

Struggles Against Precarity: Challenges in Germany For Turkish Newcomers

Seçil Kalenderoğlu, Department of Sociology, Freie Universität Berlin

INTRODUCTION

This study aims at elucidating the precarious employment conditions for a particular group of highly skilled Turkish newcomers to Germany: those who saw their life chances dwindling in Turkey after an autocratic regime and military coup attempt in 2016.

There are different mechanisms and strategies, highly educated immigrants employ in order to transfer their existing expertise, skills and personal qualities - from attitudes to worldviews, educational certificates to social networks - to the country of immigration.

Using a qualitative approach, it explores specifically how highly-skilled Turkish newcomers experience work-related precariousness, analyzing the characteristics and patterns of their employment conditions.

As studies show, the cultural capital of the majority of the immigrants are devaluated in the countries they immigrated to. Which is also true for our sample.

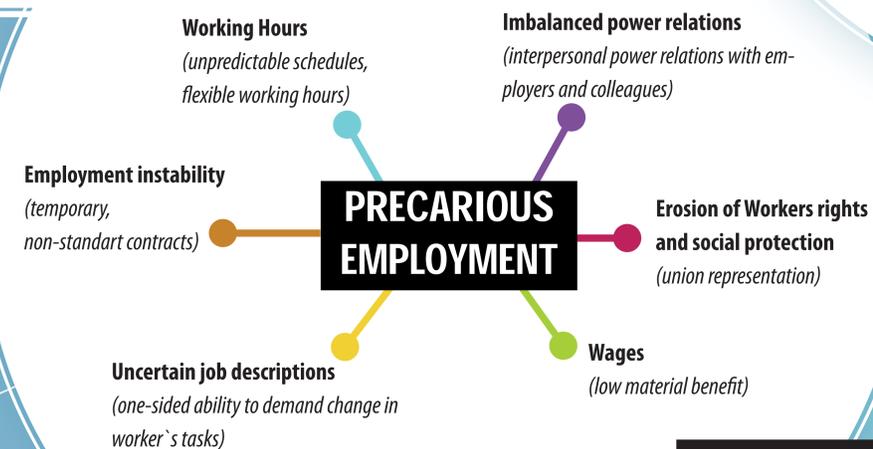
OBJEKTIVE/PURPOSE

What are the characteristics of highly skilled Turkish-newcomers employment patterns that could be embedded into the last academic debates on precarious labour?

How does cultural capital transform in the course of immigration?

As a relatively new field of study, many different researchers working of precarious employment concepts are creating their own dimensions (Rodgers, 1989; Kalleberg, Reskin, & Hudson, 200b; Van Aerden et al., 2014d; Bosmans & Lewchuk et al., 2017e).

I used these concepts as a guideline and created my own dimensions as shown in the graphic.



FINDINGS

- Due to the high degree of uncertainty of employment, employees do not have control over determining their working hours, nor on their wages
- High flexibility regarding job description and tasks according to current demands. Examples of the tight control regimes which employers practice even on the toilet breaks of their employees.
- Uncertain working schedules make it difficult to plan social life and family responsibilities, which translates precarious work conditions into precarious life situations.
- Temporality and low employment stability causes constant pressure on employees to perform well, since their future in the company depends on a range of performance indicators.
- The educational/academic achievements in the country of origin are in most cases not recognized in Germany, leading to the devaluation of cultural capital after migration extreme troubles migrants go through in the process of transferring their educational certificates in Germany which their certificates are not valued as it counts in their home country.
- Lacking German skills make it difficult to translate or apply their expertise in German labour market restrictions under foreigners law causes additional precarity.

DISCUSSION

How can better working and life situations for immigrant workers be created?

These findings underline the fact that if immigration law and labor laws are not well adapted to migrants' and the labor markets situation, the vulnerable status of immigrants likely to make them more vulnerable to precarious work conditions.

Could unionization be a strategy to combat precarious conditions?

The unionization might be an antidote to these conditions, but unfortunately in the case of my study it was not. Whereas workers councils are often misunderstood in their capabilities and powers by the employees and end up as compliant tools of the management, unions fail in not providing information about the advantages of unionization in other than the German language.

There seems to be rarely an opportunity to opt out of this situation. This study points to examples of such alternative trajectories and to the networking among the migrants as a venue of communication and information that might be helpful in that regard.

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METHOD

A qualitative method with semi-structured interviews

Sample:

Highly skilled Turkish immigrants: at least a Bachelor degree Turkish citizenship and the majority of life span in Turkey

Workplaces of the participants:

Call centers based in Berlin: Convergys, Sykes, Booking, and Arvato-Majorel (Companies providing outsourced customer or content management services to Facebook, PlayStation, Booking.com, and Nike)

Dimensions of Analysis:

1. Precarious employment dimensions (employment instability, non-standard working arrangements, low material benefits, erosion of workers' rights and social protection, lack of employee representation, imbalanced interpersonal power relations with employers and colleagues)
 2. Cultural capital dimensions (educational certificates, job experience, access to labour market, networks, legal status)
- Labour organization dimension (unions, workers councils)

★ Strong emphasis on confidentiality and anonymity.

