

HO CHI MINH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF POLITICS

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**ENSURING THE RIGHTS OF FEMALE WORKERS
AT THE WORKPLACE IN INDUSTRIAL PARKS
OF THE CENTRAL KEY ECONOMIC REGION
IN VIETNAM**

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

MAJOR: HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

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INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale for the Study

In the context of integration and development, women are increasingly affirming their significant role in socio-economic development and national construction. Female workers constitute an important segment of the workforce, making substantial contributions to economic growth and stability. However, they continue to face numerous barriers, including gender stereotypes, limited opportunities for career advancement, and the dual burden of work and family responsibilities.

Vietnamese law has established a relatively comprehensive legal framework to guarantee the rights of female workers in the workplace, as reflected in key legal documents such as the Constitution, the Labor Code, the Law on Employment, the Law on Gender Equality, and the Law on Social Insurance. Nevertheless, certain provisions remain insufficiently feasible due to socio-economic conditions and the limited enforcement capacity of some employers. The organization and implementation of legal regulations in this field have not yet achieved the desired effectiveness.

In the Central Key Economic Region, which hosts numerous industrial zones and millions of workers, female workers account for a large proportion of the labor force and are increasingly engaged in production activities. Many enterprises have paid attention to safeguarding the rights and benefits of female workers, including rest regimes, maternity leave, periodic health examinations, and related entitlements. However, the specific characteristics of industrial zone employment-marked by high work intensity and strong competitive pressure-poses significant challenges for female workers in balancing professional responsibilities and family roles. Moreover, the Fourth Industrial Revolution presents new challenges in terms of professional qualifications, vocational skills, and the risk of job displacement for female workers, particularly in labor-intensive industries.

Therefore, conducting in-depth research to accurately assess the current situation and propose solutions to improve the legal framework and enhance the effectiveness of guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace-especially within industrial zones in the Central Key Economic Region-is an urgent requirement. This is essential to ensure substantive gender equality and to promote the role of women in the era of international integration and digital transformation.

Based on the above considerations, the doctoral candidate has selected the topic: “Guaranteeing the Rights of Female Workers in the Workplace within Industrial Zones of the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam” as a doctoral dissertation in Law on Human Rights.

2. Research Objectives and Tasks

2.1. Research Objectives

The dissertation aims to comprehensively clarify the theoretical and practical foundations for guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace within industrial zones of the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam. On that basis, it proposes solutions to ensure the rights of female workers in industrial zones of the region through 2030, with a vision toward 2045.

2.2. Research Tasks

To achieve the above objectives, the dissertation undertakes the following tasks:

First, to review, synthesize, and analyze domestic and international studies related to guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace within industrial zones, thereby identifying inherited values, research gaps, and issues requiring further study.

Second, to further clarify the theoretical foundations concerning the guarantee of female workers' rights in industrial zones, including: the concept, characteristics, and content of female workers' rights; the concept, subjects, measures, and content of guaranteeing these rights; and the legal framework for guaranteeing female workers' rights in industrial zones.

Third, to analyze and assess the current situation of guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace within industrial zones of the Central Key Economic Region, identifying achievements, limitations, and their underlying causes.

Fourth, to propose solutions to enhance the guarantee of female workers' rights in industrial zones of the Central Key Economic Region.

3. Research Subjects and Scope

3.1. Research Subjects

The dissertation focuses on analyzing and clarifying legal provisions and measures to guarantee the rights of female workers in industrial zones, as provided in the Constitution, the Labor Code, the Law on Social Insurance, the Law on Employment, the Law on Occupational Safety and Health, and the Law on Gender Equality. It also examines the practical implementation of measures to guarantee the rights of female workers in industrial zones of the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam.

3.2. Research Scope

The scope of the dissertation is defined as follows: (1) Spatial scope: The research concentrates on five localities within the Central Key Economic Region, namely Hue City, Da Nang City, Quang Nam Province, Quang Ngai Province, and Binh Dinh Province. This selection is based on the prevailing legal framework and data collected prior to the effective date of Resolution No. 202/2025/QH15 on the reorganization of provincial-level administrative units. (2) Temporal scope: The study surveys the period from 2015 to 2024 and proposes solutions up to 2030, with a vision toward 2045. (3) Substantive scope: The dissertation approaches the guarantee of female workers' rights in industrial zones from the perspective of human rights law. The rights examined focus on the following core rights: The right to equality in employment and vocational training; The right to income and wages; The right to working hours and rest periods; The rights of female workers during pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, and social insurance; The right to protection against sexual harassment in the workplace.

The content of guaranteeing female workers' rights includes: (1) Developing and improving labor policies and laws to guarantee female workers' rights in industrial **zones**; (2) Organizing the implementation of policies and laws, including: (3) Implementing measures to protect and promote female workers' rights; (4) Raising awareness among

relevant stakeholders; (5) Conducting inspection, examination, and supervision to ensure compliance; (6) Strengthening international integration.

Measures to guarantee female workers' rights in the workplace encompass economic, social, and legal measures. However, within the scope of this dissertation, the analysis primarily focuses on legal measures as the central analytical axis, clarifying the legal basis, enforcement mechanisms, and responsibilities of relevant actors. This legal approach does not separate itself from socio-economic conditions and labor relations practice. Issues such as dispute resolution mechanisms, employer violations, and other related rights are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

4. Methodology and Research Methods

4.1. Methodological Framework

The dissertation is grounded in the dialectical materialist methodology of Marxism–Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and the Party's viewpoints on the socialist rule-of-law state and human rights. It also draws upon the Party's theories of renewal and specialized human rights theories, particularly those concerning the guarantee of female workers' rights.

4.2. Research Methods

The dissertation employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, including: Analytical and synthetic methods; Statistical methods; Comparative methods; Secondary document analysis; Primary data research.

5. New Contributions of the Dissertation

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

The dissertation systematizes, supplements, and further deepens the theoretical foundation concerning the guarantee of female workers' rights in the workplace within industrial zones.

5.2. Practical Contributions

The dissertation provides a comprehensive assessment of the current situation regarding the guarantee of female workers' rights in industrial zones of the Central Key Economic Region, identifying strengths, limitations, and their causes.

It proposes viewpoints and solutions to enhance the guarantee of female workers' rights in the region's industrial zones. Particular emphasis is placed on strengthening coordination among relevant stakeholders and improving the effectiveness of law implementation and supervision concerning labor law and the guarantee of female workers' rights in industrial zones of the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam.

6. Significance of the Dissertation

6.1. Theoretical Significance

The dissertation contributes to enriching the theoretical foundation concerning the guarantee of female workers' rights in the workplace within industrial zones. It also contributes to the development of the specialized field of human rights law, particularly in relation to the rights of female workers in the workplace.

6.2. Practical Significance

Based on its research findings, the dissertation provides objective assessments of achievements, limitations, and their underlying causes. On that basis, it proposes viewpoints

and solutions to enhance the effectiveness of guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace within industrial zones of the Central Key Economic Region. Through these research results, the doctoral candidate hopes that the dissertation will serve as a reference material for research, teaching, and learning at relevant training and educational institutions, as well as for state agencies and enterprises in the process of guaranteeing the rights of female workers in industrial zones, thereby contributing to raising awareness of respect for and protection of female workers' rights.

7. Structure of the Dissertation

In addition to the Introduction, Conclusion, References, and Appendices, the main content of the dissertation is structured into four chapters:

Chapter 1: Overview of research on guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace within industrial zones.

Chapter 2: Theoretical foundations for guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace within industrial zones.

