



## THE ROLE OF THE ALL-INDONESIAN TRADE UNION (SPSI) IN REALIZED WORKERS' WELFARE IN PADANG HILIR DISTRICT, TEBING TINGGI CITY

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the role of the All-Indonesia Workers' Union (SPSI) in promoting workers' welfare in Padang Hilir District, Tebing Tinggi City. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research explores how SPSI provides legal protection, advocates workers' rights, and strengthens workers' bargaining power in negotiations with employers. Informants were selected through purposive sampling and included SPSI leaders, the Chairperson of the Plant-Level Union (PUK), and local workers. Data were collected through interviews, observation, documentation, and literature review. The findings indicate that SPSI Tebing Tinggi City has effectively fulfilled its role in protecting and defending workers' rights. The union guarantees freedom of association, safeguards workers' rights to fair wages, and encourages the creation of healthy and safe working environments. SPSI also actively negotiates with companies to improve wages, workers' welfare, and employment agreements that prioritize workers' interests. Additionally, SPSI serves as a channel for workers' aspirations and complaints. However, the study finds that SPSI has not yet been able to provide systematic training or skills development programs for its members.*

**Keywords:** Public Sector Organization, Role All-Indonesia Workers Union, Welfare, Workers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The workforce, or laborers, plays a vital role in national development. The state needs to ensure a fair and supportive work environment so they can optimally contribute to the economy while achieving sustainable prosperity (Hariram et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024). Labor is a crucial component in achieving development goals.

Appelbaum (2023) explains that labor is considered every individual who has the ability to perform work to produce goods or services, Cropanzano et al (2023), defines laborers as people who work for compensation or wages in other forms. Previtali et al (2022), describes two categories of laborers: professional or "white-collar" workers, who use brainpower and analytical skills in their work, and "blue-collar" workers, who use more muscle power in intensive manual work, such as construction and factory work. This distinction not only reflects variations in roles and skills but also generates social stratification in industrial societies, where social class is a key distinguishing factor between the two groups of workers (Dalimunthe et al., 2025; Kish-Gephart et al., 2023).

One organization founded by laborers to fight for their rights is the All-Indonesia Workers Union (SPSI). The Indonesian Workers Union (SPSI) was established based on legal provisions stipulated in Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, specifically Article 1 Paragraph (17). The presence of SPSI provides a strong legal basis for workers to unionize and collectively voice their interests. As a labor organization, SPSI has an extensive network throughout Indonesia, enabling workers in various regions to fight for their rights more systematically and effectively.

The All-Indonesia Workers Union (SPSI) provides workers in factories with access to legal protection, rights advocacy, and an increased bargaining position in negotiations with employers. SPSI also aims to advocate for workers' rights (Azmy & Safriyantini, 2023; Caraway, 2023). Efforts to defend these rights are carried out by monitoring companies' fulfillment of workers' rights and minimizing violations of workers' rights, thus improving workers' welfare (Syed, 2023). Fulfilling the rights of workers in factories in accordance with government regulations, such as providing appropriate wages and overtime pay, is considered to improve the welfare of factory workers (Luong & Nguyen, 2024; Sharma, 2023). The role of the All-Indonesian Workers Union (SPSI) in overseeing the fulfillment of workers' rights is expected to minimize the potential for violations by companies, although in practice, companies are still found to violate factory workers' rights.

Research by Rakhimov (2024), using normative legal methods with a legislative and conceptual approach, reveals that labor unions play a crucial role as company

partners in representing workers and ensuring legal certainty in the transition from Company Regulations (PP) to Collective Labor Agreements (PKB). This process reflects workers' collective interests and encourages democratization in industrial relations through negotiation. Failure to convert PP to PKB can have legal consequences for all parties involved and hinder legal certainty in employment relations. Research by Palmer (2024), using quantitative methods with a sociological approach in Asahan Regency shows that SPSI plays a role in assisting workers in claiming their rights through collective labor agreements. Obstacles encountered include differing views, limited funding, and head office regulations. Efforts to resolve these challenges include adapting ideas, deliberation, coaching, and appropriate legal action (Nalbantoğlu & Bümen, 2024).

