Well-being and employment of young people in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam Is work enough?

Carmichael, Fiona; Darko, Christian; Vasilakos, Nicholas

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Is work enough? Well-being and employment of young people in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam

Abstract

Motivation: Investing in youth employment is central to development agendas. However, policy directed towards increasing employment rates among young people needs to consider the well-being implications of the different kinds of jobs they are able to access. This would help countries to meet the Sustainable Development Goal of decent work for all, including young people, by 2030.

Purpose: This paper examines the association between the well-being of young people in Ethiopia, Peru, India and Vietnam and their employment and the job attributes of the work they do.

Approach and methods: The study uses five waves of the Young Lives longitudinal survey for a sample of children who are followed from age eight to 22. Regression analysis estimates the relationship between well-being, employment and job attributes, taking into account gender, wealth, current and childhood health and exposure to shocks over life-courses from age eight.

Findings: The results show that in these four countries, employment does not have an unqualified positive effect on well-being. Not all jobs are 'good jobs'. Job attributes matter, specifically, who employs the individual, their pay, the work environment and the pride they take in their work. Well-being is predicted by current and childhood health and household wealth with ownership of consumer durables associated more strongly with well-being than housing quality or access to services. Greater exposure to shocks from age eight is found to have lasting effects on well-being into young adulthood.

Policy implications: Policy aimed at improving young people's opportunities for employment in the global south also to consider the types of jobs they are able to access and how this impacts on their well-being. Policy also needs to take into account pre-labour market conditions and circumstances.

Keywords: Well-being, youth employment, life course, job quality, developing countries

Introduction

This article analyses the relationship between subjective well-being, employment and job attributes among young people in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. Youth unemployment and underemployment in low- and middle-income countries has been the subject of much research (Baah-Boateng, 2016; Kumar, 2020; Berhe, 2021) partly because employment is widely recognised as the key to poverty alleviation. However, the quality of work is variable. This is recognised in UN Sustainable Development Goal 8 which promotes not just work but 'decent' work for all, including young people, by 2030.

In low-and middle-income countries work is often precarious. It can be risky, poorly rewarded and undertaken under poor conditions, and this is not only true for young people (Sumberg et al., 2021). Such work limits potential and may not contribute much to overall well-being. This is important for a multitude of reasons. Higher levels of well-being are associated with health and longevity (Graham, 2008) while individuals who experience a higher level of subjective well-being are also more likely to exhibit generosity and engage with their local communities in a positive way (Oishi et al., 2007). The subjective well-being of employees is also important for organisational performance (Monnot and Beehr, 2014). Understanding these relationships can therefore lead to significant gains across a range of outcomes for individuals, communities and organisations, while enabling policy makers to design more effective and sustainable policies to foster economic development. This argument becomes even more important when considered in the context of less developed countries where 80 percent of the world population lives (United Nations, 2019) but resources are often scarce and unevenly distributed amongst societies.

This study contributes to research that analyses the ways that employment, job attributes and work practices impact on well-being (Wheatley, 2017(a) 2017(b); Merriman, 2017; Michaelson et al., 2014). This literature has mainly focused on developed countries and the application to less developed countries is still relatively limited. This is an important omission since labour market conditions are very different. Large informal sectors and low rates of social protection in low- and middle-income countries suggest that unemployment on its own is likely to be 'a poor measure of labour market distress' (Fields, 2011: S17). Even when considered in the context of less developed countries, the focus has been on adults (Markussen et al. 2018;

Graham, 2005a,2005b; Bhuiyan & Ivlevs, 2019). Exceptions include Aufseeser et al. (2016) who argue that children's work can contribute to their well-being and development and that therefore there are dangers from prohibiting all such work. There are equally compelling arguments for foregrounding understanding of how work contributes to the well-being of young people. Notably, earlier life experiences set the stage for later life experiences and can reinforce intergenerational transfers of inequality (Roy et al, 2018; Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007; Yakub, 2002). Young people's well-being is also of particular importance in a less developed country context where 43.77 percent of the population are under 25 (United Nations, 2019). The paper contributes to knowledge of young people's work and well-being using data from four low- middle-income countries. The findings provide further support for policy directed to creating what has been termed by Sumberg et al. (2020) 'a decent work economy.'

Well-being, employment and job attributes

An expanding body of literature highlights the importance of employment in determining subjective well-being. Employed individuals report persistently higher levels of well-being than unemployed individuals (Clark and Oswald 1994; Helliwell 2003, O'Connor 2020). There are also strong links between measures of job satisfaction and workers' performance (Riketta, 2008).[1] Happier workers are found to be more likely and more willing to engage with customers and their colleagues (Bakker and Oerlemans, 2011; Robertson and Cooper, 2010); they move jobs less often (Wright and Bonett, 2007; Harris and Cameron, 2005); they are absent less often (Negrini and Perron, 2014). Happier workers also tend to receive better ratings by their work supervisors (Peterson et al, 2011), they tend to have higher earnings than their less satisfied peers (Judge et al., 2010; Graham et al., 2008); and are more effective in prioritising long-term goals over short-term gratification (Guven, 2011).

Moreover, job attributes and job satisfaction are found to be important when it comes to explaining differences in the subjective well-being of workers (Wingerden et al., 2017; Kauhanen and Natti, 2015). Predominantly in the context of developed countries, studies have identified strong links between an individual's well-being and their income/wages (Kuroki, 2018; Sabia, 2008; Blanchflower and Oswald, 2004; Clark and Oswald, 1996); hours worked

[1] The link between job satisfaction and firm performance has been shown across a range of performance metrics, including firm profitability, productivity and absenteeism.

(Heyes and Tomlinson, 2020); as well as links between well-being, job satisfaction, work practices and performance (Merriman, 2017; Riketta, 2008). While these links are not always straightforward, workers in more satisfying jobs with a better fit for their skills and ability (Harter and Arora, 2010) and greater autonomy (Kröll and Nüesch, 2019; Markussen et al, 2018; Wheatley, 2017b; Clark, 2010) have higher levels of happiness. The links in these relationships can be understood in terms of the "evaluative aspect of well-being" which refers to the way people appraise their lives "or particular aspects of lives such as job satisfaction" (Michaelson et al., 2014:10).