Chapter 3: Current situation of guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace within industrial zones of the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam.

Chapter 4: Viewpoints and solutions to enhance the effectiveness of guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace within industrial zones of the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam.

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON GUARANTEEING THE RIGHTS OF FEMALE WORKERS IN THE WORKPLACE WITHIN INDUSTRIAL ZONES

1.1. Domestic and International Studies Related to the Dissertation Topic

1.1.1. Studies Related to Human Rights in the Field of Labor

1.1.1.1. Domestic Studies

1.1.1.2. International Studies

1.1.2. Studies Related to the Rights of Female Workers

1.1.2.1. Domestic Studies

1.1.2.2. International Studies

1.1.3. Studies Related to the Rights of Female Workers in the Workplace within Industrial Zones

1.1.3.1. Domestic Studies

1.1.3.2. International Studies

1.2. General Assessment and Issues for Further Research

1.2.1. General Assessment of Published Studies

Regarding the theoretical foundation, previous studies have analyzed various aspects related to the rights of female workers and the theory of guaranteeing rights within industrial zones. However, there remains a lack of in-depth research on the role, scope, and content of guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace within industrial zones of the Central Key Economic Region.

In terms of practice, several studies have fairly comprehensively assessed the implementation of policies and laws concerning the rights of female workers. Nevertheless, most of these studies focus on individual localities. No study has yet provided a comprehensive examination of the current situation and proposed solutions specifically for the Central Key Economic Region.

1.2.2. Issues Requiring Further Research

Previous research has provided the author with an overall understanding of the rights of female workers. However, there has been no systematic and comprehensive study on guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace within industrial zones of the Central Key Economic Region. This research gap is precisely what the dissertation seeks to address.

The dissertation develops a theoretical framework on guaranteeing the rights of female workers in the workplace, including: the concept, characteristics, and content of female workers' rights; the concept and content of laws guaranteeing female workers' rights in the workplace; the subjects responsible for guaranteeing these rights; and the measures to ensure such rights.

At the same time, the dissertation evaluates the current situation, identifies achievements, shortcomings, and their causes, and on that basis proposes viewpoints and a system of appropriate solutions.

In terms of viewpoints, the dissertation emphasizes promoting the role of female workers in industrialization and modernization, enhancing their status, ensuring substantive gender equality, and combating discriminatory attitudes.

Regarding solutions, it focuses on raising awareness, strengthening coordination among stakeholders, and improving the effectiveness of law implementation and supervision.

The author expects that the dissertation will contribute to filling the identified research gap, thereby improving the guarantee of female workers' rights in industrial zones, contributing to sustainable development, and enhancing the role of the Central Key Economic Region in national development.

Chapter 2: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR GUARANTEEING THE RIGHTS OF FEMALE WORKERS IN THE WORKPLACE WITHIN INDUSTRIAL ZONES

2.1. Concepts, Characteristics, and Content of the Rights of Female Workers at the Workplace in Industrial Parks

2.1.1. Concept of the Rights of Female Workers

The rights of female workers are legal entitlements recognized and guaranteed by the State for female workers in the course of participating in labor relations. These rights reflect the combination of human rights, citizens' rights, and gender-specific legal provisions, with the aim of ensuring equality, respecting motherhood, and protecting women in conditions of employment, work, and social security.

2.1.2. Characteristics of the Rights of Female Workers

First, the rights of female workers derive from biological and legal gender characteristics. Female gender is a factor determining the position of women in labor relations. However, with the development of modern society and the recognition of the right to gender transition, the legal definition of "female workers" needs to be further clarified to ensure equality and avoid legal gaps concerning transgender persons who have transitioned to female gender.

Second, the rights of female workers reflect a combination of the protection of human rights in labor and the protection of gender-specific roles. The law is not only intended to protect reproductive health and motherhood but must also balance the interests of workers and employers, avoiding excessive protective regulations that may discourage enterprises from recruiting female workers.

Third, the rights of female workers are distinctive compared with those of male workers due to differences in physical characteristics, physiology, and social roles. Vietnamese law has established specific protective provisions, such as prohibiting the employment of female workers in arduous or hazardous work; ensuring maternity and childcare benefits; and protecting employment during pregnancy and childbirth.

2.1.3. Content of the Rights of Female Workers at the Workplace in Industrial Parks

The rights of female workers are recognized in numerous international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979), and the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), reflecting the principles of gender equality and ensuring fair, safe, and humane working conditions. Vietnam is a party to many of these conventions and has incorporated international standards into the 2019 Labour Code (Chapter X, Articles 135–142), affirming specific protective policies for female workers.

Accordingly, the rights of female workers comprise five principal groups:

The right to equality in employment and vocational training – ensuring equal opportunities for access, training, promotion, and remuneration, without discrimination based on gender or marital status.

The right to income and wages – implementing the principle of “equal pay for work of equal value” and prohibiting reductions in wages or allowances on the grounds of gender, pregnancy, or maternity leave.

The right to working time and rest – ensuring the assignment of work appropriate to physical conditions, with provisions on rest, maternity leave, and childcare, thereby promoting a balance between work and family life.

The rights during pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, and entitlement to social insurance benefits – providing special protection for health, income, and employment; ensuring at least six months of maternity leave with benefits equivalent to 100% of wages, and protection against dismissal or disciplinary action on the grounds of pregnancy or childcare.

The right to protection against sexual harassment in the workplace – ensuring a safe working environment that respects human dignity; employers are required to prevent and address violations and protect complainants.

2.2. Content, Subjects, and Measures for Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers at the Workplace in Industrial Parks

2.2.1. Concept of Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers at the Workplace in Industrial Parks

Ensuring the rights of female workers at the workplace in industrial parks refers to the comprehensive system of legal regulations, policies, and implementation activities aimed at creating conditions in which female workers are respected, protected, and able to enjoy equal rights relating to employment, safe working conditions, and occupational health, thereby ensuring gender equality in labor relations.

2.2.2. Subjects Responsible for Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers at the Workplace in Industrial Parks

The subjects responsible for ensuring the rights of female workers at the workplace include state agencies and organizations, namely: the National Assembly; the Government; ministries, ministerial-level agencies, and government-attached agencies; the Ministry of Home Affairs; local authorities; judicial bodies; regional councils; and specialized human rights agencies, namely the Human Rights Steering Committee, established pursuant to Decision No. 63/2004/QĐ-TTg dated April 16, 2004.

In industrial parks, the subjects responsible for ensuring the rights of female workers at the workplace also include entities such as the Management Boards of Industrial Parks and Economic Zones and regional councils.

In addition, subjects responsible for ensuring the rights of female workers at the workplace include political organizations, socio-political organizations, and other relevant actors, including the Communist Party of Vietnam, socio-political organizations, and employers.

2.2.3. Content of Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers at the Workplace in Industrial Parks

(1) Developing and improving labor policies and legislation to ensure the rights of female workers at the workplace in industrial parks.

(2) Organizing the implementation of policies and laws on ensuring the rights of female workers at the workplace in industrial parks, including:

Implementing measures to protect and promote the rights of female workers at the workplace in industrial parks.

Disseminating information and raising awareness among relevant stakeholders concerning the protection and promotion of the rights of female workers at the workplace in industrial parks.

Conducting inspections, examinations, and supervision of the implementation of measures to ensure the rights of female workers at the workplace in industrial parks.

Strengthening international integration.

2.2.4. Measures for Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers at the Workplace in Industrial Parks

Measures for handling administrative violations.

Measures for resolving labor disputes.

Measures for compensation for damages.

