

Holzberg, Britta

**Article — Published Version**

## Local Understandings of Decent Work and the Legitimacy of Global Labour Standards: Insights from Garment Suppliers in Egypt and Jordan

Journal of Business Ethics

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

Springer Nature

*Suggested Citation:* Holzberg, Britta (2023) : Local Understandings of Decent Work and the Legitimacy of Global Labour Standards: Insights from Garment Suppliers in Egypt and Jordan, Journal of Business Ethics, ISSN 1573-0697, Springer Netherlands, Dordrecht, Vol. 192, Iss. 4, pp. 689-712,  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-023-05490-1>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/317860>

### Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

### Terms of use:

*Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.*

*You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.*

*If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.*



<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



# Local Understandings of Decent Work and the Legitimacy of Global Labour Standards: Insights from Garment Suppliers in Egypt and Jordan

Britta Holzberg<sup>1,2</sup> 

Received: 25 March 2022 / Accepted: 11 July 2023 / Published online: 26 August 2023  
© The Author(s) 2023

## Abstract

This paper contributes to the debates on the effectiveness and legitimacy of global labour standards. Theoretically, the paper integrates literature on labour standards in global production networks with cognitive framing and sensemaking literature to capture decent work understandings of suppliers and to theoretically underpin their relevance for the debates on the legitimacy and effectiveness of global labour standards. Empirically, the study explores cognitive decent work frames of garment suppliers and discusses them in reference to global decent work frames. A thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with thirty owners and managers in Egypt and Jordan served to identify suppliers' decent work frames. Owners and managers dominantly framed decent work as a (paternalistic) family responsibility and as a business responsibility. Further notions that recurred across interviews were the framing of decent work as a human responsibility, religious (Islamic) responsibility, philanthropic responsibility, and regulatory responsibility. The findings show that supplier frames partly go beyond, partly undermine, and partly accord with global conceptualisations of decent work. They imply the need to strengthen and better communicate the human rights orientation of global labour standards and to give local social partners the autonomy to supplement and specify standards according to their context-specific needs. Global regulations otherwise risk crowding out informal, locally specific decent work practices that benefit workers in GPNs.

**Keywords** Decent work · Global garment supply chain · Supplier agency · Corporate social responsibility · Framing and sensemaking · Middle East and Northern Africa

## Introduction

According to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, “decent work for all” shall be a reality for workers worldwide by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). In the case of global garment supply chains, meeting this goal presents considerable challenges. Competitive pressures by global buyers make decent working conditions in supplier firms barely affordable (Khan et al., 2019; Perry et al., 2015), and local regulations are generally insufficient to protect workers (Mayer & Gereffi, 2010). Global labour governance is needed to ensure

decent working conditions across the complex networks of contemporary garment supply chains (Colle et al., 2014; Hendrickx et al., 2016). Global labour standards codify the international understanding of what constitutes a decent workplace. Even before the SDGs were defined, public and private actors began introducing global labour standards to guide business operations within companies' own organisations and work realities in their global production networks (GPNs). The standards are intended to ensure that suppliers, often situated in the Global South, establish decent working conditions in their production facilities.

Despite their importance, global regulatory efforts to ensure compliance with global labour standards in GPNs remain subject to critical discussions about their real benefits. Research questions whether the imposition of contemporary global labour standards is (1) effective and (2) legitimate. Concerning effectiveness, as demonstrated by the persistence of labour scandals in the garment supply chain (Anner, 2019; Reinecke et al., 2019), global regulatory

---

✉ Britta Holzberg  
britta.holzberg@rub.de

<sup>1</sup> International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Hague, The Netherlands

<sup>2</sup> Institute of Development Research and Development Policy, Ruhr University Bochum, Bochum, Germany

efforts have not yet reached their full potential. The reasons for this are complex (Holzberg, 2019). Explanations include various factors that complicate the enforcement of global regulations, such as the complexity of contemporary GPNs (Berliner et al., 2015), intensive competitive pressures (Reinecke et al., 2019), the limitations of public labour institutions (Meardi & Marginson, 2014), and restrictions on collective bargaining processes (Anner, 2011). Because of these challenges, scholars and practitioners have focused on how to improve the effectiveness of global labour standards (Berliner et al., 2015). Concerning the legitimacy of global labour standards, scholars such as Bae et al. (2021), Fontana and Egels-Zandén (2019), and Soundararajan et al. (2018) find that garment suppliers do not necessarily agree with the moral righteousness or superiority of global standards. Similarly, Hoogesteger and Massink (2021), Flanigan (2018), and de Neve (2014) highlight misalignments between worker interests and global labour standards. Disagreements between local and global understandings of decent work lead in some cases even to the characterisation of global standards as post-colonial tools that are being used to impose Western ethics on Southern suppliers (Blowfield & Dolan, 2008; de Neve, 2009, 2014; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). For instance, in Pakistan, a study found the widespread sentiment that global standards embody Western values and norms (rather than local ones), and private regulatory demands represent imperialistic efforts to replace Southern standards with Western ones (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011).

While research on the effectiveness and the legitimacy of global labour standards seem to represent different directions in the literature, this paper argues that they are interconnected and should be theoretically linked. Normative disagreements over global labour standards not only call into question the universal legitimacy of those standards but also impair their effectiveness as regulatory tools. Individual actors in global production networks often find themselves in paradoxical situations (Brix-Asala et al., 2021). They are subject to interrelated but often contradictory pressures from different stakeholders, and they must respond not only to their assessments of external expectations (Holzberg, 2019) but also to their own moral compasses. Regarding suppliers, it has been found that cultural or institutional disagreements over the moral legitimacy of global standards discourage suppliers from implementing global labour standards (Bae et al., 2021).

This paper therefore explores normative understandings of what is meant by decent work and the normative impact of these understandings on the legitimacy and effectiveness of global labour standards. To capture understandings of what constitutes decent work, the paper introduces a cognitive framing approach. Cognitive frames are mental representations of concepts that people encounter in their lives (Dewulf

et al., 2009). Identifying cognitive frames enables a discussion on a meta level about which logics determine whether a particular work practice is decent and how these logics differ between contexts. This paper follows a dynamic view of cognitive frames (Zimmermann et al., 2021) as socially constructed means within a given context of navigating complexity and making ethical judgments and decisions (Dewulf et al., 2009; Walsh, 1995).

Previous research has provided insight into ethical issue frames and decision-making frames of GPN actors in the Global North (e.g. Preuss & Fearn, 2021; Gutierrez-Huerter et al., 2021; Benkert, 2021). For the Global South, however, little in the way of framing and sensemaking research could be found that focuses on GPN actors (for notable exceptions, see Brix-Asala et al., 2021; Soundararajan & Brammer, 2018), and none of it identifies cognitive decent work issue frames. This paper contributes to filling this gap by focusing on one core actor in the Global South, the suppliers, specifically the owners and managers in supplier firms who decide on labour issues in their factories. Suppliers are (1) responsible for implementing standards on the ground (Perry et al., 2015), (2) situated at the point in GPNs where (contradictory) stakeholder pressures meet (Holzberg, 2019), (3) underrepresented in setting global labour standards (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011), and (4) under-researched (Bae et al., 2021). Previous supplier-centred research captured decent work understandings using primarily anecdotal evidence (e.g. Bae et al., 2021; Fontana & Egels-Zandén, 2019; Soundararajan et al., 2018). Decent work issue frames of suppliers remain essentially unknown, and their impact on decent work decision-making in supplier firms remains to be theoretically elaborated.

The theoretical part of this paper embeds the research on suppliers' decent work frames into the debates on the legitimacy and the effectiveness of global labour standards. It extends existing literature by combining cognitive framing with cognitive and discursive sensemaking approaches<sup>1</sup> (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014) to theorise about how decent work frames impact decent work decision-making and how they emerge and undergo transformation. The paper shows how decent work frames shape suppliers' decent work intentions and thus indirectly influence compliance with global labour standards. This paper's understanding of the term

<sup>1</sup> The term "sensemaking" can refer to social and discursive processes through which meaning is constructed and also to cognitive processes through which individuals develop their own cognitive frameworks (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). This paper connects these two views. While the emergence and transformation of frames are understood as a social and discursive process ("discursive sensemaking"), the processing of external influences that shape decent work decision-making in supplier firms is depicted as a cognitive process ("cognitive sensemaking").

*legitimacy* follows Breakey's (2021, p. 361) suggestion to focus "on the presence of factors that provide good ethical reasons for subjects to respect and implement an instrument's obligation and values, and to being held accountable for doing so". If suppliers question the substance of global labour standards and do not find them in alignment with their decent work frames, the standards' legitimacy is impaired.

The empirical part of this paper identifies suppliers' decent work frames and discusses them in comparison to global understandings of decent work and global labour standards. Communalities and discrepancies are analysed, and implications for the legitimacy and effectiveness of global labour standards are deducted. The empirical research focuses on the garment export industry in Egypt and Jordan. Garment production is highly globalised and notorious for its labour scandals (Anner et al., 2014). Increasing the legitimacy and effectiveness of global labour standards is therefore important for the industry. Egypt and Jordan, which have similar cultural backgrounds but very different industry environments (Azmeh, 2014), were chosen for the analysis to determine in how far cognitive frames extend across different contexts within one region. The transferability of research findings to other garment production contexts is examined in the discussion section of this paper.

The study identifies aspects of suppliers' decent work frames that undermine global rationales guiding the definition of labour standards and also aspects that extend the understanding of what constitutes decent work. The findings underline the need to listen to voices from the Global South when setting global labour standards and to strengthen and more effectively communicate the human rights basis for these standards. The study's findings furthermore lead to the proposal that global labour standard setters acknowledge context-specific decent work practices and allow for more discretion within local arenas in determining how to respect the core moral principles of decent work.

In summary, the aim of this paper is (1) to theoretically underpin how suppliers' decent work frames influence the legitimacy and effectiveness of global labour standards, (2) to empirically capture suppliers' decent work frames in two garment production contexts, (3) to discuss how these frames compare with global notions of decent work, and (4) to derive proposals to reduce the discrepancies between suppliers' decent work frames and global ones.

## Theoretical Framework

This section theoretically embeds research on suppliers' understandings of what constitutes decent work into the debates on the effectiveness and the legitimacy of global labour standards. For this purpose, it specifies the

concepts used in this article (2.1. Decent Work and Global Labour Standards, 2.2. Cognitive Frames) and subsequently addresses the two debates (2.3. Legitimacy, 2.4. Effectiveness).

## Decent Work and Labour Standards in Global Production

Various global research and practice communities, encompassing business-oriented (Arora et al., 2020), labour-oriented (de Neve, 2014), policy-oriented (Fransen & Burgoon, 2017), and society-oriented (Zajak et al., 2017) researchers and actors, discuss the challenge of indecent working conditions in global production. Multiple concepts and measures exist to characterise desired outcomes (Berliner et al., 2015). Terms such as *decent work*, *labour rights*, *social upgrading*, and *social sustainability* overlap (Barrientos et al., 2011; Berliner et al., 2015; Soundararajan et al., 2021) and are sometimes used interchangeably. This paper uses *decent work* to capture the desired outcome and thus connects to the terminology used in the UN's SDGs. This choice underlines that this paper focuses solely on labour-related concerns and not on other social issues in supply chains. The decent work concept was coined by the International Labour Organization (1999). It summarises a predefined set of work-related aspirations such as social protection, fair remuneration, and the right to equal opportunities (International Labour Organization, 2023). The listed aspirations are operationalised on a macroeconomic level with a comprehensive set of indicators (International Labour Organization, 2013). However, this paper uses the term on an organisational level to describe work realities in a given supplier firm without a predefined operationalisation. Following the cognitive perspective and findings from global supply chain research (Berliner et al., 2015), different decent work understandings are expected to coexist. Therefore, decent work is only loosely circumscribed to capture all work-related aspirations that affect workers' health and well-being.

On a global level, organisational understandings of what constitutes decent work are increasingly codified in global labour standards, which are defined in practice and regularly used to empirically measure decent work outcomes (Murmura et al., 2017). Global public standards are defined by international bodies such as the International Labour Organization or are included in trade agreements. Private standards are defined by international buyers and standard-setting (multi-stakeholder) organisations. Currently, multiple different public and private labour standards coexist (Fransen et al., 2019). In the context of global production, the ITC standards map (International Trade Center, 2021) includes 196 different sets of labour standards that differ in terms of the issues they address and their monitoring mechanisms and governance structures (Colle

et al., 2014). Suppliers are affected by public and private global labour standards. International organisations lobby for the inclusion of global public standards in local legislation and suppliers' employment practices (Robertson, 2019; International Labour Organization, 2019). Global buyers can furthermore request that their suppliers comply with their preferred set of private standards (Fransen et al., 2019).

