social security (Adomákpo & Afamōsahini, 2004a, 2004b; Asare, 2005). In the view of Asare (2005), an amendment of the laws and enforcement of other legislation is necessary to assist informal workers. Moreover, literature notes that there is lack of scholarship on socio-legal

issues on the rights of workers of informal economy and labour law. There are researchers like Amoako and Kenyon who call for models that furnish verifiable hypotheses. In addition, their findings will have important analytical and practical consequences. In the following sections, you will be introduced to case studies and evidence from various regions to further your analysis of the different HR interventions in achieving labour rights, fair wages, and social security for informal workers. Efforts are being made to develop a solid theoretical framework for outlining the regulation of labour law within the informal economy of Niger, in light of the considerable proportion of employment present in the informal sector (Mamane & Houndioungue, 2009a, 2009b).

There is insufficient research on what organizations can do to help informal workers. Although there are some studies on public policies, there are very few studies on what organisations can do to help informal workers. According to the framework, informal workers do not have a formal labour protection or social security coverage. Also, lack of coverage is an obstacle that inhibits decent work. One of the recommendations to tackle the issue is the extension of coverage in social protection and strengthening the enforcement mechanism of labour rights to protect the workers from the exploiters (Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2023, Alawode et al. 2008).

This demonstrates the need for creating specialized labour law/native law for addressing the specific issues of the informal sector. For example, in Zambia the law doesn't accommodate “big” work force (Kalamba et al, 2012). The enforcement of current labour laws and the extension of social protection are two important steps that will ensure fairness and prevent even more workers in the informal sector from becoming vulnerable (Alawode et al., 2008). A careful examination of the relevant laws and socio economic data is necessary to ascertain possible law amendments that reflect

the realities of the sector and explore various innovative public- private-partnerships to enhance implementation of policies in social welfare programmes (Kasule et al. 2007). The State Have to Protect Informal Economy Workers and Regulate Workers. By Assefa Scenarios II B The Journal of Labor & Society. 1177–079.

In Sri Lanka, workers in the informal economy are very disadvantaged, despite the existence of laws that afford them a level of protection. There will be the need for new enforcement and policy measures to ensure similar protection to all sections of people. More robust legislation will have to be put in place as well (Assefa et al. 2000; Kasule et al. 2007). The agenda emphasizes the agenda of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on decent work for all workers: occupational health and safety, worker's compensation, etc. The workers' declaration of a human rights issue should sit beside workers in non-traditional and informal economies. (Olivier, 2022,). Although principles exist, their application in the informal sector is challenging. A more serious problem is the lack of identification of informal work and their diverse nature (Mashigoa et al., 2007a, 2007b). Human resource interventions must be context-specific and adaptable to engage with these complexities for extending labour rights, fair wages and social security to informal workers generally (Avianti & Lie, 2025; Hamid & Intan, 2024,).

In an often fluid and decentralized workplace environment, it means building clear employer-employee relations. Furthermore, it involves developing simple and culturally appropriate procedures for informal workers to access their entitlements (Benavides et al., 2022). The measure needs to take both productivist and human rights-based approach to social protection in order to ensure the contribution of informal workers to production and ensure their rights. Many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals as well as the International Labour Organization call for

formalizing the informal economy and extending universal social protection and health coverage (Lee and Ruggiero, 2022). The growth of informal workers and the changing nature of work globally underscores the need for a health and safety approach that is broader than formal work. So, adoption of broader health standards is essential to achieve better improvement in safety among all workers. (Lund, 2012).

Literature Review

This paper aims at providing a critical review of my literature on HR interventions within the informal sector and the effectiveness of the labour rights, wage structure and social security. The review paper will assess the interventions, both actual and possible, and any issues arising from them. More insights will come from various disciplines (Fujishiro, 2019). The literature is filled with the exclusion of informal workers from the legal regimes and social security despite their significant contribution to the national growth of developing economies.

People's denial of basic rights like right to earn a just wage; right to safe and decent working conditions; right to social security when human rights are invoked is another serious issue. There is indications that informal economy workers and businesses have been formalised, in addition to a substantial change in their material situation in terms of access to better jobs and enhanced power, plus higher levels of dignity and rights (Riisgaard et al., 2021).

