

Public Policies on Employment and Labor Welfare: A View from the University Teaching Role

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ABSTRACT

Higher education revolves around a dynamic environment where public employment policies and the well-being of university professors play a crucial role in the construction of a prosperous and sustainable academic environment. The research identified the relationship between public employment policies and labor well-being in university professors, through a quantitative approach, descriptive-correlational scope and cross-sectional section. The results showed that better employment policies are associated with an increase in teachers' well-being at work, suggesting that properly designed policies could significantly enhance their general well-being. It was evident that the modality of contract and job stability are critical factors that affect job security and the psychosocial well-being of teachers. Despite the fact that high psychosocial well-being was reported, teachers experience collateral effects such as somatization and alienation, which evidenced the presence of psychosocial risks in the work environment. The importance of comprehensive and effective employment policies, as well as institutional support to improve the quality of teachers' working life, is concluded. The implementation of preventive programs for psychosocial risks, strategies to promote well-being and teacher participation in the continuous improvement of employment policies is recommended. These measures will not only benefit teachers, but will also have a positive impact on the quality of education and, consequently, on society.

1. Introduction

Public policies represent a legal expression of the State to support and strengthen the fundamental components of human rights established in the Constitution. In this way, they promote guidelines and values that are reflected in laws and regulations aimed at guaranteeing a dignified quality of life (Restrepo et al., 2022).

These policies refer to government regulations that entail modifications in working conditions. Focusing on the realm of university teaching, these state guidelines imply an increase in job responsibilities, attention to a greater number of students, and the need to conduct research on a consistent basis.(Alcántara, 2010)

According to Saavedra Chanduví, professionals who work as teachers in the public sector usually have an employment relationship under appointment, which gives them access to social benefits and greater job stability. These appointments not only represent permission to hold a position in the public service, but also a document that certifies the continuity of the teacher in his or her job.(2004)

Regulations related to the employment of teachers have introduced additional work requirements. These provisions have established that teachers who wish to work in higher education institutions must have a degree equivalent to or higher than the one they would be assigned when working, and must have the possibility of being hired through a public selection process in these institutions.(Unzué, 2003)

The educational reforms implemented in Latin America since the 1990s have introduced the need to evaluate

professional trajectories more rigorously, exerting pressure on both teaching professionals and higher education institutions in hiring processes and regulating the degree of their autonomy.

Public policies related to the employment of teachers address various fundamental aspects of the public function, which influence the structure of higher education institutions. In addition, these policies represent a way to regulate, control resources and protect workers' rights. Its relevance is reflected in its impact on administrative activities within the field of higher education.

Public policies evolve in line with the social changes experienced in each era. In the current context, characterized by the constant growth in the number of students, higher education institutions have undergone a process of expansion that, as a result, has led to an increase in the recruitment of teaching staff and new demands in terms of the qualifications required for professionals.(Walker, 2020)

Due to the expansion of higher education, new work modalities have been established for university teachers. The International Labour Organization in its Global Dialogue Forum on "The Conditions of Employment of Higher Education Personnel" states that in Latin America there are new workspaces such as assistant professors, visiting teachers and adjunct professors. However, these forms of employment entail hiring procedures that cause insecurity and, on many occasions, result in the violation of labor rights and certain social benefits to which each employee is entitled.(2018)

At the same time, it has been observed that recently, due to university accreditation processes, improvements have been promoted in university academic institutions. It has been noted that new labor demands include the expansion of research activities and the strengthening of regulations related to the continuing education of teachers, which has encouraged the increase of professionals with postgraduate degrees. Consequently, institutions have had to carry out restructuring of teaching staff in order to obtain a more outstanding performance in accreditation evaluations.(Fuksman, 2019)

The invisibility of public policies in the areas of employment of university professors has been highlighted. Changes in forms of employment, in particular, have led to greater job instability, with unpaid work being performed outside the formal work environment (Walker, 2019). Deficiencies in the delimitation between the family and work spheres still persist within the legal frameworks that regulate working conditions. These shortcomings became especially evident during the COVID 19 health crisis.

