The Association Between Part-time Employment and Social Assistance Recipiency in Norway[1]

Bård Smedsvik[2,i]
PhD Candidate, Department of Social Work,
Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

ABSTRACT

This article argues that part-time employment has several features of precarity tied to both institutional and individual factors. The consequences can be increased inequality, insecurity, and instability. It studies the relationship between part-time employment for individuals with weak labor market attachment, with periods of social assistance reception in Norway. The article used Norwegian register data to analyze this relationship. Findings show that individuals with a low employment percentage have significantly longer social assistance recipiency compared to those who work full-time, prior to social assistance reception. The empirical evidence supports an individual risk from part-time employment in this group, as well as the claim that non-standard employment is associated with increased vulnerability for individuals with weak labor market attachment. The findings relate to theoretical framework regarding the precarity and mechanisms of the labor market on several aspects, especially how institutional and individual elements link part-time employment to economic and social insecurity.

KEYWORDS

Norway / part-time employment / precarity / social assistance

1. Introduction

This article explores the relationship between non-standard employment and welfare reception, with a focus on how part-time employment is associated with recipiency periods for receivers of minimum income support (social assistance) in Norway. There is a concern regarding how non-standard employment, such as part-time work, affects individuals' social and economic vulnerability. Using data from public registers, this article examines how a specific subset of the Norwegian population, namely, individuals with greater labor market vulnerability, is impacted by their employment status in welfare reception.

It is generally believed that both the labor market and the welfare state reward fixed and full-time workers in terms of employment projections and wages, which also affect qualifications for welfare benefits, which are mostly earnings-related in Norway. Fixed employment here refers to standard employment, with open-ended contracts, in

[1] You can find this text and its DOI at https://tidsskrift.dk/njwls/index.
[2] Corresponding author: Bård Smedsvik, E-mail: bard.smedsvik@ntnu.no.

contrast to temporary employment. Further, employers use non-standard employment because it is a flexible, easy way to adjust labor costs (King and Rueda, 2008). Non-standard employment challenges the norm of standard employment in the Norwegian welfare state, characterized by strong labor market regulations, collective bargaining, and comparatively generous social security schemes, characteristics shared with other Nordic states. Despite several common institutional traits, Norway is also different from the Nordic neighbors, affecting external validity of this study. Different industrial structures and changing demography are examples of such variation (Dølvik and Steen, 2018, p.41).

This study seeks to explore how the Norwegian model of the labor market and welfare state is designed to protect individuals with non-standard jobs in the same way as those with fixed/full-time employment, or whether non-standard work is tied to increased social risk. A single country study, as this one, with registers at hand, is important, as it allows for a detailed analysis at the micro level, with high levels of precision in estimates.

Part-time work is defined as having an agreed upon number of hours per week that is less than 'full' in the national context, which in Norway is 37.5 hours. This is also commonly operationalized into a percentage of the full-time equivalent. In Norway, approximately one out of three people worked part-time in 2015, making it the most common form of non-standard employment. Part-time work has been credited as enabling more people, especially women, to enter the labor market (Barbieri 2019). This may manifest in the overrepresentation of women in part-time jobs in Norway, where two out of three individuals who work part-time are female (Statistics Norway 2021).

Non-standard employment has been linked to the concept of *precarity* in recent decades. As described by Kalleberg (2009) and Standing (2011), precarity is a situation characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability for the individual, resulting in various forms of distress (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 2). Standing (2011) referred to part-time employment as 'an avenue into the precariat' (Standing 2011, p. 15). Part-time work is uncertain and unpredictable in terms of working hours, wages, career projections, and social security eligibility compared to individuals with full-time employment.

Precarity in this paper is more empirically oriented than the typical class-cultural use of the term 'precariat' in the work of Standing (2011). The view of precarity incorporated herein is based on Macmillan and Shanahan's (2021) suggestion to differentiate between institutional and individual aspects of precarity. The institutional level refers to the mechanisms and regulations of the labor market and the welfare state. At the individual level, this operationalization entails demographic, sociological, and psychological factors.

As an overall phenomenon, Gauffin et al. (2021) found that precarity, in terms of low income and unstable employment, declined in Norway from 2008 to 2015. However, Rasmussen et al. (2019) concluded that precarity is associated with non-standard work in Norway as well as the other Nordic countries. Horemans et al. (2016) showed that the in-work poverty risk of part-time employment is not always reflected in general statistics, as full-time employment remains the dominant form of work. They also found that growth in part-time jobs was accompanied by an increased risk of poverty when working part-time.