Most research focused on employment and job attributes has been conducted in high-income, developed countries. However, labour markets in less developed countries share 'distinctive characteristics' (Herrera and Merceron, 2013:83) that distinguish them from developed countries. In particular, there is a large informal sector with little labour protection and a wide wage gap between the formal and informal sectors (Bargain and Kwenda, 2014; Fields, 2011; Arbache et al., 2010); steady wage employment is the exception (Fields, 2011). Unemployment insurance is also largely absent (Herrera and Merceron, 2013; Arbache et al., 2010) and individuals with limited access to resources cannot afford to remain unemployed while looking for a better job. But there are not enough so called “good jobs” to go around i.e. secure, well-paid jobs with social protection (Fields, 2011) that provide greater well-being (World Bank, 2012:35). Instead, people need to create their own employment or accept a job which gives them limited satisfaction when "a large number of jobs are downright miserable" (Fields, 2011). Such jobs can also lead to financial insecurity which as shown by Bhuiyan and Ivlevs (2019) for micro-entrepreneurs in Bangladesh can lead to worry, depression and lower overall life-satisfaction. As such, many developing countries have, in addition to an unemployment problem, an underemployment and an employment problem characterised by poverty among those in work who are also working very long hours (Herrera and Merceron, 2013; Fields, 2011).

For all these reasons, the positive relationships found in developed countries between well-being and employment, including self-employment, and some job attributes, may require qualification in a less developed country context. The article addresses this proposition by investigating the determinants of subjective well-being in four low- and middle-income countries. The focus on young adults provides new insights on the well-being of workers who are

just starting out in their careers. The use of panel data spanning lives from age eight to 22 additionally enables consideration of how earlier life experiences can impact on well-being in young adulthood.

Data and sample

The data used is from the Young Lives project, a longitudinal cohort study of childhood poverty following the lives of 12,000 children from two cohorts in four low and middle income countries; Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam (3,000 children in each country, 1000 in the older cohort and 2000 in the younger cohort). Five waves of the survey are currently available - 2002, 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2016. The first round of the survey took place when the younger cohort were 1-year-old and the older cohort were 8 years old. In this study, we restrict the analysis to the older cohort because our analysis focuses on young people in employment. The younger cohort were only 15 in the last survey and the majority were still enrolled in school (over 90% in Peru, India and Ethiopia, 80% in Vietnam)

The analysis uses data recording individual well-being on a nine-point scale derived from a survey question that asks: *Suppose there are nine steps on this ladder. Suppose we say that the ninth step, at the very top, represents the best possible life for you and the bottom represents the worst possible life for you. Where on the ladder do you feel you personally stand at the present time?* Answers to this question are coded numerically from one to nine with a higher value indicating a higher degree of life satisfaction according to the participant's assessment of their current life. Self-rated life-satisfaction, happiness and well-being measures have been widely used in research (Blanchflower and Oswald, 2004) and there is a substantial body of evidence that supports the validity of such measures (Wheatley, 2017a, 2017b).

In the analysis, the relationship between well-being and employment is examined using indicators of employment status and variables capturing job attributes for those in employment. The latter include employer type, earnings, work conditions and whether the individual is proud of the work they do. The analysis also allows for other aspects likely to impact on well-being including; household wealth, gender, current and childhood health, and experience of shocks. Adversity and stress experienced in childhood have been shown to lead to adverse health and well-being effects in later life (Klug et al., 2019; Bennet and Waterhouse, 2018; Slopen et al., 2012). For example, Crivello and Morrow (2019) show how disruptive events in childhood can act as 'tipping points' that compromise life chances in the absence of support.

The sample used in the analysis includes only young people for whom there is a record of their employment status (employed, not employed or enrolled in education) in the final survey round and for whom data for all five rounds was available. This generated a reduced sample of 3,057 young people due to attrition as well as missing values for key variables in some years. Sample characteristics are summarised in Table 1 by gender and country. There were as many males as females in the sample. On the nine-point scale measuring well-being, the mean score is 5.52 (the standard deviation is 1.51) and females scored very marginally (but insignificantly) higher than males. Young people in Peru scored highest on the well-being scale and those in India scored the lowest. 78% of the young people were in employment when surveyed at age 22 (86% of males and 71% of females). Employment participation is highest in Vietnam and lowest in India. The index of household wealth (described in more detail below) is higher for females and highest in Vietnam.

Among those in employment for whom data are available, males earned higher wages on average and worked marginally longer hours. Males were also a little more likely to be working for themselves, another household member, or another individual or household (compared with working for a private company, cooperative or public sector/government organisation). This categorisation by employer types captures to some extent an important distinction in a less developed country context between 'better' jobs in non-agricultural and regular wage employment which Fields describes as 'rationed' (Fields, 2011). Such jobs are more likely to be located in offices and factories than in self or own-account employment. This distinction is supported by difference of means tests showing that individuals working for a private company, cooperative or public sector/government organisation are higher paid as well as more likely to have a formal written contract and have longer tenure.[2] Young people are also more likely to be employed in these kinds of organisation in Peru and Vietnam where wages are also higher.

Table 1 about here: "Well-being, employment and wealth by gender and country"

[2] For a restricted sub-sample which excluded those in Peru, measures capturing other job attributes were available; access to transport benefits, support for study, health insurance, holiday pay, sick leave, maternity benefits or loans/credit. Individuals working for a private company, cooperative or a public sector/government organisation were also more likely to have access to these benefits.

Methods

Regression analysis

We estimate a well-being function for young adults of the following form (Powdthavee and Vernoit, 2013):

$$r = h(u(c_t, c_{t-n}) + e \quad (1)$$

Where, r denotes self-reported well-being, $u(.)$ is the young person's true well-being and h is a function relating actual to reported well-being, e is an error term. The individual's true well-being is assumed to depend on sets of characteristics and circumstances, c, determined in the current time period, t, and in the past, t-n. In the empirical model operationalising (1) the dependent variable recording subjective well-being is reported on a nine-point scale. The regressions are estimated for the most recent (fifth) wave of the survey conducted in 2016-2017 when the young people were 22 and the majority were in employment. OLS estimation was used for ease of interpretation and since Shapiro-Wilk and Shapiro-Francia tests indicated that the well-being measure is distributed normally. Two sets of regressions were estimated. The first set of regressions includes the whole sample, the second set is estimated for a smaller sub-sample for whom a subset of variables capturing job attributes, including earnings, are available. The estimated model is:

$$W_i = \alpha_0 + \sum_{j=M+1}^{N} \alpha_j l_{ij} + \sum_{j=N+1}^{O} \alpha_j w_{ij} + \sum_{j=1}^{L} \alpha_j x_{ij} + \sum_{j=O+1}^{P} \alpha_j z_{ij} + \sum_{j=L+1}^{M} \alpha_j g_{ij} + \varepsilon_j \quad (2)$$

W_i is the self-rated well-being of individual i, the α_j are the coefficients of the j explanatory variables, ε_j is an error term. The l_j are variables included to reflect employment status and job attributes. The w_j variables measure material wealth. The x_j record individual characteristics including gender, age in months, marital status, fertility (whether has children) and educational attainment (grade completed). They also include a subjective measure of poor or ill-health at age 22 and an objective measure of childhood health recorded at age eight (an anthropometric measure of child height using standardised height-for-age growth reference charts). The z_j variables record experience of economic, family and environment shocks over life

courses. The g_j variables that account for unobservable regional (urban or rural) and country level differences in development, labour markets, policies and other aspects likely to impact on well-being. The construction of the l_j, w_j *and* z_j variables is described below. Table 2 provides summary statistics and definitions for all variables.

