



SPATIAL DETERMINANTS OF ADEQUATE EMPLOYMENT IN LATIN AMERICA, THE ECUADORIAN CASE

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Abstract: *This study employs the Heckman selection model to analyse the dynamics of adequate employment in Ecuador, particularly in the context of spatial determinants. The findings reveal that while formal education significantly boosts employment prospects, its impact on job adequacy is nuanced by regional disparities and local market characteristics. Furthermore, the study uncovers gender disparities, with women facing greater obstacles in both employment access and adequacy. The role of commuting emerges as a critical factor, where infrastructure and urban planning are shown to influence job suitability. Comparatively, the Ecuadorian labour market demonstrates a higher sensitivity to spatial determinants and accessibility issues than its European Union counterparts, indicating that local employment opportunities are more constrained by geographical and infrastructural factors. This research underscores the need for integrated employment policies that consider educational alignment, mobility enhancement, and inclusivity, aimed at strengthening the link between acquired skills and job market needs within the unique Ecuadorian context*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the labour market, suitable employment refers to a situation where a worker's abilities, developed through formal education at institutions like universities or polytechnic institutes, precisely match the demands of their current position. The literature extensively investigates this phenomena, examining the elements that contribute to attaining this state of balance. A



seminal study conducted by Tsang and Levin (1985) revealed that establishing adequacy in employment relies on maintaining a harmonious equilibrium between the availability of qualified people and the demand for their knowledge.

Significantly, the employment dynamics and work opportunities varies among various locations and nations. Research undertaken in Western nations such as Germany and the United States commonly suggests that recent graduates approach their job search within the context of a globalised market. Nevertheless, in nations such as Ecuador, the job market presents a contrasting depiction. In this context, job prospects arise and are defined at a more localised level, specifically corresponding to the city or canton levels within the country. There are other causes that could explain this unique pattern. Factors such as cultural subtleties, long-standing customs, and specific socioeconomic factors may contribute to the situation. In addition, a significant absence of mobility, defined as a limited ability to move freely in space, further constraints persons from expanding their career opportunities (Smith & Gomez, 1992).

The employment strategy in regions such as Ecuador, which focuses on local elements, provides a comprehensive perspective. It suggests that although globalisation has influenced various aspects of modern societies, local characteristics, traditions, and dynamics still play a key role in shaping employment opportunities.

Spatial flexibility, as defined by Büchel and van Ham (2003), refers to the duration individuals are ready to allocate for daily commuting and their openness to relocate for employment (migration tolerance). Within this conceptual framework, an Ecuadorian graduate seeking employment in the local market has three options (Simpson, 1992). One option is to choose unemployment, considering that the current unemployment rate among university graduates in Ecuador stands at 5.26%. The source of this information is the INEC report from 2017. The second option is to willingly take up employment that demands skills below their level of qualification in their hometown or region, indicating their aversion to mobility. It is estimated that in Ecuador, approximately 15.99 percent of individuals with undergraduate degrees and 6.34 percent of those with graduate degrees are unable to secure suitable employment. An additional option is to pursue employment that aligns with his aptitudes, although is not now



accessible within the regional market. This can be achieved by either opting for a lengthier commute or relocating to a city or territory that provides employment opportunities. In Ecuador, it is expected that 31.59 percent of individuals with undergraduate degrees and 39.81 percent of those with postgraduate degrees reside outside their geographic region of birthplace (INEC, 2017).

