

Minimum Wage Implementation in ASEAN Countries: A Comparative Study of Policy Effectiveness and Challenges

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ABSTRACT - This study examines the implementation of minimum wage policies across ASEAN countries, analyzing wage-setting mechanisms, effectiveness, and key institutional challenges within a region characterized by diverse levels of economic development. ASEAN's mix of advanced and developing economies offers a strategic context for evaluating how minimum wage systems contribute to economic equity and social development. Employing a qualitative comparative approach, the study synthesizes secondary data from government reports, labor legislation, academic research, and international policy documents to assess cross-national differences in regulatory design, enforcement capacity, and policy coverage. The findings reveal substantial disparities in wage determination processes and institutional effectiveness, with recurring challenges including weak enforcement, limited protection for informal sector workers, and regional wage differentiation that produces uneven socio-economic outcomes. At the same time, certain institutional models, such as centralized wage adjustments linked to cost-of-living indicators, demonstrate more coherent and adaptive governance structures. Although constrained by reliance on secondary data, particularly in capturing informal labor dynamics, the study provides a systematic regional evaluation of minimum wage implementation. The results offer actionable insights for policymakers seeking to strengthen regulatory frameworks, improve enforcement coordination, and address labor market inequalities. Furthermore, the study contributes to business education by developing a comparative analytical framework applicable to teaching and research in international business and human resource management. It also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by examining how wage policies influence fair compensation and labor market stability, underscoring their role in advancing inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

INTRODUCTION

Minimum wage policies across the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have undergone significant transformations in recent years, reflecting the region's dynamic economic landscape and diverse labor markets (Gerard, Kelly & Bal, 2020). These transformations are closely linked to rapid industrialization, demographic shifts, globalization pressures, and post-pandemic economic restructuring, all of which have intensified debates surrounding wage adequacy and labor protection. Each member state has implemented distinct minimum wage frameworks, tailored to their unique socio-economic contexts and developmental objectives. For instance, Malaysia recently revised its minimum wage to 1,700 ringgit per month, effective February 1, 2025, to enhance living standards and stimulate economic growth. Similarly, Thailand has approved an increase in its daily minimum wage, ranging between 337 and 400 baht, effective January 1, 2025, as part of broader economic strengthening measures (Oishi et al., 2020; Riccardi et al., 2020).

Despite these advancements, implementing minimum wage policies in ASEAN countries faces several challenges. One pressing issue is the disparity between legislated wages and actual earnings, particularly in informal sectors (Nae et al., 2024). In many ASEAN economies, informal employment constitutes a substantial portion of the workforce, thereby limiting the reach and enforceability of statutory wage regulations. In Indonesia, for example, app-based taxi drivers have protested against low pay, with many earning below the minimum wage due to the lack of regulatory oversight and enforcement in the gig economy (Icasiano et al., 2012; Mohanty et al., 2026; Yasih et al., 2021). This highlights the complexities in ensuring compliance across diverse employment sectors.

Another significant concern is the tension between wage increases and economic competitiveness. Employers in Indonesia have expressed apprehension that changes to minimum wage settings could deter investment and disrupt business stability (Adam & Mohamad Yunus, 2025; Dayaram et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2024). Such concerns are particularly pronounced in export-oriented and labor-intensive industries, where production costs directly influence global competitiveness. Balancing the need for fair worker compensation with the imperative to maintain an attractive investment climate remains a delicate policy challenge across the region (Alam et al., 2024; Nurudeen et al., 2024).

This article aims to critically examine the effectiveness of minimum wage policies in ASEAN countries, focusing on their socio-economic impacts and the challenges encountered during implementation. Rather than merely describing wage levels, this study systematically compares wage-setting mechanisms, enforcement structures, and policy coverage across countries to identify patterns of effectiveness and structural weaknesses. By analyzing recent policy adjustments and their outcomes, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how minimum wage regulations influence labor markets, income distribution, and economic growth within the ASEAN context.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the ongoing discourse on labor policy in Southeast Asia by offering empirical insights into the successes and limitations of current minimum wage frameworks. Importantly, this research also contributes to the field of business education by offering a structured comparative framework that can be used in teaching human resource management, industrial relations, labor economics, and public policy analysis. Policymakers, labor organizations, and scholars may utilize this analysis to inform the development of more equitable and effective wage policies that address both worker welfare and economic sustainability in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Minimum Wage Policies in ASEAN Countries

