PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT AND WORKER HEALTH

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Work Conditions

- physical work environment & hazards
- work hours
- work schedules

A qualitative study about immigrant workers’ perceptions of their working conditions in Spain

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Invisible Work, Unseen Hazards: The Health of Women Immigrant Household Service Workers in Spain

Ahonen et al., *Am J Ind Medicine*, 2010

Employment Quality

- Employment stability
- Material rewards
- Rights & social protection
- Work time arrangements
- Employability opportunities
- Collective organization
- Interpersonal Power relations

Work Conditions

- Physical work environment & hazards, work hours, work schedules (shifts)

Other Mechanisms

- Experience of EQ; material conditions

Health & Wellbeing

EMPLOYMENT QUALITY (EQ) REFERS TO A SPECTRUM

Precarious employment

- e.g., job instability, low or volatile wages, limited fringe benefits, few rights and protections

Employment instability, income inadequacy, lack of rights and protections

Kreshpaj et al., Scand J Work Environ Health, 2020
EMPLOYMENT QUALITY (EQ) IS MULTIDIMENSIONAL

Employment Stability  Material Rewards  Workers’ Rights  Working Time Arrangements  Collective Organization  Interpersonal Power Relations  Training and Employment Opportunities

Employment Quality

- Employment stability
- Material rewards
- Rights & social protection
- Work time arrangements
- Employability opportunities
- Collective organization
- Interpersonal Power relations

Work Conditions

- physical work environment & hazards, work hours, work schedules

Health & Wellbeing

Other Mechanisms

- experience of EQ; material conditions

KEY U.S. FINDINGS

Poor employment quality/precarious employment has increased for US workers from 1988-2016.

Women, foreign-born individuals, and black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) are more likely to experience poor employment quality.

The life course employment quality trajectories for women of color are particularly constrained.

Individuals who experience poor employment quality are more likely to experience:
- Poor mental health
- Poor self-rated health
- Higher body mass indices
- Poor prenatal outcomes
PE AS A PHENOMENON IS NOT

• Limited to certain industries or occupations
• Person or social-group specific
  – E.g., not “low-wage workers”; but rather “employment that pays inadequate wages”
Political Power Relations

- Market
  - Unions, corporations
- Government
  - Parties
- Civil society

Polices

- Labor Market
  - Labor regulations, industrial relations
- Welfare state
  - Social & health policies

Employment Quality

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Heterogeneity in state policy and norms presents a source of further inequities in EQ and an opportunity to interrogate appropriate interventions.

Figure. OXFAM 2022 index simultaneously capturing multiple state-level wage policies, worker protection policies, and right to organize policies. Darker red and green denote fewer and greater worker protections & supports, respectively.
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Health & Wellbeing

Article
Investigating Employment Quality for Population Health and Health Equity: A Perspective of Power

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Figure 1. An allegory: Employment quality as a power balance between workers and the employer on an uneven playing field. Informed by Korpi’s Power Resource Model [20].

https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/19/16/9991

Developing the Concept of Employment Quality for Population Health

A new publication by OEH faculty Emily Ahonen describes the role of power in worker health and life quality.

https://admin.dfpm.medicine.utah.edu/dfpm/new2022/08/developing-concept-of-employment-quality-population-health
FOR MORE

International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health

Special Issue "Work, Health, and Equity"

Special Issue Editors

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FOR MORE
Experiences of insecurity among non-standard workers across different welfare states: A qualitative cross-country study

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Abstract
The world of work is facing an ongoing pandemic and an economic downturn with severe effects worldwide. Workers trapped in precarious employment (PE), both formal and informal, are among those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Here we call attention to at least 5 critical ways that the consequences of the crisis among workers in PE will be felt globally: (a) PE will increase, (b) workers in PE will become more precarious, (c) workers in PE will face unemployment without being officially laid off, (d) workers in PE will be exposed to serious stressors and dramatic life changes that may lead to a rise in diseases of despair, and (e) PE might be a factor in deterring the control of or in generating new COVID-19 outbreaks. We conclude that what we really need is a new social contract, where the work of all workers is recognized and protected with adequate job contracts, employment security, and social protection in a new economy, both during and after the COVID-19 crisis.
Ramifications of Precarious Employment for Health and Health Inequity: Emerging Trends from the Americas

Anjum Hajat, Sarah B. Andrea, Vanessa M. Oddo, Megan Winkler, Emily Q. Ahonen
WHAT YOU CAN DO: SURVEILLANCE

• Advocate for expanding OSH surveillance beyond factors limited to work as a physical determinant of health (e.g., EQ)

• Push to include more information about work in broader PH and social programming surveillance
WHAT YOU CAN DO: AWARENESS-BUILDING

- In your family and social circles
- In your “public squares”
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