



The Protection of Indonesian Adolescent Employment Rights in Cambodia Reviewed from Indonesian Labor Law

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<p>Article History Received: 2026-04-07 Revised: 2026-04-17 Published: 2026-05-11</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Protection of employment rights; Indonesian teenagers; employment law; Cambodia</i></p>	<p>The protection of the employment rights of Indonesian adolescents working abroad, especially in Cambodia, is a legal issue that needs serious attention. In practice, not a few Indonesian teenagers working in Cambodia experience violations of labor rights, such as unfair wages, excessive working hours, and working conditions that are not in accordance with humanitarian standards. This study aims to examine the protection of Indonesian adolescent employment rights in Cambodia based on the provisions of Indonesian labor law. This research uses normative legal research methods with a legislative approach and a conceptual approach. The results of the study show that laws and regulations in Indonesia, especially Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower and Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, have provided an adequate legal basis related to the protection of the rights of workers, including adolescents. However, the implementation of this protection is still not optimal due to weak supervision, lack of coordination between agencies, and low legal understanding of workers. Therefore, it is necessary to increase supervision, strengthen cooperation between countries, and play an active role of the government in ensuring the protection of the employment rights of Indonesian adolescents abroad.</p>

I. INTRODUCTION

The migration of Indonesian workers abroad is a phenomenon that continues to increase in line with limited jobs in the country and the encouragement of economic needs. This condition encourages some people, including the adolescent age group, to look for job opportunities abroad in the hope of earning a better income. One of the job destinations for Indonesian citizens in recent years is Cambodia, which offers job opportunities in certain sectors with relatively easy requirements. The departure of Indonesian teenagers to work abroad is often carried out without adequate preparation, both in terms of skills and understanding of the aspects of labor law. The lack of knowledge about rights and obligations as workers has put Indonesian teenagers in a vulnerable position to various forms of exploitation and violations of work rights (Agustiani & Ruslie, 2023).

Adolescents as an age group that are still in the stages of physical, mental, and social development have a weak position in the employment structure,

especially when working outside the jurisdiction of Indonesia. Age and work experience limitations cause adolescents to often lack strong bargaining power in employment relationships with employers. In practice, Indonesian teenagers working in Cambodia often face problems in the form of working hours that exceed reasonable provisions, a wage system that is not in accordance with labor agreements, non-compliance with occupational safety and health standards, and treatment that degrades human dignity. In addition, some teenagers work without a clear employment contract, which creates legal uncertainty in the event of an employment dispute (Afriliani et al., 2021). This condition shows a violation of adolescent labor rights and reflects the weak legal protection for Indonesian migrant workers in the destination country.

Normatively, Indonesia's labor law has provided a strong legal foundation in an effort to protect the rights of workers, including adolescents and migrant workers. Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower clearly regulates

the age limit of work, the prohibition of employing children, and special forms of protection for child and adolescent workers from exploitation. In addition, Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers affirms the state's obligation to provide protection to Indonesian migrant workers before working, during work, and after working abroad. The protection includes administrative, technical, and legal aspects, which aims to ensure the fulfillment of the rights of migrant workers in a fair and humane manner (Rosida, 2022).

However, the application of these legal provisions in the context of the protection of Indonesian adolescents working in Cambodia still faces various obstacles. These obstacles include weak supervision of the recruitment and placement process, lack of coordination between authorized agencies, and limited role of the state in reaching and protecting migrant workers abroad, especially those who depart non-procedurally. In addition, the low legal awareness factor among adolescents and families also worsens the protection conditions, because many adolescents do not understand the normative rights they should have obtained as migrant workers (Yuanita, 2022).

Based on these conditions, this study aims to examine in depth the regulation and implementation of the protection of the employment rights of Indonesian adolescents working in Cambodia from the perspective of Indonesian labor law. This study also seeks to identify various obstacles faced in efforts to protect the employment rights of Indonesian adolescents abroad, both in terms of regulation and implementation. The results of this study are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of labor law studies, especially related to the protection of adolescent workers and migrant workers. In addition, this research is expected to provide practical benefits as a consideration for the government and related stakeholders in formulating policies and strengthening legal protection mechanisms for Indonesian adolescents working abroad in a more effective and sustainable manner.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a normative legal research that aims to examine the protection of the employment rights of Indonesian adolescents working in Cambodia from the perspective of Indonesian labor law (Rizkia & Fardiansyah, 2023). Normative legal research was chosen because the focus of this research is on the analysis of legal norms, principles, and provisions of laws and regulations that govern the rights and protection of workers, especially adolescents and Indonesian migrant workers. The approaches used in this study are a legislative approach and a conceptual approach. The legislative approach is carried out by examining various national regulations related to employment and migrant workers, including Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers, and other relevant laws and regulations. A conceptual approach is used to understand the concept of legal protection, adolescent labor rights, and the state's responsibility in providing protection to Indonesian migrant workers abroad.

