Received: 22 MAY 2026 | Accepted: 23 JUL 2026 | Published Online: OCT 2026
UCLM Journal of Business, Accounting and Management Vol. 1 Issue 1 (October 2026)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23492188

Labor Rights Implementation in Korean-Owned Medium Enterprises in Lapu-Lapu City

Manny Lhey D. Amistad[1], Aizel U. Aseñero[2], Milrose Liatoro[3], Marvel S. Paradela[4], Nicole Rose C. Pepito[5], Edwin S. Compra[6]*

[6]dwinny@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7249-9467
University of Cebu Lapu-lapu and Mandaue

*Correspondence

ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the implementation of labor rights in selected Korean-owned medium enterprises in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu. It focused on the lived experiences of managers and Human Resource (HR) personnel concerning wages, benefits, working hours, workplace safety, grievance handling, and compliance with Philippine labor laws. Five informants from selected Korean-owned medium enterprises were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in implementing or overseeing labor-related policies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, transcribed verbatim, coded, and analyzed thematically. The findings generated five major themes: (1) labor rights are recognized but unevenly implemented; (2) wages, benefits, and compensation practices differ across enterprises; (3) operational demands affect working hours and daily compliance; (4) management style and cultural practices influence enforcement; and (5) employees often remain silent when problems arise. The findings indicate that awareness of labor laws alone does not ensure consistent implementation. Management commitment, internal systems, operational pressures, leadership style, communication, and employee trust shape how labor rights are practiced. The study proposes a Practical Labor Rights Compliance Framework centered on identifying labor gaps, assigning responsible stakeholders, implementing corrective mechanisms, monitoring and review, and achieving compliance outcomes through continuous improvement.

Keywords: *Labor rights, labor standards, Korean-owned enterprises, workplace compliance, Lapu-Lapu City*

INTRODUCTION

Labor rights are fundamental to fair, lawful, and humane working conditions. In the Philippines, labor standards establish requirements concerning wages, working hours, employee benefits, workplace safety, and mechanisms for addressing workplace concerns. Effective implementation of these standards is important not only for employee welfare but also for orderly and equitable employment relationships.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasizes the relationship between labor standards, decent work, and social protection. Its reports also indicate that the existence of legal protections does not automatically result in consistent workplace implementation, particularly where enforcement and organizational conditions vary (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2019, 2022).

In the Philippine setting, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has reported continuing concerns related to labor standards compliance, while the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) documents variation in employment conditions, including compensation and access to benefits (Department of Labor and Employment [DOLE], 2022; Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2023). These conditions point to an important distinction between the formal existence of labor rights and their day-to-day implementation at the enterprise level.

Foreign-owned enterprises are an important part of the Philippine business environment. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) identifies South Korea as one of the country's investment

Copyright: ©2026 The Authors. UCLM Journal of Business, Accounting and Management is published by University of Cebu Lapu-Lapu & Mandaue
This is an open-access journal licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (**CC BY-NC 4.0**) License.

partners, with Korean-linked businesses operating in several service-oriented sectors (Department of Trade and Industry [DTI], 2023). Lapu-Lapu City provides a relevant setting for examining this intersection because Korean-owned enterprises operate within Philippine legal requirements while organizational practices may also reflect foreign management traditions.

Cross-cultural management literature suggests that leadership styles, authority structures, and communication practices can influence how workplace policies are interpreted and enforced (Lee & Kim, 2018; Minkov & Hofstede, 2018). Within Korean-owned enterprises, hierarchical or centralized decision-making may interact with Philippine labor requirements in ways that affect everyday implementation.

The present study therefore examines labor rights implementation beyond formal policy statements by focusing on the experiences of managers and HR personnel who participate directly in workplace administration. It addresses how labor standards are practiced, interpreted, communicated, and enforced within selected Korean-owned medium enterprises in Lapu-Lapu City.

Research Gap and Purpose

Existing labor-rights research frequently examines large organizations or uses quantitative measures of compliance. The source study identifies limited research focusing on the lived experiences of managers and HR personnel in Korean-owned medium enterprises outside major metropolitan areas. This study addresses that gap through a phenomenological inquiry into workplace experiences in Lapu-Lapu City.

