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EMPLOYMENT PRECARIOUSNESS TAXONOMIES – DEFINITION, DIMENSIONS, INFLUENCING FACTORS AND CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT:

Surprisingly, taxonomies of Precarious Employment in all facets remain a debatable and unresolved issue in the literature, and this will always matter. The present paper explains the core aspects and boundaries of Precarious Employment in terms of definition, dimensions, influencing factors and the consequences of this phenomenon. Several scholarly scientific databases were searched with certain keywords for scholarly peer-reviewed articles reporting results about employment precariousness, conducted between Jan 2019 and Jan 2020. Following the Snowballing Guidelines for systematic literature studies, further qualitative analysis was used to develop the taxonomies of employment precariousness. The paper found no universal definition or boundaries of precarious employment, yet, with some intersections toward the standard and nonstandard employments; the precariousness phenomenon is reported by hundreds of studies and can be identified in terms of certain dimensions. The paper also found that precariousness in employment can be influenced by many factors including, but not limited to, globalization and global unevenness, markets and work reforms, financial crisis, and economic recession, neoliberalism and liberalization, technological evolution, the role of unions and market deregulation, as well as, organizational restructuring, downsizing, and outsourcing. The paper then identified several consequences of this phenomenon with positive and/or negative impact on flexibility, employability, social aspects, economic inequalities, as well as, the attitudes wellbeing and performance of employees. The application of the taxonomic scheme in this paper provides a systematic organization of employment precariousness and contributes to the classification of knowledge in the area of interest. Therefore, this paper attempted to deepen and bring further insights into the boundaries of precariousness in employment, yet, recommends that our understanding in this area must be widened.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of Precarious Employment has increased during the last three to four decades. According to Kalleberg (2009, 2011), Smith (2013), Benach et al. (2016) and Moscone, Tosetti, and Vittadini (2016), this phenomenon has spread across several professional and occupational spectrums, causing labor market volatility, job insecurity, and other consequences related to the employee, employer or both. Based on Virtanen et al. (2005), the rapid changes

in the workplace have led to the appearance of various forms of precarious employment, including self-employment, casual work, temporary, on-call or zero-hours contracts, fixed-term contract, and part-time employment.

As reported by Arnold and Bongiovi (2012), Smith (2013), Schwab (2016) and Benach et al. (2016), there are many unavoidable drivers cause the phenomenon of employment precariousness including the involuntary layoffs, globalization, declining influence of unions, degradation of social protection and the need for organizational restructuring. Such drivers even can facilitate a further unpleasant reshaping of “market” and “hierarchy” patterns (Gilson et al., 2009), make “hierarchical outsourcing” (Williamson, 1981; Weil, 2014) with “fissured workplace”, and consequently, leading to serious economic, organizational, health-related, societal and other challenges (Kalleberg, 2011). In a recent study by Imhof and Andresen (2017), it has been reported that “While temporary workers’ specific employment circumstances strongly suggest negative consequences for their well-being, research on temporary workers’ well-being shows serious inconsistencies”.

However, earlier research conducted by Lewchuk, Clarke, and Wolff (2011) has shown that the spread of Precarious Employment is even reshaping how households and individuals are living, how the nature of community participation work, and how negative health outcomes appear. Therefore, there is a need to understand this new trend in the labor market in more detail. This paper attempts to focus on the issues of conceptualization of this term, the influencing factors causing its increase, and its dimensions and consequences, through the development of taxonomies.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Taxonomic Scheme

Taxonomy is the science of classification where concepts are classified from general to the particular, or from the central to the substitute; almost vents, objects, places, data, information, knowledge, terms, as well as, anything can be classified using a taxonomic scheme. Therefore, taxonomy is not only a classification method or system in the area of biodiversity and living planet but also a hierarchical classification system for naming and organizing things (Webster & Watson, 2002; Greenhalgh & Peacock, 2005; Serrat, 2017). Many scholars have recommended and deployed the technique of taxonomy as a research methodology, and taxonomies of things will always matter as a classification or categorization system of such things.