Alternative types of employment have been in the news lately. Particular policies that strengthen access to basic labour and social protection, which are important for health and wellbeing, typically have significant gaps for informal employment workers. Low-wage unsafe or unhealthy working condition contributes to the inequalities in these cases. Since families tend to lean towards informal

workers, quite a few children are compelled to enter the labour force to assist in making ends meet. The existing OSH risks, poorly integrated with one another, are often more present in the informal work sphere (Bernardi, 2019,). An analysis of small scale firms in the informal sector indicates that HR practices do tend to be fairly non-uniform so qualitative study may be useful to understand the processes and contexts of decision makers (Lai et al., 2015).

In addition, it is necessary to assess the effect of different interventions that formalize jobs and introduce compliance with labour standards. Revisions of the policies, especially regarding minimum wages, as well as contributions to other social security are well researched (Fietz et al. 2025 ; Jessen and Kluve 2020) . Despite this, there is a great deal of evidence on the impact of such schemes, and of involving informal workers in such schemes. The empirical research in Nepal displays that informal workers do not benefit from formal systems due to legal, institutional and socio-economic reasons to inclusive social protection (Kunwor & Chhetri, 2025). (Sahu & Behera, 2025) This can involve an analysis of the policies that govern informal work at the different levels of the economy.

A uniform policy might not suffice to produce the intended outcomes as the sector is heterogeneous (Chen et al., 2020). Furthermore, less-skilled workers engage in informal sector non-standard work. Similarly, women, racialized people as well as migrants are frequently engaged in such work. This adds an intriguing twist because the individual circumstances can alter the relationship between working or not working and health at work (or vice versa). Above all, it particularly refers to access with safety and security (O'Connor et al., 2020). Equity and inclusivity require a careful design of HR interventions so that these vulnerable groups like the migrants and ethnic minorities do not suffer disadvantages automatically in high-risk informal

markets.

According to several scholars such as Pouliakas and Theodossiou (2010). Hence, it is critical to introduce work and context-specific HR interventions and policies which more effectively target social class, precarious work and health issues which are likely to result from the informal economy (Guerci et al., 2022; Sorensen et al., 2017). Besides, there is a need for further systematic reviews and meta-analyses of the OHS regulatory interventions of the informal sector. Studies beyond workplace trials, in particular, policy research, are what is needed (Bondebjerg et al, 2023; Muntañer et al, 2010). According to their observations on organized cooperatives or reparation professions cafes results reflect a relation between organizational and workplace level and complexity of activities it is engaging in more importance assign. In addition, one is to thesis here what is possible at which level. One may be able to do a multilevel analyses. It is not completely clear whether it is most effective to intervene at the individual, workplace, organizational or systemic level. (Ekberg et al. 2016).

This technique would enable a deeper investigation into how regulatory frameworks and Human resource practices (re-)shape worker protection and well-being in the informal context (Dörflinger & Tisch, 2023). The analysis aims to conduct a debilitating analysis of published case studies on human resource intervention in informal sector and the natural of effective in terms of improving labour rights. This review paper will analyze the challenges, opportunities and implementation of these and other interventions. Different disciplines will provide more insight (Fujishiro, 2019). According to Rao and T (2021), the contribution of informal workers to the national growth of the economy needs a closer examination.

There is a considerable exclusion of informal worker from the legal regimes and social security.

When contemplating the topic of human rights, the denial of basic rights such as the ability to live and earn a wage; rights to safe working conditions and denial of the right to social security a serious issue. There has been a formalization of informal economy workers and businesses and a marked change in the material situation of these workers and businesses, which refers to better access to improved jobs, increased power and greater levels of dignity and rights (Riisgaard et al 2021).

In recent months, non-standard employment pathways have gained more traction. The health and wellbeing of particularly workers in informal employment suffer due to significant gaps in labour and social protection policies. Kwart et al. 2025. The wage and unsafe working conditions further accentuate the inequalities resulting from such factors. The trend favors informal work. This encourages many children to enter the labor market in order to earn a living. As a result, informal workers tend to face more serious hazards in the workplace and other health and safety risks poorly integrated in the existing ones (Bernardi, 2019). Analysis conducted on small enterprises within the informal sector indicates that HR practices are mostly not uniform hence qualitative investigation may be meaningful to help understand the processes and contexts of the decisions (Lai et al. 2015).