One aim of this paper is to compare local with global decent work issue frames. It is therefore important to note that different decent work narratives already coexist in the global debate. Particularly, rights-based approaches to defining decent work are differentiated from CSR-based approaches (Giuliani, 2016; Ramasastry, 2015). Rights-based approaches link decent work to universally defined human and labour rights (e.g. Lebaron, 2021; Mena et al., 2010; Nolan, 2017). Human rights are fundamental individual entitlements as defined in national and international laws and treaties (Mantouvalou, 2012). A rights-based framing of decent work implies that working conditions are decent when they respect workers' human rights as codified in international treaties. CSR-based approaches present decent work as a corporate social responsibility or a matter of social sustainability (e.g. Fontana & Egels-Zandén, 2019; Lund-Thomsen et al., 2016; Yawar & Seuring, 2017). This framing suggests that decent work can go beyond legal obligations and encompass voluntary business decisions (van Marrewijk, 2003) that are subject to other business decisions (Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020). While both narratives continue to coexist, a consensus is emerging that global labour standards should be derived from human rights (Giuliani, 2016; United Nations, 2011; OECD, 2011). Human rights are universally recognised and rooted in international legal agreements and therefore preferable to business-specific definitions of social responsibilities (Giuliani, 2016). Accordingly, the developing and existing European supply chain laws are explicitly framed to serve the protection of human rights (IOE-KAS, 2021). In practice, however, regulatory negotiations and corporate social responsibility (CSR) considerations continue to shape decent work understandings. Public, private, and social stakeholders negotiate global labour standards (Gereffi & Lee, 2016). This participation is an important source of legitimacy for global standards (Breakey, 2021), but negotiation processes can also water down the human rights orientation of decent work (Blustein et al., 2016). In addition, most global regulations either are not legally binding (Blustein et al., 2016) or are enforced ineffectively (Berliner et al., 2015). Thus, in practice, it often remains a CSR-related question whether an organisation chooses to implement global labour standards and which standards it considers suitable for its purposes.

## Cognitive Frames, Their Emergence, and Their Impact on Decision-Making

The cognitive perspective in the fields of management and organisation studies guides this study theoretically. It focuses on mental processes and how they affect decision-making and behaviour (Walsh, 1995). This theoretical framework is especially suited to further understanding of managerial and organisational thinking and behaviour in highly complex situations or ethically ambiguous situations (Hahn et al., 2014), such as suppliers' reasoning and actions around decent work in global production. The cognitive perspective proposes that people construct 'cognitive frames' (also referred to as cognitive structures, schemata, mental images, or representations) of different concepts, which help them to "make sense" of ambiguous situations related to these concepts and to ultimately guide their behaviour (Fassin et al., 2011; Walsh, 1995). Cognitive issue frames capture the meaning a person attaches to a specific concept, event, or problem (Dewulf et al., 2009). They are not necessarily conscious but can remain subconscious and thus implicitly influence decision-making and behaviour (Dewulf et al., 2009; Zeni et al., 2016). Issue frames can be analysed on multiple levels (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). While interviews reveal information about individual frames, analysing serial interviews in a specific group provides information about cognitive frames on a group level.

The paper employs a dynamic view of cognitive frames in which issue frames are understood as socially constructed and changeable through social experiences and interactions (Zimmermann et al., 2021). The emergence and transformation of frames can be theorised as a discursive sensemaking process (Zimmermann et al., 2021) or an interactive framing process (Gutierrez-Huerter et al., 2021). The two approaches are ontologically similar in that they both emphasise the importance of social interaction for the construction of meaning (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Gutierrez-Huerter et al., 2021). Sensemaking literature, however, extends framing theories by illuminating how and when processes of meaning construction or transformation emerge (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005). Particular focal points of this literature are events that trigger and actions that shape sensemaking (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995). Insights on discursive sensemaking therefore guide this paper's theoretical understanding of how issue frames emerge and transform.

Cognitive frames impact actor decision-making and behaviour. Combining cognitive frames with ethical decision-making models (Hunt & Vitell, 2006; Zeni et al., 2016) yields the following relationship: *Cognitive frames* influence the deontological evaluation of an ethical problem and thereby a manager's ethical judgement, intention, and behaviour. Taking a more dynamic view on ethical



decision-making, cognitive frames or mental models have been highlighted to moderate cognitive sensemaking processes (Hahn et al., 2014; Zeni et al., 2016). Accordingly, decision-makers (unconsciously) possess cognitive frames which help them decide what is ethical, and these mental representations influence their ethical decision-making and behaviour. Thus, insights on cognitive sensemaking guide this paper's theoretical understanding of how decent work frames impact decent work decision-making.

### Cognitive Decent Work Frames and the Legitimacy of Global Labour Standards

Questions around the legitimacy of global labour standards have received significant scholarly attention. Research shows that global standards do not necessarily mirror local workers' understandings of a decent workplace (de Neve, 2014; Flanigan, 2018; Hoogesteger & Massink, 2021), can misrepresent certain labour groups (Alamgir & Alakavuklar, 2020), can clash with suppliers' value systems (Bae et al., 2021; de Neve, 2009; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011; Soundararajan & Brown, 2016; Soundararajan et al., 2018), are not suited to all suppliers' business realities (Fontana & Egels-Zandén, 2019; Knudsen, 2013; Simpson et al., 2012), and may even erode individual responsibility by motivating rule-following behaviour (Colle et al., 2014). The degree to which suppliers do take up global labour rationales has been shown to depend on global and local characteristics of the supply chain (Bae et al., 2021). While the clash between suppliers' decent work understandings and global labour standards has been well established, garment suppliers' own decent work understandings are commonly described solely in terms of anecdotal evidence.

This paper's cognitive framing approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of suppliers' decent work understandings and their (mis)alignment with global labour standards. The approach makes it possible to capture the meaning suppliers attach to the notion of decent work and the norms and values that they connect with it (Dewulf et al., 2009). It also allows for meta-level discussion of decent work understandings, circumventing the problem that the concept of decent work and its operationalisations in global labour standards encompass multiple dimensions and norms. Identifying suppliers' decent work frames particularly enables an evaluation of the *substantive* legitimacy of global labour standards, which is a core source of legitimacy for ethical codes and global governance schemes (Bexell, 2014; Breakey, 2021). The *substantive* legitimacy of ethical codes depends on the degree to which the codes align with the norms and values of its duty-bearers (Breakey, 2021).

An additional benefit of the cognitive framing approach is its theoretical linkage with discursive sensemaking processes, which provide insight into how cognitive frames

emerge and how they can change (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). If GPNs are assumed to be the context in which meanings are constructed, decent work frames of decision-makers are likely to be shaped by their interaction with global and local stakeholders. Global and local decent work understandings thus simultaneously influence suppliers' decent work issue frames. The relative impact of these competing understandings depends on the degree of suppliers' interaction with global or local stakeholders. The sensemaking perspective thereby explains Bae et al.'s (2021) finding that suppliers who closely interact with their international buyers are more receptive to global labour standards than other suppliers.

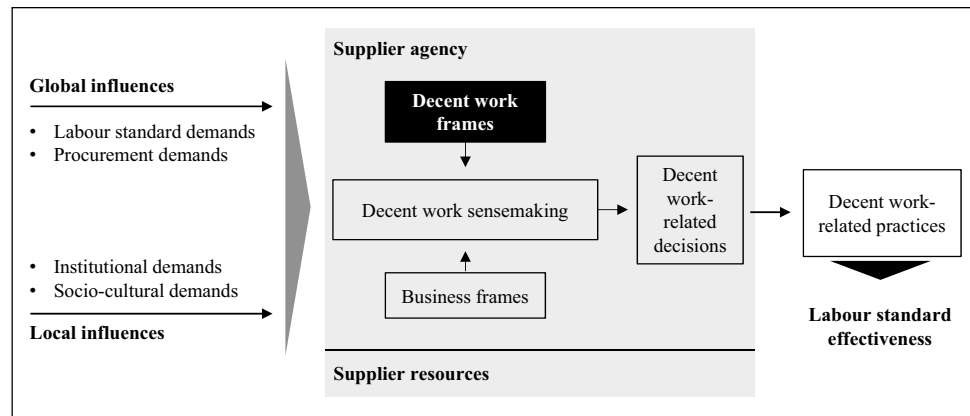
### Cognitive Decent Work Frames and the Effectiveness of Global Labour Standards

This study also addresses the effectiveness of contemporary global standards regimes. Scholars point out that indecent work realities persist, particularly in garment production (Anner, 2019; Reinecke et al., 2019). Regulatory efforts to enforce global labour standards are generally characterised as insufficient to protect workers (Berliner et al., 2015). Their effectiveness is limited by their interaction with global competitive pressures, local institutions, local socio-cultural realities, and local industry dynamics (Holzberg, 2019). Local suppliers, the actor that implements standards on the ground, often find themselves in a paradoxical situation (Brix-Asala et al., 2021). They face many, partially contradictory, claims from different stakeholders and have limited resources to fulfil them (Holzberg, 2019, 2022). How suppliers prioritise stakeholder claims and which strategies they use to respond to them (e.g. standard evasion, mock compliance, genuine compliance) depends on the agency and the capabilities of suppliers (Fontana et al., 2021; Simpson et al., 2012; Soundararajan et al., 2018).

Supplier agency and decision-making processes in supplier firms require further research (Bae et al., 2021; Fontana & Egels-Zandén, 2019; Fontana et al., 2021). Researchers who have taken on this task have described micro-processes among suppliers as cognitive sensemaking processes (Fontana, 2018; Soundararajan, 2014). Decision-makers make sense of global and local stakeholder claims, and the cognitive sensemaking process shapes their response (Soundararajan, 2014). Cognitive frames that moderate this process remain largely unknown. The only framing that has been theoretically and empirically discussed in this context is that of labour standard requirements and their cognitive and emotional reception in supplier firms (Fontana et al., 2021; Soundararajan & Brammer, 2018). This paper addresses this gap in the literature.

Ethical considerations, particularly normative disagreements with the legitimacy of global labour standards, have

**Fig. 1** Decent work frames and their impact on labour standard effectiveness



been highlighted to discourage suppliers from implementing global labour standards (Bae et al., 2021; Fontana et al., 2021; Soundararajan et al., 2018). A cognitive framing approach connects this finding to the nascent discourse on supplier agency. Normative decent work frames of decision-makers moderate organisational sensemaking processes that shape their decent work decisions. Other frames that additionally moderate sensemaking processes in supplier firms should not be neglected. Literature on sustainable and ethical decision-making particularly highlights the relevance of economic or business frames<sup>2</sup> (e.g. Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Hahn et al., 2014), which capture suppliers' notions of business success and which can counteract or reinforce their decent work intentions. Without attempting to capture all aspects that influence and shape decent work sensemaking in supplier firms, Fig. 1 illustrates the relevance of decent work frames for the debate on the effectiveness of global labour standards.

## Research Methodology

### Research Context

This study focuses on the garment supply chain. Trade in the industry is organised within a highly globalised network of production (Fernandez-Stark et al., 2011). The lead firm or global buyer, commonly a multinational enterprise located in Europe or North America, often exerts significant

control over its network and commonly defines product and production requirements, lead times, production volumes, and prices (Jamali et al., 2017). Suppliers, commonly situated in the Global South (Perry et al., 2015), export directly to global buyers, sell their products via agents, or produce as subcontractors of direct exporters. Garment producers therefore face powerful competitive pressures (Anner, 2019). Labour scandals occur frequently, and the garment supply chain features prominently in the debate on decent work in global production (Anner et al., 2014). While most studies focus on the main exporting economies in Southeast Asia, public debate and scientific research seldom address Africa or Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt and Jordan. The current study addresses this gap.

