The quality of employment in MENA countries : The place and dynamics of the middle class

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Abstract: In developing countries, decent jobs are crucial for sustainable growth and poverty reduction. However, the majority of poor workers in these countries lack access to jobs that provide them with sufficient income, benefits, and working conditions to improve their well-being. While global studies measuring the quality of employment have been conducted, they have typically relied on a single indicator. To address this knowledge gap and contribute to efforts aimed at measuring and monitoring employment quality trends in developing countries, this article proposes a multidimensional measure of employment quality in the MENA region (Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia). This measure comprises three dimensions of employment quality: access to job benefits, job stability, and working conditions. The proposed approach takes into account the availability and comparability across MENA countries by leveraging the harmonized "Integrated Labor Market Panel Surveys" and employing the Alkire-Foster method. The main findings of this article demonstrate that the quality of wage employment varies significantly across economic sectors, education levels, gender, age, and location.

Keywords : Alkire/Foster method – Labour markets – MENA – Middle-class – Multi-dimensional index – Quality of employment

***Classification JEL* :** E26 – Informal Economy; J21 – Labor Force and Employment, Size and Structure; J81 – Working Conditions

Abstract in French: Dans les pays en développement, les bons emplois sont essentiels à la croissance durable et à la réduction de la pauvreté. Cependant, la majorité des travailleurs pauvres dans ces pays n'ont pas accès à des emplois qui leur offrent des revenus, des avantages et des conditions de travail suffisants pour améliorer leur bien-être. Bien que des études mondiales mesurant la qualité de l'emploi aient été menées, elles se sont généralement appuyées sur un seul indicateur. Pour combler ce déficit de connaissances et contribuer aux efforts visant à mesurer et à surveiller les tendances de la qualité de l'emploi dans les pays en développement, cet article propose une mesure multidimensionnelle de la qualité de l'emploi dans les pays de la région MENA (Égypte, Jordanie et Tunisie). Cette mesure comprend trois dimensions de la qualité de l'emploi: l'accès aux avantages de l'emploi, la stabilité de l'emploi et les conditions de travail. L'approche proposée tient compte de la disponibilité et de la comparabilité entre les pays du MENA en s'appuyant sur la base harmonisée « Integrated Labor Market Panel

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Surveys » et en utilisant la méthode Alkire-Foster. Les principaux résultats de cet article montrent que la qualité de l'emploi salarié varie considérablement selon les secteurs économiques, l'éducation, le sexe, l'âge et la localisation.

Mots-clés : Classe moyenne – Indicateurs multidimensionnels – Marchés du travail – Méthode Alkire/Foster – MENA – Qualité de l’emploi

Introduction

A decade after the Arab Spring protests, the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region may face worsening social cohesion issues due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent economic crisis. These crises could limit employment opportunities, exacerbating the situation. However, the quality of available jobs is just as crucial as the quantity for economic sustainability and wellbeing. As the MENA region has countries with different development levels, policies need to be tailored accordingly.

The concept of quality of employment (or job quality) has gained international prominence, both for the scientific community and for public authorities, in a global context of interlinked crises with the introduction of new forms of non-standard employment (Benach et al., 2014).

In countries where the informal economy is widespread, such as MENA countries, traditional indicators such as the unemployment rate, participation rate, and wages are not necessarily the most representative of the dynamics taking place in the labor market (Deguilhem and Frontenaud, 2016).

Unfortunately, a common problem is the lack of adequate data and indicators to achieve “full employment with decent jobs”, as stated by Sehnbruch (2022). To address this, a new project called “Researching the Quality of Employment in the Middle East” lead by Sehnbruch (2022) will use comparable labour market surveys from Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan to develop a multidimensional quality of employment index. The study will highlight how policymakers can allocate resources and policies to vulnerable workers.

In line with this research perspective, this paper wishes to analyse in particular the ongoing labour market dynamics for middle-class workers,

For instance, Egypt's initial research showed that despite high economic growth, the proportion of workers experiencing multiple deprivations in the labour market increased dramatically after 2006 (Assaad et al., 2020), partly due to labour reform that liberalised contractual relationships and retrenchment of the public sector with less secure employment conditions but we don't have the isolated effect on the middle class.

