

Precarious work and PSR

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Results from the EPRES-BE data and qualitative research

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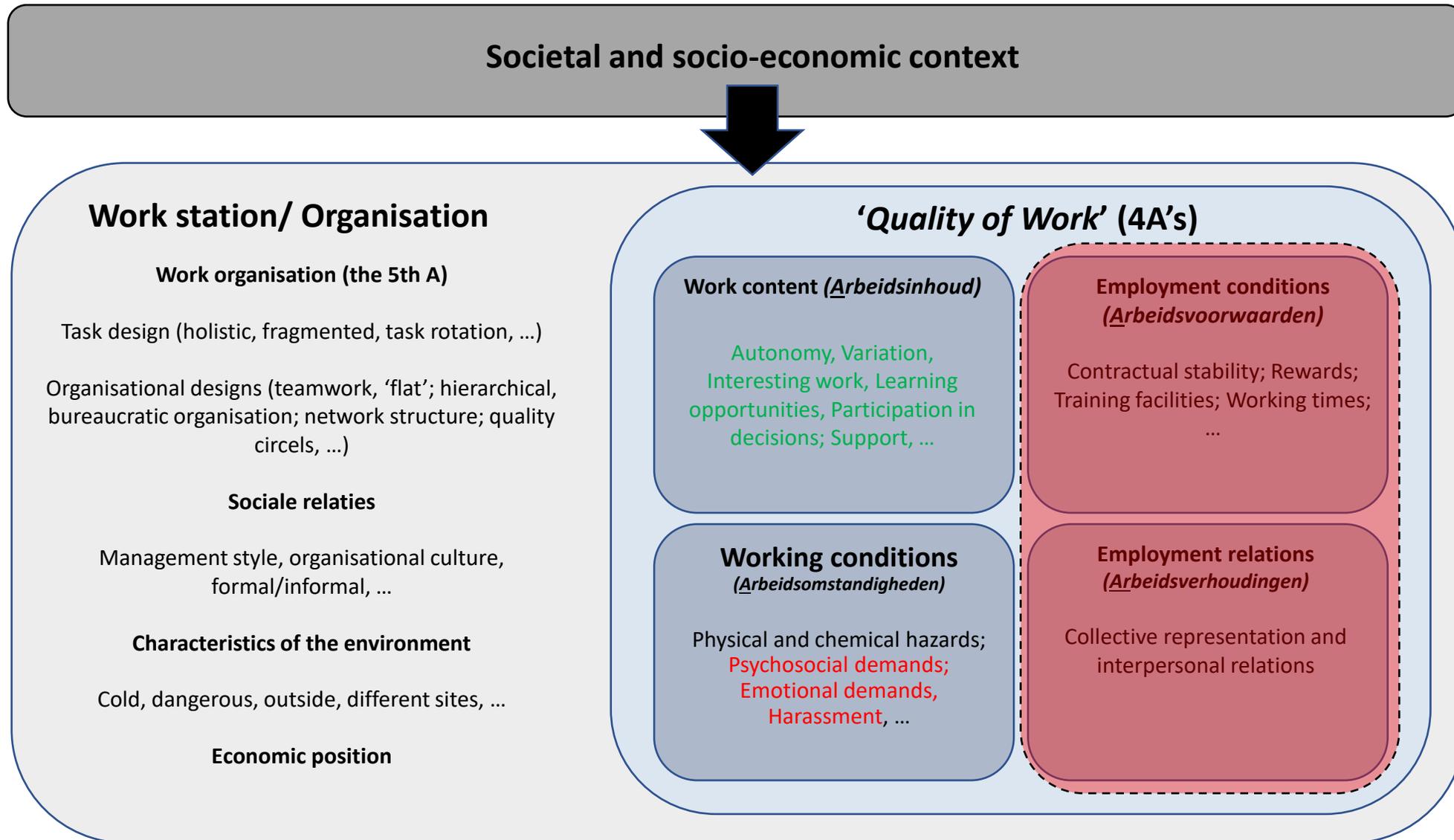
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The Quality of Work



The Transformation of Work

Standard Employment Relation (SER):

- Key term = **security** (Standing, 2011)
 - Job security
 - Security of income
 - Security of rights and social protection
 - Working time security
 - Security of future employment/employability
 - Security of representation (participation)

The SER became a “golden standard” ... however, difficult to maintain ... and ‘under attack’:

