

## **Do Workers Feel Satisfied Inside Foreign Companies Established in Tunisia after the Arab Spring Revolution?**



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**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines the situation of Tunisian workers in foreign companies established in Tunisia over the period 2019–2022. The methodology of the study depends on the quantitative and qualitative method, both of which are based on experience and monitoring results and statistics. The results indicate that the situation of workers within these institutions ranges between satisfaction and dissatisfaction. It is not good in view of the level of low wages, and it is not bad in view of the availability of a minimum suitable work environment. Several policies are proposed and discussed.

**KEYWORDS:** Foreign companies, Tunisia, quantitative method, qualitative method, workers

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Economic and political changes since 1980 have led to a redistribution of foreign direct investment around the world in favour of developing countries. In addition, globalisation has led to the dismantling of tariff and non-tariff barriers, encouraging multinational companies to increasingly locate in these countries as part of the international division of labour and to take advantage of cheap labour. In this context, the developing countries have tried to improve their attractiveness to win the bet of competition by implementing national policies that attract foreign direct investment. And Tunisia, like the rest of the developing world, has made foreign direct investment the main engine of growth for its economy. Since the 1980s, Tunisian governments have considered attracting foreign direct investment as the main objective of their economic policy in order to increase exports, create employment opportunities for the unemployed, transfer technology and contribute to industrial development.

Tunisia has endeavoured to offer an attractive framework to foreign investors far from the traditional economic determinants, such as the low cost of unskilled labour and the geographical and cultural proximity with the European continent, which represents the country's first commercial partner. In order to achieve these objectives, the country has endeavoured to ensure stability both at the political and social level and at the macroeconomic level. Despite the positive impact of foreign direct investment on the scope and component of labour in Tunisia, the situation of workers in these institutions is generally unsatisfactory

This paper studies the situation of Tunisian workers in foreign companies in Tunisia. Given the impossibility of carrying out an exhaustive survey on all the workers of foreign establishments established in Tunisia, because it is a complex, ramified and thorny process that requires efforts, enormous energy, huge funds and the long time that must be devoted to it in order to realize it and implement it with the required speed, The social sciences, especially sociology, have become dependent on the sampling method, which does not study all units of the research community, but is limited to a small part of it after being selected in an organised or random way. This stage represents the most important methodological steps in social field research, which depends on the degree of precision and the possibility of generalisation rather than non-generalisation. The sample is a precise number of cases that are selected from many social phenomena, because they represent their broad origin, which is difficult or impossible to surround it as a whole. Our field study, which relied on the questionnaire method, dealt with the situation of workers within three foreign establishments belonging to three different industrial areas.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 shows the research motives. Section 3 presents the methodology of research. Section 4 shows the scope of research, Section 4 presents the results and discussion and section 6 concludes.

### **2. RESEARCH MOTIVES**

#### **2.1 Self-motivated**

The first motive is a self-obsession, and therefore the subject has not crystallised in a way that transcends social reality, i.e. a superiority, but rather from it and to it it returns, and it had its own psychological premonitions in the beginning, which then turned into an epistemological obsession that requires study and deepening. As a Tunisian citizen, my direct observations were the first starting point for this subject, observations stemming from a sense of the existence of an actual crisis as a result of what Tunisian youth are exposed to in the face of the problem of employment, including that they resort to illegal immigration and the resulting

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risks that reach the point of death drowned in the depths of the sea, despite his psychological attachment to Tunisia, or to live with unemployment and the psychological crises that follow, and the consequent social ills, or to work with low salaries in foreign institutions.

As for the second motive, it is a personal desire that resulted from being immersed in national affairs and trying to understand its phenomena and dismantle its elements, based on data, statistics, the field, and investigation in connection with reality, especially since I am an integral part of it, interacting with it, and seeking to answer its problems as much as I can.