For this reason, we analyze socioeconomic conditions through the multidimensional employment quality index proposed by Huneeus et al. (2015) for Brazil in the period 2002-

2011. To analyze the evolution of employment quality in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, we create a multidimensional index that measures the (low) quality of employment. This index is developed based on the methodology used in multidimensional poverty measures by Alkire and Foster (2009; 2011), which itself derives from the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT, 1984; 2010) method. We adopt this methodology because there is a lack of subjective data on working conditions, and our multidimensional employment quality index excels in its ability to break down the available data according to various work-related characteristics and utilize them to the fullest extent possible (Hovhannisyan et al., 2022). The main findings of this article reveal substantial variations in the quality of wage employment across different economic sectors, education levels, gender, age, and geographical locations.

1. Literature review

It was in the late 1960s and 1970s that the concept and measurement of "quality of work life" emerged (Burchell et al., 2014; Kalleberg et al., 2000). The approach to quality of work life questions attempts to quantify living conditions solely based on major economic aggregates such as gross domestic product or unemployment.

During this period, institutional economists drew attention to differences in job quality by asserting that the labor market was divided into a primary segment comprising "good" jobs and a secondary segment comprising "bad" jobs (Kalleberg et al., 2000). One of the main concerns was that the latter group of jobs was growing at a faster rate, thus reducing the well-being of the average worker. However, publications on the measurement of quality of work life demonstrated limitations due to a lack of data and appropriate measurement methodologies.

In the 1980s, the dimension related to occupational health gained prominence in explaining job quality. The balance between work and personal life became more prominent in the 1990s and became a focal point of international debate on the subject.

Measuring job quality and defining what constitutes a good job is far from a consensus, particularly in a context of globalization that, coupled with labor market flexibilization, has brought significant changes to wage levels, employment stability, and career prospects.

A good job is associated with higher productivity and a better standard of living. It is a crucial means to achieve sustainable growth and reduce poverty. The issue faced by the majority of poor individuals in emerging and developing countries is not primarily the lack of employment but rather the fact that their jobs do not provide them with a regular wage and sufficient benefits. These jobs do not enable them to secure a better future for themselves and their families, which can negatively impact their well-being by pushing them to work longer hours (World Bank, 2012).

Existing literature on the measurement of job quality can be divided into two groups: 1. studies that aggregate indicators at the macroeconomic level, and 2. approaches exclusively based on microdata. The next section will focus on measures of job quality at the macroeconomic scale. While international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and various governments have traditionally been more concerned with the quantity of jobs created, measured by the unemployment rate or labor market participation rate, rather than the quality of jobs created, a genuine international reflection on job quality emerged in the late 1990s. At that time, there was a growing recognition of the need to reconcile both the "quantity" and "quality" of employment in the context of global economic growth and market liberalization driven by globalization.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) (Special Issue of the International Labour Review, 2003), the Employment Committee (EMCO) of the European Commission, the European Trade Union Institute (Leschke and Watt, 2014), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) - the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the OECD (Cazes et al., 2016), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) are among the institutions that have developed indicators of job quality.

Previously, the focus was primarily on job quantity, but now there is a growing recognition of the importance of considering job quality as well. This shift reflects the need to address the multidimensional aspects of employment, including wages, working conditions, stability, social protection, and opportunities for development and advancement.

By developing indicators of job quality, these institutions aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the labor market and enable policymakers to design effective strategies to improve the quality of jobs and ensure decent work for all. The recognition of job quality as a crucial dimension of economic and social development has gained momentum, and international institutions are actively working towards measuring and promoting quality employment.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) introduced the concept of job quality through decent work as early as 1999. By incorporating this notion into its conventions, the ILO aims to enable every woman and man to have access to "decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and dignity" (ILO, 1999, p.3). The ILO's action on job quality revolves around four major pillars: (1) creating jobs, (2) ensuring workers' rights, (3) expanding social protection, and (4) strengthening social dialogue.

As a proactive force in both developed and emerging/developing countries, the goal of decent work is centered on creating employment opportunities for a larger number of people and implementing active public policies (Warhurst et al., 2022). The ILO asserts that "the economy must generate opportunities for investment, entrepreneurship, skill development, job creation, and sustainable livelihoods" to achieve full employment.