- Changing balance of power
- Polarisation
- Flexibilisation and de-standardising, most ‘harmful’ at the bottom



The Transformation of Work



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Making Sense of the Transformation: Concepts

- Concepts to grasp into ‘flexibilization’ and ‘de-standardisation’
 - Employment quality:
 - *... a multi-dimensional construct, grasping into different features of the employment conditions and relations, including the stability and controllability of contracts, level and stability of wages, working hours (amount, timing, discretion), access to social rights, future employability, collective bargaining, interindividual relations (with hierarchy).*
 - Precarious employment:
 - *... a situation of accumulated unfavourable ‘employment quality characteristics’ that is essentially due to the weak bargaining power of a worker*

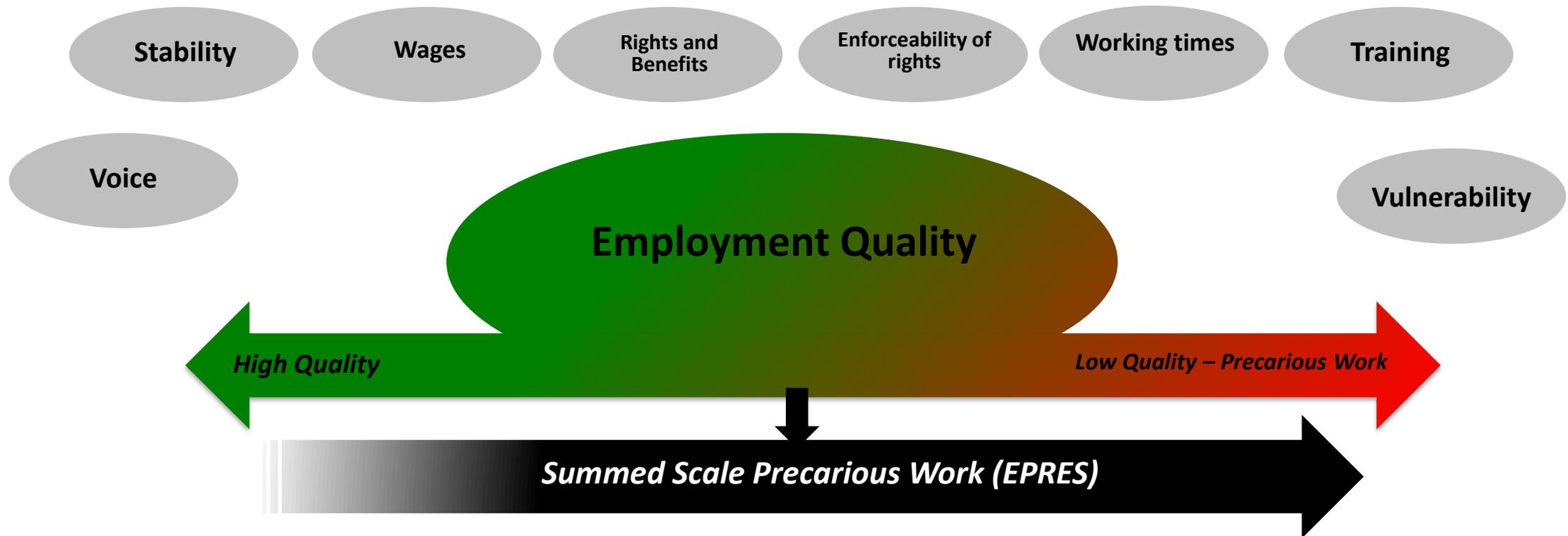


Making Sense of the Transformation: Measuring

- Using 'pragmatic' proxy-indicators
 - Type of contract, agency work, freelance, part-time
 - Advantages: readily available, common sense logic
 - Disadvantages: reductionist, fragmented view of reality, difficult to compare cross-nationally
- Subjective approaches (job/employment insecurity)
 - Confusion of cause and effect
 - Interference of preferences, personality, culture, ...
- Multi-dimensional approaches
 - Summed scales (see Lewchuk, 2016; Vives et al, 2011; Leschke et al. 2008)
 - Typological approach: constructing a typology (see Van Aerden et al, 2014)



Employment Quality and Precarious Work



Reference: Julià, M., Ollé-Espluga, L., Vanroelen, C., De Moortel, D., Mousaid, S., Vinberg, S., ... Benach, J. (2017). Employment and Labor Market Results of the SOPHIE Project: Concepts, Analyses, and Policies. *International Journal of Health Services*, 47(1), 18–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020731416676233>

