

Decent Work: Introducing the Obstacles Ahead

Hossein Askaripoor Geluyake

Department of Business Administration,
Yazd University, Yazd, Iran

Gholamreza Bordbar

Department of Business Administration,
Yazd University, Yazd, Iran
(Corresponding Author)
gbordbar@yazd.ac.ir

Mehdi Sabokro

Department of Business Administration,
Yazd University, Yazd, Iran

Ali Morovati Sharif Abadi

Department of Industrial Management,
Yazd University, Yazd, Iran

Received:

12 January 2019

Revised:

17 November 2019

Accepted:

29 December 2019

Abstract. Our main aim was to identify and prioritize the obstacles to the implementation of decent work in the industry. The current research was applied in terms of purpose. It was also descriptive survey in terms of collecting data. Due to the large extent of industry sector actors, only one side of the main actors' triangle in the industrial sector in Yazd province was selected as the statistical sample. This side of triangle included the heads of unions and workers' representatives in the industry sector. Thus the data was collected purposefully from this sample. To collect data, in the first step, obstacles to the decent work and its components were identified based on library studies and in-depth initial interviews. In the second step, though, using the Delphi-Fuzzy method and the opinion of some of the experts in the industry sector, the identified obstacles in the first step were analyzed and summarized. In the

third step, a questionnaire was designed for ranking the identified obstacles based on the Fuzzy Best-Worst Method. The questionnaire was distributed among a sample of 130 members, of which 80 questionnaires were returned. The final findings of the current study indicated that from the workers' point of view, the shortcoming in upstream laws, lack of a trust in dialogues, allocating welfare budget to unrelated areas, government-owned industries and lack of trust in other members (workers, employers, and government), were the most difficult obstacles in the implementation of decent work.

Keywords: Decent Work; Obstacles to Decent Work; Workers, Industrial Relations

1. Introduction

Decent work is one of the concepts that have been inserted into the international business literature these days which seems to be the result of neoliberal globalization (Hauf, 2015: 138). Many people believe that decent work is one of the main components of sustainable development and work life improvement (Burchell et al., 2014; Simonds et al., 2016). It's important to recognize that decent work and its components will become one of the main criteria of sustainable development until 2030 (Mallett et al., 2017). Therefore, neglecting this category would cause unpleasant consequences among countries and business arenas. It is emphasized that till now there was no imperative in joining the decent work arena, accepting its components and it seems that there won't be any imperative in the future. According to the International Labor Organization, many countries have accepted the decent work generally and have confirmed the necessity of its implementation, but most of their arguments are about details of the decent work. Regarding this brief explanation, it could be concluded that, there are a few countries that are not influenced by the overwhelming wave of the tendency toward decent work. Iran is involved in this arena, too. Iran is one of the pioneer countries in the acceptance of decent work. In the third economic development program, the attention has been paid to the decent work. However, in the fourth program (Article 101), fifth program (Article 25) and sixth program (Articles 4 and 120), decent

work and the necessity of its implementation have been referred directly. In fourth article of the sixth program, government has obliged the related departments to draft the national document of decent work until the end of the first year of this program. Moreover, in article 120 of the sixth program, it is planned to approve the provided document by the cabinet of ministers by the end of the first year of the program. However, Iran has been a pioneer in accepting the decent work but has not been successful in the implementation of the decent work. As noted, despite passing about twenty years from the approval of decent work, its implementation has been neglected. The main question which is raised is about the reasons of the lack of final implementation of decent work in the business and industry sector of Iran. By raising this question, it may be concluded that probably there are some obstacles which prevent the implementation of decent work. Investigating the documents and interviewing business activists, especially those of the industrial sector by current researchers, confirmed that there were obstacles to the implementation of decent work; obstacles which their existence or absence would lead to the existence or absence of decent work. Therefore, the main step in this research was identifying and prioritizing these obstacles and introducing them to the practitioners of the decent work field for real implementation of decent work by removing these obstacles.

