





Employability and its influence on the quality of life of Generation X in Guayaquil, Ecuador



Empleabilidad y su influencia en la calidad de vida de la Generación X en Guayaquil, Ecuador

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to analyze the employability of Generation X in Guayaquil and its influence on the quality of life. **Methodology:** A quantitative, non-experimental and cross-sectional approach was used, through surveys applied to a sample of 384 people belonging to Generation X. The questionnaire, validated by experts, was administered online during May and June 2024. Results: The findings revealed that 45.1% of respondents were in informal employment, a situation that negatively impacted their financial stability, emotional well-being and access to social security. Only 29.9% of participants reported being in formal employment. In addition, 35.2% of respondents reported experiencing age discrimination during hiring processes, which limited their employment opportunities. The results also showed that employment influenced the ability of individuals to balance their work and personal lives, highlighting the need for government support for the creation of jobs appropriate to the skills of this group. **Conclusions:** The importance of implementing public policies that promote the formalization of employment and reduce age-related barriers to improve Generation X's job opportunities and quality of life was highlighted. These measures would contribute to a more inclusive and equitable working environment.

Key words: Employability, Generation X, quality of life, discrimination, labor market.

Resumen

Esta investigación se propuso como **objetivo** analizar la empleabilidad de la Generación X en Guayaquil y su influencia en la calidad de vida. **Metodología:** Se empleó un enfoque cuantitativo, no experimental y transversal, mediante encuestas aplicadas a una muestra de 384 personas pertenecientes a la Generación X. El cuestionario, validado por expertos, fue administrado en línea durante mayo y junio de 2024. Resultados: Los hallazgos revelaron que el 45.1% de los encuestados se encontraba en empleo informal, situación que impactaba negativamente su estabilidad financiera, bienestar emocional y acceso a seguridad social. Solo el 29.9% de los participantes reportó estar en un empleo formal. Además, el 35.2% de los encuestados indicó haber experimentado discriminación por edad durante los procesos de contratación, lo que limitó sus oportunidades laborales. Los resultados también mostraron que el empleo influyó en la capacidad de los individuos para equilibrar su vida laboral y personal, destacando la necesidad de apoyo gubernamental para la creación de empleos adecuados a las habilidades de este grupo. **Conclusiones:** Se destacó la importancia de implementar políticas públicas que promovieran la formalización del empleo y redujeran las barreras relacionadas con la edad para mejorar las oportunidades laborales de la Generación X y su calidad de vida. Estas medidas contribuirían a un entorno laboral más inclusivo y equitativo.

Palabras clave: Empleabilidad, Generación X, calidad de vida, discriminación, mercado laboral.

INTRODUCTION

Generation X includes people currently between 42 and 54 years old. In Ecuador, this group leads both employment and underemployment, according to studies conducted in 2020 by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC, 2022). Perez (2024) argues that Generation X considers baby boomers as a benchmark to follow. Their perspective on teamwork tends to be more individualistic, focusing on outstanding personal performance rather than group collaboration. Despite having entered the labor market in a different social environment, their expectations remain focused on achieving at least their parents' standard of living. On the other hand, Sagituly & Guo (2023) state that this generation is characterized by their independence, results orientation and loyalty to the company. They value their freedom and autonomy, as well as seeking success in their professional careers. They are also individuals who prefer to focus on what is real and practical.

Generation X tends to have a more democratic leadership style, which means they make decisions collaboratively with others and value feedback. Leaders can influence this generation by providing an adaptive work environment and offering continuous feedback on their performance (Yadav & Chaudhari, 2024). Almanzar & Tejada (2020) describe this generation as a group characterized by independence and self-reliance, driving a transformation in the professional perspective. For them, the idea of a job for life has lost relevance, and they support the reduction of bureaucracy in enterprises, giving special importance to the balance between work and personal life. This generation reveals their consolidation in both the personal and professional spheres, showing greater loyalty and commitment to work as they move towards adulthood. This group seeks a balance between their family and personal life, considering work as a means to achieve their objectives, not as an end in itself. They entered the labor market at a challenging time during the 1980s, marked by instability and competition.