Considering the drawbacks caused by excessive schooling for both individuals and businesses, it is essential to examine the notion of adequate employment, specifically how it is influenced by commuting and migration. Effective employment focuses on the congruence between an individual's abilities and the demands of a particular occupation, which can help alleviate the adverse consequences of excessive education. This strategy requires an analysis of how commuting and migration impact employment possibilities and worker happiness, therefore enhancing the efficiency of the labour market.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has highlighted the complex interplay between commuting, migration, and local employment dynamics. For instance, a study by Monte, Redding, and Rossi-Hansberg (2018) developed a quantitative model to assess the elasticity of local employment to labor demand shocks, incorporating factors such as commuting and migration. Their findings suggest that local employment elasticities vary significantly across regions, influenced by commuting measures. This variation underscores the importance of considering commuting and migration patterns when analysing employment adequacy. The reduction in commuting costs, as indicated by their research, not only generates welfare gains but also leads to significant employment reallocations, highlighting the potential benefits of policies aimed at reducing commuting burdens.

Furthermore, the study by Kelobonye et al. (2019) on the impact of employment self-sufficiency measures on commuting time in Perth, Australia, offers insights into urban planning strategies aimed at reducing commuting times through employment distribution. Their findings reveal that job-worker balance (JWB), employment self-sufficiency (ESS), and employment self-containment (ESC) levels are critical for understanding commuting patterns. Specifically,



higher ESS correlates with lower inflow travel time, although JWB and ESC do not necessarily result in shorter travel times. This suggests that while efforts to balance employment opportunities and resident locations can influence commuting, they must be carefully designed to account for the complexities of urban mobility and employment matching.

Incorporating these findings, we can argue that addressing adequate employment in the context of commuting and migration requires a multifaceted approach. It involves not only matching skills and job requirements but also considering the spatial distribution of jobs and residences. Policies aimed at enhancing employment self-sufficiency and reducing commuting times can contribute to a more balanced and efficient labour market, ultimately benefiting both workers and employers.

In Ecuador, discussions about adequate employment, especially in relation to spatial factors at the provincial level, are critical for understanding labour market dynamics and development strategies. Focusing on adequate employment involves examining how local market characteristics (macro-level opportunities) and individual decisions (micro-level constraints) such as tolerance for migration and commuting, contribute to the employment landscape. This shift in focus aligns with studies examining spatial determinants of economic activities and their impact on employment quality and access. For instance, research by García-Vélez et al. (2022) on regional analysis of poverty and its implications for employment opportunities highlights the importance of considering spatial factors in employment studies. Moreover, the concept of financial inclusion as a mechanism to improve living conditions, as studied in the context of Ecuador's provinces (2015-2018), provides insights into how economic policies can influence employment adequacy (Calderón et al., 2021). This approach to understanding employment challenges through the lens of spatial economics and regional disparities offers a comprehensive view, addressing both the macro and micro determinants of employment quality.

Hence, it is necessary to rethink the research question in order to explore the role of macro-level opportunities and micro-level limitations in attaining adequate job opportunities in Ecuador. The novel methodology enables an in-depth review of the labour market, addressing the distinct geographical and personal aspects that influence employment results.



Until the end of the 1990s, discussions around employment primarily focused on overeducation, with spatial determinants of employment outcomes receiving limited attention. However, the theory of adequate employment, as discussed by John Rawls, shifts this focus towards ensuring that individuals not only find employment but also that such employment is meaningful and contributes to their self-respect (Eckstrand, 2016). Rawls argued that a just society would ensure full employment, allowing everyone who wishes to work the ability to find meaningful occupation. This perspective considers the right to work not just in terms of quantity but quality, emphasising the importance of employment conditions that uphold individuals' dignity and contribute positively to their life. Rawls's views underline the need for employment policies that go beyond merely addressing unemployment rates, focusing also on the nature of employment and its fit with individuals' skills and aspirations. The challenge remains to align labour market dynamics with the principle of adequate employment, ensuring that jobs available match the skills and needs of the workforce, thereby reducing the risk of overeducation and underemployment.

