

Research Paper

MoRes, or finding the parameters of just working conditions

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Rather than answering the question of fair employment outright, this essay explores it through real-world examples. By comparing the conditions of a maid, a soldier, and a corporate VP, we uncover deeper patterns that inform our understanding. The result is a proposed framework to evaluate fairness in work, introduced in the conclusion.

Work conditions can be different, some people enjoy white collar jobs in the skyscrapers, some work in the field in blue collars, some are wearing uniforms and risking their life. All jobs are different, maybe, the same job performed at different places is different too. What is important to us is the conditions of labor, whether an individual is striving or struggling.

In this research paper we are trying to judge upon what is fair employment. And for starters, the word fair is ambiguous. For example, a rich VP of a large oil company may receive a very generous compensation for his labor. But, this compensation may be very different from what others receive for similar jobs. Is it fair to our VP? Maybe, this hypothetical individual exhibits an unusual sense of self-awareness and social responsibility. To such an extent, that he sees his higher salary unjust to other people who do the same job.

Another example, a stranded soldier in distant lands, happened to be away from his team. He is devoted enough not to question his pay, but he is human enough to worry about children. Worry that they may not see him ever again. How fair is that he finds himself in this situation?

Lastly, an illegal maid, who does housekeeping for the VP above. We base her portrait on statistics (Banerjee), she is a Latina, around 40-50 years old woman working in Texas. Let's assume now that because of her illegal status, she agrees on less than market average compensation. How fair is it to shorten the wages of middle-aged women? Especially when she is the one to take the responsibility of the home keeping. What is the real value of her job? Is it less, more or same for the VP?

A word about methodology, we use money as work compensation, because money in its nature represents value. Value we give to the performed job, where a job is a building block of the economy. Regardless of the form value takes, it is one of the best measures of any economy as it is the ultimate goal of the economy to increase in value.

Let's start our analysis on the maid example. We will make it even more specific, by saying she lives and works in the city of Austin, Texas. We know on data of 2022 that her median salary is 14,40 USD per hour. With a spread of 10.83 and 20.54 USD for bottom and top 10% (Bureau). Or 31,920 USD total annual wage.

Based on another study, we estimate the cost of living in Austin. It is around 58,000 - 60,000 USD yearly to live a comfortable life for an individual. Or around 122,229 USD for a family. In our hypothetical scenario she lives with a family, she cannot alone provide for the family, she is making only a quarter of the required sum. For food alone it requires 300 USD per month for an individual (Austin). Meaning she has to work 20 hours to provide food for herself without dining out, more than 2 days of 8 hours shifts ($300/14,40$). This number may get worse, if she dines out. Furthermore, the primary care visit is estimated to be 110 USD, being her entire workday to simply visit a doctor.

How this is just to the work she does? Taking a look at her job duties. She works with people we care the most about, children. She performs all the housekeeping, cleaning and maintaining the home in shape. Saving the hours of other members of the household. VP, would make for example 100 USD an hour. If he was the one to do the housekeeping, his contribution would fall by 85%. This is ineffective and would lead to family lifestyle collapse. Household is dependent on her cheap labor at this point. No one wants to live in a dirty house with your children being left to themselves. Some companies trying to account for this and bring some justice to the industry: "Well-Paid Maids is trying to provide a market-based solution to a social problem" (Corea).

We can see that justice is an important hinge of adequate working conditions. Because the value of the performed job can be below what the real value is. It may and will be abused, as the

free market contradicts the idea of a job being rewarded with the societal value it actually has. And still the job is done, maids, in their poorly educated or other reasons have less value. It is an opportunity to make at least something of their existence. They may see it just and agree to their job, by comparing their assigned value as individuals to how they can serve other, more successful individuals.

Let's advance to a counterexample of values, such as market value plays less direct role to the societal value, military. We praise soldiers being heroes, people who risk their lives so the other can sleep well. A potential married private with less than 2 years of service receives 28,356 USD in salary (Army). This number will go significantly higher for being active duty and with higher ranks. However, in this scenario money is secondary. There is little use of them in the fight and there are many bonuses, such as healthcare, given to the soldier.