The sources of legal materials in this study consist of primary legal materials, secondary legal materials, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials include laws and regulations in the fields of employment, child protection, and migrant workers which are the basis of the analysis in this study. Secondary legal materials are in the form of legal textbooks, scientific journals, articles, and research results related to the protection of the labor rights of Indonesian adolescents and migrant workers. The tertiary legal materials include legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other reference sources that function as support in understanding legal terms and concepts.

The collection of legal materials is carried out through literature studies by tracing and reviewing various written sources that are relevant to the research problem. All legal materials obtained were then analyzed qualitatively by descriptive-analytical method, namely by describing and interpreting the provisions of Indonesian labor law and relating them to the conditions of protection of the labor

rights of Indonesian adolescents working in Cambodia. The results of the analysis are used to answer the formulation of the problem and draw conclusions according to the purpose of the research.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Context of Globalization and Adolescent Vulnerability in the Cross-Border World of Work

The protection of the employment rights of Indonesian adolescents working in Cambodia must be understood in the context of an increasingly dynamic and complex labor globalization. Globalization opens up new economic opportunities and jobs for people in developing countries such as Indonesia. However, the flow of cross-border labour migration also carries a high risk for vulnerable groups of workers, including teenagers. Adolescents are often driven by limited domestic employment, family economic pressures, and a lack of formal skills, so they tend to accept any job without assessing legal and occupational safety risks (Nesia et al., 2019).

Inequality in international employment relations puts adolescents in a very weak bargaining position compared to employers. Their young age, limited work experience, and low understanding of legal rights and obligations put them at risk of exploitation. Long working hours, substandard wages, and degrading treatment of human dignity are prone to occur. Employment sectors occupied by teenagers, generally informal and minimally regulated, such as the domestic, agricultural, and trade sectors, often do not pay attention to job safety or social security (Umarsahid et al., 2023).

The absence of a written work agreement worsens the position of adolescents in the face of the risk of rights violations. Employment relationships based on verbal agreements provide very low legal certainty, so that in the event of disputes or unfair wage distribution, it is difficult for adolescents to claim their rights. This phenomenon reflects the weaknesses of the cross-border employment protection system, especially in providing effective legal protection for

adolescent migrant workers (Sukendro et al., 2024).

This negative impact is also amplified by social and economic pressures at the family and community levels. Many teenagers consider unsuitable work as natural because they are used to facing economic limitations. The lack of information about the normative rights of migrant workers further worsens their conditions, so that exploitation tends to be accepted without resistance. Low legal awareness makes it difficult for adolescents to understand the protection they are supposed to receive in the destination country (Nunuk Nuswardani & Abd Ghadas, 2021).

This phenomenon shows that the protection of adolescent employment rights cannot rely solely on national laws or the intervention of state representatives abroad. A comprehensive approach, including pre-departure education, field surveillance, and legal protection based on bilateral agreements, is an urgent need. Legal protection for migrant adolescents is part of the state's responsibility to maintain the dignity and safety of its citizens in the midst of the flow of labor globalization.

B. Legal Protection of Indonesian Adolescents Based on National Labor Law

Indonesia's labor law provides a clear constitutional basis for youth protection. Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower affirms the age limit and special protection for child and adolescent workers through Articles 68 to 75. The provision emphasizes the importance of preventing exploitation, ensuring that work does not interfere with the physical, mental, and social development of adolescents, and strengthening legal interventions as a form of protection for vulnerable groups of workers (Sinambela et al., 2025).

Law Number 18 of 2017 concerning the Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers strengthens the state's responsibility to protect migrant workers as a whole. This protection covers the pre-departure, during work, and post-work stages. Prospective migrant workers are required to go through official procedures, meet age and competency requirements, and receive

legal education and employment rights. During employment, the state through diplomatic representatives has the obligation to monitor working conditions, handle complaints, and protect workers' rights (Musrin et al., 2022).