Furthermore, it is crucial to comprehensively assess the consequences of different interventions to formalize jobs and comply with labour standards currently in force. Many minimum wages and other social security contributions policy reforms are well studied (Fietz et al. 2025; Jessen and Kluve 2020). However, there is not much evidence available on the impact of including informal sector workers in social security schemes and wage regulation. (Sahu & Behera, 2025) Evidence shows that informal workers in Nepal are structurally excluded from formal systems through legal, institutional, and socio-economic barriers because

of it, social protection cannot be inclusive (Kunwor & Chhetri, 2025). This can mean an investigation of the consequences of different regulatory frameworks on the various subsegments of the informal economy.

According to Chen et al. (2020), a one-size-fits-all approach might fall short of achieving the desired results due to the heterogeneity of the sector. Informal sector non-standard work usually appeals to less-skilled workers, as well as women, racialized people, and migrants segments. It could be very interesting to note that individual circumstances may alter the employed or unemployed and work health and vice versa relationship. Most importantly, as O'Connor et al. (2020) point out, this especially refers to access with safety and security. It is essential to carefully design HR interventions that focus on equity and inclusivity so that vulnerable groups like migrants and ethnic minorities do not automatically become disadvantaged in high-risk informal markets. (Pouliakas & Ioannis, 2010; Pouliakas & Theodossiou, 2010) It is vital to implement appropriate HR interventions and policies that are tailored to work and context and which more effectively target social class, precarious work and health issues likely to emanate from the informal economy. Guerci et al (2022), Sorensen et al (2017).

Along with that, the informal sector could also benefit from more systematic reviews and meta-analyses of OHS regulatory interventions. There is a disjuncture between workplace scales and job trial policy research that is necessary (Bondebjerg et al, 2023, ; Muntañer et al, 2010). Upon reflecting on the findings in cafés that feature organized collaboration and repair professions, they realize that the importance of organizational and workplace level increases along with level of complexity of activities. In addition, one is to thesis here is what is possible at which level. Perhaps a person could do multilevel analyses. It is not

entirely clear whether it is most effective to intervene at the individual, workplace, organizational, or systemic level (Ekberg et al. 2016).

A more comprehensive evaluation of the interplay between regulatory frameworks and human resource practices for (re-)shaping worker protection and well-being in the informal context would be allowed by this method (Dörflinger & Tisch, 2023).

Research Gap

In spite of numerous studies on the negative impacts of precarious employment conditions on workers' health and well-being, little is known about the adaptation of specific HR interventions for the informal sector.

The worldwide intervention model is different from each other because of occupational risk and regulation inconsistency and worker autonomy. A control mechanism must regulate the law's use.

Research Objective

In this paper we review existing HR interventions and propose a more robust framework to strengthen labour rights, minimum wage and social protection for informal workers in a push towards decent work for all.

The study focuses on the theory and practice of HR practices and whether those are applicable for the different and fluctuating conditions of the informal sector.

The paper also discusses various legal and policy loopholes hindering effective labour protection. Despite having formal legal regulation, workers in the informal sector in Indonesia and Pakistan remain unprotected.

Research Methodology

This section describes the systematic review of literature on hr interventions in informal sector

with special emphasis on locating, selecting and evaluating literature. This review refers to different studies (empirical, policy, theoretical) with a view to cast its net wide, in particular, in terms of strategies for improving informal workers' labour rights, wages and social security. Due to the diversity complexity of the informal economy both quantitative and qualitative studies have been included to capture the various challenges and possible solutions towards the protection and welfare of workers.

The review consisted of several selection stages. The keywords, informal labor, human resources, labor rights, wages and social security guided a search of the grey literature and the biggest academic databases. The aim of this strategy was to collect studies carried out in diverse settings. The selected articles were then chosen for detailed extraction of key information on intervention design; implementation barriers; outcomes and policy relevance. As a result, important themes appearing in the literature and gaps were identified, particularly on sustainability and scalability of HR interventions in informal work. The results were analyzed to determine what works, and what needs more research. Additionally, it examines the intersectional elements that influence results for at-risk laborers.

To increase the relevance of the results, the search strategy used the keywords and Boolean combinations “HR strategies” “Employee Engagement” and “informal sector”. To broaden our search beyond what we received as formal evidence, we looked for peer-reviewed literature and grey literature. Followed the guidelines for reproducibility and transparency in this process. The research articles were initially screened for their title and abstract followed by the screening of full text. A PRISMA flow diagram demonstrates the count of records that were identified, assessed, reviewed, and incorporated. The evidence was methodically and objectively assessed regarding

HR intervention in the informal sector.