The processes embedded in this approach or scheme may include several activities such as listing concepts, creating categories, identifying terms, classifying expressions, discovering vocabularies, etc. (Lambe, 2007; Serrat, 2017). This paper applies this approach to understand the notion of employment precariousness in terms of definition, dimensions, influencing factors, and the consequences; as the precariousness of employment is relatively considered as a new concept, the anonymization of those terms or concerns remain matters.

Snowballing Procedure

To conduct a reliable search and analysis of the existing literature related to the concept of employment precariousness, Snowballing sampling was used as the main method to find and identify the key existing literature (Goodman, 1961). In the context of this work, this sampling technique works based on creating a

citation network of earlier studies using relevant keywords starting by identifying a seed paper (s) through ordinary search, and then, collecting the studies citing the seed article(s) as a first step.

Therefore, Google Scholar search was used as a first step to search for general terms related to precarious employment and work. Google Scholar search service is freely available and accessible from anywhere, for anyone at any time, and provides indexing for most of the academic databases and scientific journals with no restrictions to a specific publisher, as well as, allows the user to track and tap-into citation links of the comprehensive set of search results (Lecy & Beatty, 2012). After exploring the results of several searches using much employment and work-related terms, a set of key and specific terms were identified as the most commonly used in the literature as in Table 1, and then those terms were used as keywords for conducting two times search. Based on the results, three key articles were identified as seed articles, Table 1; those seed articles were widely cited as a key reference by researchers in the domain. Also, the three seed articles were published in scholarly journals and of around one decade old so that the exposure to different audiences is broad and has been cited in scholarly journals.

Table 1: First Search for Seed Article

<i>Used Items for the search</i>	<i>Precarious Employment, Employment Precariousness, Vulnerable Workers, Vulnerable Work, Precarious Workers, Precarious Work, Non-standard employment, Contingent work, Peripheral work, Flexible employment, Non-traditional Employment, Atypical employment, etc.</i>
<i>Selected seed articles</i>	<i>(Kalleberg, 2009), (Vives et al., 2010) (Benach et al., 2010)</i>

During the first step, just the titles and abstracts have been reviewed, and the extensive full review and reading were conducted in the third step. In the second step, the reference list of the three seed articles was used to conduct a Backward Snowballing (BSB) search, and the list of articles citing the three seed articles was used to conduct a Forward Snowballing (FSB) search. Based on a qualitative analysis of the abstract section of the listed articles in the second step search, the further selection was made. The inclusion or exclusion of articles listed in the search results was based on a double brief reading of the abstract section, and some times the introduction section, and then applying the criteria as in Table 2.

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Case	Decision
<i>Both readings recommend acceptance</i>	<i>Include the paper for further analysis</i>
<i>Both readings recommend rejection</i>	<i>Exclude the paper</i>
<i>None of the above</i>	<i>Iterate the second step</i>

The second step was repeated until no new articles were found, and a final list of articles is generated to be included in the third step for further analysis. In the third step, comprehensive text reading of the selected articles for inclusion was conducted to identify those articles that can be included for content analysis, and those to be excluded. In the fourth step, the selected articles in the

third step for inclusion were qualitatively analyzed to identify the terms and concepts needed for the development of taxonomies. Figure 1 illustrates the steps conducted using the Snowball procedure.

