



## LABOR RIGHTS AND JOB QUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA

<sup>1</sup>ROBERTO FABIÁN SÁNCHEZ CHÁVEZ,<sup>2</sup>RENATO DANIEL BASANTES SILVA,<sup>3</sup>JOSÉ ROLANDO CARDENAS GONZALES,<sup>4</sup>HÉCTOR LAUTARO CRESPO CAICEDO

<sup>1</sup>Abogado de los Tribunales y Juzgados de la República del Ecuador.

Magíster en Derecho Civil y Procesal Civil

Doctorante en en Derecho Constitucional.

Docente Facultad de Administración de Empresas

Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo (ESPOCH).

[roberto.sanchez@esPOCH.edu.ec](mailto:roberto.sanchez@esPOCH.edu.ec)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3248-4359>

<sup>2</sup>Abogado de los Tribunales y Juzgados de la República

Doctorante en Derecho Constitucional.

Abogado 2 de la Dirección de movilidad del Gobierno Autonomo Descentralizadi Municipal de Riobamba.

[renatoderecho@hotmail.com](mailto:renatoderecho@hotmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7528-2554>

<sup>3</sup>Universidad Tecnológica del Perú

[c25114@utp.edu.pe](mailto:c25114@utp.edu.pe)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8141-9086>

<sup>4</sup>Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo

Facultad de Administracion

Finanzas e Informática

[hlcc77@yahoo.es](mailto:hlcc77@yahoo.es)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6308-094X>

**Abstract:** *In Latin America, labor rights and the quality of jobs are issues of great relevance due to the need to improve the working conditions of millions of people in the region. In this study, a bibliometric analysis of the literature available in specialized databases in social and economic sciences was carried out, in order to identify the most recurrent trends and themes in research on labor rights and job quality in Latin America. The results indicate that the literature on this topic has grown steadily in recent decades, but there is still a way to go in terms of generating empirical evidence to inform public policies aimed at improving the quality of employment and labor rights in the region.*

**Keywords:** *labor rights, quality of employment, Latin America, bibliometric analysis.*

### INTRODUCTION

In Latin America, the protection of labor rights and the improvement of the quality of jobs are issues of great relevance due to the importance of employment as an instrument to reduce poverty and inequality. Despite the progress made in recent years, the region still faces major challenges in this area, such as labor informality, precarious jobs, discrimination and lack of access to social protection. For this reason, the analysis of the literature on labor rights and job quality in Latin America is essential to identify the most relevant trends and issues, and to generate empirical evidence to inform public policies aimed at improving working conditions in the region.

The relationship between labor rights and the quality of jobs in Latin America has been an issue of concern for researchers, academics and policymakers in the region. The quality of employment and respect for labour rights are fundamental aspects for the well-being of workers and for the economic and social development of countries.

In recent years, there have been important advances in the protection of labor rights in Latin America, such as the recognition of the right to gender equality at work and the right to a living minimum wage. However, the region continues to face significant challenges in terms of job quality and protection of labor rights, especially in the context of growing labor informality and lack of access to social protection.



In this sense, this article aims to analyze the current situation of labor rights and the quality of jobs in Latin America, examining the existing literature and conducting a bibliometric analysis of the studies published in the region. In addition, it seeks to identify the main challenges and opportunities facing the region in terms of labor rights and job quality, and propose some recommendations to improve the current situation.

The introduction to the article raises the importance of the topic, refers to current advances and challenges, and presents the objective of the study. Next, the bibliometric analysis examines the most relevant studies published in the region in recent years, which will allow identifying the most relevant topics and the most used approaches in the literature. The methodology describes the techniques and procedures used to perform the bibliometric analysis and the analysis of the results obtained. Finally, the conclusions present the main findings of the study and propose recommendations to improve the current situation of labor rights and the quality of jobs in Latin America.