2. Literature review

Decent work is an important component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (I.L.O. 2016: 2). The concept of “decent work” was formulated by the International Labor Organization (I.L.O.) to refer to satisfactory working and employment condition. In fact, the main goal of the international labor organization is creating opportunity for women and men in order to achieve productive decent work under free, equal, and safe conditions by respecting the human dignity (United Nations, 2006; I.L.O., 2005 & 2016). This definition and its conditions are not limited to any particular person or job; rather they include all individuals of any race, nationality, gender and age, and in any area of business (private or cooperative) and industry. In short, decent work means a productive work which supports the rights of all individuals

with any ability (O'Reilly, 2007). The main components of decent work include four components.

- Supporting fundamental rights at work. These rights are based 8 conventions; a) freedom of relations, cooperation and recognition of the collective negotiation right (Conventions Nos. 87 and 98), b) the elimination of forced jobs (Conventions Nos. 29 and 105), c) the elimination of child work (Conventions Nos. 138 and 182) d) the elimination of discrimination in employment (Conventions Nos. 100 and 111) (Bordbar & Habibi, 2013: 219).
- Supporting employment. The I.L.O in its 22nd convention, asked the signatory countries to regulate their economic and social policies in a way that their main focus is on employment, thus provide a productive work with appropriate income, on the basis of fundamental rights for everybody.
- Social protection development. Social protection outlines the need to safeguard health, pensions and livelihoods of the work. It also aims to provide adequate financial and other protection in the event of health and other contingencies. (Nizami and Prasad, 2017: 15).
- Supporting social dialogue. It refers to the process and tripartite dialogue mechanisms between the government and the social partners (worker and employer) (I.L.O., 2013).

The definition of industrial relations states that industrial relations are a set of tripartite relations among the group of workers, the group of employers and government. Therefore, the main actors in the field of industrial relationships are workers (or their representatives), employers (or their representatives), and the governments (Clark, 2000; Edwards, 2003). As is clear, one side of the triangle of tripartite actors in the field of industrial relations is definitely and undoubtedly at the disposal of workers and their representatives. Table1. the most important research that directly relates to identifying and analyzing the obstacles against decent work and its components are presented.

Table1. Research background

Narasimha Reddy (2005)	Narasimha, believed that the items such as high flexibility required for globalization, inequality, unemployment, job insecurity and poverty that come out of globalization, were the challenges of decent work.
Rafatjah and Kheirkhah (2013)	They considered women's employment obstacles in decent work area as follows: problems and issues of the home and children, traditional and negative attitudes toward women's work, discrimination and inequality of employment, inflexible and prolonged hours of work, patriarchy and the lack of cooperation of men at home and unhealthy working environment.
Bordbar et al. (2014)	According to them, items such as distrust in working relations, inappropriate economic situation, ambiguity in laws, mental judgments of managers and supervisors, the behavior and appearance of individuals, workplace of people, current cultural context, communication differences, impediment regulations, and so on, were some of the obstacles to the implementation of the fundamental rights at work in Iran.
Kercheval et al. (2013)	According to Kerkheval et.al (2013), the main reasons for not using women in the official sector and not enjoying decent work were: patriarchy, halo errors regarding women, biological factors, the level of education, religion and culture, politics, marriage and divorce, sexual harassment, discrimination in payments, the difference in funding for women and men, discrimination in arrival and hiring, industrial discrimination, professional discrimination, and physical and verbal conflicts between supervisors and subordinates.
Hosseinabadi et al. (2015)	They, in their study, outlined the following items as the most important obstacles to the social dialogue of decent work: various labor and employer organizations, weakness of coordination among them, lack of focus among labor and employer organizations and failure to reach a common command, difference in understanding the social dialogue by various actors in industrial relations, paternalism attitudes of employers toward workers, employer' interest-seeking and individualist interest-seeking
Sobhanian et al. (2016)	According to them, the most important obstacles to the social welfare in Iran are: lack of a coherent framework for macro and strategic policies, lack of macro-strategic cohesion at the levels of decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, parallelism and interference of the functions of numerous active departments and organizations, lack of a standard classification for programs and activities, lack of accepted technical criteria in organizing activities, lack of proper allocation of welfare budgets among programs and activities.
Errighi et al. (2016)	They, in their study, outlined the following items as the most important obstacles to decent work: abundance of low-skilled educated workers, stressful work environment, employment of women in low-paid and low-ranked jobs, and inability to negotiate and bargain, and not hearing the voices of workers.