The Jordanian garment export industry is deeply embedded in the global garment production network (Azmeah & Nadvi, 2013). A favourable trade agreement between Jordan and the United States motivated South and Southeast Asian companies in the early 2000s to establish garment factories in Jordan. They focus on the cut, make, and trim stages of production and employ predominantly South and Southeast Asian migrants (Azmeah, 2014). As of today, most owners, managers, and workers in Jordan are migrants (Better Work Jordan, 2019). Jordanian law only mandates a 25% share of local workers. The volume of garment exports is small on a global scale but important for the Jordanian economy: 25% of total Jordanian exports are connected to the garment industry (Better Work Jordan, 2019). A distinguishing feature of the Jordanian garment industry is its intense work with global actors on decent work-related issues (Holzberg, 2023). After the revelation of incidents involving serious labour abuse in 2006 (National Labor Committee, 2006), the global community and especially the United States began to scrutinise working conditions in Jordan. The international multi-stakeholder initiative Better Work Jordan came to Jordan in 2009 and collaborates with almost all garment exporters to improve working conditions (Better Work Jordan, 2019). International observers report significant improvements (Aissi et al., 2018; Robertson, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> The term “business frames” (“Cognitive Decent Work Frames and the Effectiveness of Global Labour Standards” section) refers in this paper to frames that characterise a decision-maker’s understanding of business success. “Decent work frames”, on the other hand, characterise a decision-maker’s understanding of decent work success. The term “business responsibility frame” (“Cognitive Decent Work Frames of Suppliers in the Garment Industry” section) characterises one “decent work frame” detected in the empirical analysis: the idea that decent work success is achieved if business and worker interests are balanced or reconciled.

The Egyptian garment export industry is deeply embedded in the local context (Azmeah, 2014). Exporting garment manufacturers belong to a vertically integrated industrial community with strong historical ties (El-Haddad, 2012). A private export industry focusing on the United States and Europe developed in the 1990s (Grumiller et al., 2020) and was boosted in 2004 by a favourable trade agreement supporting exports to the United States (Azmeah, 2014). While the volume of garment exports is small on a global basis, the industry is essential for the local labour market as it employs 21% of Egypt's manufacturing labour force (CAPMAS, 2018, data: 2017). Family-owned firms dominate the industry and employ predominantly local Egyptian workers (Azmeah, 2014). Thus, the factory landscape is rather heterogeneous. Garments are manufactured in small, medium, and large factories that are located in residential areas or distinct industrial zones.

A comparison of Egypt and Jordan demonstrates institutional and cultural similarities and industrial differences between the two countries. Both countries are members of the League of Arab States and have signed the Arab Charter on Human Rights. The charter reflects the coexistence of universalistic and particularistic conceptions of human rights in the region. It largely endorses international human rights standards (Almutawa & Almanea, 2022; Porras-Gómez, 2020) but also allows for local specificities—for example, regarding particular gender, migrant, child, and religious rights (Rishmawi, 2020; Sadri, 2019). Most particularistic aspects of the charter have been criticised at the international level as being in violation of international human rights law (Rishmawi, 2005, 2020; Vitkauskaitė-Meurice, 2010). The cultures of Egypt and Jordan are significantly influenced by Islamic traditions (Sidani & Thornberry, 2010). Local culture suggests that employers should respect their workers and treat them like family members (Possumah et al., 2013). Workers, in turn, owe them loyalty and respect (Metwally & Punnett, 2017). Good relationships within the company are frequently considered to be more important than compliance with rules and regulations (Cullina, 2016). According to Islam, decision-making should be a participative process following principles of consultation, fairness, teamwork, and cooperation (Mellahi & Budhwar, 2010). This ideal procedure is, however, often not followed in practice (Patel et al., 2019). Looking at the garment industry, it can be noted that Egyptian and Jordanian suppliers operate in very different industry contexts. While Egyptian suppliers are locally embedded and struggle with political unrest and a poorly developed social system, Jordanian suppliers are closely interwoven with the global production network and separate from the remainder of the economy. Only satellite unions that predominantly employ local workers are connected to local communities in Jordan.

**Table 1** Overview of participating suppliers

Factory location	Factory size (workers)	Egypt	Jordan
Industrial zone	0–499	2	3
	500–1499	3	2
	1500–5500	2	3
Residential area	0–499	5	1
	500–1499	1	1
	1500–5500	0	0

## Research Design

A qualitative multiple case study was conducted in Egypt and Jordan to study cognitive decent work frames of suppliers in the garment export industry. The qualitative approach allowed generating new context-sensitive insights on an under-researched topic of business ethics (Reinecke et al., 2016). Semi-structured interviews with owners and managers that are involved in decent work decision-making served as the main data source. The interviews allowed for establishing the confidential and friendly environment necessary for discussing the sensitive topic of decent work (Gaskell, 2000). The sampling of interview respondents followed a maximum variation logic whereby common themes are likely to reflect the perceptions of the entire case (Patton, 2002). The analysis was conducted on a group level so that the variety of frames present in the research contexts could be identified and the joint experience of each group as a whole could be captured (Fontana & Egels-Zandén, 2019). Interview transcripts were analysed with a thematic analysis that helped to unearth implicit ideas or “patterns of meaning” from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). Data collection was triangulated to enhance the credibility of the analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Expert and worker interviews, factory visits, and industry documents were used to provide a better understanding of the research context and the validity of interview responses.

## Data Collection: Interviews with Decision-Makers and Experts

Thirty owners and managers from twenty-three factories were interviewed (see Tables 1, 2 and Annex I for further details). The sample includes small, medium, and large garment factories from different industrial zones in Egypt and Jordan, and respondents differed in age, gender, nationality, and job title. Jordanian suppliers almost exclusively produced for North American markets, while suppliers in Egypt exported to Europe and North America. The interview process started in May 2017, when the author conducted several pre-interviews with industry and labour experts. The experts helped select English and Arabic terminology for the



**Table 2** Overview of interview respondents

Management role	Local/migrant	Egypt	Jordan
Owner	Local	2 female, 6 male	1 male
	Migrant		2 male
General manager	Local	6 male	1 male
	Migrant		1 male
HR and/or compliance	Local	1 female, 2 male	1 female, 1 male
	Migrant		2 male
Other (exports, production etc.)	Local	1 female, 1 male	1 female, 1 male
	Migrant		

interviews that was easily understandable in the local industry. For instance, the experts recommended talking about a *good quality of work for workers* in Egypt instead of *decent work*. The ILO's Arabic term for decent work was not commonly used in the research contexts. It literally translates into 'proper', 'suitable', or 'appropriate' work (Cowan & Wehr, 1994, p. 1040). The methodological and theoretical implications of this finding are further addressed in the discussion section of this paper. The final terminology and main interview questions were subsequently piloted with the English-Arabic translators who accompanied the interviewer to the interviews. The main interviews were conducted from September to October 2017 in Egypt and from April to May 2018 in Jordan. Respondents described what they considered to be a good quality of work for their employees, elaborated selected work practices and why they implemented them, and described what they envisioned as their "dream" work environment. Interview durations ranged from 35 to 93 min in Jordan and 27 to 135 min in Egypt. The average interview was longer in Egypt than in Jordan because of translation requirements. Most interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. When participants declined to be recorded, the interviews were documented thoroughly. During the transcription, Arabic interview answers were translated again so that they could be compared with the translation during the interviews. Transcription and translation were done by native speakers who additionally explained local figures of speech and other local specifics. The author double-checked all transcriptions and discussed unclear content with native speakers from the research contexts. The data were documented and organised using the research software MAX-QDA, which also aided data analysis.

### Data Analysis: Thematic Network Analysis

A thematic analysis to unearth cognitive frames of decision-makers from the collected data was carried out according to the six steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). These steps guide the analyst to discover latent themes that recur within and across the data. Following the proposition of Attride-Stirling (2001), the themes were hierarchically

structured into basic, organising, and global themes. Basic themes represent singular claims from the textual data and remain close to the interview text (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Basic themes that address similar issues are clustered into organising themes, and groups of organising themes constitute each global theme. This process helps to reveal implicit ideas grounded within the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Several rounds of coding and research discussions were needed to establish and define the global themes of the analysis, the decent work frames of suppliers, and the organising and basic themes. Naming the themes was especially challenging as the understanding of the theme concepts (e.g. family, philanthropic, human) differs across contexts. Global themes have to be considered in combination with the basic themes that define them (see Tables 3, 4) to ensure a joint understanding. Please refer to Annex II for an overview of coded themes and Annex III for an excerpt of the coding frame.

In total, six decent work frames were discovered among suppliers, two of which dominated in the interviews (see findings "Cognitive Decent Work Frames of Suppliers in the Garment Industry" section). Four organising themes served to describe the discovered frames further. The organising theme "Image" comprises basic themes about images that were used to describe a person's decent work understanding (e.g. the image of a family). The images capture metaphors, slogans, or stories which decision-makers repeated to describe a frame and which served to influence the sense-making of others (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). Under the organising theme "Objective", basic themes were subsumed that provide information on why the respondent considered decent work to be important. The organising theme "Employer-worker relationship" provides information on how the relationship between workers and their employers was characterised in a certain decent work frame. Finally, claims about work practices that were typical for a specific decent work frame were subsumed under the organising theme "Typical practices". Not all global themes included enough information to correspond with all organising themes. For the four global themes that only occurred sporadically, only the objective and the typical practices could be identified.

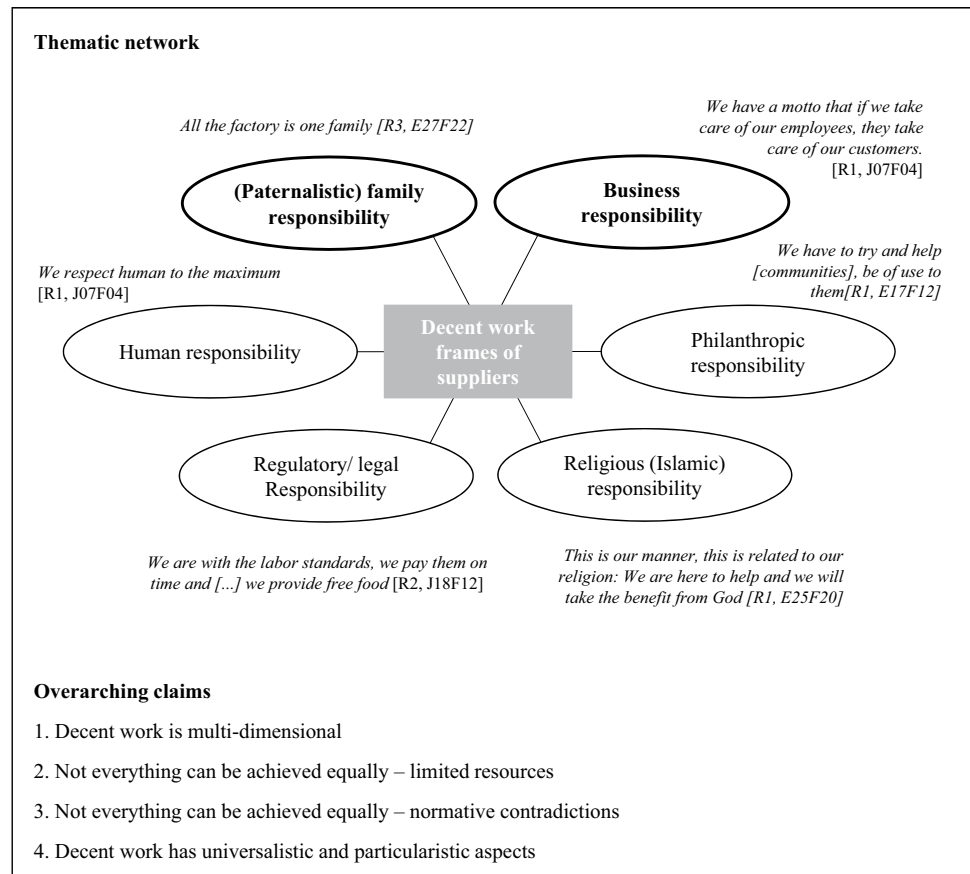
**Table 3** Specification of suppliers' decent work frames 1

