Tell Me Your Story:

Trialling The Sensemaker Methodology To Conceptualise Precarious Work Among Employed Individuals In South Africa

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Abstract

Although precarious work is not a new phenomenon, birthed out of the development of paid employment in the 19th century (Kalleberg, 2009), a steady rise in precarious working arrangements has become cause for concern, due to its many adverse consequences. The aim of this dissertation is to evaluate whether The Work Precarity Framework and the Psychology of Working Theory reflect the experiences of precarious workers in South Africa. This study used the SenseMaker tool to collect data and the SenseMaker methodology to guide the research process. Data was collected by 15 data capturers after they had been trained in how to use the data collection tool. A total of 204 working individuals residing in Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain in Cape Town narrated a story related to the question: "Tell me a story about your work which made you feel really bad or really good." and interpreted their narrative on dimensions presented to them. Results indicate that experiences associated with precarious work are closely related to poor working conditions which manifest in feelings of anger, resentment, poor well-being and reduced satisfaction and commitment to their jobs. Other consequences include feelings of marginalization, including discrimination and inequality. The results of this study therefore indicate the importance of limiting exposure to precarious working conditions to improve people's lives at work and outside of work because of the deeply interwoven relationship between life and work. Contextual factors, such as the ability to meet basic survival needs, such as taking care of their families, influence whether participants are able to cope with precarious working conditions. Although the results from this study show that the Work Precarity Framework and Psychology of Working Theory capture a significant number of experiences of precarity in South Africa, specific contextual factors including positive attitudes and behavioural outcomes despite precarity are not adequately captured by the theories. These theories can therefore be said to lack the cultural and contextual nuances which would enable them to adequately account for all experiences of precarious work in South Africa.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Although precarious work is not a new phenomenon, birthed out of the development of paid employment in the 19th century (Kalleberg, 2009), a steady rise in precarious work arrangements has become a cause for concern due to its many adverse effects. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines *precarious work* as providing low remuneration, working hours, or security compared to a regular job (ILO, 2012). Expressly, precarious work is typically framed in standard versus non-standard working arrangements. The standard employment relationship includes elements such as full-time, stable, and long-term employment with a single employer and access to social security, such as unemployment benefits (Vosko, 2011). This standard employment relationship implies that precarious work is a marginal phenomenon, with much of the working population experiencing standard forms of work. The prevailing definition of precarious work based on research in so-called developed countries[1] has left researchers questioning whether the concept in its current form adequately captures precarious work in the Global South (Betti, 2018; Munck, 2013). However, precarious work has become a consistent and widespread feature of working arrangements worldwide, specifically in the Global South, where it tends to be the norm, developing into a natural element of work (Munck, 2013). Kalleberg and Vallas (2018), therefore, criticise the precarious work concept for embodying an archaic, traditional form of working arrangements that excludes the differences in the development of work in the Global North and Global South. As such, the understanding of and research on precarious work has been conceptualised from a developed, capitalist nations' lens, with little consideration that contexts differ in the developing

[1] Within the context of this dissertation, the terms Global North and Global South are used to differentiate between countries with differing socio-economic and political characteristics. The Global North refers to wealthier countries located in the Northern hemisphere of the globe, with the addition of New Zealand and Australia (Morazes & Pintak, 2007). The Global South, on the other hand, refers to those nations which are poorer and located in the Southern hemisphere and tropical regions of the world. Both terms are used interchangeably with the terms 'developed' and 'developing' nations (Morazes & Pintak, 2007). It should, however, be noted that these definitions require further refining as they use simplistic assumptions of geography and inequality. It is important to acknowledge the individualized power dynamics of countries within these regions, which these definitions universalize to provide a generalized view of politics, economic and historical background.

world. This lens simplistically assumes the history and experiences of workers in the North and South to be equal.

While it is true that there are precarious working situations in developed countries, literature has long ignored the more extensive and pervasive history of precarious work in the Global South, creating a skewed set of results that only depict the experiences of less than half of the working population (Scully, 2012). Scully (2016) points out that contemporary studies of precarious work provide Eurocentric examples that reflect Northern perspectives of working conditions because they depict precarious work as a consequence of neoliberalism. This creates a narrative that implies that work was stable preceding this global development, with precarious work only becoming pervasive post-globalisation. This obscures the experiences and understanding of precarious work in the Global South as it fails to account for the deeply rooted history of precarious work in the Global South, which arose out of colonialism, marginalisation, discrimination, and, in South Africa, also from apartheid. This history is closely related to how work developed and how people in this region likely experience it. However, accounts of the lived experiences of people in the Global South need to be included in academic work on precarious work. Capturing these experiences would make it possible to develop a more nuanced and diverse understanding of precarious work. This is the purpose of the study described in this dissertation.

1.1. Research Rationale and Objectives

The study of precarious work and subsequent theories have predominantly been developed from a Northern lens, with the Northern context in mind. Subsequently, due to the skewed understanding of precarious work in the Global South and the limited application of existing theories within this region, it is unclear whether these theories are applicable in the Global South. This study, therefore, aims to understand whether the current theory adequately captures the experiences associated with precarious work in South Africa. Consequently, the outcomes of this study should expose the utility and effectiveness of existing theories' ability to adequately capture the experiences of precarious work in the Global South. In addition, this study brings these experiences to light using a psychological perspective of precarious work, which was historically dominated by the fields of economics and sociology. Although the term *precarious work* has not typically appeared in Organisational Psychology research, its fundamental characteristics of job insecurity and uncertainty have been vital research areas within Organisational Psychology (Allan et al., 2021). The forthcoming book in Routledge's Organizational Frontiers Series titled *Tackling Precarious Work,* co-edited by work psychologist Stuart Carr (with Veronica Hopner and Darrin Hodgetts) further indicates that the topic has started receiving attention in Organisational Psychology circles. As such, the

objective of this study further aims to contribute to the literature on precarious work by linking it to the psychological discipline through a psychological framework of work precarity to provide a thorough understanding of individuals' experiences of precarious work across contexts.

1.2. Research question

Do existing theories of precarious work reflect the experiences of precarious workers in South Africa?

1.3. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research problem, rationale, and research question that the study presented in this dissertation aims to address. The subsequent chapter describes the development of precarious work as a concept, the ambiguity surrounding the definition of the concept, an outline of existing research on precarious work in South Africa, and the theoretical frameworks of precarious work. With this information, the literature review aims to provide an overview of how the concept was popularised and whether precarious work and its theories are relevant to the Global South. This is followed by the Methods chapter (Chapter 3), in which a detailed overview of the SenseMaker methodology which informed the empirical aspect of the study and the SenseMaker tool through which data was collected. SenseMaker was utilised in this study to surface and analyse individuals' work experiences. The results are presented and discussed in a joint Results and Discussion chapter, which outlines the predominant themes which emerged from the data to demonstrate whether the theories of precarious work adequately captured the South African experiences of precarity (Chapter 4). The dissertation ends with an overarching Conclusion in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

In order to understand whether existing theories of precarious work are applicable and relevant in the Global South, the literature review starts with an overview of the history of precarious work, followed by an evaluation of precarious work definitions. The precarious work situation in South Africa is outlined, as well as the two psychological models of precarious work upon which this study is based, namely The Work Precarity Theory (Allan et al., 2021) and the Psychology of Working Theory (Duffy et al., 2016). These sections provide a roadmap of the literature, outlining how and by whom the concept of precarious work was popularized and whether its development is likely to hold relevance in Global South contexts.

2.1 The Development of the Precarious Work Concept

In order to understand what the concept of precarious work is and why this thesis seeks to evaluate its theoretical relevance in the Global South, it is helpful to understand how and why the term developed. As early as 1840, works by philosophers such as Fredrich Engels' 'Condition of the working class in England' (1845) and Karl Marx's 'Das Kapital' used the term to describe the outcomes of political systems, namely communism and socialism, which were at the fore of political debate at the time (Betti, 2018). Nevertheless, even in these early accounts, a Eurocentric perspective on the concept was evident through their singular focus on the precarious working and living conditions of the people in Britain and later Europe and America. As such, understanding the development of the concept from its inception provides insight into whether the theories that evolved from this concept have relevance for the Global South. Thus, investigating the genealogy of the term exposes for whom and by whom the concept was developed, bringing to light whether it represents a global perspective inclusive of the Global South.

Even though precarious work was referred to by several economists, politicians, and social scientists as early as 1840, the concept became more widely used from the 1970s onwards, as the term was conceptualised in light of developments in Western Labour markets (Betti, 2018). At this time, labour markets in Western Europe, China, Japan and the United States transitioned into the post-Fordist, neo-liberal era. Flexible labour arrangements became regarded as positive developments as they were assumed to increase employment and business competitiveness (Betti, 2018). It marked the end of the form of capitalism which had characterised Europe and North America after the Second World War, in which standard work

had been the norm (Mosoetsa et al., 2016). Though ‘standard work’ started declining in favour of new forms of work, now known as precarious work, the International Labour Organization (ILO) continued and continues to promote the post-war, full-employment, welfare-state model, which views standard employment as the conventional way of working (ILO, 2012).

In the neoliberal era, the term informal work gained traction. It was often used synonymously with precarious work (Munck, 2013). In the North, informal or precarious work commonly described work in the informal sector, creating the concept of a dual economy: the formal and the informal. The informal sector describes workers who work outside the formal capitalist system, including individuals who are not recorded as working members of the state and, therefore, not protected by labour law (Kenny, 2016). It can include work in small-scale manufacturing, retail, and domestic work, as well as illegal activities which exist outside of labour, tax, and contract law (Munck, 2013). Yet, as much as it was seen as the less common way of working, informal work became the norm in the North in some industries in the 1980s and 1990s. It is frequently applied to work in the creative field, including artists, musicians, architects, and software developers. The rise in informal and precarious work was facilitated by the decentralisation of industrial work, the spread of sub-contractors and undocumented workers, and the new ‘gig economy’ (Betti, 2018). In the North, informal work was seen as a new means of economic development born out of a globalised era, albeit unwelcome by some economists.

Even in the Global North, standard work arrangements were not universal before the 1970s. The so-called new development of precarious work, encompassing aspects of informality and flexibility, had already been experienced by women and ethnic minorities. Poorly regulated work, unprotected jobs, and insufficient pay have been the norm for ethnic minorities and women throughout history, but significantly so during the Fordist era (Betti, 2018). Not only does this demonstrate the gendered and ethnic lines across which the history of work has been portrayed in the global North, but it also shows that the precarious work concept predominantly concerned and essentially captured the experiences of the white male working class (Agarwala, 2018).

In the global South, workers often employed mixed livelihood strategies, relying on non-wage income such as subsistence farming and informal trading to substitute wages under the Fordist era of little social protection and legal rights (Scully, 2016). Precarious work in the South is therefore closely linked with the structural and systemic historical experiences of low- and middle-income countries. This contrasts with the economic development, access to state benefits and equal distribution of wealth that the North was privileged to in the 20th century and remains today.

Against this background, it is essential to critique the idea that precarity developed as something new in contrast to standard forms of work. The Northern perspective of precarity

as a new developmental state which ebbs and flows with the economic cycle applies to the working population of only a small number of societies. Rather than being the norm, Fordism was the exception and never the standard in colonised countries, neither during nor post-colonialism (Munck, 2013). In Southern countries, precarious work depicts the type of work-for-pay, which has always been the norm and thus an established characteristic of the Southern world of work. This is an important distinction as precarious work has been presented as a new concept established as a result of the significant effect of Fordism on the world of work (Scully, 2016). However, as Fordism was never a mainstream experience in the Global South, precariousness was, implying that there was no significant loss of working experience in the Global South that the North seemed to have experienced as a consequence (Munck, et al., 2020).

An example of how incorrectly considering precarious work as a new development can shape viewpoints can be seen in Guy Standing's (2011) book 'The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class', which Google Scholar recorded as having been cited 10,477 times on 11 January 2023. In it, Standing defined the precariat as a new class in the making, in which people have no long-term employment prospects and insecure working situations. Standing defines members of this social category as those who lack employment, access to jobs and work, skills, and income security. Munck (2013) points out several flaws in Standing's argument. First, it is incorrect to characterise the precariat as a new class. Standing ignores that this form of work has been the norm in most societies since the advent of paid work. Indeed, the empirical reference points Standing uses to conclude the global precariat are based entirely on the United Kingdom's political and economic developments, ignoring any other part of the world, including the Global South. For this reason, Munck (2013) further argues that Standing's definition of precarious work is overly simplistic because it is void of the nuances and historical significance of work in other parts of the world, specifically the Global South, producing yet another colonising concept.

Although Standing's (2011) work is an extreme example of the inaccuracies that evolve when a narrow-minded and, consequently, Northern-centric approach is used to develop a concept, this viewpoint seems to have become the norm. However, considering how the development of precarious work is not an all-encompassing and world-representative concept, only including the so-called 'new' development of the concept in the North, it highlights its skewed relevance for the South. This brings into question whether the development of the concept is skewed to a Northern outlook and whether the term itself is relevant for other regions in the world. Consequently, the definition of precarious work is discussed in the following section to determine whether it adequately captures the essence of precarious work that has always been experienced in the South.