In the first set of estimations for the whole sample the l_j explanatory variables include categorical variables recording the individual's employment status. Initially an individual's employment status is categorised as either employed (in any capacity), in education (enrolled in education and not in employment) or neither of these. In order to consider how well-being is associated with different types of employment, a second categorical variable sub-divides those in employment by type of employer as described above: private company, cooperative or public sector or government organisation; or self-employed, working for another household member, another individual or another household. This broad categorisation, as already discussed, is correlated with different measures of job quality[3] and does not overly restrict the sample size as a wide variety of job types, including low or unpaid family work, is represented. In the second set of estimations, in addition to type of employer, additional measures capturing job attributes are included; hourly earnings (in US dollars), a negative index capturing aspects of the physical work environment and whether the individual is proud of the work they do. These measures, particularly hourly earnings, were available only for a smaller sub-sample of respondents. The measure of the poor quality of the work environment[4] was constructed using principal component factor analysis with six dichotomous variables recording responses to questions that asked whether the individual worked under hot sun or rain, where there was insufficient lighting, in a noisy environment, with fumes, gases or dust, in a smelly or dirty environment, or at heights.[5] Pride in one's work is an aspect likely to be related to 'a sense of achievement'. The latter is often referred to in surveys that try to elicit measures of job satisfaction (see for example, the Workplace Employment Relations Survey, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills,

[3] There is no specific variable in the Young Lives data that categorises jobs as in the formal or informal sector.
[4] A limitation of this measure is that the young people were not able to self-identify aspects of the working environment they considered poor. We are grateful to an anonymous referee for highlighting this point.
[5] The factor eigenvalue for the constructed variable was 2.05. The proportion of the variance explained was 34.16%. The highest loading (0.7314) was for working 'with fumes, gases or dust'. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.7019 (middling). The LR test: independent vs. saturated $chi^2(15)$ statistic was 1373.55 ($Prob>chi^2 = 0.0000$).

2013). Both capture eudemonic aspects of well-being by capturing satisfaction of psychological needs through a sense of competence, meaning or purpose (Michaelson et al., 2014).

Variables measuring hours of work (and hours of work squared), whether the individual had a written contract and tenure with current or previous employer were also available (the last two only for a smaller sub-sample) but these measures were never significant, and they are not included in the presented results. The lack of significance of hours of work was surprising given evidence that well-being and hours of work are linked (e.g. Heyes and Tomlinson, 2020). Part of the explanation is likely to lie in differences between developed and developing country contexts. In the latter, people often have little or no social protection and need to work, and can work long hours for low earnings (Fields, 2011)[6] . For this sample of young people, mean daily hours of paid work are a little over eight (Table 1), 20 per cent of the sample are working for more than nine hours a day and eight per cent for over twelve hours a day. As argued by Herrera and Merceron (2013) in the context of sub-Saharan Africa, long working hours may mean that the concept of time-related underemployment needs to be expanded to include measures of the quality of work, including low hourly earnings, in analyses of developing countries.

The wealth measures (w_j) take values between zero and one and measure, separately and in aggregate, housing quality, access to services (electricity, piped drinking water, own, not shared, toilet and adequate fuels (paraffin, kerosene, gas or electricity) for cooking), and possession of consumer durables (including a radio, television, bicycle, motorbike, automobile or landline or mobile phone). The aggregate wealth index averages the score over the separate housing quality, services and consumer durables indices. The wealth measures are expected to be positively related to well-being. Separating out the component parts of the aggregated wealth index enables exploration of which aspects of material wealth matter most for well-being.

The variables capturing experience of shocks (the z_j) use records of occurrence of events that respondents consider have negatively affected the welfare of the household.[7] This analysis uses records of family shocks (illness or death of a family member) economic shocks (loss of

[6] Increasing casualization of work in many developed countries coupled with weakened social protection has led to increasing insecurity for some workers in precarious jobs (Prosser, 2016; Wilson and Ebert, 2013). Their situation is not dissimilar from that of many workers in lower income countries, particularly those, often young people, in precarious informal sector jobs (Sumberg et al., 2020; Yeboah et al., 2017). We thank an anonymous referee for drawing our attention to this point.

[7] Shocks record events that have negatively affected the economic situation of the household since last surveyed. All shock-related variables are binary recording whether or not a particular type of shock is reported.

employment, source of income or family enterprise) and environment shocks associated with crop failure as only these measures were available for all survey rounds and all countries. While a fairly uncontroversial expectation is that experience of shocks is negatively related to well-being, the variables constructed in this analysis are used to test whether shocks can have significant, long-term and cumulative impacts on well-being in later life. To do this, experiences of shocks were coded into a single variable recording eight states; no shock (50% of states), family shock (21% of states), economic shock (6.78% of states), environmental-crop shock (7.76% of states) and four states recording the four possible multiple shock combinations. The coded states were analysed as complete sequences in Stata 15 using optimal matching and clustering procedures as described in Brzinsky-Fay, Kohler & Luniak (2006) and operationalised elsewhere (e.g. Wahrendorf, 2015; Potârcă, Mills and Lesnard 2013; Anyadike-Danes and McVicar 2010).[8] Ward's hierarchical cluster linkage algorithm in combination with Calinski-Harabasz and Duda/Hart Je(2)/Je(1) index cluster stopping rules suggested five clusters.

The clusters group similar trajectories in terms of the duration of, and transitions between, states recording exposure to different shocks from early childhood into young adulthood. Figure 1 shows stacked area plots for each cluster showing the proportion of observations in each shock state over time.[9] Cluster 1 groups '*stable'* trajectories with no shocks. Cluster 2 trajectories are '*mostly stable with early economic shocks'*: 63% of states are without shocks and while the incidence of economic shocks is the third highest (16.35% of states) after clusters 4 and 5 these are mostly experienced in the first survey round. Cluster 3 trajectories are '*mostly stable with early family shocks'*: 63% of states are without shocks and most of the 30% of states recording a family shock occurred in the first two survey rounds. Cluster 4 trajectories are '*unstable'*: 65% of states record shocks, mainly family shocks. Cluster 5 trajectories are '*very unstable'* recording the highest incidence of states with shocks (70% of states). They also record the highest incidence of states recording a shock due to crop failure (46% of states and 75% of all states recording a crop failure) reflecting that individuals in this cluster were the most likely to be living in a rural area. With these life history trajectories, the expectation that experience of shocks has life-time, negative effects suggests that those in the

[8] Insertion/deletion (indel) costs were fixed at half the maximum substitution cost (2).
[9] The numbers in each cluster were: cluster 1 224; cluster 2 914; cluster 3 363; cluster 4 678; cluster 5 876.

stable cluster 1 would have higher well-being relative to those in the *unstable* and *very unstable* clusters, 4 and 5.