The study aimed to understand (a) the lived experiences of managers and HR employees regarding labor rights implementation, (b) their perceptions of compliance with Philippine labor laws, (c) the challenges they encounter, and (d) the elements that can inform a practical labor rights improvement framework.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to examine the lived experiences of managers and HR personnel regarding labor rights implementation. The design was selected because the inquiry sought descriptive depth and contextual understanding rather than statistical measurement or hypothesis testing. The researchers adopted an interpretivist philosophical orientation and described an atheoretical stance during the initial phase of analysis so that meanings could emerge from informant accounts before relevant theoretical perspectives were introduced.

Phenomenological analysis proceeded inductively. The researchers identified significant statements, assigned descriptive codes, clustered related meanings, and synthesized broader themes. The source manuscript notes that the procedure was particularly informed by the identification of significant statements, formulation of meanings, clustering of themes, and synthesis of participant experiences associated with Colaizzi's phenomenological approach.

Research Setting and Informants

The study was conducted in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu. The research environment was characterized in the source as a highly urbanized city with substantial economic activity and foreign-owned enterprises, including Korean-owned businesses in retail, food service, hospitality, and related commercial sectors.

Five informants composed of managers and HR personnel from selected Korean-owned medium enterprises participated in the study. Purposive sampling was used because the informants had direct knowledge or experience in implementing, overseeing, or enforcing labor-related policies. The

Copyright: ©2026 The Authors. UCLM Journal of Business, Accounting and Management

source manuscript states that the sample was determined through data saturation, with later interviews showing recurring patterns and no new significant themes.

Informant	Position	Experience	Business Type
1	Manager	1 year, 7 months	Korean-owned restaurant
2	HR Representative	12 years	Korean-owned restaurant
3	HR	3 years	Korean-owned hotel
4	Manager	3 years	Korean-owned restaurant
5	Manager	2 years	Korean-owned restaurant

Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Employed in a Korean-owned medium enterprise in Lapu-Lapu City	Employed in a non-Korean-owned enterprise or outside Lapu-Lapu City
Managerial or Human Resource position	Rank-and-file position without managerial or HR responsibilities
At least one year of continuous service	Less than one year of continuous service
Direct responsibility for implementing, overseeing, or enforcing labor-related policies	No involvement in implementing, monitoring, or enforcing labor-related policies

Research Instrument and Data Collection

A semi-structured interview guide containing five central open-ended questions was used. Questions were designed to elicit specific workplace experiences, decision-making situations, and challenges rather than abstract opinions. Flexible probing questions were used to clarify responses and explore emerging themes while preserving consistency across interviews. The guide was reviewed by a content expert specializing in qualitative research and labor relations, with revisions made to improve clarity, neutrality, sequencing, and alignment with the domains of inquiry.

Prior to interviews, the researchers secured organizational permission, explained the study's purpose and safeguards, and obtained informed consent. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or through online platforms depending on informant availability and lasted approximately 15–20 minutes. With consent, interviews were recorded and supplemented by field notes. Procedures included confidentiality safeguards and reference to Republic Act No. 10173, the Data Privacy Act of 2012, as stated in the source manuscript.

Data Analysis

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. Researchers repeatedly reviewed transcripts, identified significant statements, assigned descriptive codes, clustered related codes, and synthesized themes. Themes were compared across informants to identify convergence and divergence. Direct quotations were used to anchor thematic interpretations. Reflexive notes and analytic documentation were maintained throughout the process.

Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness

Participation was voluntary, and informants could decline questions or withdraw. Identifying information was removed from transcripts and neutral informant codes were used. Digital recordings and transcripts were stored in password-protected files accessible only to the research team. The study emphasized respectful interviewing, avoidance of leading questions, and responsible treatment of potentially sensitive workplace experiences.

Trustworthiness was addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was supported through sustained engagement and clarification; transferability through contextual description; dependability through documentation of procedures and

Copyright: ©2026 The Authors. UCLM Journal of Business, Accounting and Management

coding decisions; and confirmability through direct grounding in informant statements and reflexive analytic logs.