2.2 Defining Precarious Work

There needs to be more clarity and more consensus around the conceptualisation of precarious work. Currently, three main definitions have widely been applied in work on this topic. Standing's (2011) definition of precarious work defines it as a 'new' and 'dangerous' class in the making that is forced to accept unstable and temporary work with no work identity or direction. Specifically, Standing characterises this as a 'new class', which demonstrates deprivation and feelings of dissonance from the traditional or standard work arrangements (Standing, 2011). Standing includes seven characteristics of insecurity, including earning insufficient income, labour law insecurity, job insecurity in being able to keep one's job, work security to work in conditions which allow for adequate workplace health and safety, opportunities to grow and learn new skills, access to collective bargaining associations and access to job opportunities. Several scholars critique Standing's definition as overly simplistic as it is limited to the seven aforementioned characteristics of insecurity (Standing, 2011). Moreover, Standing's assertion that the precariat is a 'new class in the making' has also been challenged due to its lack of evidence which demonstrates how the precariat can be considered a class on its own (Betti, 2018; Munck, 2013; Scully, 2016;). Lastly, Standing's definition is centred on the British working experience, with little reference to other Northern nations, specifically any countries outside of Europe or Britain, limiting its usefulness outside of the Northern context.

Cranford et al. (2003) define *precarious work* as work which does not include certainty of the continuation of employment, autonomy at work, protection by the law and adequate income. The problem with this definition is that it is broad and unclear because these four criteria can be interpreted in various ways. Kalleberg and Vallas (2018), on the other hand, define *precarious work* as work that is uncertain, unstable, and insecure and in which employees receive little or no workplace protection or support from employers. Although scholars widely used by scholars, it is even more vague than Cranford et al. (2003) because of its lack of specificity (Allan et al., 2021; Munck, 2013; Mosoetsa et al., 2016;).

The ILO adds to these definitions by defining *precarious work* as that which provides low remuneration (payment below a living wage, that is, a wage level which allows people not only to meet their basic needs but maintain a decent standard of living), long working hours (working more than the legal hours, without overtime pay), and job security (securing employment with the unlikelihood of losing the job), compared to a regular job or standard employment (ILO, 2012). All four definitions share that precarious work is 'bad', non-standard work. This implies that standard work is employment which abides by the law, pays enough for an individual to live, provides legal protection for employees and is not inherently unstable. According to Kalleberg and Hewison (2012), standard work is work with stable employment

structures established by an employer. These must include regular working hours, sufficient remuneration and conventional benefits. In contrast, precarious work includes, but is not limited to, agency work, temporary work, contract work, casual or on-call work, seasonal work, homework, self-employment, and part-time work (ILO, 2012).

A critique of all four definitions is that they define precarious work compared to the Northern developed definition of standard work, implying that standard work is the ideal that should be aspired to and, therefore, the solution to precarious work. This creates a set of restrictive definitions which are closed off to other, perhaps more realistic, or novel ways of work that can be experienced. Therefore, not only do these definitions create a set of relational standards which hinge on a form of work which is present in less than half of the world and which was developed with a specific context in mind, it brings into question whether any of these definitions suit the context of the Global South where standard working arrangements are the exception, not the norm (Agarwala, 2018). Perhaps the solution is for the definition of precarious work to be void of any relational aspect to standard work, to create an inclusive definition of precarious work open to other, more novel ideas of work (Scully, 2016). Consequently, the evidence presented above demonstrates that the existing definitions of precarious work are void of a comprehensive understanding of precarious work, specifically relating to precarious work experiences in the Global South. This imposes an ideal of work that may not be best suited to or experienced by the Global South.

Based on the above definitions, precarious work can take many forms. It includes flexible, casual, and informal work but is more encompassing than these types of work and thus not synonymous with either. Although none of the above definitions truly encompasses precarious work in the Global South, these conceptualisations of the concept are currently the best representation of precarious work. Therefore, this study combines elements of both Kalleberg and Cranford's definitions as they are broad enough to encompass aspects of insecurity that are not explicitly mentioned in these definitions, however, which may be present in the global South. For this study, *precarious work* can therefore be defined as work which comprises six characteristics:

1. A lack of certainty around the continuation of employment,
2. Unstable and insecure employment,
3. Employees lack control over the work process,
4. A lack of regulatory protection,
5. A lack of support from employers,
6. Insufficient income to meet needs.

This definition thus includes objective characteristics of precarious work. From a psychological lens, however, it would matter less what the job objectively looks like, but how incumbents perceive their work, in other words, their subjective experiences

Some scholars have posed that whether or not work is precarious – and to what degree - does not only depend on objective characteristics, such as whether the amount of pay is above or below a level deemed adequate but also on subjective work experiences, such as whether an individual perceives being treated fairly at work. Subjective work precarity, or perceived job precariousness, considers the individual experiences of working conditions and their impact on other areas of life (Allan et al., 2021). The definitions presented above focused on the objective indicators of precarious work, i.e. insufficient legal protection, low or minimum wages, minimal employee autonomy over working hours, poor working conditions, and job insecurity (Campbell & Price, 2016). This section argues how proponents of subjective definitions, like Campbell and Price (2016) and Clement et al. (2009), may have varying subjective perspectives of an objectively defined 'bad job', and those objective assessments of job precarity thus provide little benefit.

By including working individuals' subjective experiences of their work in assessing work precarity, researchers acknowledge that work precarity is linked to and dependent on the social contexts in which individuals find themselves. These social systems can either worsen or minimise the effects of objective indicators of precarious work, affecting the subjective experiences of objectively defined jobs (Campbell & Price, 2016).

Campbell and Price (2016) draw on the example of Australian high school students who work part-time to explain why it is crucial to consider subjective assessments of work precariousness. Students who participated in their study were employed in the retail sector. Their work required students to stack shelves, work behind the teller, or do general work in stores. Although such retail jobs are typically described as precarious as poor wages characterise them, high employee turnover and limited employee control over working conditions, wages, and working hours, these students did not view their work as precarious. This was primarily due to contextual factors that would mitigate the adverse effects if students lost their job, such as access to alternative income opportunities and limited impact of job loss on their ability to provide for themselves. Therefore, although the objective indicators of precarious work are widely accepted, the subjective experiences of individuals situated in specific contexts affect the impact of job precariousness and how it is experienced.

2.3 Precarious Work in South Africa

The history of work in South Africa mirrors work in other countries in the Global South but is also influenced by the apartheid system. In South Africa, labour regulation and rights

are rooted in socially constructed meanings of race, gender, and skill (Kenny, 2016; Makhulu, 2010). Therefore, South Africa's labour history is rife with exclusions and marginalisation: 'standard' employment agreements were reserved for white men. Although white women's work was protected under the law during apartheid, their labour participation was still regarded as inferior and a short-term bridge while they waited for marriage (Kenny, 2016). The precariousness of labour was, therefore, a central strategy to provide cheap labour throughout history, remiss of fundamental worker rights and adequate working conditions, membership to trade unions and a standard employment contract.

In both colonial and apartheid South Africa, employment structures acted as a means to create economic and political marginalisation. The post-apartheid governance structure brought a sense of hopefulness for adequate rights in the workplace through a better constitution and new labour law (Kenny, 2016). Barchiesi (2008) and Al-Bulushi (2013) argued, however, that the economic and political liberalisation that South Africa adopted after apartheid ended, questions the hope of social and wage labour emancipation. It only moderately improved casual employment, joblessness, and workplace rights. In fact, South Africa has experienced an increase in unemployment and flexible jobs (Mahadea & Kaseeram, 2018). Even job opportunities created by the government are characterised by precarious working conditions (Scully & Moyo, 2021). Some government initiatives even created job opportunities with conditions below the legal standards. When the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) was established in 2003, for example, it promised: "more jobs, better jobs and decent work for all" (Growth and Development Summit Agreement, 2003). Job opportunities in the EPWP are only temporary; however, they are paid below minimum wage and exempted from the national Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) to disincentivise workers from leaving other jobs to enter the programme (Scully & Moyo, 2021).

Even though, by objective standards, most jobs in South Africa would be considered precarious even today, Barchiesi's (2008) findings indicated that workers in South Africa do not automatically view their employment situations as precarious. In Western literature, this is typically described as a sign that individuals have lost hope and are feeling disempowered (Fabrellas, 2019; Padrosa et al., 2020). It is also possible to see the increased casualisation and popularity of informal work in a more positive light, though: such work can provide a means to additional and alternative sources of income in order to support low wages obtained in formal employment, and thus increase individuals' agency and empowerment (Barchiesi, 2008). The degree to which this might be the case depends on contextual factors: where there is no social security net which ensures individuals' survival even without income through work, agency and empowerment derived from precarious work might be lower than in contexts where individuals' survival is secured.

While in the Global North, income through work with government-provided support has been considered when assessing individuals' economic sustainability. However, people in the Global South also rely on other social networks to substitute their livelihoods, particularly in South Africa (Scully, 2016). Smit and Rugunanan's (2014) and Jinnah's (2020) qualitative studies show that at least for refugees and immigrants in South Africa, precarity arising from informal work does not provide agency and empowerment. Instead, all participants reflected feelings of despair and hopelessness in securing stable employment. Although, it should be noted that the work experiences of refugees and immigrants differ from those of South African nationals because a certain level of state-provided security still exists for South Africans. Scully reported in 2016 that government grants, such as payments made in case of disability, unemployment or childcare, constituted the largest share of the household income for 25% of precarious workers. This data indicates that a substantive proportion of precarious workers depend on alternative sources of income to contribute towards their cost of living, demonstrating that grants are an integral part of South Africa's social welfare system. This may account for why immigrants expressed less agency than their South African counterparts because they do not qualify for additional support from the government. Moreover, immigrants are also afforded limited choices because they have few job opportunities in the formal economy.

Some scholars argue the idea of a dual economy, one where the formal and informal economies coexist in mutually beneficial terms (Agarwala, 2018; Betti, 2018; Sigmann, 2016). Conceptually, this aligns with the experiences of work for the white male population versus the experiences of women and people of colour. The notion of a dual economy encourages capitalism because it encourages freedom to work; however, it turns a blind eye to the fact that this side of the economy is built on the exploitation of people and cheap labour along racial and gender lines. Standing's (2011) research in Soweto points to the mixed livelihood strategies that many employ, with even traditionally secure or non-precarious households having at least one member in a precarious form of employment. In reality, precarious workers, unemployed people and those in formal employment live and work together in an interdependent world of work (Scully, 2016). In South Africa, where state support is insufficient, incomes are often combined across a household to ensure individual and familial survival (Scully, 2016). A household may extend across geographical locations and beyond the nuclear family. Individuals in urban areas often send money to family members living in rural areas of the country (Barchiesi, 2008). However, for some, precarious livelihoods threaten the order of the household, which was traditionally based on the importance of the male breadwinner as the head of the household. Therefore, increased uncertainty and informality of work tend to heighten anxieties around social order and respect, which was built upon regular employment (Barchiesi, 2008). This perceived erosion of age and gender-based

power in the household poses a threat to the authority of masculinity in the workplace and community.

Although the research presented above paints an overview of the class, race, gender, and work structures in South African society, it may only be representative of some people's experiences. However, given the diverse work history, it would be impossible to accurately account for all South Africans' work experiences. For this reason, it is helpful to have a robust theory that accounts for most of the work experiences for people in the Global South. The following section will outline the current theoretical frameworks that exist to describe and conceptualise precarious work.

2.4. The Theory of Precarious Work as Theoretical Framework

Although precarious work studies have gained traction over recent years, empirically founded and tested theoretical models are scarce. Equally so, as outlined in Section 2.4, there is no authoritative definition of precarious work. This section aims to provide an overview and evaluation of the existing theories and provides substantiation for the use of The Work Precarity Framework (Allan et al., 2021) and the Psychology of Working Theory (Duffy et al., 2016) which will be used in this study to examine their relevance and effectiveness in capturing the experiences of precarious work in South Africa.

In the health sciences, Benach et al. (2014) and Bodin et al. (2020) proposed theoretical frameworks which aim to understand precarious work and its impact on health and quality of life. Their frameworks overlap significantly because they consider the precarious employment relationship a multidimensional construct. They assume that the more unfavourable employment conditions exist within the same job, the greater its precarity. Precarious conditions refer to income level, non-wage benefits, workplace rights, trade unionism and length and type of contract. Both Benach et al. (2014) and Bodin et al. (2020) proposed that economic, social, and political trends are antecedents to the degree and spread of precarious work in society as they all influence employment. On the other hand, dangerous, unfulfilling, and dissatisfying work are seen as potential consequences of precarious employment and not as characteristics of precarious work itself (Bodin et al., 2020). Instead of emphasising job insecurity as a defining characteristic of precarious work and, thereby, insecurity of life in general, Bodin et al. (2020) emphasise the contextual factors that worsen the precarious employment relationship.

Neither Bodin et al. (2020) nor Benach et al. (2014) clearly defined precarious work. Instead, their frameworks are heuristic process models which show the links between precarious work and health consequences. On the contrary, Allan et al. (2021) recently developed a theory of precarious work which outlines the antecedents and outcomes of

precarious work at the micro, meso and macro level perspectives and defined precarious work in detail. Moreover, unlike prior theories, Allan et al. (2021) account for social and economic marginalisation, as well as economic conditions and policies, which provide a more inclusive theory which might hold more relevance for the Global South. It is thus the theory that will be examined within this literature review and upon which the development of the testing tool is based in this study. This theory will therefore be used to evaluate whether it reflects the experiences of precarious work in South Africa. An overview of the framework is presented in the next section.

2.4.1. An Overview of Allan et al. (2021) Theory Of Work *Precarity*

Allan et al. (2021) developed a theory which differentiates between objective and subjective precarious work. This theory differentiates between the objective precarious work defined in section 2.4 from subjective experiences of work precarity or perceived job insecurity. Work precarity includes the psychological experiences of insecurity, instability and the lack of power related to work (Allan et al. 2021). Essentially, work precarity is the subjective experience of precarious work. Specifically, this theory categorises work precarity into three types: precarity of work, precarity at work and precarity from work. Each speaks to specific characteristics of the uncertainty and insecurity he assumes to characterise precarious jobs. The precarity of work relates to people's precarity around their occupational future and job continuity. Temporary work contracts, irregular working hours and pay, minimal workplace protections and limited organisational structures cause precarity of work (Allan et al.2021). Moreover, insufficient remuneration and job insecurity hinder people's ability to plan for the future due to unstable employment and inconsistent income (Seubert et al., 2019). Notably, the precarity of work is related to uncertainty about how people's livelihoods will continue and the difficulties associated with finding new employment and coping with job loss (Kalleberg, 2009).

