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# Work Commitment Modes of Temporary Agency Workers in Restaurants

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Abstract: In this study, the focus is on a single form of temporary work to create added value compared to previous well-being research in the temporary work context. Very little research has been conducted on temporary agency work in restaurants. An extensive survey is planned to be conducted in Finland. This study shows the pilot tests results of the survey. Examining the differences and similarities of work commitment between different worker groups in restaurants give insight for planning and targeting measures needed to increase well-being at work and productivity. Data is collected through a questionnaire based on the Organizational Commitment and QPS Nordic questionnaires, both of which focus on psychological and social factors at work. The data collection for the pilot study was conducted as an online survey for two weeks. Link to the questionnaire was published on a Facebook page for local restaurant workers in the Northern Ostrobothnia area with 130 members. In total, 53 workers responded. It was possible to divide the workers into groups by their form of working. Four distinct groups were found, each with its combination of commitment modes and features. A clear baseline was established by the normal full-time workers against which other groups (temporary agency workers) were compared. There were also controversial findings that should not be legally present in temporary agency work. The results of this research will benefit involved labour market actors and the service sector. Also, examining the differences and similarities between different worker groups gives insight into planning and targeting high-performance work practices.

Keywords: Employee well-being, temporary agency work, commitment, employee behaviour

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#### INTRODUCTION

As its name already suggests temporary work only lasts for the duration stated in the contract and there is no explicit agreement to become permanent. Temporary work is done by outside workers which are rarely included in the core of many work organizations (Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012). The term "temporary work" is used in a great variety of circumstances and different forms of temporary work with divergent characteristics. This leads to ignoring of employment-specific characteristics and makes it harder for the comparability of previous results of various researches (De Cuyper et al., 2008; Imhof & Andresen, 2018). There is other meaning for temporary work. Often term "temporary work" means rented workforce that is mediated by temporary work agencies. The general characteristics of temporary work mentioned before also applies. There are three parties to this type of temporary work employment relationship: the worker, the temporary work rental company (also called temporary agency) and the end user company. The temporary agency is the worker's official employer and pays his/her wages. The end user company (in this study

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restaurants) determines and supervises the work being done in their premises (Imhof & Andresen, 2018).

The use of temporary agency work can lead to division into different segments of workers, the less-favourable temporary and part-time workers and to more fortunate permanent and full-time workers. Temporary workers often have lower quality jobs which mean they have lower job security, reduced access to both statutory and employer-provided social security benefits, holidays, and funded training (Kauhanen & Nätti, 2015). Work organizations have three different levels of segmentation of temporary agency workers: All core; temporary agency workers are used for the same work tasks as user company's workers. The core and periphery situation; temporary agency workers are assigned simple work tasks and user company's workers perform advanced work tasks. In all periphery situation work organization is customized to use low-skilled temporary agency workers, who are easily recruited and terminated. There is a shift in employment relations where all core-situation becomes smaller but more secure, while the periphery with its casual and precarious work grows larger, whereby the temporary agency workers belong to the periphery labour market (Angriani, Ariffin, & Rahmawati, 2017; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012; Forde & Slater, 2005). The temporary agency workers on the periphery receive lower wages that are not totally due to differential human capital i.e., knowhow, rather average temporary agency jobs are of lower quality than permanent jobs (Forde & Slater, 2005).

Temporary agency workers are one of the least protected worker groups in many European countries. There are many regulations and court rulings imposing that temporary agency workers should become employees of the end user company after various time of continuous employment which do not seem to be implemented or enforced (Finlex, 2001; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012; Maroukis, 2016). In Finland pretense of regular employment relationships are the rule. This is stated in Supreme Court ruling KKO 2012: 10 (Finlex, 2012). According to the Supreme Court, the fact that work is temporary work does not justify the conclusion of a fixed-term contract. If the end user company has a continuing need for labor, the employment relationship between the end user company and the temporary worker must be valid indefinitely. This rule is being circumvented in many cases, so some workers work indefinitely on triangular form, through agency. In Britain, Sweden and Greece the temporary agency workers are also not merely used for temporary needs (Davidov, 2004; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012; Maroukis, 2016). Obscurities due to triangular natures of the employment relationship with temporary agency, end user company and temporary agency workers, the different definitions of employee status have been worsening. For that, European Commission (EC) has given a European directive to prevent discrimination against temporary agency workers, and to improve temporary agency workers' access to permanent employment, to collective facilities in user undertakings and to training (European Commission, 2008).