Several studies have attempted to empirically examine how non-standard work, with a focus on part-time employment, affects welfare recipients. Ultimately, this article aims to establish whether there is a relationship between non-standard employment and the period of subsequent welfare reception, focusing on part-time work as the main form of non-standard employment, using a deductive approach along with Norwegian administrative data. The potential outcome involved measuring social and economic hardship through welfare reception, which Kalleberg (2009) perceived as the ultimate form of precarity. Here, this is represented by the reception of minimum income support.

The operationalization of the outcome is recipiency periods of social assistance, the most common minimum income scheme in Norway. This made it possible to study a subset of the population consisting of 132,000 individuals with weak labor market attachment (Heggebø et al. 2020) and greater social vulnerability. Social assistance normally takes the form of short-term economic aid to help individuals and households with disposable income that is insufficient to cover basic needs. It is usually given when an individual does not qualify for unemployment benefits, often because an individual has exhausted his/her benefits or because the qualification-wage or qualification-period is too low. The amount varies depending on the family's situation and is intended to only cover necessities. Recipients are thus in the most precarious economic situation in the Norwegian welfare state.

The emphasis of this approach has been to examine how employment situation relates to individuals out-of-work situation. The intention was to show that the type of employment relation of an individual can be an important determinant for their prospects outside employment. The article is mainly built on a previous study by Svanlund and Berglund (2018), who investigated the relationship between fixed and temporary employment contracts among people on the likelihood of social assistance reception. Svanlund and Berglund (2018) indicated that for individuals in non-standard employment, compared to those in standard jobs, there is an increased risk of long-term marginalization. This article sought to build on these findings, especially by investigating the *degree* of marginalization associated with non-standard work, as well as other TYPES of non-standard employment. Whereas previous studies have investigated the overall chance of becoming a social assistance recipient, this study focused on the length of social assistance reception, contributing to extend our understanding of this relationship.

Several studies focus on non-standard employment from a workfare perspective, on how flexible employment can reduce welfare reception for individuals within welfare (Berglund et al., 2017). The empirical and theoretical framework here is rather intended to explain that the potential consequences of part-time into welfare. This is done by looking at how aspects of working life and the labor market can relate to an individual's situation when outside employment. Norwegian register data form a solid empirical basis to explore this relationship. The data enabled us to use a panel design that could place the outcome (social assistance reception) in the future, allowing to control for fixed effects in unobserved heterogeneity. The next section covers relevant concepts, theory, and previous literature. The data and methods section follows, where the data and analytical approach is described. The Results section presents the main findings from the empirical analysis. In the Discussion and Conclusion, I scrutinize the results in light of the theoretical framework.

2. Theory and previous literature

The theoretical and intuitive reasoning behind investigating the abovementioned relationship rests on the assumption that the outcomes of part-time employment are related to institutional and individual characteristics. At the individual level, this is connected to several elements that comprise precarity. At the structural level, the relationship can be explained by how the labor market values part-timers compared to full-timers (King & Rueda, 2008).

Among sociologists, non-standard employment has in recent decades been heavily linked to the notion of 'precarity' or 'precariousness'. This can be seen as a broader concept that can be divided into more distinctive dimensions of precarious employment or one's life situation. At the individual level, precarity can be *economic* in terms of income, *organisational* in terms of working conditions, *temporal* (referring to uncertain employment periods and employment protections), and *social* (involving the social security available for individuals) (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989; Kalleberg, 2014; Gauffin et al., 2021). Part-time work can be related to several of these dimensions. It can be tied to the economic aspect via lower wages caused by fewer hours worked; in turn, lower wages affect social security qualifications, such as unemployment or sickness benefits. In addition to the instability of fewer hours worked, part-time jobs are often related to weekend/shift work (Ilsøe, 2016), which is connected to the organizational dimension. Part-timers can work fewer hours than they desire or more than were agreed upon, which in both directions is tied to the predictability of one's work status (Standing, 2011, p. 36). Part-time work is often described as low-skilled, low paid, and insecure (Fagan & Rubery, 1996). The impact of part-time work on these dimensions is viewed here as a linear relationship, where a decreasing percentage of employment is believed to increase the vulnerability of part-timers.