Precarity at work relates to individuals' subjective experiences of the workplace itself. Precarious workers are more likely to experience workplace hazards, including physically dangerous conditions, harassment, racism, and discrimination (Allan et al., 2021). Therefore, precarity at work not only relates to physical safety but also to psychosocial workplace safety. Importantly, exposure to work environments which do not promote physical and psychological safety and inclusion may result in fear and job-related stress.

Precarity from work relates to how precarious jobs affect other aspects of life, such as providing for oneself and one's family and fulfilling basic needs such as food security, shelter and maintaining relationships with others (Allan et al., 2021). Secure and stable work provides people with the resources to satisfy basic life needs such as a steady income, the ability to

participate in society in an economic and social capacity and a sense of purpose (Allan et al., 2021). However, although individuals may have a stable and secure job, it should be noted that they may still experience precarity from work if their job does not provide them with a wage level which enables them to take care of themselves. Therefore, individuals may still experience precarity from work even if they do not experience precarity of work.

2.4.1.1. Outcomes of Precarious Work

Allan et al. (2021) highlighted that the three types of work precarity should not be viewed in isolation, but as interacting. Together, they are assumed to lead to specific negative consequences. Not being able to plan into the future, for example, is a key source of stress which manifests in adverse consequences at the individual level but also at the organizational and societal level. Although this lends itself more towards a Northern assumption as South Africans demonstrate a short-term orientation rather than to engage in long-term planning, this might be as a result of not being able to plan. Moreover, as previously mentioned, the consequences of precarious work may vary according to class, gender, race, and context, and should be considered with these identities in mind (Allan et al., 2021). These consequences are particularly prevalent and more negatively affect marginalized and low-income individuals (Pugh, 2015). Poverty and marginalization inherently impede an individual's ability to respond to life demands such as taking care of and providing for family. Thus, if resources to cope with the outcomes of precarious work are scarce, it worsens the strain of precarious work on individuals. This inability to cope with life pressures also affects work itself and the ability to find another job, contributing to a cycle of only accessing precarious working situations (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018).

Precarity is likely to affect various aspects, including, but not limited to, job attitudes, behaviours, employee identity and employee health and wellness (Allan et al., 2021; Wilson & Erbert, 2013). However, the consequences of precarious work could encompass far more than the Work Precarity framework presents as not all possible outcomes have been investigated thus far. Poor employee attitudes, such as disengagement, may result in deviant workplace behaviours which might, in fact, be a behaviour-based strategy to deal with the uncertainty and inconsistency of work (Greenhalgh, 1979). Precarious jobs may make it difficult to integrate into the workplace resulting in social isolation (Seubert, Hopfgartner and Glaser, 2019). This may also adversely affect the health and well-being of employees and result in unfavourable workplace behaviour (Seubert, Hopfgartner & Glaser, 2019). Moreover, characteristics of precarious work, such as job insecurity, are negatively associated with job satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment (Allan et al., 2021: Guarnaccia et al., 2016). Employees are less likely to commit to their job and organization due to the

unpredictable future in their job roles, leading to poor performance in the job role. Additionally, job insecurity is positively related to turnover indentations and withdrawal intentions.

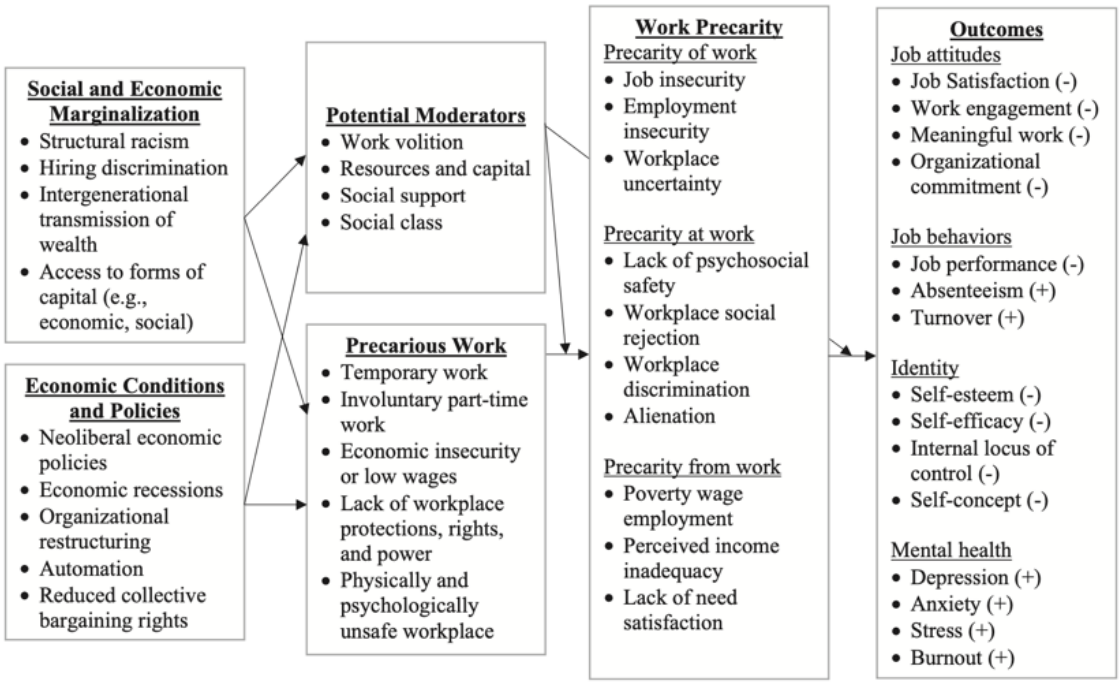
The experiences and consequences of precarious work also vary according to demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and race (Allan et al., 2021). Although the workforce has become more inclusive of women, precarious work more adversely affects women due to the additional roles which many women carry, namely caring for children and/or other family members. Pugh (2015), for example, found that, females in precarious work tend to have too few resources to support both home and work-life, resulting in a detached attitude in the workplace and at home. Therefore, even as women can participate more in the labour force, precarious working situations make it difficult, especially for women, to participate in other areas of life. Importantly, in the absence of public policies which promote childcare and family leave, women may be forced to stay in precarious working situations as precarious work does not allow for childcare due to insufficient income or conditions related to work.

There has been little attention in research on whether members of different racial groups experience precarious work differently. This is likely to be the case as it is evident that racial discrimination exists in workplaces (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018). People of colour and ethnic minorities have historically also been overrepresented in jobs which include little job security or workplace protection, two prominent features of precarious work. Existing literature predominantly frames precarious work experiences in a way that only reflects the white male experience (Agwarwalla, 2018). In South Africa, specifically, both during the apartheid era, the race system influenced the security and stability of work for people of colour, influencing the experiences of work for a whole demographic of people which is typically undocumented. Therefore, there is a need to understand the different experiences of precarious work for people of colour. Additionally, Kalleberg and Vallas (2018) pointed out that individuals of different ages are also likely to experience precarious work differently. The lack of work-related experience among young people enables organisations to exploit them as a convenient source of low-paid labour. Lastly, precarious work also hinders young people's ability to plan for their future, resulting in a young workforce who lives hand-to-mouth (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018). The consequences of precarious work are therefore contingent on people's identities, emphasizing the importance of varied cohorts' experiences of precarious work.

Finally, the consequences of precarious work including job attitudes, job behaviours and the effects on people's various identities have significant effects for employee health, specifically mental wellbeing (Seubert, Hopfgartner & Glaser, 2021). The consequences of precarious work, including persistent stress related to uncertainty and inconsistency may reduce workers' mental health (Allan et al., 2021). Work precarity is known to be associated with increased burnout, depression, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, as well as to decrease both job and life satisfaction. Individuals' identities, in turn, affect how well they are able to

cope with poor well-being. A summarising schematic overview of the Theory of Work Precarity is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Schematic Overview of Allan et al. (2021) Theory of Work Precarity as presented in Source (Allan et al., 2021, p.5)



Psychology of Working Theory

The discussion of the Precarious Work Framework above demonstrates its usefulness because it speaks directly to precarious work experiences, characteristics, and consequences. This is important for the current study because it aims to examine whether this theory captures all precarious work experiences, even in a different context in which it was developed, like South Africa. Another theory which is useful to understand the psychology of precarious work is Duffy et al. (2016) Decent Work Theory.

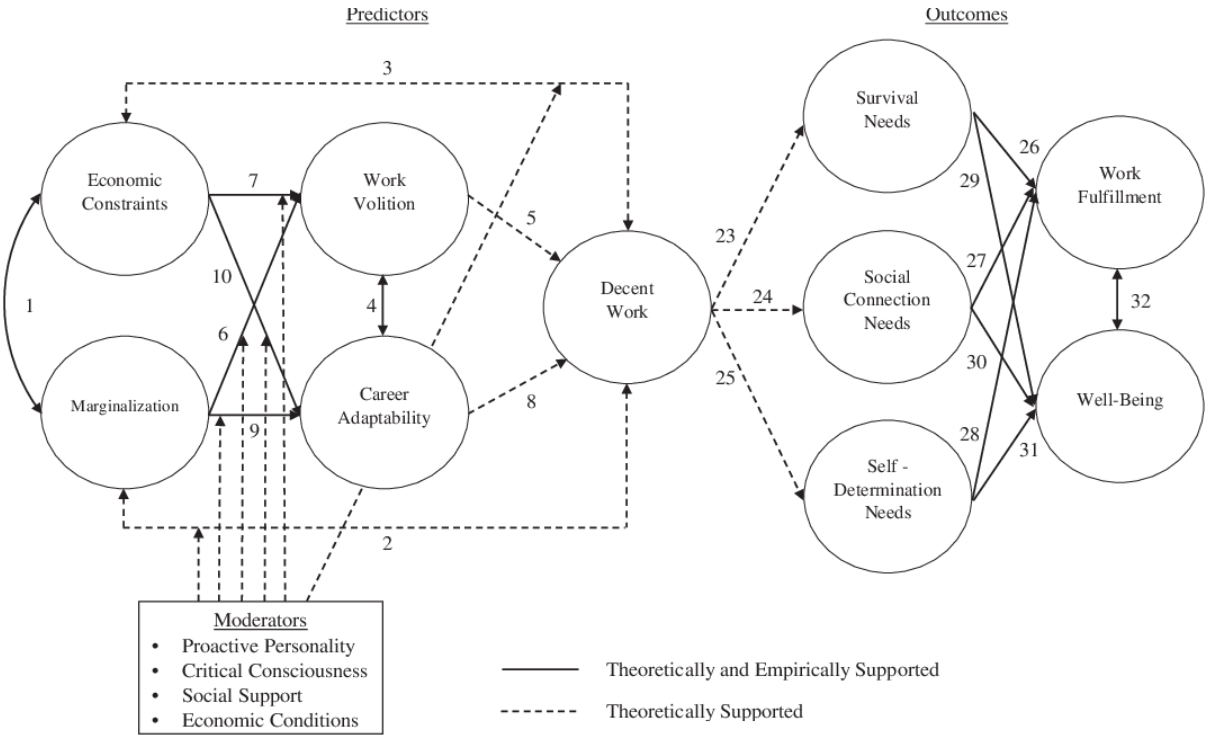
Aligned to the definition of precarious work as not standard work, precarious work would be considered as work that is not decent. The Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) explains how external factors may affect an individual's ability to exercise control over their working arrangements as well as how they can cope, affecting their ability to obtain decent work (Duffy et al., 2016). Decent work consists of a safe workplace, working hours which allow adequate time for rest and other life activities, organisational values which align with social and individual values, sufficient income, and access to healthcare (Duffy et al., 2016). Work is decent when all these characteristics are experienced, enabling individuals to meet their life

needs, causing less psychological stress, and improving overall well-being (Duffy et al., 2016). Decent work can be seen as the inverse of precarious work.

Moreover, a crucial element of the Psychology of Working Theory is its emphasis on the contextual characteristics which provide the attainment of decent work. These characteristics, including marginalisation and economic constraints, which act as hindrances of decent work, are mentioned as potential causes of precarious work, as shown in Figure 1 above. The Psychology of Working Theory integrates these broader social and other contextual factors with the individual focus of traditional psychology theories. It, therefore, provides a holistic view of working, carefully considering the social, economic, historical and political factors which shape working for people. Given the South African context in which this study is conducted, it is crucial to adopt a critical lens which specifically aims to capture the predominant experiences of the population, which bear a resemblance to the experiences captured by the PWT. This study, therefore, employs a combined approach, using both the Precarious Work Framework and the PWT to ensure a greater scope of experiences can be captured and understood.

The Psychology of Working Theory is, therefore, an appropriate addition to this study as it identifies the inverse of precarious working situations and has been developed with a critical lens, aiming to consider the experiences of all people, particularly those near the poverty line, marginalised and discriminated groups, as well as people who face difficulties with work due to contextual factors. A summary of the PWT is provided in diagram 2.

Figure 2: A Schematic Overview of Duffy et al. (2016) Psychology of Working Theory as presented in Duffy et al. (2016, 129).



