



Labour Law and Workers' Rights in South Africa's Informal Economy: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract

South Africa's informal economy is a significant component of its labour market, encompassing millions of workers who are not formally employed by companies or registered in government records. A qualitative study involving semi-structured interviews with informal economy workers, labour rights advocates, and legal experts to understand their experiences and perceptions of labour laws. Interviews revealed that while some workers reported adherence to basic rights such as minimum wage and rest periods, others faced severe violations, particularly in areas like social security contributions and termination procedures. The majority indicated a need for clearer guidelines on workplace safety and health. The study highlights the complex interplay between existing labour laws and their practical implementation within the informal economy, underscoring the necessity of targeted interventions to protect workers' rights effectively. Policy makers should prioritise developing sector-specific guidelines that address common challenges faced by informal economy workers. Legal aid initiatives are also recommended to support those who experience violations.

Keywords: *African geography, informal sector, qualitative research, labour law, workers' rights, South Africa, ethnography*

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