### METHODOLOGY

A bibliometric analysis of the literature available in specialized databases in social and economic sciences was performed, using a systematic search strategy and predefined inclusion criteria. The most recurrent trends and themes in research on labor rights and job quality in Latin America were analyzed.

#### **Bibliometric analysis**

A literature search was conducted in the databases specialized in social and economic sciences (Scopus, Web of Science and EconLit), using the terms "labor rights", "quality of employment" and "Latin America". We identified a total of 457 articles published between 1990 and 2022 that met the inclusion criteria. The results indicate that scientific production on labor rights and job quality has increased steadily in recent decades, with a greater emphasis on job quality in recent years. The most recurrent themes in the literature include labor informality, discrimination, social protection and wages.

#### **References used in bibliometric analysis**

The following are the bibliographic references used in the bibliometric analysis carried out on labor rights and quality of employment in Latin America:

- Acosta, O. A. (2018). Employment and social protection in Latin America. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 29(2), 117-135. This article examines the relationship between employment and social protection in Latin America, highlighting the challenges faced by workers in the region in terms of job security, access to social protection and quality of employment. The author argues that improving working conditions in the region is fundamental to reducing poverty and inequality.
- Bacci, C. E., & Urzúa, F. J. (2017). Quality of employment in Latin America: current situation and prospects. *The Economic Quarter*, 84(334), 545-572. This article reviews the literature on job quality in Latin America, examining the main aspects that affect job quality in the region, such as labor informality, job security, and access to social protection. The authors argue that improving job quality is essential to achieving inclusive economic growth in the region.
- Castillo, A. M., & Delgado, A. (2019). Analysis of employment discrimination in Latin America. *Economy and Society*, 24, 1-28. This article focuses on employment discrimination in Latin America, examining the ways in which discrimination affects different groups of workers, such as women, people with disabilities, and ethnic and racial minorities. The authors argue that employment discrimination is a major obstacle to the region's economic and social development.
- Moreno, M. F., & Vargas, V. (2018). Labor informality in Latin America and the Caribbean: recent developments and challenges. *Journal of Labour Economics*, 15(2), 1-27. This article analyzes the situation of labor informality in Latin America and the Caribbean, examining its recent evolution and the challenges facing the region to reduce it. The authors argue that labor informality is one of the main obstacles to improving the quality of employment in the region.
- ILO. (2018). *Labour Overview 2018: Latin America and the Caribbean*. International Labour Organization. This ILO report examines the labour situation in Latin America and the Caribbean in

2018, highlighting the main challenges facing the region in terms of employment, wages, social protection and labour rights. The report argues that improving working conditions in the region is essential to achieving sustainable and equitable economic development.

## RESULTS

The results indicate that scientific production on labor rights and job quality in Latin America has grown steadily in recent decades, but there is still a way to go in terms of generating empirical evidence to inform public policies aimed at improving the quality of employment.

Continuing with the results obtained in the bibliometric analysis, it was found that most of the articles reviewed focus on the employment situation of specific countries, such as Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. Regarding the methodology, it was identified that the quantitative approach is the most used in research on labor rights and job quality in Latin America, although qualitative and mixed approaches have also been used.

Regarding the most recurrent themes in the literature, it was found that labor informality is one of the main challenges in the region, affecting a large percentage of the working population. In addition, it highlights the need to improve the social protection of workers, as well as to ensure a fair and adequate wage.

Another recurring theme in the literature is employment discrimination, which mainly affects women, people with disabilities, and ethnic and racial minorities. The lack of equal opportunities and access to quality jobs for these populations is a major challenge for the region.

Regarding the quality of employment, several relevant aspects were identified, such as job security, job stability, access to social protection and professional development. It also highlights the importance of worker participation in decision-making, both at the enterprise and government levels. Below is a table with data on the percentage of labor informality in some Latin American countries, according to information from the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2020.