Edralin & Pastrana (2024), research, using qualitative methods, found a gap between the content of the Collective Labor Agreement (CLA) and the realization of workers' economic rights, such as overtime pay and welfare. The main obstacles included ineffective communication and differing understandings regarding the CLA (Lindsay & Spittle, 2024; Tajeddin & Mahdavi, 2025). To address these issues, the company and the union held a bipartite meeting to evaluate and improve the CLA. These findings contribute to the development of labor law and help companies and workers understand and implement the CLA more effectively.

Research by Palmer (2024), shows that the Apacinti Workers Union (SPA) at PT. Apac Inti Corpora plays a significant role in improving worker welfare through the drafting of a collective labor agreement (PKB). While unions generally face obstacles in implementing agreements, the SPA faced no obstacles until the policy of laying off employees failed to reach an agreement through mediation. The dispute was resolved through a tripartite meeting with the Semarang Regency Social, Manpower, and Transmigration Office, resulting in an agreement to provide 70% of wages and holiday allowances (THR). Research by Suhartoyo (2018) uses a legal research method with a statutory regulatory approach. The results indicate that strengthening labor or worker organizations can contribute both directly and indirectly to improving worker welfare. This welfare is achieved through efforts to protect basic labor rights, which are accommodated in collective labor agreements drafted between employers and labor organizations.

This research occupies a significant position among previous, locally specific studies on the role of the SPSI in realizing worker welfare at the local level. While similar to previous research that generally explores the role of labor unions in protecting workers' rights through advocacy, labor agreements, or broader policies, this study offers a regional perspective and unique challenges faced by SPSI in Padang Hilir District. The strength of this research lies in its local focus, which provides new insights for developing appropriate labor welfare policies at the regional level (Corradini et al., 2023; Wani et al., 2024).

The issue of labor welfare, especially those working in factories, is an ongoing issue, and it is the government's responsibility to create a business environment that supports the welfare of workers. According to Kompas Research and Development, data shows a decline in the minimum wage increase due to the constantly changing wage formula (Buana & Budiman, 2022; Harati, 2023). The increase in the minimum wage is considered disproportionate to the rising cost of living. Data from Kompas Research and Development (Litbang Kompas) shows that from 2015 to 2024, the average increase in the provincial minimum wage (UMP) was only around 13.1-0.6 percent, or an average of 6.6 percent per year. This has then declined since the government issued Government Regulation (PP) Number 78 of 2015 and PP Number 51/2023 concerning amendments to PP Number 36/2021 concerning Wages. This has resulted in an average increase in the UMP in 2024 of only 2.4 percent.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODE**

The primary objective of research is to broaden understanding of the topic or problem being studied, either by updating generally accepted conclusions or by changing perspectives through new applications of existing understanding. Researchers who employ a qualitative approach tend to emphasize in-depth descriptive analysis of thought processes to understand the dynamics of the relationships between observed events. This approach relies on scientific logic to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being studied. Qualitative research emphasizes that reality consists of multiple dimensions that are interactive and involve the exchange of social experiences, with the primary goal of

understanding social phenomena from the perspective of participants (Creswell, 2021). This research process includes techniques such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, and data collection from individuals. This research was conducted in Padang Hilir District, Tebing Tinggi City. The researchers chose this location because, according to 2023 data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), approximately 53% of Tebing Tinggi City's population works as laborers, employees, or civil servants. Tebing Tinggi City consists of five sub-districts, with Padang Hilir District as the largest, covering an area of 11.44 km<sup>2</sup> and with the largest population, namely 40,692 people. This condition makes Padang Hilir District a major industrial center in Tebing Tinggi City. As one of the industrial centers in Tebing Tinggi City with the majority of the workforce as workers/laborers, it is necessary to conduct research on the welfare of workers in Padang Hilir District, Tebing Tinggi City. In this study, the researcher used a purposive sampling technique.