### **2.2 Objective motives**

The issue of employment is one of the topics that raise political and social concern, as employment represents a problem that threatens the entity of society if it is not addressed. The issue of employment is closely related to the issue of economic growth, given that one percent of economic growth achieves 15,000 jobs. And since the issue of growth in Tunisia is linked to many variables, foreign direct investment represents the most important of them with reference to the approved development method. The decline of these investments and the slowdown in production as a result of the turmoil in the country and the uncomfortable situation of workers in foreign institutions led to a rise in the unemployment rate, a rise that threatens the cohesion and stability of society and deepens the sense of injustice.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The research process is divided into general methodological principles and specific research rules and techniques. No research can be conducted without a clear and precise methodology. The idea of methodology, in the well-known terminological sense, was formed from the 17th century onwards by Francis Bacon, Descartes and other scholars who were interested in the empirical and deductive method. Sociologists have adjusted the methodology to help understand the wider meaning of the results of scientific research and the research process itself, emphasising that the difficulties to which research is exposed can increase the value of the method.

There is a qualitative approach and a quantitative approach, both of which are based on experiment, monitoring results and statistics to understand and analyze social phenomena and economic results. The scientific study is not just collecting information and facts, but it is an interpretation of these facts and an explanation of their meanings and their relationship to each other. In addition, every scientific research is able to combine multiple and different approaches, including the qualitative approach, because it gives the study more accuracy and richness. Different field methodologies need to be adopted so that the research is integrated and interdependent, thus increasing its accuracy and robustness. Thus, the sociological approach to conducting this work required the investment of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and thus the adoption of both quantitative and qualitative questionnaire approaches to determine the position of workers within foreign establishments in Tunisia.

### **3.1 Quantitative approach: the questionnaire form**

Survey research was born from the impossibility of asking questions to each inhabitant separately. The questionnaire is to describe the whole by the part, in the sense that we know the population by the sample, and it is the point of reaching the theoretical reflection, but it is also the point of departure of the empirical observation that you pursue. And each question must find its meaning in relation to the predetermined hypothesis, the results obtained being able to confirm or invalidate the hypothesis concerned by the experiment. The form also means: extracting and analysing the results through its contribution to facilitating the sorting and analysis processes (Schiffino, 2004).

Our search form consists of a set of closed questions with predetermined suggestions and choices, and it also contains a set of open questions to leave the field of dialogue open with the respondent without restricting it, and giving him a margin of freedom of expression. This questionnaire is based on a set of variables, which are gender, civil status, educational level, years of work and career plan in three foreign factories residing in Tunisia. It should also be noted here that all the variables of the sample members are considered important in understanding the quality of the organization's culture.

It should also be noted here that all the variables of the sample members are considered important in understanding the quality of the organization's culture. The interaction process between us and the interrogator lasts half an hour, interspersed with a series of open-ended questions that take the form of spontaneous dialogues and discussions that seek, on the one hand, to reassure the interrogator and bring us closer to him, and on the other hand, to collect as much information as possible.

### **3.2 Qualitative approach**

Thus, this approach helps us to achieve a sort of equation between the internal and external dynamics of social phenomena. We adopt the qualitative approach because our research falls within the framework of a case study of the situation of workers in three foreign companies established in three different regions in Tunisia. An approach that gives a holistic vision to study a specific phenomenon in a specific society. The qualitative research relies mainly on simple observation with participation and an in-depth interview with the various segments of workers within the three foreign industrial establishments in question so that we can understand the psychological, sociological and economic situation through direct integration in the labor field (Bourdieu 1979).

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### **3.2.1 The interview**

The interview is a means of data collection, based on writing down the various meetings and dialogues that take place between the respondent and the researcher, and it is one of the important tools because it creates an area of comfort between the two parties, especially for the respondent, who makes him more telling the facts and revealing them, especially those related to past times (Brinkmann, 2023). There are many events, facts, and facts that cannot be obtained as a result of our inability to access the archives of the institutions that are in question, events experienced by the workers of the institution at their various levels and job ranks because they are related to their daily living while at work. Therefore, the investment of the interview as a research technique cannot be dispensed with due to its interest in the culture of the institution and in the prevailing cultural standards and identity within the research community, which we can only reach by accessing many facts and events related to the past.