Measures for criminal prosecution.

2.3. Law on Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers at the Workplace in Industrial Parks

The law on ensuring the rights of female workers is formulated on the basis of universal human rights values and international commitments to which Vietnam is a party, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979), and the fundamental conventions of the ILO. The 2019 Labour Code and its guiding legal documents have incorporated these international principles into domestic law, clearly stipulating the rights of female workers and mechanisms for their protection at the workplace.

Specifically:

(1) Law on ensuring the right to equality in employment and vocational training: ensuring that women have equal opportunities with men in recruitment, training, and promotion, without discrimination based on gender.

(2) Law on ensuring the right to income and wages: reflecting the principle of “equal pay for work of equal value” and prohibiting reductions in wages, allowances, or other benefits of female workers on the grounds of gender, pregnancy, or maternity.

(3) Law on ensuring the right to working time and rest: regulating working-hour limits, leave, and holidays, and prohibiting the employment of pregnant female workers in arduous work, overtime work, or long-distance business trips.

(4) Law on ensuring rights during pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, and entitlement to social insurance benefits: ensuring at least six months of maternity leave, benefits equivalent to 100% of wages, employment protection, and appropriate job placement.

(5) Law on ensuring the right to protection against sexual harassment in the workplace: prohibiting sexual harassment and requiring employers to establish workplace regulations and complaint mechanisms and to protect complainants.

2.4. Laws on Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers at the Workplace in Selected Countries and Implications for Vietnam

The dissertation examines the experiences of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand—three Asian countries with cultural and social characteristics similar to those of Vietnam but which have made significant progress in ensuring the rights of female workers.

Japan: Japan has established a comprehensive legal framework, including the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (1986), the Child Care and Family Care Leave Law (1991), and the Basic Act for a Gender-Equal Society (2000), among others, to ensure equality in recruitment, remuneration, maternity leave, and protection against sexual harassment. The Government has implemented the “Womenomics” policy to encourage enterprises to increase the employment and advancement of women, while developing welfare systems, childcare facilities, and flexible employment arrangements, contributing to an increase in the female labor force participation rate to approximately 72% in 2022.

Republic of Korea: The Republic of Korea has strengthened its legal framework for gender equality through the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act (1987, amended in 2018), the Framework Act on Gender Equality (2014), and the Act on Promotion of Economic and Social Development of Women (1999). The Government supports women’s entrepreneurship, flexible working arrangements, and childcare, while promoting the “K-Womenomics” strategy to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions and narrow the gender income gap.

Thailand: Thailand focuses on the Labour Protection Act (1998, amended in 2019), the Gender Equality Act (2015), and the Social Security Act. These regulations prohibit gender discrimination, provide for 98 days of paid maternity leave, combat sexual harassment, and support welfare programs for women. The National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2017–2021 contributed to increasing the female labor force participation rate to 59%.

Implications for Vietnam: (1) Improve legislation on gender equality and the protection of female workers toward greater consistency, accompanied by effective monitoring mechanisms, such as Thailand’s model of a committee promoting gender equality; (2) strengthen policies supporting work–family balance, expand childcare leave for both fathers and mothers, develop childcare facilities in industrial parks, and promote flexible employment arrangements; (3) promote opportunities for women’s advancement and leadership, link gender equality with enterprise assessment criteria, and provide support for leadership training and entrepreneurship; and (4) raise awareness and strengthen law enforcement, enhance legal dissemination, and promote the role of trade unions and women’s organizations in protecting the rights and interests of female workers.

Chapter 3: CURRENT SITUATION OF GUARANTEEING THE RIGHTS OF FEMALE WORKERS IN THE WORKPLACE WITHIN INDUSTRIAL ZONES IN VIETNAM’S CENTRAL KEY ECONOMIC REGION

3.1. Overview of the Central Key Economic Region

3.1.1. Natural and Socio-Economic Conditions of the Central Key Economic Region

The Central Key Economic Region (CKER) was established in 1997, initially comprising Thừa Thiên Huế (now Hue City), Da Nang, Quang Nam, and Quang Ngai. In 2004, Binh Dinh was added to the region. The region covers an area of 27,881 km², accounting for approximately 8.4% of Vietnam's total land area, and holds a strategically important position in terms of geography, economy, politics, culture, and national defense.

Economically, during the period 2001–2019, the region's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) grew at an average annual rate of 10.25%. Although the growth rate slowed during 2011–2019, it remained higher than the national average. The region currently has four coastal economic zones, one high-tech park, and 19 industrial zones.

The total population of the region is approximately 6.55 million people (with a population density of 235 persons per km²), accounting for 7.4% of the national population. In 2022, the labor force reached 3.8 million people, representing 7% of the national labor force. However, labor quality remains relatively low, with the proportion of trained workers below 50%; Da Nang has the highest rate (41.6%), while Binh Dinh has the lowest (15%). This situation poses significant challenges in job creation and improving human resource quality.

The region possesses numerous natural and socio-economic advantages favorable for the development of industrial zones. It has a strategic geographical location at the center of the country, connecting the North–South axis and the Central Highlands, and is located near major seaports such as Da Nang and Dung Quat, which are highly convenient for import and export activities. The region is rich in natural resources, including minerals, marine ecosystems, and valuable mineral water sources, effectively supporting processing and manufacturing industries.

Its transportation system-comprising roadways, railways, seaports, and international airports-is relatively well-developed, facilitating transportation and logistics. In addition, the region has an abundant labor force and a system of vocational training institutions and universities that contribute to improving workforce quality.

However, the region also faces several limitations. Infrastructure remains insufficiently synchronized; similarities in development potential among localities have led to overlapping industries and dispersed investment resources. Negative impacts from extreme weather events such as storms and floods, along with resource exploitation not closely linked to conservation, affect sustainable development. Key economic sectors such as fishing, aquaculture, and seafood processing generate economic value but also exert environmental pressure. Furthermore, although labor quality has improved, it still does not fully meet development requirements, and labor force growth remains slow. Investment capital is limited and insufficient to meet infrastructure development needs, particularly inter-provincial and island transportation systems. Overall, residents' income levels remain relatively low.

3.1.2. Overview of Industrial Zones in the Central Key Economic Region

Since the establishment of the first industrial zone (IZ) in Da Nang in 1994, the region's industrial infrastructure has expanded significantly in terms of quantity. By the end of 2023, the region had four coastal economic zones (Chan May–Lang Co, Chu Lai, Dung

Quat, and Nhon Hoi), one high-tech park in Da Nang, and 19 industrial zones located outside the economic zones. These account for approximately 5.8% of the total number of industrial zones nationwide and 45.2% of the industrial zones in the 14 Central provinces.

Industrial zones play an important role in regional economic development, particularly in Da Nang and Quang Nam, which have the largest number of operating industrial zones. Da Nang also leads in industrial production value (VND 13,352 billion), nearly double that of Quang Nam (VND 7,073 billion).

However, the attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) remains limited. In the first five months of 2023, only 18 new FDI projects were licensed, with a total registered capital of USD 56 million, averaging just USD 3.1 million per project. Da Nang ranks first in the number of investment projects in industrial zones, with 402 projects (including 118 FDI projects), followed by Binh Dinh, Thua Thien Hue, Quang Ngai, and Quang Nam with the lowest number.

According to Decision No. 1874/QĐ-TTg (2014), the development orientation of the Central Key Economic Region focuses on developing economic zones, industrial zones, and urban areas as growth poles, closely linked with environmental protection and sustainable development.