Figure 1 about here: "*Stacked area plots for each cluster: Proportions in states over time"*

Results

Table 3 shows the results for regressions estimated for the whole sample. Table 4 shows results for the estimations for the sub-sample for whom data recording additional job attributes was available.

Table 3 about here: "Well-being and employment"
Well-being and employment

In estimation (1) in Table 3 the indicators of employment status distinguish between whether the individual is in any type of employment (the reference category) in education or neither of these. The results for estimation (1) indicate that, without distinguishing between different kinds of employment, individuals in education or neither in employment nor education have higher well-being than individuals in employment. This suggests, that being in employment has a negative effect on well-being. However, estimation (2) which distinguishes type of employment by employer type shows that this is too simplistic. In estimation (2) the results indicate that young adults working for themselves, another individual or a household (the reference category) have lower well-being than those in any other category. The positive significance of the indicator of employment in jobs in private companies, cooperatives or the public sector/government indicates that young people in these jobs record higher well-being, supporting the contention that these are 'better' jobs. Financial insecurity is likely to be part of the explanation for the lower well-being of the former group, as already noted this group has lower earnings on average. These results show that, it is important to differentiate between different types of employment.

The significant positive coefficients associated with still being in education and not being in either employment or education are interesting. That both coefficients are also larger than that for employment in a company, cooperative or the public sector/government is perhaps explained by the option of remaining in education or not working being affordable only for those with

sufficient resources (Herrera and Merceron, 2013; Arbache et. al., 2010). Young adults still in education may also record higher well-being because they expect to have access to higher-paying job opportunities in the future. Not being in employment may reflect the up and down nature of informal work as well as personal circumstances such as family caring where gender roles are important. The majority (84%) of those neither in employment nor education are female (Table 1). 43% of those not in employment who declared they had not looked for work in the week prior to being surveyed said this was because there were either housewives and/or caring for children Young women were also more likely to report having children (35% of women compared with 9% of males). These figures suggest that family circumstances and responsibilities are important reasons for not being in employment or education. Females also record higher well-being, although having children is weakly and negatively related to well-being and marital status is insignificant. As in previous research, educational attainment has positive significance (Clark and Oswald, 1996).

The shock clusters are all strongly negatively significant relative to the *stable* cluster 1. The largest negative coefficients are associated with clusters 4 (*unstable*) and 5 (*very unstable*) whose members suffered the most shocks. The larger and stronger effect of cluster 4 suggests that family shocks are potentially more damaging for well-being than other types of shocks. This is supported by evidence that parental orphanhood in sub-Saharan Africa lowers school enrolment (Case et al., 2004) and maternal death in childhood is associated with lower occupational status in the Netherlands (Rosenbaum-Feldbrügge, 2019). These results are consistent with arguments that shocks and setbacks over life-courses have lasting effects in contexts where social protection systems are weak or non-existent (Arbache et al, 2010).

Those currently in poor health unsurprisingly have lower well-being, while the objective measure of health at age eight (the height-for-age score) is positively related to well-being, indicating that better health in early childhood has long term positive effects. Rural location is insignificant but the country effects are significant with well-being highest in Peru and lowest in India (Ethiopia is the reference). Country level differences in inequality may explain part of these differences. Earnings-based Gini coefficients calculated for the four countries show that among young people in this sample inequality is highest in India (0.615) and Peru (0.537) and lowest in Vietnam (0.387) and Ethiopia (0.512). World Bank (2020) estimates of the income share of the richest 10% also indicate that the distribution of income is most unequal in Peru

(32.1 percent) and India (31.7 percent) and more equal in Vietnam (27.5 percent). These figures indicate that the distribution of income in Peru and India is more unequal than in the United States, by many measures the most unequal country in the global north. However, as argued by Reyes-García et al. (2018) the relationship between inequality and well-being in developing countries is unlikely to be clear-cut; inequality can lead to unfavourable peer-group comparisons but can also suggest scope for upward mobility.

Estimation (3) includes the aggregate wealth index, estimation (4) includes the three indicators of wealth (housing quality, access to services and ownership of consumer durables) that together constitute the aggregate index. All the wealth indicators are positively significant with the largest coefficient in estimation (4) associated with the acquisition of consumer durables suggesting. This could be explained by Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs in that housing quality and access to services arguably satisfy more basic physiological and safety needs associated with shelter, health and property, while possession of consumer durables could be associated with higher level social and esteem needs. Greater inequality in the distribution of particular assets could also make access to such assets more important for well-being and Gini coefficients constructed for the indices of wealth indicated that the distributions of housing quality and consumer durables were the most unequal.

The inclusion of the wealth indices weakens the significance of not being in either employment or education and employer type. This suggests that part of the reason for differences in well-being associated with employment status and type of employer is linked to differential access to wealth (the direct relationship between earnings related wealth and well-being is investigated in the estimations in Table 4). Educational attainment also loses significance. This is not surprising, since educational attainment and the indices of wealth are positively and significantly correlated. This partly reflects inequality in access to education in low- and middle-income countries which often means that children from wealthier households have access to more (and better) education (Alcaraz, 2020; Spaull, 2013; Glewwe and Jacoby, 2004; Kingdon, 2002). For example, in Ghana, children from the richest 20 percent of households have been reported to average six more years of schooling than those from the poorest households (Watkins, 2013). With the inclusion of the wealth indicators having had children also loses significance. In contrast, rural location attains positive significance, implying that rural location is associated positively with well-being but only after wealth differentials are

taken into account. This result is consistent with evidence that people living in urban areas have higher risks of mental ill-health (Mechelli, 2019) and, in some countries, lower levels of subjective well-being (Burger et al., 2020). However, it is clearly important to control for wealth. There is well-established evidence that subjective well-being rises with per capita income (Deaton, 2015) and the economic situation is generally better in urbanised areas (OECD/European Commission, 2020).[10]

Table 4 about here: "Well-being and job attributes"

Well-being and job attributes

The estimates in Table 4 include three additional measures capturing job attributes: earnings (in US$), whether the individual is proud of the work they do and the negative index of the physical work environment. Records for these variables, in particular earnings, were not complete resulting in smaller sample-sizes. In estimation (1) which does not include wealth, working for a private company, cooperative or public sector/government organisation and earnings are both positive and significant although the latter only weakly. Pride in work is positively and strongly significantly associated with well-being. A poorer quality physical working environment is significantly associated with lower well-being. The weaker significance of earnings in this estimation suggests that these other aspects of a job are more important for individual well-being.