Incorporating Frank's (1978) work into the discussion on adequate employment offers a historical perspective on the complexities of labour market outcomes, particularly in relation to spatial determinants and gender disparities. Frank's theory, which explored the differential overqualification between genders within households, highlighted how geographical constraints and labour market choices of one spouse can disproportionately expose the other to risks of over-education or underemployment. This early examination underscores the necessity of framing employment policies within a context that considers both spatial and familial dynamics, further enriched by Rawls's (as discussed by Eckstrand, 2016) emphasis on meaningful employment. Frank's findings serve as a foundational element that underscores the importance of addressing both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of employment, advocating for a labour market that not only provides jobs but ensures that these jobs are adequately matched to the skills and circumstances of individuals, thus mitigating the risk of overeducation and enhancing overall job satisfaction and societal well-being.



Beginning in 2003, research efforts have expanded the understanding of employment dynamics beyond the confines of overeducation. Studies such as Büchel and van Ham (2003) initially broadened the analysis to include the spatial determinants of employment adequacy, moving beyond the limitations of gender theory to explore how the size of the labour market influences the alignment between individuals' qualifications and job roles. The integration of later hypotheses by Manning and Petrongolo (2017) further refined this analysis, suggesting that individuals prioritise finding employment within close proximity to their residence to minimise mobilisation and frictional costs. This preference leads to a scenario where, in the absence of suitable job opportunities within their local labour market, individuals may accept positions that either underutilize or precisely match their skill set. In this context, the concept of adequate employment is framed by three key factors as identified by Büchel and van Ham (2003):

2.1 Factor One: Availability of Job Opportunities

The chance of finding adequately matched employment is significantly influenced by the spatial distribution of job opportunities and the size of the labour market, which together define a worker's job search horizon. This horizon is influenced by personal mobility and the willingness to commute or migrate for work, highlighting the importance of both the quantitative and qualitative distribution of employment opportunities across regions (Büchel & van Ham, 2003).

2.2 Factor Two: Emigration Tolerance

Emigration tolerance reflects the capacity and willingness of individuals to relocate for work, affected by the costs associated with moving and the potential loss of social, economic, and cultural ties to their place of origin. This tolerance is diminished when relocation would disrupt multiple household earners or when deep-rooted community ties exist, posing challenges to labour mobility. The dynamics of emigration tolerance and its impact on job market outcomes are comprehensively explored by Green, McIntosh, and Neuburger (2015), who highlight how individual and familial considerations shape labour mobility decisions and, consequently, the suitability of employment matches.



2.3 Factor Three: Commutation Tolerance

Commutation tolerance is defined by the maximum time individuals are willing to spend travelling between their home and workplace. This tolerance is influenced by social and cultural factors and varies across different locales, with studies suggesting a maximum commuting time of 45 minutes in OECD countries as a benchmark for employment decisions (Van Ommeren & Rietveld, 2005).

Incorporating the insights of recent studies, such as those by Liu, Huang, and Wang (2021), which emphasise the critical role of local economic conditions and individual preferences in job search and employment outcomes, enriches our understanding of adequate employment. These studies contribute to a nuanced view of how individuals navigate the job market, balancing qualifications with the realities of job availability, personal circumstances, and local economic contexts.

In recent efforts to understand the dynamics of the labour market, the concept of adequate employment has emerged as a pivotal area of study, especially in the context of developing economies. For example, studies have highlighted the importance of aligning labour market demand with the skills and qualifications of the workforce to ensure higher levels of employment adequacy. In this vein, Autor, Levy, and Murnane (2003) discuss how technological advancements have reshaped the demand for skilled labour, underscoring the necessity for economies to adapt their education and training systems to meet these evolving demands.

Moreover, the issue of adequate employment extends to how demographic groups, including immigrants and ethnic minorities, integrate into the labour market. Research by Chiswick and Miller (2009) on the economic assimilation of immigrants suggests that recognizing foreign credentials and providing targeted training programs are essential for maximising the employment prospects and contributions of immigrants to the labour market.



Concerning older workers, the work of Posthuma and Campion (2009) highlights the challenges and opportunities presented by an ageing workforce. They argue for the development of age-inclusive HR practices and lifelong learning initiatives to enhance the employability and productivity of older adults, thereby ensuring they find adequate employment that reflects their experience and skills.

3. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this paper is to analyse the concept of adequate employment and the factors that impact it, with a specific emphasis on its correlation with the geographical region.

Prior to delving into methodological considerations, it is important to emphasise the challenge in determining if employed individuals possess adequate employment. This is the case when there is no record indicating whether a person rejects a job because it is not acceptable (Ramos and Sanromá, 2013). The only way to identify if a person has not an adequate job is if he finds a job and his qualifications reveal that he has more training than is required. Additionally, it is necessary to generate estimates specifically for those who receive labour income. This requires an initial step to be taken before running the appropriate work model, in which it is indicated whether they are employed or not (Rodriguez Lozano, 2016). All of the previously indicated factors would lead to selection bias.

Heckman (1979) presents a two-step methodology to address this issue. The initial step involves employing a probit model to assess the likelihood of an event taking place, with the dependent variable. Subsequently, the outcomes are examined using an OLS (Ordinary Least Squares) approach that utilises the inverse of Mills. Instead of this, Büchel and van Ham (2003) suggest a two-step probit method. In the first step, a model is defined to calculate the likelihood of an individual securing a job. In the second step, another model is employed to determine the likelihood of the individual being overeducated. However, in our case, we will focus on the probability of the individual having a suitable job. This is significant since the dependent variables in both steps have a binary character.



Prior to adopting this methodology, the supplied features are provided for the development of an econometric procedure to evaluate the correlation between adequate employment at the individual level and labour market variables:

- a. A database of individuals above the age of 22 with at least a third-level degree is compiled (who will be considered as those at risk of over-education). Students, pensioners, and members of the armed forces and national police are not included. The place of residence serves as a variable to connect individual and regional data. Data sources include the National Survey of Employment, Unemployment, and Underemployment ENEMDU (INEC, 2017) and Satellite Georeferencing Systems (Google Maps).
- b. Then, individual observations are categorised by residence. The statistics encompass both local and individual characteristics. It is necessary to consider the layered structure of the data in order to maintain the assumption of independence of observations, which is fundamental to conventional regression models (Moen et al., 2016). The resolution of this matter is achieved by categorising the data in the model according to canton, a method also employed by Büchel and van Ham (2003).

This research uses discrete choice models as its principal analytical tool for evaluating and forecasting outcomes. These models are characterised by the dependent variable of interest having a limited number of distinct and exclusive response options. Therefore, it is possible to differentiate between dichotomous answer models and multiple-choice models (Medina Moral, 2003).

The proposed methodology examines both the likelihood of an individual being hired and the likelihood of them having suitable employment. In the first stage, an econometric specification is employed to calculate the probability of being employed. In the second stage, the probability of having a suitable job is estimated (Büchel and van Ham, 2003). Given the binary nature of employment, where individuals are either hired or not, we utilise a probit model (Büchel and van Ham, 2003).

Based on the two-step model of Heckman (1979) with the variation of Büchel and van Ham (2003), the employment decision and that of adequate employment depend on an Index that is

determined by one or more explanatory variables for the purposes of this paper. Hence, a higher score indicates a higher probability of an individual being employed and, if working, having a satisfactory job.

The variables utilised in the initial two phases are thereafter augmented in accordance with the factor of the employed database (INEC, 2017).

