

7 Fast food, fair pay, and fairy tales: Young women and wage disparities in fast food employment

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Abstract

Fairwork Principle 1 asserts that all workers, regardless of their employment classification, should earn a decent income in their home jurisdiction, factoring in work-related costs and active hours worked. This chapter examines how well New Zealand's fast-food and takeaway (FFTA) sector aligns with this principle, using data on wages and worker experiences. The analysis focuses on the perspectives of FFTA employees, who are predominantly young, female, and part-time workers. Findings raise significant concerns about the implementation of Fairwork Principle 1, particularly regarding the payment of a Living Wage. The research also highlights issues of fairness and accuracy in wages, which may limit the sector's ability to provide sustainable employment opportunities. Turnover intentions among young workers suggest that the sector struggles to offer long-term career prospects. Unless wage-related concerns are addressed, FFTA jobs are unlikely to evolve into sustainable careers rather than short-term employment. While social aspects, such as enjoying time with coworkers, may provide some short-term job satisfaction, they are unlikely to offset the financial challenges of low wages as workers age and seek greater financial independence.

Introduction

This chapter examines Fairwork Principle 1: Fair Pay, which asserts that all workers, regardless of their employment classification, should earn a decent income in their home jurisdiction, accounting for work-related costs and active hours worked. Additionally, they should be paid on time and for all completed work (Fredman *et al.*, 2020). Focusing on New Zealand's fast-food and takeaway (FFTA) sector, this chapter draws on the most extensive hospitality employee survey ever conducted in the country. It presents recent data on FFTA workers' wages and experiences, assessing how effectively the sub-sector meets the challenge of providing a 'fair' wage. The analysis highlights the perspectives of