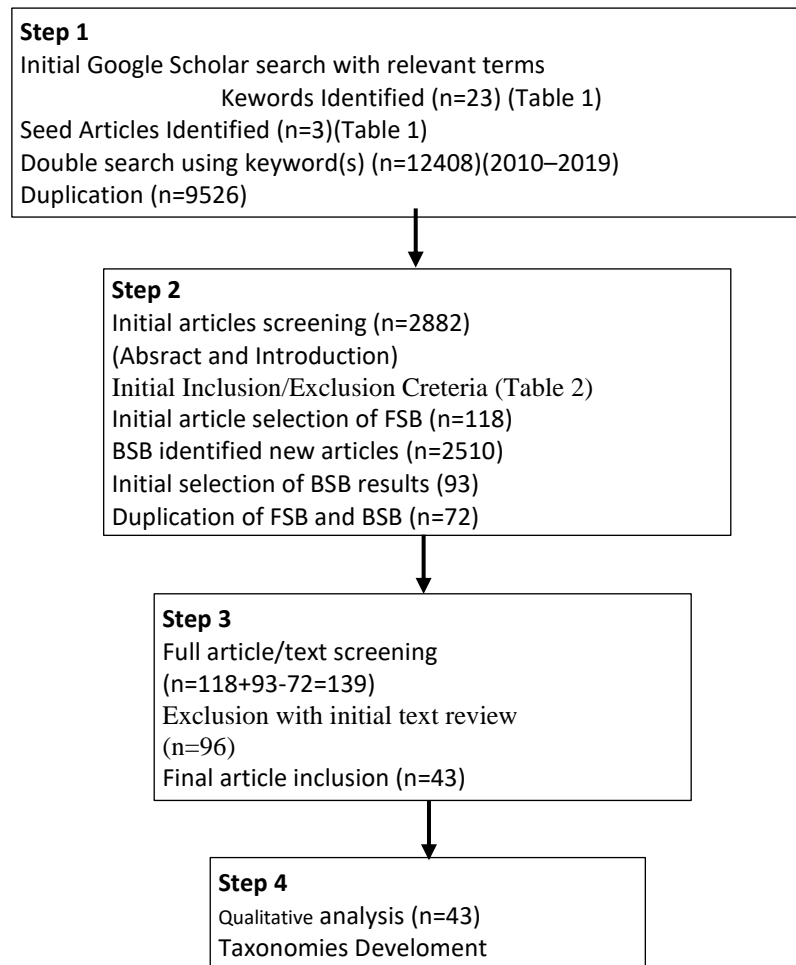


Figure 1: Sampling Procedure

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Employment Precariousness Conceptualization Taxonomy

According to the literature in this domain, it has been demonstrated that by the end of the twentieth century, there was general and worldwide agreement that the labor markets were in clear transition, and employment was becoming less secure and instable. This transition was confirmed, mentioned and investigated by many scholars such as Standing (1999), Benach et al. (2000), Cranford, Vosko and Zukewich (2003), Vosko (2006), De Witte et al. (2008), De Cuyper et al. (2008), Kalleberg (2009), Muntaner et al. (2010), Kalleberg (2011), Standing (2011), Arnold and Bongiovi (2012), Wagenaar et al. (2012), Smith (2013), Weil (2014), Lewchuk et al. (2014), Benach et al. (2014), Adams and Deakin (2014), Behling and Harvey (2015), Dawson et al. (2015), Schonfeld and Mazzola (2015), Benach et al. (2016), Moscone, Tosetti and Vittadini (2016), Campbell and Price (2016), Lewchuk (2017), Van Aerden, Gadeyne and Vanroelen (2017), Imhof and Andresen (2017), Shoss (2017), Jiang (2018), Rudolph and Zacher (2018), Fischmann et al. (2018), Baffoe-Bonnie and Gyapong (2018).

Those scholars provided findings on that the prevalence of secure and stable SER full-time employment with firm contracts and benefits was in decline, while some alternative forms of NonSER work grow, most of which are temporary, part-time, self-employed, insecure, unstable, etc. The SER and NonSER were then classified according to the Labour Market Segmentation Theory. However, due to the ongoing evolution of worldwide labor markets, the set of employment conditions described by those scholars were identified as precarious employment; and will bound to continue for the foreseeable future (Muntaner, 2016).