3.1.3. Overview of Female Workers in Industrial Zones of the Central Key Economic Region

By 2023, the region had approximately 3.8 million workers, accounting for 7% of the national labor force. The number of female workers in industrial zones has increased sharply, from approximately 32,000 in 2015 to 224,000 in 2023—an increase of sevenfold.

The majority of female workers originate from rural areas and account for about 60% of the workforce in sectors such as textiles and garments, footwear, and seafood processing. Therefore, special attention should be paid to their health, maternity benefits, and childcare support. Female workers generally demonstrate high discipline and adaptability to industrial working environments. Most live with their families, which reduces housing pressure; however, ongoing urbanization may create new challenges in management and daily life.

Although many industrial zones in the region are characterized by small-scale enterprises, female workers are increasingly shifting their occupational structure, improving their professional qualifications, and actively participating in enterprise management and social activities. They play an important role in dialogue with employers, implementing grassroots democracy regulations, and contributing to the development of harmonious labor relations and the reduction of labor disputes.

As of April 2024, across the region, 12,500 enterprises employing 10 or more workers had established trade union organizations.

Despite their significant contribution to regional economic development, female workers continue to face numerous challenges, including working conditions, limited opportunities for career advancement, and gender inequality. This situation requires comprehensive solutions from the State, enterprises, and society to improve their living conditions and effectively utilize this vital human resource.

3.2. Current Legal Framework on Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers in the Workplace

3.2.1. Current Legal Framework on Ensuring the Right to Equality in Employment and Vocational Training of Female Workers

Vietnamese law has made significant progress in ensuring gender equality in

employment and vocational training for female workers. In terms of strengths, the legal system has relatively comprehensively internalized international principles on gender equality, including CEDAW and ILO Conventions No. 100 and No. 111. It clearly defines the responsibilities of the State and employers in ensuring equal opportunities in recruitment, training, employment, and promotion; recognizes women's equal right to vocational training alongside men; and provides support policies for women in rural and ethnic minority areas to participate in vocational education. In addition, sanctions against gender discrimination in labor relations have been more specifically regulated (Decree No. 12/2022/ND-CP).

However, several limitations remain. Many provisions are still general in nature and lack detailed guidance to identify indirect discrimination. There is overlap and inconsistency among relevant laws, such as the 2019 Labor Code, the 2006 Law on Gender Equality, and the 2013 Law on Employment. Support mechanisms for vulnerable women in vocational training and employment remain unclear and largely exist in the form of policies and programs rather than being fully codified into law. Monitoring, data collection, and enforcement mechanisms are still limited and lack specialized procedures. Moreover, gender equality legislation in labor has not been closely integrated with social security and sustainable employment policies, reducing the overall effectiveness and coherence in ensuring equal rights for female workers.

3.2.2. Current Legal Framework on Ensuring the Right to Income and Wages

The 2019 Labor Code and Decree No. 145/2020/ND-CP have concretized the principle of “equal pay for work of equal value,” in line with international conventions such as ILO Convention No. 100. Together with the 2006 Law on Gender Equality and the National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2021–2030, this legal framework has contributed to promoting income equity, enhancing women's economic status and financial autonomy. Some large enterprises have begun implementing transparent wage mechanisms, reflecting the positive impact of the law in practice.

Nevertheless, enforcement remains limited. The law lacks clear and unified guidelines on criteria for determining “work of equal value,” creating difficulties in practical application. Inspection, supervision, and sanctioning mechanisms for wage discrimination are weak and not specialized, resulting in a persistent gender pay gap, particularly in the private sector. Additionally, transparency in wage scales and payroll disclosure remains limited, while gender stereotypes in society and corporate culture continue to negatively affect the realization of income equality for female workers.

3.2.3. Current Legal Framework on Ensuring the Right to Working Time and Rest Periods

The 2019 Labor Code regulates limits on working hours and provides rights to breaks during working hours, weekly rest days, and annual leave. It also establishes specific protective policies for pregnant employees, women giving birth, and those raising young children (Article 137). Maternity leave, postnatal convalescence leave, nursing breaks, menstrual leave, and administrative sanctions under Decree No. 12/2022/ND-CP have contributed to safeguarding women's health, safety, and gender equality in the workplace.

However, certain limitations persist. Some provisions are principled in nature and lack detailed guidance for specific industries and occupations. Monitoring compliance remains weak, particularly in the private sector. In many workplaces, female workers' right to rest is still violated, while legal protection mechanisms are not sufficiently strong. Moreover, certain protective regulations-such as restrictions on overtime work or business trips during pregnancy-may unintentionally limit women's career opportunities. Current legislation also does not adequately address work-family balance policies, such as flexible working hours or workplace childcare facilities.

3.2.4. Current Legal Framework on Ensuring Maternity Rights

The 2019 Labor Code and the 2024 Law on Social Insurance comprehensively regulate the rights of pregnant women and women giving birth, including a minimum of six months of maternity leave, entitlement to benefits equal to 100% of salary, job security, and protection against dismissal or unilateral termination of employment contracts on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity. Pregnant employees are entitled to transfer to lighter work, reduced working hours, and 60 minutes of paid nursing breaks per day. The social insurance mechanism and administrative sanctions under Decree No. 12/2022/ND-CP enhance the binding force and practical protection of these rights.

However, several shortcomings remain. Some provisions are formalistic and lack effective enforcement mechanisms. Many enterprises circumvent the law by dismissing or not renewing contracts with pregnant employees. Female workers in the informal sector do not fully benefit from social insurance, as voluntary insurance policies do not adequately cover maternity benefits. Regulations on maternity leave lack flexibility, and inspection and supervision mechanisms are ineffective. Support policies for childcare remain minimal, with no specific requirements regarding facilities such as lactation rooms or childcare centers. Furthermore, the law does not provide incentives or preferences for enterprises implementing family-friendly policies, leaving the protection of maternity rights largely dependent on employers' goodwill.

3.2.5. Current Legal Framework on Ensuring Protection Against Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

For the first time, the 2019 Labor Code formally defines and prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace (Article 8), marking a positive shift in legislative thinking toward protecting the dignity and honor of workers, especially female workers. Decree No. 145/2020/ND-CP provides detailed regulations on internal rules, complaint-handling procedures, and whistleblower protection, thereby establishing a legal basis for enterprises to proactively prevent and address violations. In addition, the 2015 Penal Code (amended and supplemented in 2025) may be applied to handle serious offenses such as humiliation, rape, or sexual assault, strengthening legal deterrence.

Nevertheless, current legislation still has significant limitations. The concept of "sexual harassment in the workplace" remains general and lacks detailed descriptions of specific acts and degrees of severity, making violations difficult to identify. Sanctions are not sufficiently stringent, and there are no specific administrative penalties exclusively addressing this conduct. Protection mechanisms for victims and whistleblowers remain weak, while fear of job loss discourages many victims from reporting incidents. Awareness-raising, monitoring, and data collection remain limited, particularly in small enterprises, private businesses, and industrial zones-where the risk of harassment is relatively high but difficult to control.

3.3. Practice of Implementing the Law on Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers in the Workplace in Industrial Parks in the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam

3.3.1. Practice of Implementing Legal Provisions to Ensure Rights

Practice of implementing the law on ensuring the right to employment and vocational training. Provinces in the Central Key Economic Region (CKER) have implemented various policies to promote gender equality in employment and vocational training in accordance with legal regulations, thereby improving skills and creating sustainable jobs for female workers. Numerous training programs, enterprise-vocational school cooperation initiatives, and awareness-raising activities have been carried out, contributing to expanded employment and promotion opportunities for women. However, disparities in access to vocational training remain across localities; training quality is not always aligned with actual labor market demand; gender stereotypes persist; and supervision of law enforcement is still largely formalistic.