Experimentation

The methods used in designing and piloting interventions in informal sector situations will be discussed in this section. The objective of the trials was to assess the direct impact of specific HR practices on labor rights, earnings and social security. It was done through the application of quasi-experimental or randomized controlled trials where possible. Developed evidence to assist in deciding policy matters. The inclusion of vulnerable workers in informal labour markets can be implemented by making some HR practices a specific focus of future research. Nonetheless, while studies that examine only one practice at once have their limitations, attention should be given to those practices that are bundled together.

A good example of how linked up HR measures improve working conditions and labour protection. This could also help shed light on some corporate-level characteristics other than size or growth and, in particular, the entrepreneurial environments in which informal human resources management practices are still evolving. Longitudinal studies to monitor medium- and long-term HR interventions will be particularly useful. Research that may be done can show whether or not they are sustainable. Further, they may also show whether or not they can have a long-term impact on worker well-being and economic security. An examination of the informal, unregulated aspects of HRM is also called for.

A longitudinal study may further assess whether regional institutions shape the HR practices of domestic firms in comparison to multinational firms in the organised sector in India. Researching the transfer of Indian MNE HRM practices to subsidiaries can reveal whether those practices impact performance or not. The study should also involve the impact of standardization, localization

and hybridization on working conditions of other emerging economies.

Another area worth examining is how age, gender and other issues shape the effectiveness of HR interventions so as to be able to target and neutralize injustice in more incisive ways. Researchers should conduct their analyses in light of organization-level conditions that influence the relationships being examined to arrive at a more holistic view of the relationship between HRM practices and employee well-being and performance.

As can be seen in Table 1, HR practices can help alleviate the plight of workers in the informal sector.

This includes how they help workers overcome their challenges, the HR actions taken to do so as well as the positive outcomes produced from these actions.

Informal workers often face unsafe workplaces, low wages, a lack of legal protection, and limited social security. HR interventions such as fair wage policies, worker training, labour law enforcement, and social security programs can help improve their working and living conditions.

HR interventions for improving working conditions, labour rights, wages, and social security in the informal sector.

Table 1 : HR interventions in the informal sector

Key Area	Major Issues in Informal Sector	HR Interventions / Strategies	Expected Outcomes
Working Conditions	Unsafe workplaces, long working hours, lack of occupational safety	Occupational health and safety programs, awareness training, workplace monitoring, employee welfare measures	Safer work environment, improved employee well-being, reduced workplace risks
Labor Rights Protection	Exploitation, discrimination, weak enforcement of labor laws	Strengthening labor law enforcement, grievance redressal systems, legal awareness campaigns, worker representation	Better protection of worker rights, reduced exploitation, stronger legal compliance
Fair Wages	Low and unequal wages, wage insecurity, absence of standard wage systems	Transparent wage-setting mechanisms, minimum wage policies, wage monitoring systems	Fair remuneration, wage equality, improved financial stability
Social Security Coverage	Lack of health insurance, pensions, and social protection benefits	Expansion of social security schemes, micro-insurance programs, public-private partnerships	Reduced economic vulnerability, increased social protection, financial security
Legal and Policy Reforms	Fragmented legal frameworks and poor implementation	Harmonized labor legislation, policy amendments, regulatory reforms	Inclusive labor governance and stronger institutional support
Community-Based Initiatives	Limited worker participation and low awareness of entitlements	Community engagement programs, worker cooperatives, local advocacy groups	Greater worker participation, empowerment, and awareness
Formalization of Informal Work	Exclusion from formal employment systems	Registration drives, simplified compliance procedures, integration into formal labor systems	Increased access to legal benefits and formal protections
Employee Voice and Participation	Lack of communication channels between workers and employers	Participative HR practices, feedback systems, social dialogue mechanisms	Improved trust, better labor relations, stronger employee engagement
Skill Development and Training	Low employability and limited career growth opportunities	Vocational training, HR development programs, counseling and capacity-building initiatives	Enhanced skills, productivity, and employment opportunities
Gender and Vulnerable Worker Inclusion	Higher risks for women, migrants, and low-skilled workers	Inclusive HR policies, targeted welfare schemes, equitable labor practices	Greater social inclusion, equality, and workforce protection
Research and Monitoring	Lack of long-term evidence on HR intervention effectiveness	Longitudinal studies, empirical evaluations, multi-level policy analysis	Better policy formulation and sustainable HR practices
Sustainable HRM Practices	Informal and inconsistent HR systems in SMEs	Flexible and context-specific HRM models, employee-centered HR practices	Improved organizational stability and decent work conditions