(Paternalistic) family responsibility	Business responsibility
<i>Image</i>	<i>Image</i>
Family	Win–Win
Home away from home	Balance
Collective	Battle
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Objective</i>
Ensure well-being of workers in all areas of life	Worker benefit
Educate and discipline workers	Provide work opportunities/income
	Ensure worker satisfaction
	Business benefit
	Ensure business survival/profit
	Build and keep committed, productive workforce
<i>Employer-worker relationship</i>	<i>Employer-worker relationship</i>
Employers and workers as one unity	Constructive: Balancing employer and worker needs and demands
Employers as parents; workers as children	or
Relationship values: honesty, respect, loyalty	Destructive: Clash between employer and worker needs and demands
<i>Typical practices (selection)</i>	<i>Typical practices (selection)</i>
Helping workers with personal (especially financial) problems	Providing decent earning opportunities, including opportunities to work overtime
	Treating workers fairly and respectfully
Offering direct communication with top management/owner	Providing transportation to work
Supporting work-life balance of workers	Offering (tasty) food at work
Embedding factory in local community, ensuring a short commute	Providing good facilities, including accommodation
Offering leisure time activities	

**Table 4** Specification of suppliers' decent work frames 2

Regulatory responsibility (local laws, global standards)	Philanthropic responsibility	Human responsibility	Religious responsibility (Islam)
<i>Objective</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Objective</i>
Comply with local laws and regulations	Support development of workers	Honour human rights	Honour local religious (Islamic) traditions
Comply with global standards	Support development of local community	Honour basic human needs	Honour religious (Islamic) duties of workers
	Support development of industry and country		
<i>Typical practices (selection)</i>	<i>Typical practices (selection)</i>	<i>Typical practices (selection)</i>	<i>Typical practices (selection)</i>
Paying salary according to legal requirements	Developing workers' work and life skills	Providing financial support in case of need	Celebrating local Islamic holidays in factory
Organising overtime according to legal requirements	Providing job opportunities to poor/marginalised community members	Allowing overtime to provide decent salary	Celebrating religious holidays of migrant workers
Providing food and accommodation according to Collective Bargaining Agreement (Jordan)	Offering in-house technical education opportunities	Limiting overtime to protect workers' health and work-life balance	Shortening working hours during Ramadan
Ensuring non-discrimination according to law		Ensuring non-discrimination	Giving out (Islamic) holiday gifts and bonuses
		Protecting physical integrity	Helping with personal (financial) problems

**Fig. 2** Overview of suppliers' decent work frames in Egypt and Jordan



After the thematic network was developed, it was evaluated for consistency and country differences. The MAXQDA document portrait was used to check whether basic themes belonging to the same cognitive frame were made in direct combination. A re-evaluation was conducted for outliers to determine the extent to which they could be attributed to the cognitive frame in question. With the help of the MAXQDA Code-Matrix browser, one or two dominant cognitive frames were singled out for each interview. All basic themes in an interview that did not belong to these dominant frames were also treated as outliers and re-evaluated. To detect country differences, codes were subsequently visualised separately for Egypt and for Jordan. The thematic networks were then compared between countries to see whether certain frames dominated in either country. As findings were similar across country contexts, they are presented jointly for both countries in this paper.

The interviews included some claims about decent work by respondents that could not be attributed to a specific cognitive frame. These claims were collected separately in the analysis. Even though their inclusion in the findings was not foreseen as part of the research purpose, they provided fundamental information on suppliers' decent work understandings and are therefore presented with the findings (see "[General Claims About Decent Work](#)" section).

## Research Findings

### Cognitive Decent Work Frames of Suppliers in the Garment Industry

Six cognitive frames around the concept of decent work emerged in the interviews with owners and managers in garment factories. These frames characterised decent work in terms of (1) (paternalistic) family responsibility; (2) business responsibility (See fn. 2); (3) regulatory or legal responsibility; (4) philanthropic responsibility; (5) religious, especially Islamic, responsibility; and (6) human responsibility. Figure 2 depicts the discovered frames, and Tables 3 and 4 detail each responsibility.

#### (Paternalistic) Family Responsibility

Decent work was recurrently framed as a paternalistic family responsibility across interviews. Factories were described as "families" for local workers [E16F12, E26F21, J07F04, J09F06]<sup>3</sup> or "homes away from home" for migrant workers

<sup>3</sup> Each interview was assigned an interview code to protect respondents' anonymity. The code specifies the context (Jordan or Egypt) and interview type (Factory, Worker, or Expert). The seventh interview in Egypt, which was the fourth interview in a factory, was therefore

[J07F04, J08F05, J18F12]. Decision-makers considered themselves responsible for taking care of their workers and frequently referred to them as if they were children or “kids” [E01F01, R1], despite them being adults. Respondents not only cared for work-related issues but also helped if workers had personal problems, especially financial ones. Furthermore, they offered food at work, provided accommodations for migrant workers, celebrated life events and birthdays, and organised leisure time activities.

There was a very, let’s say, synchronization between the people, and we were working as a family. [J09F06, R1]

We, as [factory 01], are a safe environment for the outside community. We do not have harassments, we do not allow with wrong relationships, no degrading treatment, everyone takes their rights. Everyone sends their kids safely to work at our factory. [E01F01, R1] We are responsible for our employees 24/7, 365 days a year. Although they only work for us for 10 hours a day, but we are responsible for them even after working hours. [J07F04, R1]

Notably, respondents had a paternalistic family image in mind. They not only aimed to ensure the well-being of workers in all areas of life but also to discipline and educate them. E25F20-R1 stressed the importance of rules to educate workers, and J07F04-R1 related that their migrant workers are taught how to make their beds and keep their living area clean. Honesty, respect, and loyalty were valued and expected from workers.

### Business Responsibility

Across interviews, decision-makers recurrently framed decent work as a business responsibility. Thereby, they commonly referred to the image of a ‘win-win’ situation or a ‘give-and-take’ situation, as shown in the respective quotations:

I believe that we are just monitoring all the parameters around us to make the workers’ lives better because it is a win-win situation. [E07F04-R1]

If you need more quality, more good target, more discipline, you have to give the worker everything. [J19F13-R1]

Footnote 3 (continued)

labelled E07F04. For interview quotes, further specification is added to anonymously identify respondents (R1, R2, etc.). Especially in Egypt, it was frequently the case that more than one respondent participated in the interviews.

If employers provided workers with working conditions that they liked, good workers could be recruited, retained, and motivated to work productively. A decent workplace was considered to be a workplace that made workers happy. As one Jordanian manager highlighted: “our aim is one, make the worker happy” [J19F13-R1]. Worker satisfaction was repeatedly tied to a decent income, fair and respectful treatment, and work amenities (especially transportation, food, and accommodation).

However, not all respondents saw the employer-worker relationship as a constructive one. The business rationale also included responses that described the relationship between employers and workers as a battle. One manager [J18F12-R1], for instance, said, “This is [an] army [...]. Keep them [...] happy. You don’t have a choice today, really, if you ask me.” Some respondents described workers as disrespectful, disloyal, or dishonest and opined that these workers needed to learn that employers could only offer them work opportunities if they helped to make the business profitable.

### Regulatory Responsibility

Some decision-makers framed decent work as a regulatory responsibility. They either expressed the view that compliance with local laws and global standards as requested by buyers made a workplace decent or they recognised the role of local and global regulations in setting benchmarks for decent work practices. Local labour laws tended to be referenced more frequently than global labour standards. J05F02-R1, for instance, proudly exclaimed that “everything is by law. Whatever we are practising [is] based on labour law.” This interviewee equated legal compliance with decent work. Most of the other respondents also referred to global standards and local laws during the interviews; however, they distinguished between regulations and their personal understandings of decent work. These discrepancies between decision-makers’ personal understandings of what constitutes decent work on one hand and local and global labour regulations on the other are further outlined in “[General Claims About Decent Work](#)” section.

### Philanthropic Responsibility

In some interviews, respondents expanded their decent work understandings to also include the well-being of the local community, society, and industry. This frame resembled the framing of decent work as a (paternalistic) family responsibility, but the scope included social provisions that went well beyond the direct business sphere.

Our aim really is to help the society as well and the industry. [E30F24, R1]

[...] so that we can all live a good life, whether in our Egypt or elsewhere. All people must rise. [E17F12, R1]

Respondents felt responsible for such things as providing basic education to their workers [J07F04], participating in technical training initiatives [E30F24], hiring local labour [J09F06], or offering trainings [E17F12] and part-time work opportunities to rural women [E01F01]. This enlarged understanding of employer responsibility was frequently attributed to the failure of the state to provide for people's basic needs, such as education, health care, or poverty support, especially in Egypt.

### Human Responsibility

Several interview respondents saw respecting human rights and basic human needs as their human duty. The words "human" and "humanity" were repeatedly used in reference to decent work; for example, "We respect human to the maximum" [J07F04, R1] and "We are all humans" [J18F12, R1]. Workers were said to have human rights, such as the right to a decent income [J09F06] and respectful treatment [J18F12]. One Jordanian manager stressed, "We believe in [human rights]. It's not only saying it, we believe [in it]" [J07F04, R1]. Respondents thereby acknowledged that respect for human rights is not always self-evident in garment production. Workers were furthermore said to be entitled to have basic human needs honoured; for example, working hours needed to be capped so that workers could rest [E22F17, E26F21, J08F05, J06F03]. However, understandings of what constituted human rights and needs were subjective. One owner considered eleven working hours per day to be humane [J06F03-R1], while another one found 8 h to be an appropriate daily maximum [E26F21-R2].

### Religious (Islamic) Responsibility

In several interviews, respondents linked decent work to their personal religious beliefs, which were predominantly Islamic. An owner justified her company's decent work efforts as follows: "This is our manner, this is related to our religion: We are here to help, and we will take the benefit from God" [E25F20, R2]. Others added that they considered it decent to honour Zakat, the Islamic duty to give alms to poor people, or to adjust working conditions during Ramadan:

So, we provide the factory's zakat to [their] employees. If one of our workers' dads is in the hospital, I stand by them. At the end of the day, it's my obligation. Those closest to me are important to tend to. [E28F23-R1]  
In Ramadan, the working hours differ. [E12F09-R1]

Furthermore, decision-makers highlighted the importance of honouring their workers' religious duties and occasions. J07F04-R2 explained, "We celebrate with Hindus, with Muslims, with Christians, with any religion that we have, we would celebrate with [the workers]."

### General Claims About Decent Work

Four general claims about decent work were made across interviews (see Fig. 2).

First, decent work was characterised as a multi-dimensional concept that covers a plurality of work-related issues: "What makes out a good quality for workers [...]? Not only one thing, many things" [E07F04-R1]. Consequently, respondents did not see workplaces binarily, as decent or indecent; instead, they considered them as having high quality in certain dimensions while lagging behind in others. Decent work frames and corporate resources (see the following assumption) influenced how decision-makers prioritised different aspects of decent work.

Second, making a workplace decent requires resources. The amount and type of resources needed can vary, depending on the decent work dimension concerned. Among others, E28F23-R1 stressed the requirement of financial resources to improve working conditions: "In order for me to give them more money, I need to make more money, or else I'll close up shop." E01F01-R2 added that an increase in remuneration is more costly than treating workers fairly and respectfully. Human and physical resources were also considered necessary: shorter working hours require additional staff [E22F17], supervisors need to be trained to treat workers respectfully [E28F23], and escape routes require space [E01F01]. Continuous improvement is, therefore, necessary to eventually achieve decent work: "We are focusing on much better issues today because the bar is rising in the [Jordanian] industry" [J18F12-R1].

Third, several respondents highlighted contradictions between different understandings of decent work that can act to impede compliance with laws or standards.

Local laws can contradict global laws: "Sometimes Jordan law is not matching with labour international law." [J08F05-R1]

Local and global regulations can contradict suppliers' decent work understanding: "We [are] responsible, we [find] things [in global labour standards] that we cannot approve of." [E12F09-R1]

Workers' wishes can contradict suppliers' understandings of decent work: "[Workers] do not really think about that [safety in the workplace]. But I struggle with them for their own sake." [E28F23-R1]

Fourth, while respondents considered some aspects of decent work universalistic, they saw other aspects as particularistic.



Decent work issues framed as a matter of human responsibility were commonly considered universalistic. Most other issues were characterised in terms of the different priorities for different groups of workers, locations, and industries. Especially noteworthy differentiations involved the needs of women versus men and, in the case of Jordan, the needs of local workers versus migrant workers.

