

Quality of working life in Italy: findings from Inapp survey

La qualità del lavoro in Italia: i risultati di un'indagine Inapp

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Abstract Job quality is important to all citizens and is also central to policy concerns as Europe tries to boost economic growth and address the demographic challenge and the threats to the welfare systems. Making work sustainable and keeping people in work for longer are two key aspirations of many European countries. Maintaining and developing job quality is crucial for attaining these goals.

The paper aims at analyzing the behavior of the workers as regard the job quality in Italy in terms of working conditions, working time, work-life balance, health and well-being at work, pay and income.

More in detail, the paper provides a statistical picture of job quality in Italy, investigating its variability and relevant inequalities. The analysis is carried out using the quantitative research “*Indagine campionaria sulla Qualità del Lavoro*” (QdL), provided by Inapp (“*Istituto Nazionale per l’Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche*” – Public Policy Innovation). It provides a rich portrait of workplace trends in Italy over the last fifteen years. Using logistic regression model, it is possible to estimate the job satisfaction level among workers more accurately. Overall the data confirm the existence of strong inequalities among workers and the findings also underline the importance of company and workplace practices in safeguarding health and safety (including against psychosocial risks), improving work–life balance, supporting career development, promoting skills use and development, managing workload and designing meaningful jobs. This requires policy attention, to increase the focus on job quality as part of active labour market policies.

Abstract *Il presente contributo fornisce un quadro statistico della qualità del lavoro in Italia, indagando la sua variabilità e le disuguaglianze rilevanti, analizzando il comportamento dei lavoratori in termini di condizioni di lavoro, orario di lavoro, equilibrio tra vita lavorativa, salute e benessere al lavoro, retribuzione e reddito. L’analisi è stata effettuata utilizzando “l’indagine*

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campionaria sulla qualità del lavoro" (QdL), una ricerca quantitativa condotta dall'Inapp (Istituto nazionale per l'Analisi delle politiche pubbliche). Utilizzando un modello di regressione logistica, è stato possibile stimare più accuratamente il livello di soddisfazione del lavoro tra gli occupati. Nel complesso i dati confermano l'esistenza di forti disuguaglianze tra i lavoratori e sottolineano anche l'importanza delle prassi aziendali.

Key words: Ageing workforce; Job quality; Pay and income; Work-life balance; Working conditions; Logistic regression model.

1 Introduction

Job satisfaction for all is a goal for European education, training and employment policies. In particular, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) underlines as significant objectives the “promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions...proper social protection, dialogue between management and labour, the development of human resources with a view to lasting employment and the combating of exclusion” (Article 151 TFEU).

In the main slogan of the Europe 2020 strategy – ‘smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ – the ideas of working conditions and job quality are implicit rather than explicit; however, ‘improving the quality of work and working conditions’ is a pivotal objective of the European Commission’s 2010 ‘Agenda for new skills and jobs’ initiative².

Improving working conditions and job quality continues to be a significant goal in European policies, underpinning Europe’s capacity to compete. It is a cross-cutting issue that both influences and is influenced by many other European policies. For example, the Commission’s recent industrial renaissance and enterprise policies have implications for working conditions and job quality (European Commission 2017). And conversely, the improvement of working conditions is important for the implementation of other European policies (i.e. innovation and gender equality).

Current European policy concerns include work–life balance (in particular for working parents), fighting undeclared and fraudulent work, extending working life, addressing the challenge of segmented labour markets and ensuring a proper balance between flexibility and security, investing in human capital, preparing individuals for potential risks over their life course, and addressing the significant inequalities that people face in the labour market (Judge and Watanabe 1993).

² “*High quality of work goes hand in hand with high employment participation. This is because the working environment plays a crucial role in enhancing the potential of the workforce and is a leading competitiveness factor. In order to innovate and to deliver promptly and efficiently, EU companies depend for their survival and expansion on a committed workforce, thriving in a high-quality working environment, with safe and healthy working conditions*”.

The current policy debates on new forms of employment and undeclared and fraudulent work highlight the importance of monitoring working conditions and of providing data and analysis that can both enhance understanding of the common challenges faced by Europe and the Member States and support policymaking in these areas.

