

Exploring the Work-Life Experiences of Temporary Employment Service Employees in South Africa

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Abstract: This study examines the working career experience of temporary employment services' (TES) employees within a globalised economic environment. Incorporating the ethical framework for human resources and industrial relations (HRIR), the study investigates the perceptions of serving and ex-temporary employment services (TES) employees in relation to their work and career experiences. A multiple case study was adopted, with a focus on selected retail, banking, telecommunications, hospitality and Public Service. The finding reflected some mixed reactions for work experience and career outcomes and provided some platform for gaining experience by making informed career choices on one hand and addressing the poor conditions of work on the other. It was further established that the overall perceptions held about TES employment practices may fall below the HRIR ethical norms. This paper offers management and policy makers an insight into the mechanics of the TES phenomenon in the context of the HRIR ethics.

Keywords: Temporary Employment Services, Globalisation, Work Career Experience.

INTRODUCTION

Studies on the impact of non-standard work arrangements, namely fixed-term contract job, personnel consulting services, zero-hour work shifts, and triangular employment setup continue to evoke intense debates (Addison & Surfield, 2009). On the one hand, past literature maintain that atypical work arrangements offered dead-end work careers, providing employees with little opportunity or incentive to acquire necessary work skills or to develop strategies for meaningful job search on the labour market. On the other hand, atypical work facilitates work career advancement by reducing the time temporary employees spend searching for higher-graded jobs, while also reducing higher incidences of staff turn-over. There is a growing consensus amongst labour experts that the trend towards atypical work arrangements seems unstoppable.

For survival, business organisations compete to lower their production costs. In response, debates arise regarding the general ethical benchmarks, such as the extent to which society's freedom is aided or hindered, in addition to the extent to which fundamental human rights are protected by the actions of business organisations (Delaney, 2005, p. 206). Against this background, this study intends to offer management and policy-makers an insight into the views and experiences of TES employees for effective management as well as policymaking.

Problem Statement

The emergence of triangular employment relationship poses a substantial challenge to labour law, trade unionisation and ancillary aspects of the labour relations system. According to Delaney (2005, p.203), the problem is further compounded by the dilemmas surrounding the human resource management's role within a globalised business environment arising from a lack of broad consensus on how to comply with ethical standards in labour relations. Vosko (2009) adds that even the adoption of the policy interventions, such as the Directives on Temporary Agency Work of 2008 signified a setback for TES employees' protection because this Directive contextualises equal treatment by deviating from the overall framework of protective measures provided by the EU for similar forms of precarious work. In other words, Vosko (2009) was of the view that the Directive threatens to dilute the gains made at the national level in many of the fifteen member countries in the EU over the last decade. Hence, further research is needed to clearly understand the relationships between employment insecurities and triangular employment relationships.

Research Question

The contextual issues encompassed in the research questions are presented in Table 1.

Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of this study:

- To develop an appropriate research approach for the purpose of capturing and unravelling the

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Table 1: The Contextual Issues in the Research Questions

| Issues of interest/ debate | | | Resultant research questions |
|--|---|--|---|
| Level 1 | What What is the nature of temporary employment service? | Purpose, characteristics and challenges | What is the views and experience of temporary employment services employee with regard to the nature of employment contracting? |
| Level 2 | Why Why is temporary employment service on the rise? | Debates, individual choices and goals | What is driving the employees of temporary employment service to seek temporary agency jobs? |
| Level 3 | How How is the temporary employment service viewed? | International Labour Conventions, mitigating steps, career and legislation | How does the temporary employment service measure up to the ethical principles of human resources management and business practice? |
|  <p><i>The underlying assumptions in developing a framework for atypical employment policy framework</i></p> | | | |

Source: Authors' Fieldwork.

experiences and views of TES employees working within some selected sectors of the South African economy,

- To revisit the work of prominent researchers in the relevant fields in order to extrapolate theoretical constructs by means of which TES employees experience and view on job seeking behaviours could be clearly understood, and
- To develop a conceptual model of TES employment contract.

Literature on Temporary Employment Service

Defining atypical and non-standard form of employment requires defining standard employment.