According to research literature the research questions are What are the most important obstacles to the social dialogue component of decent work and how is their prioritizing? What are the most important obstacles to the social protection component of decent work and how is their prioritizing? What are the most important obstacles to the decent employment component of decent work and how is their prioritizing? What are the main obstacles to the fundamental rights at work component of decent work and how is their prioritizing? What are the most important and most common obstacles to decent work and how is their prioritizing?

3. Method

The current research was applied and descriptive survey. In the current study, in the first step, the library method (books, articles, texts and the internet) and a semi-structured interview were used with some experienced members of the labor unions and workers' representatives in the industrial sector of Yazd province, who had enough knowledge of the decent work and were aware of the industrial relations. In the second step, the best-worst fuzzy method was utilized to prioritize the obstacles. Due to the undeniable impact of the experts' judgment in the results of the current study, the experts were selected judgmentally from the members of the leadership of the labor unions and labor representatives. The population of the target statistical sample, according to the mentioned criteria, were 130 people including 93 representatives of workers, 36 heads of trade unions and one person, secretary of the assembly of workers' representatives. Subsequently, the questionnaire which was compiled by the fuzzy best-worst method for ranking the identified obstacles, were given to the members of the sample and 80 out of 130 (61.5% of them) questionnaire were completed and returned and the data of the current study were extracted from the questionnaire completed by these experts. The results were then analyzed using the fuzzy best-worst method. The findings and interpretations would be discussed in the forthcoming stages.

4. Finding

In order to confirm the obstacles to decent work and its components, all the obstacles which were identified through literature of research (Bordbar et al. (2014) ; RafatJah & Kheirkhah (2013); Kercheval et al. (2013); Khan (2017); Narasimha (2005); Errighi et al. (2016); Sobhanian et al. (2016) ; Hosseinabadi et al. (2015); and I.L.O. (2015)) and interviews with experts, were inserted to the Delphi-Fuzzy specific questionnaire and 15 experts were asked to fill this questionnaire in accordance with its standard method. After completing and analyzing the Delphi-Fuzzy questionnaire in two steps, the following obstacles were approved in general and insert in fuzzy best – worth method questionnaire. It should be noted that regarding the emphasis of the I.L.O., the equal importance of the four main components of decent work and the interrelated relationship of these four components (Ghai, 2006), equal weights have been considered for them in the present study. In this part of the research, in order to answer the questions of research, obstacles to the components of decent work were weighted using the fuzzy best-worst method. They were identified by the experts and were summarized by Delphi-Fuzzy method (Table 2).

Table2. Weights and ranking of obstacles to components of decent work

Obstacles to social dialogue	Definite weight	Obstacles to social protection		Ranking
Lack of trust in dialogues	0.3297	Allocating welfare budget to unrelated areas	0.2320	1
Inability of workers in tripartite talks	0.0551	Interference of the government and the parliament	0.1052	2
Neglecting the collective interests	0.0516	Adopting laws without regarding the insurance calculations	0.0702	3
Conflict of interests	0.0509	Legal restrictions	0.0611	4
Different perceptions from the concept of dialogue	0.0493	Inefficient governmental management of funds	0.0583	5
Failure to officially recognize dialogues in the formal framework	0.0491	Inability of trustees to respond to their clients	0.0542	6
Patron – client mentality among employers	0.0450	Lack of conformity of the supportive programs with	0.0529	7