[Migrants] come here to earn a living. They don't have families. [...] Jordanians have obligations, have families. [J07F04-R1]

We have Nepali, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, Indian, Jordanian, and Syrian [workers]. Each nationality has different thoughts, different minds, different traditions, different habits. [J08F05-R1]

It is not a single issue, it is about the culture, about the system, the laws, many things, and it is different between the capital and the small cities and the villages. [E30F24-R1]

## Discussion

This study empirically identified the cognitive frames of owners and managers around notions of decent work as it relates to export-oriented garment factories in Egypt and Jordan. The findings show that suppliers particularly framed decent work as a (paternalistic) family responsibility and as a business responsibility. Some respondents also considered themselves responsible for philanthropic contributions. Suppliers acknowledged the existence of private and public labour regulations but drew on them for their understandings of decent work in only a few cases. Decent work was repeatedly characterised as a human and religious obligation. This section reflects on these frames in relation to the theoretical background presented at the beginning of this paper.

First, the finding that six different decent work frames coexist in Egypt and Jordan shows that a joint understanding of decent work has not yet been constructed in the research contexts. Already the design of the research study revealed that neither the English nor the Arabic term for *decent work* was widely known in Egypt and Jordan. Hence, the potential to use language for joint sensemaking (Whittle et al., 2023), in this case a joint global–local understanding of decent work, remains untapped. Following the advice of local experts, decent work understandings were discussed in the study under the notion of a *good quality of work for workers*. From a sensemaking perspective, language discrepancies not only result from a decoupling of global and local decent work frames but also potentially reinforce the decoupling process (Cuffari et al., 2015; Whittle et al., 2023). The need to adapt the terminology used in the study to the chosen research context,

therefore, not only reflects global and local differences in the understanding of decent work but also partially explains the detected expansion of the concept of decent work in Egypt and Jordan.

Second, according to the discursive sensemaking perspective, cognitive frames are socially constructed in stakeholder interactions (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Zimmermann et al., 2021). In GPNs, local suppliers interact with actors at the local level as well as actors at the global level. Accordingly, the identified frames of suppliers in Egypt and Jordan contain local, global, and hybrid ideas. The family responsibility frame, the philanthropic responsibility frame, and the religious responsibility frame can be linked to Arabic and Islamic ideas (Jamali & Sidani, 2012; Kabasakal et al., 2012; Metwally & Punnett, 2017; Possumah et al., 2013). The regulatory responsibility frame, with which few of the owners and managers agreed, corresponds to the global idea that labour standards codify decent work. The human responsibility frame encompasses local and global ideas. Local culture postulates human dignity and justice as values to honour (Khan et al., 2015), and global discourses advocate a human rights basis for global labour standards (Giuliani, 2016; United Nations 2011). Differences between local, regional, and international conceptualisations of human rights (Almutawa & Almanea, 2022; Rishmawi, 2020) might thereby have contributed to the finding that respondents' understandings of which rights a worker has differed across the interviews. The terminology owners and managers used in reference to the business responsibility frame also contains hybrid elements. While the global CSR and sustainability debate uses the image of a “win–win” situation (Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020), Arab management culture and Islamic work ethics centre on a “give and take” situation (Qasim et al., 2020). Overall, local ideas dominated in the cognitive frames of the owners and managers who participated in the study, indicating that global notions of decent work were not determinative within their GPNs. This finding is particularly surprising in the case of Jordan, where the garment industry is closely interwoven within its global production network (Azmeah, 2014).

Third, suppliers voiced decent work intentions that exceed global notions of decent work. The identified frames suggest an employer's responsibility extends beyond the sphere of work to cover the personal needs of workers (family responsibility frame), religious needs of workers (religious responsibility frame), and the development of the larger society (philanthropic responsibility frame). Decent work practices that can be linked to this enlarged understanding of responsibility were described in previous studies as “informal” or “silent” CSR practices (Fontana & Egels-Zandén, 2019; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). These practices are not acknowledged in the global debate. Still, they are crucial to suppliers and their workers, particularly in countries of the

Global South, where public welfare systems fail to address these concerns.

Fourth, respondents explicitly differentiated between women's and men's needs, confirming that there is a "female uniqueness" (Koburtay et al., 2023) that needs to be recognised in the economy. Some critiques of global labour standards point out that they do not make this differentiation (Alamgir & Alakavuklar, 2020). The differentiation between women and men allows suppliers to tailor their decent work practices to gender-specific needs. This differentiation, however, also contributes to reinforcing traditional gender roles and undermines the goal of promoting gender equality, which is an inherent component of many global labour standards (Mückenberger, 2022). Better recognition of women's needs in global labour standards is called for, without confining women into their traditional caretaking roles.

Fifth, suppliers' decent work frames included assumptions that undermine global understandings of decent work. The interviewees' paternalistic views on the employer-worker relationship, particularly in relation to the family responsibility frame, are considered highly problematic from a global perspective, which is focused on bargaining processes in which employers and employees are on an equal footing (Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Zajak et al., 2017). A paternalistic perspective is at odds with an understanding of decent work whose goal is emancipating workers (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2017). Another frame that put the interviewees at odds with global understandings of decent work is the business responsibility frame. In the context of the study's setting, this frame incentivises suppliers to prioritise decent work practices that align with their business objectives. While this idea is not foreign to business actors in the Global North, it contradicts the idea of global labour standards as a means of protecting workers' human and labour rights (Giuliani, 2016).

Sixth, suppliers' decent work frames matched global frames with respect to the idea that employers should acknowledge and accommodate workers' human rights and basic human needs. However, the respondents rarely linked these rights and needs to global labour standards and did not perceive existing labour regulations as legitimate representations of those rights and needs. Additionally, despite agreement among the suppliers as to the universalistic nature of human rights and needs, their understandings of what these rights and basic needs are differed across interviews. Rights-based approaches to labour standards therefore may have the potential to foster a mutual understanding of decent work, but as yet that potential has not been realised in practice.

Seventh, the findings show that suppliers perceive the concept of decent work as an ideal that cannot (yet) be fully realised in garment supply chains. Owners and managers in supplier firms decide which decent work practices they prioritise and implement. Resource limitations and

contradictory regulatory demands have previously been shown to hinder the enforcement of global standards (Holzberg, 2022; Nadvi & Raj-Reichert, 2015). The findings of this paper add a local dimension to this dilemma. Unless resources are expanded, pressuring suppliers to focus on implementing global labour standards is likely to crowd out other, context-specific decent work practices. Therefore, this paper argues that standard setters need to consider carefully which practices global standards intend to crowd out and which they intend to preserve. The previous discussion of clashes between supplier frames and global frames can inform this consideration.

The decent work frames of suppliers presented in this paper arose in a very specific research context and have not yet been explicitly analysed in other developing country production contexts. Therefore, their transferability to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) needs to be discussed. Two observations support the idea that the research results are transferable: (1) The frames resonate with other supplier-centred research findings in global (garment) production. Images used to illustrate the (paternalistic) family responsibility frame were also observed in other countries. Tran and Jeppesen (2016, p. 603), for instance, quote a respondent from Vietnam who proposed that "the working environment has family-like elements." The link between business benefits and decent work, characteristic of the detected business responsibility frame, is also noted by Huq et al. (2014). They find that advantages in worker recruitment and retention motivate suppliers' decent work practices in Bangladesh. The religious responsibility frame seems likewise not to be specific to Egypt and Jordan. In a study by Perry et al., (2015, p. 742) in Sri Lanka, managers linked their work-related actions to religion as "the Buddhist culture demands fairness and social justice and equity between all the people." Fontana and Egels-Zandén (2019, p. 1059) "observed a strong human dimension" in suppliers' perceptions of labour-related CSR in Bangladesh, which corresponds to ideas incorporated in the human responsibility frame detected in this study. Accord with global standards and a regulatory framing of decent work was expressed in India: "They [the buyers] demand for these standards. These things are good for workers and common people" (Soundararajan & Brown, 2016, p. 93). However, most decision-makers quoted in other studies questioned the moral legitimacy of global and local regulatory demands (de Neve, 2009), as was the case in this study. (2) The six detected decent work frames recurred across respondents with different Arab backgrounds and from two countries. This finding was surprising as the local industry contexts in Egypt and Jordan differ significantly (see "Research Context" section). This may be an indication that the detected frames are likely to exist in similar forms in other developing country production contexts, particularly Arab or Islamic ones.

## Implications for Theory and Practice

### Theoretical Contributions

First, this paper introduces a cognitive framing approach into the debate on global labour standards to capture actor-specific decent work understandings. The empirical analysis of suppliers' decent work frames shows how this approach can foster insight into (mis-)alignments between the mental models of global regulators and suppliers. It allowed for the identification of common ground in the form of human-centred decent work approaches, but it also pointed out where cognitive frames are misaligned and need to be addressed in the processes of setting and implementing standards. The empirical analysis unearthed four organising themes to describe decent work issue frames: *Image*, *objective*, *employer-worker relationship*, and *typical practices*. These organising themes can be built upon in future research on decent work frames.

Second, this paper contributes to the debate on the legitimacy of global labour standards. The findings show, in accordance with previous research (Bae et al., 2021; Flanigan, 2018; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011), that the *substantive* legitimacy (Breakey, 2021) of global labour standards is impaired. Extending existing literature, this empirical study highlights which assumptions of decision-makers clash with global frames (e.g. paternalism, gender inequality) and which ones agree (e.g. assumptions of universalistic human rights and needs). Additionally, the research points out that multiple decent work frames coexist among suppliers and in the global debate. This lack of joint agreement hinders cooperation in multi-stakeholder initiatives (Fougère & Solitander, 2020) and therefore also holds back progress in promoting decent work. The theoretical link between cognitive frames and discursive sense-making points the way forward. Joint meaning construction through stakeholder interaction is needed to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of global labour standards. Joint language construction should thereby also play a role in discussions of these standards. Previous research has illustrated that decent work-related frames can change (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015; Gutierrez-Huerter et al., 2021). The following section will outline practical suggestions for improving global labour standards.

Third, the theory section of this paper advances the analysis of normative frames for understanding decent work as a way of providing insight into the effectiveness of global labour standards. Bridging existing theoretical knowledge on cognitive framing, cognitive sensemaking, and labour standard effectiveness, the theory section conceptually underpins the relationship between decent work issue frames and standard effectiveness (see

Fig. 1). The empirical findings support the assumptions included in the framework. The highlighted contradictions between global, local, and workers' decent work expectations show that suppliers often find themselves in paradoxical situations (Brix-Asala et al., 2021) and need to make sense of the differing demands (Holzberg, 2019; Soundararajan, 2014). Resource constraints limit their decision-making space and lead to the need to prioritise. The different decent work frames suggest different decent work priorities, and this study's findings provide insights into which practices are morally motivated by each frame (see Tables 3, 4). The impact of decent work frames on actual work practices must thereby be considered in the context of suppliers' business considerations. Discrepancies between ideal working conditions and actual working conditions in supplier firms were repeatedly attributed to suppliers' business responsibilities.

### Implications for Practice

This study's theoretical and empirical findings support existing efforts to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of global labour standards and lead to a new proposal for further supporting this goal. Multi-stakeholder perspectives are increasingly considered in the definition of private and public global labour standards (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2017; International Labour Organization, 2019). While the findings of this study show that supplier perspectives are not yet adequately covered in this process, the objective of multi-stakeholder integration is nevertheless worthwhile as it stimulates discursive sensemaking and the construction of a joint terminology. Further research on decent work understandings of suppliers and workers in the Global South is recommended to increase their voices in standard-setting procedures. A distinction should be made between female and male, local and migrant workers. This study's findings additionally strengthen demands to link global labour standards to universally defined human and labour rights (Giuliani, 2016; United Nations, 2011). Standard setters should not dilute this rights orientation as it significantly increases the legitimacy of global standards. The consistent alignment of global standards with universal human rights would furthermore enhance both the harmony and effectiveness of existing standards (Kuruvilla et al., 2020). Those who might adopt the standards in turn need to be convinced that rights-oriented global labour standards add value to their business operations. This study found that suppliers did not perceive global labour standards to be morally or economically valuable. In particular, suppliers did not see the link between global labour standards and the protection of human rights. More global-local interaction is needed to stimulate discursive sensemaking between actors. The interaction should demonstrate the human rights relevance

of global public and private standards and the need to align labour standards in global supply chains with global (rather than regional or local) conceptualisations of human rights. Regional or local conceptualisations of human rights that are misaligned with global ones impede joint global sensemaking. International initiatives operating at the local level can help to promote global standards and their positive impacts on human rights among suppliers. Auditors should also be trained to elaborate on the standards' human rights orientation and business benefits.