Numerous changes (demographic, structural and technological) are affecting the composition of the workforce, employment levels, job content and how workers experience their working lives. These developments challenge the role that work plays in our societies, with working life actors responding in different ways, and have a knock-on effect on working conditions and job quality (Eurofound 2017).

Furthermore, demographic ageing is an irreversible process. The direct effect of population ageing is the increasing share of elderly people, who are in retirement age, compared to the decreasing share of young people (Eurofound 2015).

The ageing of the European working population calls for policy attention to two issues: ensuring that demanding working conditions can be undertaken by an older workforce and ensuring that working conditions are sustainable over the life course to allow people to remain in work longer.

2 Data and methods

In order to achieve this goal, the analysis is carried out using microdata from the quantitative research “*Indagine campionaria sulla Qualità del Lavoro*” (QdL)³, provided by Inapp⁴.

The survey aims to measure working conditions in Italy, analyse the differences among workers, identify groups at risk, highlight issues of concern and areas of progress and, ultimately, contribute to developing policy aimed at improving job quality. In 2015, QdL interviewed over 15.000 workers, both employees and self-employed people, in Italy (with appropriate weights provided by Istat they are 22 million, exactly the workers' amount in Italy). Workers were asked a range of questions concerning employment status, work organisation, learning and training, working time duration and organisation, physical and psychosocial risk factors, health and safety, work–life balance, worker participation, earnings and financial security, as well as work and health (Clark 1998).

Going beyond the objective measures of job quality, the report also looks at workers' own assessment of their working lives. It finds associations between the different dimensions of job quality and factors such as engagement, financial

³ For more details: <http://inapp.org/it/dati/qualitadelavoro>

⁴ National Institute for Public Policy Analysis, former ISFOL - National Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training Employment, that changed its company name in INAPP (*Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche – Public Policy Innovation*) on December 1st 2016 (www.inapp.org)

security, the development of skills and competences, health and well-being, the reconciliation of work and private life, and the sustainability of work.

The first part describes the main characteristics of the workforce in Italy. Apart from traditional aspects, such as employment levels broken down by occupation, sector or employment status, it also looks at indicators such as sex, age, educational attainment, country of origin, seniority, health status and household circumstances.

Subsequently it focuses on developments in job quality in Italy. The current analysis is based on the following seven indices: physical environment; work intensity; working time quality; social environment; skills and discretion; prospects; and earnings. The indices cover extrinsic and intrinsic job features captured from an objective perspective. They are based on positive and negative self-reported features of the job, which measure the concrete experiences of work and have been proven to have a causal effect (either positive or negative) on the health and well-being of workers. The analysis of each index's components is supplemented by other features of the job or the working environment, such as dealing with customers or place of work. Other organisational resources provided through employee representation at the workplace are also considered.

Special attention is paid to the perspective of the individual job-holder: how their skills match their job, what their level of engagement is with their job, whether it provides them with financial security, what their work–life balance and time preferences are like, and how they juggle their different roles as worker, family member and citizen. Finally, issues around health and well-being, as well as workers' views on the sustainability of work, are explored.

QdL paints a wide-ranging picture of Italy at work, across occupations, sectors and age groups. Its findings highlight actions for policy actors to help them address the challenges facing Italy today and provide detailed information on a broad range of issues, including exposure to physical and psychosocial risks, work organisation, work–life balance, and health and well-being.

The topics covered include employment status, working time duration and organisation, work organisation, learning and training, physical and psychosocial risk factors, health and safety, work-life balance, worker participation, earnings and financial security, as well as work and health, with a special attention to gender mainstreaming.

Since its launch in 2002 the “*Indagine campionaria sulla Qualità del Lavoro*” has provided an overview of working conditions in Italy in order to:

- assess and quantify working conditions of both employees and the self employed;
- analyse relationships between different aspects of working conditions;
- identify groups at risk and issues of concern as well as of progress;
- monitor trends by providing homogeneous indicators on these issues;
- contribute to national policy development in particular on quality of work and employment issues.

Using multivariate analysis (logistic regression models with Stata software) it is possible to estimate the job satisfaction level more accurately (Liu 2016). The model has been developed for employed adults only and includes, first of all,

adults' socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender and citizenship), secondly, job and size enterprise.