Van Der Riet (2010) describes standard employment as full-time employment of an indefinite duration, which is under the control of the employer and mostly at the workplace. Atypical employment (AE) therefore refers to the opposite of standard employment (Addison & Surfield, 2009). Being extension of AE, TES is a triangular employment relationship setup, which is different from labour consultants, who bridge the gap between formal recruitment and selection processes and accelerate entry into workplaces. Regarding the nature of key features of alternative employment, there seems to be no consensus in literature (Polivka & Nardone, 1989; Abraham, 1990; Brewster & Tregaskis, 1997; De Grip, Hoevenberg & Willems, 1997; Polsky, 1997). Besides, Thompson (2003) maintains that work patterns over the ages reflected an expression of

power relations, with employers forcing labour costs down while employees strive to achieve decent work standards. Furthermore, he accentuated that in the absence of protective or minimum baselines, employers would race against each other to institute cost-saving measures, popularly known as a race to the bottom. The casualisation of employment relationship is exacerbated by the incapacity of labour unions to organise the TES employees. May, Campbell and Burgers (2005:1) noted the characteristic of AE as the “spread of bad conditions of service, namely employment insecurity, irregular hours, intermittent employment, low wages and, to a great extent absence of standard employment benefits”.

Theories behind the rise of alternative working arrangements are diverse and range from temporarily replacing permanently employed staff, who become absent owing to sick leave. In such case, employers tend avoid compliance with costs of contract termination, particularly in countries where strict legislations on employment contract apply. Hence, offering lower wages to temporary workers, gaining managerial flexibility by adjusting the numbers of employees in response to the volatility of the economic, changes in legislation to weaken the bargaining power of employees became the norm (Biggs, Burchell, & Millmore, 2006). In this context, the agency takes over personnel functions for purposes of protecting highly skilled and scarce permanent employees. The previously mentioned theories are mainly routine HR responses (Jahn & Bentzen, 2012). Other reasons include identifying potential standard employees prior to making any kind of employment commitment (Leschke, 2009; Wenger & Kallenberg, 2006). In this way, temporary employment fits the employer's strategy of creating a protective hedge for full-time employees as temporary employees are always the first in line to be retrenched each time business organisations experience decline in income during economic recession (Golden & Appelbaum, 1992).

While debates still persist whether or not TES employment practices is strongly linked to the business cycle, a significant consensus emerged holding that alternative work arrangements developed from the phenomenon of globalisation as business organisations scrambled to adjust to threats and opportunities that accompanied the spread of globalisation (Piasecki & Wolnicki, 2004; Baccaro, 2011; Ukpere, 2011; Adgaonkar, Yewale & Mule, 2012).

In fact, literatures have highlighted a three segment typology of temporary employees, arranged according

to the motives for accepting the TES employment setup namely involuntary temporary workers (Bernesak & Kinnear, 1999; Casey & Alach, 2004; Tan & Tan, 2002), voluntarily motivated workers (Hardy & Walker, 2003; Morris & Vekker, 2001) and the stepping-stone motive workers (Kunda, Barley, & Evans, 2002). Expanding on this typology, Tan & Tan (2002), emphasise some reasons why people accept TES jobs, namely the need to support the family financially, desire for secondary earnings, the quest to improve the level of acquired skill, dissatisfaction with permanent jobs and the need for more work-life balance. Others are stepping stone reasons and the lack of alternatives or inability to find permanent employment. In a nutshell, the above mentioned motives may further be fragmented into two categories of reasons, namely involuntary reasons and voluntary reasons. The involuntary reasons denote a forced choice, while the voluntary reasons are by choice. A basic assumption of this classification, which was borne out of this study, is that jobs accepted involuntarily are associated with overall unsatisfactory employment outcomes, while jobs accepted voluntarily were found to be associated with favourable outcomes. In a nutshell, atypical employment is a sub-product of globalization and TES is an extended form of atypical employment, given its triangular nature.