Temporary agency work is often viewed as an example of flexible work and a flexible buffer of workers that can be adjusted rapidly due to uncertain or changing demand and on the other hand is criticized for giving the power of employment negotiation in the hands of the brokering agency rather than the worker and bringing instability to work relationships (Forde & Slater, 2005; Maroukis, 2016). Flexibility is not always a wanted affair by the employer, if costs providing worker's flexibility are becoming too high, they pay higher wages to attract workers who value flexibility less or are on the periphery, like temporary agency workers (Green & Heywood, 2011). A high portion of involuntary temporary agency workers, for example in Britain average 50 per cent, casts doubt on the validity of the claim that temporary agency working meets "a genuine demand for flexible work from workers" (Forde & Slater, 2005). Feeling secure is an important part of employee well-being as are satisfactory pay, working hours and conditions which are associated to worker performance in general that turns up as better service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty (Graaf-Zijl et al., 2005; Jogaratnam, 2018; Madera, Dawson, Guchait, & Belarmino, 2017).

In addition to temporary agency workers this study uses term other atypical workers to describe the rest workers that do not fall into category of regular full-time worker or temporary agency worker. They are workers that work less than what is agreed in full-time contracts or collective agreements, with the workers employment contract stipulating shorter daily working hours or the worker works only part of the week or month. Other atypical workers beside part-time and temporary workers are: on-call contracts that are often "zero-contracts" with no agreed working hours, fixed-term employment, self-employed people, independent workers and homeworkers (De Cuyper et al., 2008; Eurofound, 2017; Imhof & Andresen, 2018; Pirani, 2017).

Worker commitment to the workplace is essential for the productivity and profitability of the company. An outgoing worker takes a lot of tacit knowledge about that particular company as they go, and training/learning a new worker takes time and brings costs. Mutual commitment of the company and a worker and a good working environment and workplace culture have been associated with influencing job satisfaction, motivation, employee turnover and attraction

and increase productivity and company financial gains (Albao, 2018; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Warrick, 2017). Worker commitment issues are the concern of end user company. It is the one that pays the costs of worker turnover and its effects on productivity. Research has not paid enough attention to the impact of temporary agency workers on the end user companies (Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012).

Commitment can be further divided to three modes; affective, continuance and normative. Affective commitment means worker's emotional attachment to the work organization such way that the person identifies with it, feels kinship with it and enjoys membership of the organization. In the eyes of the worker, the organization has significant value for its own sake, in difference from its purely instrumental value. Continuance commitment is when there is benefit (for example salary) associated with continued membership with the organization and there is some kind of harm associated with leaving (losing the salary). Normative commitment is a belief about one's responsibility to the organization. Normatively committed persons believe that staying as a member of the organization is the right and moral thing to do and feel internalized compelling pressure to act how it is expected according to organizations goals and interests (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

## Purpose of this Study

This pilot study examines the functionality and validation of the questionnaire to be used for restaurant temporary work research. In addition, this pilot study aims to examine preliminary results that the research is able to produce. In this process a range of theories are used to support the analyses and background. The research aims to find out the different commitment modes of different groups of restaurant workers and their attitudes towards work and motives for working. When the commitment modes of workers are known, then measures to change the work commitment are easier to target and plan for. Also examining the differences and similarities between different worker groups give insight for planning and targeting measures such as high-performance work practices. This study is made from restaurants to restaurants and in addition the research addresses phenomena common in the business world. The results of this research will benefit involved labor market actors and the service sector. Utilizing evaluation and analyses, answers to the following three research questions is attempted to find:

RQ1: How different types of restaurant workers commit to their workplaces?

RQ2: What are typical reasons for working temporary of these groups?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method of collecting the data is a questionnaire, which is designed for the study of restaurant workers. Data is collected through a questionnaire, which is based, on the Organizational Commitment and QPS Nordic questionnaires, both of which focus on psychological and social factors at work (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, 2001; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). QPS is thoroughly psychometrically tested and tried in many organisations. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) is well documented and considered reliable. Cronbach's Alpha values are between 0.82 and 93 (Kanning & Hill, 2013). In both these questionnaires, different kinds of commitment are measured. QPS Nordic is also used to map job requirements and job strain, that are combined and examined in comparison to work commitment modes, but these things are outside the scope of this pilot study. Statistical methods are used to investigate the determinants of worker commitment modes.

#### Research Context

Problems in previous temporary work researches are that they have been too general, they bundle all forms of temporary work. Temporary agency work characterized by a triangular employment relationship has gotten too little attention. This also leaves out employment-specific characteristics of the different types of temporary work to be considered (Imhof & Andresen, 2018). Studies combining temporary agency work and restaurant work are nearly non-existent, even though restaurants are a large user group of temporary agency work. As a contribution to science, this study focuses on temporary agency work in restaurants in order to add new knowledge, value and insights.

#### Study Setting

The questionnaire has 55 questions in total. First three questions are participants' personal information; age, gender and a place of residence. Next are five questions about participants' forms of work; working hours/week, type of primary workplace, the form of employment, reasons for working temporarily and specifying questions about work (9).