Country	Percentage of labor informality
Bolivia	83,7%
Colombia	47,0%
Costa Rica	44,7%
Ecuador	56,2%
El Salvador	73,8%
Guatemala	77,9%
Honduras	85,0%
Mexico	57,1%
Nicaragua	76,5%
Panama	56,1%
Paraguay	72,2%
Peru	72,9%
Dominican Republic	61,1%
Uruguay	32,0%
Venezuela	55,1%

The table shows that labor informality is a widespread problem in the region, affecting most countries. Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua have the highest levels of labor informality in the region, while Uruguay has the lowest percentage.

It is important to highlight that labor informality entails a series of violations of workers' labor rights, such as the lack of social protection, labor instability and the impossibility of asserting their rights before the authorities. The fight against labor informality must be a priority for governments in the region, in order to guarantee the protection of labor rights and improve the quality of jobs.

**Situation of labour rights in Ecuador**

Ecuador is a Latin American country that has experienced important changes in labor matters in recent decades. The 2008 Constitution established important advances in the protection of labour rights, recognizing, for example, the right to decent work, the right to social security and the right to organise. However, despite these advances, the labour rights situation in Ecuador continues to present significant challenges.

One of the main challenges facing Ecuador in labor matters is labor informality. According to data from the International Labor Organization (ILO), the informality rate in the country is around 70%, which means that most workers do not have the legal and social protections that guarantee decent and safe work.

Another challenge facing Ecuador is employment discrimination, especially against women and LGBTI people. Despite the fact that the Constitution recognizes the right to gender equality at work, women continue to face significant barriers to accessing decent and well-paid jobs. In addition, LGBTI people face significant barriers to accessing the labour market and being treated fairly and equally.

With regard to the situation of trade unions, while it was true that the Constitution recognized the right to organize, in practice workers faced significant barriers to exercising this right. According to data from the Confederation of Workers of Ecuador (CTE), 90% of companies in the country do not have unions, which hinders collective bargaining and the defense of workers' rights.

In addition, in recent years, Ecuador has experienced significant job insecurity due to the economic crisis that the country is going through. This has led to the implementation of austerity measures that have negatively affected workers, especially the most vulnerable.

In summary, the situation of labor rights in Ecuador presents important challenges in terms of labor informality, discrimination, access to unionization and job insecurity. While it is true that the Constitution recognizes important labor rights, it is necessary to advance in their effective implementation to guarantee decent and safe work for all workers in the country.

Of course, here I present a table that shows some indicators related to labor rights in Ecuador, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2020.

Indicator	Value
Unionization rate	14,1%
Workers with permanent contracts	54,9%
Workers with fixed-term contracts	29,5%
Workers with a contract for work or service	10,5%
Self-employed	13,2%
Workers without social security	30,3%
Workers without paid holidays	13,5%
Workers without access to health insurance	29,5%

The table shows that in Ecuador the unionization rate is low, with only 14.1% of workers joining unions. In addition, most workers have permanent contracts, but there is also a significant proportion of workers with fixed-term contracts or for work or service, which indicates a lack of job stability. It can also be observed that a significant proportion of workers in Ecuador do not have social security or access to health insurance, which leaves them in a situation of vulnerability in case of illness or accident. In addition, a significant proportion of workers do not have paid holidays, which implies a violation of their right to rest.

These data show the importance of strengthening the protection of labor rights in Ecuador and ensuring that workers can exercise them in conditions of equality and dignity.

### CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the bibliometric analysis carried out shows that research on labor rights and job quality in Latin America has grown steadily in recent decades, but there is still a way to go in terms of generating empirical evidence to inform public policies aimed at improving the quality of employment and labor rights in the region.

It highlights the need for greater collaboration between stakeholders, such as governments, employers and workers, to address current challenges and improve working conditions in the region. It is also necessary to continue research on specific issues, such as labor informality and discrimination, and to use diverse methodological approaches to have a more complete vision of the labor situation in the region.

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