Going beyond previous recommendations, the findings of this study lead to a proposal to widen decent work understandings and the substance of global labour standards to include context-specific aspects that do not violate universal human rights. The proposal refers to local decent work practices that are not covered by global labour standards but are important to workers in the local context. The recognition of context-specific decent work practices within the framework of global labour standards is advocated to prevent the displacement of such practices and to strengthen the *substantive* and *autonomy* legitimacy (Breakey, 2021) of global standards.

The proposal distinguishes between (1) context-specific responsibility standards and (2) the context-specific application of standards. (1) Responsibility standards include issues relevant to the well-being of workers in a specific context and the responsibility to ensure business survival. They cover the contents of supplier frames that were shown to exceed global frames of decent work and that were labelled "hidden" or "silent" decent work practices in previous research (Fontana & Egels-Zandén, 2019; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). (2) The context-specific application of standards addresses the need to specify rights-oriented requirements locally. For instance, while global standards can request the payment of living wages, the amount of money constituting a living wage depends on the local context. Existing standards commonly refer to local laws and industry regulations if a context-specific specification is required. The proposal recommends the continuation and extension of this practice. Current global standards tend to micro-manage how human rights are protected – for instance, by prescribing that a certain type of fire extinguisher or toilet be installed (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). Giving local actors more autonomy in specifying how labour rights are best respected in local contexts can enhance the legitimacy of global standards (*autonomy legitimacy*, Breakey, 2021).

The proposal also calls for locally defining context-specific regulations and involving business and social stakeholders in the process. If collective bargaining processes exist, they could be used to define context-specific standards. Involving international actors to facilitate the definition of standards is recommended as this stimulates discursive sensemaking across global and local actors. In Jordan, the

International Labour Organization or Better Work Jordan could, for instance, facilitate the process. Global buyers should subsequently formally acknowledge and reward compliance with these standards. Suppliers should be obliged to comply with universalistic and context-specific rights-oriented regulations. Compliance with responsibility standards that go beyond international human rights could be rewarded with bonus points in suppliers' compliance ratings or by permitting exceptional scores in worker well-being surveys to enhance suppliers' compliance ratings.

## Limitations and Future Research

This paper introduces a cognitive framing approach to capture suppliers' understandings of decent work and links this approach to sensemaking scholarship to theorise the relevance of frames for the legitimacy and effectiveness of global labour standards. The empirical analysis focused on decent work frames of suppliers in the garment export industry in Egypt and Jordan. The findings highlight disconnects between decent work understandings among global standard setters and industry suppliers but also find common ground for defining and implementing global labour standards and therefore also achieving SDG 8. To address the limitations of this study, future research is needed which further develops understandings of decent work frames in the global debate.

First, this paper focused on suppliers' cognitive frames for understanding what constitutes decent work in Egypt and Jordan and only briefly addressed the coexistence of different decent work understandings on the global level. Meanwhile, a plurality of decent work concepts exists across scientific disciplines and languages. Further theoretical analysis is recommended to dissect and discuss coexisting decent work frames in the international arena for the purpose of stimulating joint sensemaking. Second, the relationship between decent work frames and decent work practices, which was theoretically elaborated in this paper, awaits empirical study. Similarly, the social construction of suppliers' decent work frames must be further researched. Future research could trace discursive sensemaking between global and local stakeholders. Third, this study focused on one local stakeholder group in global production. Research illuminating decent work frames of other supply chain stakeholders in the Global South (buying agents, auditors, workers, etc.) is recommended to make their decent work understandings visible in the global debate. Particularly, workers' decent work frames ought to be compared to those of owners and managers to evaluate the extent to which the detected frames represent a local consensus or a business-specific viewpoint. Fourth, this paper employed a social constructivist view on cognitive frames, which implies that



frames are time- and context-specific (Zimmermann et al., 2021). The cognitive frames identified in the empirical part of this paper therefore need to be considered as snapshots of decent work understandings at the time of the analysis. Future research might evaluate how much decent work frames of decision-makers change over time; in particular, the Covid-19 pandemic might have changed views on decent

work in global production. Fifth, the study would need to be replicated in other production contexts and GPNs to validate the presented findings across the Global South. While this study focused on identifying the range of frames present in the research context, quantitative studies could be used to analyse their frequency.

## Annex

### Annex I: Profiles of Interviewed Factory Owners-Managers

	Factory code	Factory location	Factory type	Approx. no. of workers	Respon-dent	Role	Local/migrant	Gender
1	E01F01	Residential	tier-1	500	R1	General Manager	Egyptian	Male
					R2	IT Manager	Egyptian	Male
2	E07F04	Industrial	tier-1	600	R1	General Manager	Egyptian	Male
3	E08F05	Industrial	tier-2	150	R1	General Manager	Egyptian	Male
4	E11F08	Industrial	tier-1	1500	R1	HR Manager	Egyptian	Male
5	E12F09	Industrial	tier-1	2500	R1	General Manager	Egyptian	Male
6	E17F12	Industrial	tier-1	900	R1	General Manager	Egyptian	Male
					R2	Compliance	Egyptian	Female
					R3	HR Manager	Egyptian	Male
7	E21F16	Industrial	tier-1	350	R1	General Manager	Egyptian	Male
8	E22F17	Residential	tier-2	25	R1	Owner 1	Egyptian	Female
					R2	Owner 2	Egyptian	Male
9	E24F19	Residential	tier-1	70	R1	Export Manager	Egyptian	Female
10	E25F20	Residential	tier-1	80	R1	Owner 1	Egyptian	Female
					R2	Owner 2	Egyptian	Male
11	E26F21	Residential	tier-2	155	R1	Owner	Egyptian	Male
12	E28F23	Residential	tier-1	130	R1	Owner 1	Egyptian	Male
					R2	Owner 2	Egyptian	Male
13	E30F24	Industrial	tier-1	500	R1	Owner	Egyptian	Male
14	J05F02	Industrial	tier-1	600	R1	HR & Compliance	Migrant	Male
15	J06F03	Industrial	tier-2	150	R1	Owner	Jordanian	Male
16	J07F04	Industrial	tier-1	2000	R1	General Manager	Jordanian	Male
17	J08F05	Industrial	tier-1	3000	R1	HR Manager	Jordanian	Female
18	J09F06	Residential	tier-1	800	R1	COO	Jordanian	Male
19	J12F08	Industrial	tier-2	200	R1	Owner	Migrant	Male
20	J13F09	Industrial	tier-2	150	R1	Owner	Migrant	Male
21	J16F11	Residential	tier-1	450	R1	Factory Manager	Jordanian	Female
22	J18F12	Industrial	tier-1	1800	R1	General Manager	Migrant	Male
					R2	HR & Compliance	Migrant	Male
23	J19F13	Industrial	tier-1	950	R1	HR & Compliance	Jordanian	Male



**Annex II: Global, Organising, and Basic Themes**

Global theme	Organising theme	Basic theme
1. (Paternalistic) family responsibility	1.1 Image	1.1.1 (Paternalistic) family
		1.1.2 Home away from home
		1.1.3 Collective
	1.2 Objective	1.2.1 Ensure well-being of worker in all areas of life
		1.2.2 Educate and discipline workers
	1.3 Employer-worker relationship	1.3.1 Employer-workers are close/one unity
		1.3.2 Employer as parent/caretaker; worker as child
		1.3.3 Relationship values: honesty, respect, loyalty
	1.4 Typical practices (top 9)	1.4.1 Support of personal (especially financial) problems
		1.4.2 Direct communication with top management (open door)
		1.4.3 Work-life balance support (nursery, shortened working hours)
		1.4.4 Decent salaries
		1.4.5 Factory in residential area (short commute)
		1.4.6 Offer of leisure time activities
		1.4.7 Homely work environment
		1.4.8 Fair and respectful treatment
		1.4.9 Safe work environment
		2.1.1 Win-Win
		2.1.2 Give and take/Balance
		2.1.3 Battle
2. Business responsibility	2.1 Image	2.2.1 Worker benefit: Provide work opportunities/income
		2.2.2 Business benefit: Ensure business survival/profit
	2.2 Objective	

Global theme	Organising theme	Basic theme
3. Regulatory responsibility	2.3 Employer-worker relationship	2.2.3 Worker benefit: Ensure worker satisfaction
		2.2.4 Business benefit: Keep and build committed, productive workforce
		2.3.1 Constructive: Balancing of employer-worker needs and demands
		2.3.2 Destructive: Clash between employer-worker needs and demands
	2.4 Typical practices (top 9)	2.4.1 Decent salaries and overtime opportunities
		2.4.2 Social and medical insurance, indoor clinic
		2.4.3 Transportation to work
		2.4.4 (Tasty) daily meals at work
		2.4.5 Comfortable facilities, including accommodation for migrants
		2.4.6 Offer of leisure time activities
		2.4.7 Fair and respectful treatment
		2.4.8 Communication channels for workers to communicate their needs
		2.4.9 Work-life balance support (nursery, shortened working hours)
		3.1.1 Comply with local laws and regulations
		3.1.2 Comply with global standards
		3.2.1 Food and accommodation according to Collective Bargaining Agreement
		3.2.2 Overtime regulations according to global standards
		3.2.3 Salary according to national legal regulations
	2.1 Objective	
	2.2 Typical practices	

Global theme	Organising theme	Basic theme	Global theme	Organising theme	Basic theme		
Global theme 4. Philanthropic responsibility	Organising theme 4.1 Objective	3.2.4 Non-discrimination according to national legal regulations	6. Religious (Islamic) responsibility	6.1 Objective	6.1.1 Honouring local religious (Islamic) work ethics and traditions		
					6.1.2 Honouring religious (Islamic) duties of workers		
				6.2 Typical practices	6.2.1 Zakat (alms)		
					6.2.2 Ramadan provisions (shortened hours, food packages, money)		
					6.2.3 In-house celebration of local religious holidays		
					6.2.4 In-house celebration of workers' religious holidays		
					6.2.5 Respectful communications		
					7. Overarching claims about decent work	7.1.1 Decent work includes a plurality of work issues	
		4.2 Typical practices		4.2.1 Decent salaries		7.1 DW is multi-dimensional	7.2.1 Limited financial resources
				4.2.2 Support of personal (especially financial) problems			7.2.2 Limited temporal resources
				4.2.3 In-house training or technical education opportunities		7.2 DW is not fully feasible—limited resources	7.2.3 Limited human resources (hard and soft skills)
4.2.4 Temporary jobs for students during holidays	7.2.4 Limited physical resources (especially space)						
4.2.5 Job opportunities for poor/marginalised community members	7.2.5 Respectful communications						
4.2.6 Reading and writing classes, English language classes	7.3 DW is not fully feasible—normative contradictions		7.3.1 Local laws contradict global labour standards				
4.2.7 Secure workspaces for women			7.3.2 Worker interests contradict local/global regulations				
			7.3.3 Own normative judgements contradict local/global regulations				
5. Human responsibility	5.1 Objective		5.1.1 Honouring human rights	7.3 DW has universalistic and particularistic aspects	7.4.1 Different groups of workers have different needs		
			5.1.2 Supporting basic human needs		7.4.2 Different cultures have different needs/priorities		
	5.2 Typical practices	5.2.1 Financial support in case of need	7.4.3 Different organisations and jobs have different needs				
		5.2.2 Rest periods/limited overtime	7.4.4 All humans have rights and basic needs				
		5.2.3 Additional earning opportunities/extended overtime					
		5.2.4 Punctual, correct payment of salaries					
		5.2.5 Physical integrity					
		5.2.6 Non-discrimination					

### Annex III: Excerpt of the Coding Frame

Type of theme	Theme	Description	Sample Quote
Global	1. (Paternalistic) family responsibility	Owners-managers frame decent work as a (paternalistic) family responsibility. They talk about decent work and their workers as if they are a (paternalistic) parent who takes care of their children	
Organising	1.1 Image	Theme includes all basic themes that describe the image that an owner-manager has of the work environment or the work relationships within the factory	
Basic	1.1.1 (Paternalistic) family	Statements describing the work environment or the work relationships as family-like	In [factory J06], we are trying to have the family concept system. [J09F06, R1]
Basic	1.1.2 Home away from home	Statements describing the work environment or the work relationships as home away from home (for migrant workers)	We create a home away from home for all our employees wherever they are [J07F04, R1]
Basic	1.1.3 Collective	Statements describing the work environment or the work relationships as a collective or a community	The factory is a small community [E08F05, R1]
Organising	1.2. Objective	Theme includes all basic themes that provide information on the intention that an owner-manager associates with decent work	
Basic	1.2.1 Ensure well-being of worker in all areas of life	Statements implying the intention to ensure the workers' well-being during working hours and after work	They [workers] live better, they should learn better. They should have a better authority of life. [...] There are many more things we can do, [...] we can have libraries. [...] [J18F12, R1]

Type of theme	Theme	Description	Sample Quote
Basic	1.2.2 Educate and discipline workers	Statements implying the intention to educate and discipline workers (like children)	I: What are the most crucial issues you teach them [...]? R1: How to live in a dormitory with others, on the soft skills. They've been with their parents or most of them are young, between the age of 20 and 30. [...] This is your cover, this is your bed. You have to take care of your bed, organise everything. You are not living alone. [J07F04, R1]
Organising	1.3 Employer-worker relationship	Theme includes all basic themes that provide information on the owners-managers' perception of employer-worker relationship	
Basic	1.3.1 Employer-workers are close/one unity	Statements describing employers and workers to have a very close relationship, including a personal relationship	A week doesn't go by without an engagement, birthday, or wedding celebration going on. A birthday or wedding, everyone has to attend. So, our relationship with each other [is close]. [E08F05, R1]
...			