Estimations (2) and (3) include the wealth indices. The aggregate wealth index is significant in estimation (2) but in estimation (3) only the consumer durables index is strongly significant. The stronger effect of the consumer durables index could be linked to a more unequal distribution of wealth for this sub-sample, particularly in relation to the index of consumer durables.[11] With the inclusion of the wealth indices, the significance of employer type is reduced (as in Table 3) but the significance of the other indicators of job quality is not affected. The

[10] It is also the case among this sample of young people that those living in urban areas are significantly wealthier; the mean value of aggregated measure of household wealth is 0.685 for the urban sub-sample and 0.559 for the rural sub-sample ($p<0.01$).

[11] For this sub-sample, the Gini coefficient for the aggregate wealth index is 0.165 compared with 0.234 for the consumer durables index (the equivalent Gini coefficients for the full sample are 0.158 and 0.224 respectively). The Gini coefficient for the housing quality index is lower for this sub-sample (0.195) than the full sample (0.224).

pattern of results for the other included variables is very similar to Table 3 although some variables have less significance, possibly reflecting the smaller sample sizes.[12]

Discussion

The results of this analysis indicate that many of the factors identified in previous research as being important for well-being are also relevant for young adults in low- and middle-income countries. However, there are also differences. In particular, well-being is associated positively with some, but not all kinds of employment; employment is not unconditionally beneficial for well-being. Specifically, well-being is higher in jobs with higher earnings, where the physical working environment is more conducive to health and safety and where individuals can take pride in their work. In the context of the four countries in the study, type of employer is also relevant; working for oneself or another individual or a household is associated with lower well-being than working for a private company, a cooperative or a public sector/government organisation. This result is consistent with important distinguishing features of labour markets in developing countries. In particular, large informal sectors and restricted access to 'better' jobs in regular wage employment. As a result, a large number of jobs are in irregular employment and such jobs can be 'miserable' and low-paid (Fields, 2011). The results also indicate that young adults who are still in education at age 22 and those neither in paid work nor education have higher subjective well-being than those in employment. This result is likely to reflect lower levels of protection in low- and middle-income countries that mean the option of not working is only affordable for those who already have sufficient resources (Herrera and Merceron, 2014). Since educational attainment of children from poorer households is lower in lower-income countries (Alcaraz, 2020; Watkins, 2013; Filmer and Pritchett, 2004) this conclusion is indirectly supported by evidence that unemployment rates in Africa are higher for the most educated than

[12] In sensitivity analysis Heckman two-stage techniques (Heckman, 1979) were used to test whether reporting the additional job attributes included in the second set of regressions (earnings, pride in work and work environment) reflected unobservable individual characteristics associated with well-being. The results of these procedures indicated that this potential source of sample selection did not cause bias - the Inverse Mills Ratio (Heckman's lambda) derived from a first stage equation was insignificant when included as an explanatory variable in the second stage well-being equation. We also tested whether individual level heterogeneities in observable individual characteristics biased the results using propensity score matching (Deheija and Wahba, 2002). The reconstructed sample matched young people by employer type. In the regressions with the matched sample that included the additional job attribute variables the direction of the effects of most variables were similar to those in Table 3. These results suggest that the OLS results are not biased. The results from these estimations are available on request.

for those with no education (Arbache et al., 2010: 43). In relation specifically to Ethiopia, Robles (2010:321) argues that educated people would rather remain unemployed, queuing for a public-sector job than take up a job in the informal sector or become self-employed.

Linked to this argument, the results highlight the importance of access to material wealth, exposure to shocks and health. Wealth in terms of ownership of consumer durables appears to be particularly important for well-being and this is even more true for those in employment. Given evidence that subjective well-being is not absolute (Clark and Oswald, 1996) part of the explanation for this finding could be that there is greater inequality in the distribution of consumer durables and this drives a "wedge between the "have's" and "have not's"" (Reyes-Garcia et al, 2018:1198). This comparison effect (Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2005) could be reinforced if consumer durables are associated with higher level social and esteem needs than housing quality and access to services (Maslow, 1943).

In relation to experience of shocks, the results show how events that play out over young lives can impact on well-being in adulthood. In particular the results for the different clusters of shock histories suggest that early family shocks and a history of repeated and multiple kinds of shocks have the most lasting impact on well-being. This evidence confirms that in countries where safety nets are limited the consequences of negative shocks can be potentially serious and long-lasting. On the other hand, that young people from relatively poor backgrounds with low exposure to shocks have higher well-being is in keeping with Crivello & Morrow's (2019:3) conceptualisation of 'narratives of possibility'. Their study of a sub-sample of children who participated in qualitative components for the Young Lives study, from age 12 to 19, highlights the importance of children's social relationships and support networks for breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty. Specifically, their findings emphasise how unanticipated difficulties such as illness, an accident, parental death or climatic shocks can cause school disruptions, economic decline and diminished hope. Crivello & Morrow (2019) describe such events in terms of turning points in children's lives. That ill health in childhood can lead to a turning point is supported by previous research (Currie and Vogl, 2013) and in this study by the positive significance of the indicator of childhood health in the well-being estimates. Nevertheless, while such turning points can tip life chances, Crivello and Morrow (2019) show that supportive relationships and access to resources can mitigate such effects. This is probably

part of the reason for the weaker significance of some of the shock clusters when indices of wealth are included in the estimations.

These results highlight the importance of job attributes and life course events for the well-being of young people in low- and middle-income countries. However, the generalisability of the results may be limited by the oversampling of poorer children in the Young Lives survey, although children with more education and better access to services are represented[13]. In addition, at the time of the last survey the sample members are only 22 and at this age lives are unlikely to be settled. However, that our results show that some young adults experience lower well-being at an early life stage raises concerns that these effects could have implications for later life. Furthermore, while the longitudinal nature of the data enables consideration of earlier life circumstances and events spanning children's lives, the surveys capture only five points in time over 15 years. Some of these limitations will be addressed by future research which will be able to take advantage of a further survey round currently being conducted.