Regarding the precarious employment term, the literature can be divided into three distinct camps: precarious employment is universally interchangeable with “non-standard” employment such as in case of Markey et al. (2002); precarious employment is attached to certain types or categories of non-standard employment, or precarious employment is a multidimensional and complex concept affecting the standard or non-standard employment as in case of Rodgers (1989), Cranford, Vosko and Zukewich, 2003, and Campbell and Burgess (2001). Therefore, several scholars with extensive ongoing research efforts recommend developing measures of employment precariousness that can go beyond simply measuring the form of employee-employer relationship (Vosko, 2006; Vives et al., 2010; Lewchuk, Clarke & de Wolff, 2011; Goldring and Joly, 2014; Lewchuk et al., 2014; Puig-Barrachina et al., 2014; Benach et al., 2014; Bohle et al., 2015; Gallie et al., 2017; Benach et al., 2016; Callea & Chirumbolo, 2016; Moscone, Tosetti & Vittadini, 2016; Van Aerden, Gadeyne & Vanroelen, 2017; Imhof & Andresen, 2017; Shoes, 2017; Lewchuk, 2017; Fu et al., 2017; Fischmann et al., 2018; Jiang, 2018). In other words, rather than simply identifying certain forms under the SER or NonSER employments as precarious employment, the task in this study involves examining the precariousness level in different employment forms. This can help in determining the extent to which a certain job or employment work is precarious. Figure 2 illustrates the taxonomy of employment precariousness conceptualization.

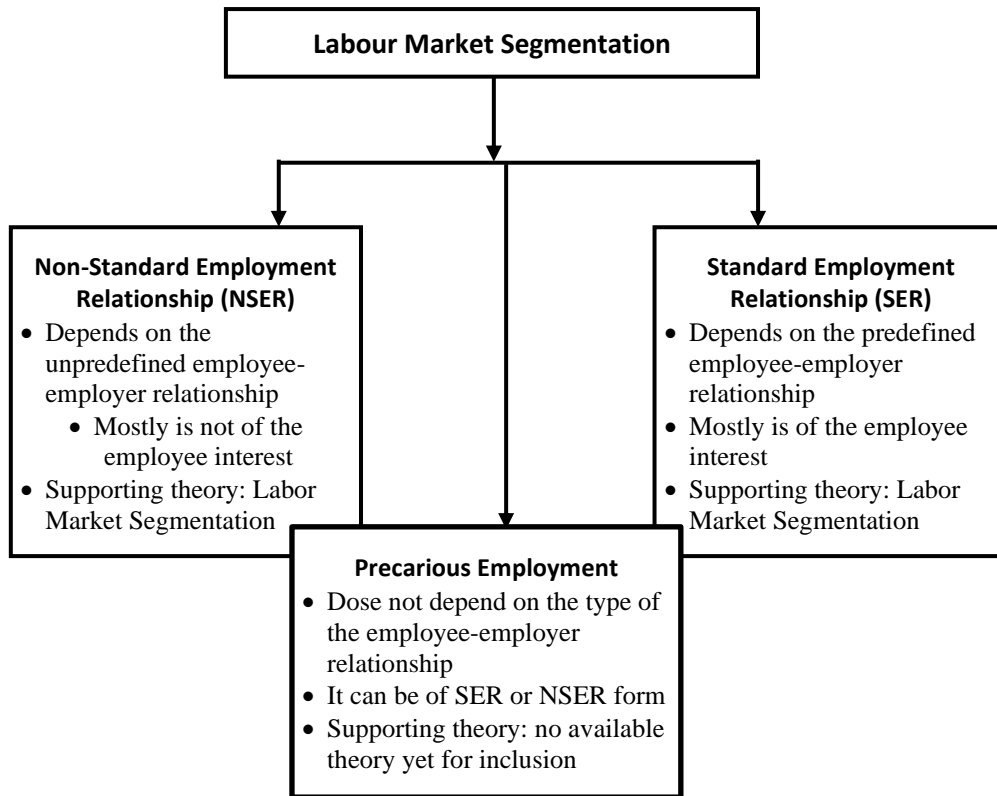


Figure 2: Taxonomy of Employment Precariousness Conceptualization

Employment Precariousness Dimensional Taxonomy

As explained by Amable, Benach, and González (2001), precarious employment is not a precarious job; as the later means just an unstable job, while precarious employment can be identified through certain dimensions as explained earlier. Despite several studies reported different dimensions of employment precariousness, the construct encompasses and can be comprehensively identified by six main dimensions: Job Insecurity and Temporariness, levels of Empowerment and Disempowerment, Vulnerability and Risks, Income and Wages, Employment Rights and Exercising those Rights (Vives et al., 2010; Benach et al., 2010; Amable, Benach and González, 2001). This work will make the use of those factors and their sub-components to assess the level of employment precariousness. Figure 3 illustrates the taxonomy of employment precariousness dimensions.