While globalisation is difficult to define, there is nevertheless broad consensus that it entails a form of integration of markets and supply which results in the expansion, deepening and acceleration of integration in all aspects of life, such as culturally, economically, financially, spiritually, as well as combating of crimes in societies (Vos, 2009). The inter-connectedness arises from worldwide changes in economic, technological, political processes and communications that increasingly affect social life within and across nations and societies (Schwandt, 2007; Evans, Pucik & Bjorkman, 2011). Globalisation therefore portrays a world without boundaries in which information, capital and goods move easily across sovereign states (Wheeler, 2005; Ukpere & Slabbert, 2009; Ukpere, 2011). However, the cost saving notion inherent in globalisation responses is such that countries are guided by unique conceptualisation in their responses to socio-economic challenges (Vos, 2008; Von Holdt & Webster 2008; Bowles, 2010).

Regarding career development issues, the study by Mitlacher (2007) revealed a grievous lack of growth prospects, so much so that the issue did not even feature in the agendas of meetings of the business

organisations concerned. While some studies have found higher poor health conditions in TES employees compared to fixed-term and permanent employees, others have found that it is easier for TES employees to find alternative jobs as workers in standard employment (Bardasi & Francesconi, 2004; Olsen, 2006). As Head Lucas (2003, p.15) noted, the British experience in the hospitality sector indicated no career transition as business organisations tended to apply extreme measures to management of employee relations: "Such an approach entails the imposition of zero hour contracts which act as a psychological device to reinforce a feeling of impermanence to the employment relationship." Expanding on this argument, Lewchuk, De Wolff, King and Polanyi (2003, p. 23) conclude that subjecting employees to psychological uncertainty appear to expose employees to "lower job satisfaction, exhaustion, depression and in the long run, stress-related illnesses, such as cardiovascular diseases".

Latin American economies have been pursuing three main ideologies in their response to the rise in atypical employment, namely embracing globalisation, increasing privatisation and liberalisation in their programmes of structural adjustment (Tokman, 2008). Although the impact of globalisation was not similar to western countries, Latin American countries became economies that are more open and the formerly dominant state participation in the economy adopted a supportive role and relaxed policy directives for individual business organisations to play more significant roles. For example, in Argentina and Brazil, the average working hours per week declined as a result of the increase in part-time work (ILO, 1995) while Mexico and Chile recorded increases in weekly working hours from 43.4 to 46.4 and 43.6 to 45.3 respectively. The aforementioned reality triggered the adoption of strategies to mitigate the effect of globalisation by increasing competitiveness through cost reduction and value add to production, alternating according to trade union density. Such strategies took the form of payroll intermediaries, labour broking, informalisation of work and the expansion of the informal sector. In effect, these strategies constituted ways in which to operate legally outside of labour regulations (Tokman, 2008). Overall, social protection for informal workers in Latin America has been made fairly extensive and involved social protection coverage for informal workers, including expanding the eligibility for social security benefits and the adoption of new intervention strategies such as unemployment benefits

and other special measures for the benefit of uninsured workers.

With regards to the African experience of atypical employment, Wood (2008, p. 330) maintains that, "very little literature exists on the prevalence and impact of TES phenomenon in Africa". He further attributed this situation to the consequences of poorly resourced tertiary institutions of learning as well as insignificant formal employment standards. Notwithstanding sufficient literature on the African experience, Klerck (2009) found that nonstandard jobs were based on the exemption of the triangular employment relationship from statutory protective measures of a collective nature. Consequently, the increased use of TES allowed management to evade and where impossible, dilute the protective measures that ordinarily protect permanent employees from competitive pressures in the labour market. A different scenario applied to the situation in Botswana and Swaziland, where the suppression of wages in the two countries was the result of both the low skills of the indigenous populations and the deliberate policy decisions by the local authorities (Wood, 2008).

South Africa was not spared the greater effects of globalisation. This occurred because the South African economy was more integrated into the global economy than other African economies. However, the study of poverty in South Africa has been done with the historical legacies of apartheid as major reference point, namely, racial oppression and discrimination (Nyenti, 2007; Omowowo, 2011). Compounding the above challenges is a common assumption in South Africa that unemployment is the main cause of poverty, and that job creation would solve all problems related to poverty, with less attention being paid to the types of jobs that should be created or the extent of restructuring existing jobs (Barker, 2003). The on-going trend of subcontracting work in the new political dispensation transferred the burden of upkeep of living standards from the formal sector to the family or household because of poor wages accruing to increasing number of temporary employees (Von Holdt & Webster, 2008).