2.5. Conclusion

This chapter provided a succinct, yet comprehensive summary on the information that currently exists on precarious work with a specific focus on work which considers the psychology of precarious work. The literature review pointed to the problematic that the term *precarious work* referred to changes in the nature of employment in the Global North since the 1970s but is also used to describe working conditions in the Global South which did not experience this shift and where individuals' experiences were thus shaped differently. It provided a critique of the existing Northern and narrow definitions of precarious work, but also emphasized the importance to consider the subjectivity in how precarious work is experienced. Allan et al.'s (2021) PWF and Duffy et al.'s (2016) PWT were outlined as theoretical models which consider the subjective aspects related to precarious work and relevant context factors. However, both of these were developed in a Global North context. Whether they account for the work experiences of South Africans remains unknown and was to be explored through the empirical data collected for this dissertation. The following chapter outlines the Methods used to do so.

Chapter 3:
Method

The following chapter outlines the research design employed in this study. This includes an overview of the SenseMaking methodology and SenseMaker as a tool for collecting and analysing the data. Thereafter, the data collection process and a description of the sampling technique and sample are outlined.

2.4. Research Design

The research design of this study was chosen considering the study purpose and research question. This study aimed to examine whether the existing theories of precarious work reflect the experiences of precarious workers in South Africa. Therefore, this study employed an exploratory research approach to seeking new insights (Rahi, 2017). For this, Snowden's (2005) sensemaking approach formed the basis as it allows for exploring social patterns (Van der Merwe et al., 2019). It allows for an abductive approach in that it measures beyond what the researcher assumes to already know about the phenomenon. The affiliated SenseMaker tool involves an unconventional mixed-method approach to collecting data by gathering micro-narratives from participants, which are then quantitatively analysed by the participants in a sensemaking process. The two sections below describe the approach and instrument in more detail.

2.4.1. Snowden's (2005) Sensemaking Approach and The Cynefin Framework

Snowden (2005) perceives sensemaking as a cognitive process which unearths how people make sense of the world around them, informing behaviour by individuals and a social collective (Van der Merwe et al., 2019). He assumes that micro-narratives show how their narrators make sense of the world as they reflect patterns of complex social systems and phenomena. Specifically, these narratives are shaped by prevailing cultural norms, world experiences and values; thus, sensemaking is an interactive process which depends on the contextual factors within which the sensemakers find themselves (Wibeck & Linner, 2021).
Sensemaking is an integral approach in Snowden's (2005) Cynefin Framework, which he developed to identify contexts where a specific problem occurs as either obvious, complicated, complex, or chaotic. Identifying the nature of the context is important as it informs decision-makers about what suitable responses to address the problem might be. Sensemaking is seen as appropriate when problem contexts are complex and, by definition, unordered. In such contexts, sensemaking interacts with a larger system through "probing". Probing extracts micro-narratives from elements forming part of a complex social system. Micro-narratives

expose general truths in a community, making sensemaking a useful tool for researchers to understand complex social phenomena. Sensemaking is an abductive research approach to surface connections between systemic patterns and relationships to make meaning of social systems and inform social transformation (Van der Merwe et al., 2019). The response patterns identified inform suitable intervention strategies (Snowden, 2005). In essence, the Cynefin Framework aims to classify large-scale problems by finding patterns of issues that inform strategy and action on a macro level (Snowden, 2005).

2.4.2. Measuring Instrument: The SenseMaking Tool

SenseMaker is a software based on the Cynefin framework, originally developed as a mixed-method tool to inform organisational decision-making, functioning and policy-making (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003). The use of SenseMaker as a research tool is relatively new, though Van der Merwe et al. (2019) used it for academic research in a South African organisation and outlined its potential for this purpose. They concluded that SenseMaker could be used as a method for collective enquiry of greater viewpoints, understanding and experiences of society at large. To conduct research with the SenseMaker tool, the researcher needs to establish a signification framework. The Signification Framework underlies the SenseMaker research process because it forms the foundation of the researcher's exploration (Snowden, 2005). It consists of a set of quantitative questions of clarification related to micro-narratives provided by participants, which their narrators answer in what is called a self-signification process. These clarification questions are signifiers because they give meaning to and indicate the nuances of the participants' micro-narratives. Essentially, participants provide quantitative answers to the signifiers, which clarify the interpretation of micro-narratives and assign meaning to the themes that develop from these narratives. The SenseMaker tool displays plots which visually represent mathematical patterns that reflect the social context of the research (Van der Merwe et al., 2019). The signification framework, therefore, forms the foundation for discovering and making sense of patterns in complex social systems.

Data collection begins with an open-ended question which asks participants to share a story or observation on a given topic based on their personal experiences. This story is the micro-narrative. The elicitation question is based on the purpose of the research. It should remain open-ended to allow for positive and negative stories (Van der Merwe et al., 2019). The elicitation question can also be provided as written questions, images, or both to trigger a response. Participants are invited to give their story a title to aid the sensemaking process. Once the story has been shared, participants begin the process of self-signification. They respond to the questions in the signification framework, which are equivalent to items in

quantitative surveys. Response formats can include dyads, triads, stones, and multiple-choice questions.

Dyads consist of questions answered on a slider which expresses a continuum between two opposite extremes. Participants should set the slider to the point which best describes their micro-narrative. The SenseMaker software then assigns a percentage to the answer. Through this, underlying factors can be measured, including beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and other aspects influenced by the larger system in which the research takes place.

In triads, the response options are presented in a triangle where each corner is labelled. Research participants provide their answers through a dot which they place in the triangle. The dot indicates the degree to which each label applies to their narrative. It thus also reflects the degree to which each of the three labels relates to each other in the narrative. SenseMaker translates this positioning into three numerical results, representing the weight of influence of the three labels presented in the triad in the participant's story. Triads are particularly useful to identify subtle underlying factors influencing individual narratives.

A stone widget consists of a canvas, an image, a drawing or two axes. The stones are markers placed on the canvas to illustrate participants' narratives about a given issue. Stone widgets are, therefore, useful to convey how different participants view the same issue. Stones are evaluative because they require participants to assign value to given issues and can be more challenging for participants. Multiple choice questions are largely used for capturing sample demographic data.

2.4.3. Motivations For The Use Of The Cynefin Framework And Sensemaking Tool

SenseMaker differs from traditional mixed methods approaches as it combines participant micro-narratives with statistical analysis of quantitative data. This means that qualitative and quantitative information are assessed side by side to produce a quantitative data set underpinned by individual micro-narratives. Moreover, the SenseMaker tool makes it easy to shift between qualitative and quantitative data, allowing for a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives and experiences as patterns are easily comparable between the two datasets (Omoding et al., 2020). This allows researchers to quantify complex, systemic, and societal concepts and gives meaning to these quantifiable results through individual stories. Importantly, what makes SenseMaker different from traditional qualitative measures, is that it transfers the power of interpretation from the researcher to the participant who interprets their own story (Van der Werwe et al., 2019). This reduces researcher bias and allows a more objective analysis of participants' experiences. This way, it may reveal information that traditional interview or survey data do not pick up (Omoding et al., 2020).

SenseMaker is particularly useful in exploratory research where variables or phenomena are unknown (Van der Merwe et al., 2019). By identifying patterns in quantitative data derived from qualitative micro-narratives, researchers can uncover more than what is already known (Van der Merwe et al., 2019). This holds particular relevance for the current study, in which the goal is to identify whether the existing theories of precarious work reflect the experiences of precarious workers in South Africa without the interpretations of these being influenced by the researcher's knowledge of what is already known about precarious work in other contexts. This limited influence allows truths about precarious work to surface. An additional advantage of using the SenseMaker tool over traditional mixed methods approaches is the ease and speed of data collection compared to traditional qualitative data collection methods. This is a benefit given the time constraints in which this research needs to be completed.

2.5. Procedure

The Cynefin Company, which is the company that designed the SenseMaker tool, offers a one-month training course which provides in-depth insights into how to use the SenseMaker tool. Trainees are guided through the conceptualisation and design principles through a practical application of the tool. Each training participant chooses a question they would like to address. The researcher was granted a bursary to participate in this training. The training course allowed a maximum of 1,500 participant responses to be captured, which was sufficient for this study. This bursary allowed up to three participants to attend, meaning that my supervisor and I could take part and access the training information. The specific wording of the elicitation question and signifier framework, i.e. the dyads, triads, stones, and/or multiple-choice questions that followed the narrative presented by a participant used in this study, were developed during the SenseMaker training. Data collection and analysis were carried out using the tool, with expert help accessible via the Cynefin Company where needed, after ethics approval was granted.

The study was carried out in the Western Cape communities of Mitchell's Plain and Khayelitsha, where 12 unemployed research assistants trained in data collection were employed to collect data from individuals in their communities. Research assistants were chosen from their community to facilitate ease of data collection and translation into Afrikaans and isiXhosa, if necessary. They were trained on the purpose of the research, how to use the SenseMaker tool, and how to work with participants and store the data they have collected in a face-to-face training session in 3-hour training session. In the session, the group was also divided into pairs. Each pair administered the data collection instrument to each other while the researcher fielded questions and difficulties. This gave each research assistant insight into the type of questions participants might ask and how the survey worked practically. The

researcher checked each completed dataset to ensure that research assistants understood how answers to the signifiers needed to be provided. A common error was that research assistants had viewed the answers to dyads and triads as multiple-choice options, where they had to choose one ‘correct’ corner or concept. The researcher explained the dyads and triads in more detail, and the research assistants again administered the instrument to each other. This time, answers were provided as intended. How dyads and triads were meant to be answered was reiterated to the research assistants throughout the training, as well as on a WhatsApp group which included all research assistants, to remind them to explain the correct way to understand these response formats to participants. After the training had been completed, research assistants were tasked to collect data within one month by recruiting community members as participants. Additionally, after each completed administration of the SenseMaker tool, participants posted an image of the recorded dataset on the WhatsApp group, along with the time stamp, so that the researcher could check that the data had been entered satisfactorily. This WhatsApp group was also used for research assistants to ask questions and to provide feedback about the data collection process.

Research assistants had access to the SenseMaker survey via a weblink which they could use on their mobile devices. The researcher provided data to research assistants to upload responses in real time. Research assistants were paid R100 for each survey collected. The analysis was conducted using the SenseMaker® software by the Cynefin Company.

2.6. Instrument Development

The signification framework developed for this study was designed based on the definition of precarious work identified in section 3.2. To reiterate, for this study, *precarious work* is defined as work which lacks certainty around the continuation of employment, is unstable and insecure, where employees lack control over the work process, receive little support from employers, lack regulatory protection and where employees do not receive sufficient income to meet their needs. Moreover, the signification framework also aims to capture the elements present in the two theories identified in this study, namely the Work Precarity Framework and the Psychology of Working Theory. Hence, the design of the signification framework and elicitation question focused on the following aspects of the definition and the theories: instability, insecurity, income level, and elements relating to work precarity, including precarity of work, precarity at work and precarity from work. Moreover, the framework aimed to capture the survival needs of people. The design also aimed to include outcomes of work precarity, including job attitudes, job behaviours, identity, and mental health. Lastly, the framework's design included contextual elements such as social and economic marginalisation. It is also important to note that given the limited time frame in which this

research was conducted, each element mentioned above was not explored through its triad and dyad. Instead, the elements of focus above were often combined to form a holistic framework, where each triad and dyad included several aspects relating to precarity to create a signification framework which captured all aspects required to answer the research question.

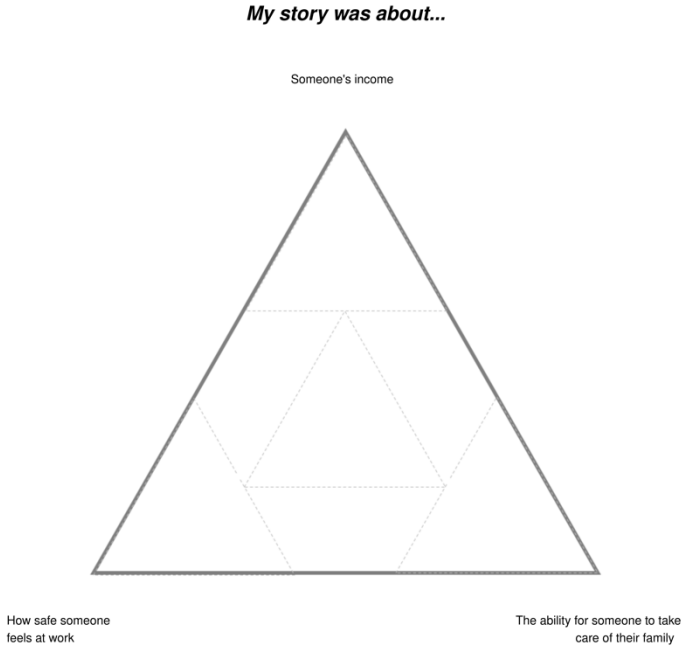
The elicitation question for the study was as follows:

Tell me a story about something that happened at your work which made you feel really good or feel really bad. This story can be from your past or present and can be any length.

The purpose of this question was to prompt the participants to tell a story about a work-related event and how they felt about it. This aimed to reveal work experiences that would indicate elements of precarious work. Importantly, this story prompt was broad enough to allow the participants to share any experiences; however, it guided them to tell a work-specific story, as well as the type of event it was, either negative or positive.

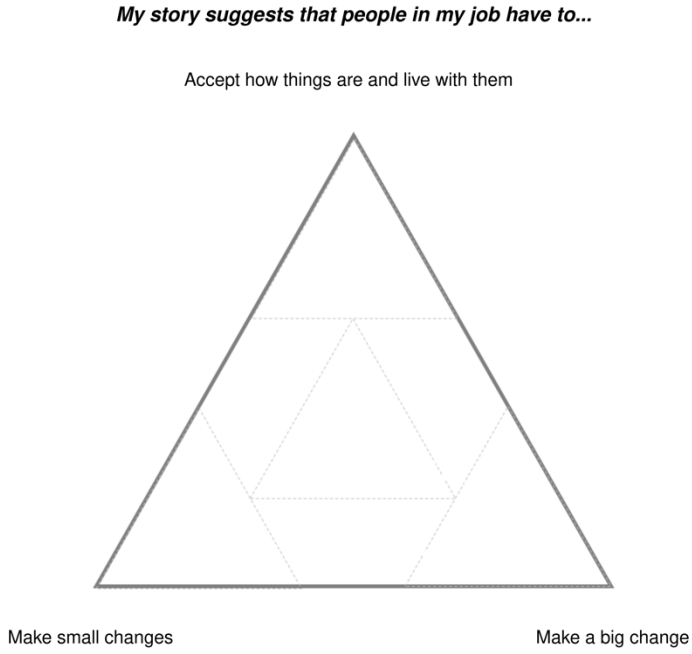
Each triad and dyad are indicated below, as well as a description of how and why each triad was designed.