Minimum wage policies in ASEAN countries exhibit significant variation, reflecting the diverse economic structures, labor market conditions, and policy priorities across the region. Countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand have implemented national minimum wages, while others, such as Singapore and Brunei, rely on sectoral wage policies or market-driven mechanisms (Escollano et al., 2023; Magasházi et al., 2025). The rationale behind these policies is to ensure fair wages for workers while balancing economic competitiveness and business sustainability (Che Ahmat et al., 2019; Katmon et al., 2025; Shvindina et al., 2025; Van & Arno, 2020).

In Malaysia, the government announced an increase in the minimum wage from 1,500 to 1,700 ringgit per month, effective February 1, 2025, as part of efforts to support low-income workers amidst rising living costs (Healy, 2020; Kumar et al., 2020). Similarly, Thailand approved a daily minimum wage hike ranging from 337 to 400 baht, effective January 1, 2025, in an attempt to boost domestic consumption and economic stability (Bierbaum et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Indonesia's minimum wage system has been a subject of debate, with employers' associations advocating for maintaining the existing wage-setting framework to avoid disruptions in business operations (Caraway et al., 2019; Caraway et al., 2020).

The absence of a uniform minimum wage policy across ASEAN highlights the need for a contextual approach to wage determination (Ford et al., 2021; Hasanah et al., 2024). While some nations employ a centralized wage-setting mechanism, others adopt decentralized approaches where regional authorities adjust wages based on local economic conditions (Hashim et al., 2024; Subramaniam & Abdul Jalil, 2025). For instance, in Vietnam, the minimum wage is categorized into different regional levels to account for disparities in living costs (Liu et al., 2020; Obermann et al., 2020). This strategy allows for more targeted wage policies but also introduces challenges in enforcement and compliance (Gkliati et al., 2025).

The role of collective bargaining and social dialogue has been emphasized as a complementary mechanism to minimum wage policies (Liukkonen, 2019; Zhang & Pan, 2025). According to Abd Razak and Enah (2021) and Sisson (2024), effective wage-setting practices require tripartite consultations among governments, employers, and labor unions to ensure fair outcomes. For example, in Philippines wage boards determine sector-specific minimum wages through consultations, which allows for adjustments based on industry conditions and economic performance (Laha et al., 2024).

2.2 Effectiveness of Minimum Wage Policies

The effectiveness of minimum wage policies in ASEAN has been widely debated in terms of poverty alleviation, employment levels, and economic growth (Alekhina & Giovanni, 2023). While proponents argue that higher minimum wages contribute to reducing income inequality and improving workers' livelihoods (Carr, 2023; Overstreet, 2021; Warr et al., 2021), opposing perspectives caution that poorly calibrated wage increases may generate unintended labor market distortions, particularly in developing economies with high informality rates. Critics warn that excessive wage hikes may lead to job losses, increased informal employment, and reduced business competitiveness (Bruttel, 2019; Ulyssea, 2021).

Empirical studies provide mixed findings on the impact of minimum wage increases on poverty reduction. A study on Indonesia's Java Island analyzed data between 2002 and 2014, concluding that minimum wage increases had a limited impact on poverty alleviation due to weak enforcement and high informal employment rates (Merdikawati & Ridho, 2025). This finding suggests that minimum wage policy alone cannot effectively reduce poverty unless supported by strong enforcement institutions and complementary social protection systems. Similarly, in Malaysia and Indonesia, real minimum wage growth has outpaced labor productivity gains, raising concerns over long-term economic sustainability and business competitiveness (Shahiri et al., 2024). When wage growth is not aligned with productivity growth, firms may respond by reducing hiring, increasing automation, or shifting operations to lower-cost regions.