A study by Restrepo provides key insights into the factors to be taken into account in educational administration. It determined that neither gender nor the educational level of individuals significantly influence the Quality of Working Life or the Attitude towards Public Employment. However, it is identified that the type of contract and the nature of the educational institution do exert a distinctive impact. Specifically, he observed, teachers with permanent contracts experience a greater sense of job security and greater confidence in their professional abilities. In addition, institutional support and job security tend to be higher at private universities. The research also reveals that there is a positive correlation between Quality of Work Life and Attitude towards Public Employment.(2021)

In the review of recent contributions, it has been observed that public employment policies, despite their shortcomings, play a crucial role in the work environment of Higher Education. These policies have not only shaped new work contexts, but have also transformed workers' rights and responsibilities. University teachers, in this new dynamic, are professionals in constant search of excellence and the improvement of their skills, while some institutions have found ways to legally support themselves to avoid meeting the necessary requirements to guarantee decent working conditions, in order to raise the quality of the educational institution.

With the above background, the research was justified in knowing to what extent the perspective of public employment policies is reflected in the labor well-being of teachers of a higher education institute?

2. Methodology

This research has a quantitative approach, correlational descriptive scope and cross-sectional section, carrying out the collection of information through virtual resources.

The objective of this study was to identify the relationship between public employment policies and the well-being of teachers at a Higher Education Institute.

Population and sample

The population consisted of a total of 100 teachers from an institute of higher education in the city of Guayaquil.

Sample Type: For Convenience

Sample: The study was established to focus on 100 teachers with no age limit, with a minimum of six months of experience in higher education teaching, the information was collected online with a link to the Google FORMS platform.

Instruments and techniques applied

The first exploration instrument corresponded to the Questionnaire on the Perception of Public Employment Policies, which assesses needs, concerns and expectations in relation to employment policies. It is structured in five factors, labor remuneration, composed of 7 items; the second factor is the Hourly Load composed of 4 items; the third factor, Social Benefits, 7 items; the fourth factor Training and continuing education composed of 6 items; the fifth factor Promotion of job stability composed of 6 items. For a total of 30 items. The reliability in the piloting of the instrument was 0.83.

The second instrument was the General Occupational Well-Being Questionnaire, which presents the six scales that make it up and includes two main dimensions: psychosocial well-being (which covers, in turn, the facets of affects, competencies and expectations) with a total of 38 items and collateral effects (somatization, burnout and alienation) with a total of 13 items.

Free and Informed Consent Act, Document designed by the research group with the purpose of guaranteeing the integrity and confidentiality of the data ethically collected.

Procedure

The research was developed under five sequenced and chronologically developed phases, see table (1).

Table 1. Phases of the study carried out

Phases	Development
First	Habituation process and criteria for selecting information.
	Habituation of the information chosen by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Language: Spanish and English. ➤ Temporality: 2018 – 2023 ➤ Terms: studies carried out in both national and international universities, focused on the variables of public policies on employment and labor welfare, cover topics such as employment conditions in the field of higher education, the work environment of professors, job satisfaction of university professors and the factors that influence their work motivation. ➤ Information resources: Scopus, Ebscot, Web of Science, PsycINFO, Dialnet, Redalyc databases, through digital platforms.
Second	Detailed data evaluation and examination
	An exhaustive review, selection and analysis of documents related to the central themes of the research was carried out: public policies on employment and labor welfare. This included examining the structure of public employment policies, as well as working and working conditions, and quality of life in the workplace. In the selection of categories, the theoretical and methodological foundations were taken into account, as well as the epistemological perspectives in the field of Public Management and the Psychology of Work and Organizations. This also implied reviewing and describing the instruments used to explore, describe or evaluate the variables in question, especially those related to public employment policies and labor welfare.
Third	Sample selection
	It was carried out in a higher education institute (IES) in the city of Guayaquil, through a formal request to the authority. Through technological tools, the instruments and their corresponding filling of the items were socialized.
Fourth	Interpretation of results
	Through the tabulation of the data collected by the instrument and the application of the statistical (SPSS) version 25.0
Fifth	Diagnostic return
	Initially, the feedback process was carried out with the doctoral students and the advice of the tutor. Subsequently, the results were presented to the participants involved in the study.

Note: authors' elaboration 2024

3. Results

According to the results of the first objective, as reflected in Table 2 and Graph 1 (see below), it can be seen that, in the occupational well-being questionnaire in general terms, the predominant interval is high 27, covering 66% of the responses. This indicates a marked trend towards acceptance or a high degree of agreement on the part of the sample evaluated, in this case, the teachers.