Then comes twenty questions of applied QPS Nordic about psychological and social factors at work. Values given for each question are between 1 and 5. The QPS Nordic-questions are not used in this pilot study. After QPS Nordic section come 22 questions of OCQ to map commitment modes divided in three groups that are; affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Each has 7 questions and one "dummy" question. Values given for each question are between 1 and 5, 1 indicating the least amount of commitment and 5 the most. Last there is open question for feedback and assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to temporary work or workers and it is not used in this pilot study. The data collection for pilot study was conducted as an online survey for two week's period. A link to the questionnaire was published on the Facebook page of local restaurant workers that has 130 members. 53 restaurant workers responded to the questionnaire (40.8%). For the later research more participants are to be acquired and from other regions. Worker groups were categorized by how they answered to question about their way of working. Those who answered working both, regularly full-time and through temporary agency in the same workplace were categorized as regular temporary workers.

#### **RESULTS**

## Sample Description

Of 53 participants, (30, 56%) were female. Age ranged from under 20y (2, 4%), 21-30y (23, 43%) 31-40y (20, 38%) 41-50y (8, 15%). Weekly working hours were under 10 hours (7, 13%), 11-20 hours (10, 19%), 21-30 hours (11, 21%), 31-40 hours (15, 28%) and over 40 (10, 19%). Workplaces were Bar (28, 53%), Food service restaurant (20, 37%), bouncer (porter) (4, 8%), cafeteria (1, 2%). Form of working of the participants was regular full-time work (10, 19%), regular temporary agency work (12, 23%), temporary agency work (25, 47%), part-time and other atypical work (6, 11%).

## Description of Categorized Worker Groups

Regular Full-time workers work in a job the employment contract is valid indefinitely. There is no written end date in the contract. Work continues until the employee or employer wants to terminate the employment. This type of work has defined working time. By the Finnish legislation, regular working time is a maximum of eight hours a day and 40 hours a week. Weekly regular working hours may also be arranged for an average of 40 hours over a maximum period of 52 weeks (Finlex, 2001).

Temporary agency workers are a rented workforce that is mediated by temporary work agencies and they are working in their workplace only temporarily and with a fixed-term contract arrangement.

Regular Temporary agency workers are a combination of the regular full-time workers and the temporary agency worker. They work regularly, like the full-time worker at the end user company but the salary payer is a temporary work agency.

Other Atypical workers are the rest which do not fall in either category, full-time regular workers or temporary agency worker of any kind.

### Quantitative Analyses Evaluation

Table 1 RELIABILITY OF COMMITMENT MODES

			Affec	ctive Commitment				
•	Case Processi	ing Sumr	nary	Reliability Statistics				
		N	%	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items		
Cases	Valid	34	64,2	.580	.583	7		
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	19	35,8					
	Total	53	100,0					
a. Listwise de	eletion based on	all variable	es in the procedure.					
			Contin	uance Commitment				
(	Case Processi	ing Sumr		dunce Commitment	Reliability Statistics			
		N	%	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items		
Cases	Valid	33	62,3	.765	.773	7		
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	20	37,7					
	Total	53	100,0					
a. Listwise de	eletion based on	all variable	es in the procedure.					
			Norm	ative Commitment				
Case Processing Summary				Reliability Statistics				
		N	%	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items		
Cases	Valid	40	75,5	.625	.629	7		
$Excluded^a$	13	24,5						
Total	53	100,0						
a. Listwise de	eletion based on	all variable	es in the procedure.					

As noted before the Cronbach's Alpha values are between .82 and .93 of OCQ. As seen from Table 1 this limited and fragmented sample only gets Cronbach's Alpha values .583 .629, and .773 for the reliability of the questionnaire's different sections of commitment. The questionnaire works well for the intended purpose considering limitations.

Table 2 AVERAGE SCORES FOR COMMITMENT MODES AND IDEAL OF FULL-TIME WORK

Worker Group	Affective	Continuance	Normative	Mean	Ideal of full-time work
Regular Full-time Workers	3,29	3,49	2,99	3,25	100%
Temporary Agency Workers	3,01	2,95	2,66	2,87	66%
Regular Temporary Agency Workers	2,76	3,16	2,71	2,87	91%
Other Atypical Workers	3,12	2,47	2,95	2,85	83%

Viewing the commitment modes from Table 2 regular full-time workers in comparison to other working groups, it comes clear that full-time workers are the most committed to their work. The continuance commitment mode is the most prominent. That indicates that the continuance of the work relationship, income and security gotten from continuing the work relationship is the most important reason for working. Regular full-time workers also feel like being more responsible for the organization and more emotionally attached to it than temporary agency workers. This

can be seen from normative commitment and affective commitment scores.