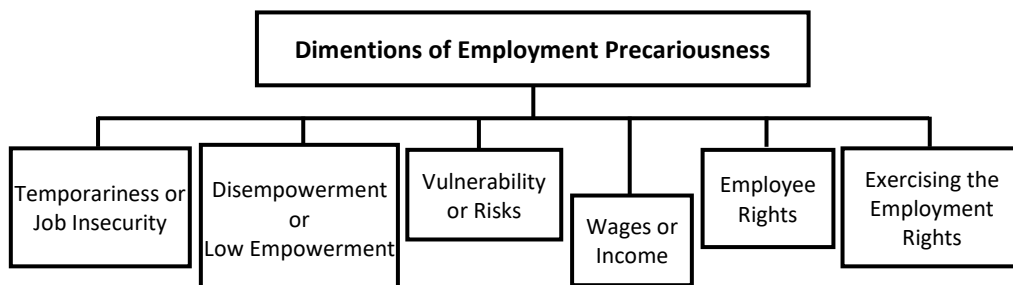


Figure 3: Taxonomy of Employment Precariousness Dimensions

Employment Precariousness Factors Taxonomy

The literature reported an increase in the prevalence of precarious employment as a worldwide phenomenon with a focus on different relevant aspects. For example, Kalleberg (2009) and Lewchuk (2017) explained that the quality of employment conditions and relations has changed considerably in the last four

decades due to the extensive focus on labor market competitiveness and flexibility. Indeed, there was also a good body of literature arguing that there has been a decline in the prevalence of the SER due to many reasons. As argued by Standing (2011), there is a new emerging class of workers known as the “Precariat”; those workers are in insecure jobs with few employment benefits or social protections as organizations started since looking for strategies to cut down costs and level commitments towards employees. Many scholars in this domain including Gilson et al. (2009), Kalleberg (2011), Arnold and Bongiovi (2012), Smith (2013), Weil (2014), Schwab (2016), Benach et al. (2016), Imhof and Andresen (2017), Lain et al. (2018), as well as Fischmann et al. (2018) reported several factors causing this transition such as globalization and global unevenness, markets and work reforms, financial crisis and economic recession, neoliberalism and liberalization, technological developments, the role of unions and market deregulation, and organizational restructuring, downsizing or outsourcing. Figure 4 illustrates the taxonomy of factors influencing the employment precariousness.