Johnson (2006) adopts a skeptical perspective towards authority and promotes leadership based on competence with a spirit of anti-engagement (Lombardía *et al.*, 2008). In the educational sphere, they focus on studying and training, although with no guarantee of progress,

and also seek to learn new languages (Cervetti, 2014). These high-level professionals are concerned with maintaining their socioeconomic status (Sagituly & Guo, 2023) and show a strong commitment to continuous learning throughout their lives (Miller & Laspra, 2017).

In the workplace, they pursue a balance between work and personal life (Sagituly & Guo, 2023), viewing employment as temporary and each venture as a stepping stone to better opportunities (Dick, 2019). In addition, they evaluate the personal benefits of each job and strive both to achieve their own goals and to meet organizational objectives (Keif & Donegan, 2006).

According to Díaz Sarmiento *et al.* (2017), this generation is characterized by being mature professionals, properly prepared and with significant responsibilities, playing a fundamental role in the labor market, where work is an essential part of their self-definition. They also value recognition, feedback and interpersonal relationships within the organization. Rather than adhering to the visions and missions defined by previous generations, they focus on incorporating their own motivations and projections into their work.

Members of Generation X actively participate in the enterprise, taking responsibility and taking the initiative, according to various surveys. For them, the idea of being part of the enterprise's identity is a priority and a unifying one. In addition, they constitute the majority of high-level business leaders and founders of start-ups, who know how to raise venture capital to keep their projects in the limelight (Rodríguez Segura & Peláez García, 2010).

Regarding the employability of Generation X in a Latin American city, the study by Calle Angeles (2021) shows that 79.17% of the participants exhibited a high level of employability, while 18.75% demonstrated a medium level and 2.08% presented a low level. The assessment of employability was developed through indicators that include extracurricular knowledge, self-management of employment, network of contacts, current employment situation, labor expertise, market demands, as well as labor demands (Calle Angeles, 2021).

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing problems in the Ecuadorian labor market, creating significant gaps in access to quality jobs (Oliveri *et al.*, 2023). In this

context, employability, in addition to improving the quality of life of beneficiaries, allows them to obtain a stable and secure source of income, which contributes to economic and social well-being. Likewise, the acquisition of a stable and rewarding job represents a fundamental pillar in the structure of human well-being, as it provides a significant context that directly influences people's financial capacity and emotional stability. Job stability not only ensures financial security, but also correlates with emotional well-being, fostering mental and physical health in an integral manner (Soh *et al.*, 2016).

Arévalo-Pachón (2012) indicates that the absence of employment or the condition of unemployment entails adverse repercussions that directly impact integral satisfaction. This scenario can lead to chronic stress, anxiety, depressive disorders and other problems associated with mental health. The loss of a stable job and the difficulty in accessing the labor market generate a sense of financial and emotional uncertainty, gradually affecting self-esteem and sense of purpose. The need for employment can also influence social isolation and the perception of self-efficacy, creating barriers to social participation. These factors, in conjunction with joblessness or prolonged unemployment, can significantly affect people's mental and emotional health, altering their well-being (Paul & Moser, 2009).

In the city of Guayaquil, full employment for people over 39 years old decreased by 5.94% between 2017 and 2018, and by 4.3% between 2018 and 2019. According to several specialists, there are several variables, in addition to age, that influence the reduction in the possibilities of this generation to access adequate employment, such as hiring processes linked to experience or the lack of adaptation to technology (El Universo, 2019).

Through a detailed analysis of the employability of the participants, we sought to understand how this employment status affected various aspects of their overall well-being. The objective of this research was to analyze the employability of Generation X in Guayaquil and its influence on their quality of life. To this end, the following question was posed: How does employability influence the quality of life of Generation X in Guayaquil, considering emotional, economic, social and general aspects of well-being?

METHODOLOGY

The research was descriptive, non-experimental, with a cross-sectional design and a quantitative approach. Since the objective of the study was to analyze the employability of Generation X in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and its influence on the quality of life, a descriptive study was carried out by means of surveys applied to persons of this generation.

The sample size calculation was based on a total population of 2.6 million inhabitants in Guayaquil. Considering that 18% of this population corresponded to Generation X, the target population was estimated to be 468,000 people. This figure was treated as an infinite population, according to Triola (2008), who indicated that a population is infinite when it exceeds 100,000 individuals. With a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, it was determined that the sample should be made up of 384 Guayaquileños belonging to Generation X. 57.3% of the respondents were men from Generation X. Likewise, there was a greater involvement of people between 43 and 46 years of age (50.8%). Similarly, a large percentage of the participants were married. As for the type of employment, informal employment predominated, with 45.1%, reflecting an unstable situation in the labor market, since these jobs lack social security, stability and benefits. The percentage of formal employment was 29.9%, indicating that this generation faces difficulties in finding jobs that offer formal contracts and benefits.