Practice of implementing the law on ensuring the right to income and wages. Local

authorities in the CKE R have introduced policies to safeguard female workers' income and wage rights in line with the 2019 Labor Code, contributing to narrowing the gender pay gap and improving living standards. Several provinces and cities-such as Da Nang, Quang Nam, and Binh Dinh-have issued plans and resolutions requiring fair and transparent wage payment linked to productivity and social security. The rate of female workers participating in social insurance has reached approximately 87%. Nevertheless, female workers' income remains lower than that of men. Some enterprises continue to violate wage and benefit regulations; bonus and allowance policies are unstable; labor inspection remains limited; and female workers' bargaining capacity is still weak.

Practice of implementing the law on ensuring working time and rest periods. Provinces in the CKE R have implemented measures to ensure compliance with working time and rest regulations under the 2019 Labor Code. Many enterprises adhere to standard working hours, overtime limits, and flexible shifts for employees raising young children. In some localities, such as Da Nang and Quang Nam, pilot five-day workweeks and proper implementation of annual leave and maternity leave have improved workers' health and productivity. However, excessive overtime beyond legal limits still occurs, particularly in textile and footwear enterprises. In some cases, female workers are required to return to work earlier than prescribed after maternity leave. Labor inspection and sanctioning remain irregular and not sufficiently effective.

Practice of implementing the law on ensuring rights during pregnancy, childcare, and social insurance benefits. Local authorities have adopted policies to protect the rights of pregnant workers, those raising young children, and those entitled to social insurance benefits, helping stabilize income and support reintegration into the workforce after maternity leave. Positive models include "flexible shifts for mothers with infants" (Quang Nam), "women-friendly workplaces" (Binh Dinh), lactation rooms, and reproductive health communication programs (Da Nang, Quang Ngai). The rate of female workers participating in social insurance exceeds 90%. However, some enterprises evade social insurance contributions or delay benefit payments; pregnant workers are sometimes assigned unsuitable work; childcare facilities and lactation rooms remain insufficient in industrial parks; inspection mechanisms are weak; and female workers' awareness of their social insurance rights is still limited.

Practice of implementing the law on protection against sexual harassment in the workplace. Localities in the CKE R have implemented measures to prevent and combat workplace sexual harassment in accordance with the 2019 Labor Code and the Code of Conduct issued by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, contributing to safer and more respectful working environments for women. Many enterprises have incorporated anti-harassment provisions into internal regulations, organized training and communication activities, established reporting channels, and adopted internal handling procedures (Da Nang, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh). Approximately 72% of female workers have received training, though some still lack guidance on complaint procedures or experience verbal harassment. Nonetheless, some enterprises have not clearly defined complaint-handling procedures; communication efforts remain superficial and irregular; and enforcement lacks consistency.

3.3.2. Awareness-Raising and Legal Dissemination for Relevant Stakeholders

Legal dissemination and awareness-raising activities concerning female workers' rights in industrial parks in the CKE R have been gradually renewed, focusing on key legal documents directly affecting female workers, such as the 2019 Labor Code, the 2024 Law on Social Insurance, and the Law on Gender Equality. Communication methods are diverse and adapted to the characteristics of female workers in industrial parks, including direct communication sessions, leaflets, workshops, legal knowledge contests, social media, and digital platforms. As a result, legal awareness among female workers has improved,

contributing to better working conditions, enhanced gender equality, and reduced discrimination. Localities such as Da Nang and Quang Nam have effectively organized communication programs, training sessions, and policy dialogues with broad worker participation. However, awareness-raising efforts remain limited, often formalistic, fragmented, and lacking specialization. Content has not sufficiently addressed specific issues such as reproductive health or workplace gender equality. Coordination between state agencies and social organizations remains inadequate, and enterprise participation has not been effectively mobilized. Local authorities need to develop clear communication strategies, strengthen training, establish databases, and organize periodic dialogues to enhance awareness and commitment to protecting female workers' rights in industrial parks.

3.3.3. Inspection and Supervision of the Protection of Female Workers' Rights

From 2015 to 2024, inspection and supervision activities concerning the protection of female workers' rights in industrial parks in the CKE R have been conducted in accordance with legal regulations and local directives. Departments of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs have coordinated with relevant sectors and trade unions to inspect enterprises' compliance with labor, trade union, social insurance, and occupational safety regulations. Violations have been detected and addressed in a timely manner, and enterprises have been guided to rectify shortcomings. For example, in 2023, Quang Nam inspected 38 enterprises regarding labor, insurance, and occupational safety compliance, contributing to improved working conditions. Nevertheless, significant limitations remain due to ineffective coordination among authorities and related organizations. Inspections are sometimes superficial and lack depth; inspection forces are understaffed and lack professional expertise. Many enterprises fail to fully implement maternity and childcare regimes. Supervision mechanisms are not synchronized, and the absence of inter-regional inspection mechanisms leads to delays in handling violations. Training and dissemination of labor rights remain general and lack focus. The role of trade unions in protecting female workers' rights has not been sufficiently prominent or closely coordinated with inspection bodies.

3.3.4. Strengthening International Integration and Cooperation

Enhancing international integration and cooperation is a key solution for protecting female workers' rights in industrial parks in the CKE R. Through international commitments (such as CEDAW and ILO conventions), support programs like "Better Work Vietnam," and policy models from countries such as Japan and South Korea, localities have improved working environments and promoted gender equality.

Specifically, Da Nang has signed cooperation agreements with the ILO; Quang Nam has implemented a World Bank-funded labor governance improvement project; Thua Thien Hue has cooperated with JICA to build childcare facilities and rest areas for female workers; and Binh Dinh has launched anti-harassment campaigns. Administrative reforms have also been promoted to attract effective international cooperation.

Survey results of civil servants and female workers in industrial parks in the CKE R indicate that most respondents agree with the implementation of policies and laws protecting female workers' rights, though limitations remain. The criterion "Inspection and supervision ensuring female workers' rights" received the highest rating (3.55/5 points), while "Communication and dissemination of support policies" (2.96/5 points) and "International integration to enhance policy effectiveness" (2.14/5 points) were rated lower. Maternity benefits were assessed at an average level (3.02/5 points).

Limitations in international integration and cooperation include the absence of synchronized mechanisms for adopting international standards. Although the 2019 Labor Code and the 2006 Law on Gender Equality clearly regulate female workers' rights, practical implementation faces difficulties. For example, in Hoa Khanh Industrial Park (Da

Nang), while some enterprises have adopted standards such as SA8000, most lack specific policies supporting female workers, particularly regarding maternity leave, childcare regimes, and safe working environments.

International cooperation programs, including technical assistance for capacity building and labor rights protection, remain localized and have not been widely replicated. Weak coordination between state management agencies and international organizations has limited access to advanced models. For instance, some enterprises participating in ILO programs focus mainly on occupational safety rather than broader issues such as facilitating women's access to vocational training.

In many industrial parks, although localities have opportunities to attract foreign investment through cooperation agreements, coordination among stakeholders remains ineffective. Projects supporting female workers' skill development or labor rights protection are often constrained by limited financial resources and insufficient state coordination. The absence of a comprehensive data system on working conditions and female workers' rights in industrial parks further hinders effective policy evaluation.