What keeps a soldier motivated to risk his life, what makes his job just if not free-market compensation? It is his sense of duty he carries of course, how society values his job, honor of being a veteran. The conditions and opportunities military career holds are quite lucrative. Special scholarships, career opportunities, and travel abroad. Those all are incredible opportunities in life to have for further personal growth. Military alone can compensate well to fit individuals. Many refuse to leave how good it is, having a successful military career means guaranteed worry-free life.

Maybe it is challenging when you enlist, having to endure the basic training, living in barracks and having a drill sergeant. Whos job is to put a young soldier under constant stress and get used to harsh conditions. Work being fair, may be benefits it provides, especially in the form of growth opportunities. Many individuals would prefer an undignifying or risky job that would yield a better future and honor, not just money. Enduring challenges and harsh conditions may be just to a soldier, may not be just to a maid. We can see that 36% of the maids are getting threatened, abused and verbally abused (Ranoa).

Looking back on the VP example, generally a low risk and high income job, with often dubious societal value. It is true that business fuels the economy and is helping the community

by creating jobs. Allowing many to earn a living and prosper, even oil companies are providing essential to our modern life fuel. But, why is his compensation so much higher? It might be a fact that a large company may be a lever for individual skills. Meaning that decisions made by the individual lead to numerically significant changes. Maid when she cleans the table doesn't change the world much. But a VP of an oil company, by simply reducing operating cost by 1 cent will produce billions of revenue. One may argue that he is carrying a tremendous risk of the decision, as unpredictable market decisions may backlash and lead to billions of losses. VP is risking his life and career, almost as a soldier does. Justifying his salary, however, risks are naturally diversified in big companies considering the damage one individual could make. Usually, any decision would require a gigantic groundwork, analysis and research, where a high ranking executive would only choose whether to adopt a solution or reject. Having a very sophisticated analysis on his table.

Eventually, when not backed by risk value or societal value, we say the compensation is just by market alone. Which can be really just only in a pure capitalist ideology, otherwise it would be overvalued and harmful. Harmful in the way of fueling economic disparity. We already have a situation where only 32% of workers feel as if they are paid fairly (Cohen). With Texas minimum wage of 7,25 USD per hour (Minimum Wage), which is twice the less of our previously made calculations of house maid with 14,40 USD. Both are not enough for living and are set by the government as an absolute minimum. For a job to be just, it doesn't need a good financial contribution, but rather just to society. For it not to be disrupting the society. And this may be extended to other factors of societal health. Such as crime and the environment. Just a job must be ethical in its core, it must not provide large influence to do unethical actions.

Eventually we found the following parameters that make a work just, we call it MoRes:

- Market value.
- Opportunity.
- Risk factor.
- Ethical impact.
- Societal value.

We've seen how these parameters contribute to feeling just in the workplace. Market value being the most straightforward, being necessary final compensation in resources to sustain an individual. Any job that doesn't offer bare minimum is unjust, a wage that denies healthcare is unjust, as it would impose that any sustained injury on the workplace would not be treated adequately. On the other hand, excess compensation is a fuel of social inequality and is unhealthy to society. We also have seen that monetary compensation may be lower and just, when it provides positive opportunities. It is fair for a newcomer in a lucrative place to struggle, if his struggle will be compensated later. Will, means determined future with risks being insignificantly low, because risk is a separate factor that must be compensated on its own. Example of a soldier shows that risk has a lot of value, given that risk is of death.

Ethical impact is important as well, it is unethical and so unjust to assign a worker to do an unethical job. That may cause him distress and force him to treat other people unfairly. Even if an individual lacks empathy for others, it is unjust to abuse it in such a manner. Lastly and most importantly is societal value, abstract from finance, it is the ultimate measure of impact on society. It ensures and reflects our struggle for a better environment and human progress, a better world.

We already suffer economic disparities and unethical practices such as child labor (Ura). By using mores we can gauge how fair a job is. Hopefully, fair job conditions would improve societal health and allow individuals to prosper. By providing an easy assessment of how fair an individual's situation is. Lastly, an important acknowledgement, MoRes is not a collection of independent parameters; rather, they interact dynamically. For example, high societal value can justify lower market compensation — but only if ethical conditions and future opportunity offset that loss. The complexity of these tradeoffs will be explored in future work. Mores can be suppressed when the need is dire like a martial law. But if action is just, then mores would still work.

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