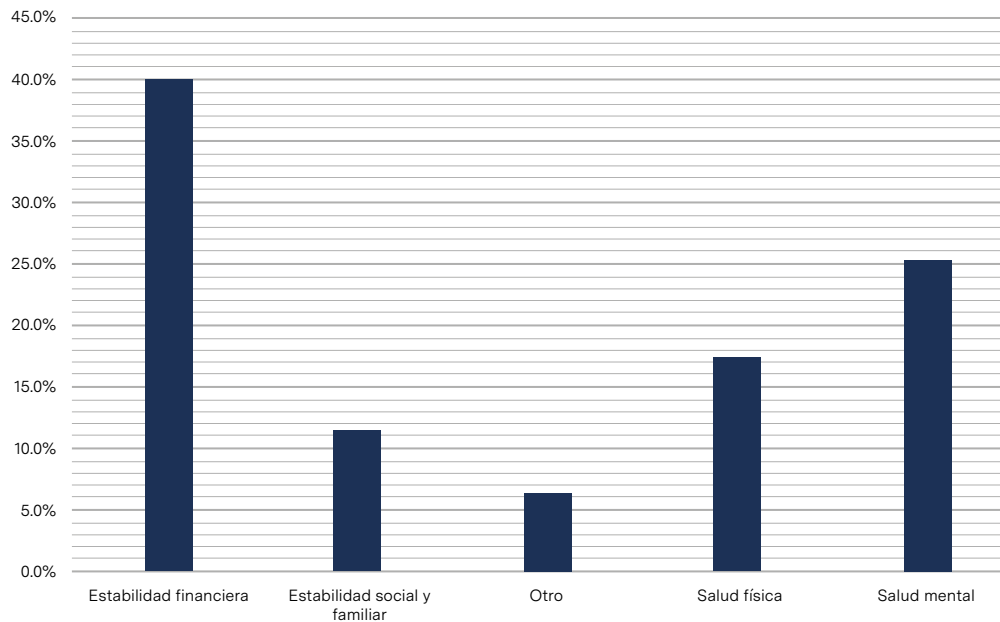
For this purpose, an online questionnaire composed of 15 questions was designed, which was subjected to a validity test through the evaluation of five experts in the areas of administration and human resources. Data collection was carried out during the months of May and June 2024. Data processing and generation of statistics was carried out using the SPSS statistical software, version 26.

This research followed the confidentiality and anonymity protocols established by the Declaration of Helsinki. Participants gave their informed consent voluntarily, and measures were implemented to protect their privacy. Data were anonymized, ensuring that participants could not be identified, and any risk that could compromise their physical or emotional integrity was avoided (Del Percio, 2020).

RESULTS

Figure 1.