**Acknowledgements** I thank my on-site field advisor Sherif Hamdy, everybody who facilitated access to interview respondents, all interview respondents, and the translators for supporting my field research in Egypt and Jordan. I thank Peter Knorrinda and Uta Wilkens as well as three anonymous reviewers and the journal editor for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Any shortcomings of the paper remain my own.

**Funding** The field research was supported by the Ruhr University Research School PLUS, funded by Germany's Excellence Initiative [DFG GSC 98/3].

**Data Availability** The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available as they contain information that could compromise the privacy of research participants.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The author has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

**Ethical Approval** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Development Research and Development Policy of the Ruhr-University Bochum (09/2017).

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

**Open Access** This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

## References

- Aissi, J., Peels, R., & Samaan, D. (2018). Evaluating the effectiveness of labour provisions in trade agreements: An analytical and methodological framework. *International Labour Review*, 157, 671–698. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ilr.12125>
- Alamgir, F., & Alakavuklar, O. N. (2020). Compliance Codes and Women Workers' (Mis)representation and (Non)recognition in the Apparel Industry of Bangladesh. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 165, 295–310. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-4080-2>
- Almutawa, A., & Almanea, H. (2022). Analyses of non-compliance to Legislation by Signatories to the Arab Charter of Human Rights: a framework for national observance and regional enforcement. In J. Rehman, A. Shahid, & S. Foster (Eds.), *The Asian yearbook of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law* (pp. 237–269). Brill.
- Anner, M. (2011). The impact of international outsourcing on unionization and wages: Evidence from the apparel export sector in Central America. *ILR Review*, 64(2), 305–322.
- Anner, M. (2019). Predatory purchasing practices in global apparel supply chains and the employment relations squeeze in the Indian garment export industry. *International Labour Review*, 158, 705–727. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ilr.12149>
- Anner, M., Bair, J., & Blasi, J. (2014). Towards joint liability in global supply chains: Addressing the root causes of labor violations in international subcontracting networks. *Comparative Labor Law and Policy Journal*, 35(1), 1–43.
- Arora, B., Kourula, A., & Phillips, R. (2020). Emerging paradigms of corporate social responsibility, regulation, and governance: Introduction to the thematic symposium. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 162, 265–268. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04236-2>
- Attridge-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1, 385–405. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146879410100100307>
- Azmeh, S. (2014). Labour in global production networks: Workers in the qualifying industrial zones (QIZs) of Egypt and Jordan. *Global Networks*, 14, 495–513. <https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12047>
- Azmeh, S., & Nadvi, K. (2013). 'Greater Chinese' Global Production Networks in the Middle East: The rise of the Jordanian Garment Industry. *Development and Change*, 44(6), 1317–1340.
- Bae, J., Lund-Thomsen, P., & Lindgreen, A. (2021). Global value chains and supplier perceptions of corporate social responsibility: A case study of garment manufacturers in Myanmar. *Global Networks*, 21, 653–680. <https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12298>
- Barrientos, S., Mayer, F., Pickles, J., & Posthuma, A. (2011). Decent work in global production networks: Framing the policy debate. *International Labour Review*, 150, 297–317. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1564-913X.2011.00118.x>
- Barrientos, S., & Smith, S. (2007). Do workers benefit from ethical trade? Assessing codes of labour practice in global production systems. *Third World Quarterly*, 28, 713–729. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590701336580>
- Baumann-Pauly, D., Nolan, J., van Heerden, A., & Samway, M. (2017). Industry-specific multi-stakeholder initiatives that govern corporate human rights standards: Legitimacy assessments of the Fair Labor Association and the Global Network Initiative. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 143, 771–787. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3076-z>
- Benkert, J. (2021). Reframing business sustainability decision-making with value-focussed thinking. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 174, 441–456. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04611-4>
- Berliner, D., Greenleaf, A. R., Lake, M., Levi, M., & Noveck, J. (2015). Governing global supply chains: What we know (and don't) about improving labor rights and working conditions. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 11, 193–209. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-120814-121322>
- Better Work Jordan (BWJ). (2019). *Annual Report 2019: An industry and compliance review*. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://betterwork.org/portfolio/19446-2/>
- Bexell, M. (2014). Global governance, legitimacy and (De)legitimation. *Globalizations*, 11, 289–299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2014.919744>
- Blowfield, M. E., & Dolan, C. S. (2008). Stewards of virtue? The ethical dilemma of CSR in African agriculture. *Development & Change*, 39, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2008.00465.x>
- Blustein, D. L., Olle, C., Connors-Kellgren, A., & Diamonti, A. J. (2016). Decent work: A psychological perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00407>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Breakey, H. (2021). Harnessing multidimensional legitimacy for codes of ethics: A staged approach. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 170, 359–373. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04270-0>
- Brix-Asala, C., Seuring, S., Sauer, P. C., Zehndner, A., & Schilling, L. (2021). Resolving the base of the pyramid inclusion paradox through supplier development. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 30, 3208–3227. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2798>
- CAPMAS. (2018). *Annual bulletin of employment, wages and working hours statistics 2017* (Ref. no. 71—12213—2017). Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://censusinfo.capmas.gov.eg/Metad-ata-en-v4.2/index.php/catalog/272>

- Choi-Fitzpatrick, A. (2017). *What slaveholders think : How contemporary perpetrators rationalize what they do*. Columbia University Press.
- Cornelissen, J. P., & Werner, M. D. (2014). Putting framing in perspective: A review of framing and frame analysis across the management and organizational literature. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 8, 181–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19416520.2014.875669>
- Cowan, J. M., & Wehr, H. (Eds.). (1994). *A dictionary of modern written Arabic: (Arabic - English)* (4th ed. Spoken language series). Spoken Language Services.
- Cuffari, E. C., Di Paolo, E., & de Jaegher, H. (2015). From participatory sense-making to language: There and back again. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 14, 1089–1125. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-014-9404-9>
- Cullina, H. T. (2016). *Leadership development in Egypt: How indigenous managers construe Western leadership theories* (ROS Theses Repository). Edinburgh Business School, Heriot-Watt University.
- de Colle, S., Henriques, A., & Sarasvathy, S. (2014). The paradox of corporate social responsibility standards. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 125, 177–191. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1912-y>
- de Neve, G. (2009). Power, inequality and corporate social responsibility: The politics of ethical compliance in the South Indian Garment Industry. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(22), 63–71.
- de Neve, G. (2014). Fordism, flexible specialization and CSR: How Indian garment workers critique neoliberal labour regimes. *Ethnography*, 15, 184–207. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138112463801>
- Dewulf, A., Gray, B., Putnam, L., Lewicki, R., Aarts, N., Bouwen, R., et al. (2009). Disentangling approaches to framing in conflict and negotiation research: A meta-paradigmatic perspective. *Human Relations*, 62, 155–193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726708100356>
- El-Haddad, A. (2012). Effects of the global crisis on the Egyptian textiles and clothing sector: A blessing in disguise? *ISRN Economics*, 2012, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/941695>
- Fassin, Y., van Rossem, A., & Buelens, M. (2011). Small-business owner-managers' perceptions of business ethics and CSR-related concepts. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 98, 425–453. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-010-0586-y>
- Fernandez-Stark, K., Frederick, S., & Gereffi, G. (2011). *The apparel global value chain: Economic upgrading and workforce development*. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://www.globalvaluechains.org/cgclisting/the-apparel-global-value-chain-economic-upgrading-and-workforce-development-chapter-3/>
- Fiss, P. C., & Hirsch, P. M. (2005). The discourse of globalization: Framing and sensemaking of an emerging concept. *American Sociological Review*, 70, 29–52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240507000103>
- Flanigan, J. (2018). Sweatshop regulation and workers' choices. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 153, 79–94. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3395-0>
- Fontana, E. (2018). *Corporate Social Responsibility Sensemaking: The change agency of executives in Bangladesh and CSR workers in Japan*. Dissertation. Stockholm School of Economics.
- Fontana, E., Atif, M., & Gull, A. A. (2021). Corporate social responsibility decisions in apparel supply chains: The role of negative emotions in Bangladesh and Pakistan. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 28, 1700–1714. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2139>
- Fontana, E., & Egels-Zandén, N. (2019). Non Sibi, Sed Omnibus: Influence of supplier collective behaviour on corporate social responsibility in the Bangladeshi Apparel Supply Chain. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 159, 1047–1064. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3828-z>
- Fougère, M., & Solitander, N. (2020). Dissent in consensusland: An agonistic problematization of multi-stakeholder governance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 164, 683–699. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04398-z>
- Fransen, L., & Burgoon, B. (2017). Introduction to the special issue: Public and private labor standards policy in the global economy. *Global Policy*, 8, 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12406>
- Fransen, L., Kolk, A., & Rivera-Santos, M. (2019). The multiplicity of international corporate social responsibility standards. *Multinational Business Review*, 27, 397–426. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MBR-08-2019-0083>
- Gaskell, G. (2000). Individual and group interviewing. In M. Bauer & G. Gaskell (Eds.), *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound* (pp. 39–56). SAGE Publications.
- Gereffi, G., & Lee, J. (2016). Economic and social upgrading in global value chains and industrial clusters: Why governance matters. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 133, 25–38. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2373-7>
- Giuliani, E. (2016). Human rights and corporate social responsibility in developing countries' industrial clusters. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 133, 39–54. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2375-5>
- Grumiller, J., Raza, W. G., & Grohs, H. (2020). *Strategies for sustainable upgrading in global value chains: The Egyptian textile and apparel sector* (ÖFSE Policy Note 33/2020). Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/218826>
- Gutierrez-Huerter, O. G., Gold, S., & Trautrim, A. (2021). Change in rhetoric but not in action? Framing of the ethical issue of modern slavery in a UK sector at high risk of labor exploitation. *Journal of Business Ethics*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-05013-w>
- Hahn, T., Preuss, L., Pinkse, J., & Figge, F. (2014). Cognitive frames in Corporate Sustainability: Managerial sensemaking with paradoxical and business case frames. *Academy of Management Review*, 39(4), 463–487.
- Hendrickx, F., Marx, A., Rayp, G., & Wouters, J. (2016). The architecture of global labour governance. *International Labour Review*, 155, 339–355. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1564-913X.2015.00039.x>
- Holzberg, B. (2019). Crossvergence of socially (ir)responsible employment practices in supplier firms. *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 16, 305–324. <https://doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-11-2017-0076>
- Holzberg, B. (2022). Vertical and horizontal diffusion of labour standards in global supply chains: Working hours practices of tier-1 and tier-2 textiles and garment suppliers. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2022.2150980>
- Holzberg, B. (2023). Promoting decent work in global production—lessons learnt from the Jordanian garment industry. In I. G. Arraiano, B. Díaz, M. Del Baldo, R. Schmidpeter, & S. O. Idowu (Eds.), *Corporate social responsibility in a dynamic global environment: Sustainable management in challenging times* (CSR, Sustainability, Ethics & Governance). Springer.
- Hoogesteger, J., & Massink, G. (2021). Corporate labour standards and work quality: Insights from the agro-export sector of Guanajuato, Central Mexico. *Third World Quarterly*, 42, 1196–1212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2021.1874334>
- Hunt, S. D., & Vitell, S. J. (2006). The general theory of marketing ethics: A revision and three questions. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 26, 143–153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0276146706290923>
- Huq, F. A., Stevenson, M., & Zorzini, M. (2014). Social sustainability in developing country suppliers: An exploratory study in the ready made garments industry of Bangladesh. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 34, 610–638. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOPM-10-2012-0467>



