

International Labour Review

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1 **Essential yet excluded: COVID-19 and the decent work deficit among domestic workers in Brazil**

Louisa ACCIARI, Chirlene DOS SANTOS BRITO and Cleide PEREIRA PINTO

This article presents data from a survey conducted with the National Federation of Domestic Workers of Brazil on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic workers, also considering emergency policies and the Federation's main actions in the first year of the crisis. Focusing on employment and income, occupational health and safety, and violations of rights, it shows the extreme polarization between those who lost their livelihoods and those obliged to continue working at the expense of their health and basic human rights. Although the circumstances were exceptional, the authors argue that this situation was made possible by pre-existing conditions of legal exclusion and precarity.

Keywords: domestic workers, COVID-19, decent work, Brazil, employment, income, occupational health and safety, workers' rights.

25 **Shorter hours wanted? A systematic review of working-time preferences and outcomes**

Miklós ANTAL, Benedikt LEHMANN, Thiago GUIMARAES, Alexandra HALMOS and Bence LUKÁCS

Changes in working time have important economic, social and environmental implications. However, research on workers' preferences is highly fragmented across disciplines and journals. To overcome this, the present article provides a systematic review of the literature, analysing 173 studies. The study shows that working-time outcomes and mismatches are mostly studied in a small group of OECD countries, using survey data and statistical methods. The most clear and consistent results are about gender, care responsibilities and current working hours. Among professions, only the medical workforce receives substantial attention. Norms and preference formation are poorly understood, and more qualitative research is essential to understand how working-time reductions could spread.

Keywords: industrial relations, preferences, working-time reduction, overemployment, underemployment, mismatch, literature survey.

49 **The fallacy of the lump of labour theory: Evidence for Latin America**

Ignacio APELLA

In a context of population ageing, this article analyses the “lump of labour” theory using empirical evidence from Latin America. Instead of finding a crowding-out effect, estimations using a fixed effects model on a panel of annual data drawn from household surveys in 11 countries between 2002 and 2019 suggest a positive correlation between the employment rates of older adults and young people. Additionally, results show a positive association between the labour incomes of older and young workers. These findings could indicate that an expansion in the employment of older adults maintains economic growth and, therefore, a greater demand for labour, which could be supplied by young people.

Keywords: lump of labour fallacy, labour market, ageing, older workers, youth employment, Latin America.

73 **The value of complaints mechanisms in the private labour regulation of GVCs: A case study of the Fair Labor Association**

James HARRISON, Margarita PAREJO and Mark WIELGA

Can complaints mechanisms strengthen the private labour regulation of global value chains (GVCs)? This article empirically investigates the results produced by the Fair Labor Association’s (FLA) complaints mechanism, which alone allows outcomes to be verified from the complainant’s perspective. Although the vast majority of complainants find this mechanism to be valuable, it also has a number of limitations that seriously affect outcomes for workers. The authors utilize the concept of “grounding” to explore how national, social and corporate dimensions affect the performance of the FLA complaints mechanism for workers. The implications of these findings are then considered for complaints mechanisms in other GVCs.

Keywords: complaints mechanisms, private regulation, multistakeholder initiative, clothing industry, value chains, labour standards, case study.

95 **Safety and health at work as fundamental rights: A comparative-historical study of the ILO’s strategy of realistic vigilance**

Jeffrey HILGERT

This article is a comparative-historical study of ILO action on occupational safety and health (OSH) as fundamental rights. In the two decades following the adoption of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the ILO used a realist lens and prioritized the idea that OSH were dependent upon economic preconditions for their protection. This history is revisited in the light of the new complex of global health uncertainty and the addition of OSH to the framework of fundamental principles and rights at work. The analysis highlights the applicability of a realistic vigilance approach to the ILO’s current work on OSH.

Keywords: occupational safety and health, human rights, ILO, Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, fundamental rights, comparative study.

117 **Preferential employment policies and firm performance: Evidence from Indian public sector enterprises**

Ritika JAIN and Vinoj ABRAHAM

This article examines the impact of job reservations on the performance of public sector enterprises (PSEs) in India. Drawing on data for all central government-owned manufacturing PSEs from 2014 to 2017 and employing instrumental variable techniques, the authors test the hypothesis that reservations benefit firm performance if implemented across all levels of the employment hierarchy. While the findings validate this hypothesis, they also indicate that the reserved categories are disproportionately represented in the lower end of the organizational hierarchy. This imbalance is primarily driven by systematic limitations in vacancy notifications and discriminatory practices within organizations.

Keywords: workforce diversity, public enterprise, India, reservation, labour productivity, employment policy, data analysis.

141 **Working, yet not working: Assessing labour underutilization in India**

Shalina Susan MATHEW

Labour market responses to past business downturns across countries have been ambiguous and paradoxical, including both pro- and counter-cyclical reactions. In the absence of adequate social safety nets, including unemployment insurance, counter-cyclical employment rates could signal distress rather than productive employment opportunities. Juxtaposing household employment–unemployment data with the recommendations of the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians on labour underutilization, this article critiques existing data on underemployment in India and calls for the review of data collection methods to better inform labour market policies.

Keywords: labour underutilization, underemployment, invisible unemployment, business cycle, added worker effect, discouraged worker effect, potential labour force, India.

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ISSN 0020-7780
www.ilo.org/revue

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