Table 2. Overall result of the workplace well-being questionnaire

INTERVAL	OVERALL RESULT	
	Frequency	%
High	66	66%
Middle	34	34%
Low	0	0
Total	100	100%

Note: Survey applied to teachers

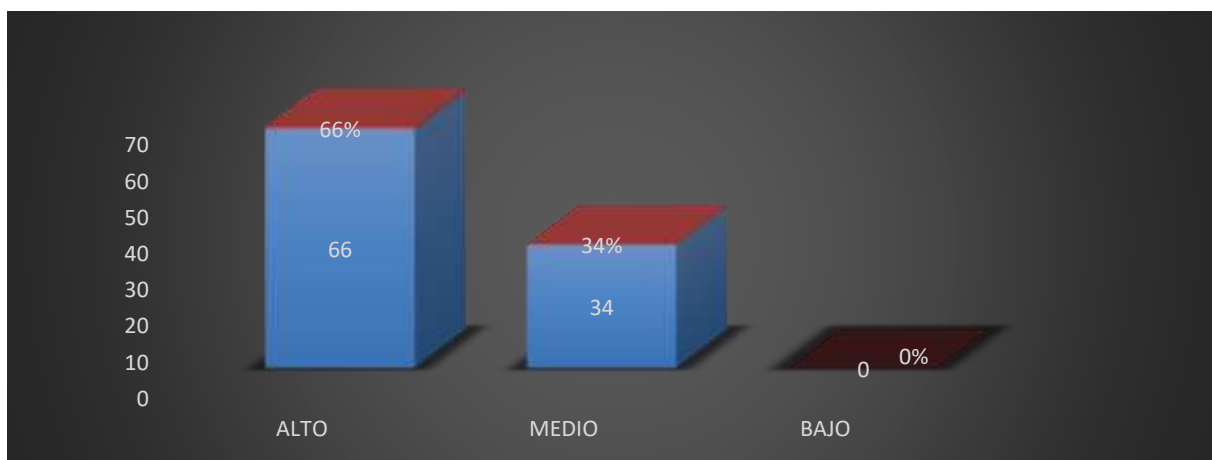


Figure 1. Results of the Workplace Wellbeing Questionnaire

Note: Prepared by Pacheco Peralta, Nancy Estefanía and co-authors (2023).

In relation to the dominant interval by dimensions, psychosocial well-being is denoted in the three indicators called affections with 76%, competencies with 79% and expectations with 74% as noteworthy indicators of occupational well-being, an indicator with a lower acceptance is not appreciated, see table (3).

Table 3. General result of the psychosocial well-being dimension

INTERVAL	AFFECTIONS		COMPETENCES		EXPECTATIONS	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
HIGH	76	76%	79	79%	74	74%
MIDDLE	21	21%	18	18%	26	26%
LOW	3	3%	3	3%	0	0%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Survey applied to teachers

In relation to the results obtained on the collateral effects dimension, the alienation indicator was denoted as the element with the highest presence with 63%, on the contrary, the indicator with the lowest presence is attrition with 35%. However, it is highlighted that the three indicators such as somatization, attrition and alienation are present in the sample at a medium level, see table (4).

Table 4. Overall result of the collateral effects dimension

INTERVAL	SOMATIZATION		DEGASTE		ALIENATION	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
HIGH	39	39%	35	35%	63	63%
MIDDLE	51	51%	41	41%	34	34%
LOW	10	10%	24	24%	3	3%
TOTAL	100	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Survey applied to teachers

The descriptive statistical analysis of the variable well-being at work from the teachers' perception presents the following results:

The questions assessed in the psychosocial well-being dimension determine as an arithmetic mean 5.4 equivalent to a result with a tendency towards psychosocial well-being, based on the options of the adjective scale.

Within the psychosocial well-being dimension, questions (1) "Currently, in my work, I feel: Dissatisfaction-Satisfaction", question (20) "Currently, in my work, I feel: Uselessness-Usefulness", question (42) "In my work career: my professional skills are rising-they are falling"; They are denoted by the highest score ratings, or acceptance posture from the teachers' perception.

Questions (7) "Currently, in my work, I feel: Uncertainty-Certainty", question (14) "Currently, in my work, I feel: Incapacity-Capacity" and question (36) "In my work career: My participation in the decisions of the organization is going up-they are down"; are denoted by the lowest score ratings, from the teachers' perception.

Similarly, the greater dispersion of scores or standard deviation (SD), in question (7) and the following questions (17) are added: "Currently, in my work, I feel: Inefficiency-Effectiveness" and (34) "In my work career my opportunities for job promotion are going down-they are going up".

In relation to questions (1), question (17) and question (41) "In my work career my commitment to work is down-it is rising". Less dispersion is established.

In the collateral effects dimension, the statistical results of the questions posed determine as an arithmetic mean 4.1 equivalent to a result with a tendency towards collateral effects, based on the options of the adjective scale.