Mead (1989) argued that almost all individuals will seek employment, but only if they can also have some form of success, which is to attain mainstream jobs and wages. Withdrawing from employment can also be interpreted as a political element, a protest against the menial jobs the economy offers the unskilled. They may also shift their attention to be more oriented toward their private lives, and to abandon their previous vocational aspirations (Mead, 1989, p. 161). Empirical evidence by Macmillan and Sanahan (2021) shows that precarious work affects individuals by producing lower self-efficacy, less social integration, and less social capital.

Within political science, King and Rueda's (2008) 'cheap labor' hypothesis states that all industrial countries need cheap labor of different kinds. States with stronger labor market regulations that do not support cheap labor through standard employment (such as the Nordic nations) will support part-time and other non-standard work as a source of cheap labor. Part-time employees earn less per hour than full-timers (Kalleberg 2000, p. 345; Kenworthy 2008, p. 34), although this is not the case in Norway (Hardoy & Schøne, 2006). Part-timers in Norway are viewed as 'cheap' or cost-efficient because they are flexible. For instance, employers are legally committed to giving part-time workers fewer hours, although many part-timers are available for more hours but do not generate additional expenses for over-time pay immediately. In this way, part-timers are more flexible, as short-term upscaling and downscaling of the labor stock (in total hours) is more easily accessible when employers need it.

Further, employers use part-timers as a source of cheap labor, as they are less valued in terms of capital. Rueda (2005) maintained that part-timers also suffer the consequences of economic fluctuations: They are hired in good economic times and laid off in downturns (Rueda, 2005, p. 63). From a structural perspective, Marx and Picot (2020) described how to view labor market vulnerability through an insider-outsider perspective, which proposes a dualistic view where risk is distributed due to labor market institutions segmenting of workers into 'insiders' who have regular employment and a low risk of unemployment, and 'outsiders' who are stuck in non-standard jobs with a greater risk of unemployment (Rueda, 2005, Marx & Picot, 2020). Rubery et al. (2018) asserted that the focus on privileged insiders has been used to advocate for austerity-related reforms of the labor market, which are only assumed to increase non-standard employment.

Although labor market legislation theoretically provides the same employment protections for part-timers as full-timers with standard employment contracts, the literature suggests that they do not necessarily enjoy such protections in the eyes of the employer, at least not in terms of employment and career projections. Instead, labor-market structures and mechanisms disfavor part-timers, as they are less valued by employers and thus have weaker employment projections than full-timers. The consequences include not only an increased risk of unemployment, but also more serious precarity caused by both structural and individual aspects.

Rubery et al. (2018) applied the SOFL (security, opportunity, fair treatment, and life beyond work) framework to view differences between standard and non-standard employment: (1) security refers to wages and economic security; (2) opportunity refers to career and employment projections; (3) fair treatment entails how employers treat part-timers and full-timers with respect to wages and employment; (4) life beyond work involves how working hours, both regarding the number of hours and shift work (evening, night, and weekend shifts), affect family and other quality of life aspects outside of one's job.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2010) found that '*Despite regulatory changes to ensure equal treatment between part-timers and full-timers in terms of wages and working conditions, significant differences remain. Part-time jobs, on average, carry a penalty in terms of wages, training, promotion, job security and union membership, but a premium in terms of control over working time and health and safety*' (OECD, 2010, p. 212).

The literature is somewhat conflicting regarding how part-time work on one side gives families flexibility, but is also unstable, as working hours are often variable and unpredictable since they include shift/weekend work (Walsh, 2007). This leads to an ambiguous understanding of whether the flexibility of part-time work is enjoyed by both the employee and the employer. Findings from a survey showed that approximately one out of every four individuals in Nordic countries works part-time involuntarily. In addition, more part-timers in Norway perceive their economic situation as difficult compared to full-timers, but less so than in Sweden and Finland. Part-timers in Norway are also more frequently dissatisfied with their jobs. Despite these differences, the overall degree of life satisfaction between part-timers and full-timers is similar (Lanninger & Sundström, 2014).

The research question asked is: *Is part-time employment related to longer social assistance periods in Norway compared to those in full-time employment?* To answer it, the following hypothesis was tested:

> H1: For individuals who become social assistance recipients, a lower number of weekly hours agreed upon in prior employment positively relates to the period of social assistance reception.