		international standards		
Superior position of the employer in the dialogues	0.0435	Inappropriate economic conditions	0.0476	8
Lack of adherence of the government	0.0435	Dispersion of resources of the health system	0.0466	9
Historical roots of lack of social dialogue	0.0423	Budget allocated to this area is not enough	0.0425	10
Lack of complete satisfaction with the results of dialogues	0.0421	Increase of government debt to funds	0.0418	11
Marginalized nature of social dialogue by revolution and war	0.0419	Not complying and commitment of funds to financial transparency	0.0415	12
Tendency to negotiate in the worst possible condition	0.0416	Ambiguity in the definition of welfare services and programs	0.0405	13
Limitation of dialogues to salaries	0.0400	Lack of a fund supervising the funds	0.0388	14
Relying on official authorities to implement the results of dialogues	0.0390	Parallel work and interference of the duties of the service providers	0.0382	15
Rejection of negotiating employers by other employers	0.0334	The ambiguity in the formation of an integrated "social security organization"	0.0269	16
Obstacles to decent employment		Obstacles to the fundamental rights at work		
Government-owned industries	0.3253	Lack of trust in other members	0.2915	1
Government's double standard in dealing with workers and employers	0.0562	Working children's high obedience	0.0733	2
Administrative corruption	0.0504	Inflexible and prolonged working hours	0.0642	3
Workers are not shareholder	0.0498	Economic feasibility of child labor	0.0554	4
Lack of substructures	0.0496	Not considering the employer's conditions	0.0529	5
Unwillingness of employers in a tripartite balance	0.0476	High labor supply	0.0495	6
Negative mental atmosphere in the economy	0.0463	Personality difference	0.0471	7
Forced and unwanted work with low wages	0.0452	Difference in the type of communication	0.0448	8

Government employment policies	0.0448	Lack of internal coherence in negotiations	0.0443	9
Change in the working culture and work evasion	0.0448	Atmosphere of the working environment	0.0433	10
High risk of investment and job creation in the country	0.0429	Type of organization	0.0427	11
Lack of standards complied with international standards	0.0427	Consequentialism	0.0422	12
Existence of desk- job culture	0.0424	Mental judgment of the managers	0.0411	13
Lack of communication the education system with industry	0.0402	Making emotional decisions in negotiations	0.0411	14
Inappropriate training and skill acquisition	0.0369	Shortage of skilled workers	0.0371	15
Pseudo- jobs	0.0344	Home and children issues	0.0275	16

Common and macro obstacles to the decent work			
Shortcoming in upstream laws		0.3143	1
Ideology governing society and industry		0.0940	2
Governmental support		0.0901	3
Political situation and subsequent behaviors		0.0817	4
Economic situation		0.0817	5
Legitimizing of decent work		0.0808	6
Culture of society and organization		0.0564	7
Executive and operational costs of decent work		0.0536	8
Organization management and its accompaniment with decent work		0.0525	9
Individuals' attitude towards decent work		0.0507	10
Information and communication technology		0.0424	11

The consistency rate of this paired comparison was 0.172 indicating that it was compatible. With regard to result of analysis, lack of a trust in dialogues, inability of workers in tripartite talks and neglecting the collective interests, were introduced as the most important obstacles to the social dialogue component of decent work. The consistency rate for the paired comparison of the second research question was 0.171, which indicated that it was compatible. With regard to result of analysis, allocating welfare budget to unrelated areas, government and parliament intervention in executive affairs of funds and approved laws, without considering the insurance calculations were introduced as the most important obstacles to social protection component of decent work. The

consistency rate for the paired comparison of the third question of research was 0.084, which indicated that it was compatible. With regard to result of analysis, government-owned industries, government's double standard in dealing with workers and employers and administrative corruption were introduced as the most important obstacles to decent employment component of decent work. The consistency rate for the paired comparison of the fourth question of research was 0.203, which indicated that it was compatible. With regard to result of analysis, lack of trust in other members, working children high obedience and inflexible and prolonged working hours were introduced as the most important obstacles to the fundamental rights of decent work. The consistency rate for the paired comparison of the fourth research question was 0.107, which indicated that it was compatible. With regard to result of analysis, shortcoming in upstream laws, ideology governing society and industry and governmental support were introduced as the most important common and macro obstacles to decent work.