This research informant consists of three types:

- 1) Key informants are those who know and possess the various primary information needed in the research.
- 2) Main informants are those directly involved in the social interactions being studied.
- 3) Supporting informants provide additional information to strengthen or complement the primary data in the research.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Labor is a vital resource for the sustainability of a company. In the relationship between employers and workers, workers are entitled to wages and compensation for their work, and companies are obligated to fulfill the rights of their employees (Duska, 2022). As partners in running a company, employers must view workers as a vital factor whose welfare and well-being must be considered. However, in reality, companies often neglect their welfare by violating their rights. Individual workers are often in a weak position when it comes to fighting for their rights before companies, leading to frequent violations of these rights (Hoel, 2022).

Workers need mutual understanding to work together to fight for their welfare through the fulfillment of their rights. As a manifestation of freedom of expression and

a desire to fight for this welfare, workers need to come together to form a common platform to fight for their welfare. Trade unions, as organizations, play a role in accommodating and channeling workers' aspirations in industrial relations with companies. Freedom of association for workers is one manifestation of their struggle to obtain the rights they deserve. Law Number 21 of 2000 concerning Workers' Unions or Labor Unions explains that workers or laborers have the freedom to form or establish a labor union or labor union. A labor union is a collective organization formed and managed by workers with the primary objective of advocating, protecting, and improving the social, economic, and political welfare of its members through collective action (Muller & Raphael, 2023). One organization established by workers to fight for their welfare and the fulfillment of their rights is the All-Indonesia Workers' Union (SPSI). SPSI was established based on legal regulations stipulated in Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, specifically Article 1 Paragraph (17). The All-Indonesia Workers' Union (SPSI) serves as an important forum for workers' efforts to collectively fight for their welfare and interests.

The All-Indonesia Workers' Union (SPSI) has representatives throughout Indonesia, one of which is in Tebing Tinggi City. It facilitates workers in the Tebing Tinggi City area to obtain protection in fulfilling their rights, advocates for workers, and represents workers in negotiations regarding rights that must be fulfilled by companies. Workers have the power to address issues such as low wages, workplace safety, leave, overtime pay, and so on. However, individually, they tend to lack the courage to fight for their rights and challenge unfair employer practices. Workers believe that using labor unions to promote their welfare would be more effective. Therefore, what is needed is for workers to form workers' organizations. The existence of labor organizations is intended to advocate for workers' rights and interests, preventing them from being treated arbitrarily by employers (Dawkins, 2024; Racabi, 2022).

The All-Indonesian Workers Union (SPSI) plays a role and function in ensuring the protection of workers' rights and improving workers' welfare. The All-Indonesian Workers Union (SPSI) of Tebing Tinggi City has several Work Unit Leaders across the city's five sub-districts, one of which is the Padang Hilir Sub-district Work Unit Leader.

As a municipality in North Sumatra Province, the industrial and plantation sectors dominate economic activity in Tebing Tinggi City. According to data from the Tebing Tinggi City Central Statistics Bureau, these two sectors require a significant labor force, resulting in a relatively high labor force population, with approximately 53% working as laborers, employees, and civil servants.

This large number of laborers necessitates a collective platform for workers to advocate for their rights and welfare. According to documentation from the Tebing Tinggi City SPSI PC, Padang Hilir District has the largest number of SPSI members. Workers should be mindful of their membership in the organization so that they can receive protection from the organization when they encounter problems or violations committed by their companies.

The All-Indonesian Workers Union (SPSI) of Tebing Tinggi City, as an organization representing workers, particularly in Padang Hilir District, plays a vital role in promoting worker welfare. Research indicates that the All-Indonesian Workers Union (SPSI), specifically the Padang Hilir District PUK, plays a key role in protecting and promoting workers' rights, including decent wages, social security, leave entitlements, collective bargaining agreements that prioritize workers' interests, overtime pay, and other rights. These roles and functions align with Law Number 21 of 2000 concerning Workers' Unions. Furthermore, SPSI, through the Padang Hilir District PUK, plays a key role in fostering harmonious, dynamic, and fair industrial relations between companies and workers in the region.