The second pillar aims to promote universal respect for fundamental principles and rights at work by strengthening social standards. This is a crucial aspect of the job quality strategy in emerging and developing countries, where the socio-economic conditions of workers are often precarious for the majority.

The third pillar seeks to improve the socio-economic security of all workers by ensuring an effective and inclusive social protection system. In this regard, the ILO aims to promote the integration of all individuals by guaranteeing safe working conditions in order to "promote social justice and the internationally recognized rights of the human person and workers." Social protection is particularly important in emerging countries to understand the complementarities between labor market flexibility resulting from atypical employment and employment and income security, as a high level of labor market flexibility generally leads to low security for workers. Better health and improved working conditions enhance productivity and address basic needs.

The fourth and final pillar asserts the right of all workers, especially the most vulnerable, to actively participate in the democratic life of their enterprise by contributing to its economic and social decision-making processes. While the right to join trade unions is guaranteed by law in developed countries, it is not systematically the case in emerging countries. However, it is a prerequisite for democracy and wage improvement.

The concept of decent work entails considering the interactions between the four aforementioned objectives (Bazillier, 2011). In this sense, it serves as a valuable instrument for public policies, particularly since its inclusion in the report of the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) held from October 2 to 11, 2013, where the term "job quality" appeared eight times and was incorporated into the resolution proposal at points 63 and 70. The 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), which took place from October 10 to 19, 2018, included recommendations on measuring job quality at points 38 and 39: "The ILO continues to collaborate on the initiative related to measuring job quality led by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to ensure its consistency with the framework for measuring decent work and its indicators. The objective of the job quality

measurement framework is to provide a structured and consistent system for measuring job quality".

The concept of job quality is gradually emerging as an analytical tool for public policies in emerging countries, particularly through the proliferation of theoretical and empirical studies published in special issues of the Industrial and Labour Relations Review and the International Labour Review (Guergoat-Larivière and Marchand, 2012; Floro and Messier, 2011; Osterman, 2013; Burchell et al., 2014; Ocampo and Sehnbruch, 2015).

Huneeus et al. (2015) developed an indicator of (low) job quality based on the multidimensional poverty measurement methodology of Alkire and Foster (2009 and 2011), which itself draws from the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) method (1984 and 2010).

Alkire (2011) acknowledges that Amartya Sen was the first to employ a multidimensional methodology for measuring poverty through the concept of capabilities. In his 1976 article, "Poverty: An Ordinal Approach to Measurement," Sen states that "in measuring poverty, two distinct problems must be solved: (1) how to identify the poor in the total population, and (2) how to construct a poverty index using the available information on the poor." Sen (1976) used an identification approach and an aggregation mechanism, which paved the way for subsequent studies. Examples include the works of Streeten (1981), Atkinson (2003), and Duclos and Araar (2006).

2. Job Quality Measure Methodology

2.1. Dimensions of job quality

Over the past decade, numerous frameworks for assessing job quality have been proposed by international expert panels, both at macro and micro levels. Notable efforts in this regard include the concept of decent work indicators by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013), the job quality index by Eurofound (2012), job quality indicators by the European Union Employment Committee, good jobs for development by the World Bank (2012), quality of employment by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE, 2015), and the OECD job quality framework (Cazes et al. 2016). These frameworks commonly focus on four key dimensions: (1) earnings, (2) benefits (social protection), (3) job security, and (4) working conditions (physical and mental well-being).

While converting labor income into a binary indicator oversimplifies the assessment of job quality, the Alkire-Foster aggregation method employed in the analysis offers several desirable properties for constructing an aggregate Job Quality Measure (JQM), albeit relying on binary indicators (Alkire and Foster, 2011). The practice of transforming labor incomes into binary indicators is widely used in the construction of JQMs (Brummund et al., 2018; González et al.,

2021; Sehnbruch et al., 2020). Alternatively, the literature includes composite indicators that utilize continuous variables, such as the Human Development Index constructed by the United Nations Development Programme, which calculates a geometric mean of three normalized continuous variables. Exploring the continuous nature of labor income could be a fruitful area for future research in developing a more comprehensive JQM.