The questioning method allows the respondent, i.e. the workers of the three institutions of our research, was able to answer freely and honestly without being restricted to specific answers, as the researcher does in official interviews, especially in the case of closed-ended questions. The private dialogues with the workers, in addition to the freedom of expression and granting them a margin of the required confidence, puts them in a state of comfort and reassurance that enables them to give many information and facts, and to mention many realities that were absent and that we could not reach by adopting the participatory observation technique because they occurred in previous periods of time. These informations are important and rich and refers us to the true situation of workers within the foreign institutions erected inside the country, and therefore the case study is interested in studying the past as a major influence in showing the situation in the present time, and its future expectations (May et al. 2023).

In order to achieve closeness to the optimal interview, it is necessary to control the objective dimension, and it is necessary to take into account the movements, looks and silence during the interviews, not just the words, conversations, stories and novels as recommended by Bourdieu (Nonna, (1995), because there are many intentions and meanings in that, provided that they are not misinterpret. What increases the importance of the interview in our research is our dependence on the variables that we chose to observe and study as indicators that help us to understand the internal work of the institution, such as the management of human resources, internal communication, assignments, the principle of participatory, the mechanism of professional formation and resuscitation, and job mobility. In addition to the pattern of social relations prevailing within the three industrial establishments under study (the type of actors and their bets, work conditions and climate, relationships within work), then the institutional culture that we derive from the foregoing through the employees' representations of the establishment and their behaviors and attitudes through professional socialization, or collective memory.

### **3.2.2 Observation**

Observation is a necessary technique for carrying out any social research that cannot be bypassed as a link between the researcher and the subject of his research, whether it is quantitative or qualitative. Note that we do not limit the technique of observation to the field of research only, but we also take into account the external environment to which the three institutions belong. The importance of observation as an essential step in the study of the social phenomenon was emphasized by Ibn Khaldun, Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim and other philosophers and sociologists. Its importance is represented in the fact that it allows us to accurately observe the phenomenon and investigate the data related to it.

## **4. SCOPE OF RESEARCH : THE SAMPLE**

The sample is an integral part of the quantitative research, the questionnaire and the collection of information in the field cannot be of value if the sample is not precisely defined. The main characteristic that distinguishes the quantitative approach is its specificity and its ability to represent the population concerned in the study (Louis, 1975) and the representative sample of the population is the one that gives an opportunity to each of these individuals to be chosen (Albarelo, 2007) and therefore we rely mainly on a representative sample of the employees of the institutions under study.

Our field survey is based on the questionnaire method, as it focused on the situation of workers in three foreign establishments in three different industrial zones in Tunisia, namely the electrical wire factory located in the Ertiah-BullaRegia industrial zone in the state of Jendouba, which employs about 2500 workers, the German "Kromberg & Schubert" factory to manufacture electric cables for cars in the state of Beja, which employs about 4.000 workers, and the "Toscani-Manifatture" factory for the manufacture of shoes in the industrial zone, Jabal al-Wasat 1, in the state of Zaghuan, which employs 150 workers).

This sample comprises 10% of the total number of workers at all levels, including 50 managers, 250 supervisors and 400 workers. This sample is considered large in size, because the larger the sample size, the lower the standard error of sampling and the greater its ability to represent the study population. This sample includes multiple categories (youth and the elderly), male and female sexes, different ages, different administrative ranks (executive, management assistant, execution assistant, laborer), and the different educational levels of the employees in general (primary education, secondary education, vocational training and higher education). These variables interact with each other in order to investigate the internal conditions of work and the nature of the relations between the various actors and to know the extent of the institution's orientation towards the assignment and its reliance in that on the required specializations and academic levels, or on mediations and on personal relations. And we followed the random basis because

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"the rationale for such a test is to give all cases of the study population the same chances and probabilities of appearing in the sample (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2012). The research and study procedures began in 2019 until the end of February 2022 with the questionnaire. And whenever we need additional information that enriches and benefits the research, we renew the interviews with those concerned for inquiries and research, and add them to the study.