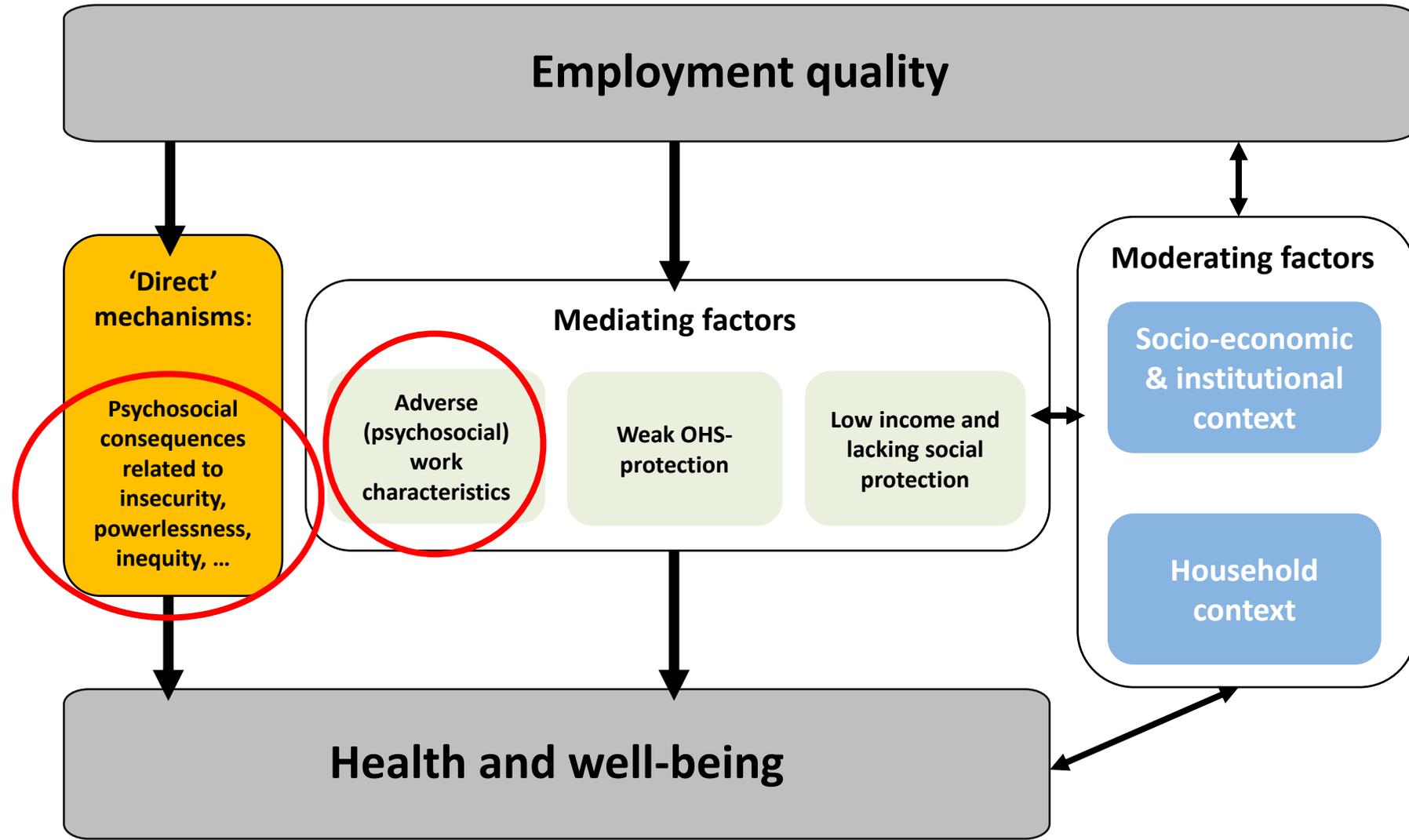


Some references to this work...