Temporary agency workers have a low continuance commitment mode, so they are more likely to leave the workplace than regular full-time workers. The affective commitment mode is quite neutral, so they do not have strong liking to one way or the other about their workplace. Reason for this is the nature of temporary work and the nature of temporary agency workers themselves. Temporary agency workers can be divided into two categories by the attitude on ideality for regular full-time work. Portion of temporary agency workers who think that regular full-time work is ideal is 66%. Those temporary agency workers who do not think the regular full-time work to be ideal (the 33%, 8 of total 25), raised few points for working for temporary agency. In the "reasons for working temporarily"- part of the questionnaire they answered that they want to decide working hours themselves, (7 out of 8) and they do not want to commit to one job, (7 out of 8). They also work in many workplaces, (7 out of 8).

Temporary agency workers which think that regular full-time work is the ideal form of working (66%, 16 of total 25) answered "reasons for working temporarily"- part of the questionnaire as follows; "no other work is available", 7 out of 16, "otherwise I would be unemployed", 6 out of 16 "with studies or other work", 7 out of 16. One temporary agency worker did not answer this part at all. Temporary agency workers are either working the way they want, or they are forced to be temporary agency workers. The commitment modes follow this division. Temporary agency workers which think full-time work to be ideal are much like the regular temporary agency workers by their reasons for working.

Regular temporary agency workers are a mixture of regular full-time workers and temporary agency workers. The affective mode score is not as high as the workers of other forms of work. Combining with the continuance score that indicates they would like to continue working, but the workplace does not matter so much. This low affective, high continuance indicates that regular temporary agency workers are not satisfied with their form of working. Their ideal of the full-time job 91% (11) strengthens this viewpoint. In the "reasons for working temporarily"- part of the questionnaire they raised few reasons for working. Many did not answer these questions, but those who did, most common answer was "no other work is available", 4 out of 12, "otherwise I would be unemployed", 4 out of 12 and "with studies or other work", 3 out of 12. This divides regular temporary agency workers further in two categories. Those who does not have other options than temporary agency work and those who work so voluntarily and have some other primary activity.

Also notable is the portion of regular temporary agency workers, 32% (12/37) of total temporary agency workers. Even the regularity of temporary agency work is deemed illegal in Finland by the Supreme Court, it is still common in restaurants. There was only (9) 24% of all temporary agency workers do not think regular work to be ideal and so are working temporarily voluntarily, that leaves 76% involuntary.

Other Atypical workers-group is too fragmented for analysis and *N* is too low. Roughly, commitment modes can be found, but reliability is low.

#### CONCLUSION

Regular full-time workers have it best, they are at the core of work organization. They have the best work tasks, benefits, job security and pay. They are also last to leave if layoffs are necessary. Temporary agency workers are on the other hand easily replaceable and their situation is precarious. Belonging to the periphery or working life, they take jobs as they come trusting to sentence, "Temporary agency work is a steppingstone to work life." Often it is not, and the situation continues indefinitely. Many are forced to live and work this uncertain way and they think that they do not get from work that they most want, the financial certainty and security of continuing work. This uncertainty also affects workers plans for the future. Involuntary is the main reason not to commit to temporary agency work, except workers whose attitude and life situation appear to be sorted towards temporary work, but those people are the minority, 24% in this study. If commitment is to be expected, employers must take account of workers wishes of continuance and fair treatment. That means making temporary workers regular workers if there is a real continuing need for labour. Employers easily ruin their reputation as trustworthy employer and respected entrepreneur if law and regulations are circumvented considering fair recruitment and treatment of their workers. Even then 32% of temporary agency work is done regularly against the law.

#### LIMITATIONS

Being just a pilot study, it is expected that this study has several limitations. When considering results and analyses, following aspects should be acknowledged as limitations of this study. Firstly, the sample size was quite limited, this

type of study needs much larger sample. The sample was enough to get results on commitment modes, but limitations came to the fore when viewing reasons for working temporarily. Secondly, some part of the data was fragmented, like in case of the atypical workers any kind of classification was impossible. Thirdly, in addition to fragmentation and sample size limitations participants left many questions unanswered. Fortunately, enough answers were received for analysis, but these factors are the weakest link in this study. Fourthly, a notable point as limitation is the locality of this pilot study. All participants came from the same city, so local special features of working environment might affect the results as well as the familiarity of participants to each other. Fifthly, translation problems came apparent when examining the commitment mode questions. The OCQ had to be translated into Finnish. As languages are not compatible, the actual wording of questions had to be thought as it was intended and then try to convey the idea to translated questions. Cronbach's Alpha values .583 .629, and .773 in comparison to unmodified, untranslated OCQ's Cronbach's Alpha values are between .82 and .93. This might indicate that something is lost in translation or this is explained by the high volume on unanswered questions or neglect answering them.

The questionnaire is much larger than the part examined in this pilot study. Many parts that are interesting were left out of this pilot study. Those parts will be examined on further research that uses the whole data and other perspectives and with much more participants and from different regions.

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