In response to globalisation and the challenges of unemployment and poverty, trade unions were compelled to adopt strategies that went beyond worker issues. For instance, Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) members playing an active role in party political forums, such as parliament and the municipal councils, with the believe that such

involvement in politics could provide them with more bargaining power for the benefits of the workers (Buhlungu, 2008). Concisely, therefore, the choice has to be made between decent jobs and atypical employment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The research methodology addresses the question of how the data addressing the research question was obtained, analysed and how the findings was arrived at. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001, cited in Henning 2004, p. 36), "research methodology focuses on the process and the kinds of tools and procedures.

Research Strategy

As aforementioned, a multiple case study approach was adopted as a research strategy.

Population and Sampling

Both serving and ex-TES employees form the population of the study, in order to gain broader understanding of the TES phenomenon. Participants were selected from food processing organisations, hospitality, banking and telecommunications sectors. In total eight participants were selected for the study. Two of the participants work in a bakery, while two others

work in the retail organisation. One participant works in a telecommunication state-owned entity, and another one works in a banking organisation, while another one work in a hospitality organisation. The last participant works in the Public Service. The initial intention was to select 12 participant, but after the eighth interview, we reached the stage of data saturation. Table 2 summarised the profile of the sample.

Data Collection

Both serving and ex-TES employees were interviewed in order to gain broader understanding of the TES phenomenon. In total, eight participated were interviewed Secondary data in the form of reports and past cases were obtained from organised labour, Commissioners working in the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration as well as the Department of labour inspectorate.

Data Analysis

Thematic and content analysis were used during the data analysis. The data analysis occurred throughout the different stages of the study. The process commenced with organisation, reduction and description of the data, and culminated in drawing of meaning (Schwant, 2007). The objective of analysing

Table 2: Profile of Research Participants

| | RP | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|----------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Employment status | TES | TES | TES | TES | Ex-TES | Ex-TES | TES | Ex-TES |
| Marital status | Married | Single | Married | Single | Single | Single | Single | Married |
| Gender | Male | Male | Male | Male | Female | Female | Female | Female |
| Family Responsibility/Parent | Parent | No | Parent | No | Parent | Parent | Parent | Parent |
| Income status | | | | | | | | |
| Primary | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Supplementary |
| Secondary | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| Occasional | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Property ownership | Private | No | Private | No | Rented | Rented | Rented | Private |
| Educational status | Grade 12 | Grade 12 | Grade 12 | Grade 12 | Grade 12 plus diploma | Grade 12 plus financial diploma | Grade 12 | Grade 12 plus secretarial diploma |
| Current employment responsibility | Stores administration (supervisor) | Mixing baking ingredients | Field marketer (retail stock controller) | Dispatch | Client services administrator | Bank accounts reconciliations | House-keeping | Admin clerk |

Source: Authors' Fieldwork.

Table 3: Spread Sheet of Coding Linked to Concepts

| RP | Early days | Education | Family responsibility | TES experience (years) | Marital status | Fate of TES | Economic sector |
|----|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Poverty | Grade 12 | Primary | 13 | Married | Ban | Retail |
| 2 | Poverty | Grade 12 | Secondary | 3 | Single | Ban | Food processing |
| 3 | Poverty | Grade 12 | Primary | 9 | Married | Regulate | Retail |
| 4 | Poverty | Grade 12 | Secondary | 2 | Single | Ban | Food processing |
| 5 | Protected childhood | National diploma | Primary | 6 | Single | Regulate | Telecommunication |
| 6 | Protected childhood | National diploma | Primary | 10 | Single | Regulate | Banking |
| 7 | Poverty | Std. 10 | Secondary | 0.3 | Single | Ban | Food processing |
| 8 | Protected childhood | Grade12 plus secretarial diploma | Secondary | 9 | Married | Regulate | Public service |

qualitative data is to organise individual statements into themes that produce new understanding at higher level (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). Mouton and Marais's (1990) analytical tools as well as Schütz's (1962) first-order and second-order constructs typology were applied to make sense of the data. Through manual coding, categories and themes emerged from the data. In order to minimise data loss or skipping, we created a spread sheet and captured the participants' main views in terms of both sub-topics and categories, as outlined in Table 3.