- Specific EPRES-data collections:
 - Vives, A., Vanroelen, C., Amable, M., Ferrer, M., Moncada, S., Llorens, C., ... Benach, J. (2011). Employment precariousness (EPRES) in Spain: prevalence, social patterning and population attributable risk of poor mental health. *International Journal of Health Services*, 41(4), 625–646.
 - Vives-Vergara, A., González-López, F., Solar, O., Bernales-Baksai, P., González, M. J., & Benach, J. (2017). Precarious employment in Chile: psychometric properties of the Chilean version of Employment Precariousness Scale in private sector workers. *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*, 33(3). <https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-311x00156215>
 - Jonsson, J., Vives, A., Benach, J., Kjellberg, K., Selander, J., Johansson, G., & Bodin, T. (2019). Measuring precarious employment in Sweden: translation, adaptation and psychometric properties of the Employment Precariousness Scale (EPRES). *BMJ Open*, 9(9), e029577. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2019-029577>
- Analyses based on secondary data:
 - Padrosa, E., Belvis, F., Benach, J., & Julià, M. (2020). Measuring precarious employment in the European Working Conditions Survey: psychometric properties and construct validity in Spain. *Quality & Quantity*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-020-01017-2>
 - Bosmans, K., Van Aerden, K., & Vanroelen, C. (2016). Precaire arbeid in België. In M. Lamberts, L. Szeker, S. Vandekerckhove, G. Van Gyes, G. Van Hootegem, Y. Vereycke, ... P. Vendramin (Eds.), *Jobkwaliteit in België in 2015. Analyse aan de hand van de European Working Conditions Survey EWCS 2015 (Eurofound)* (pp. 247–270). Leuven: HIVA-K.U.LEUVEN.
- Related, but alternative approaches:
 - Van Aerden, K., Puig-Barrachina, V., Bosmans, K., & Vanroelen, C. (2016). How does employment quality relate to health and job satisfaction in Europe? A typological approach. *Social Science and Medicine*, 158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.04.017>
 - Gevaert, J., Van Aerden, K., De Moortel, D., & Vanroelen, C. (2020). Employment Quality as a Health Determinant: Empirical Evidence for the Waged and Self-Employed. *Work and Occupations*, 073088842094643. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888420946436>
 - Peckham, Fujishiro, Hajat, Flaherty, & Seixas. (2019). Evaluating Employment Quality as a Determinant of Health in a Changing Labor Market. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 5(4), 258. <https://doi.org/10.7758/rsf.2019.5.4.09>



Precarious Work and Mental Health



Reference: Vanroelen, C., Julia, M. & Van Aerden, K. (2021). Precarious employment. An overlooked determinant of workers' health and well-being?, In: Korunka, C. (ed.). *Flexible working practices and approaches: Psychological and social implications of a multifaceted phenomenon*, Springer (Forthcoming)