Triad 1:



This triad served to identify to what extent the three survival needs in the PWT were seen as crucial in South African employees' minds by assessing to what degree they featured in participants' micro-narratives. Specifically, it speaks to the core needs necessary for decent work to be experienced: safety at work, adequate compensation and hours which allow for free time to complement familial and social values (Duffy et al., 2016). Hence, the triad included corner labels, which speak to these facets of decent work.

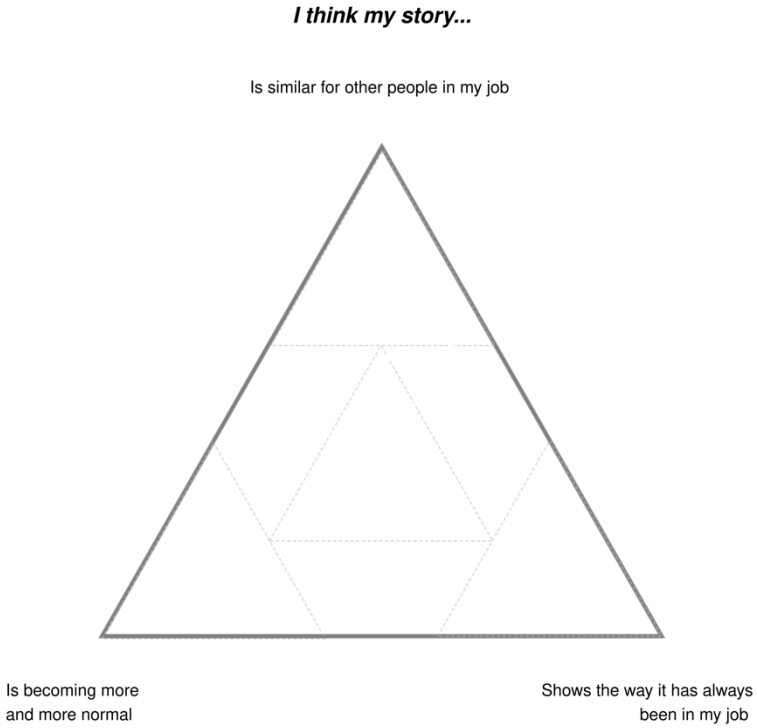
Triad 2:



This triad was designed to understand to what degree individuals perceived that change was a possibility. The ability to plan for their future enables individuals to manage their resources, thereby providing some control over their future. This then provides a level of autonomy in making decisions about one's life (Kalleberg & Hewison, 2012). Therefore, this triad indicates whether people have autonomy over making decisions and adapting to life (Duffy et al., 2016). As indicated in Figure 2, this triad considered three different aspects of people's jobs, namely, the top corner, "Accept things the way they are and live with them", the BL corner "Make small changes", and lastly, the BR corner "Make a big change". The top corner was designed to understand the individuals' attitudes in the face of adversity by evaluating their perception of progression and change. The BL and BR corner both indicate ambition and the internal locus of control and depict a spectrum of how large the change is.

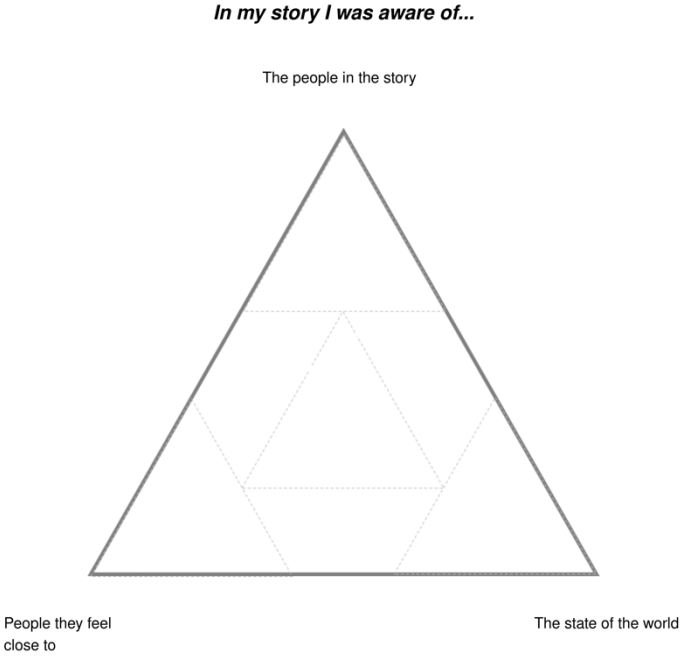
This indicates whether people believe they can adapt slightly or whether total transformation and radical change are necessary for change and progression.

Triad 3:



This triad was designed to understand more about the context of people's work, specifically how people perceive their work experiences in relation to others and if their experiences are shared experiences. Specifically, the triad labels indicate whether people think their story is similar to other people in their job (top label), is becoming more and more normal (BL label) and shows the way it has always been in their job (BR label). This triad, therefore, asks participants to evaluate whether their story is the norm, systemic, or whether it is changing and becoming a new norm. Participants are then tasked with evaluating whether they feel these aspects are similar to others in their jobs, which may indicate whether these are shared experiences or sentiments for people in South Africa, indicative of the greater context.

Triad 4:



This triad was designed to understand precarity from work and its effects on other areas of life from the micro, meso and macro level perspective. The BL corner, “People they feel close to” explores people’s awareness of people they are close to or in their inner circle, which speaks to their micro levels of interaction. The top corner of the triad, “The people in their story”, explores people’s awareness of people in their general community and workplace and the wider circle of society they interact with, the meso level of interaction. Lastly, the BR corner of the triad, “The state of the world” reflects the awareness that people have of the world around them, the macro level of interaction. In this way, this triad explores how these three areas of life feature in the stories and, thus, how prevalent they are in individuals’ minds.

Triad 5:

This triad aimed at investigating social equality and social stratification and the degree of marginalisation experienced. Due to South Africa's history of racial segregation and the significant levels of inequality, this triad sought to understand to what degree societal structures translated into people's perception of this at work. As such, the top corner of the triad, "Everyone was treated the same", was aimed at understanding equality; the BL corner of the triad, "People were accepted the way they are" was intended to understand the acceptance of diversity, and the BR corner of the triad, "Those who had done better work were treated better" was intended to understand inequality and perceptions of merit or perceived advantages. On the other hand, participants who responded with "N/A" would indicate people who felt their stories did not relate to individuals' treatment in relation to each other and as individuals.

Triad 6:

This triad was designed to understand people's current circumstances and attitudes toward their work. It also investigates people's orientation towards the future based on their current situation, specifically how their outlook or circumstances may affect their future. Although similar to triad 2, the design intention behind this triad was more focused on the current lived reality of participants than the control they have over making decisions about adapting to change. The BL corner of the triad, namely "It is difficult to make a living" was intended to reflect participants' ability to make a living, which speaks to basic survival. The top corner of the triad, "The main person in the story is on the right path, " was intended to indicate whether participants feel that their current situation is conducive to the type of future they want. The BR corner of the triad, namely, "things will get better in the future", was intended to reflect people's current sentiment towards the future based on current events. It also demonstrates whether people feel there is a need for things to improve or are satisfied with how things are currently.

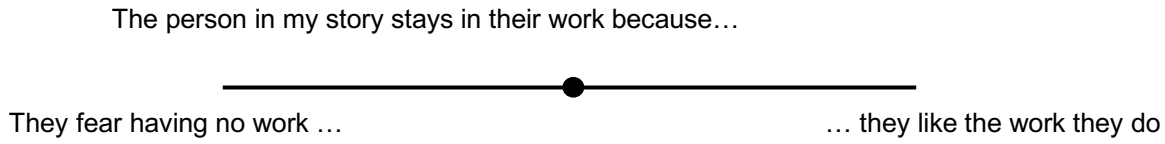
Dyad 1:

What I shared in my story says/ shows that…

Everything is the same — There is constant change, nothing is certain

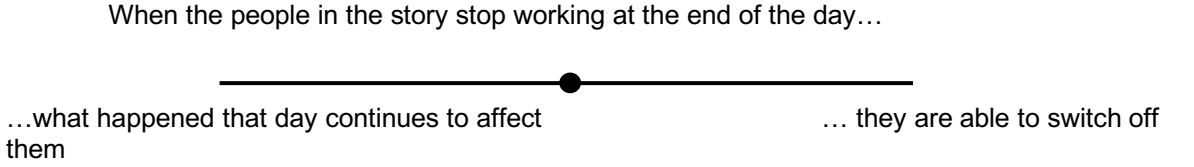
This dyad was intended to investigate how people react and relate to conditions of uncertainty. As described by Kalleberg and Vallas (2018), uncertainty is a key element of precariousness. Therefore, this dyad indicates whether people are experiencing uncertainty at work as it relates to the story they shared. As such, the left slider label investigates whether things are constant, “Everything is the same”. In contrast, the right slider label investigates changes and uncertainty, “There is constant change, nothing is certain”. Importantly, the stories mentioned need not specifically make mention of uncertainty but rather reflect greater uncertainty of the underlying factors, including beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of uncertainty which are influenced by the larger system. Therefore, here it is important to examine where the majority of the stories lie on the continuum as it reflects the greater sentiment of the group.

Dyad 2:



This dyad was designed to investigate why people would stay in precarious working situations. The lack of sufficient alternative jobs and state resources makes this a poignant question which reflects the South African context. As such, the left side of the slider, “They fear having no work”, indicates people staying in their jobs because the risk of having no work is too high. On the contrary, the right-hand side of the slider, “They like the work they do”, depicts that people stay in their work because they get fulfilment from their jobs.

Dyad 3:



This dyad was intended to investigate precarity from work and how work affects other areas of life. Specifically, it speaks to the well-being and mental health effects that precarious working conditions may have for participants. The left side of the slider, “What happened that day continues to affect them”, examines the degree to which people feel affected by their story and its impact on them outside of work. On the other hand, the right side of the slider, “They can switch off”, reflects the lack of effect on the participants outside of the work environment.

Dyad 4:

In my story…

… only some have a say … everybody is heard

This dyad was designed to understand the work environment better, specifically eliciting stories which may give light to the systemic context which has infiltrated the work environment. Not only does this dyad look at whether participants have a voice, but it also looks at whether the work environment is authoritative or democratic, thus either silencing or giving voice to marginalised workers. To examine this, the left side of the dyad, “Only some have a say”, looks at a lack of agency and power. In contrast, the right side of the dyad, “everybody is heard”, looks at empowerment and the agency participants have.

2.7. Participants And Sampling Technique

This study employed a non-probability convenience sampling method to capture information about the experiences of working people in two low to middle-income areas of Cape Town. This method was chosen due to time and resource constraints as the research needed to be completed within the timeframe given for a Master’s study in Organisational Psychology at the University of Cape Town. The final sample comprised N = 204 participants is deemed sufficient. All participants were over the age of 18 years and South African citizens so as not to conflate results with foreigners’ experiences which, as outlined in the Literature Review, may differ from those of South Africans (Jinnah, 2020; Smit & Rugunanan, 2014).

The sample was relatively even in terms of gender distribution, with 47,5% males (n = 97), 50% females (n = 102) and five participants who had selected “other” as their gender. Of the respondents, 60% classified themselves as African (n = 124), and 38% classified themselves as coloured (n = 79), with one person abstaining from answering. The majority of the sample identified as Christian (n = 130) or Catholic (n = 4), followed by Muslim (n = 39), and approximately 15% indicated other religions (n = 30). A third of the participants were employed at small organisations consisting of between 10-50 employees (n = 68, 33%), followed by a quarter each employed in medium-sized (n = 52), 25%, between 50-250 employees) and large organisations (n = 49), 24%, over 250 people). The smallest number of participants were employed in small organisations (n = 33, 16%), comprising less than ten employees. Of the respondents, 36% (n = 74) indicated that they worked standard working hours (40 hours per week), with 25% (n = 53) indicating that they worked standard hours and overtime. The rest of the sample identified shift work to describe their working hours (n = 42,

20%), followed by flexible working hours (n = 29, 14%), part-time (n = 5, 2%) and one person did not provide an answer. Lastly, participants indicated that they worked in the following industries: retail (n = 41, 20%), manufacturing (n = 30, 14%), catering or hospitality (n = 26, 12%), education (n = 18, 8%), government (n = 17, 8%), healthcare, bank, insurance and telecommunications (n = 15, 7%), energy (n = 3, 1%), chemistry/metal (n = 1, 0.4%) and 35 participants (17%) selected “other” as their industry of work.

2.8. Ethical Considerations

Before the research was carried out in this study, approval was sought from the University of Cape Town’s Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee. Ethics was granted, followed by data collection. Participants were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality of their stories and answers, as well as informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point. Importantly, each participant voluntarily participated in the study by consenting to participate. The participants were also informed of the study's purpose and how the results will be utilised. Additionally, no participants were subjected to harm, deceit, or prejudice throughout the study. Lastly, data integrity was ensured through a password protected login of the SenseMaker platform where all the data is stored. Importantly, research assistants did not have access to any data once it was submitted and the project was closed after a certain date to ensure that no additional, invalid responses could be collected. The data is stored in the SenseMaker software and platform, as well as a password protected download of the data on the researchers personal device.