In this article, we define the concept of middle-class by taking account the following definitions. The concept of the middle class lacks a universally agreed-upon definition (Clément et al, 2022) (refer to Bourdieu's habitus concept developed in 1972), but it encompasses individuals who share common social values. Various researchers propose using threshold criteria related to standard of living (well-being) or income. Occupational reference frameworks can also be employed. Additionally, the existence of a sense of belonging to the middle class, which represents a social status, can be assessed through surveys (WVS, 2017-2022).

Using a relative definition is relevant because individuals tend to evaluate their status not in absolute terms, but in comparison to those around them. One commonly used relative measure defines the middle class based on boundaries around median income (Birdsall et al, 2000).

Sociologists often view social class as determined by education or occupation. One advantage of the education criterion compared to income is that education tends to remain constant throughout life. It is easier to categorize educational credentials than to classify occupations across all sectors, as job losses make occupation a variable. However, the value of educational credentials can decline, and benchmark job titles may change over time.

The scarcity of survey data for analyzing long-term consumption patterns in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries has led to a reliance on definitions that emphasize political and professional affiliations as drivers of middle-class behavior, or the adoption of existing definitions of middle-class status from other regions. According to ESCWA (2014), using these definitions results in estimates of the MENA middle class that are either unrealistically small (less than 5% of the population) or unrealistically large (more than three-quarters of the population).

PEW (2015) divides the population in each country into five groups based on daily per capita consumption or income: (i) poor, (ii) low income, (iii) middle income, (iv) upper-middle income, and (v) high income. The four thresholds separating the income groups are $2, the minimum daily per capita income to escape poverty, $10, the threshold for attaining middle-income status, $20 to enter the upper-middle income category, and $50 to access high income. These thresholds are expressed in 2011 prices and 2011 purchasing power parities.

Dang and Ianchovichina (2016) estimate the size of the middle class in Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Tunisia using an absolute income benchmark. Middle-class status is assigned to individuals with income above a vulnerability line (i.e., the probability of falling into poverty over the 2005-2010 period) set at $4.9 per day per person in 2005 terms. The middle class experienced significant growth in Tunisia, while it declined substantially in Egypt, and there was no change in the size of the middle class in Jordan.

Among all these approaches, we favor the one proposed by Dang and Ianchovichina (2016) as it is a more recent method with a common threshold across countries.

We use microdata from the Integrated Labor Market Panel Surveys (ILMPS). The ILMPS is a data set that integrates and harmonizes data and variables from five rounds of the Egypt Labor Market Survey (in years 1998, 2006,2012 and 2018), two rounds of the Jordan Labor Market Survey (in years 2010 and 2016), and the 2014 Tunisia Labor Market Survey. It contains created, compatible variables that are harmonized (to the extent possible) across all rounds. The Economic Research Forum (ERF) has undertaken a number of labor market panel surveys (LMPSs) across countries and time. This data set integrates (harmonizes) these surveys, including:

- The 1998, 2006, 2012, and 2018 rounds of the Egypt Labor Market Panel Survey (ELMPS) ;
- The 2010 and 2016 rounds of the Jordan Labor Market Panel Survey (JLMPS) ;
- The 2014 round of the Tunisia Labor Market Panel Survey (TLMPS).

The harmonization is designed to create comparable data that can facilitate cross-country and comparative research. All the surveys incorporate similar survey designs, with data on households and individuals within those households (OAMDI, 2019).

Job benefits encompass non-wage forms of compensation, including paid leave, health insurance. In today's labor market, employers attract workers by offering non-wage compensation alongside regular wages or salaries. Moreover, job benefits serve as a form of insurance against temporary income loss, such as unemployment, or unexpected expenses like healthcare costs. Insurance plays a vital role in preventing transient poverty due to temporary fluctuations in consumption (Duclos et al. 2010; Jalan and Ravallion, 1998). The benefits dimension comprises indicators such as provision of health care by the employer, paid annual leave and paid sick leave.

This study also considers observed job tenure as another suitable indicator of stability, as workers who have been in the same job for several years are likely to continue in that job for a longer period. It is also composes to the permanency in employment indicator.