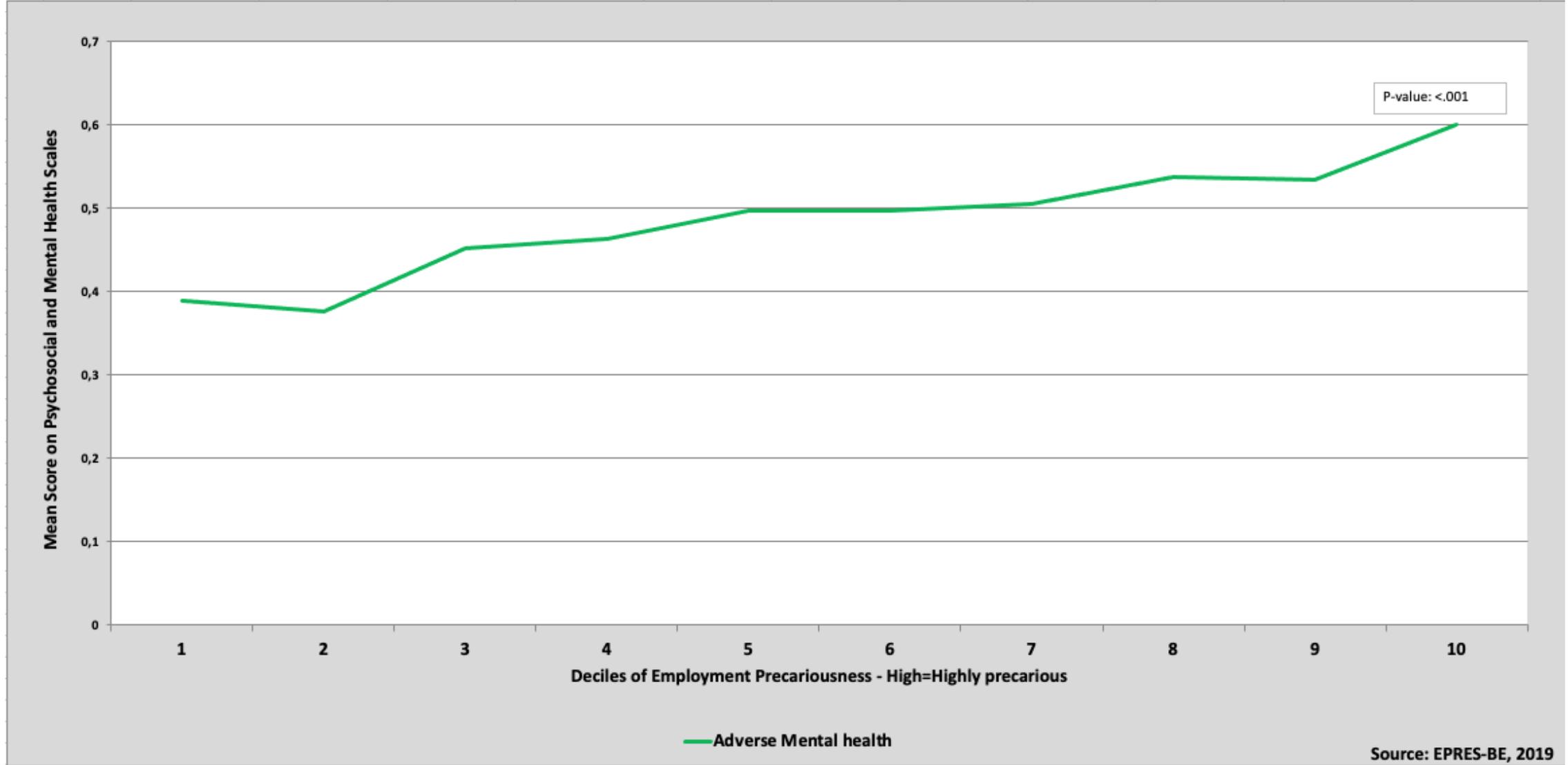
Empirical research: EPRES-BE study

Employment precariousness, psychosocial working conditions and material deprivation in Belgian domestic cleaners:

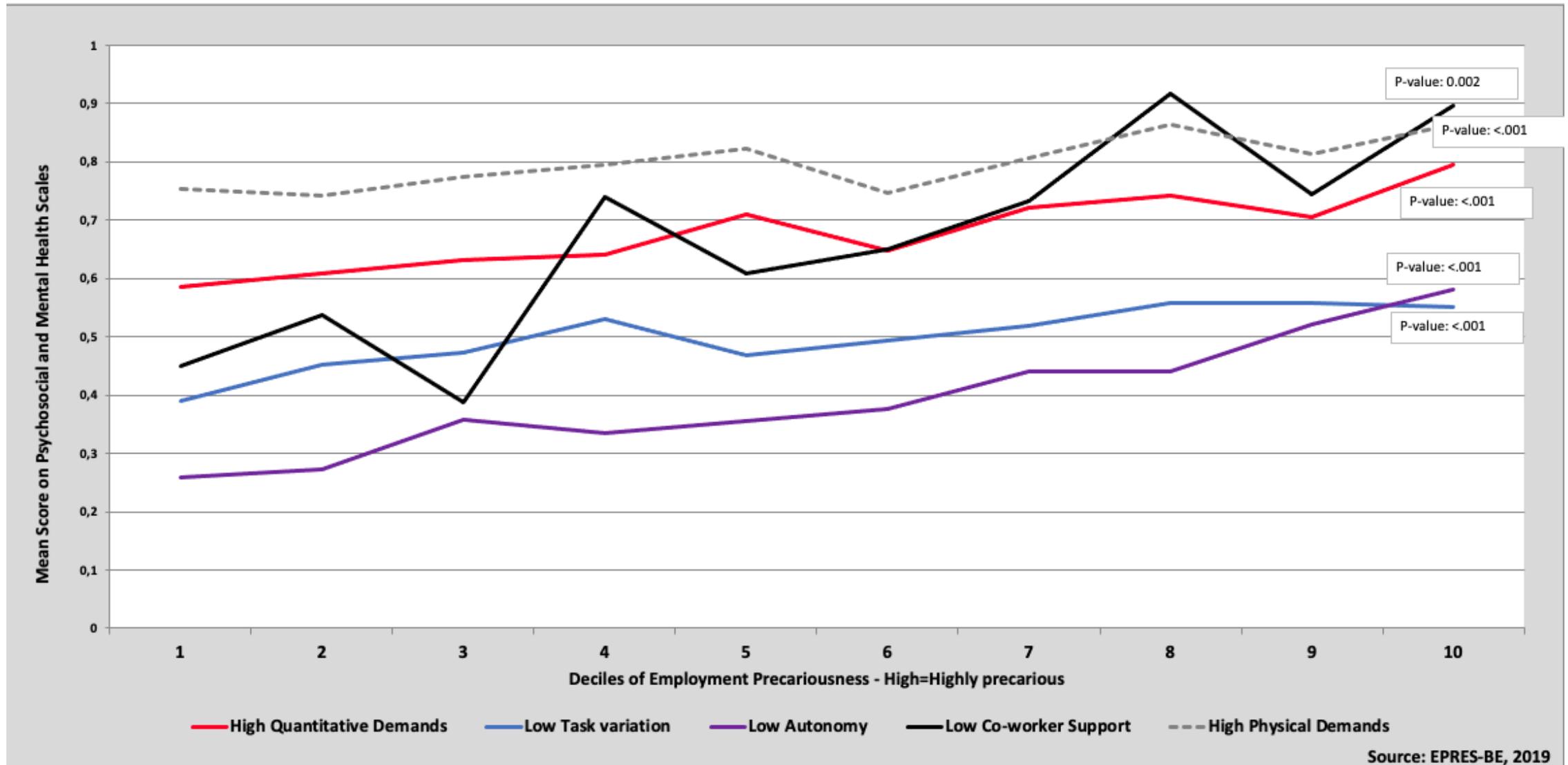
- First results based on EPRES-BE data (<http://precariouswork.be> – Du/Fr)
 - 1,115 female domestic cleaners included in the ‘Service Voucher System’ (taken from wider sample of 2,707 employees)
 - Recruited in spring-summer 2019 (with follow-up)
 - Cross-sectional results
- Measures
 - EPRES-BE (temporariness, disempowerment, vulnerability, rights, exercise of rights, low wages, flexible working times, lack of training) – 0-1 scale (1 = max. precariousness)
 - Outcome: WHO-5 mental health index
 - PSR:
 - PSR – Work task-intrinsic characteristics: Quantitative demands, Task variation, Autonomy, Colleague-support (and Physical Demands)
 - PSR - Direct pathway: Subjective job insecurity, Perceived financial strain
- Statistical analyses:
 - Descriptives and OLS-regression analyses