RESULTS

Five major themes emerged from the narratives of the five informants. The themes are presented below with representative statements and connections to the literature cited in the source manuscript.

Theme 1. Labor Rights Are Recognized but Unevenly Implemented

Most informants described Philippine labor laws as a basis for company practices. Some reported compliance with minimum-wage requirements, rest days, overtime pay, and government-mandated benefits.

However, other informants described gaps between formal policy and actual practice, including breaks that were not consistently taken and perceptions that Philippine labor rights were not fully practiced. The findings therefore show a distinction between formal recognition of labor standards and consistent workplace enforcement. This is consistent with the ILO's observation that legal protections do not necessarily translate into uniform workplace practice (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2019).

Theme 2. Wages, Benefits, and Compensation Practices Differ Across Enterprises

Informants described variation in wages, incentives, and benefits. Some enterprises reportedly provided SSS, PhilHealth, and Pag-IBIG coverage and other workplace benefits, while others reported delayed or incomplete benefits, particularly in newer operations. Concerns regarding deductions without clear explanation were also mentioned.

These accounts indicate that compensation practices differed according to organizational readiness, systems, and management priorities. The pattern corresponds with the broader variation in compensation and benefit access documented by the Philippine Statistics Authority (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2023).

Theme 3. Operational Demands Affect Working Hours and Daily Compliance

Staffing levels, customer demand, scheduling pressure, and peak operating periods were identified as factors affecting working hours and overtime. Informants described difficulties balancing manpower and working-hour requirements, while some reported extended duty without corresponding overtime payment and breaks that were not fully observed during busy periods.

The findings suggest that operational pressures can complicate consistent observance of working-hour and overtime standards. The source manuscript relates this pattern to literature emphasizing productivity demands, staffing constraints, and business-efficiency priorities in shaping HR and labor practices (Cooke, 2018; Wang & Cooke, 2021).

Theme 4. Management Style and Cultural Practices Influence Enforcement

Informants described both supportive and centralized management styles. Some Korean employers were perceived as respectful and fair, while others were described as relying heavily on the owner's preference in workplace decisions. One informant noted that management sometimes wanted termination decisions to occur immediately, although due-process requirements still had to be observed.

These accounts indicate that leadership behavior, authority structures, and communication patterns influence how workplace policies are interpreted and enforced. This finding is consistent with the cross-cultural management literature cited in the study (Lee & Kim, 2018; Minkov & Hofstede, 2018).

Copyright: ©2026 The Authors. UCLM Journal of Business, Accounting and Management

Theme 5. Employees Often Remain Silent When Problems Arise

Although channels for discussing schedules, salary, and workplace concerns may exist, informants indicated that employees do not always use them. One account described employees choosing silence or resignation because they perceived complaints as ineffective, stressful, or unlikely to result in action.

The finding points to the importance of trust in grievance mechanisms. Morrison (2014) discusses employee silence as a workplace phenomenon that can arise when employees perceive speaking up as ineffective or risky.

Representative Informant Statements

Informant 1: "Gina ensure namo nga employees kay paid according sa minimum wage... hatagan ug rest day, overtime pay, ug government benefits."

Informant 2: "Above minimum raman mi."

Informant 3: "Kadaghanan dili ma-practice... ang break dili magamit."

Informant 4: "Wala kaayo sila mag-practice ug Philippine labor rights."

Informant 5: "12 hrs ka mag duty... walay bayad."

Informant 3: "Usahay sa iyahang gusto masunod."

Informant 4: "Silence nalang kay wala man kay mahimo."

Cross-Theme Synthesis

Theme	Core Finding	Implementation Implication
1. Recognition vs. practice	Labor rights are formally recognized but inconsistently applied.	Formal policies require monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.
2. Compensation and benefits	Wages and benefits vary among participating enterprises.	Payroll, benefits, and documentation systems need regular review.
3. Operational pressure	Manpower and workload pressures affect hours, overtime, and breaks.	Scheduling and manpower planning should incorporate labor standards.
4. Management and culture	Leadership style and authority structures shape enforcement.	Managers and HR personnel need consistent labor-standard guidance.
5. Employee silence	Some workers hesitate to report concerns or use grievance channels.	Grievance mechanisms need accessibility, confidentiality, and trust.