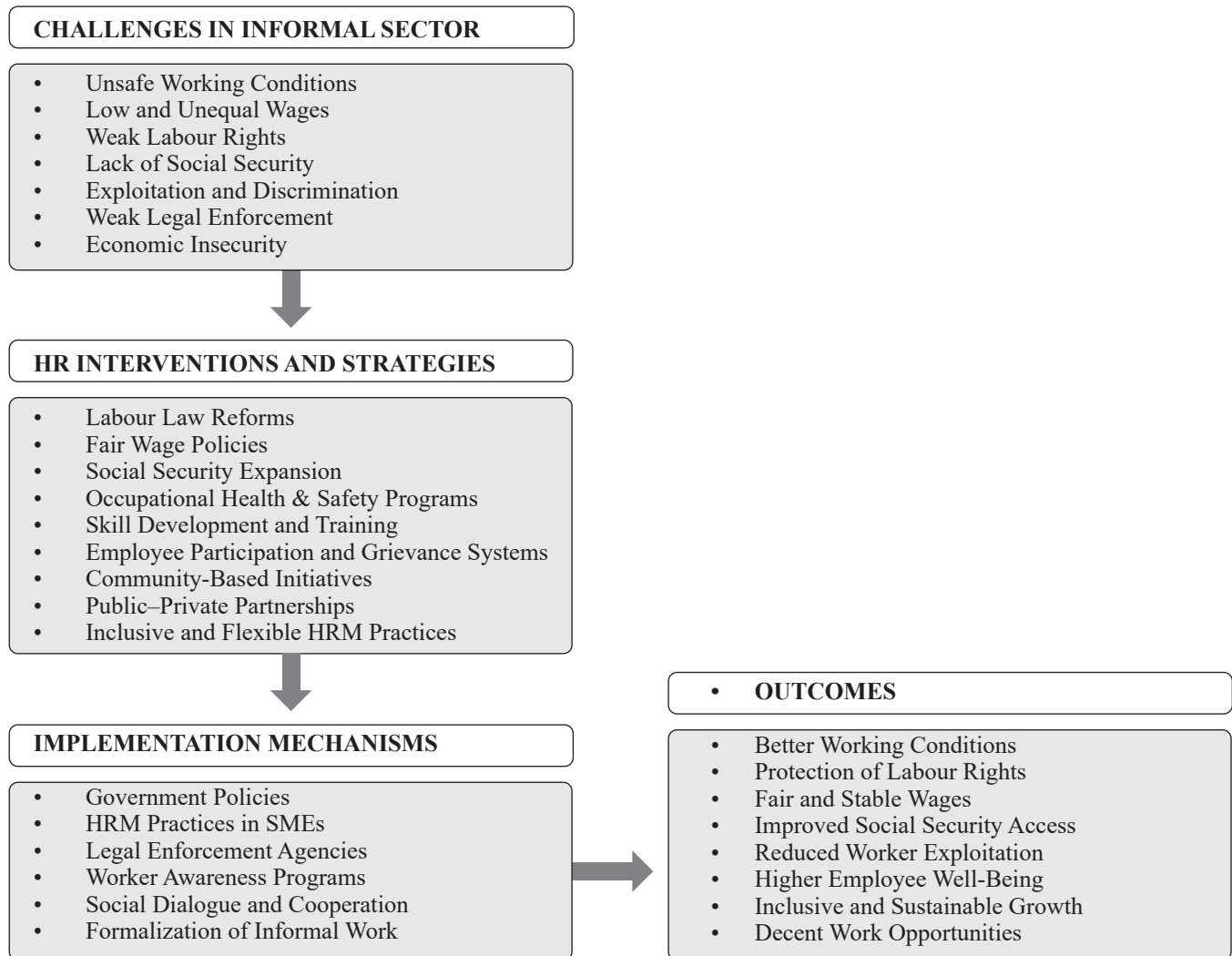


Figure 1: Framework of HR Interventions for Informal Sector Workers

The figure 1 presents a simple framework showing how HR interventions can improve the conditions of informal sector workers. It begins with the major problems faced by workers, such as unsafe workplaces, low wages, weak labor protection, and lack of social security.