### 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Questionnaire analysis

As part of our study of the situation of the worker in the above-mentioned foreign institutions, we conducted a questionnaire among different professional groups, including managers, supervisors and employees. The results of this questionnaire are presented in the Table 1.

Through the statistics that we have made, we have found that most of the age groups are the young people between eighteen and thirty years, which represent 65%, while the age group between thirty and forty represents 25%. The age group over forty is 10%, with a total absence of the under eighteen age group.

We took a photo for a banner hanging on the wall of the electrical wire factory in Jendouba (see Figure 1) written in Arabic, which explains the majority of the age group working in the establishment and its level of education. The banner indicates : “SEBN (Electrical Wire Factory of Bulla Regia) intends to recruit female workers. The educational level is from the seventh grade of primary school to the fourth grade of secondary school. Age ranges from 18 to 35 years”.

**Table 1. The results of the questionnaire for the three foreign industrial companies**

	Category	Percentage
Age	16-18	00%
	18-30	65%
	40-30	25%
	40 and over	10%
Education	Nothingness	00%
	Professional formation	05%
	Primary and similar	15%
	Secondary and similar	70%
Gender	Superior	10%
	Male	25%
Rank at work	Female	75%
	Manager	15%
Type of work	Worker	85%
	Regular	25%
	Occasional	70%
How to get to work	Seasonal	05%
	Direct contact with the institution	20%
	Personal relationships	10%
	Employment offices	55%
	Training institution	15%



**Figure 1. Announcing the recruitment of female workers in the electrical wire factory in Jendouba**

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With regard to the level of education, all three institutions lack illiterate workers, i.e. zero per cent, whereas we find that the highest percentage is related to workers who have attended secondary school, and it reaches up to 70 per cent. As for those with higher degrees, their percentage is low, estimated at 25 per cent. Based on the contact we had with the workers, it became clear to us that the percentage of female workers is three times the percentage of male workers, i.e. 75 per cent, compared to the percentage of male workers, which is estimated at 25 per cent. This difference is explained by women's ability and willingness to sacrifice in order to improve their material and social conditions, even if it is based on a low salary.

The category of workers in the three establishments monopolises a large percentage of the available jobs, reaching 85%, and managers are limited to a small percentage estimated at 15%, due to the real need of these establishments for a larger number of workers. The type of work differs from one worker to another and from one institution to another. There are those who work on a casual basis, i.e. through a temporary employment contract of one year or 06 months, renewable according to the needs of the institution, which is the highest percentage of up to 75 per cent compared to the percentage of regular workers who do not exceed one quarter of the total number of workers. This is what serves the interest of the organisation before the interest of the worker.

There is more than one way to access employment, as it can be seen that most of the workers in these institutions have found work through employment agencies with work integration contracts. As for direct contact, it is 20%, personal relations are 10%, and finally through the institution supervising the training, it is 15%, and it is considered a relatively low percentage compared to its counterparts in developed countries.

### **5.2 The workers' situation in the three foreign establishments**

It was natural at the outset to ask the question of how workers felt about their work and how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the work they did on a daily basis.

The salary in the three foreign establishments is determined according to the number of hours, which amount to 48 hours per week, at a value of 2 dinars per hour for a qualified and efficient worker, i.e. an estimated monthly amount of 400 Tunisian dinars, and 1.36 for the ordinary worker trained in the speciality, i.e. 300 Tunisian dinars per month. And the workers expressed their dissatisfaction with the salary as low and insufficient in relation to the work and efforts made. The three institutions guarantee the affiliation of all workers to the National Social Security Fund. These institutions also provide health insurance for their benefit, which reinforces the workers' sense of their value in the institution. These companies provide their workers with overalls consisting of white coveralls, which are washed or replaced as needed. And workers must wear the apron when entering the work hall and remove it when leaving it.