Aspects on which having a job has an influence according to Generation X

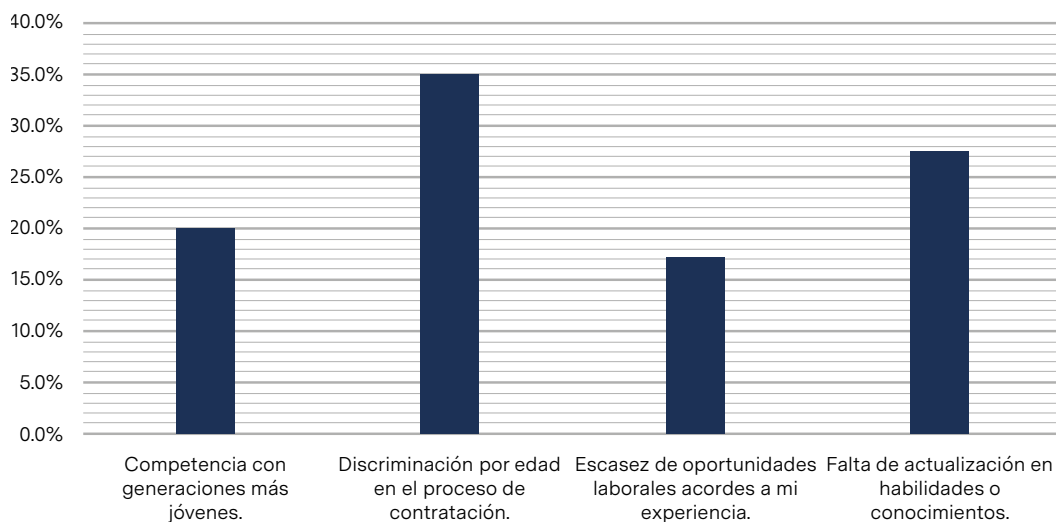


The importance of having a job affects several aspects of people's lives, as shown in Figure 1. Financial stability is the aspect that benefits most from employment, with 39.8%, which reflects the relevance of having a formal, paid job. In addition,

25.3% of respondents believe that having a job has an influence on mental health, since covering basic needs and leading a dignified life contributes to reducing anxiety and stress.

Figure 2.

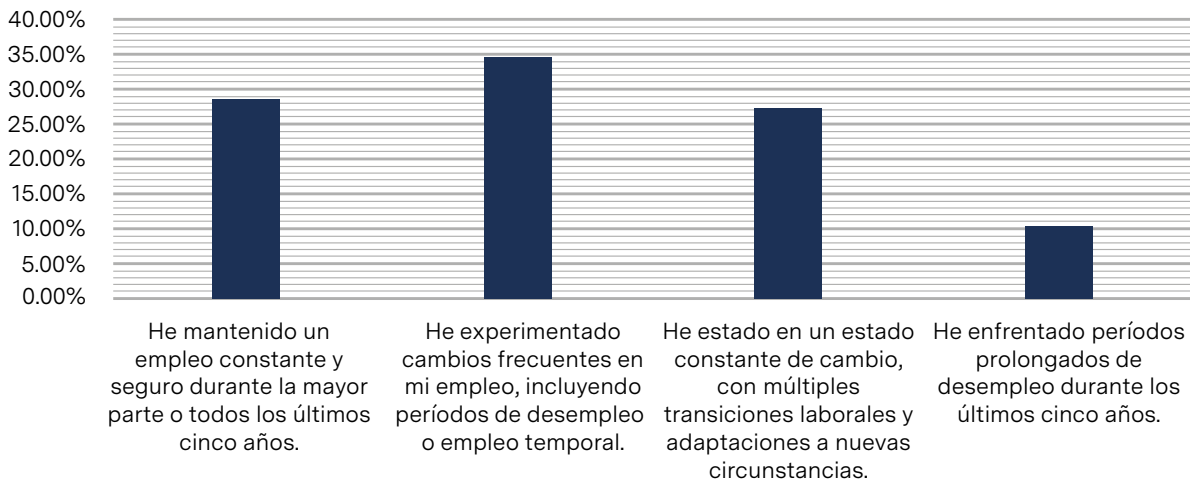
Main difficulties encountered in finding employment



In Figure 2, the most common difficulty faced by the majority of respondents is age discrimination during the hiring process, with 35.2%. It is

important to take this data into account, as it is an illegal practice that limits employment opportunities for this population group.

Figure 3.
Employment stability in the last 5 years of the Generation X



According to Figure 3, 34.4% of respondents have experienced frequent changes in their employment, including periods of unemployment or temporary jobs, often without social benefits.

On the other hand, only 28.4% have managed to maintain constant and secure employment, which is evidence of significant job instability in this generation.