The dimension of working conditions include having a written contract, social security contributions and excessive work hours. Excessive work hours are defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as working more than 48 hours per week. This variable can serve as a reliable proxy for mental well-being and achieving a balance between work and personal life. The rationale behind using the indicator of holding a second paid job is that individuals with only one job tend to have better physical and mental health overall, resulting in higher job satisfaction compared to those with multiple jobs (Smith et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, indicators related to health and safety, work content, and work opportunities are typically unavailable in labor force or household surveys and, as a result, cannot be included in the article.

Table 1. Dimensions, indicators, thresholds, and weights of the multidimensional indicator of (low) job quality in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia.

Dimensions	Indicators	Suffering from deprivations if…	Weighting
I) Benefits	Health insurance	Job does not provide health insurance	$1/3$
	Annual paid leave	Job does not offer paid holiday leave	$1/3$
	Paid sick leave	Job does not offer paid sick leave	$1/3$
II) Stability	Tenure	Less than 3 years of tenure in job for workers ages 25–64, Less than 1 year of tenure in job for workers ages 18–24	$1/2$
	Permanent employment	Employment is temporary, not permanent	$1/2$
III) Working conditions	Social security	Job is not associated with any type of social security	$1/3$
	Written contract	Employment is not bound by written contract	$1/3$
	Excessive working hours	Individual exceed more than 48 weekly hours	$1/3$

$$Job\ quality\ measure = (Health\ insurance * 1/3 + Annual\ paid\ leave * 1/3 + Paid\ sick\ leave * 1/3 + Tenure * 0.5 + Permanent\ employment * 0.5 + Social\ security * 1/3 + Written\ contract * 1/3 + Excessive\ working\ hours * 1/3\ )$$

2.2. The Alkire-Foster method

The Alkire-Foster theoretical framework, originally developed for measuring multidimensional poverty, is adapted as the chosen method for measurement and aggregation across dimensions (Alkire and Foster 2011). This method involves assigning indicators to each dimension and setting deprivation cutoffs, which are threshold levels for each indicator. If individuals fall below the deprivation cutoff in a specific dimension, they are considered deprived in that dimension. By aggregating the deprivation indicators for each individual, a multidimensional measure of poverty is created.

The adaptation of the Alkire-Foster framework to measure and aggregate job quality was first proposed by Brummund et al. (2018) as a benchmarking tool for job quality in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The Alkire-Foster method offers several valuable properties

derived from an axiomatic framework that are relevant for identifying and measuring poverty, including the ability to incorporate both cardinal data, such as labor income, and ordinal data, such as the availability of paid annual leave. These properties, although restrictive, are highly valuable for measuring good jobs. The properties include decomposability, replication invariance, and symmetry. Decomposability ensures that the aggregate Job Quality Measure (JQM) is a weighted sum of JQMs for different subpopulations, such as workers in different industries or rural and urban workers, with the weights reflecting the relative sizes of these subgroups in the total population. Replication invariance and symmetry are important for comparing job quality among different groups, as they ensure that the measured job quality for groups of varying sizes is comparable and that individuals in these groups contribute equally to the overall measure of job quality.

Sehnbruch et al. (2020) introduces a novel approach to evaluating employment quality in Latin American developing countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay) from a multidimensional perspective, aiming to inform public policy. By utilizing household and labor force survey data from 2015, their study demonstrates the possibility of measuring the Quality of Employment (QoE) through a multidimensional methodology. This approach complements traditional indicators like participation and unemployment rates, which may not accurately reflect labor market performance in countries with significant informal sectors. Drawing from the capability approach and previous work on multidimensional poverty, their study employs the Alkire/Foster (AF) method to construct a synthetic indicator of QoE at an individual level. Three dimensions are selected as essential for workers and their employment situations: income, job security, and employment conditions. Job security is further divided into occupational status and job tenure, while employment conditions are subdivided into social security affiliation and excessive working hours. Thresholds are set within each dimension and sub-dimension to determine deprivation levels, and an overall cut-off line is established to calculate composite deprivation levels. The results of this indicator are highly significant for policymakers, providing precise identification of vulnerable worker groups and highlighting dimensions and indicators that contribute to labor market deprivation. Additionally, the study expands the employment discourse in developing countries by considering variables that are often overlooked, such as occupational status and job tenure, which are critical to the well-being of workers and their dependents. Moreover, the research underscores variations among Latin American countries, both in the overall QoE index and its component dimensions. Chile exhibits the highest QoE results in the region, while Paraguay performs the worst, followed by Mexico, Bolivia, and Peru. Interestingly, countries

like Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Brazil face challenges related to job rotation. Importantly, their study reveals that low unemployment rates do not necessarily correlate with low levels of QoE deprivation. In fact, some analyzed countries, like Mexico, demonstrate the opposite trend.

