



Industrial Relations in Bali's Tourism Industry: Challenges and Implications for Employee Welfare

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Received : 2025-10-14
Accepted : 2025-12-20
Published: 2026-01-16

ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the most strategic sectors supporting economic growth, employment creation, and regional development in Bali, Indonesia. As a labor-intensive industry, tourism performance is highly dependent on the quality of industrial relations between employers, employees, labor unions, and government institutions. Despite its substantial contribution to the regional economy, Bali's tourism industry continues to face persistent industrial relations challenges that negatively affect employee welfare.

This conceptual article aims to examine industrial relations issues in Bali's tourism industry and analyze their implications for employee welfare. The study adopts a qualitative, literature-based approach by reviewing academic journal articles, labor regulations, and international reports related to industrial relations, tourism employment, and employee welfare, particularly within the context of Indonesia and Southeast Asia. The review identifies key challenges, including wage inequality, employment insecurity due to the dominance of contract-based employment, limited labor protection, and weak employee participation in organizational decision-making.

The findings suggest that fragile industrial relations practices reduce employee welfare in terms of income stability, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and access to social security. Moreover, weak industrial relations also undermine service quality and organizational performance, which are critical for competitiveness in the tourism sector. Strengthening industrial relations through fair employment practices, transparent communication, effective social dialogue, and consistent government supervision is therefore essential to enhance employee welfare and support sustainable tourism development in Bali.

Keywords: industrial relations; tourism employment; employee welfare; labor relations; Bali.

Cite This Article: Pradyandari, D.A.P., Santosa, R.T.P.B. 2026. Industrial Relations in Bali's Tourism Industry: Challenges and Implications for Employee Welfare. *Bali Tourism Journal* 10(1): 1-3. DOI: 10.36675/btj.v10i1.136

INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

The tourism industry has long served as the backbone of Bali's regional economy, contributing significantly to employment opportunities, income generation, and socio-cultural development. Hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, transportation services, and other supporting tourism businesses absorb a large proportion of the local workforce. As a service-oriented and labor-intensive sector, tourism performance is closely linked to the quality of human resources and employment relationships within organizations.

Industrial relations refer to the system of interactions among employers, employees, labor unions, and government institutions in regulating employment conditions, resolving workplace disputes, and ensuring labor protection. In Bali's tourism industry,

industrial relations are shaped by seasonal tourist demand, flexible employment arrangements, and the dominance of small and medium-sized enterprises. While such characteristics provide operational flexibility for employers, they also generate vulnerabilities for employees, particularly with regard to job security, wage stability, and access to social protection.^{1,2,3}

Previous studies indicate that weak industrial relations often lead to labor disputes, high employee turnover, declining job satisfaction, and reduced service quality. Conversely, harmonious industrial relations contribute to employee commitment, organizational stability, and sustainable business performance.⁴ Given that service quality in tourism is highly dependent on employee attitudes and behavior, industrial relations should be viewed as a strategic management issue rather than merely an administrative

concern. This article aims to explore key industrial relations challenges in Bali's tourism industry and analyze their implications for employee welfare through a conceptual and literature-based approach.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative conceptual review methodology. Relevant literature was collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, labor regulations, and reports published by national and international institutions between 2010 and 2024. The selection criteria focused on relevance to industrial relations, tourism employment, and employee welfare, with particular emphasis on studies conducted in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

The selected literature was analyzed using thematic synthesis to identify

recurring patterns and key issues related to industrial relations practices and their implications for employee welfare. This approach enhances transparency and academic rigor while allowing the study to integrate theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from previous research.

Industrial Relations Challenges in Bali's Tourism Industry

Industrial relations in Bali's tourism industry are characterized by a complex interaction between economic dependency on tourism, flexible employment practices, and institutional weaknesses in labor governance. While tourism has generated extensive employment opportunities, the quality of industrial relations remains uneven and continues to pose serious challenges for employee welfare.

One of the most persistent challenges is wage inequality. Although regional minimum wage regulations have been formally established by local governments, enforcement across tourism enterprises is inconsistent. Many tourism workers, particularly those employed on a daily or contractual basis, receive wages that are close to or even below minimum standards. Employers often justify this practice by referring to seasonal fluctuations in tourist arrivals, unstable revenue streams, and rising operational costs. However, from an industrial relations perspective, weak wage enforcement reflects an imbalance of power between employers and employees and undermines the principle of fair compensation. Prolonged wage inequality reduces employees' purchasing power and contributes to economic vulnerability among tourism workers.