Therefore:

$$Y_i = \{1 \text{ si } I_i^* > 0 \text{ } 0 \text{ si } I_i^* < 0$$

The Probit model is defined by:

$$P\left(y = \frac{1}{x}\right) = F(\beta'x) = \int_{-\infty}^{\beta'x} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \exp \exp \left(-\frac{1}{2}t^2\right) dt = \int_{-\infty}^{\beta'x} \phi(t)dt$$

F represents a function that returns values between 0 and 1 for all real numbers Z. Similarly, F denotes the normal cumulative distribution function with standardisation, as described by Medina Moral in 2003. Therefore, it can be expressed in the following manner:

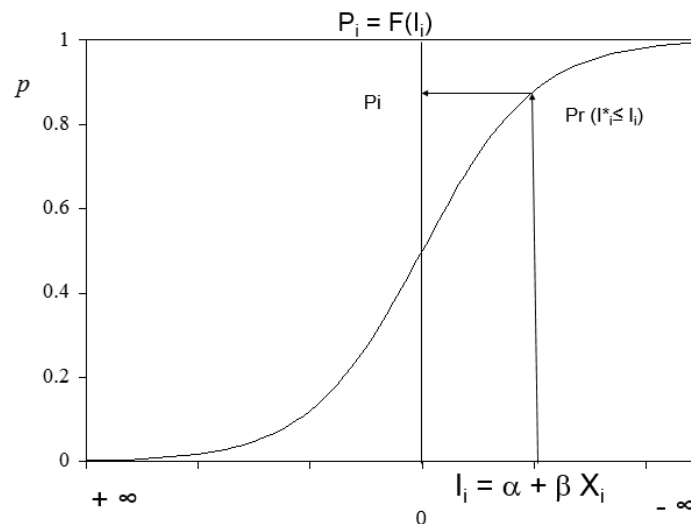


Figure 1

Source: Methodological Notes Master's Degree Project Evaluation ITBA-UCEMA

By utilising predictive modelling, it is possible to evaluate the probability of an individual being employed, as well as the geographical factors that impact their job status.



As a result, the first Probit model take this form:

$$Pr = (X) = \phi(X'\beta')$$

$Pr = (X)$; The probability that a worker with a college degree will be hired. (Employment=1)

β' ; Vector of estimable parameters.

X ; Selected Variables Matrix.

ϕ ; The normal cumulative function standardised.

This probit model considers the following variables:

- Gender
- Age (in years).
- The square root of age.
- Coupling: (If the worker, male or female has a partner)
- Second Income: (The worker male or female earns money through a side occupation).
- Years of formal education
- Years of tenure in the position.
- Nationality (The worker is foreign)
- Disability Income: (If the worker receives an impairment pension)
- Automobility (If the worker has a vehicle for private use)
- The average travel time to the next metropolitan centre in Ecuador is 120 minutes, but it is only 45 minutes in OECD countries.
- The rate of unemployment in the worker's place of origin.
- Female employee in a committed relationship:
- Secondary Income for Women: (Applies to women who have an additional source of income).

Taking into consideration solely the working population, the state of over-education will next be assessed, therefore calculating the likelihood that an employed individual is in an adequate job.



Consequently, a second probit model with the following parameters will be utilised:

$$Pr = (X) = \phi(X'\beta')$$

$Pr = (X)$; The likelihood that a worker has an adequate job (Adequate job=1)

β' ; Vector of estimable parameters.

X' ; Selected Variables Matrix.

φ ; The normal cumulative function standardised.

This second probit model considers the following variables:

- Gender
- Coupling: (If the worker, male or female has a partner)
- Second Income: (The worker male or female earns money through a side occupation).
- Years of formal education
- Years of tenure in the current job.
- Nationality (The worker is foreign)
- Disability Income: (If the worker receives an impairment pension)
- Automobility (If the worker has a vehicle for private use)
- Average travel time to the nearest metropolitan centre (which for the Ecuadorian case is 120 minutes compared to 45 minutes in OECD countries)
- The unemployment rate in the worker's hometown.
- Woman partnership: (If the employee is a woman who has a partner.)
- Woman Secondary Income: (If the worker is a woman with a secondary income source).

Age and age squared are not included in the second model since it is assumed that age affects employment but not overeducation. According to Büchel and van Ham (2003), there are three causes for this phenomenon. First, since age has no bearing on the choice to accept or reject an overqualified employment offer. Second, since if a probit model is run in the first stage, very comparable coefficients will be returned in the second; while this is not proof that this variable should be deleted, it does imply that deleting it would not alter the significance of the model.