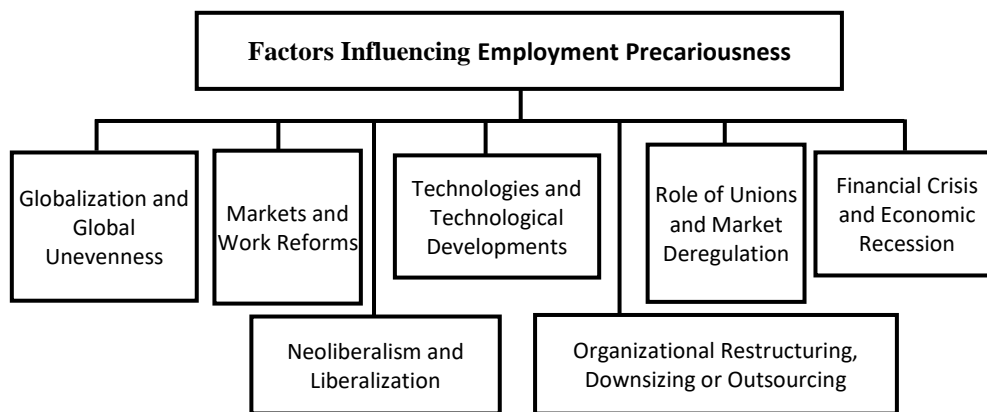


Figure 4: Taxonomy of Factors Influencing the Employment Precariousness

Precariousness Consequences Taxonomy

Scholars like Supiot (1999), Kalleberg (2000), De Cuyper and De Witte (2008), De Cuyper et al. (2008), Kalleberg (2009), Puig-Barrachina et al. (2014), Benach et al. (2016), Lewchuk (2017), as well as, Lain et al. (2018) among others, reported that there is a wide range of findings with debates on the potential benefits and consequences of precarious employment. The issue of advantages and disadvantages can be contextual (i.e., varying according to gender, country, situation, employment form, etc.), and may vary according to the perspectives of the employee, employer, society, healthcare, and economy. As discussed by De Cuyper and De Witte (2008), some of those attributes can be negative for some employees, but not for others, and some jobs can be advantageous in some contexts but not in others.

For example, Kalleberg (2009) explained that flexibility and employability with social gains are to be advantageous outcomes of this employment trend, while some of the disadvantageous attributes included flexibility, negative attitudes, and low levels of well-being for the employee, as well as, some negative behavioral intentions and health results. Other examples were given by Kalleberg (2000), De Cuyper et al. (2008), as well as, Imhof and Andresen (2017), showing that temporary employment in case of low-skilled workers face real risks, while the experienced workers with high levels of skills prefer temporary employment for financial profitability, more flexibility and personal controls. As a result, there is no clear cut-off decision or appraisal regarding certain attributes of given precarious employment to be with positive or

negative effects. Figure 5 illustrates the taxonomy of the employment precariousness consequences.

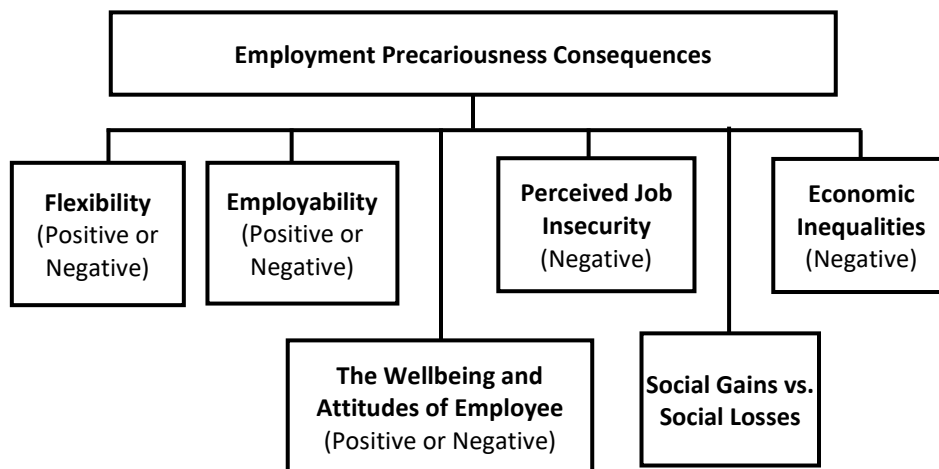


Figure 5: Taxonomy of Employment Precariousness Consequences.

CONCLUSION

This article attempted to develop taxonomies of precarious employment in terms of definition, dimensions, influencing factors and consequences. The snowballing technique has been used to conduct a review of literature in the domain. Based on the findings, there is an outstanding need to develop a universal definition of the precariousness of employment with a unified agreement of the concept or term to be in use by scientists and market professionals. The suggested taxonomies have been developed, definition taxonomy (three items), dimensions taxonomy (six items), influencing taxonomy (seven items), and consequences taxonomy (six items). Those taxonomies are expected to provide further insights into understanding the phenomenon of employment precariousness, yet, more research is needed in this domain.

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