3. Data and analytical approach

The analytical approach involved Norwegian register data to study how part-time employment correlates to the length of periods of social assistance. Data was accessed through the statistical interface Micrrodata.no. Public registers enable us to study individual-level administrative data on a wide range of social and labor variables via large samples drawn from the Norwegian population over several years. Data from public registers have several advantages. There are no problems with sample attrition and the quality of information is generally better than that of interview data (Hansen, 2009, p. 218). The data are collected from different registers such as tax registers, educational databases, and national population registers, connected to individuals through a personal identity number.

The data structure and method of analysis included panel data with a fixed-effects estimation technique based on a subset of the Norwegian population, consisting of all individuals between 18 and 65 years of age who were employed and received social assistance at least one month between 1 January 2015, and 31 December 2019. The sample is not representative of the entire population but rather a specific subset that is socially and economically vulnerable focused on in this study, and suitable for studying within group variation in welfare reception. As seen in Table 4 in the appendix, the mean wage of the sample is roughly half of the mean wage earned by the broader population. This is likely explained by the fact that either part-time employment or welfare recipiency was the main source of income for many of the individuals in several of the time periods. The mean age indicates that the sample is younger than the age span would naturally suggest. This is in line with higher labor market vulnerability at younger ages. The share of the sample with higher education and union membership is also substantially lower than the total population. This implies that the sample in question represents individuals with lower socioeconomic status and describes the portion of the population that receives welfare.

The analysis applied fixed-effects estimates with a lagged independent variable for part-time, as the main goal was to study employment prior to welfare, in order to understand the individuals' employment situation relates to welfare reception. A certain timespan is chosen, based on several key employment variables from the 'A-melding' register, which contains detailed information reported to the tax authorities by employers and was first made available in 2015. The main advantage of this analytical approach is that a fixed-effects estimator can capture a large share of unobserved heterogeneity (Longhi & Nandi, 2015, p. 183). The fixed-effects estimator applies a dummy for all individuals in the model, resulting in estimates that control for all observed and unobserved time-invariant factors. Since the focus is on social factors under an exogeneity assumption, this approach usually gives more consistent estimates than a regular ordinary least squares (OLS) estimator (Petersen, 2002; Wooldridge, 2019).

The model applied a continuous dependent variable, measuring how many months individuals received social assistance in each year. The independent variable is the weekly hours of work agreed upon in an individual's employment contract. It is operationalized as the percentage of the full-time equivalent (FTE) with 11 categories, from 0% to 10% as one category, to 100% of the FTE (see Table 2). Students and other groups who have part-time jobs as their secondary occupation are excluded. The control variables included in the model are income, wealth, education, number of children, marital status, and union membership. Controlling for income is especially important, as this is the primary qualifying determinant for other benefits. Additionally, many individuals receive several benefits at the same time. Further, those who receive social assistance for longer periods are more likely to receive other benefits (Hansen, 2009, p. 221). Also included are control variables for whether people receive other benefits such as housing support, unemployment benefits, disability benefits, or work assessment allowances. To capture time trends, such as nominal increases in wage and age, the model included year dummies (not reported) to control for this. A list of all covariates is available in the appendix (Table 4).

3.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 1 Dependent variable

Social assistance recipiency 2015-2019 (months 0-12)						
	2015	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**Total**
Mean (standard dev)	2.1 (3.2)	1.98 (3.1)	1.92 (3.1)	1.82 (3.1)	1.66 (3.0)	1.89 (3.12)

Table 2 Explanatory variable: work percent

Employment percent	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**Total**
1. 0-10%	3040	2931	2984	2877	2894	1731
2. 10-20%	4568	4307	4314	4482	4243	21,918
3. 20-30%	3837	3680	3708	3878	3903	19,008
4. 30-40%	2935	2677	2681	2857	2876	14,022
5. 40-50%	2899	2813	2787	2844	3035	14,384
6. 50-60%	2899	2749	2567	2819	2972	14,012
7. 60-70%	2388	2280	2150	2400	2487	11,709
8. 70-80%	2261	2135	1962	2225	2473	11,042
9. 80-90%	1993	1822	1548	1820	1961	9133
10. 90-99%	1765	1605	1094	1406	1514	7377
11. 100%	24,102	26,841	31,048	36,036	40,002	158,041
unemployed	62,576	65,189	64,681	59,033	55,121	306,605
Total	115,260	119,043	121,518	122,691	123,490	601,995

3.2 Model specification

The model is specified as follows:

$$SA_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Employment\,Percentage_{i,t-1} + X'_{i,t} + \beta_4 Year_{i,t} + u_{i,t}$$

SA_{it} is the number of months that individual i receives social assistance in year t. β_1 is the employment percentage, divided into 11 categories with 10 deciles, lagged with one year for individual i in year $t-1$. $\boldsymbol{X}'_{it}$ contains all other covariates for individual i in year t. β_4 is a dummy set for years for individual i in year t, while u is the error term. The model applies clustered standard errors, correcting for autocorrelation and heteroskedasticity. As the social assistance scheme is administered by municipalities, there might be local variations in take-up and allocation of benefits, the standard errors are thus clustered on the municipality of residence.