Employment insecurity constitutes another major challenge in Bali's tourism sector. The widespread use of short-term contracts, outsourcing arrangements, and informal employment has become a dominant labor strategy aimed at enhancing organizational flexibility. While such arrangements may reduce labor costs for employers, they significantly limit employees' access to career advancement, training opportunities, and long-term employment benefits. Job insecurity weakens employees' bargaining positions and increases their susceptibility to unfair labor practices, such as unilateral contract

termination and excessive working hours. Over time, persistent insecurity generates psychological stress, anxiety, and declining job satisfaction among tourism workers.

Limited labor protection further exacerbates industrial relations problems. Despite the existence of national labor laws mandating social security participation, occupational safety, and employment benefits, many tourism workers remain inadequately protected. Informal workers and short-term contract employees are particularly vulnerable to exclusion from health insurance, employment injury protection, and old-age security schemes. This gap between regulatory frameworks and practical implementation highlights deficiencies in labor inspection, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms within the tourism industry.⁵

Another critical issue relates to weak employee participation and limited collective representation. Communication between management and employees in tourism enterprises is often hierarchical and one-directional, leaving little room for meaningful employee voice. The presence of labor unions in the tourism sector remains relatively low, especially within small and medium-sized enterprises that dominate Bali's tourism landscape. As a result, collective bargaining processes are weak, and social dialogue between employers and employees is often ineffective. Limited participation reduces employees' ability to influence workplace policies and further diminishes their bargaining power.

These interconnected challenges illustrate that industrial relations problems

in Bali's tourism industry are not merely isolated managerial issues but structural concerns embedded within the broader labor market context. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts among employers, labor unions, and government institutions to strengthen labor regulation enforcement, promote fair employment practices, and enhance mechanisms for employee participation.⁶

DISCUSSION

The industrial relations challenges identified in Bali's tourism industry have substantial implications for employee welfare and organizational sustainability. Wage inequality reduces employees' purchasing power and often forces them to seek additional employment, which may negatively affect physical health, work-life balance, and long-term productivity. From an employee welfare perspective, insufficient income undermines perceptions of fairness and organizational trust.

Employment insecurity further intensifies welfare concerns. The dominance of short-term contracts weakens employees' bargaining positions and contributes to psychological stress, anxiety, and declining job satisfaction. Over time, such conditions may increase turnover intentions and reduce organizational commitment, ultimately affecting service quality in tourism establishments.

Limited labor protection reflects a structural gap between labor regulations and their implementation. Although

Table 1. Key Issues of Industrial Relations in Bali's Tourism Industry

Aspect	Description	Implication for Employee Welfare
Wage System	Wage disparities and weak minimum wage enforcement	Income instability
Employment Status	Dominance of contract and informal employment	Job insecurity
Labor Protection	Limited access to social security programs	Low social protection
Employee Participation	Weak labor unions and communication channels	Reduced bargaining power

national labor laws mandate minimum standards for wages and social security participation, enforcement remains inconsistent. This highlights the critical role of government supervision and institutional support in strengthening industrial relations governance.

From a human resource management perspective, weak industrial relations negatively influence employee motivation and service behavior. Tourism services rely heavily on emotional labor and interpersonal interactions; therefore, employees who experience insecurity and unfair treatment are less likely to deliver high-quality service. Consequently, improving industrial relations is not only a welfare issue but also a strategic imperative for organizational performance and destination competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

Industrial relations constitute a critical factor influencing employee welfare and organizational sustainability in Bali's tourism industry. This conceptual review demonstrates that wage inequality,

employment insecurity, limited labor protection, and weak employee participation remain persistent challenges affecting tourism workers.

Improving industrial relations through fair employment practices, transparent communication, effective social dialogue, and consistent government oversight is essential to enhancing employee welfare and supporting sustainable tourism development. Future research is encouraged to employ empirical methods to further examine the relationships between industrial relations practices, employee welfare, and organizational performance in the tourism sector.

DISCLOSURE

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

FUNDING

his study did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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