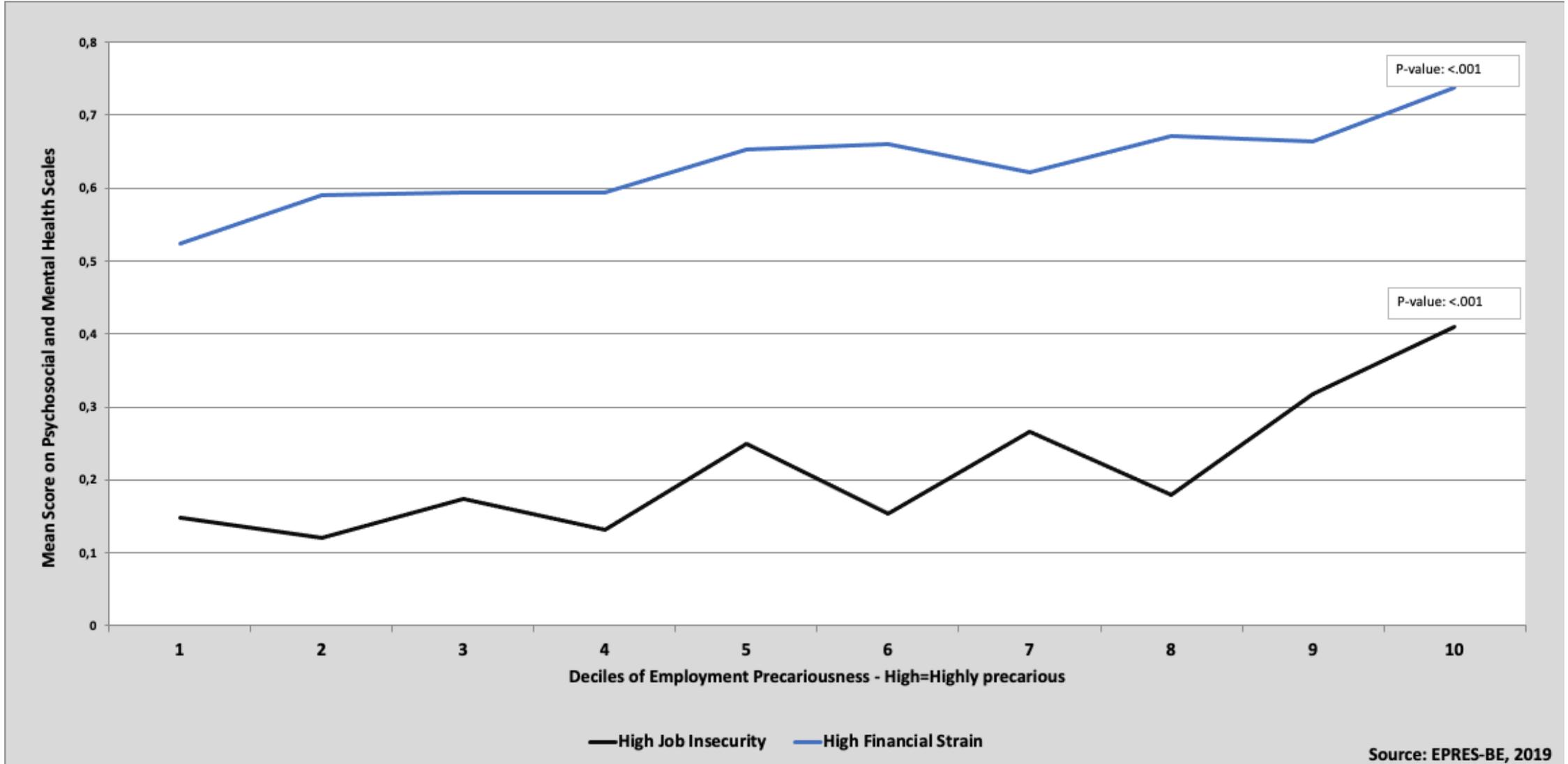
Precarious work and Mental health



Precarious work and Task specific PSR



Precarious work and Direct PSR



Regression results: Precarious work – PSR – Mental health

<i>Complete case analyses</i> N=877	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Beta (S.E.)					
Constant		0.251 (0.037)***	0.002 (0.042)	0.101 (0.036)**	0.222 (0.041)	-0.062 (0.044)
Age						
under 25	0.134 (0.045)**	0.113 (0.045)*	0.078 (0.041)	0.081 (0.041)	0.125 (0.048)	0.063 (0.043)
25-34	0.081 (0.028)**	0.054 (0.029)	0.024 (0.027)	0.042 (0.027)	0.057 (0.032)	0.020 (0.029)
35-44	0.086 (0.027)**	0.057 (0.028)*	0.033 (0.026)	0.039 (0.026)	0.063 (0.032)*	0.024 (0.028)
45-54	0.046 (0.027)*	0.033 (0.027)	0.015 (0.025)	0.022 (0.025)	0.032 (0.031)	0.004 (0.027)
55+	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref
Household status						
Single	0.036 (0.033)	0.054 (0.033)	0.033 (0.030)	-0.011 (0.031)	0.065 (0.037)	-0.002 (0.033)
Single with children	0.061 (0.031)**	0.055 (0.030)	0.039 (0.028)	-0.009 (0.028)	0.057 (0.034)	0.004 (0.030)
Couple	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref
Couple with children	0.024 (0.025)	0.011 (0.025)	0.008 (0.023)	-0.004 (0.023)	0.020 (0.027)	0.005 (0.024)
Precarious empl.	0.553 (0.067)***	0.522 (0.067)***	0.198 (0.068)**	0.355 (0.063)***	0.492 (0.075)***	0.162 (0.072)*
Quantitative demands	0.401 (0.032)***		0.271 (0.037)***			0.166 (0.041)***
Physical demands	0.320 (0.036)***		0.118 (0.039)**			0.107 (0.042)*
Task Variation (low)	0.180 (0.031)***		0.124 (0.029)***			0.118 (0.031)***
Autonomy (low)	0.283 (0.030)***		0.120 (0.032)***			0.087 (0.035)*
Financial Strain	0.430 (0.030)***			0.387 (0.031)***		0.274 (0.034)***
Job Insecurity (high)	0.154 (0.030)***				0.087 (0.030)**	0.041 (0.027)