DISCUSSION

The findings portray labor rights implementation as an organizational practice rather than a purely formal legal condition. Across the five themes, informants described a recurring difference between recognizing labor standards and consistently applying them. This distinction is compatible with the source literature from the ILO and DOLE, which emphasizes the importance of workplace-level implementation and enforcement (Department of Labor and Employment [DOLE], 2022; International Labour Organization [ILO], 2019).

Variation in wages, benefits, and working-hour practices indicates that enterprise-level systems matter. Where organizations had clearer payroll, scheduling, and benefits processes, informants described more structured compliance. Where systems were weaker or operational pressure was greater, implementation gaps were more visible. This pattern also corresponds with the broader employment-condition variation reported by the PSA (2023).

Leadership and communication emerged as additional mechanisms through which formal standards become workplace practice. The findings do not establish that Korean management culture uniformly produces a particular labor practice. Instead, informants described different experiences

Copyright: ©2026 The Authors. UCLM Journal of Business, Accounting and Management

within the participating enterprises, including supportive management as well as centralized decision-making. The pattern is therefore better understood as an interaction between management behavior, organizational systems, and the local regulatory environment, consistent with the cross-cultural management literature cited in the source study (Lee & Kim, 2018; Minkov & Hofstede, 2018).

Employee silence represents another implementation issue. Even when communication channels exist, employees may not use them when they lack confidence that complaints will lead to meaningful action. This finding adds an employee-relations dimension to formal compliance because the effectiveness of grievance systems depends not only on their existence but also on perceived accessibility and trust (Morrison, 2014).

Taken together, the findings suggest that strengthening labor-rights implementation requires an integrated system: clear policies, responsible stakeholders, reliable documentation, regular monitoring, responsive grievance mechanisms, and continuous management and HR training. The proposed framework below organizes these elements into a continuous improvement cycle.

Proposed Practical Labor Rights Compliance Framework

The source study proposes a Practical Labor Rights Compliance Framework for Medium Enterprises. The framework is presented as a continuous process intended to connect identified labor gaps with responsible stakeholders, corrective mechanisms, monitoring, and compliance outcomes. The original framework figure appears on page 36 of the thesis and contains five stages.

Stage	Focus	Examples from the Source Framework
1. Identified Labor Gaps	Assess internal and external factors affecting labor-rights compliance.	Unpaid/underpaid overtime; incomplete benefits; irregular schedules; weak grievance handling; employee feedback; operational and resource constraints.
2. Responsible Stakeholders	Define roles in implementation.	Top management, HR department, supervisors/managers, employees, and relevant government agencies.
3. Corrective Mechanisms	Implement actions to close gaps and strengthen compliance.	Correct wages/overtime; ensure benefit remittance; improve scheduling and rest periods; establish grievance mechanisms; provide labor-law training; monitor records.
4. Monitoring and Review	Continuously evaluate and improve systems.	Internal audits; management–employee meetings; complaint review; corrective actions; policy and process improvement; coordination with DOLE when needed.
5. Compliance Outcomes	Achieve lawful and fair workplace practices.	Compliance with labor standards; fair treatment; fewer disputes and violations; stronger workplace relationships; improved productivity and sustainable business growth.

Because the framework was developed from five informants in selected enterprises, it should be treated as a practical study-derived framework rather than a validated universal compliance model. Its application to other enterprises should be accompanied by context-specific assessment and, where appropriate, further empirical validation.

CONCLUSION

Labor rights implementation in the selected Korean-owned medium enterprises in Lapu-Lapu City was described as formally recognized but unevenly practiced. The study identified implementation differences in wages and benefits, working hours, breaks, overtime, policy enforcement, and grievance

Copyright: ©2026 The Authors. UCLM Journal of Business, Accounting and Management

handling. These differences were associated in the informant narratives with operational demands, staffing conditions, management systems, leadership style, communication, and employee trust.