Conversely, Thailand's recent minimum wage increase has been framed as a strategy to stimulate economic activity. By boosting workers' purchasing power, policymakers hope to drive domestic consumption and overall economic growth (Anggadani et al., 2023; Wailerdsak, 2023). This approach suggests that, when implemented with complementary economic policies, minimum wage hikes can have positive spillover effects on economic performance. Despite these potential benefits, wage increases alone are insufficient to address broader labor market challenges (Berger, 2022). The informal economy remains a significant barrier to the effectiveness of minimum wage policies (Özgür et al., 2021). In countries like Myanmar and Cambodia, a substantial proportion of workers remain outside formal wage regulations, limiting the reach of minimum wage policies (Chang, 2022). Addressing these challenges requires integrated policies that combine wage regulations with social protection measures and skills development programs (Razavi et al., 2020).

2.3 Challenges in Implementation

The implementation of minimum wage policies in ASEAN countries faces multiple challenges, including enforcement difficulties, compliance issues, employer resistance, and regional economic disparities (Nurhayati, 2022; Polaski, 2022). One of the most significant obstacles is the high prevalence of informal employment, which weakens the effectiveness of statutory wage policies (Narula, 2020). In Indonesia, for instance, over 60% of workers are employed in the informal sector, where minimum wage laws are rarely enforced (Hamid et al., 2022).

Economic disparities within countries also complicate minimum wage implementation (Clemens, 2021). In Thailand, regional wage differentiation has been introduced to account for variations in living costs and economic conditions, with wage rates ranging from 337 to 400 baht per day (Floerkemeier et al., 2021). While this approach ensures wage levels are more reflective of local economic realities, it also adds complexity to policy enforcement and monitoring (Leigh, 2024).

Employer resistance is another critical challenge (Mukhuty et al., 2022). In Indonesia, the Employers Association has argued against frequent minimum wage hikes, citing concerns over increased labor costs and potential negative impacts on investment and business stability (Alexandre et al., 2022). Similar concerns have been raised in Malaysia, where businesses have called for gradual wage adjustments to avoid sudden financial burdens on enterprises (Abhari et al., 2022).

Moreover, wage policies often face political and administrative hurdles (Mucciaroni, 2023). Weak institutional capacity and inconsistent policy enforcement contribute to the ineffectiveness of minimum wage regulations (Ram et al., 2020). In some cases, workers continue to receive wages below the legally mandated minimum due to lack of oversight and ineffective grievance mechanisms (Bosch et al., 2023). Strengthening labor inspection systems and ensuring compliance through digital wage payment systems could enhance enforcement and accountability (Gallo & Thinyane, 2021).

2.4 Recent Developments and Policy Responses

Recent policy developments across ASEAN reflect a growing recognition of the need to balance economic competitiveness with social protection (Karim & Faizah, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic prompted several governments to reassess wage policies in response to economic downturns and rising inflation (Jordà & Fernanda, 2023). In Malaysia, the decision to raise the minimum wage in 2025 was driven by concerns over declining real incomes and the rising cost of living (Liew, 2024). Similarly, Thailand's wage hike is part of broader economic stimulus measures aimed at fostering post-pandemic recovery (Yarrow, 2022).

Other ASEAN nations have explored alternative wage-setting mechanisms to enhance policy effectiveness. The Philippines, for instance, has strengthened tripartite consultations to ensure that wage adjustments reflect both labor market conditions and business realities (Laha & Mayurakshi, 2024). Meanwhile, Vietnam has expanded social protection schemes alongside minimum wage increases to provide a more comprehensive approach to worker welfare (Lin & Minh, 2021).

The digitalization of wage payments has also gained traction as a means to improve enforcement and transparency (Dubal, 2023). Cambodia and Indonesia have initiated pilot programs to promote digital wage disbursement, reducing the risks of wage theft and underpayment (Fletcher et al., 2024; Van et al., 2020). Such initiatives indicate a shift towards more structured and enforceable wage policies that leverage technology to enhance compliance (Mishel & Josh, 2021).