3.4. Practice of Activities of Entities Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers in the Workplace in Industrial Parks in the Central Key Economic Region

3.4.1. Achieved Results

State Actors Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers

State entities play a central role in ensuring the rights of female workers (FWs) in industrial parks. The National Assembly, as the highest legislative body, promulgates key laws such as the 2019 Labor Code, the 2006 Law on Gender Equality, and the 2024 Law on Social Insurance, while supervising their implementation and allocating the state budget for programs supporting female workers.

The Government formulates and administers specific policies and mechanisms to protect female workers' rights, including Decree No. 145/2020/ND-CP, Resolution No. 28/NQ-CP, and Decision No. 1874/QĐ-TTg, and coordinates activities among ministries, sectors, and local authorities. Line ministries and ministerial-level agencies such as the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (with certain functions currently reorganized under the Ministry of Home Affairs)-implement sectoral policies, conduct inspections, carry out communication activities, and integrate gender perspectives into policymaking. Local Departments of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs provide guidance and enforce regulations on labor contracts, wages, dispute settlement, and the protection of specific groups such as female workers in industrial parks through circulars, plans, and reports.

Local governments organize policy implementation in practice, coordinate infrastructure development, ensure living and working conditions for female workers, support vocational training and healthcare, and handle labor disputes. Judicial bodies, including the People's Courts and the People's Procuracies, ensure justice, supervise legal proceedings, and protect the lawful rights and interests of female workers.

Management Boards of Industrial Parks and Economic Zones directly implement policies to ensure safe working environments, improve welfare, and promote gender equality. The Central Key Economic Region Coordinating Council provides policy advice, supervision, and coordination to foster a fair, safe, sustainable labor environment and strengthen regional linkages.

Political Organizations, Socio-Political Organizations, and Other Actors

In Vietnam, the protection of female workers' rights in industrial parks is carried out under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the supervision and social criticism of socio-political organizations, and the proactive engagement of enterprises.

The Party provides strategic orientation through directives and resolutions, such as Directive No. 37-CT/TW and related provincial and municipal implementation plans,

aimed at building harmonious labor relations and improving vocational training quality.

Socio-political organizations-including the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, the Vietnam Women's Union, the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, and the Vietnam Fatherland Front-actively participate in policy formulation and supervision, represent and protect female workers' rights, and organize activities related to healthcare, education, skills development, and awareness-raising.

Enterprises are central actors directly responsible for creating safe, equal, and friendly working environments, ensuring rights related to wages, social insurance, maternity, and protection against harassment. They also cooperate with trade unions and socio-political organizations in communication, training, and rights protection initiatives.

Survey results from civil servants and female workers in industrial parks in the region indicate that the highest-rated criterion was "Trade unions in industrial parks effectively perform their role in protecting workers' rights and supervising policy implementation," with an average score of 3.61/5. In contrast, the criteria "Non-governmental organizations and associations support raising awareness and skills for female workers" and "Initiatives by female workers to improve living and working conditions and ensure fundamental rights" received lower ratings of 2.69/5 and 2.93/5, respectively. This suggests that while the role of trade unions is clearly recognized, the participation of NGOs and female workers themselves in improving living conditions remains limited.

3.4.2. Limitations

Despite achieved results, the activities of entities responsible for ensuring female workers' rights in industrial parks in the Central Key Economic Region still face significant limitations due to weak coordination among state agencies, enterprises, and social organizations.

Coordination among state bodies responsible for labor, gender equality, and the protection of female workers' rights remains formalistic and lacks effective linkage and supervision mechanisms. Many enterprises have not genuinely prioritized the protection of female workers' rights, particularly regarding flexible working arrangements, safe working conditions, and maternity support. The role of trade unions and labor associations remains modest and lacks proactive engagement in communication and in connecting employees, employers, and state authorities.

To address these shortcomings, comprehensive and synchronized solutions are required, including:

- Establishing clear inter-agency coordination mechanisms and specialized task forces at the local level;

- Strengthening the capacity of trade unions and setting up legal advisory centers in industrial parks;

- Encouraging enterprises to invest in employee welfare through incentive mechanisms, mandatory periodic reporting, and transparency requirements;

- Applying information technology in management, developing shared databases, and building online platforms to support enterprises and female workers;

- Organizing interdisciplinary training courses, policy dialogues, and public awareness campaigns.

These measures aim to enhance coordination among stakeholders and improve the effectiveness of policy implementation in protecting the rights of female workers in industrial parks in the Central Key Economic Region.

3.5. Assessment of the Current Legal Framework and Practice of Implementing the Law on Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers in the Workplace in Industrial Parks in the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam

3.5.1. Strengths and Their Causes

3.5.1.1. Strengths

The legal framework on ensuring the rights of female workers in the workplace has achieved significant positive outcomes. It protects fundamental rights such as equality in recruitment, employment, and vocational training; equal pay; working time and rest periods; maternity protection; and prevention of sexual harassment. Vietnam has internalized major international standards and shifted legislative thinking from a purely protective approach to one centered on substantive equality, while maintaining specific policies for vulnerable groups.

The linkage between labor law and social security policies, gender equality strategies, vocational training programs, and enterprise welfare initiatives has contributed to creating a more sustainable working environment for female workers.

Practice in industrial parks in the Central Key Economic Region (CKER) demonstrates improved access to equal employment opportunities, prioritization of technical and technological vocational training for female workers, enhanced protection of fundamental rights, maternity and childcare benefits, and strengthened workplace safety and respect.

The National Assembly promulgates laws; the Government, ministries, and local authorities implement policies; judicial bodies supervise and sanction violations. Political and socio-political organizations, particularly trade unions, actively participate in protecting rights, raising awareness, improving working conditions, and connecting the State with workers, thereby promoting gender equality and substantive rights for female workers.

3.5.1.2. Causes of the Strengths

Objective causes: In the context of international integration and development, ensuring the rights of female workers in industrial parks is not only an internal requirement but also an important indicator of human rights and democratic governance, as well as a binding commitment under international agreements to which Vietnam is a party, such as ILO conventions, CEDAW, the CPTPP, and the EVFTA.

The CKER, characterized by rapid industrialization and strong FDI attraction, generates high demand for female labor. Enterprises increasingly recognize the importance of building safe and appropriate working environments to enhance productivity and competitiveness. Social awareness of the role of female workers has improved, while international organizations provide financial, technical, and legal support. Furthermore, technological advancements and modern management trends contribute to creating fairer workplaces, reducing inequality, and supporting sustainable career development for female workers.

Subjective causes: Achievements in ensuring female workers' rights in industrial parks stem from the sound leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the effective governance of the State in implementing policies. Respect for human rights, particularly in the process of building a socialist rule-of-law state, serves as a fundamental basis for protecting female workers' rights.

State agencies have made significant efforts in policy formulation and supervision, contributing to safer and more equitable working environments. Awareness and responsibility among enterprises and female workers have gradually improved, helping stabilize the labor force and promote sustainable development in the CKER.

Trade unions have also played a representative and protective role through social dialogue, legal supervision, and awareness-raising training activities, contributing to building a fair, safe, and sustainable working environment.

3.5.2. Limitations and Their Causes

3.5.2.1. Limitations

Despite notable achievements, limitations remain in the legal framework. The internalization of international conventions is not yet comprehensive; certain provisions

lack clarity (e.g., equal pay for work of equal value, prevention of sexual harassment, collective bargaining); and there are insufficient specific regulations tailored to female workers in industrial parks. Some policies, sanctions, and inspection mechanisms remain weak, creating challenges in enforcing rights and ensuring gender equality.