4. Results

4.1 Regression results

Table 3 Regression results

	Social assistance (1)	**Social assistance (2)**
1. Work percent	–0.08*** (.00)	–0.04*** (0.00)
Temporary employed		0.24*** (0.04)
Higher education		0.61*** (0.4)
Children		–0.02** (0.05)
(log)income		0.16*** (0.02)
(log)wealth		–0.08*** (0.00)
Disability (percent)		–0.01*** (0.00)
Union member		–0.33*** (0.01)
Oslo		–0.19*** (0.03)
Work assessment allowance		–0.72*** (0.04)
Housing support		2.02*** (0.03)
Unemployment benefit		–0.21*** (0.03)
Unemployed		1.29*** (0.05)
Constant	1.21*** (0.01)	–0.03*** (0.17)
R^2 (within)	0.02	0.16
N	597,570	591,942
N (individuals)	132,216	132,216

Clustered standard error (on municipality) in parentheses.
*Significant at 5%, **significant at 1%; ***significant at 0.1%. Model included year dummies (not reported).

The model shows the mean linear relationship between the independent variables and welfare reception, controlling for both observed and unobserved heterogeneity, on a very large sample. The goodness-of-fit measure, R^2, is also fairly high, suggesting that the variables included (both the explanatory variable and the controls) are relevant. Because public registers run the risk of identifying individuals with extreme values or when dealing with smaller samples, the applied software winsorizes the data on the top percentage as an anonymizing measure. As a result, the reported number of observations in the descriptive tables and the simple and multiple regression models are slightly different from each other.

The direction of the coefficient in the simple and multivariate regression models is similar, showing consistency in the estimated relationship between the variables in question. The mean effect of being employed part-time varies depending on the size of the part-time percentage, which is in line with the initial hypothesis. The independent variable in focus has been lagged with one year. This is to place employment percent significantly prior to subsequent welfare reception, as the relationship in most cases imply a change from employment to unemployment. Focusing on the model with controls, all else being equal, for individuals with the lowest employment percentage, social assistance recipiency is almost half a month (0.4) longer compared to full-time. This is a quite significant difference given that the mean recipiency period for the sample is less than two months.

The variable for unemployed works primarily as a control variable. This is because the periods of social assistance reception usually are accompanied by unemployment. This indicates some uncertainty as to how we interpret this variable. If we carefully interpret those unemployed compared to those who receive social assistance as a supplementary benefit, we see that those who are unemployed receive substantial longer periods of social assistance, of over one month in average. Importantly, for individuals who held temporary jobs prior to receiving welfare, the recipiency periods are longer, that is, 0.22 months. Another relevant variable that should receive attention is that union membership generally results in a significantly shorter reception period, which is in line with an assumption that unions provide some labor market protections.

5. Discussion

The article examines how previous employment is related to individuals who become recipients of the minimum income scheme in Norway; we observe a clear link between non-standard employment and the subsequent period of welfare reception. It is important to stress that social assistance is only given to individuals in the most precarious economic situations and represents serious social and economic vulnerability.

As described in the Results, after controlling for the reception of alternative benefits, part-timers with a low employment percentage have significantly longer recipiency periods than recipients who held full-time contracts. For individuals who work closer to full-time, the mean relationship to recipiency is weaker. In accordance with the theoretical arguments and previous research on this topic, the findings indicate an increasingly stronger relationship between fewer hours in an employment contract and the length of welfare reception. Empirically, this supports the argument that part-time work has characteristics of precarity related to both structural factors of the Norwegian labor

market and the welfare state, and individual factors tied to working life characterized by insecurity and instability.

Longer periods of welfare reception for part-timers provide a further basis for addressing how the labor market values part-timers in terms of the high risk of unemployment and the risk of long-term unemployment. As such, this supports the assertions of King and Rueda (2007) concerning part-timers within low-hour jobs, which generate low wages for the employed and with little value in the eyes of employers.