Moving forward, ASEAN countries must continue refining their minimum wage frameworks to ensure they remain responsive to economic changes while protecting workers' rights. Future research should explore the long-term effects of recent wage policies on employment, productivity, and economic resilience, particularly in the post-pandemic recovery period. The effectiveness of these policies will largely depend on the ability of governments to integrate wage regulations with broader labor market and social protection strategies.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study adopts a qualitative comparative research design to examine the implementation of minimum wage policies across ASEAN countries. The methodological approach is grounded in institutional theory and comparative political economy perspectives, which conceptualize wage systems as embedded within broader regulatory, socio-economic, and governance structures (Skarbek, 2020; Eitrem, 2024). Institutional theory has been widely applied in contemporary governance and regulatory research to explain how institutional configurations shape policy outcomes and enforcement effectiveness (Eitrem, 2024). By situating the analysis within these theoretical frameworks, the study ensures that arguments move beyond description and are conceptually anchored in established labor market and governance scholarship.

A qualitative design is appropriate because minimum wage systems involve legal frameworks, political negotiations, enforcement institutions, and socio-economic contexts that cannot be fully captured through quantitative indicators alone (Busetto et al., 2020). Qualitative inquiry is particularly well-suited to examining complex policy processes and institutional dynamics, where contextual interpretation is essential (Aspers & Corte, 2021). Given the cross-national scope and institutional diversity of ASEAN economies, qualitative comparative analysis allows for contextualized interpretation of policy mechanisms rather than isolated statistical measurement (Skarbek, 2020).

The study relies on systematically selected secondary data, including government legislation, official wage regulations, reports from international organizations, and peer-reviewed academic studies. Structured secondary data analysis is widely recognized as a rigorous approach in policy research when supported by transparent inclusion criteria and systematic evaluation of sources (Johnston, 2020). Source selection followed three criteria: relevance to minimum wage governance, publication credibility, and recency. This structured process enhances transparency and methodological rigor (Busetto et al., 2020).

Three complementary analytical techniques were employed. First, qualitative content analysis was used to extract policy design features and enforcement mechanisms from legal documents. Content analysis provides systematic coding procedures that strengthen analytical consistency and validity (Assarroudi et al., 2021). Second, comparative analysis was conducted to identify cross-country similarities and divergences in wage-setting institutions. Comparative qualitative approaches are particularly suitable for identifying institutional patterns and explanatory contrasts across heterogeneous cases (Skaaning et al., 2020). Third, thematic analysis was applied to synthesize recurring implementation challenges. Thematic analysis enhances analytical coherence by systematically linking empirical observations to conceptual categories (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

To enhance validity and reliability, the study incorporates data triangulation through cross-verification of legal texts, policy reports, and empirical studies. Methodological triangulation is widely recognized as a key strategy for strengthening credibility and reducing single-source bias in qualitative research (Flick, 2022). Additionally, a transparent analytical protocol was maintained, including documentation of coding categories and comparison criteria, to enhance replicability and research transparency (Skarbek, 2020). While reliance on secondary data limits direct measurement of informal labor practices, this limitation is mitigated through the integration of peer-reviewed empirical studies and international datasets that capture informality dynamics in developing and emerging economies (Ulyssea, 2020).

Given that this study is based on secondary data, ethical considerations primarily focus on ensuring proper citation and adherence to intellectual property rights (Armond et al., 2021). All sources are accurately referenced following academic standards to uphold academic integrity (Ellis et al., 2020). Since no human participants are involved, ethical concerns regarding consent and confidentiality do not apply; however, the study maintains a commitment to accurately representing and interpreting data without bias or distortion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Minimum Wage Implementation in ASEAN Countries

Table 1 presents a comparative overview of minimum wage policies across ASEAN countries, highlighting their diversity in wage levels, coverage, and implementation mechanisms. A critical analysis of these aspects reveals the underlying economic, political, and social factors influencing wage-setting practices and their implications for labor markets and economic development.

The minimum wage landscape in ASEAN countries is marked by stark differences in wage levels, reflecting each nation's economic maturity, labor market structures, and cost of living (Lim, 2024). The higher minimum wages in developed economies like Singapore and Malaysia ensure a better standard of living (Latimaha et al., 2020; Senasi, 2020), while countries like Vietnam and Indonesia set lower wages to maintain economic competitiveness and sustain employment (Phan, 2022). This discrepancy highlights the delicate balance between safeguarding workers' welfare and fostering a business-friendly environment (Thanetsunthorn & Rattaphon, 2023). However, low minimum wages in some countries may not be sufficient to address poverty and income inequality effectively (Berger et al., 2025).