Conclusion

This article examines how employment status and job attributes are linked to the subjective well-being of young people in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. The analysis contributes to existing research (Wheatley, 2017(a) 2017(b); Michaelson et al., 2014) by extending the evidence base to low- and middle-income countries and for young people at early stages in their career. It seems uncontroversial to agree with Quinn and Rubb (2006) that it is important to extend labour market analyses to low- and middle-income countries in which the majority of the world's population live. The analysis also contributes to research concerned with examining how childhood experiences and family circumstance impacts on adult outcomes (Carmichael et al, 2019; Crivello & Morrow, 2019; Bennett and Waterhouse, 2018).

Our results highlight the importance of the quality of work for the well-being of young people in low- and middle-income countries. The findings strengthen support for the argument that not all jobs are 'good jobs' that "provide greater wellbeing to the people who hold them" (World Bank, 2012:35). This has resonance for problems of youth underemployment and unemployment in many less developed countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where jobs

[13] Details of the survey design and sampling are available from Young Lives (2018) and have been described elsewhere (see, Favara, 2017; Dendir, 2014).

in the formal sector are in short supply (Honorati & Silva, 2016) and people are often employed in jobs for which they are over educated (Handel et al. 2016; Darko and Abrokwa, 2020; Carmichael et al., 2021). The results also highlight the association between well-being and access to wealth, particularly wealth in the form of consumer durables. Lastly, the results confirm that childhood ill-health and exposure to family, economic and environmental shocks can have long-lasting adverse effects in country contexts where lives, particularly children's lives, can be vulnerable because of limited social protection, unequal access to wealth and exposure to extreme shocks due to famine and conflict (Currie and Vogl, 2013).

These results support policy in less developed countries that targets inequalities in earlier life as well as labour market barriers and imperfections that restrict youth access to good jobs. The evidence of Sumberg et al. (2021) is that such constraints are rarely youth-specific. However, entry into employment can be a particular challenge for young people due to lack of experience and job readiness, limited resources, including information and lack of access to well-connected informal networks (Chari et al., 2017; Fox and Kaul, 2018). Having a good job is fundamental to improving living standards and quality of life. Good jobs provide greater well-being to those that hold them and their value to society is higher (World Bank, 2012). A good job can provide a sense of belonging that enhances social inclusion. Decent work (ILO, 1999; Rantanen et al, 2020) can help build the confidence, trust and civic engagement of young people as well providing them with income. In contrast, poor working conditions can lead to frustration, lowering well-being and potentially fuelling a sense of social injustice that weakens social cohesion.

Employment policies aimed at young people need to target those who are marginalised by labour market structures which tend to reinforce the advantages of the more educated and those from more wealthy backgrounds. Targeted employment and training programmes can help to provide young people with skills and experience that enhance their productivity and employability. Examples include youth national service programmes in Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa (e.g., for South Africa see National Youth Development Agency, 2021). Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and apprenticeship schemes can also help to address skills mismatch problems that “have impeded smooth school-to-work transitions for many young people” (UNESCO, 2013:5). There is evidence of the efficacy of skills-based training in raising earnings and addressing mismatch (Kuepie et al, 2009; Aizenman et al. 2017)

although evidence from specific interventions is also mixed (Card et al. 2011; Blattman et al. 2014; Attanasio et al., 2017; Jie Chen and Chindarkar, 2017). A review of evidence from low-income countries by Fox and Kaul (2018) is also critical of the ability of training programmes to help young people to access formal sector employment. Fox and Kaul (2018) highlight the short-term nature of gains from training interventions and evidence of displacement. Including industry in the planning and design of these kinds of programmes is a way of better targeting to opportunities that exist in the labour market, whether in the formal sector or otherwise (Dodoo & Kuupole, 2017; Fox and Kaul, 2018; Okolie et al., 2020).[14] Investments in skill acquisition that raise productivity and earnings in household and micro businesses are still good for development (Awasthi et al., 2020, Jie Chen and Chindarkar, 2017; Kuepie et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, given the large share of the informal sector and the restricted availability of wage employment in many developing economies, these kinds of programmes will not be enough to guarantee access to a 'good' job, particularly for marginalised youth. As stated by Sumberg et al. (2021:3) "investment in training, no matter how well intentioned, does not create jobs". Sumberg et al. (2021) and Fox and Kaul (2018) argue that in lower-income countries youth employment is part of wider employment problem, described in the African context as a 'missing jobs crisis' (Sumberg et al., 2021), that only structural changes can address. Ultimately this requires an expansion in production which takes time but can be facilitated by infrastructure investments that increase connectivity and policy changes that encourage private investment (Fox and Kraul, 2018). Strengthening labour market governance and social protection mechanisms could also help by improving working conditions and reducing the risks associated with precarious work (Yeboah et al., 2020; Sumberg et al., 2021; Chari et al., 2017).

[14] Education Sub Saharan Africa (ESSA) discuss how educational establishments in Africa can work with employers to increase employment for young people (Asare and Essah, 2021).