Higher education is related to longer recipiency in the model. Individuals with higher education are generally underrepresented within social assistance recipiency. This is likely because higher education is a stronger predictor of selection into social assistance, than it is to explain severity of welfare reception (Smedsvik et al. 2022).

Union membership is low among this group of welfare recipients, with approximately 20% being unionized (roughly 50% in the total working population). However, it seems that joining a union gives valuable support to the recipients, at least in terms of reception periods. Increased income is related to longer recipiency in the model. This should not be misunderstood, as higher income can also be derived from receiving benefits for longer periods. However, the wealth variable has a negative direction, suggesting that a better economic situation decreases recipiency. An interesting finding is that temporary work does not have a strong association to recipiency as part-time employment. This can be seen partly in line with the findings by Svanlund and Berglund (2018) wherein temporary employment can serve as a stepping stone toward fixed employment. They also indicated that temporary employment has an increased risk of long-term marginalization, as the results show a positive relationship to recipiency periods compared to holding fixed employment. This supports the broader understanding that non-standard employment can affect individuals negatively.

The results thus agree with the findings of Rasmussen et al. (2019) that non-standard work is linked to precarity compared to standard work. As mentioned in the initial sections, part-time work has several features that can be unappealing to a large group of people. Working unfixed hours and shifts is difficult for individuals who also want to prioritize family or other care activities (Ilsøe, 2016). Regarding the family component, the outcomes plainly indicate an objective risk of precarity for families with part-time breadwinners. However, it is still unclear whether the individual experiences of part-timers with family duties affect their attitudes and motivation toward work. In this case, the literature presents conflicting findings as to how part-time work is perceived at the individual level (Walsh, 2007), where on the one hand, it is seen as flexible and giving autonomy to individuals and families, and on the other hand as unstable and unpredictable. Most likely, there are large differences regarding how these perspectives manifest in individuals' perceptions of their situations. Moreover, there is a difference between perceptions and reality, where there is a gap between self-perceived risk and the objective risk of instability.

As the analysis could carefully indicate, those who receive social assistance as a supplementary benefit alongside employment have shorter periods of reception than those unemployed. This would indicate that having some sort of activity is better than inactivity. This would of course be an important implication to support the effect of labor market activation to reduce welfare claims.

One remaining question is whether individuals end up receiving social assistance because they withdraw themselves from society or because the labor market does not

value people with a history of part-time work. However, these two factors are not necessarily mutually exclusive, which is also an important claim in this article: that part-time work can contribute to a downward spiral caused by being marginalized by the labor market, ultimately producing great harm to individual motivation and well-being. Hence, part-time employment is not necessarily restricted to individuals' perceptions of their own employment situation, and we should not assume that the only precarious form of non-standard work is involuntarily.

The results add to the fact that in addition to the in-work poverty risk of part-time employment (Horemans et al. 2016), the out-of-work repercussions are more serious for individuals who had part-time jobs than those who worked full-time. The societal ramifications suggest that although part-time work can serve as a profitable form of employment for the labor market (King and Rueda, 2008), there are consequences that are not necessarily as advantageous in the eyes of the individual. If the outcome of part-time work is an increased risk of receiving long-term welfare, this should induce a debate on the societal trade-offs between flexibility for employers and the cost for many part-time employed. Moreover, research should examine whether current labor market regulations give equal protections to disadvantaged workers, and whether this contributes to a segmented labor market between insiders and outsiders.

Discussion of the consequences of precarity has also been crucial for the class-cultural debate around Standings' (2011) precariat: a class whose common trait is the experience of being detached from society. Kalleberg (2009) pointed to how precarity affects communities, leading to a lack of social engagement, affecting membership in civil society, and reducing social capital. Further, more research is needed on the individual dynamics of non-standard work on vulnerable groups, especially to understand the transition between work and unemployment.

Finally, the empirical analysis demonstrates that part-time work is related to longer periods of welfare reception. How this relationship impacts structural conditions in the labor market and social stratification should receive further attention, as the consequences of part-time likely go beyond the scope of this study. The aim was to give an overall perspective on how part-time work is linked to welfare reception. Part-time work is clearly more desirable than inactivity, although the risks related to part-time jobs should not be ignored if the goal is to reduce periods of welfare reception. The difficulty lies in creating an institutional setup that does not discriminate against part-time workers compared to full-time employees; at the same time, part-time work should be voluntary and not as attractive for the employer. We do not know if this is possible of course. The opportunity for everyone who wishes to work full-time will likely be challenged by preferences for flexible employment and the market's need for cheap labor that part-timers represent.