Thirdly, authors such as Büchel and Battu (2003) and Dolton and Silles (2008) have not discovered a higher degree of relevance in age.

RESULTS

Table 1. Results of the job probability (PANEL A) and adequate job like hood (PANEL B)

VARIABLES	I	II
	n=9004	n=1244
Intercept	-2.056e+00 ***	+9.159e-01 ***
Gender (If worker is female)	-6.412e-01 ***	-2.900e-01 ***
Coupling (If the worker, male or female has a partner)	+8.272e-03	-5.241e-01 ***
Second Income (The worker male or female earns money through a side occupation).	+9.073e-07 *	-5.581e-04 ***
Age	+1.249e-01 ***	-
The square root of age	-1.483e-03 ***	-
Years of formal education	+8.804e-02 ***	-1.100e-01 ***
Years of tenure in the current job	-	-1.319e-02 ***
Nationality (The worker is foreign)	+4.962e-01 ***	7.298e-01 ***
Disability Income: (If the worker receives an impairment pension)	-9.727e-01 ***	-3.769e+00



Automobility (If the worker has a vehicle for private use)	+1.807e-01 ***	-1.495e-01 ***
Average travel time to the nearest metropolitan centre	-2.405e-01 ***	-4.992e-02 **
The unemployment rate in the worker's hometown	-6.342e+00 ***	-1.309e+01 ***
Woman partnership: (If the employee is a woman who has a partner)	-1.057e-01 ***	+4.605e-01 ***
Woman Secondary Income: (If the worker is a woman with a side income)	-5.365e-06 **	-2.116e-04 *
Estimated standard error		
Inverse Mills Ratio	0.06890	0.06131
σ	0.18170	N/A
ρ	0.37916	N/A
Note: ***: $p < 0.001$, **: $p < 0.01$, *: $p < 0.05$		

Data Source: ENEMDU (2017)

In the initial phase of the Heckman model, the likelihood of an individual in Ecuador obtaining employment was examined. The findings indicate that:

- Women have a significantly lower probability of being employed compared to men, suggesting gender barriers in accessing the labour market.
- Age shows a nonlinear relationship with employment, which could reflect a labour market favouring workers within certain age brackets.
- Formal education enhances the likelihood of employment, underscoring its significance as a critical factor for labour market access.



- Ownership of a vehicle for private use and the receipt of disability income are also significant factors, potentially reflecting the impact of mobility and social barriers, respectively.
- The interaction between being female and having a partner or a secondary income indicates complex gender dynamics in the labour market.

These findings highlight the need for policies aimed at improving gender equity and inclusion in the labour market, as well as the importance of education and mobility as employment facilitators.

The second stage focused on employment suitability among those who are employed. The key conclusions are:

- Tenure at the current job (years of tenure) and formal education positively impact job suitability, suggesting that work experience and training are valued for job quality.
- Being a foreigner or having a disability negatively impacts job suitability, which could reflect discrimination or structural disadvantages.
- The local unemployment rate and the average commuting hours have significant implications for job suitability, highlighting the influence of macroeconomic and infrastructure factors.

These results suggest the need to strengthen job training programs and urban and regional development policies, as well as to address the inequalities affecting foreigners and people with disabilities.

The combination of findings from both stages of the Heckman model provides a holistic perspective on the factors influencing both the probability of obtaining employment and obtaining suitable employment in Ecuador. It underscores the persistence of gender inequalities in job access and the positive influence of education and work experience on job quality. Moreover, it evidences the need to address the barriers faced by vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and foreign workers.