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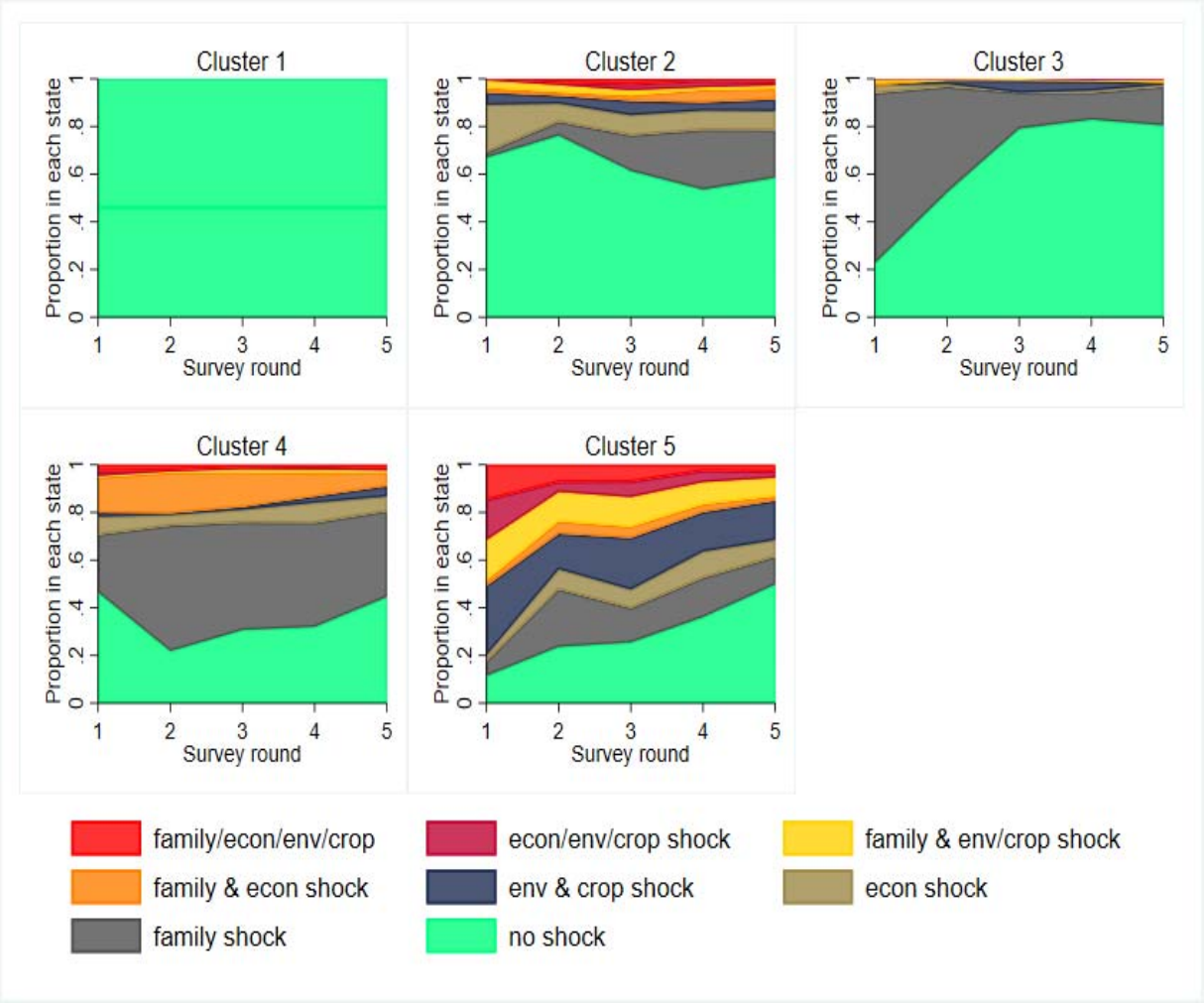
Figures

Figure 1: ***Stacked area plots for each cluster: Proportions in each state over time***



Tables

Table 1: Well-being, employment and wealth by gender and country

	Whole sample	Males	Females	Ethiopia	India	Peru	Vietnam
Well-being	5.52	5.49	5.55	5.41	5.00	6.44	5.58
Female	0.50			0.47	0.51	0.48	0.53
Wealth index	0.62	0.61	0.63	0.46	0.65	0.67	0.70
Employed	0.78	0.86	0.71	0.79	0.62	0.84	0.92
In education	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.14	0.14	0.09	0.04
Not in paid work/not in education	0.11	0.04	0.19	0.07	0.25	0.07	0.04
Employed by self/another household member/another individual/another household	0.48	0.55	0.41	0.59	0.49	0.38	0.43
Employed by private company/coop/public sector/government	0.30	0.31	0.30	0.20	0.13	0.46	0.49
Hourly earnings (in USD)[a]	1.63	1.78	1.46	0.47	1.24	3.06	1.51
Daily hours of paid work[b]	8.73	8.87	8.54	8.84	8.87	8.77	8.56
Works $\geq$ 8 hours daily (~full-time)[b]	0.82	0.84	0.79	0.78	0.87	0.77	0.82

[a, b]Mean for sub-sample of those reporting earnings, hours of paid work

Table 2: Variable definitions and summary statistics

Variable	Definition	N	Mean
Subjective well-being	Measured on a nine-point scale with 9 best possible life and 0 worst possible life.	3056	5.52
Employed	Employed in any capacity	3057	0.78
Employed by self/another household member/another individual/another household	Either self-employed, working for another household member, another individual or other household	3057	0.48
Employed by private company/ coop/public sector/government	Works for a private company, cooperative or public sector/government organisation	3057	0.30
In education	Enrolled in education and not in employment	3057	0.10
Not working and not in education	Not currently working and not enrolled in education	3057	0.11
Wealth index	Aggregated measure of household wealth ranging between 0 and 1. Average score over housing quality, services and consumer durables indices.	3055	0.62
Housing quality index	Measure of housing quality. Between 0 and 1.	3055	0.64
Access to services index	Household access to basic services (electricity, piped drinking water) their own (not shared) toilet and adequate fuels for cooking. Between 0 and 1.	3057	0.77
Ownership of consumer durables index	Household possession of consumer durables including: radio, television, bicycle, motorbike, automobile, landline/mobile phone. Between 0 and 1.	3057	0.45
Female	1 if female; 0 if male	3057	0.50
Age	Age of the individual in months.	3055	264.76
Highest grade completed	Educational attainment of individual.	3012	9.55
Poor health	Subjective ill-health: 1 if very poor/poor health; 0 otherwise (average/good/very good).	3057	0.04
Children	Has one or more children: 1 if has at least one child; 0 otherwise.	3057	0.22
Married/cohabiting	Marital status: 1 if ever married/cohabited; 0 otherwise.	3057	0.29
Height for age score (HAZ8)	Objective measure of childhood health at age 8 recorded in the first survey round (anthropometric measure of child height using standardised height-	3017	-1.64

	for-age).		
Cluster 1: Stable	Experienced no shocks over the years surveyed	3057	0.07
Cluster 2: Mostly stable with early economic shocks	Relatively few shocks. Bulk of economic shocks experienced early in childhood.	3057	0.30
Cluster 3: Mostly stable with early family shocks	Relatively few shocks. Most shocks were family shocks experienced earlier in childhood.	3057	0.12
Cluster 4: Unstable	Experienced a high number of shocks, mostly family shocks.	3057	0.22
Cluster 5: Very unstable	Experienced the highest number of shocks, including a particularly high number of environmental (crop related) shocks.	3057	0.29
Log of hourly earnings (in USD)	Natural logarithm of hourly earnings (in USD)	1323	-0.12
Poor working environment	Principal component factor analysis score using six dichotomous variables recording the individual's response to questions asking whether worked: under hot sun or rain; where there was insufficient lighting; in a noisy environment; with fumes, gases or dust; in a smelly or dirty environment; or at heights.	2461	-0.00
Proud of work	1 if agree/strongly agree with the statement "I am proud of the work I have to do"; 0 if otherwise (disagree/strongly disagree/more or less).	2892	0.79
Urban location	1 if urban area, 0 if rural.	3045	0.48
Rural location	1 if rural area, 0 if urban.	3045	0.52
Ethiopia	1 if Ethiopia, 0 if India, Peru, or Vietnam.	3057	0.25
India	1 if India, 0 if Ethiopia, Peru, or Vietnam.	3057	0.30
Peru	1 if Peru, 0 if Ethiopia, India, or Vietnam.	3057	0.18
Vietnam	1 if Vietnam, 0 if Ethiopia, India, or Peru.	3057	0.27