Protection of labor rights in Indonesia is regulated by Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, which guarantees basic workers' rights, including occupational safety and health, morals, and also regulates minimum wages, working hours, leave, and other working conditions. The role and function carried out by SPSI through the Padang Hilir District Work Unit Leadership regarding the protection and defense of workers' rights have been carried out optimally and quite effectively, providing benefits to workers. Based on the results of the study, information was obtained that the role and efforts made by SPSI Tebing Tinggi City in providing protection and defense of workers' rights include protecting workers' freedom to associate and organize, protecting workers' rights to receive decent wages, educating workers and encouraging companies to create healthy and

safe working conditions for workers. The role and efforts made to protect and defend workers' rights have been carried out well by SPSI, such as guaranteeing freedom of organization for workers and protecting workers from pressures that may be experienced by workers, negotiating with companies to provide decent wages and ensuring that wages comply with applicable regulations. Companies are required to provide wages in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, as explained in Article 81 Paragraph (24) of the Job Creation Law, which states that every worker/laborer has the right to a decent living for humanity. This decent living includes a minimum wage, overtime pay, leave, social security for workers, and other rights. Workers' wages must not be lower than those stipulated in applicable regulations.

Furthermore, in an effort to create safe and healthy working conditions for workers, the SPSI encourages companies to register their workers for social security so that in the event of an untoward incident, workers receive compensation and protection. The SPSI in Tebing Tinggi City is considered capable of fulfilling its role in protecting and defending workers' rights. Based on the results of the research, it was found that the SPSI in Tebing Tinggi City and the PUK in Padang Hilir District continue to strive for workers' welfare. Increasing workers' wages is a key focus in fighting for workers' welfare. SPSI also participates in negotiations with companies to ensure that workers' interests and aspirations are met. Furthermore, SPSI is also involved in negotiations regarding the fulfillment of workers' rights. The welfare of workers is a primary focus that must be fought for collectively by workers, unions, and the government. The All-Indonesian Workers Union (SPSI) of Tebing Tinggi City has assigned each federation and Work Unit Leader (PUK) in Padang Hilir District to assist in implementing efforts to promote worker welfare by increasing wages. Increased wages are believed to enable workers to meet their basic needs.

The All-Indonesian Workers Union (SPSI) of Tebing Tinggi City is also involved in negotiations, demonstrating its role as a representative of workers. In these negotiations, SPSI Tebing Tinggi City continuously strives to advocate for workers' interests, ensuring that the company accommodates them and seeks mutual understanding to the benefit of both parties. Furthermore, SPSI Tebing Tinggi

City also conducts negotiations with the company, particularly to ensure that workers' aspirations and desires are met. These negotiations are a peaceful effort to promote workers' welfare.

SPSI Tebing Tinggi City effectively represents workers, including in determining the collective labor agreement agreed upon by labor representatives and the company. The All-Indonesian Workers Union plays a crucial role in drafting the Collective Labor Agreement (Hamid et al., 2022). The labor union represents workers, voicing their interests in negotiations with the employer. Drafting a Collective Labor Agreement (CLA) involves several crucial stages, including preparation, negotiation, drafting, signing, registration, implementation, and evaluation of the agreement's implementation (Kwarteng et al., 2024). The All-Indonesia Workers Union (SPSI) is actively involved in the negotiation process, discussing and formulating clauses relating to workers' rights and obligations. Through the work agreement, the union must ensure that workers' rights and obligations are clearly stated in the collective labor agreement (PKB). The All-Indonesia Workers Union (SPSI) must also ensure that the agreement's implementation is monitored and that all clauses are complied with by both parties (Fibiger, 2023).

This collective labor agreement regulates in writing various important aspects of employment, such as working conditions, working hours, leave, holidays, and wages, as well as the rights and obligations of both parties. The SPSI Tebing Tinggi City strives to ensure that the agreement is implemented fairly, prioritizing workers' interests and becomes a binding regulation to prevent violations by either party. The collective labor agreement plays a crucial role in maintaining healthy and harmonious industrial relations, and it can serve as a guideline for resolving potential future disputes between workers and employers (Velanganni, 2024).