- International Labour Organization (ILO). (1999). *Report of the director-general: decent work* (International Labour Conference 87th Session). Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/rep-i.htm>
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2013). *Decent work indicators: Guidelines for producers and users of statistical and legal framework indicators: ILO Manual, 2nd Version*. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---integration/documents/publication/wcms\\_229374.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---integration/documents/publication/wcms_229374.pdf)
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2019). *Rules of the game: A brief introduction to International Labour Standards*. ILO.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2023). Decent work. International Labour Organization (ILO). Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>
- International Trade Center (ITC). (2021). ITC Standards Map. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://standardsmap.org/en/identify>
- IOE-KAS. (2021). *Key developments in mandatory human rights due diligence and supply chain law: Considerations for employers*. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://www.ioe-emp.org/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=156042&token=ee1bad43bfa8dbf9756245780a572ff4877a86d5>
- Jamali, D., Lund-Thomsen, P., & Khara, N. (2017). CSR institutionalized myths in developing countries. *Business & Society*, 56, 454–486. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650315584303>
- Jamali, D., & Sidani, Y. (2012). Introduction: CSR in the Middle East: fresh perspectives. *CSR in the Middle East: Fresh perspectives* (pp. 1–10). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kabasakal, H., Dastmalchian, A., Karacay, G., & Bayraktar, S. (2012). Leadership and culture in the MENA region: An analysis of the GLOBE project. *Journal of World Business*, 47, 519–529. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2012.01.005>
- Khan, F. R., & Lund-Thomsen, P. (2011). CSR as imperialism: Towards a phenomenological approach to CSR in the developing world. *Journal of Change Management*, 11, 73–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2011.548943>
- Khan, K., Abbas, M., Gul, A., & Raja, U. (2015). Organizational justice and job outcomes: Moderating role of Islamic work ethic. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 126, 235–246. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1937-2>
- Khan, S. I., Bartram, T., Cavanagh, J., Hossain, M. S., & Akter, S. (2019). "Decent work" in the ready-made garment sector in Bangladesh. *Personnel Review*, 48, 40–55. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-01-2018-0001>
- Knudsen, J. (2013). The growth of private regulation of labor standards in global supply chains: Mission impossible for western small- and medium-sized firms? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 117, 387–398. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1527-8>
- Koburtay, T., Abuhusseini, T., & Sidani, Y. M. (2023). Women leadership, culture, and Islam: Female voices from Jordan. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 183, 347–363. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05041-0>
- Kuruvilla, S., Liu, M., Li, C., & Chen, W. (2020). Field opacity and practice-outcome decoupling: Private regulation of labor standards in global supply chains. *ILR Review*, 73, 841–872. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019793920903278>
- Lebaron, G. (2021). Wages: An overlooked dimension of business and human rights in global supply chains. *Business and Human Rights Journal*, 6, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1017/bhj.2020.32>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Lund-Thomsen, P., Lindgreen, A., & Vanhamme, J. (2016). Industrial clusters and corporate social responsibility in developing countries: What we know, what we do not know, and what we need to know. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 133, 9–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2372-8>
- Maitlis, S., & Christianson, M. (2014). Sensemaking in organizations: Taking stock and moving forward. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 8, 57–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19416520.2014.873177>
- Mantouvalou, V. (2012). Are labour rights human rights? *European Labour Law Journal*, 3, 151–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/201395251200300204>
- Mayer, F., & Gereffi, G. (2010). Regulation and economic globalization: Prospects and limits of private governance. *Business and Politics*, 12, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1469-3569.1325>
- Meardi, G., & Marginson, P. (2014). Global labour governance: Potential and limits of an emerging perspective. *Work, Employment and Society*, 28, 651–662. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017014534007>
- Mellahi, K., & Budhwar, P. (2010). Introduction: Islam and human resource management. *Personnel Review*, 39, 685–691. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00483481011075558>
- Mena, S., de Leede, M., Baumann, D., Black, N., Lindeman, S., & McShane, L. (2010). Advancing the business and human rights agenda: Dialogue, empowerment, and constructive engagement. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 93, 161–188. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-009-0188-8>
- Metwally, E., & Punnett, B. J. (2017). Leadership in Egypt. In T. R. Lituchy, B. L. Galperin, & B. J. Punnett (Eds.), *LEAD: Leadership effectiveness in Africa and the African Diaspora* (pp. 53–70). Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Mückenberger, U. (2022). A quest for equity: labour standards on the transnational move. In F. Nullmeier, D. de Reufels González, & H. Obinger (Eds.), *International impacts on social policy. Global dynamics of social policy* (pp. 463–476). Springer.
- Murmura, F., Bravi, L., & Palazzi, F. (2017). Evaluating companies' commitment to corporate social responsibility: Perceptions of the SA 8000 standard. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 164, 1406–1418. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.07.073>
- Nadvi, K., & Raj-Reichert, G. (2015). Governing health and safety at lower tiers of the computer industry global value chain. *Regulation & Governance*, 9, 243–258. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rego.12079>
- National Labor Committee (NLC). (2006). *U.S.-Jordan free trade agreement: Descents into human trafficking and involuntary servitude*. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://issuu.com/iglhr/docs/0605-iglhr-usjordanfreetradeagreeme>
- Nolan, J. (2017). Business and human rights: The challenge of putting principles into practice and regulating global supply chains. *Alternative Law Journal*, 42(1), 42–46.
- OECD. (2011). *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, 2011 Edition*. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://www.oecd.org/corporate/mne/48004323.pdf>
- Patel, T., Salih, A., & Hamlin, R. G. (2019). Perceived managerial and leadership effectiveness in UAE and Egypt: A comparison through the combined lenses of Islamic work ethics and Islamic leadership. *European Management Review*, 16, 647–666. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12184>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Perry, P., Wood, S., & Fernie, J. (2015). Corporate social responsibility in garment sourcing networks: Factory management perspectives on ethical trade in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 130, 737–752. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2252-2>
- Porras-Gómez, A.-M. (2020). The "Arab Exceptionalism" re-examined from the legal perspective of human rights. *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 13, 121–137. <https://doi.org/10.1525/caa.2020.13.2.121>

- Possumah, B. T., Ismail, A. G., & Shahimi, S. (2013). Bringing work back in Islamic ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 112(2), 257–270.
- Preuss, L., & Fearn, A. (2021). Cognitive frames held by supply chain managers: Implications for the management of sustainability in supply chains. *Supply Chain Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SCM-08-2020-0364>
- Qasim, M., Rizvi, T. H., & Irshad, M. (2020). Impact of ethical leadership on task performance and organizational citizenship behavior: Moderating role of Islamic work ethics. *Journal of Management and Research*, 7, 166–193. <https://doi.org/10.29145/jmr/72/070206>
- Ramasastri, A. (2015). Corporate social responsibility versus business and human rights: Bridging the gap between responsibility and accountability. *Journal of Human Rights*, 14(2), 237–259.
- Reinecke, J., & Ansari, S. (2015). What is a “Fair” price? Ethics as sensemaking. *Organization Science*, 26, 867–888. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2015.0968>
- Reinecke, J., Arnold, D. G., & Palazzo, G. (2016). Qualitative methods in business ethics, corporate responsibility, and sustainability research. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 26, 13–22. <https://doi.org/10.1017/beq.2016.67>
- Reinecke, J., Donaghey, J., Bocken, N., & Lauriano, L. (2019). *Business models and labour standards: Making the connection*. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://www.ethicaltrade.org/resources/business-models-labour-standards-making-connection>
- Rishmawi, M. (2005). The revised Arab charter on human rights: A step forward? *Human Rights Law Review*, 5, 361–376. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngi021>
- Rishmawi, M. (2020). Universality of human rights in the human rights system of the League of Arab States. *Die Friedens-Warte*, 93, 33. <https://doi.org/10.35998/fw-2020-0002>
- Robertson, R. (2019). *Working conditions, transparency, and compliance in global value chains: Evidence from better work Jordan* (The Better Work Discussion Paper Series 32). Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://betterwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/DP32.pdf>
- Rodriguez-Gomez, S., Arco-Castro, M. L., Lopez-Perez, M. V., & Rodriguez-Ariza, L. (2020). Where does CSR come from and where does it go? A review of the state of the art. *Administrative Sciences*, 10, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci10030060>
- Sadri, A. (2019). The Arab human rights system: Achievements and challenges. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 23, 1166–1182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2019.1597713>
- Sidani, Y. M., & Thornberry, J. (2010). The current Arab work ethic: Antecedents, implications, and potential remedies. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 91, 35–49. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-009-0066-4>
- Simpson, D., Power, D., & Klassen, R. (2012). When one size does not fit all: A problem of fit rather than failure for voluntary management standards. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 110, 85–95. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-1149-6>
- Soundararajan, V. (2014). *Understanding the construction of working conditions in small and medium sized enterprises in developing countries: The case of Indian Garment Exporting Firms*. Dissertation. Royal Holloway, University of London (GB). Retrieved March 18, 2023, from [https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/portal/files/19905636/Thesis\\_full\\_revised.pdf](https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/portal/files/19905636/Thesis_full_revised.pdf)
- Soundararajan, V., & Brammer, S. (2018). Developing country sub-supplier responses to social sustainability requirements of intermediaries: Exploring the influence of framing on fairness perceptions and reciprocity. *Journal of Operations Management*, 58–59, 42–58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jom.2018.04.001>
- Soundararajan, V., & Brown, J. A. (2016). Voluntary governance mechanisms in global supply chains: Beyond CSR to a stakeholder utility perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 134, 83–102. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2418-y>
- Soundararajan, V., Spence, L. J., & Rees, C. (2018). Small business and social irresponsibility in developing countries: Working conditions and “evasion” institutional work. *Business & Society*, 57, 1301–1336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650316644261>
- Soundararajan, V., Wilhelm, M., & Crane, A. (2021). Humanizing research on working conditions in supply chains: Building a path to decent work. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, 57, 3–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jscm.12260>
- Tenbrunsel, A. E., & Smith-Crowe, K. (2008). 13 Ethical decision making: Where we’ve been and where we’re going. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 2, 545–607. <https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520802211677>
- Tran, A. N., & Jeppesen, S. (2016). SMEs in their own right: The views of managers and workers in vietnamese textiles, garment, and footwear companies. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 137, 589–608. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2572-x>
- United Nations (UN). (2011). *Guiding principles on business and human rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” framework*. Retrieved March 18, 2023, from [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf)
- United Nations (UN). (2015). *Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all*. United Nations (UN). Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/>
- van Marrewijk, M. (2003). Concepts and definitions of CSR and corporate sustainability: Between agency and communion. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 44, 95–105. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1023331212247>
- Vitkauskaitė-Meurić, D. (2010). The Arab charter on human rights: The Naissance of New Regional Human Rights system or a challenge to the Universality of Human Rights? *Jurisprudence*, 119(1), 165–180.
- Walsh, J. P. (1995). Managerial and organizational cognition: Notes from a trip down memory lane. *Organization Science*, 6(3), 280–321.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations (Foundations for organizational science)*. Sage Publ.
- Whittle, A., Vaara, E., & Maitlis, S. (2023). The role of language in organizational sensemaking: An integrative theoretical framework and an agenda for future research. *Journal of Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01492063221147295>
- Yawar, S. A., & Seuring, S. (2017). Management of social issues in supply chains: A literature review exploring social issues, actions and performance outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 141, 621–643. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2719-9>
- Zajak, S., Egels-Zandén, N., & Piper, N. (2017). Networks of labour activism: Collective action across Asia and beyond. An introduction to the debate. *Development & Change*, 48, 899–921. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12336>
- Zeni, T. A., Buckley, M. R., Mumford, M. D., & Griffith, J. A. (2016). Making “sense” of ethical decision making. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27, 838–855. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.09.002>
- Zimmermann, A., Albers, N., & Kenter, J. O. (2021). Deliberating our frames: How members of multi-stakeholder initiatives use shared frames to tackle within-frame conflicts over sustainability issues. *Journal of Business Ethics*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04789-1>

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.