In our approach, we select the Alkire-Foster framework which is applied to dimensions of deprivation. This means that if any of the indicators within a dimension are not satisfied, the dimension as a whole is considered deprived and assigned a value of 1. For each dimensions of job quality, all indicators must not be satisfied to define deprivations. A higher JQM value indicates poorest job quality. The JQM can be formally expressed as follows:

$$JQM_i = \sum_{d,i} w_d I_{d,i} \quad (1)$$

where JQM_i is the JQM for individual i; $I_{d,i}$ is an indicator function set equal to 1 if individual $i's$ job is deprived in dimension d, and w_d are the weights assigned to each dimension.

The proposed JQM (Job Quality Measure) adds up the deprivations across dimensions and assumes equal weights of unity for each dimension to highlight the contrast with deprivation indicators. By measuring job quality in this manner, a worker will receive a job quality score of 0 if their job fails to meet any of the success criteria in all dimensions. On the other hand, a worker with a job that achieves faillures in all three defined dimensions will receive the maximum job quality score of 3.

The equal weighting of each dimension is a subject of debate. In linear aggregation indicators, where success within each dimension is determined by indicator functions, weights play a normative role in determining the relative importance of each dimension. The crucial question is how to identify appropriate weights. There are various options for weighting in multidimensional indexes, and the equal weights approach is the standard practice in the field.

3. The main correlates of job quality

Given the high correlation across various JQM dimensions, the paper follows Brummund et al. (2018) runs the following regression to identify conditional correlations and to understand more clearly the characteristics that may be the main predictors of job quality:

$$JQM_{jsc} = \alpha + \beta X_{jsc} + \gamma_2 Sector_s + \gamma_3 Occupation_s + \gamma_4 Country_c + \varepsilon_{jsc} \quad (2)$$

where JQM_{jsc} is the level of job quality for an individual j, working in sector s, in country c ; X_{jsc} is a vector of covariates with workers characterics ; $Sector_s$ is a sector of employment ; $Occupation_s$ is the occupation classification of employment ; and $Country_c$ is country fixed

effects. $I_{d,i}$ is an indicator function set equal to 1 if individual $i's$ job is deprived in dimension d, and w_d are the weights assigned to each dimension.

The findings obtained from a linear regression analysis of equation 2 are displayed in table 2. The second column presents the overall results for MENA countries Egypt (1998, 2006, 2012 and 2018), Jordan (2010 and 2016) and Tunisia (2014).

The analysis reveals notable disparities in the quality of wage employment across economic sectors. When comparing industry sectors to agriculture (the reference category), job quality generally demonstrates a positive impact. Within the industry and services, a majority of employees enjoy better jobs compare to the agricole sector. The quality of wage employment also varies depending on factors such as education, gender, age, and geographical location. Interestingly, women experience better job quality compared to male. The results indicate that employees working in urban areas and those who are unionized have better job quality compared to others. Furthermore, compared to illiterate employees, those who have received education have better job quality, even though attending university is not associated with the highest level of job quality. It is those who have received a basic education who have the best job quality.

Table 2. Predictors of Job Quality across Egypt (1998, 2006, 2012 and 2018), Jordan (2010 and 2016) and Tunisia (2014)