Source: EPRES-be 2019 survey (own analyses); *p<0,05, **p<0,01, ***p<0,001;

Model 0: Bivariate models for all variables included separate; Model 1: Socio-demographics, Precarious employment; Model 2: Socio-demographics, Precarious employment and Intrinsic job quality; Model 3: Socio-demographics, Precarious employment, Financial strain; Model 4: Socio-demographics, Precarious employment, Job insecurity; Model 5: Socio-demographics, Precarious employment, Intrinsic job quality, Financial strain, Job insecurity



Empirical research: Evidence from qualitative studies

In-depth interviews with temporary agency workers and domestic cleaners (service voucher system) in Belgium and Canada

- Phd-Research of Kim Bosmans
- EU 7th Framework SOPHIE-project (www.sophie-project.eu)
- Key references:
 - Bosmans K. Workers' perceptions of precarious employment. A qualitative study of the psychosocial processes linking employment experiences to mental well-being. Dissertation. 2016.
 - Bosmans, K., Hardonk, S., De Cuyper, N., & Vanroelen, C. (2016). Explaining the relation between precarious employment and mental well-being. A qualitative study among temporary agency workers. *Work*, 53(2). <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-152136>
 - Bosmans, K., Lewchuk, W., De Cuyper, N., Hardonk, S., Van Aerden, K., & Vanroelen, C. (2017). The experience of employment strain and activation among temporary agency workers in Canada [unpublished work]. *Society, Health & Vulnerability*, Accepted f. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20021518.2017.1306914>
 - Mousaid, S., Huegaerts, K., Bosmans, K., Julià, M., Benach, J., & Vanroelen, C. (2017). The Quality of Work in the Belgian Service Voucher System. *International Journal of Health Services*, 47(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020731416677478>



Qualitative evidence: Direct psychosocial effects

- Powerlessness:

- *“You feel like you’re being toyed with and things are out of your control. You have to do temporary work in order to survive . . . Sometimes it does happen that you feel good in a company and you want to stay there and build a career, but [cynical laugh] after a while you don’t know what to think anymore . . . You’re put aside so easily, while maybe the job could’ve been a step up for you.”* (Emma, 35, social sector)

- Injustice:

- *“Permanent employees got everything they wanted, but the agency workers . . . Once, I asked them for half a day off because I really needed it, and they said “No, permanent workers have priority.”* (Mia, 49, retail)

- Uncertainty :

- *“My agency says, “Here and there, here and there”. It’s a dog’s life now. When we get up in the morning we have to think, “I hope that the agency calls us”. We have to stay in the house and wait for the call. We pray every day that they will call us.”* (Victoria, 33, manual worker)



Qualitative evidence: Work task, social relations, ...

- Discrimination:
 - *“When there’s a staff party or they go out for bowling and dinner for some or other occasion, the temporary agency workers aren’t invited. You just can’t sign up. They hand out a piece of paper to write your name on, but this piece of paper is just not handed to you.”* (Patrick, 49, manual worker)
- Power abuse by permanent workers:
 - *“Had this permanent colleague gone up to tell the boss that he had seen me using my cell phone, I would’ve been fired immediately, on the spot. Just because I put him in his place!”* (Jason, 23, manual worker)
- Doing the dirty, less interesting, dangerous, ... work:
 - *“These kinds of jobs were always given to the agency workers ... There were boxes which came in from China on pallet boards which had mould because they were wet ... we were the ones who had to move those boxes onto other pallets. We were supposed to wear a mask against the bacteria, but most of us didn’t bother.”* (Patrick, 49, manual worker)



Discussion

Main conclusions:

- Precarious work puts focus on 'labour market bottom'
- Strong associations with (mental) health
- Strongly, but not entirely mediated by PSR via different pathways
- Domestic cleaners in SVS are relatively homogenous population, but still:
 - Strong differences in exposure to precarious work
 - Strong links with mental health
 - Importance of work-intrinsic and household features as mediators (= room for action)
- Results very consistent with previous EPRES-research

Policy pointers for the bottom of the labour market:

- Regulate the contingent sector: anti-discrimination and equal pay, social protection, OHS-efficacy, ...
- Investment: (net) wage increases, training, innovative work organisation, collective working time reduction, ...)
- Strengthen collective voice (labour unions) and individual level say
- Stimulate alternative economic models: social economy, cooperatives, in-sourcing

