

The Perceived Effect of Industry-level Bargaining on Union Influence and Workers' Participation: The Case of the Philippine Media Industry

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ABSTRACT

Workers in the Philippine media industry experience decent work deficits, particularly in exercising of their rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. This is associated with low union density and the limited influence of enterprise-level bargaining on the quality of work life. Using mixed methods, specifically focused group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and a survey of unionized and unorganized workers in the media industry, this study examines the determinants of low union participation and collective bargaining coverage according to the three tiers defined by the Strategic Choice Theory and analyzes the advantages and challenges of industry-level bargaining in the Philippine media industry. This study finds that: a) Management strategies such as misclassification of workers as non-regular employees or management employees restrict workers' union membership eligibility and inclusion in collective bargaining agreements; b) Government rules on union membership and collective bargaining and government actions such as red-tagging, the failure to address impunity against media workers, and the weak enforcement of regulations against illegal labor contracting and worker misclassification have likewise constrained unionism and collective bargaining; and c) Workers' union participation and commitment are likely to increase with the higher perception of both the positive influence of the union on the quality of work

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life and the adverse consequences associated with unionism. Lastly, the study finds that participation and commitment in an industry-level union increase with a stronger perceived impact of industry-level collective bargaining on enhancing the quality of work life and mitigating the adverse consequences of union participation. The study recommends actions to be taken by employers, unions, and the government, including changes on DOLE DO 40-03 (implementing rules on trade unionism and collective bargaining), to foster a conducive environment for trade unionism and collective bargaining at the industry level and to address decent work deficits experienced by the workers.

Key Words: collective bargaining, industry-level bargaining, strategic choice theory, quality of work life, union participation, union commitment