

Weak Institutions and Labor Exploitation: Myanmar's Legal Protection in Garment Industry of Multinational Supply Chains

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Abstract

This paper examines labor exploitation and labor rights' violations of low-skilled workers in Myanmar's garment industry within multinational companies through the labor economics as well as legal perspectives. It shows how the multinational supply chains follow the commitment of their contracts and international labor standards under the military regimes. Despite the multinational supply chains create job opportunities, the enforcement of labor laws under the international legal standards have remained a significant challenge in Myanmar. Additionally, unstable political context and authoritarian military rule intensify the working conditions and vulnerability of workers in the garment industry. The study explores how weak legal frameworks under authoritarian regime's capacity contribute to violation of labor rights and inadequate protections, against international standards, including the International Labor Organization (ILO) core conventions and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (2011). This study conducts a qualitative legal-institutional analysis, employing labor economics theory alongside political economy, legal doctrinal, and institutional analyses. The research relies on secondary data from United Nations trade and labor statistics, World Bank Development Indicators, Worldwide Governance Indicators, and Reports from Human Rights Watch to analyze legal gaps and labor rights violations within multinational supply chains. Therefore, the findings demonstrate the critical role of effective governance in enforcing legal protections and commitments within the fragile political contexts, supporting the necessity of responsibility and accountability to ensure the basic rights as well as protection accordance with the international labor standards.