5. Conclusions

The main goal of the current study was to identify and prioritize the obstacles to decent work and its components. Based on this, by relying on field and library methods for data gathering, and new methods of analysis and ranking such as Delphi-Fuzzy and fuzzy best-worst methods, and relying on the experts' society in the industrial relations in Yazd province, the data of current research was collected and analyzed. Obstacles such as shortcoming in upstream laws, ideology governing society and industry, governmental support, lack of a trust in dialogues, inability of workers in tripartite talks, emphasis on the personal interests of each party and neglecting the collective interests, allocating welfare budget to unrelated areas, government and parliament intervention in executive affairs of funds, approved laws without considering the insurance calculations, government-owned industries, government's double standard in dealing with workers and employers, administrative corruption, lack of trust in other members (workers, employers, and government), working children high obedience and inflexible and prolonged working hours were introduced as the most important obstacles to decent work and its components.

References

- Bordbar, Gh. & Habibi, M. (2013). "Comparative study of a number of decent work indicators in Iran and the world", *Political-Economic Journal*, No 292, pp.208-225.
- Bordbar, Gh.; Mirjalili, M. & Dehghan, A. (2014). "Ranking and analysis of obstacles to implementation of fundamental rights at work from employers' point of view", *comparative law studies*, Vol 5, Iss 2, pp.265-285.
- Burchell, B.; Sehnbruch, K.; Piasna, A. & Agloni, A. (2014). "The quality of employment and decent work: definitions, methodologies, and ongoing debates", *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, No 38, pp. 459-477.
- Clark, I. (2000). *Governance, the State, Regulation and Industrial Relations*, Routledge, London.
- Edwards, P. (2003). *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice*, USA, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2ndEd.
- Errighi, L.; Khat iwada, S. & Bodwell, Ch. (2016). *Business process outsourcing in the Philippines*, I.L.O.
- Fourth, fifth and sixth development plans of Iran, Vice president for development and human resources.
- Ghai, D. (2006). *Decent Work: Objectives and Strategies*, I.L.O.
- Hauf, F. (2015). "The Paradoxes of Decent Work in Context: A Cultural Political Economy Perspective", *Global Labour Journal*, Vol 6, Iss 2, pp.138-155.
- Hosseiniabadi, M.; Saeedi, A. & Haghghatian, M. (2015). "Sociological understanding of social dialogue in Iran's industrial relations", *Journal of Socio-cultural development studies*, Vol 4, Iss 1, pp.123-149.
- I.L.O. (2005). *Decent Work Indicators for the Asia and Pacific region: concepts and Definitions*, I.L.O.
- I.L.O. (2013). *Decent Work Indicators*, Geneva, I.L.O, 2nd Ed.
- I.L.O. (2016). *Decent work in global supply chains*, International Labour Conference, 105th Session, Geneva, I.L.O.
- Khan, F. (2017). *Barriers to pay equality in Pakistan- The gender pay gap in the garment sector*, Geneva, I.L.O.

- Kercheval, j.; Markowitz, D.; Monson, K. & Read, B. (2013). Women in Leadership- Research on Barriers to Employment and Decent Work for Women, I.L.O.
- Mallett, R.; Atim, T. & Opio, J. (2017). "Bad work' and the challenges of creating decent work for youth in northern Uganda, Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium", www.securelivelihoods.org
- Narasimha Reddy, D. (2005). "Challenges of Decent Work in the Globalization World", the Indian Journal of Labour Economics, Vol 48, Iss 1.
- Nizami, N. & Prasad, N. (2017). Decent Work: Concept, Theory and Measurement, Singapore, Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Reilly, A. (2007). The right to decent work of persons with disabilities, Geneva, I.L.O., 1st Ed.
- Rafatjah, M. & Kheirkhah, F. (2013). "Issues and challenges of women: s employment in Iran from the point of view of Managers", Social development studies, Vol 1, Iss 2, pp.130-156.
- Simonds, M.; Simonetti, P.; Altintzis, Y. & Morrissey, T. (2016). "Decent work for all by 2030: taking on the private sector", Spotlights on the SDG8, UNO.
- Sobhanian, M. H.; Masoudi, I. & Akbarpour, N. (2016). Welfare and social security in Iran, the institute for social security research.
- United Nation. (2006). Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work, New York, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Office.