CONCLUSIONS

The present empirical research on job suitability in Ecuador offers findings that both converge with and diverge from previous studies in the literature. Consistent with Monte, Redding, and Rossi-Hansberg (2018), this study highlights the variability of local employment elasticities in response to labour demand shocks, with a particular focus on the importance of commuting. Likewise, this study supports the notion that reducing commuting costs not only increases welfare but also restructures the distribution of employment, which aligns with policy implications aimed at minimising commuting burdens.

In accordance with Kelobonye et al. (2019), it was observed that urban planning strategies seeking to decrease commuting times through equitable employment distribution, although valuable, must be meticulously designed to capture the complexities of urban mobility and job suitability. In the context of Ecuador, the importance of labour self-sufficiency measures and the spatial distribution of employment are highlighted as critical factors in understanding commuting patterns and their influence on job quality.

The current research extends the understanding of the existing literature by examining how commuting and migration intertwine with the local employment dynamics in Ecuador, a developing country with unique labour market characteristics. Similar to García-Vélez et al. (2022), the relevance of considering spatial factors in employment studies is emphasised, showing the need for policies that address both macroeconomic opportunities and individual-level constraints, such as tolerance for migration and commuting.

However, unlike what some previous research suggests, such as Büchel and van Ham (2003), this study did not find a direct and significant relationship between the size of the labour market and job suitability. This could reflect contextual differences between the countries studied or variations in research methodology.

The findings of this study also align with the principles of suitable employment discussed by John Rawls (as described in Eckstrand, 2016), highlighting the importance of employment being not only available but also meaningful and contributing to individuals' self-respect.



Evidence that factors such as education and work experience enhance job suitability supports the notion that employment policies should encourage the matching of individual skills and aspirations with available job opportunities.

Incorporating the work of Frank (1978), the differential influence of overqualification among genders within households is recognized. This study found that, while gender is significant in the probability of employment, its impact on job suitability is not as pronounced, suggesting that gender dynamics in the Ecuadorian labour market may differ from those observed in previous contexts.

The findings of this study suggest that employment policies in Ecuador should adopt a holistic approach that includes transport infrastructure, urban and regional planning, and educational training and development. The significant impact of formal education on job suitability underscores the importance of an education system aligned with labour market needs, aligning with findings from Autor et al. (2003). Additionally, the implication of commuting times on job suitability underscores the need for urban development policies that enhance connectivity between residential areas and employment centres, in line with recommendations from Kelobonye et al. (2019).

Social inclusion emerges as a pressing need, as both nationality and disability have negative implications on job suitability. This highlights the existence of structural barriers that may be limiting access to quality employment opportunities for certain groups. Consequently, strategies aimed at promoting the labour inclusion of people with disabilities and foreign workers are required, in tune with the studies by Chiswick and Miller (2009) on the economic assimilation of immigrants.

In terms of gender, the results reflect a significant disparity in employment probability for women, suggesting the persistence of gender inequalities in the labour market. This finding points to the need for specific policies that address systemic barriers to female employment, resonating with Frank's (1978) perspective on differential overqualification among genders, but extending it further towards access to employment in general.



Rawls's focus on meaningful employment and its contribution to self-respect finds resonance in this study, as job suitability emerges as a crucial component of individual well-being and social development. In this regard, the current research supports Rawls's vision and emphasises the importance of labour policies that not only increase the quantity of employment but also improve its quality, in line with the theory of suitable employment discussed by Eckstrand (2016).

Finally, the research underscores the importance of considering the spatial determinants of employment. In tune with Büchel and van Ham (2003), it recognizes that the availability and spatial distribution of job opportunities, along with tolerance for commuting and migration, decisively shape workers' employment search horizon. This suggests that employment policies should incorporate a spatial approach, attending to the country's economic geography and individual preferences, to maximise the match between employment and skills, thus minimising the risk of overqualification and underemployment.

The results of this research emphasise the need for integrated policies that simultaneously address educational, mobility, inclusion, and gender factors, within a framework that considers both macroeconomic opportunities and microeconomic limitations to achieve greater job suitability in the Ecuadorian context.

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