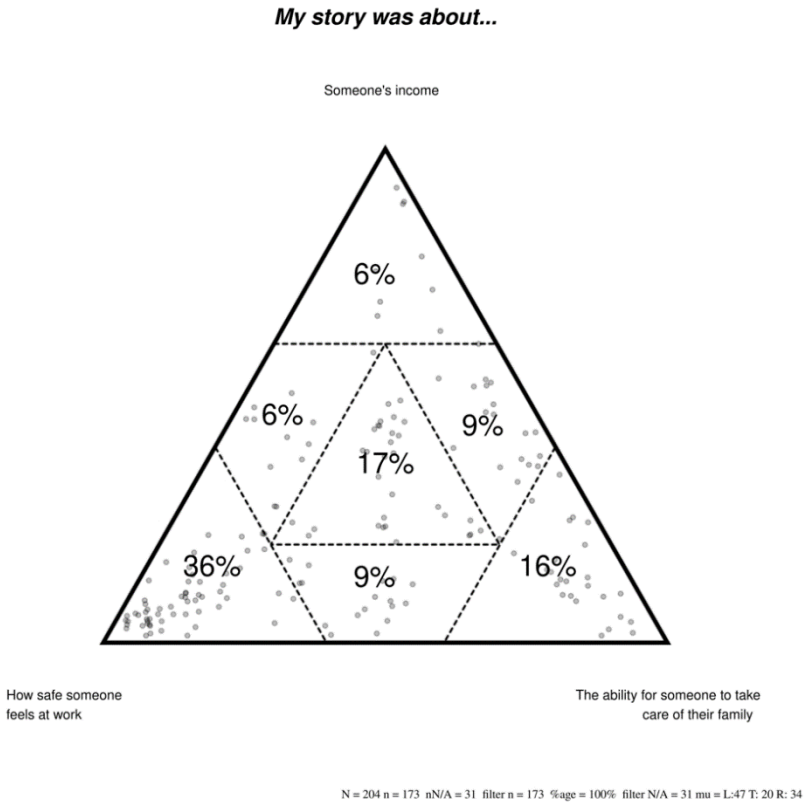
2.9. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the method or tool in this study which will be used for the process of data collection and data analysis; SenseMaker. Motivations for the use of this tool and its specific design, ethical considerations and sampling technique were outlined to provide an overview of how the study was carried out. The following section will outline the results and discussion of results.

Chapter 4:
Results and Discussion

This chapter includes the results and discussion of the data analysis through SenseMaking. SenseMaking involves making sense of each Triad and Dyad presented to participants as well as participants' micro-narratives. Due to a software error in the SenseMaker tool, it was impossible to interpret the data provided via Stones, as the SenseMaker tool did not record meaningful information for these items. However, rich, and complex data was available for analysis due to the large number of triads and dyads. It is recommended to have four triads and two dyads in each study for ease of design and interpretation. However, given that precarious work is a multifaceted concept, with several aspects that need to be investigated, this design included six triads and four dyads to adequately capture these concepts in the framework.

Triad 1: Three survival needs indicative of decent work



In relation to their individual stories, as indicated in Figure 3, approximately a third of participants (36%) thought their story indicated that safety is a primary concern as most of the data points fall in the bottom-left (BL) corner labelled as "How safe someone feels at work". This shows that the issue of safety at work was a salient theme that emerged from the

narratives in this study. Moreover, many of the data points in the BL corner of the triad are situated far into the corner, indicating that of the three needs, safety at work is primary, if not the only need referred to in several stories, more prominent than income and the ability to take care of one's family.

Only 6%, that is, every 20th story, was seen to relate predominantly to income rather than to safety and the ability to take care of family. A total of 15% of participants (n = 31) indicated that their story did not relate to income, the ability to take care of family, or safety needs by choosing "not applicable" for this triad.

The dominance of safety as a theme in relation to income and the ability to take care of family seemed surprising, particularly given the current economic climate in South Africa. Joblessness, poverty, and the cost of living are particularly high post-COVID-19 (Francis, 2020). However, according to the PWT, safety is a primary survival need that needs to be met, enabling people to access other resources for survival. Therefore, safety is central to meeting survival needs and economic needs (Duffy et al., 2016). Essentially, this may mean that safety at work is a salient theme or something that people are particularly aware of when asked to tell a story about their work experiences.

In its design, Triad 1 did not specify whether safety referred to physical or psychological safety. Psychological safety refers to one being able to express oneself without the fear of adverse outcomes to career, self-image, and status (Kahn, 1990). Psychological safety is promoted in predictable, consistent, and well-defined situations, creating a non-threatening environment where trust is formed (Kahn, 1990). This fosters meaningful interpersonal relationships that support and accept failure without the fear of adverse consequences. Psychological safety seemed to be the predominant theme among these stories, with story titles indicating several aspects of psychological safety which are not being met at work, including discrimination, toxicity in the workplace, a lack of value, judgement, unfair treatment, misuse of power, respect, and equality. Those who reported negative stories depicted a lack of respect, dignity, and unfairness in the workplace, predominantly from supervisors but also from colleagues, which are generally coupled with a poor supervisor or management system which undermines the development of psychological safety for employees. One participant's narrative stated:

"…I think the guy was racist, he didn't like black people and colored people. He fired the Muslim we worked with. Up until my time came too, because I had to go and pull my tooth, he insisted that I should wait, and I took off to the nearest clinic then to go receive the medical help I need. I left the company cause the conditions weren't suitable for me or anyone who isn't Jewish."

Perceptions of the kind of unfair treatment described by this participant are echoed in many other stories. Narratives of participants' disregard for managers' instructions, as well as

resignation from the company, are consistent with empirical research conducted in South Africa, which demonstrates that a psychologically safe work environment fosters employee engagement and is negatively associated with employee's turnover (Bailey et al., 2017; Heyns, McCallaghan & Senne, 2021).

On the other hand, the narratives which considered the ability to provide for one's family were primarily about meeting basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter, despite poor work circumstances. The concern was less about free time for social fulfilment, as suggested by the PWT, and more indirectly about free time to meet the basic needs of one's family. Where narratives described the inability to care for family members, the reason was seen in negative work experiences where participants saw themselves as being treated unfairly, not afforded dignity or discriminated against. Participants seemed to endure these poor working conditions due to a lack of employment alternatives and family responsibilities that needed to be met. One participant described the following in relation to this:

"Work is always a problem for me. I work so hard and get paid and treated unwell. I have a family to support, I can't just leave my job to find a new one because it was hard enough to get this one. Life wasn't supposed to be this way. Equality for our skin color. All I want to say is everyone has to provide for their families. Don't treat your workers like they meaningless."

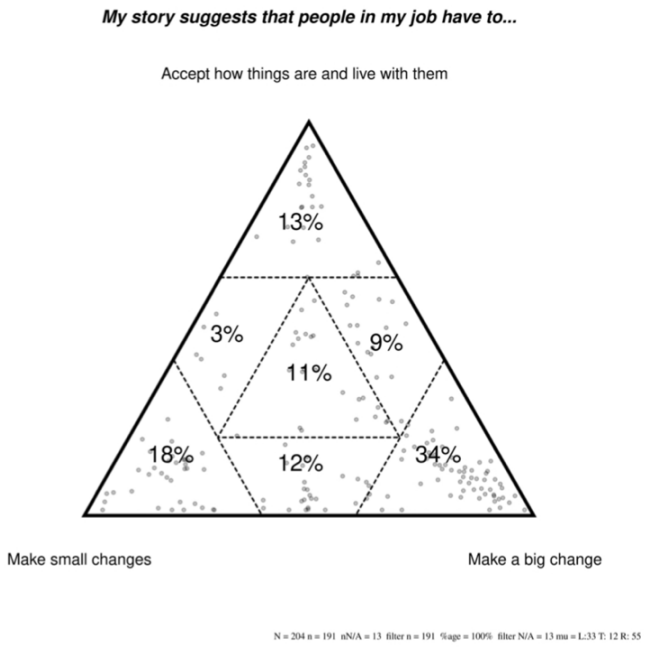
Even though stories such as the one presented above sometimes referred to income and safety, participants still interpreted them as referring to providing for the family rather than the issue of income itself. The problem is thus not a lack of monetary means per se, but specifically, because it means that family needs cannot be fulfilled. The stories in this segment of the triad were told predominantly by women working as domestic workers, cashiers, or factory floor workers. These are typically low-paying jobs, thus making the ability to provide for one's family difficult, perpetuating the cycle of having to stay in precarious work due to these obligations. (Munck, 2013). Like Kenny's (2016) findings, which expose the retail industry for its dependence on low-income, part-time and insecure employment strategies under the Apartheid regime, workers still experience similar precarious conditions today.

With support from the narratives, the results from this triad indicate that safety is an important aspect of work of which participants are particularly aware. Specifically, psychological safety can be seen as the more dominant aspect of safety which surfaced in participants' stories. As demonstrated by the PWT, safety is a key aspect of the three survival needs, which are directly influenced by the obtainment of decent work. The poor psychological safety depicted in this Triad demonstrates the need for decent work experienced by most participants in this study. The absence of decent work implied in these instances further suggests that the opposite is experienced, where participants are experiencing precarious working conditions. Explicit mention of the lack of psychological safety demonstrates that

precarity at work is a significant experience for most participants. This is consistent with the PWF, which outlines the adverse outcomes of such experiences of precarity, including poor job attitudes and higher turnover intention.

The emergence of one dominant theme, namely safety, as indicated in the results above, is acknowledged by the PWT as a theme which may occur since people may not be able to meet or fulfil all of their survival needs at all times because life responsibilities, wages, and economic or contextual factors may change and impact these experiences (Duffy et al., 2016). As presented above, the results from the top and BR corners in the triad indicate that income and the ability to care for one's family are less salient themes, foregrounding safety as the dominant experience. Therefore, the PWT adequately captured the three needs of survival in these participants' stories; however, it foregrounds safety as a dominant need that needs to be met.

Triad 2: Individual adaptability to life events and autonomy over own decisions



The most common category, in which a third (34%) of participants placed their story, was that people in their job need to make a big change, while only 13% of participants indicated that things should remain the way they are.

Making a big change can be seen as a dominant theme in this triad. It may signify participants' desire for radical change and transformation by taking action for a better future. Moreover, making a big change is reminiscent of people being dissatisfied with their current circumstances, stimulating their desire for change. Although participants reflect dissatisfaction with their current situation, the stories may also indicate an attitude of optimism that they can

make such changes. Many stories present similar attitudes of optimism, suggesting elements of personal agency as shown in the extract below:

"I was working as an electrician assistant in a certain company in Stellenbosch. We were a mix of black, coloured and white people in the office. Afrikaans was dominant in the workplace, which was a big downfall for me. The was a language barrier which was a huge disadvantage for me because my colleagues would discuss work and what needed to be done in Afrikaans even though they are fully aware I can't read or write or even understand Afrikaans…I'm not happy here, and I'm currently applying in other places; as soon as something comes up, I'm packing my things and leaving…."

"I was in charge of security. There was a break-in and theft that occurred. It happened at night when I was at home. I was not informed at the earliest opportune moment. The blame was put on me by virtue of my office. I found out it was a planned way to get rid of me. I resigned so that I don't lose my benefits."

In both cases, unhappiness, and unwillingness to accept the job the way it is, as well as the way they felt they were being treated, resulted in the intention to leave their employment in search of a better work opportunity. Congruent to Barchiesi's (2008) findings, despite a lack of job opportunities, these participants demonstrated a sense of agency in dealing with their job situation. This is echoed in many stories in this study. Examples, such as job resignation can be viewed as a radical outcome or change due to the uncertainty of finding another job, yet it also confirms prior studies' findings that South African individuals show optimism despite a lack of alternative resources (Hlatshwayo, 2018; Wilson & Erbert, 2013). According to McDowell and Christopherson (2009), the need for change stems from optimistic confidence in the hope for different forms of work. In these instances, this need is typically exacerbated by poor work experiences, as demonstrated in the excerpts above. This also shows a willingness to adapt to change should a better opportunity arrive. It should, however, be noted that not all participants view the search for an alternate job with a sense of ease due to the familial responsibility and survival needs that need to be met, as demonstrated below:

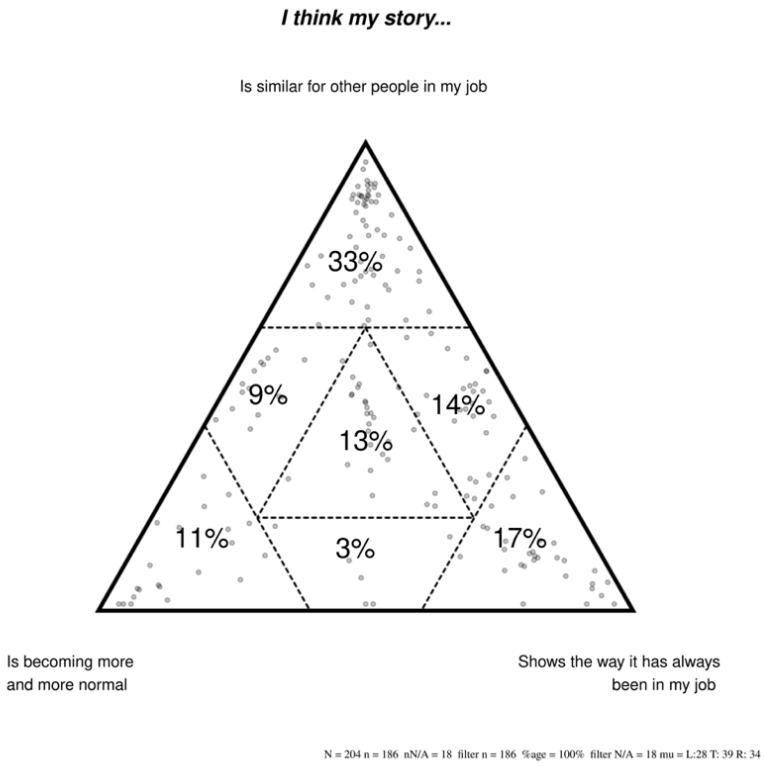
"…I'm always working hard to make sure I exceeded the expected target. I work long hours but the rate per hour that I'm getting is really not worth the time I sacrifice from my family and social life. Our boss is also not understanding he's always pushing for work to be done. I'm always tired and hardly spend time with my daughter I'm only staying in the job to make means to live otherwise I would have resigned."