Within the collateral effects dimension, the questions (44) "Currently, because of my work, I feel: Never-Always headaches", the question (49) "Currently, because of my work, I feel: Never-Always emotional exhaustion", the question (54) "Currently, because of my work, I feel: Never-Always distant treatment"; are denoted by the highest scoring ratings, or the position with the highest presence of these effects.

Questions (47) "Currently, because of my work, I feel: Never-Always Muscle Tensions", question (48) "Currently, because of my work, I feel: Never-Always Work Overload" and question (52) "Currently, because of my work, I feel: Never-Always Bad Mood"; are denoted by the assessments with the lowest presence of effects.

Similarly, the greatest dispersion of scores or standard deviation (SD) is the question (46) "Currently, because of my work, I feel: Never-Always Back Pain and the questions (50) "Currently, because of my work, I feel: Physical exhaustion Never Always" and the question (52) are added.

In relation to questions (43), "Currently, because of my work, I feel: Never-Always Digestive Disorders" the question (51) "Currently, because of my work, I feel: Never-Always Mental Tiredness" and the question (55) "Currently, because of my work, I feel: Never-Always Frustration". Less dispersion is denoted.

In relation to the results of the second objective of the research, related to the public employment policy variable, the results found as reflected in the table and graph, it is observed that, in general terms, the predominant interval is the medium, covering 69% of the responses. This indicates a marked trend towards the sample having responded to the questionnaire with average scores on the scale. The high interval represents 31%, see table (5).

Table 5. General result of the public employment policy questionnaire

INTERVAL	OVERALL RESULT	
	Frequency	%
High	31	31%
Middle	69	69%
Low	0	0
Total	100	100%

Note: Survey applied to teachers

The results of the dimensions of public employment policies, salary compensation shows an average level of 66% and at a high level of \$34. The workload dimension represents 80% at medium level 11% and at low level and 9% at high level. The social benefits dimension shows 67% at medium level, 27% at high level and 6% at low level. The training and education dimension presents 50% at medium level, 40% high level and 10% low level. Job stability shows 50% at medium level and low level the same percentage, see table:

Table 6. General result of the public employment policy dimension

INTERVAL	COMPENSATION		WORKLOAD		SOCIAL BENEFITS		TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION		JOB STABILITY	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
HIGH	34	34%	9	9%	27	27%	40	%	50	%
MIDDLE	66	66%	80	80%	67	67%	50	%	50	%
LOW	0	0%	11	11%	6	6%	10	%	0	%
TOTAL	100	100%	100	100%	100	100%	100	100%	100	100%

Note: Survey applied to teachers

The descriptive statistical analysis of the public employment policy, according to the teachers' perception, denoted the following results:

The questions assessed in the public employment policy variable determine as an arithmetic mean 3.12 equivalent to "Neither agree nor disagree" of the Likert scale, a result with a tendency towards neutrality.

Within the dimension of workers' compensation, questions (1) "The remuneration received as a university professor is fair and adequate for their experience and level of training" has a high average of 3.30. Question (7) "Have you ever considered quitting your job as a university professor because of the salary compensation you receive" has a low average of 2.38. The question "Bonuses and additional incentives are adequate and fair" shows a high deviation of 1.45.

In the workload dimension, question (9) "Do you feel that the workload you have as a university professor is excessive and affects your quality of life" has a high average of 3.33, question (11) "Do you consider that you have enough time to carry out research and update your knowledge within your workload" a low average of 1.91 and question (8) "The workload as a university teacher is adequate to be able to fulfill their work and personal responsibilities" has a greater dispersion of 1.37.

The social benefits dimension has the question (17): "The social benefits you perceive increase your motivation and commitment to your teaching role" has a high average of 2.83. Question (12) "Do you receive any type of social benefit apart from your base salary, such as health insurance, life insurance, pension insurance, among others" has a low average of 2.15. Question (17) coincides with the one with the greatest dispersion.

In the training and education dimension, question (19) "The institution where you work has provided training or continuous training in the last 12 months" shows a high average of 4.42 in this research, question (23) "The institution provides an adequate response when requesting training or continuous training" presents a low average of 3.44, with the same question having the greatest dispersion of 1.18.

Question (30) "Considers that the institution in which you work should take actions to improve the promotion of job stability of its university professors, refers to a high average of 4.4896. Question (28) "The institution provides adequate management in relation to the promotion of job stability for teaching staff" results with a low average of 2.61 and question (27) "Does job instability affect your performance as a university professor. A greater dispersion is denoted 1.32.