Figure 4.
Aspects to improve the employability of Generation X

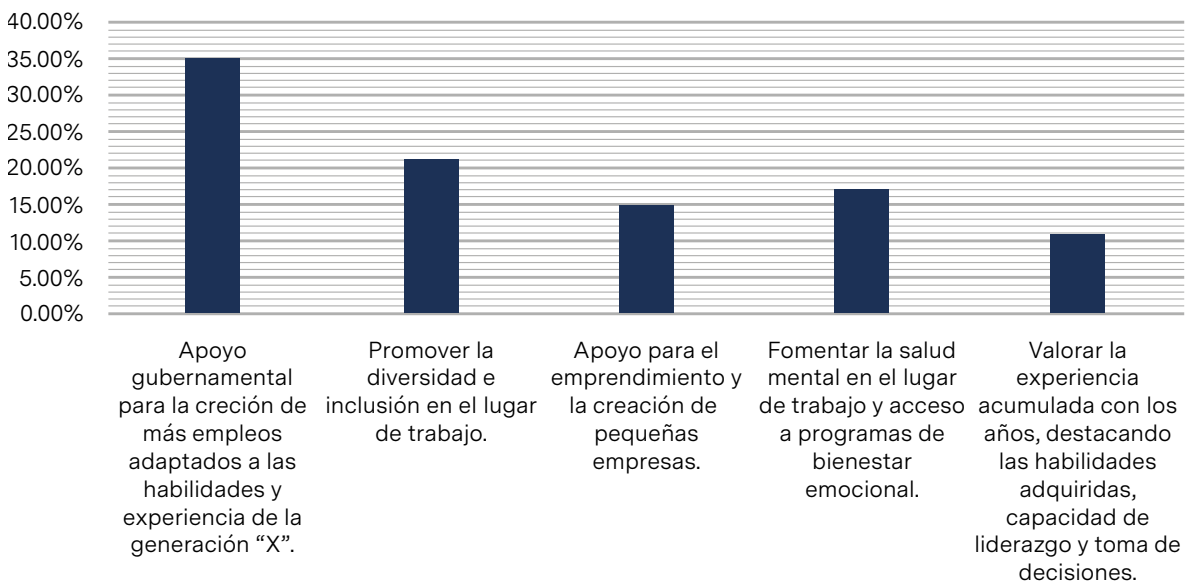
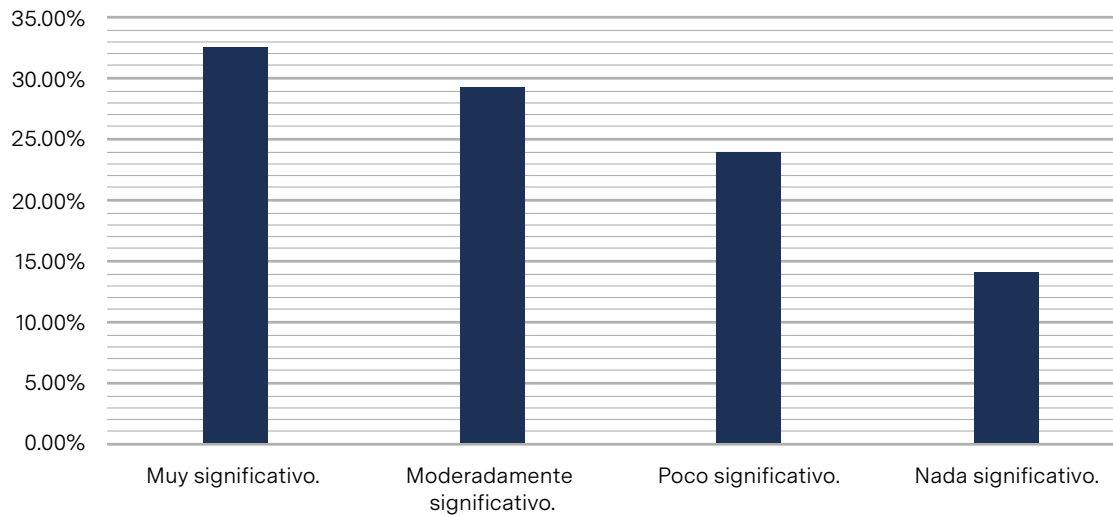


Figure 4 shows the aspects that could improve Generation X's employability. It is noteworthy that 34.9% of respondents indicate that, in order to enhance job opportunities, government support is needed for the creation of jobs that match their skills. This highlights the urgency of

implementing new public policies that address the needs of this population group. In addition, 21.4% believe that it is essential to promote diversity and inclusion in the work environment to combat age discrimination.

Figure 5.
Importance of employability for work-life balance



According to Figure 5, 32.6% of respondents believe that employability plays an important role in their ability to balance work and personal life, while 14.1% believe that employability has had no impact on their ability to achieve this balance.