The findings further indicate that knowledge of Philippine labor laws is not, by itself, sufficient to produce consistent implementation. Workplace systems must translate legal requirements into documented procedures, monitored practices, accessible grievance mechanisms, and accountable management decisions. The proposed framework provides a study-derived structure for organizing these actions through identification, responsibility assignment, corrective mechanisms, monitoring, and continuous improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen internal labor-compliance systems covering wages, overtime, working hours, rest periods, benefits, disciplinary procedures, and employee documentation.
2. Conduct regular internal reviews of attendance, payroll, overtime computation, benefits remittances, leave records, and grievance cases.
3. Use reliable attendance and payroll systems to improve timekeeping and compensation documentation.
4. Improve manpower planning and scheduling during peak operating periods to reduce excessive overtime, missed breaks, and understaffing.
5. Provide continuing training for managers, supervisors, and HR personnel on Philippine labor standards, workplace discipline, grievance handling, and fair employee relations.
6. Provide foreign owners or authorized representatives with orientation on Philippine labor requirements before and during business operations.
7. Establish accessible grievance channels, including confidential or anonymous reporting options, and communicate the procedures clearly to employees.
8. Strengthen regular labor-management communication through structured meetings and documented follow-up of workplace concerns.
9. Maintain respect for employees' lawful rights to self-organization and worker representation under Philippine labor laws.
10. Encourage DOLE and other relevant agencies to continue employer education, inspections, and labor-standards monitoring, with attention to medium and foreign-owned enterprises.
11. Future researchers should consider including rank-and-file employees, comparing different foreign-owned enterprises, and using mixed methods to examine labor-rights implementation more broadly.

Author Contributions

Author 1: Conceptualization, Methodology, **Author 2:** Data curation, Writing-Original draft preparation; **Author 3:** Investigation, Validation, **Author 4:** Visualization, Writing- Reviewing; **Author 5**: Supervision, Editing; **Author 6**: Writing- Reviewing , Supervision

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Generative AI Statement

The authors used ChatGPT (Open AI) solely as a language-support tool to improve the clarity, coherence, and grammatical accuracy of the manuscript. All AI-assisted outputs were critically reviewed, revised, and validated by the authors to ensure the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the content. The authors accept full responsibility for the final version of the manuscript and its published content.

Copyright: ©2026 The Authors. UCLM Journal of Business, Accounting and Management

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the data gathering, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Cebu Academic Research Ethics Committee (UCAREC). The approved protocol ensured adherence to the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, justice, voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity, and compliance with the Data Privacy Act throughout the research process.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing financial, professional, or personal interests that could have influenced the conduct, findings, or publication of this study.

Data Availability

Data will be made available by the corresponding author on request.

Acknowledgments

The authors sincerely acknowledge the University of Cebu Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue (UCLM) for its unwavering support in completing this research. The guidance and institutional resources provided by the University Research Center greatly contributed to the successful conduct of the study. Finally, the authors express their sincere appreciation to the peer reviewers and editors for their constructive comments and recommendations, which significantly improved the quality and scholarly merit of this manuscript.

REFERENCES

Cooke, F. L. (2018). Concepts, contexts, and mindsets: Putting human resource management research in perspective. Human Resource Management Review.

Department of Labor and Employment. (2022). Labor laws compliance system report. https://www.dole.gov.ph

Department of Trade and Industry. (2023). Foreign investments report. https://www.dti.gov.ph

International Labour Organization. (2019). Working conditions in a global perspective. https://www.ilo.org

International Labour Organization. (2022). World employment and social outlook trends 2022. https://www.ilo.org

Lee, K., & Kim, [initials not provided]. (2018). [Bibliographic details not provided in the source thesis].

Minkov, M., & Hofstede, G. (2018). The evolution of Hofstede's doctrine. Cross Cultural & Strategic Management, 25(1), 10–20.

Morrison, E. W. (2014). Employee voice and silence. Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior.

Philippine Statistics Authority. (2023). Labor force survey report. https://www.psa.gov.ph

Wang, Y., & Cooke, F. L. (2021). Human resource management and labor outcomes. Human Resource Management Journal.

Copyright: ©2026 The Authors. UCLM Journal of Business, Accounting and Management