The scope of minimum wage coverage also varies significantly across ASEAN, with some countries implementing a universal wage policy while others rely on sectoral or regional models (Bazarganu, 2021). Countries like Thailand and Malaysia enforce a nationwide minimum wage, ensuring broad protection for workers (Grimshaw & Rafael, 2021), whereas Singapore and Indonesia adopt a more flexible approach with sectoral or provincial wage differentiation (Yasin et al., 2022). While targeted wage policies allow for economic adaptability, they can create labor market segmentation, potentially exacerbating wage inequalities and making compliance more challenging (Tilly et al., 2022).

Regional wage disparities pose another challenge, as some countries adjust minimum wages based on geographical cost differences. While this approach ensures that wage policies are attuned to local economic conditions, it also leads to complexities in enforcement and compliance (Wang et al., 2025). Higher wages in economically developed regions can drive businesses to relocate to lower-wage areas, deepening regional economic disparities (Yan et al., 2024). Policymakers must strike a balance between maintaining fair wages and ensuring that businesses remain viable across all regions.

A key goal of minimum wage policies is to reduce income inequality and improve worker welfare, but their effectiveness is highly dependent on proper enforcement and timely wage adjustments (Peña-Casas & Dalila, 2020). Countries that conduct periodic wage reviews, such as Thailand and Malaysia, have been more successful in ensuring that wages keep pace with inflation (Khalid, 2023). Conversely, in nations where wage hikes are inconsistent or lag behind inflation, the real value of wages diminishes over time, reducing the intended economic benefits (Lorenzoni & Iván, 2023). Strengthening institutional capacity to monitor and enforce wage policies remains crucial for enhancing their effectiveness.

Despite the benefits of minimum wage policies, employer resistance is a persistent issue, particularly among businesses concerned about rising labor costs (Malhotra et al., 2021). Countries like Indonesia and Malaysia have witnessed pushback from employer associations, who argue that frequent wage hikes could deter investment and burden small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Yasih, 2021). This tension underscores the need for balanced wage policies that consider both worker protection and economic competitiveness. Governments must engage in meaningful dialogue with stakeholders to ensure that wage policies support both labor welfare and business sustainability (Torres et al., 2023). To enhance the effectiveness of minimum wage policies, several ASEAN countries have introduced policy innovations. The Philippines' tripartite wage-setting mechanism fosters balanced decision-making by involving key stakeholders (Berg et al., 2023), while digital wage payment systems in Cambodia and Indonesia aim to improve wage transparency and compliance (Robertson, 2020). Moving forward, ASEAN nations must integrate minimum wage policies with broader labor market strategies, including productivity-linked wage models, social protection measures, and skills development programs. This holistic approach will help ensure that minimum wage policies contribute to long-term economic resilience and equitable growth.

The comparative analysis of minimum wage implementation in ASEAN underscores the complex interplay between economic realities, policy frameworks, and labor market conditions. While minimum wages serve as an essential tool for worker protection, their effectiveness depends on enforcement, regional adaptability, and complementary economic policies. ASEAN governments must continuously refine their wage-setting mechanisms to balance economic growth with social equity, ensuring that minimum wage policies contribute to inclusive and sustainable development across the region.

Table 1. Minimum Wage Implementation in ASEAN Countries

Country	Minimum Wage (Local Currency)	Equivalent in USD	Coverage	Implementation mechanisms
Singapore	SGD 1,500 per month	\$1,136	Sectoral (cleaning, security, landscape maintenance)	No universal minimum wage; progressive wage model implemented in specific sectors (Minimum Wage Act 1948)
Malaysia	MYR 1,700 per month	\$382	Nationwide	Regular reviews based on economic performance; recent increase to counter inflation (National Wages Consultative Council Act 2011)
Philippines	PHP 13,115 per month	\$225	Regional	Wage boards set minimum wages by region; periodic reviews for adjustments (Wage Rationalization Act, Republic Act No. 6727)
Vietnam	VND 4,420,000 per month	\$182	Regional	Four-tier minimum wage system based on cost of living differences (Decree 74/2024/ND-CP, 2024)
Indonesia	IDR 2,036,000 to IDR 5,067,000 per month	\$126 to \$311	Provincial	Minimum wages vary across regions; wage setting influenced by economic conditions and labor market demands (Government Regulation No. 51 of 2023)
Thailand	THB 337 to THB 400 per day	\$10.57 to \$12.57	Nationwide (with regional variations)	Adjusted regionally; wage increases linked to inflation and economic growth (Labour Protection Act, 1973)