Figure 6.
Aspects of quality of life affected by employment situation

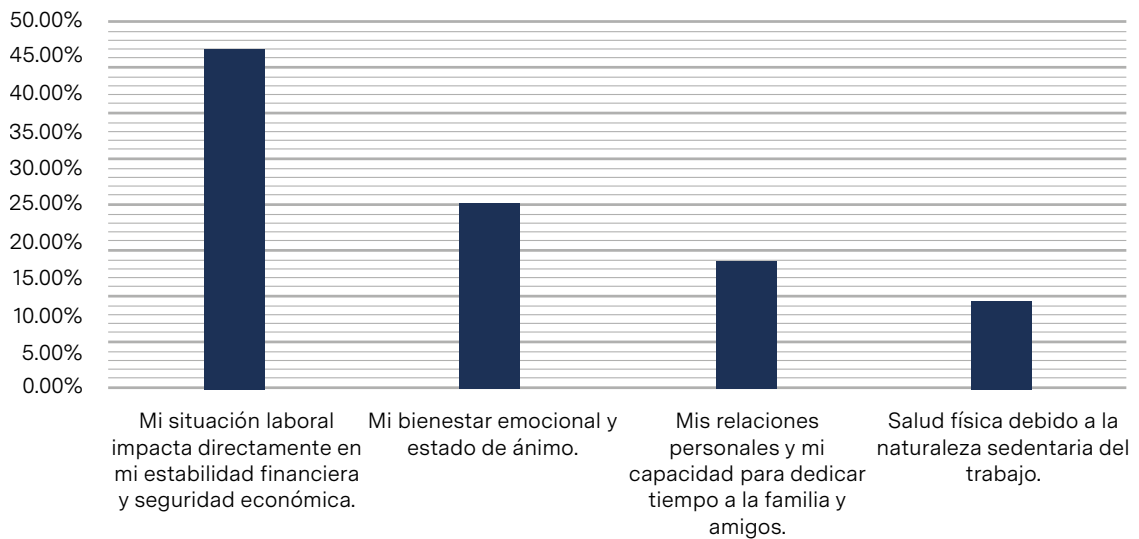


Figure 6 presents the main aspects of quality of life that are affected by the employment situation. The main factor is financial stability and economic security, with 45.8%, while 12% attribute the greatest affectation to physical health. Clearly, people who do not have a job - whatever the reason - lack a source of income that allows them to meet daily expenses, both personal and family. This, in turn, can affect other aspects of their lives, such as physical, emotional and affective health.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research pointed to the prevalence of informal employment within the Generation X population in Guayaquil, with 45.1% of respondents reporting to be involved in this type of occupation. This situation revealed significant instability in the labor market, as informal jobs lack social security, stability and benefits, fundamental aspects for an adequate quality of life. Research such as that of Babyshev *et al.* (2021) confirmed that precarious employment, including informal and temporary employment, tends to reduce the quality of life due to the lack of security and legal protections, generating economic difficulties that affect not only financial stability, but also the physical and mental health of workers. In contrast, only 29.9% of this generation had access to formal employment, which highlighted the difficulties they faced in obtaining jobs with contracts and benefits. This coincided with studies that highlighted those workers with formal jobs enjoy greater financial stability, which allows them to cover their basic needs and plan their future in a more secure way (Anandhi & Velmurugan, 2024).

Financial stability was highlighted among respondents as one of the most important benefits of having a formal job, which reinforced the relevance of this type of occupation. This result was consistent with research showing that financial stability facilitates not only job satisfaction, but also an improvement in overall quality of life (Conover *et al.*, 2022). However, previous studies also highlighted that job insecurity, such as the perception of a possible job loss, can have significant negative consequences for overall health, increasing levels of stress and anxiety, and increasing the risk of more serious diseases, such as cardiovascular problems (Ferrie & Martikainen, 2007; Navinés *et al.*, 2016).

On the other hand, the results of this study also revealed that 35.2% of respondents had experienced age discrimination during the hiring process. This phenomenon was of particular concern for Generation X, whose members face greater barriers to formal employment due to age-related prejudices. Kuchenkova (2022) confirmed that older workers are more vulnerable to being relegated to precarious jobs, thus perpetuating economic instability and reducing career development opportunities.