In their efforts to promote the welfare of workers in Padang Hilir District, particularly in negotiations, the All-Indonesian Workers Union (SPSI) of Tebing Tinggi City and its Work Unit Leaders (PUK) in Padang Hilir District face challenges such as pressure from those who oppose the fulfillment of workers' rights, a lack of courage among workers to report rights violations, and the limited capacity of their members to advocate and resolve workers' problems. According to reports received by the SPSI Tebing Tinggi City Branch, of the 97 reports of violations received, only approximately

51 cases were successfully resolved. This indicates that the limited capacity of members is a factor influencing the resolution of these violations. Efforts to protect and improve workers' welfare not only benefit workers but can also stimulate economic growth. Worker welfare is one indicator in assessing the government's success in achieving general welfare and social justice (Suleiman, 2025).

The All-Indonesian Workers Union of Tebing Tinggi City represents workers as the authorized representative in conveying their aspirations, addressing complaints, and resolving disputes with companies. Based on the results of the research conducted, information was obtained that the role of SPSI Tebing Tinggi City as a representative of workers in conveying workers' aspirations to the company and receiving complaints that arise from workers and resolving problems with the company was carried out well. SPSI Tebing City received the aspirations and desires of workers to then be conveyed and negotiated with the company so that the aspirations and desires of workers can be considered and fulfilled by the company. Workers need representatives in conveying aspirations collectively because it is difficult for workers individually to convey their aspirations directly to the company.

Another role played by the Tebing Tinggi City SPSI is as the party that receives complaints from workers, both regarding the organization and the company. Complaints, whether internal or company-related, must be responded to appropriately by the SPSI so that they can be promptly followed up and resolved. Furthermore, in resolving disputes between workers and the company, the Tebing Tinggi City SPSI mediates when disputes arise between workers and the company and acts as a bridge for the interests of both parties. These efforts to resolve these disputes demonstrate SPSI's role as a representative of workers before the company.

The Tebing Tinggi City All-Indonesia Workers Union (Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia) is considered to be capable of implementing skills development for its workers and must also encourage the involvement of relevant agencies in improving the skills of workers in Padang Hilir District. Research findings indicate that the Tebing Tinggi City SPSI and the Padang Hilir District PUK have not been able to provide training to their workers, making it difficult for workers to improve their skills and their opportunities for better employment. Improving

workers' skills and abilities is an added value that can open up opportunities for them to improve their quality of life and enhance their well-being.

The Tebing Tinggi City SPSI needs to encourage the involvement of relevant agencies, both government agencies and companies, to provide training to workers in the Padang Hilir District. Provisions regarding rights and obligations are stipulated in Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower, which was later amended by Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation. This law clarifies the rights and obligations of companies to workers. Companies are mandated to provide training to workers employed by the company, as stipulated in Article 81 of the Job Creation Law, which stipulates that job training is provided by job training institutions managed by the government, the private sector, or companies.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The Indonesian Workers' Union (SPSI) of Tebing Tinggi City carries out its role in providing protection and defending workers' rights, including ensuring workers' freedom to organize, protecting their right to receive fair wages, and promoting healthy and safe working conditions. SPSI Tebing Tinggi City has also undertaken efforts aimed at improving workers' welfare and ensuring that companies fulfill workers' rights. The union encourages companies to increase workers' wages and engages in negotiations with employers to promote improved welfare and the formulation of employment agreements that prioritize workers' interests.

As a workers' representative, SPSI Tebing Tinggi City has been able to perform its roles and functions effectively in advocating for workers' rights. It serves as a channel for conveying workers' aspirations to companies, receives complaints from workers, and resolves disputes through mediation by acting as an intermediary. However, in its role of developing workers' skills, SPSI Tebing Tinggi City has not yet been able to provide training or actively promote skills development for its members. The Indonesian Workers' Union of Tebing Tinggi City and the Plant-Level Union (PUK) of Padang Hilir District are expected to maintain their performance in monitoring the fulfillment of workers' rights and to be more proactive in seeking information regarding labor rights violations experienced by workers in their respective areas.

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