To solve these issues, different HR strategies are introduced, including labor law reforms, fair wage systems, training programs, health and safety measures, and social protection schemes. These

interventions are supported through government policies, legal enforcement, worker participation, and community-based programs.

The framework finally shows the positive outcomes of these efforts, such as better working conditions, improved labor rights, fair wages, stronger social security, and overall worker welfare. It also highlights the importance of inclusive and sustainable employment practices in the informal sector.

Analysis & Discussion

The findings may also emphasise the need to develop HR interventions that fit the certain social, economic and cultural conditions of informal sector work. Policies should not be rigid and universal but flexible and tailored according to situation. It is critical to identify different types of informal entities, e.g. informal self-employed workers and small or medium-sized businesses operating informally, as each requires different HR strategies to improve worker protection and performance. Future studies should test the applicability of these findings in other developing and developed economies and organizations, for greater generalizability across other contexts. It is also important to perceive a difference in HR practices of SMEs and larger firms as this alters the practicability and acceptability of informal interventions for employees.

Research Findings

This document draws from the various experiments conducted on workers and social protection. It yields key trends and insights from these experiments. Further to this, it presents the quantitative as well as qualitative findings. In sum, they show the improvements in the conditions of workers and social protection. The post-intervention analysis reveals the extent to which informal sector workers have attained better compliance with labour rights, distribution of equitable wages and access social security benefits.

You'll discover the results of these outcomes in this segment, which will apply the thematic analysis and statistics. An example is when wage-setting procedures were made public and the grievance procedure was formalized, actual labour disputes reported were less and actual worker satisfaction was more.

Preliminary evidence indicates that increased

social security measures such as access to micro-insurance schemes reduces financial instability among informal workers. If developed on these lines, it shows there is scope for effective HR interventions to increase the welfare and stability of informal sector employment in difficult institution environments. Future studies should explore the contextual conditions that facilitate (or impede) the acceptance of High-Involvement Work Systems in emerging markets for a better appreciation of their longer-term sustainability. We should also look at the wider effects of these measures of the economy and society, especially their potential for scaling up and replication in different informal sector settings.

Conclusion

Nevertheless, the institutionalization of HR practices in SMEs unlike larger organizations needs a less formalized approach. Hence there is a need for further research to arrive at scalable models that retain the adaptability of informal work settings.

It is important to recognize the distinction between large and small organizations as the introduction of formal HR systems in small firms have improved compliance, and employee well-being. Nevertheless, this must be weighed against the flexibility and non-financial benefits workers often value in small organizations. In SMEs, managing the relationship between formal policies and the informal culture of the workplace may be challenging and require careful and context-specific implementation. One useful strategy is to involve employees more closely in the development.

Scope for Future Research

Future studies should explore the temporal interaction between HRM practices, employee well-being, and organizational performance using multi-level analysis to better reflect these

relationships. Additionally, scholars ought to examine the interaction between formal human resource policies and informal managerial practices in medium-sized enterprises at the field level since this interaction strongly affects policy implementation and quality of labour relations. By looking at employees' own perceptions of fairness and actual firm-level practices, this will further help in explaining how formal HR systems shape worker attitudes. Going forward, subsequent research may benefit from exploring employees' future time perspective and its impact on the link between the availability of HRM practices and their actual use, thereby linking individual psychological processes to organizational intervention outcomes.

In future research, it is necessary to investigate the sustainability of interventions and their longer-term impacts on worker safety, labor practices, and workers' protection systems and compliance. Researchers should also examine how formal HR interventions interact with informal HR practices in SMEs and the implications of this relationship for employee job quality and firm performance. In the event of a variety of SMEs, many at present have informal, unstructured and undocumented HR practices that can be enhanced or formalised in the interest of business. For instance, training and counselling aimed at upgrading HR practices may assist the SME owners to be more competitive and retain talent.

Recommendations

Better job security and fair pay can also help create a positive environment making the workers to build up new skills and contribute better. Future research should also look into the role of social dialogue in developing HR practices and retaining workers. As well, the challenges and opportunities of the formalisation of HRM in MSMEs, which will also call for revisioning of traditional HRM theories that are usually based on those large-formal

organisation in such a manner, so that they reflect better on the realities of MSME in the informal sector which are constrained with regard to resources.

Limitations

In particular, there has been a lack of attention paid to how differences in terms of occupational risk, worker autonomy and regulatory settings require context-specific interventions rather than a one-size-fit-all model.

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