Regarding the impact of employment on mental health, 25.3% of respondents perceived that having a job reduced anxiety and stress, improving their psychological well-being. This finding was aligned with previous research indicating that job stability not only guarantees financial security, but also contributes to emotional and psychological well-being by providing a sense of purpose and certainty (Albertini *et al.*, 2021). However, in situations of precarious employment, these effects can be reversed, exacerbating workers' stress and anxiety.

Another relevant aspect that emerged from this study was the relationship between employability and the balance between work and personal life. Thirty-two-point six percent of the respondents indicated that employment played a fundamental role in maintaining this balance. The literature supported this conclusion, as workers who achieve an adequate work-life balance tend to report higher levels of satisfaction with their life in general. However, when employment is unstable, as is the case with informal jobs, this balance is affected, increasing stress and decreasing quality of life (Burkha-nova *et al.*, 2022).

Finally, the results suggested that government intervention is crucial to improve the employability of Generation X, since 34.9% of respondents believed that the government should play an active role in creating jobs that match their skills. This finding coincided with studies that indicated that well-designed public policies can alleviate the negative effects of job instability, thus promoting employment inclusion and stability (Bobkov & Veredyuk, 2022).

Contribution to knowledge

Among the main contributions of this study, a high prevalence of informal employment was identified, whose negative effects affect both the physical and psychological well-being of the participants. In addition, it highlighted the urgent need for public policies to promote formal employment and reduce age discrimination, thus promoting better working conditions and integral development of this population belonging to the Generation X.

Limitations

Among the limitations of this research, the geographic focus stands out, since 384 Generation X people were surveyed in Guayaquil.

Although this sample provides an overview of the problem, it is not sufficient to generalize the results to the entire Ecuadorian or Latin American population. Future research could broaden the geographic scope. In addition, it would be valuable to develop longitudinal studies that analyze the evolution of employability and its impact on quality of life over time.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has shown that Generation X in Guayaquil faces significant challenges in terms of employability, with a worrying prevalence of informal employment (45.1% of those surveyed) and limited access to formal jobs. This reality not only creates economic instability, but also affects the quality of life of this generation, affecting their physical, mental and emotional well-being. Informal employment, characterised by a lack of social security and benefits, perpetuates job insecurity, limits the ability to plan financially and generates high levels of stress and anxiety.

Age discrimination, reported by 35.2 % of respondents, is another factor aggravating the employment situation of Generation X. This group, with vast experience and skills, faces significant barriers to accessing formal jobs due to age-related prejudice. This group, with vast experience and skills, faces significant barriers to formal employment due to age-related prejudice, which restricts their inclusion in the labor market and perpetuates a limited view of the value of more experienced workers. Addressing this discrimination must be a priority when designing inclusive public policies and raising awareness in the private sector, in order to fully harness the potential of this generation.

One of the most revealing findings is the relationship between employment and work-life balance. 32.6% of respondents highlighted that formal employment contributes to maintaining this balance, providing stability and greater overall satisfaction. However, when employment is precarious and job insecurity is present, this balance is affected, increasing stress levels and deteriorating both physical and emotional health. This fact reinforces the urgent need for policies that promote formal, secure jobs adapted to the skills of this generation.

Government intervention is presented as a key piece in mitigating the negative effects of labor informality. 34.9% of respondents stressed the need for the government to play an active role in the creation of jobs adjusted to Generation X skills. Well-designed public policies would not only alleviate labor precariousness, but would also generate a more inclusive and stable environment, promoting the personal and professional development of this group.

The results of this study emphasize the need for coordinated action among government, business and civil society to improve the employability of Generation X in Guayaquil. Access to formal employment should not only be a goal, but a priority to guarantee the economic stability and integral well-being of this generation. Addressing age discrimination, improving working conditions and promoting inclusion are essential actions to move towards a fairer and more equitable labor market, in which the experience and skills of the Generation X are fully valued.

Contribución de los autores:

Josue Paul Guerrero Cabrera: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Research, Methodology, Writing - original draft, Writing: revision and editing.

Hans Josue Vera Torres: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Research, Methodology, Writing - original draft, Writing: revision and editing.

Karina Anabella Ascencio Burgos: Methodology, Research, Writing - original draft, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing - original draft, Writing - revision and editing.

Nicolás Armando Sumba Nacipucha: Methodology, Supervision, Research, Validation, Visualization, Writing - original draft, Writing: revision and editing.

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Conflictos de interés

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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