Eight categories that emerged, were subsequently translating into five themes. Table 4 provides a summary of such categories and themes.

Table 4: Overview of Evolving Categories and Themes

| Category | Theme |
|---|---|
| Poor circumstances Opportunities | Push factors Motivation for applying for a TES job |
| Job setting Platform for career change | Conditions of service |
| Role of TES Perceptions of TES as employer | Job satisfaction |
| Changes in policy Interventions | Future of TES |

The categories and themes arising out of the interpretation of the data came out of the application of both modification and confirmation (iterative process) throughout the data gathering process.

FINDINGS

The key findings cover general constructs on the one hand and constructs unique to theme categories on the other. They are summarised below:

- **Awareness** arises from people's consciousness of the prevalence of TES, which, in turn, leads their reconciliation with the employment situation. Affected employees coped better in situations they believe they can change.
- **Poverty as a** socio-economic situation limit people's choices regarding acceptable jobs.
- There is link between a person's level of **education** and his or her chances of exiting or remaining in a TES employment relationship, these chances were even in terms of entry into the world of work. The higher the person's level of education, the quicker his/her chances of exiting TES.
- Employees need work **decent job** opportunities, which provide fair income, protective measures against insecurity at the workplace, health insurance for the employee's families, opportunities for education and training, as well as integration into the organisational structure and work culture, platform to articulate grievances, as well as involvement in decision-making processes.
- Employees desire some level of **autonomy**, which is the latitude to perform and exercise some discretion. That is an indication of a sense

of trust between employer and employee. Employers should acknowledge that an atypical employment job is equally important when granting autonomy.

- The overall the **employment relationship** arrangement of TES is characterised by job insecurity, which strains the relationship. The length of service rendered when employed by TES resulted in either a positive or a negative relationship. Employees with many years of service defend the triangular employment arrangement by citing clear advantages. Any measures that may be taken to regulate TES should take into consideration these positive aspects.
- **Communication** is very important in any relationship and TES relationship is not an exclusion. As it is to be expected, clear and direct communication is essential for the achievement of set goals. In a triangular relationship, it is very difficult to optimise communication. While TES firms dictate conditions of employment, the business organisation operates on the basis of routine directives.
- The duration of **contracts** and the frequency of their renewal as well as the identity of the employer seem problematic for the parties. The often complex and conflicting contracts between agency and end user and agency and temporary worker left ample room to exploit TES employees.
- TES employees have to deal with risks related to **occupational incidents** such as health and safety
- The unregulated TES environment provides a fertile ground for the proliferation of **dubious TES operations**. The cloak of secrecy these firms operate under, raises questions of registration and tax obligations. Under such circumstances, levels of abuse of employees go unchecked.
- Government, business, organised labour, and civil society should take note of the dual phases of **frustration** faced by vulnerable employees and job seekers. The creation of the working poor leads to a poverty cycle and by extension, frustrated job seekers who becomes a pool of

social ills; crime, drugs addiction, gangsterism, alcohol abuse and family conflicts.

- Once deployed at specific business location, TES firms do not **monitor the performance or work environment of employees** but **bequeath** the responsibility to an in-house HR unit. The grey area so created leaves employees vulnerable to abusive practices.

Constructs Unique to the Themes

Push factors manifest in the high rate of unemployment, which makes it difficult for first-time employees to choose jobs they prefer. Service conditions and early exit could be improved by short-term deployment as TES employees. Seeing that TES firms link job seekers to existing vacancies, the *future* of TES is highly contentious. *Coping mechanisms* for TES employees could be enhanced by both TES employers, business organisations and employees developing coping mechanisms to manage issues. A positive relationship climate would recognise the constructive contribution of all concerned parties, resulting in possible readiness to defend each other.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