The energy that the worker expends in his work results from the lunches that he eats. If the food or meals he eats are insufficient in terms of quantity and quality, one soon loses his ability to withstand the energy required by his organs. Adequate food helps it in vital growth and compensates cells in cases of illness, emaciation, or injury from wounds and ulcers. Thus, adequate and necessary nutrition is considered one of the most important issues that concern the owners of the establishment, which confirms that foreign establishments are fully aware of the importance of having a restaurant within the establishment. The restaurants inside these establishments are divided into restaurants and cafes at the same time, and they provide various meals and drinks at relatively reasonable prices, taking into account the purchasing power of the worker. These restaurants offer fast and varied meals according to the worker's request. The food provided is generally considered sufficient and contains important nutrients. The three factories also contain all the necessary health conditions.

There is adequate lighting available in these establishments, and sufficient daylight is available through the windows, in addition to electric light in all parts of the work halls. Therefore, it can be said that lighting is available and sufficient to help workers think and concentrate, and it does not cost them much effort or trouble to differentiate and distinguish things. Mobility is one of the most important things that concerns the worker when he obtains a job, especially when the distance between the place of residence and the place of work is long and necessarily requires a means of transport. This is one of the most important types of service that the worker seeks to benefit from the industrial establishment, which in turn pays attention to this issue and provides a means of transport for workers wherever they reside in the delegation where the establishment is located. This is a picture we took in front of the wire factory in Jendouba that shows us that. This is a photo we took in front of the wire factory in Jendouba.

The three establishments provide their workers with a doctor who examines workers suffering from illnesses, examines them on the spot, provides them with medical prescriptions, advises them, guides them and enables them to find out the causes of the illness from which they are suffering. The doctor also refers them to specialists or hospitals, if their condition so requires, for the necessary tests and analyses. Despite the efforts made by the above-mentioned institutions, they remain insufficient and do not express workers' satisfaction due to the low level of wages and the absence of other important elements.

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**Figure 2. Transport facilities provided for workers at the Jendouba electrical wire factory**

Workers are assigned to the three establishments under review through fixed-term contracts that expire at the end of a specified period, which does not exceed six months or one year at the latest. The contract is also renewed for some workers depending on the needs of the establishment, noting that for others, the establishment sometimes gives them a rest of three months or more, after which some people return to their previous activities, if necessary. Also, the number of workers is reduced from one year to the next and others are added, which indicates that the workers work in a temporary and seasonal manner. This confirms that these institutions avoid, as far as possible, the demarcation of workers. This is considered to be one of the most important problems facing workers in foreign establishments in Tunisia, where workers constantly feel fear and dread as the expiry date of the contract approaches, for fear of being dismissed from their services, thus entering a period of open-ended rest that may send them back to unemployment. Working hours are considered one of the most important issues that concern workers in these institutions, which rely on a 48-hour system per week, at an average of 8 hours per day, while giving workers half an hour's rest. In the sense that it depends on the one-time system, and the working time is from six o'clock in the morning until four o'clock after noon during the first week, then from four o'clock after noon until ten o'clock in the evening in the following week, then from ten o'clock in the evening until six o'clock in the morning in the third week.

This method contributed to the exhaustion of the workers' forces, which made them feel the long hours of work, boredom, anxiety and exhaustion. There is no doubt that long, tiring work harms the worker's health, in addition to limiting his activity and lowering his productivity. Also, a single rest period between working hours in addition to working three different times causes psychological and material disturbances that limit the activity of the worker

These establishments install monitoring machines throughout the establishment in order to monitor the workers while they are doing their work, which increases their tension and their sense of constraint. It is an indirect imposition of work and diligence, with a warning against procrastination and non-compliance with the internal system of the institution. Consequently, the tight monitoring adopted by these institutions is one of the most important causes of psychological pressure and boredom experienced by workers.