	MENA Countries
Age	-0.017*** [0.000]
Male	0.087*** [0.009]
Education: Read and write (Ref. : Illiterate)	-0.146*** [0.018]
Education: Basic education	-0.259*** [0.014]
Education : Secondary education	-0.184*** [0.013]
Education : Post-secondary	-0.162*** [0.019]
Education : University	-0.082*** [0.017]
Education : Post-graduate	-0.035*** [0.017]
Urban	-0.038*** [0.007]
Union members	-0.510*** [0.009]
Production-based wage (Ref. : Fixed wage)	0.522*** [0.009]
Partially fixed wage	0.105*** [0.037]
Sector : Industry (Ref. : Agriculture)	-0.377*** [0.035]
Sector : Services	-0.424*** [0.034]
Occupation : professionals (Ref. : Managers)	-0.047 *** [0.014]
Occupation : Technicians and associate professionals	-0.070*** [0.017]
Occupation: Clerical support workers	-0.042*** [0.018]
Occupation : Service and sales workers	0.444*** [0.019]
Occupation : skilled agricultural	0.722*** [0.039]
Occupation : Craft and related trades workers	0.832*** [0.021]
Occupation : Plant and machine operators	0.687 *** [0.021]
Occupation : Elementary occupations	0.547*** [0.024]
Country fixed effects	**Yes**
Number of observations	**38 159**
Adjusted R^2	**0.5255**

Notes: The sample includes 3 countries (Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia). Wage employees 18-64.
Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** ($p < 0.01$), ** ($p < 0.05$), * ($p < 0.1$).

Source: Integrated Labor Market Panel Surveys (ILMPS).

Conclusion

In recent years, numerous academic publications have been undertaken. For instance, special issues in the International Labour Review and expert groups have been formed on the subject. That is why we chose to dedicate the first chapter of this thesis to a literature review on existing measures of job quality, both at the macroeconomic level, through the definitions provided by major international organizations, and at the microeconomic level, with the proliferation of recent studies on specific countries or groups of countries. Although job quality has become an active area of study in the past two decades in developed countries, it remains a concept that is not widely discussed in emerging and developing countries such as Latin America, where the incidence of informal employment and low wages is particularly high. As noted by Hovhannisyan et al. (2022) and Warhurst et al. (2022), the availability of data on all dimensions of job quality varies from one country to another. Surveys of the labor force or household surveys reflect a country's labor market and regulatory environment, which can hinder the comparative study of job quality. The availability of information for constructing a multidimensional indicator of job quality also varies according to different types of employment within countries. Surveys generally distinguish between main types of employment, such as wage employment, self-employment, unpaid employment, and other types of employment. As a result, questionnaires often consist of a comprehensive set of questions for wage workers and a shorter questionnaire for self-employed workers, which explains why the majority of studies focus on wage workers.

Job quality is traditionally associated with the level of remuneration and the socio-economic security it provides. However, studies tend to demonstrate that the characteristics of the work environment impact employees' well-being. Jobs differ in the level of effort they require. Some jobs are highly demanding, requiring workers not only to work overtime but also to work at a fast pace and meet tight deadlines that can be emotionally exhausting. These high-demand jobs can be stressful and challenging, while conversely, jobs that require little effort can be perceived as dull. The level of resources available to workers in the workplace is a critical factor that determines to what extent high effort creates stress and tension or to what extent it can be stimulating. For example, the level of autonomy a worker has in performing their daily tasks, the support they receive from colleagues and superiors, and having clear and defined tasks and goals, as well as opportunities for learning, not only mitigate the potential negative consequences of demanding jobs but also provide workers with opportunities for personal development and the pursuit of their projects. Therefore, a balanced work environment where

one has sufficient resources relative to the demands of their work is crucial for employee motivation and productivity, especially for their well-being.

Despite the ambiguity surrounding the notion of job quality, it remains an important field of study, especially considering that job quality is a source of productivity and performance as it contributes to employee motivation (Amoranto and Chun, 2011).

In countries like Latin America or MENA, where the informal economy is prevalent, traditional indicators such as unemployment rate, labor force participation rate, and wages may not be the most representative of ongoing dynamics in the labor market. Therefore, to gain a different perspective on socio-economic conditions, we propose constructing a multidimensional indicator of (low) job quality based on Alkire and Foster's multidimensional poverty indicator (2009 and 2011), intentionally recognized. Applied to Egypt (1998, 2006, 2012 and 2018), to Jordan (2010, 2016) and Tunisia (2014), considering three dimensions: Benefits (Health insurance, Annual paid leave, Paid sick leave), Stability (Tenure and Permanent employment), and Working conditions (Social security, Written contract and Excessive working hours), our results show a significant differences across industries, gender, occupations, worker’s characteristics.

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