There are push factors necessitating acceptance of a TES job as prevailing form of employment contract. Job market segmentation also determines the likelihood of attracting higher levels of atypical employees. Manufacturing services and hospitality are predominant sectors (Connelly, Gallagher & Webster, 2011) while women, the low-skilled, young people (aged 15-29), older people (aged 55-65) predominate the composition (May, Campbell & Burgess, 2005). Job seekers pursue different goals in life. These goals, in turn, inform people's choices. First-time and less qualified job seekers have limited choice of the type of employment they make and are forced to take up TES jobs. Others make voluntary choices are motivated by the opportunity to acquire work experience as temporary employee, the opportunity to explore what is on offer on the labour market and what future career opportunities to plan for, and a desire for freedom and independence (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011; Kroon & Freese, 2013). Moreover, Addison & Surfild (2009), May, Campbell, & Burgess (2005) and Berton, Devicienti and Pacelli (2011) found that workers who elected to make use of TES are more likely to be employed much sooner than those who continue their job search outside the TES environment. Overall, it

appeared that the overriding factor in job seekers' decision to take up a TES job is the employee's perception of his/her location within the framework of his or her hierarchy of needs. Extreme poverty and scarcity of job opportunities are some of the push factors for accepting atypical employment contracting.

The family status and role in the homesteads is a major consideration in the decision to accept atypical employment. Primary income earning, including ownership of property explain why income assistance is provided to family members (Haider & McGarry, 2006, p. 4), namely, out of concern for the well-being of their close family members or as part of a mutually beneficial arrangement, compensatory top up for the lower income earner, the financial assistant/contributor earned sizeable enough income to offer support and provide some form of insurance to each other, and alleviation of liquidity constraints. In a nutshell, three key categories of motives determine reasons for acceptance of atypical employment, namely deciding voluntarily to accept atypical employment, being forced to accept atypical employment (involuntary motive), and preparing for career transition (De Jong, De Cuyper, De Witte, Silla & Bernhard-Oettel (2009).

The main driving force behind the business organisations' decisions to prefer labour brokers is to achieve numerical and wage flexibility (Head & Lucas, 2003; Wenger & Kalleberg, 2006; Van Jaarsveld, 2006). Business organisations should therefore, adopt clear strategies for managing conflicting expectations and fears of temporary and full-time employees (Druker & Stanworth, 2004; Biggs, Burchell & Millmore, 2006). The future of TES remains debatable. TES makes no positive contribution towards job creation because vacancies exist within business organisations anyway. Autor and Houseman (2010) maintain that apart from providing experience and skill, such jobs tend to be temporary and generally do not lead to permanent positions. TES could, at best, be described as undesirable necessity. Van Eck (2010) and NEASA (2012) predicted that in the South African sense, labour broking would be recognised albeit with strict regulations to protect the vulnerable position of workers found in the triangular employment relationships.

Coping with TES employment depends on the reason for adopting such employment relationship. On the whole, TES jobs provide a means of income to employees with lower qualifications and with insecure trajectories alternating between temporary agency jobs, odd jobs and unemployment. Such jobs are convenient

entry points for young people leaving school and who wish to obtain job training or to acquire job experience. Positive attitude make better copying strategy possible (Voss, Vitols, Farvaque, Broughton, Behling, Dota, Leonardi & Naedenoen, 2013). Without exception, participants considered themselves tools for generating profit for the client business organisation, while getting very little for themselves from the organisation. While Omowowo (2011) observed a lost cause scenario for TES employee, COSATU (2012) declares that labour brokers just recycle the youth every 6 months through their books.

Confronted with lack of power to change their work situation, employees adopt the resignation strategies of Martínez, De Cuyper and De Witte (2010) namely the stepping stone hypothesis and impression management. These strategies compensate for lack of training opportunity or job security (Manthorpe, Cornes & Moriarty, 2012) manifested in complex or heavy caseloads (usually, those no-one else in the team wanted to take) while lacking access to the same level of support and supervision as permanent colleagues. In short, a mixed bag of coping strategies took the form of personal interest, fear of unemployment, recognition and independence at the workplace, love for the job and resignation to the situation. In fact, the situation is unlikely to improve soon (Keller and Seif ert, 2005). De Cuyper, De Witte and Van Emmerik (2011, p. 104) in a nutshell observed that atypical employment is a reality that must be accepted, requiring strategies to balance the different expectation of employees and employers. The unsustainability of the creation of the working poor, however, requires lawmakers to intervene, in order to mitigate the situation (Underhill & Rimmer, 2008; Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011).