Stories such as the one demonstrated above imply that the desire for change, specifically radical change in people's work situations, is contingent on its compatibility with individual social and familial values and needs. The PWF corroborates this finding as resources, capital, and social support act as potential moderators for experiences of precarious work and its outcomes. According to the PWT, deficiency in meeting social needs

diminishes personal well-being and work fulfilment (Duffy et al., 2016). Although most participants indicated this need for radical as above, less than one-fifth of the participants (18%) wanted smaller, more manageable, and realistic changes to occur. This desire for changes in a smaller magnitude may reflect satisfaction with most of their working situation, with the need for a few or minor things to change. For instance, a reduction in working hours, and an increase in wages, may significantly positively affect people's attitudes. This results in a lesser need for radical change, as demonstrated in the prior excerpt's intention to quit and reduces the need for participants to endure and adapt to unwanted change. Overall, the results of this triad indicate that change features as a theme in participants' stories, with 64% of participants indicating that their stories are related to some change. More importantly, these narratives indicate that for those who are employed, even in jobs which are considered less favourable, participants demonstrate a sense of optimism in finding alternative job opportunities displaying a sense of hopefulness and agency over their employment situations. The second largest set of data points (18%) falls within the BL corner of the triad, where stories indicate that people in their job need to make small changes.

As indicated in the results mentioned above, making a big change was the dominant theme that emerged from the participants' stories. Although participants' experiences highlight dissatisfaction with their jobs and working conditions, the stories equally highlight a sense of optimism that alternative opportunities exist and would be willingly accepted. These stories, therefore, highlight elements of precarity of work, demonstrating support for the PWF in that they highlight the severe consequences for the outcomes of precarious working situations, specifically job behaviours and attitudes, such as the intention to quit (Allan et al., 2021). Yet, a crucial element not accounted for by the PWF is the experience of precarious working conditions and a sense of optimism despite these working conditions participants find themselves in. Here, the PWF only captures the well-known negative experiences of precarity of work, however, is remiss of other potentially positive experiences of precarious work that may occur. Although this may be contextually specific to the attitudes of South Africans, it points towards the theory's inability to capture contextually niche experiences.

Triad 3: Shared experiences at work



The majority of participants (33%) indicated that they think their stories were similar to the experiences of other people in the same jobs, indicating that their experiences are perceived to be the norm. Although highly individualistic, the stories shared by these participants, because they share negative stories that affect them personally, also depict a shared experience with others. Although these stories embody a sense of collectivism, the individualism in the stories can be viewed as part of the subjective experiences which differentiate one person's story from another (Campbell & Price, 2016). Importantly, although individual subjectivity plays a role in how work is perceived per person, Campbell and Price (2016) emphasise the SenseMaker model by asserting that these individual stories are embedded within a greater social context in which these experiences are institutionalised. This reduces individual agency because it positions individual experiences as a consequence of contextual factors and not because of individual action (Campbell & Price, 2016). This is perhaps indicative that these experiences are so entrenched in the lived experiences of South Africans that it is difficult to view this as anything but the norm. The below story demonstrates this shared experience of life and work:

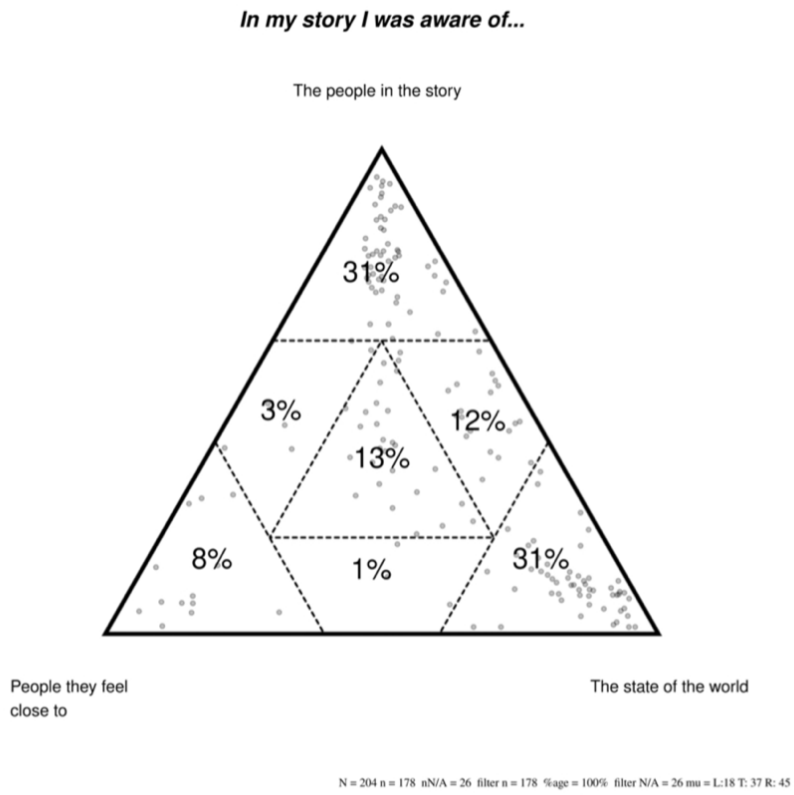
"I work as a domestic worker and I do sleep ins. If I go to work from Monday I will come back home on Fridays later, maybe at 6. I will be on this side trying to do washing for my kids. I have a 6 years old girl and a 2 and half [year old] so my sister would help me with the 2 years girl. So, it's hard for me to go to work and look after other children while I leave mine behind but I do not have a choice. They need to eat and to be clothed by me so I need to do all I can

to make them to look like other children. That's how life is. We all need to hustle for our children and families."

Upon further examination, it is interesting that only 17% of participants' stories were placed in the BR corner of the triad. Given South Africa's history of segregation and racialisation at work, one would assume that this would greatly influence participants and that more stories would be placed in the BR segment. On the one hand, this may be attributed to this way of life that has become the norm, that it is difficult to separate one's own experiences from it and to view it as part of a systemic issue. On the other hand, the majority of the participants in this study are relatively young, which may indicate why South African history may play less of a role in their stories as they would have been too young to experience and remember it themselves.

The main theme that emerged from the results in this triad is the sense of collectivism and shared work experiences, which indicates that participants view their experiences as the norm not only for them but for everyone else as well. These experiences stem from a greater social context which influences and gives meaning to why participants experience work in a particular way. As outlined in the PWF and PWT, contextual factors such as social and economic marginalisation or economic and political factors influence how work is experienced. Specifically, both the individual stories, as well as the results from this triad which indicate that people have shared experiences of work, corroborate this normative understanding of work but also demonstrate that although participants do not explicitly acknowledge how contextual factors influence their experiences, the context in which they find themselves shapes individual experiences to become a norm for the group as a whole. Therefore, in theory and outlined in both the PWF and the PWT, these contextual factors set the scene for outlining where the experiences of precarious work stem from. PWT and PWF set the scene for one to consider contextual factors, providing nuance and greater depth of why participants may experience work this way.

Triad 4: Precarity from work and contextual factors



The overall distribution of stories shows that an equal proportion (31%) of stories were seen as referring only to the state of the world or only to people in the story.

The stories that indicate concern for only the people in their story reflected precarity at work (i.e., social issues at the workplace, such as discrimination, alienation and lack of social safety) rather than precarity from work (e.g., affecting other areas of life including familial responsibilities) as the design had intended. Specifically, the stories speak about the micro level of interaction, with participants mostly providing stories which personally affected them and where other people's behaviours and actions played a role in the experience. Thus, stories and experiences always included an individual aspect rather than a collective experience, as exemplified by this individual's account:

"... My issue is respect and value in this company. I'm really not happy because most people refuse to follow rules and regulations of the company, food safety standards to be general that we supposed to be following as people in the food industry. It's making my job very difficult because I'm told to ignore, or I will be in trouble for reporting the inappropriate behaviours of my colleagues. Whenever I request or give instructions to people who are reporting to me, they don't respect me as their senior. The job that they do is always not up to standards I always have to clean after their mess. I have been told I'm asking questions I don't know my job whenever I ask for clarification regarding anything that has to do with work when in fact it's been only 3 months since I started working for this company. I'm still trying to get the hang of things. I'm not happy I feel like work stress is weighing up on me. I've been

complaining without any assistance. I'm drowning. Sometimes I even question myself because people here always make me feel dumb."

Effects on personal identity, including diminished self-esteem, as well as effects on mental health, including anxiety, stress and burnout, are predominant themes in the top corner of the triad. Specifically, the examples demonstrated in the above story reflect a threat to psychological safety at work and a lack of workplace power. These align with the outcomes of precarious work situations in the PWF. Allan et al. (2021) describes these as outcomes of precarious work, which intensify experiences of job and employment insecurity, exacerbating the outcomes associated with precarious work. Moreover, stories such as the example depicted above demonstrate the crucial part that work experiences play in shaping identity. Work is considered a central part of individual identity; thus, a lack of stable and secure work may erode one's sense of self (Selenko et al., 2017).

Moreover, several studies have found significant relationships between job insecurity and impaired mental health (Hana et al., 2017; Llosa et al., 2018). Therefore, this job incongruence affects people's identities, bearing consequences for their well-being and mental health. Employment can therefore be seen as more than a means of survival or in-group membership, but also holds psychological and emotional significance (Selenko et al., 2017). For example, the extract above demonstrates several threats to individual identity that impact mental health, including "drowning" and "feeling dumb".

In addition, individual psychological state as a result of precarity at work is a salient theme in the top corner of this triad. This is because participants have interpreted this top corner in a highly individualistic manner, sharing experiences directly linked to poor mental health outcomes. This negative psychological state directly results from poor working conditions, which the PWF attributes to precarity at work. Specifically, participants seem to draw a direct link between their poor mental experiences and the workplace, which acts to diminish self-esteem and increases their perceived lack of control over their working situations. The PWF links these as direct outcomes of work precarity, affecting their ability to cope at work.

According to social identity theory, the consequences of precarious work can be seen as circular in their effect (Selenko et al., 2017; Jetten et al., 2017). Insecure work affects one's identity, making people feel less identified with the in-group, potentially impacting one's mental health and well-being, reducing in-group loyalty, and further exacerbating precarity. A decline in self-esteem as a result of job insecurity perpetuates the negative consequences of precarity in that it decreases people's motivation to continue with their job search, be engaged at work and be loyal to the organisation (Allan et al., 2021). It is, therefore, sufficient to deduce that the consequences of job insecurity extend beyond the work context into other areas of life and personal identity.

By assessing if individuals considered contextual factors that might impact their working lives and experiences, the stories which participants felt indicated the state of the world, but not the people in the story or those they felt close to did not explicitly make mention of such contextual factors. Instead, the stories in this corner of the triad were about a lack of control at work. Titles of many stories included a cry for help or for acknowledgement, including “Help our people!”, “Understand one another”, “Appreciate your workers”, and “Respect others”. For the most part, these stories reflected a desire for the behaviour of others in the organisation to change and for better treatment, as well as better resources to succeed in life by taking care of themselves.

Moreover, access to decent work and collective bargaining power is lacking in many of these stories, with employees and employers being unaware of worker rights and obligations. Employment relationships appear to be poor in many stories, with employers displaying a lack of basic care or human dignity for their employees. This is supported by studies conducted on healthcare workers who also demonstrate this poor employment relationship, with several similarities, including low wages, fixed-term contracts and collective bargaining between those studies and the stories in the current study (Hlatshwayo, 2018). It can therefore be inferred that people yearn for change to occur at the individual level but also the organisational and government level in order to improve work experiences.