In relation to the general objective of the research, on the correlation between both variables, Occupational Well-being and Public Employment Policy using Spearman's Rho coefficient. A positive and significant correlation was found between both variables, with a correlation coefficient of $Rho = 0.224$ and a bilateral significance of 0.025 ($p < 0.05$); This suggests that, as the values of Occupational Well-being increase, so do those of Public Employment Policy, although the strength of this relationship is moderate. It should be noted that the sample for both variables consisted of 100 individuals, see table (7).

Table 7. Correlation between public employment policies and well-being at work

			Well-being	P Policy
Rho de Spearman	Well-being	Correlation coefficient	1,000	,224*
		Sig. (bilateral)		0,025
		N	100	100
	P Policy		,224*	1,000
		Correlation coefficient		

Sig. (bilateral)	0,025	
N	100	100

*. The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral).

Hypothesis testing

Ha: Public employment policies contribute to the well-being of university professors at work.

Ho: Public employment policies do not contribute to the well-being of university professors at work.

Given that the correlation is significant at a level of 0.025, we can reject the null hypothesis (Ho) and accept the alternative hypothesis (Ha), indicating that public employment policies do contribute, at least to some extent, to the well-being of university professors.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The value of the Spearman correlation coefficient between these two variables is 0.224. This value suggests that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. However, the magnitude of this coefficient is low, implying that the relationship is weak. The bilateral significance is 0.025 for the correlation between these two variables. This value is less than 0.05, which indicates that the observed correlation between public employment policies and labor well-being is present.

A study by Restrepo highlights that the type of contract and the nature of the institution have a significant impact on the Quality of Working Life and the Attitude towards Public Employment in teachers. In both studies, the type of contract appears as a significant factor that influences teachers' perception of their well-being at work. (2021)

Also Buitrago et. al focused on exploring the relationship between the dimensions of psychosocial well-being and the collateral effects in teachers of public institutions in Manizales and aspects such as organizational culture, work environment, and risks associated with work. In general, teachers perceive their emotions and skills positively, although their expectations tend to be viewed negatively, negative side effects associated with working conditions were also identified, including somatic problems (such as headaches and muscle tension), symptoms of burnout (excessive workload and emotional exhaustion) and feelings of alienation (moodiness, professional dissatisfaction and impersonal treatment). This suggests that, beyond employment policies, working conditions have a substantial impact on the physical and psychological health of teachers.(2021)

In a study in Colombia, Satizabal, Cruz and Unás analyzed several aspects of employment conditions in the teaching field, including schedules, locations, types of contracts and remuneration. They found that job instability in education is often disguised as "flexibility," which translates into generally unfavorable work circumstances, such as the extension of work beyond working hours, limited opportunities for stable and long-term contracts, limited possibilities for wage increase, and a tendency to simultaneously occupy several jobs. The study also highlights significant differences between working conditions in public and private higher education institutions, with the former being more favorable. This is a further analysis of how employment policies influence workplace well-being and what aspects of these policies might need revision to improve the working conditions of university teachers(2020)

In their research at the Faculty of Dentistry of the University of Guayaquil, Ordoñez and collaborators focused on evaluating engagement and burnout in teachers. Using a non-experimental transactional approach and online surveys with 65 teachers, they found that levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were low, while personal fulfillment and engagement, reflected in vigor, dedication, and absorption, were high. In addition, variations in emotional exhaustion and personal fulfillment were observed depending on the type of contract and work seniority. These findings underscore the need for university administrators to identify and promote the factors that increase engagement and develop strategies to minimize the risk of burnout in teaching staff. This study confirms that employment policies that promote job stability and recognize seniority can have a positive impact on reducing burnout and promoting well-being.(2021)

In conclusion, this study suggests that well-designed policies have the potential to significantly improve workplace well-being. In addition, the type of contract and seniority in the institution have a notable impact on the perception of job security and on the psychosocial well-being of teachers, which in turn influences their performance and commitment.

Although teachers report high psychosocial well-being, they also experience side effects such as somatization

and alienation, indicating that there are psychosocial risk factors that need to be addressed, in addition to the need for the institution to be perceived as a support network for teachers.

It is recommended to establish preventive programs for psychosocial risks and strategies to promote well-being at work. In addition, the active involvement of the teaching staff in the continuous improvement of employment policies. The adoption of these practices will not only benefit teachers, but will also have a positive impact on educational quality and, consequently, on society.

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