Relating the Finding to the Ethical Principles of Human Resources and Industrial Relations (HRIR)

Measuring up the TES phenomenon against ethical principles of human resources management and industrial relations yielded the following negative outcomes:

Utility: The motive of business organisations is profit at all costs hence the research participants were treated as profit-generating tools in an exploitative manner.

Liberty: The participants did not enjoy minimum levels of freedom regarding choices in their work environment.

Duty: Work rules were perceived as highly prescriptive with conditions of work imposed unilaterally, thereby rendering the employees as captives.

Fairness: With limited opportunities for growth, the employees' responsibility towards their dependents and by extension, society was compromised.

Virtue: In the world of business, where the primary motive is business, issues of social goodness were perceived as insignificant.

Care: In the minds of the average business organisation, caring for vulnerable employees is not at all important therefore the need for stricter regulation of TES is imperative.

Further determination of the participants' orientation towards TES (Johnson, 1998) showed three classifications as reflected in Table 5 below:

The preceding table indicates that TES realists are pragmatic and accept the situation they could not change. TES sceptics are scornful of the capacity or readiness by regulatory bodies to fix challenges of triangular employment relationships. TES cynics consider inconsequential the existence or phasing out of the TES phenomenon.

The Model of TES Employment Contracting Behaviour

Extrapolation of the findings to the problem statement and research question gave rise to a model explaining TES contractual arrangements in a particular framework. The model tracks employee entry into the place of work, the applicable HRIR ethical frameworks at play, the conflict contractual motives culminating in different career outcomes referred to as The Captives (feeling trapped), The Go-

getters/transitionalists (stepping stones) , the Dead-setters (uncompromising) and the Radicals (hostile). Table 6 below provides the TES employment contracting model

Employees encounter a pre-determined or given reality framed around four pillars namely, the socio-economic environment, globalised business environment, business and HRM ethics, and legislative framework. Entry into the world of work takes place against a poor socio-economic environment with very few prospects for permanent employment, thereby using TES as forced entry vehicle into the world of work. Different employer organisations subscribe to different philosophical principles informing their outlook to the type of employment relationship established with employees. Conflicting motivational factors drive parties to adopt employment relationship arrangements resulting into relationship that could either be cordial or adversarial. The HR function occupies the middle arena; determining the final shape of remuneration and other conditions of service. Having entered the workplace with a set of expectations, TES employees soon experience inadequacies in terms of what they received in exchange for their work. Different TES employees attached different meanings to their situations, which in turn translate into different outcomes. The model represents an extension to job-seeking models such as the Motivator-hygiene theory of Frederick Herzberg (1960), the Sequential model of Soelberg's (1967) and the Integrative conceptual model of Van Hoyer, Van Hooft and Lievens (2009). The focal point of these three models is largely the pre-employment phase and therefore articulated little regarding on-the-job experiences of employees.

IMPLICATIONS

Regardless of whether employers are TES or client business, security and growth opportunities should be

Table 5: Categories of TES Orientation or Perception

| Orientation category | Underlying views |
|----------------------|---|
| TES realists | Atypical employment is the prevailing form of employment Embarking on strike action is risky for TES employees The job market is very tight for new job seekers |
| TES sceptics | Triangular employment relationships are exploitative in nature but Government and new legislation can improve the plight of TES employees Trade unions promote the interests of TES employees |
| TES cynics | Banning of TES will lead to an increase in unemployment TES firms create job opportunities |