Table 3: Well-being and employment

	(1)[a]	(2)[b]	(3)[b]	(4)[b]
Employment status				
In education	0.4584***	0.5214***	0.4632***	0.4617***
	(0.0911)	(0.0949)	(0.0939)	(0.0938)
Not employed and not in education	0.2076**	0.2546***	0.1625*	0.1662*
	(0.0896)	(0.0918)	(0.0912)	(0.0911)
Employed by private comp/ coop/public sector/government		0.1510**	0.1006	0.1142*
		(0.0646)	(0.0640)	(0.0641)
Wealth				
Wealth index			1.8338***	
			(0.2060)	
Housing quality index				0.4298***
				(0.1388)
Access to services index				0.4430***
				(0.1464)
Ownership of Consumer durables index				1.0747***
				(0.1692)
Individual characteristics				
Female	0.1621***	0.1533***	0.1435**	0.1466***
	(0.0569)	(0.0569)	(0.0562)	(0.0562)
Age	-0.0047	-0.0053	-0.0062	-0.0057
	(0.0062)	(0.0062)	(0.0061)	(0.0061)
Highest grade completed	0.0176**	0.0166**	0.0052	0.0044
	(0.0071)	(0.0071)	(0.0071)	(0.0071)
Poor health	-0.4681***	-0.4583***	-0.4324***	-0.4333***
	(0.1399)	(0.1398)	(0.1381)	(0.1379)
Children	-0.1993*	-0.1920*	-0.1183	-0.1370
	(0.1019)	(0.1019)	(0.1009)	(0.1010)
Married/cohabiting	-0.1302	-0.1188	-0.1347	-0.1320
	(0.0938)	(0.0938)	(0.0926)	(0.0925)
Height for age score at age 8	0.0959***	0.0940***	0.0733***	0.0685***
	(0.0236)	(0.0236)	(0.0234)	(0.0234)
Shock trajectories				
Mostly stable with early economic shocks	-0.3034***	-0.3082***	-0.2887***	-0.2891***
	(0.1073)	(0.1072)	(0.1059)	(0.1057)
Mostly stable with early family shocks	-0.3142***	-0.3179***	-0.2726**	-0.2700**
	(0.1213)	(0.1212)	(0.1197)	(0.1196)
Unstable	-0.4437***	-0.4459***	-0.4104***	-0.4125***
	(0.1116)	(0.1115)	(0.1101)	(0.1100)
Very unstable	-0.4132***	-0.4126***	-0.3110***	-0.3008***
	(0.1134)	(0.1133)	(0.1124)	(0.1124)
Location				
Rural location	0.0215	0.0438	0.2380***	0.1991***
	(0.0606)	(0.0613)	(0.0643)	(0.0673)

India	-0.4513***	-0.4520***	-0.7969***	-0.7317***
	(0.0755)	(0.0755)	(0.0840)	(0.0870)
Peru	1.0937***	1.0619***	0.7576***	0.7351***
	(0.0902)	(0.0911)	(0.0963)	(0.0969)
Vietnam	0.2047***	0.1693**	-0.2425***	-0.2283**
	(0.0792)	(0.0806)	(0.0920)	(0.0964)
Constant	6.8986***	7.0123***	6.3526***	6.2294***
	(1.6466)	(1.6461)	(1.6263)	(1.6249)
Observations	2,957	2,957	2,956	2,956
R-squared	0.147	0.149	0.171	0.174

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
[a]Reference category for employment status is Employed
[b]Reference category for employment status is Employed by self/another household member/another individual/another household

Table 4: Well-being and job attributes

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Job attributes			
Employed by private comp/ coop/public sector/government[a]	0.1603**	0.1314	0.1367*
	(0.0813)	(0.0809)	(0.0808)
Log of hourly earnings (in USD)	0.0849*	0.0787*	0.0815*
	(0.0461)	(0.0458)	(0.0457)
Poor working environment	-0.1802***	-0.1671***	-0.1645***
	(0.0402)	(0.0400)	(0.0400)
Proud of work	0.3603***	0.3587***	0.3682***
	(0.0949)	(0.0941)	(0.0941)
Wealth			
Wealth index		1.5067***	
		(0.3243)	
Housing quality index			0.2788
			(0.2078)
Access to services index			0.3501
			(0.2246)
Ownership of Consumer durables index			0.9473***
			(0.2310)
Individual characteristics			
Female	0.0947	0.0981	0.1079
	(0.0837)	(0.0830)	(0.0831)
Age	-0.0137	-0.0148*	-0.0132
	(0.0090)	(0.0090)	(0.0090)
Highest grade completed	0.0050	-0.0011	-0.0013
	(0.0100)	(0.0100)	(0.0100)
Poor health	-0.4807**	-0.4318*	-0.4443**
	(0.2267)	(0.2251)	(0.2252)
Children	-0.2068	-0.1782	-0.1925
	(0.1510)	(0.1499)	(0.1499)
Married/cohabiting	-0.0204	-0.0228	-0.0256
	(0.1325)	(0.1314)	(0.1312)

Height for age score at age 8	0.1221***	0.0985***	0.0918***
	(0.0354)	(0.0354)	(0.0355)
Shock trajectories			
Mostly stable with early economic shocks	-0.2314	-0.2229	-0.2270
	(0.1433)	(0.1422)	(0.1420)
Mostly stable with early family shocks	-0.4078**	-0.3682**	-0.3677**
	(0.1636)	(0.1625)	(0.1624)
Unstable	-0.4789***	-0.4555***	-0.4656***
	(0.1496)	(0.1484)	(0.1484)
Very unstable	-0.3227**	-0.2570	-0.2523
	(0.1597)	(0.1590)	(0.1592)
Location			
Rural location	-0.0315	0.1018	0.0495
	(0.0862)	(0.0902)	(0.0975)
India	-0.2107	-0.4393***	-0.3735**
	(0.1347)	(0.1423)	(0.1460)
Peru	1.1000***	0.8745***	0.8585***
	(0.1601)	(0.1661)	(0.1661)
Vietnam	0.2948**	-0.0311	-0.0018
	(0.1316)	(0.1481)	(0.1553)
Constant	9.0010***	8.4872***	8.1041***
	(2.3960)	(2.3789)	(2.3825)
Observations	1,258	1,258	1,258
R-squared	0.206	0.219	0.222

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

[a]Reference category is Employed by self/another household member/another individual/another household