4.2 The Effectiveness of Minimum Wage Policy in ASEAN Countries

The effectiveness of minimum wage policies in ASEAN varies significantly due to differences in economic structures, labor market conditions, and enforcement mechanisms (Ni & Kyosuke, 2020). One of the primary objectives of minimum wage policies is to improve worker welfare and reduce poverty (Berger et al., 2025). In countries such as Malaysia and Thailand, where periodic wage adjustments are conducted, minimum wage policies have contributed to enhancing workers' purchasing power and mitigating the adverse effects of inflation. However, in nations where minimum wage revisions are inconsistent or fail to keep pace with the cost of living, such as Indonesia and Vietnam, the real value of wages can erode over time, reducing their effectiveness in improving worker well-being (Ali, 2024).

Moreover, minimum wage policies can have mixed effects on employment levels (Jardim et al., 2022). While higher wages may increase disposable income and stimulate domestic consumption, they can also lead to unintended consequences such as reduced hiring or increased automation, particularly in labor-intensive industries (Rozelle et al., 2020). Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which dominate the ASEAN economy, are often disproportionately affected by wage hikes as they may lack the financial capacity to absorb increased labor costs (Ke, 2024). This can result in a slowdown in job creation or even job losses, thereby limiting the overall effectiveness of wage policies in reducing unemployment and economic inequality.

Another critical factor influencing the effectiveness of minimum wage policies is enforcement (Gindling, 2024). In countries with high levels of informal employment, such as Indonesia and Myanmar, many workers do not benefit from legally mandated minimum wages. The lack of robust regulatory frameworks and weak labor inspection systems further undermine policy effectiveness (Håkansta et al., 2024). For minimum wage policies to achieve their intended goals, governments must invest in enforcement mechanisms, including digital wage tracking, stronger labor inspections, and penalties for non-compliance (Bossler et al., 2022).

Additionally, a well-functioning social dialogue system involving governments, employers, and labor unions can help ensure that minimum wages are set at sustainable levels that support economic growth while protecting workers (Papadakis, 2021).

Finally, the effectiveness of minimum wage policies depends on complementary measures such as social protection, skills development, and productivity-linked wage systems (Ab Manan et al., 2022). Countries that integrate wage policies with broader economic strategies, such as Singapore's progressive wage model and the Philippines' tripartite wage-setting mechanism, tend to achieve better labor market outcomes (Platt et al., 2022). These approaches ensure that minimum wage increases are aligned with productivity gains, preventing economic distortions while fostering inclusive growth.

4.3 The Challenges in Implementing Minimum Wage in ASEAN countries

Despite the potential benefits of minimum wage policies, ASEAN countries face numerous challenges in their implementation. One of the foremost challenges is achieving a balance between protecting workers' rights and maintaining economic competitiveness (Bottero, 2020). Employers, particularly in labor-intensive sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture, often argue that rising labor costs reduce their ability to compete in global markets (Herrigel, 2020). This resistance to minimum wage hikes is evident in countries like Indonesia, where employer groups have lobbied against significant wage increases, citing concerns over business sustainability and investment attractiveness (Ollivaud, 2021). Another major challenge is the significant disparity in economic conditions across different regions within a single country (Nijman & Yehua, 2020). In Indonesia and Vietnam, for example, minimum wages are set at different levels depending on the region, reflecting variations in cost of living. While this approach helps address local economic differences, it also complicates enforcement and creates inconsistencies in wage distribution. Workers in lower-wage regions may experience stagnation in earnings, leading to income inequality between urban and rural areas (Dustmann et al., 2022). To address this issue, governments must ensure that regional wage adjustments are fair and reflect real economic conditions without exacerbating economic imbalances.