In practice, the implementation of legal protection still faces significant obstacles. Illegal or informal recruitment of adolescents is common, while the supervisory capacity of Indonesian representatives in Cambodia is limited by human resources, budgets, and legal authority. Many youth workers are not officially registered, making it difficult to obtain protection in the event of a violation of employment rights or disputes. The absence of a written employment agreement further weakens their legal position, increasing the risk of exploitation (Afriliani et al., 2021).

Low legal awareness among adolescents and families exacerbates this problem. Many adolescents accept unsuitable working conditions as something normal due to a lack of understanding of their rights. Lack of employment education and access to legal information are the main factors. This reflects the need for more systematic preventive interventions, including socialization of labor regulations and ongoing training on the rights of migrant workers (Azmy, 2023).

The combination of national regulations and field supervision is key to ensuring the protection of adolescents. Strict enforcement of laws against illegal recruitment, supervision of working hours, wage guarantees, and job safety can ensure that the rights of adolescents are met. This legal protection is not only based on national norms, but also reflects Indonesia's responsibility to meet international human rights standards for migrant workers (Siregar, 2021).

C. Strategy for the Protection of Indonesian Adolescents' Employment Rights Abroad

The protection of the employment rights of Indonesian adolescents in Cambodia requires a comprehensive strategy that brings together regulations, supervision, education, and international cooperation. Indonesian representatives in Cambodia must have adequate capacity, authority, and resources to monitor

working conditions, uphold workers' rights, and crack down on labor violations. Bilateral coordination with the Cambodian government is essential to anticipate illegal recruitment practices and ensure legal protection for migrant workers (Arifuddin Muda Harahap, 2020).

Legal education and labor socialization are equally important preventive strategies. The pre-departure program should emphasize workers' rights, official placement procedures, how to report violations, as well as the principles of decent work. The involvement of migrant migrant sending families and communities is also needed so that they are able to support adolescents in choosing safe and legal jobs. This approach will increase legal awareness and establish a work culture that values safety and justice (Harahap & Nasution, 2025).

Official registration, age and competency requirements, and ongoing supervision must be combined with strict law enforcement against those who engage in illegal recruitment or exploitation. This measure not only legally protects the employment rights of adolescents, but also ensures the safety, dignity, and fulfillment of the normative rights of migrant workers. The implementation of this strategy reflects the country's constitutional responsibility to protect all its citizens inside and outside the national jurisdiction (Nurvianti & Fathurrahman, 2020).

This approach must be accompanied by a continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Monitoring should include working conditions, wages, working hours, and compliance with safety and health standards. Periodic evaluations will identify obstacles that arise and adjust protection policies and procedures. Thus, the protection system becomes dynamic, responsive, and oriented to the real needs of adolescent workers (Febrihapsari et al., 2021).

The protection of the labor rights of Indonesian adolescents in Cambodia must ultimately combine preventive, repressive, and educational elements. This strategy allows adolescents to obtain decent, safe, and humane jobs, while affirming the state's position as a protector of the rights of its citizens. This comprehensive approach is proof that the protection of adolescent migrant workers is not

only an administrative responsibility, but also part of the state's legal and moral obligations in the context of the globalization of labor (Junaidi & Khikmah, 2024).

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusion

The protection of the employment rights of Indonesian adolescents in Cambodia faces complex challenges due to the dynamics of globalization, the vulnerability of young workers, and inadequate cross-border employment practices. Indonesian adolescents who work abroad are often in a weak bargaining position due to limited age, experience, and legal understanding, making them vulnerable to excessive working hours, inadequate wages, and degrading treatment. Indonesia's labor law, through Law No. 13 of 2003 and Law No. 18 of 2017, provides a clear basis for protection, including age restrictions, pre-departure procedures, normative rights, and legal education obligations for migrant workers. However, implementation in the field still faces significant obstacles, such as illegal recruitment, weak supervision of representatives abroad, and low legal awareness of adolescents and families. This condition shows the need for a comprehensive strategy that combines regulation, supervision, education, and bilateral cooperation. The protection of adolescent employment rights is not only a national legal obligation, but also part of the state's responsibility to ensure safe, humane, and decent work, in accordance with the principles of universal human rights.

B. Suggestion

The country needs to strengthen employment supervision for adolescent migrant workers through increased capacity for overseas representation and bilateral cooperation with the Cambodian government. Legal education and labor socialization must be carried out on an ongoing basis for prospective workers and families, so that adolescents understand their rights and obligations. Law enforcement against illegal recruitment and exploitation practices must be stricter, and official registration of

migrant workers must be carried out to ensure effective legal protection.

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