Implementation across localities and enterprises is uneven. Many enterprises-particularly small, medium-sized, and subcontracting enterprises-do not fully comply with regulations on working hours, rest periods, social insurance, and maternity benefits. Inspection and supervision have not fully met practical demands; detecting and handling violations is difficult due to the closed nature of enterprises and female workers' reluctance to lodge complaints. Certain specific rights, such as protection against sexual harassment and safeguards for pregnant and childcare workers, are not implemented uniformly and often remain confined to internal regulations.

Coordination among responsible entities is also limited. The Regional Council, Industrial Park/Economic Zone Management Boards, and some local authorities have not always been proactive, resulting in uneven protection of rights, training opportunities, and welfare benefits for female workers. The role of political and socio-political organizations lacks consistency and proactive supervision, limiting the effectiveness and widespread impact of rights protection and welfare improvements.

3.5.2.2. Causes of the Limitations

Objective causes: Although the CKER has experienced strong industrial growth-contributing to economic expansion, investment attraction, job creation, and infrastructure development-its operational efficiency remains limited, with few high-value projects and weak linkages among industrial parks and enterprises.

The labor market provides employment opportunities for female workers but also poses challenges, including high work intensity, limited training opportunities, and vulnerability to layoffs during economic fluctuations. Cultural and social factors-especially gender stereotypes and family pressures-continue to create barriers to career development and equal access to employment opportunities for female workers.

Subjective causes: First, enterprises' awareness of female workers' rights remains limited, leading to incomplete implementation of gender equality and protection policies. Many enterprises are concerned about costs and therefore either fail to implement or only formally implement maternity, childcare leave, and occupational safety measures. Second, the absence of effective coordination mechanisms among management agencies reduces the effectiveness of supervision and enforcement. Female workers facing disputes often must approach multiple authorities, complicating rights protection.

Third, inspection activities remain weak; inspection forces are understaffed and lack expertise; sanctions are relatively low. Some enterprises circumvent the law or prefer paying fines rather than fully complying with regulations. Fourth, female workers themselves often lack adequate information, skills, and confidence to assert their rights, while support mechanisms are not sufficiently effective. Fifth, trade unions within enterprises remain relatively weak, lacking proactiveness and independence, and have not yet built strong trust among workers-particularly in supervising compliance and supporting workers in labor disputes.

Chapter 4: VIEWPOINTS AND SOLUTIONS FOR ENSURING THE RIGHTS OF FEMALE WORKERS IN THE WORKPLACE IN INDUSTRIAL PARKS IN THE CENTRAL KEY ECONOMIC REGION OF VIETNAM

4.1. Changes in the Context of Administrative Unit Mergers and the Two-Tier Local Government Model in Relation to Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers in Industrial Parks in the Central Key Economic Region

The implementation of Resolution No. 202/2025/QH15 and the two-tier local government model under Law No. 72/2025/QH15 has not only altered administrative

boundaries but also restructured the governance space for development, including the system of Industrial Park Management Boards, regional planning frameworks, and social security policies.

Administrative mergers have led to changes in management mechanisms, inspection and supervision of labor law enforcement; shifted planning approaches from a provincial focus to a regional linkage orientation; and resulted in labor mobility and increased pressure on social infrastructure. At the same time, these changes require a comprehensive review and harmonization of policies supporting female workers to ensure equality and prevent policy disruption.

Under the two-tier local government model, the provincial level assumes responsibility for strategic planning and coordination, while the commune level directly implements policies. The removal of the intermediate district level increases demands for governance capacity and inter-agency coordination.

Therefore, the new context necessitates restructuring the system for ensuring female workers' rights in industrial parks in a synchronized, adaptive, and regionally integrated manner.

4.2. Viewpoints on Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers in the Workplace in Industrial Parks in the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam

Viewpoint on Improving the Legal Framework for Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers

Improving the legal framework for protecting female workers' rights must be grounded in a human rights-based and gender equality-oriented approach, aligned with socio-economic development objectives. The law should accurately reflect the actual conditions of female workers in industrial parks, ensuring protection in recruitment, training, promotion, wages and bonuses, occupational safety, and maternity, while simultaneously creating opportunities for enhancing professional capacity.

The legal system must harmonize the interests of female workers and enterprises, avoiding overprotection while still guaranteeing a safe and equitable working environment. Furthermore, legislation should be consistent with international standards, coherent with domestic regulations, and clearly define the responsibilities of the State, enterprises, and employees.

The ultimate goal is to establish a feasible and effective legal system that both safeguards the rights of female workers and promotes the sustainable development of enterprises and society.

Viewpoints on Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers in Industrial Parks in the Central Key Economic Region

The following key viewpoints are identified: Promoting the role and potential of female workers in industrial parks in the Central Key Economic Region, recognizing them as an essential force contributing to regional economic growth and industrial modernization. Ensuring female workers' rights in the workplace to create a favorable, safe, and supportive working environment that enables women to participate fully and equally in the labor market. Combining the protection of female workers' rights with the promotion of workplace democracy, strengthening dialogue, collective bargaining, and employee participation in enterprise governance within industrial parks. Combating gender stereotypes and outdated social norms in both the labor environment and broader social life, thereby fostering substantive gender equality and sustainable social development.

4.3. Solutions to Enhance the Effectiveness of Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers in the Workplace in Industrial Parks in the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam

4.3.1. Raising Awareness and Strengthening Coordination Among Stakeholders Responsible for Ensuring the Rights of Female Workers in Industrial Parks

Violations of female workers' rights in industrial parks (IPs) in the Central Key Economic Region (CKER) mainly stem from limited awareness and insufficient coordination among relevant stakeholders. Therefore, two primary groups of solutions should be emphasized.

First, raising awareness among female workers, enterprises, trade unions, and state management agencies through the dissemination of labor policies and legislation. Communication activities should be diversified-such as leaflets, videos, social media campaigns, contests, and workshops-focusing on fundamental rights (maternity protection, rest periods, prevention of sexual harassment, and non-discrimination). It is also necessary to train communication officers and equip female workers with legal knowledge to enhance their capacity for self-protection.

Second, strengthening coordination among stakeholders by establishing clear inter-sectoral mechanisms and defining specific responsibilities. Coordination procedures among state management agencies should be institutionalized. Enterprises should cooperate with trade unions to develop appropriate welfare policies. Trade unions and social organizations should enhance their supervisory and connective roles, while regular dialogue mechanisms should be promoted to foster linkages and create a safe, equal, and sustainable working environment for female workers in IPs.

4.3.2. Continuing to Develop and Improve Labor Policies and Legislation Related to Female Workers in Industrial Parks

The objective of this solution group is to establish a comprehensive, feasible legal framework that is compatible with international commitments and suited to Vietnam's context, particularly in the CKER. Priority should be given to internalizing international conventions concerning women's rights, such as CEDAW and ILO Conventions No. 100, 111, and 190, to better protect female workers in IPs.

Specifically, regulations on equal pay, non-discrimination, maternity protection, prevention of sexual harassment, strengthened monitoring, stricter sanctions against violating enterprises, and enhanced trade union roles should be supplemented and clarified. Amendments to certain provisions of the 2019 Labor Code are also necessary to ensure compatibility with ILO Conventions No. 29 and 98, including limiting compulsory overtime, expanding the scope of collective bargaining, and providing clear guidance for employee representative organizations to conduct transparent and fair negotiations.

The legal system should further require written labor contracts, flexible working hours, lactation rooms, wage transparency, compulsory insurance coverage, clear definitions of harassment, and effective complaint-handling mechanisms. In addition, support policies should prioritize vocational training, housing assistance, and access to public services.