Workers enjoy a weekly rest day. As for holidays and vacations, they are almost absent unless there are compelling reasons that prevent the worker from practicing his work, and they are also unpaid, and hours of absence are deducted from the monthly wage. On official holidays, workers enjoy two days of paid rest, but if the rest exceeds two days, the worker may be subject to the penalty of dismissal from work. Grants and privileges are absent within these institutions, as there are no material incentives or moral privileges, although they are the most important incentives that may contribute to raising productivity.

In the following, we will pay attention to the external social aspects of our study community, and the most important thing we can mention in this context is the extent to which the three institutions help the needy families nearby.

The director of the production department at the electrical wire factory in Jendouba, which is the same as the answer of the rest of the institutions under study, says, "Our institution does not provide funds directly to needy families and vulnerable groups that deserve subsidies, but rather gives them to local authorities such as the municipality, the state, or the regional council, and the latter is the one that it is responsible for distributing it".

He also added that "the Electrical Wiring Factory undertook the maintenance of the primary school "Al-Irtihah" from the northern delegation of Jendouba located in the area where the factory is located. Repairing the water network and faucets in the health groups, complete cleaning of the yard and garden, and all maintenance works that improve the infrastructure of the institution. In addition to the movement of a team of administrators and workers towards the school to secure the maintenance process, which was well received by the parents, students, and the educational framework in this institution, which our institution also enabled it to include desks for teachers and chairs for students".

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### 6. CONCLUSION

In general, the situation of workers in the three companies studied can be determined by identifying the degree of satisfaction, contentment and acceptance of the working conditions and environment, including supervision, colleagues, management, working hours, wages, incentives, and training courses, as well as the satisfaction of their various needs: material, moral, psychological and social. And the results of the questionnaire that we conducted on 700 workers of various levels and administrative ranks proved that foreign institutions give priority to production and working conditions that raise productivity without taking care of the worker's conditions, which makes them feel routine, bored, anxious and exhausted, and deepens in them the feeling of abandonment and dissatisfaction. Thus, almost all workers expressed a desire to leave work if another job was available for them.

Workers' dissatisfaction is caused by the difficulty in satisfying their various needs and motives. The degree of the worker's satisfaction with his work can be known by the difference between what he actually gets in terms of monthly salary and a specific level that he takes as a criterion for what he should get. Thus, the main factor of dissatisfaction with the workers within these institutions is mainly represented in the low level of wages and the difference in salaries between them, in addition to other factors such as dry relations within the institution, whether between the workers themselves or between workers and administrators, the type of monitoring and supervision, the policy of the institution, Work conditions and conditions, one-sharing system, night work and others. As for the social aspect and the institution's radiation on its external environment, these institutions provide a lot of assistance to the local authorities to distribute it to poor people. In addition to the maintenance of some educational institutions.

The findings from this study have several policy implications. In light of what has been presented and analysed in this research through the field questionnaire, we recommend the following:

- ✓ Commitment to developing investment laws, making them transparent and stable, and intensifying promotional efforts for investment opportunities.
- ✓ Enacting more laws and legislations that address workplace conditions, maintenance of equipment and tools, organization of workflow, and a good distribution of working hours and rest times during the day.
- ✓ Enacting the necessary legislation for determining wages and their compatibility with the cost of living, and regulating work relations through social relations that must be between the worker and management and between the worker and his colleagues at work.
- ✓ Resisting the problem of boredom resulting from the routine imposed by the nature of work through reasonable diversification that does not affect the progress and level of production.
- ✓ Develop major national programs for environmental protection and sustainable development, which are considered one of the most important areas for the advancement of employment, as they provide an important stock of employment opportunities.
- ✓ More interest in the Tunisian worker in foreign institutions
- ✓ Establishing industrial zones outside the built-up area to avoid pollution problems and the resulting dangers.

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