In order to achieve this goal, we have used "Satisfaction" as the dependent variable (weighted model). Satisfaction = 1 if the worker is satisfied.

Concretely, in our study the following variables are considered (tab. 1):

- **Gender.** Categorical. Dummy variable: Female, Male (reference cat.).
- **Age group.** Categorical. Six intervals. From 18 to 24 (reference cat.); 25 to 34; 35 to 44; 45 to 54; 55 to 64; 65+.
- **JobISCO.** Categorical. Nine levels. Elementary occupations (reference cat.); Managers; Professionals; Technicians and associate professionals; Clerical support workers; Services and sales workers; Craft and related trades workers; Plant and machine operators and assemblers; Military forces.
- **Education level.** Categorical. Three levels. Secondary school (reference cat.); High school; University.
- **Training.** Four levels: No training (reference cat.), Yes, paid by me; Yes, paid by other; Yes, paid by me and others.

Table 1: Logistic regression model

Variables		Beta	ODDS	Sign.
• Gender				
Male (ref.)	Female	0,28	1,33	0,003
• Age group				
18-24 (ref.)	25 - 34	-0,45	0,63	0,142
	35 - 44	-0,66	0,51	0,031
	45 - 54	-0,43	0,65	0,155
	55 - 64	-0,69	0,50	0,025
	65 - W	-0,17	0,84	0,666
• Education level				
Secondary school (ref.)	High school	-0,31	0,73	0,009
	University	-0,41	0,66	0,007
• Job ISCO				
Elementary occupations (ref.)	Managers	1,19	3,27	0,000
	Professionals	0,83	2,29	0,000
	Technicians and associate professionals	0,77	2,16	0,000
	Clerical support workers	0,71	2,02	0,000
	Services and sales workers	0,34	1,41	0,057
	Craft and related trades workers	0,68	1,96	0,000
	Plant and machine operators and assemblers	0,31	1,37	0,121
	Military forces	1,72	5,59	0,007
• Training				
No (ref.)	Yes, paid by me	0,34	1,40	0,021
	Yes, paid by other	0,62	1,86	0,000
	Yes, paid by me and others	0,65	1,92	0,005
Intercept		2,02	7,56	0,000

Number of obs = 15,059

Wald chi2(19) = 94,85

Prob > chi2 = 0.0000

Log pseudolikelihood = -7266817.1

Pseudo R2 = 0.0283

Source: own elaboration on QdL data (Inapp survey)

3 Conclusions

Overall, the survey finds, structural inequalities and differences in terms of gender, employment status and occupation are still significant. In the last 10 years, there has been limited progress in some aspect of job quality.

Going beyond the objective measures of job quality, the report also looks at workers' own assessment of their working lives. It finds associations between the different dimensions of job quality and factors such as engagement, financial security, the development of skills and competences, health and well-being, the reconciliation of work and private life, and the sustainability of work.

Looking at the findings through the lens of the job quality profiles, jobs in the 'poor quality' profile would benefit most from actions to support the various dimensions of job quality and labour market policies focused on moving workers into better-quality roles (Cedefop 2015).

More generally, job quality can be supported by a wide-ranging set of policies and actions aimed at addressing the issues raised in the survey's analysis of job quality indices and profiles and that support workers throughout their working lives. In addition to policy initiatives at EU level, by national authorities and social partners, progress can also be achieved through workplace practices and policies at company level.

The improvement of working conditions takes place in a context of subsidiarity. Governments and social partners, companies and workers all have a role to play. Yet experience has shown that the EU is also a key player and has contributed to improving working conditions through its various measures with regard to the improvement of health and safety at work and gender equality, and its wider coordination of employment policies

Finally, vocational training plays an important role because the nature of jobs is changing, necessitating changes in the skills that are required of workers and adapting lifelong learning systems to the needs of an ageing workforce. The recent crisis has also highlighted the importance of education and training at all stages of life, in particular for older adults to avoid unemployment, vindicating the messages that "it is never too late to learn" and learning must be for all. This requires older people to maintain and update the skills they have, particularly in relation to new technologies. Continuous learning and development of an ageing workforce are important for employers' survival in competitive markets, as well as for maintaining older people's employability.

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