6. Limitations

The study has some important limitations that need to be addressed. First, it is important to stress that the design applied does not allow for causal interpretation, although there is a time aspect in the empirical approach. The study mainly shows important correlations of the studied relationship. Second, limitations also concern issues with external validity, especially how the empirical results apply to other Nordic states. There

are both similarities and differences between the Nordic states that are important when discussing this region. Institutional similarities between the Nordic welfare states led to the term 'Nordic welfare model'. Although, as mentioned in the Introduction, there are important differences especially between the Nordic labor markets and welfare states. The theoretical framework, both the individual aspects of working life and the structural aspects of the labor market, has an overall relevance to the countries. The empirical data, on the other hand, is limited to the Norwegian context, which is important when evaluating the implications of this study.

This relates to a general issue in empirical research of the region. Previously, cross-country analysis of non-standard employment on social outcomes has found differences between the Nordic countries, such as between Norway and Sweden (Svanlund and Berglund, 2018), between the three Scandinavian countries (Ilsøe 2016), and the four largest Nordic countries as well (Svalund, 2013; Rasmussen, 2019). Single-country studies thus constitute a supplement to the literature (Håkansson and Isidorsson, 2015; Slettebak and Rye, 2022). Comparative studies, in combination with country-specific studies, with micro level evidence such as this, jointly contribute to a better understanding of working life, precarity, and social vulnerability in the region.

7. Conclusion

This article has tested the hypothesis that welfare recipients in Norway who held full-time jobs have shorter recipiency periods than those who worked part-time. This relates to both institutional and individual factors. The institutional factors are mostly tied to how the labor market values treat part-time workers negatively in terms of employment, wages, and career projections, resulting in the need for minimum income support for longer periods. The institutional factors negatively affect individuals' economic and psychological situations, leading to various forms of distress. This is connected to how low and unstable numbers of hours impact employment projections, wages, the accumulation of skills, and family stability, which in turn influence individuals' socioeconomic status. The findings from a large sample panel regression indicate a significant link between a lower percentage of employment and longer welfare recipiency. This gives empirical support to theoretical arguments about non-standard employment and welfare reception. The ultimate outcome of this situation is greater economic inequality, insecurity, and instability. Hence, policymakers should be aware that individuals who are vulnerable to the labor market face risks when it comes to part-time work (compared to full-timers). The risks of part-time work should be considered when regulating or reforming labor market policies targeting this group. The aim of this article was not to form a conceptualization of part-time employment as exclusively negative, as I only focused on a subset of the population, and there are well-known aspects of part-time work that are both 'good' and 'bad'. The objective was rather to point out that there are risks of part-time work for this specific group—which are connected both to institutional and individual components, which should receive greater attention.

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Note

[i] The technology to access the data remotely is Microdata.no. The code utilized to run the analysis can be obtained on request from the author, or from the following link: https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/GVHZ6

Appendix

Table 4 List of covariates

Variable	Mean value				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Age (18–65)	33	34	35	36	37
Social Assistance (number of months received in year)	2.1	1.98	1.92	1.82	1.66
Children (in household 0–17 year)	0.72	0.69	0.67	0.67	0.66
Couple (living with spouse or partner)	0.68	0.67	0.66	0.66	0.65
Disability (registered degree of disability if receiving disability pension, 0–100%)	2.31	2.69	3.12	3.86	5.06
Gross income (In NOK	250,977	264,625	281,680	305,046	332,424
Gross wealth (in NOK)	301,300	313,928	337,443	365,933	417,578
Higher education (above upper secondary)	0.14	0.15	0.16	0.17	0.18
Housing support (1 if receiver of housing support, 0 if otherwise)	0.26	0.29	0.31	0.27	0.25
Oslo	0.11	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.13
Temporary employment (1 if temporary employed, 0 if otherwise)	0.06	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.06
Union member (1 if member, 0 if otherwise)	0.18	0.19	0.2	0.22	0.25
Unemployment benefit15 (1 if receiver, 0 if otherwise)	0.17	0.16	0.16	0.14	0.13
Work assessment allowance (1 if receiver, 0 if otherwise)	0.14	0.15	0.16	0.16	0.17