Table 6: Model of TES Employment Contracting Behaviour

| Business and HRM ethics | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|-------------------------|-----|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Context | Entry into the job market | Ethical foundations of HRIR and Central element | Conflicting motivational factors | TES theme categories | HRM factors | TES employee perception | | Individual career classification | | |
| | | | | | | Good | Bad | | | |
| Socioeconomic environment |  Temporary Employment Service (atypical employment contracting) | Utility: Welfare or utility maximisation through cost-benefit analysis | Maximisation of profit vs decent work | Rejection of future role | Significance of work and work ethics | | X | The Captives | | |
| | | | | Profit-generating tool or exploitation | Universalism | | | | | |
| | | | | New job creation | Deferring insecurity and risk to employees | | | | | |
| | | Liberty: Negative right of freedom and liberty from non-interference through strong property rights | Implementation of compulsory overtime vs leisure time | Reverting to TES | Employee surveillance and control | | X | | The Go-getters/ Transitionalists | |
| | | Duty: Respect for human dignity through the Kantian categorical imperative | Prescriptive work rules vs consultative arrangements | Internal remedies | Consultation | | X | | | The Dead-setters |
| | | Fairness: Justice as liberty, equal opportunity and concern for the least well-off through the veil of ignorance and the difference principle | Prioritise business efficiency issues vs opportunities for personal growth | Platform for career change | Justice | X | X | | | |
| | | | | Responsibility status | Social and organizational justice | | X | | | |
| | | | | Service period | Basic human, civil and employment rights | X | X | The Radicals | | |
| | | Virtue: Moral character/goodness to achieve flourishing through virtues and community | Non-existence of coded ethical guidelines vs clarity of policy guidelines | Push factors | Equal opportunity and diversity | X | X | | | |
| | | | | Internal remedies | | | X | | | |
| Care: Nurturing personal relationships through caring for people | Establishing work relationships based on exploitation vs constructive work relationships | Stricter regulation | Social welfare Community of purpose | | X | | | | | |
| | | Profit-generating tool or exploitation | | | | | | | | |
| Globalised business environment | | | | | | | | | | |
| Legislative framework | | | | | | | | | | |

Source: Authors' Fieldwork.

awarded to TES employees; improving their role from limited contracts duration. Employment relations and business ethics should be upheld. Current human resource management function should move from

control mode to advocacy stance and thereby bridge the divide between management and employees. The common thread running through both Western and non-Western ethical principles is that undue risks

should not be deferred to employees. Policy makers should select the measures in the new labour dispensation to reflect the preferences of all affected by TES. From the study's conceptual framework, it is clear that no employee adopted a TES job as a professional trajectory. Therefore, HR managers should establish measures, based on ethical HRM principles, to accelerate the transition to permanent employment status. Such measures would reduce the incidence of employees alternating between TES employment and unemployment. Although recent legislative amendments in South Africa addressed some employment insecurities, which was identified as first order constructs, arguments still persists from organised labour for total ban on TES. South Africa as a signatory and strong member of the ILO should indeed be ahead of other countries in terms of regulating TES.

RECOMMENDATIONS

More research is required to understand the work-life experiences of vulnerable employees. In particular, the following should receive attention: Primarily, there is a need to verify and refine the substantive theory of TES, by exploring the views of TES firms and business organisations on their experience in triangular employment arrangements. In terms of closing the wage gap, there is a need to investigate the level at which to peg the minimum wage level and what mitigating steps could be taken to support small business. In addition, there is a need to introduce mechanisms that helps to convert workplaces into both income generating and skills transfer environments. More than that, it is necessary to articulate corrective mechanisms to deal with the management of TES employees. It is also imperative to explore the efficacy of current policy interventions in triangular employment relationships. In addition, TES firms and senior managers of business organisations, need to pay more attention to concerns raised by TES employees, regarding issues of employment insecurities affecting the employees, proposals for improving the quality of work life, the role that regulatory bodies could play in shaping a mutually-beneficial relationship between parties within a triangular employment relationship, by incorporating the above mentioned ethical principles in the respective workplaces.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the fact that global efforts to define and measure informal employment remain unresolved

it is likely to impact negatively on efforts to formulate joint strategies aimed at mitigating the effect of atypical employment. Meanwhile the increase in technological innovation is likely to drive more employees into the informal employment pattern. While the European Union is taking definitive steps to mitigate the negative effects of atypical employment, similar intervention strategies appear to be remote in Africa. It would seem that the poor state of the economies in the developing countries is bedevilling the efforts of policy intervention in the area of atypical employment. Overall, the literatures have highlighted the fact that precarious employment relations invariably accompany accelerated technological innovations. It would appear to be a standard norm, that as economies develop technologically, with some segments of society lifted out of poverty, it is essential to adopt protective measures to cushion the negative effects of such new technological advancements in the work environment. The contrasting benefits of globalisation are bound to increase the debates on appropriate models of economic growth. Sovereign states have to make difficult choices between the pursuit of decent jobs, on the one hand, and other alternative by monitoring job patterns.

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