The improvement of laws and policies will create a solid legal foundation for safeguarding female workers' rights, enhancing productivity, stabilizing the workforce, and promoting sustainable economic development, which requires effective coordination among the State, enterprises, trade unions, and social organizations.

4.3.3. Enhancing the Effectiveness of Enforcement and Supervision of Labor Law Implementation for Female Workers in Industrial Parks

In the context of socio-economic development and international integration, female workers play a vital role in IPs within the CKER. However, violations remain common, including excessive overtime, inadequate maternity benefits, unsafe working conditions, and ineffective sexual harassment prevention. Inspection and supervision activities remain limited, reducing enforcement effectiveness.

To address these issues, several measures should be implemented:

First, improving and strengthening labor law enforcement by issuing detailed guidelines, increasing penalties for violating enterprises, and publicly disclosing violators to create social accountability pressure.

Second, intensifying inspection and supervision of labor law compliance in enterprises within IPs, including more frequent periodic and ad hoc inspections, particularly in sectors employing a high proportion of female workers. Secure and confidential online reporting channels should be established to enable female workers to report violations safely.

Third, promoting the role of trade unions and social organizations in monitoring labor law compliance. Trade unions should represent female workers in negotiations and dialogue, review wage and working time policies, ensure occupational safety, and prevent harassment, while also organizing legal consultation and awareness programs.

Fourth, improving working conditions and social welfare for female workers by ensuring safe and hygienic workplaces, reasonable working hours, lactation and rest rooms, full implementation of social insurance, health insurance, maternity benefits, and the development of childcare facilities near IPs.

Fifth, applying technology in management and supervision, including digital attendance and payroll systems, environmental monitoring through sensors and cameras, and digital platforms enabling female workers to access legal information and submit complaints.

In the context of provincial mergers under Resolution No. 202/2025/QH15, the Government should promptly issue policies to harmonize labor regulations among newly merged provinces, establish effective coordination mechanisms, adjust IP development planning to new socio-economic conditions, and invest in inter-regional social infrastructure (childcare centers, kindergartens, healthcare services) to ensure better living and working conditions for female workers.

4.3.4. Effectively Implementing Support Measures to Ensure the Rights of Female Workers in Industrial Parks

Under the impacts of industrialization and integration, IPs in the CKER attract a large number of workers, with women accounting for a significant proportion. However, they continue to face challenges such as inadequate working conditions, income disparities, limited promotion opportunities, and difficulties balancing maternity responsibilities with work.

To safeguard and promote female workers' rights, comprehensive support measures are required.

First, enhancing training and awareness-raising programs, including vocational skills development, dissemination of labor law (maternity benefits, social insurance, reproductive health protection), and soft skills training (communication, financial management, self-protection from harassment). Communication channels should be diversified to ensure accessibility.

Second, strengthening financial and welfare support by improving wage, bonus, and allowance policies during maternity and childcare periods; providing housing and transportation assistance; building childcare facilities near IPs; ensuring access to healthcare and reproductive health services; and applying flexible working arrangements for pregnant workers or those with young children. Support funds from trade unions, local authorities, and social organizations should also be established for disadvantaged female workers.

Third, building support networks for female workers through the establishment of women workers' clubs, promoting enterprise–employee dialogue, and offering psychological counseling services to reduce stress and improve work performance.

4.3.5. Expanding and Promoting International Cooperation

In the context of deep international integration, improving policies and enhancing the capacity of female workers in CKER IPs is essential for safeguarding rights and increasing productivity.

First, labor policies for female workers should be aligned with international standards, particularly regarding wages, social insurance, and maternity regimes, while addressing gender pay gaps. Foreign-invested enterprises should be encouraged to support female workers through tax incentives, financial support, training programs, and childcare facilities. Vietnam may learn from models such as the “Women-Friendly Company” initiative of South Korea.

Second, international cooperation networks should be strengthened by connecting with organizations such as the ILO, UN Women, GIZ, AWEN, and WEF. Programs such as “Better Work Vietnam” and “IM Japan” demonstrate effective approaches to improving skills and working conditions. International conferences and forums provide opportunities for female workers to access global standards and technological advancements.

Third, foreign direct investment (FDI) attraction strategies should incorporate gender equality criteria, offering tax reductions, financial incentives, and land lease preferences for investors committed to equal recruitment, training, and welfare policies for female workers.

4.3.6. Solutions for Sustainable Industrial Development and Building Competitive Advantages from Gender Equality

This solution group aims to transform the protection of female workers’ rights into a sustainable competitive advantage in the context of international integration and ESG trends.

First, upgrading standards by establishing a Gender Parity Index (GPI) to measure pay equality, leadership opportunities, and family-support benefits, and piloting a “Women-Supportive Enterprise Certification” to prioritize enterprises in global supply chains.

Second, integrating female workers’ rights into trade strategies by leveraging free trade agreements (FTAs) to promote labor standards and implementing Responsible FDI policies that prioritize investors committed to welfare and training for female workers.

Third, supporting female workers’ technological adaptation through reskilling and upskilling programs to transition into higher value-added positions, combined with flexible working models.

The synchronized implementation of these solutions will position industrial parks in the CKER as responsible production hubs, enhancing reputation, competitiveness, and international integration capacity.

CONCLUSION

From the perspective of human rights law, this dissertation examines the protection of the rights of female workers in the workplace within industrial parks in the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam. The study develops a theoretical framework on ensuring the rights of female workers in industrial parks, thereby contributing to the advancement of legal theory concerning the protection of women’s labor rights in the workplace. On that basis, the dissertation employs secondary documents and data in combination with field surveys to analyze the current situation of safeguarding the rights of female workers in industrial parks in the Central Key Economic Region, adopting a human rights-based legal approach.

Industrial parks in the Central Key Economic Region play an important role in promoting economic growth, characterized by multi-sectoral development, effective utilization of coastal geographical advantages, and concentration on processing and manufacturing industries, logistics, and port services. Female workers in these industrial parks make significant contributions to regional economic development. However, they also face numerous challenges related to working conditions, opportunities for career

advancement, and gender equality. Based on empirical evidence, the dissertation analyzes the current status of ensuring the rights of female workers in the workplace in industrial parks in the region. The doctoral candidate also collected opinions to assess the situation of rights protection for female workers.

Accordingly, the dissertation identifies the practical achievements in ensuring the rights of female workers in industrial parks in the Central Key Economic Region during the period from 2015 to 2024, while also highlighting policy shortcomings, limitations, and difficulties in safeguarding these rights.

Through this research, the dissertation draws the following conclusions:

First, ensuring the rights of female workers in industrial parks is essential. The protection of these rights must be approached comprehensively, not only from the perspective of legal enforcement but also from the standpoint of policy design, corporate governance, and coordination among relevant stakeholders.

Second, although significant progress has been made in protecting and improving the rights of female workers in industrial parks in the Central Key Economic Region, various barriers remain, including policy constraints, social perceptions, inadequate infrastructure, and workplace environment limitations. These challenges require greater attention and more concrete actions from all concerned parties.

Third, based on the theoretical framework and the analysis of the current situation, the dissertation proposes orientations, solutions, and recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of ensuring the rights of female workers in industrial parks in the Central Key Economic Region. These solutions should be implemented comprehensively, synchronously, and in alignment with the country's major policy directions.

Despite considerable efforts, due to the author's limited capacity, the research inevitably contains shortcomings. The doctoral candidate sincerely welcomes comments and feedback from lecturers, experts, and scholars in order to further refine the dissertation and contribute to improving the effectiveness of protecting the rights of female workers in industrial parks in the Central Key Economic Region of Vietnam.

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