Compliance and enforcement remain persistent hurdles in many ASEAN countries. High levels of informal employment, weak labor laws, and inadequate monitoring mechanisms make it difficult to ensure that employers adhere to minimum wage regulations (Bosch et al., 2023). In countries like Myanmar and Cambodia, where informal labor accounts for a large share of the workforce, enforcing minimum wage laws is particularly challenging. Strengthening labor inspection agencies, introducing digital payment systems to ensure transparency, and increasing penalties for non-compliance can help improve enforcement and protect vulnerable workers (Gallo & Hannah, 2021).

Another implementation challenge is the potential inflationary pressure caused by minimum wage hikes. When wages rise significantly without corresponding increases in productivity, businesses may pass on the costs to consumers, leading to higher prices for goods and services (Clemens, 2021). This can erode the real income gains achieved through wage increases, particularly in economies where inflation is already a concern. Policymakers must carefully calibrate wage adjustments to ensure they do not trigger unintended inflationary effects that counteract the benefits of higher wages (Bordo & Mickey, 2021).

Furthermore, minimum wage policies must be designed to complement broader labor market strategies (Jardim et al., 2022). In the absence of adequate vocational training and skills development programs, higher minimum wages alone may not lead to improved labor market outcomes (Clemens, 2021). ASEAN countries should prioritize workforce upskilling initiatives to enhance labor productivity, ensuring that wage increases are supported by corresponding improvements in worker capabilities.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has provided an in-depth analysis of minimum wage implementation in ASEAN countries, highlighting key differences in policy approaches, effectiveness, and the challenges associated with enforcement. The comparative review revealed significant disparities in minimum wage levels, with economically developed nations such as Singapore and Malaysia setting higher wages than their lower-income counterparts, including Indonesia and Vietnam. The analysis also underscored the varying coverage and scope of minimum wage policies, with some countries adopting universal wage policies

while others rely on sectoral or regional approaches. The effectiveness of these policies largely depends on enforcement mechanisms, economic conditions, and labor market dynamics, with countries that integrate minimum wage policies with productivity-linked strategies demonstrating more sustainable outcomes.

One of the significant contributions of this article is its comparative framework, which offers a nuanced understanding of how different ASEAN countries implement and enforce minimum wage policies. By examining both the benefits and drawbacks of these policies, this article provides valuable insights for policymakers, employers, and labor organizations seeking to balance worker welfare with economic sustainability. The discussion also highlights best practices, such as Thailand's periodic wage reviews and the Philippines' tripartite wage-setting mechanism, which could serve as models for other ASEAN nations striving to enhance their wage policy effectiveness. Moreover, the critical analysis of employer resistance, enforcement challenges, and economic disparities sheds light on potential areas for policy improvement, ensuring that minimum wage policies contribute to reducing poverty and income inequality without compromising business competitiveness.

While this study provides a comprehensive evaluation of minimum wage implementation in ASEAN, several areas warrant further research. Future studies should focus on the long-term economic impacts of minimum wage policies, particularly their effects on employment trends, business sustainability, and labor market segmentation. Additionally, comparative studies examining the role of technological advancements, such as digital wage payment systems, in improving compliance and enforcement could offer valuable policy recommendations. Further research could also explore the interplay between minimum wage policies and broader social protection measures, including unemployment benefits and worker retraining programs, to ensure a holistic approach to labor market stability and economic resilience.

In conclusion, minimum wage policies remain a critical instrument for promoting social and economic equity in ASEAN countries. However, their success hinges on careful policy calibration, robust enforcement, and integration with broader labor and economic strategies. By adopting evidence-based policymaking and continuously refining wage-setting mechanisms, ASEAN nations can enhance the effectiveness of their minimum wage policies, ensuring inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding this manuscript.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Mohd Ridwan Abd Razak.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Analysis, Writing. **Enah Ali.**: Article drafting. **Arsalan Mujahid Ghouri.**: Literature Review. **Subramaniam Kolandan.**: Manuscript Editing.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

Data available within the article or its supplementary materials.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT and Grammarly to enhance the clarity of the writing. After using the ChatGPT and Grammarly, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

ETHIC STATEMENTS

Not applicable.

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