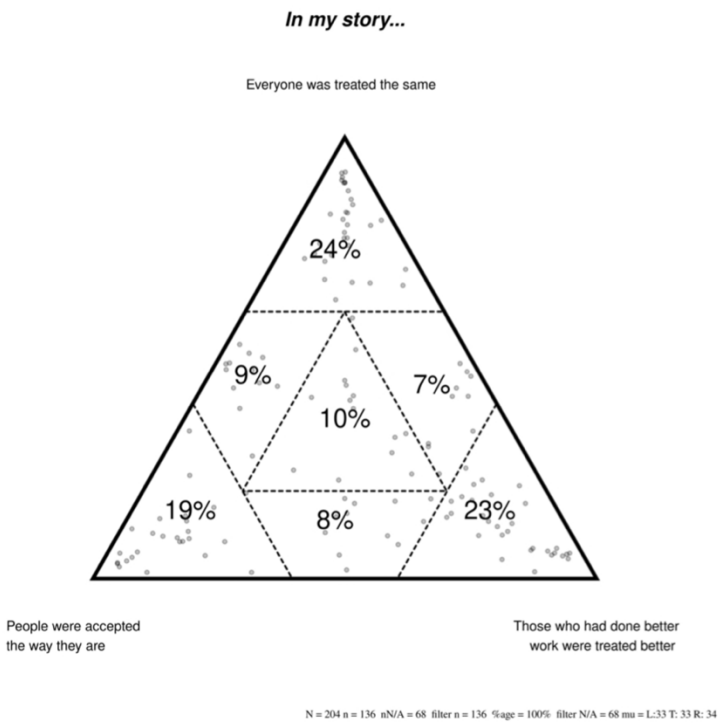
Social and economic marginalisation, as well as economic conditions and policies, are outlined as a condition of precarious work in the Precarious Work Framework and can increase the severity of consequences associated with precarious work (Kalleberg & Hewison, 2012). The stories demonstrated in this cohort share instances of marginalisation, including structural racism, but also a lack of access to economic resources. These can be seen as contextual factors beyond the control of the individual, which significantly impacted how the participants viewed their work. Interestingly, although objective factors of insecurity, including a lack of bargaining power, poor psychological safety and a lack of control around their working situation, are significant in these stories, there is an equal theme of the need for compassion and understanding others’ situations. Although most stories speak about individual experiences, several stories in this cohort implied the need for individual help and collective help for the social group experiencing the same problems. Moreover, participants who indicated that they were aware of the state of the world in their stories closely align with those in Triad 3, who indicated that they felt their stories closely resembled those of other people in their job, further demonstrating a sense of shared experiences. One participant expressed this as follows:

“I worked as a [..] intern at a government institution. Before I got the job someone that was conducting the interviews gave me a call and asked if I would drive with him home, he will drop me at home. Keep in mind I never gave him my number. I thought to myself this is

very wrong he is a grown man, things went on. Eventually I got the job, we were about 12 interns and we chilled together during lunch. Some of them mention things about him asking to drive with him I kept quiet. Until this one day 3 months into the internship things went south, he came till inside my office and stood in my personal space. The baddest thing of all is MY SUPERVISOR was in the office when he stood in my space and touched my bum. At that moment of time I didn't know what to do I was awkward and just walked away. The next day came and I went for lunch spoke about it to the other interns and they explained something similar we than decided to go an report him, Us speaking up is probably the baddest thing we could do, because HR said they already investigated him for sexual assault twice they can't do it again and my supervisor said nothing and she's a female as well. This was very upsetting but as time goes on I get to deal with it."

The first dominant theme present in this triad includes the negative psychological experiences of precarious work, particularly an erosion of personal identity, increased anxiety, stress, and burnout. These outcomes reflect the individual experiences of people at work, particularly pointing to the lasting negative effects that precarious working conditions can have on the individual psychological state. The PWF explicitly accounts for these as subjective experiences of precarity at work, which is a salient theme in the top corner of the triad. Moreover, major references to an erosion of individual identity further perpetuate the negative cycle of precarity, potentially harmfully affecting other areas of life. This is outlined by Social Identity Theory mentioned above. The PWF sufficiently reflects these negative experiences of precarious work for individuals in this triad; however, the PWT adds additional nuance due to its consideration of context and Social Identity Theory which may further impact the effects of precarity. This is further supported by the other dominant theme in this triad, in which participants were particularly aware of the state of the world. The PWT specifically outlines such contextual factors as aspects that exacerbate precarity experiences. Therefore, the PWT sufficiently reflects the experiences of precarious workers in this triad.

Triad 5: The degree to which the effect of societal structures translates into individual work experiences



The top corner of the triad indicates that 24% of participants felt that people were treated the same as others, demonstrating perceived equality or equal unfairness. Importantly, the label of the top corner does not purposefully lead people to answer with positive stories but can also lead to negative stories in which everyone is treated the same, albeit in a negative way. Indeed, the stories representing these participants were, to equal degrees, positive and negative accounts of events which had occurred at work. For example:

"My story is about how I got a promotion after having to sleep with my employer. I studied horticultural science at varsity and graduated in 2017. I have been applying for a job or internships with no luck and after pandemic hit us things got worse. I met a guy who was working for city of Cape Town who forwarded me a horticultural architecture position. I applied and I was unfortunately not successful he promised me the job if I slept with him. I agreed and agreement was that it was a once off thing. I got the job but he kept on asking the same thing over and over again for me to keep my job. I'm not happy because I can't report him because it would put me in trouble of how I initially got the job. He disrespect me in front of junior colleagues and talks to me however he wants. I want to quite but I have a family who look up to me."

While this story is an extreme example, it highlights the extreme forms of unfairness and lack of agency that can be experienced at work. The act of getting a job through sexual exploitation and bribery shows the inequality in hiring decisions and the lack of opportunities available for people, thus resorting to this behaviour. Moreover, studies have shown that

where there is evidence of one sexual harassment case, there are likely also other victims (Jinq & Yazdanifard, 2015). This demonstrates not only the exploitation of vulnerable workers but also unfair treatment in the workplace. Perceptions of unfair treatment, including inequality, evoke negative reactions from employees, such as anger, resentment, sabotage, and withdrawal (Zohar, 1995). Greenberg (1990) describes these as strain responses due to organisational injustice. Hiring discrimination and a lack of access to economic resources can be seen as organisational injustice, thus increasing workers' likelihood of obtaining precarious working situations (Kalleberg & Hewison, 2012). Furthermore, workplace inequality in this scenario can be seen as a threat towards psychological and physical safety for the employee, exacerbating precarity for these participants. In essence, this describes Adam's (1976) Equity Theory, demonstrating the negative effect that inequality may have at the individual and organisational levels.

"I am currently working in a small shop of the foreigners they sell clothes and other stuff so the money I don't want to lie it's very small and it doesn't even cover for transport because I have to buy school clothes for my younger brother so I make some debts to travel to work because I need that money…so Avery time I go to work my boss looks me in some funny ways Avery time I am at work . So I met with other girl who have worked there they told me that my boss is a 45womanizer so he actually pay more money to those who sleep with him.. and even now I don't know whether to live this job or what but I have heavy loads at home I really need the only BTW I am considering to live the job and search for other one cause I cannot work with my boss looking at me as if I am his girlfriend…so that is life of poverty we come across this bad people and they take advantage of us poor people Avery times we find something for ourselves we need to give something back to our bosses and it hurts a lot to need something very desperate and there are people taking advantage of that .and my boss doesn't hide his feelings towards his employees if you try to talk about reporting him he will live you alone till u Are in a transport going home the he will call u and tell you that u are fired.it means that we can't talk or do anything to report him because he has a power to fire some one that's what other girls who have worked there were telling me…"

An interesting finding of the stories in this cohort includes the lack of work volition that the participants possess. These workers demonstrate precarity in that their workplace is insecure due to the lack of workplace safety, income inadequacy and uncertainty. One could define these individuals as the working poor, which refers to people who have obtained work, yet it is insufficient to create a decent living (Allan et al., 2021). Allan et al. (2021) describes poverty wage employment as an aspect of precarity from work. Importantly, it helps to highlight work which is far below the standard for a decent living. Many participants in this cohort who describe negative stories can be said to be part of the working poor due to their lack of decent work. Many participants' reactions to unfair treatment almost always lead to the intention to

quit their jobs; however, few follow through on this threat due to familial obligations and responsibilities. Such responsibilities hinder the working poor from seeking alternate employment due to the scarcity of jobs and dependence on income for basic means of survival. This perpetuates the cycle of staying in precarious working situations, leading to unsafe, insecure, and unequal working arrangements.

On the other hand, other participants shared more positive stories of perceptions of equality, which relate less to precarious work characteristics than the negative stories. The positive stories shared within this section of the triad tend to take a more collective stance, or a feeling of shared fairness and equality, whereas the negative stories are more individualistic in nature. This may be due to the specifics shared in the individual stories, which relate to individual experiences, whereas positive stories reflect the group's sentiment. Equity Theory (Adam, 1976) describes these positive attitudes and behaviours as a result of equality at work, which is evident in these stories.

“As an employee at this particular company, there is order, your salary is always on time and you get recognition for the work produced. The work environment is strict and professional, yet it feels like home.”

“I work at a dairy product factory...we specialise in all dairy products. I love my job, there’s nothing complicated about what I do...I load and offload trucks that's all. Is it cold? Yes extremely at winter especially, I drink about 5 cups of coffee per shift. Just to keep warm. The only plus for my job is the almost free stuff we get, at the staff shop....we get 75%off everything...so that's a plus for my kids and wife. My co-workers are great, even the supervisors and managers treat us with respect....yes the are days when the shhhugar hits the fan, but we handle it as a team. Our biggest threat to our day...is if the trucks are late, and our customers are stressing about their deliveries...then we start thinking outside the box.”

The BR corner of the triad intended to investigate the inverse of the top corner, thus looking at inequality and perceptions of merit, with 23% of participants placing their story in this corner. As expected, the stories were similar to those of the top corner; however, with one significant difference, most of the stories were depicted negatively. Moreover, these stories are more explicit in their inequality accounts than the top-corner stories. Several stories also note the aspect of the level of education, seniority, favouritism, and discrimination indicating that jobs are not always awarded according to merit. Importantly, both stories from the top corner and the BR corner speak about inequality and discrimination, where the concepts go hand in hand.

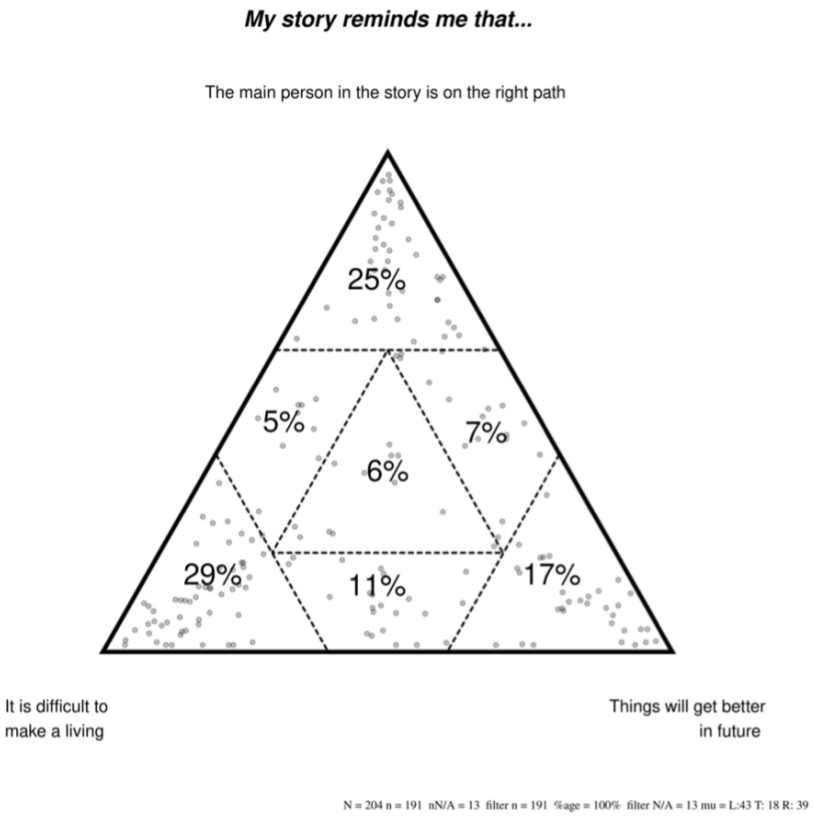
“I used to work at a hospitality company that focused on linens. I worked there as a general worker, picking, packing and dispatch. What I realised they hired people based on their colour (race) because our supervisors I highly suspect that they don't have matric but are supervisors because they were coloured. They broke the terms and conditions of our contract,

stating that we get three types of written warning: verbal, written and final warning they lacked supervising qualities."

In corroboration with the findings from other triads, unfairness, a lack of agency and inequality are the major themes which emerged from the stories in this triad. These stem from a lack of decent working environments, resulting in a threat to workplace safety, income inadequacy and general uncertainty. These are all aspects of precarious work which affect how people experience work. Specifically, these result in negative employee behaviours and attitudes, such as the intention to quit, demonstrating the outcomes of precarious work. On the other hand, those who experienced equality and fairness at work experienced this due to decent working conditions. This demonstrates how polarising the experiences of precarious work are versus decent work as outlined by the PWT and PWF as inverse concepts. This triad, therefore, demonstrates evidence of how the PWF and PWT adequately reflect the experiences of precarious work and the inverse in South Africa.

Triad 6: Perceptions of current lived reality versus future orientation towards work

The findings of this triad indicate that people are



struggling to make a living, as 29% of data points fall within the BL corner of the triad. Although this finding is unsurprising given the current economic climate in South Africa, it contradicts

triad 1 in that people are struggling to make ends meet. However, they do not place greater value on income earned. Triad 1 required participants to weigh the three survival needs outlined by the PWT, which found that the importance of income is diminished when compared with personal safety and familial responsibility, as these are considered salient aspects of survival. However, the stories shared in this triad do not require participants to weigh survival needs or people versus money. Rather, they require participants to weigh their future, which relies on the money they earn. Thus, although the stories shared in this segment of the triad include many of the stories shared in Triad 1, greater emphasis could be placed on money as it is not being compared to more salient survival needs. The below participant's story emphasises the importance of money:

"I am a bar tender I always work late that why my interview is at this time I love the job I'm doing but I don't enjoy it but because of the money I have to do it I ended up loving my job day by day cause I had no choice life teaches us to love the work we do even if we don't like it some situations makes us to have no choice so I'm working to feed my family also when we at work we get bribes also tips yes u take a tip but not bribes like when a guy want to have sex with a lady and she refuses I would get paid to keep quiet about it they do their things there and get the lady but I keep quiet because I need the job so my story is no fun but I'm telling it because yes we need work to feed our families but at times we choose wrong decisions that hurt others but we need to work so my job is not fun we make too many wrongs but keep quiet and do your job or you will lose it yes I'm not happy about it but it's life."

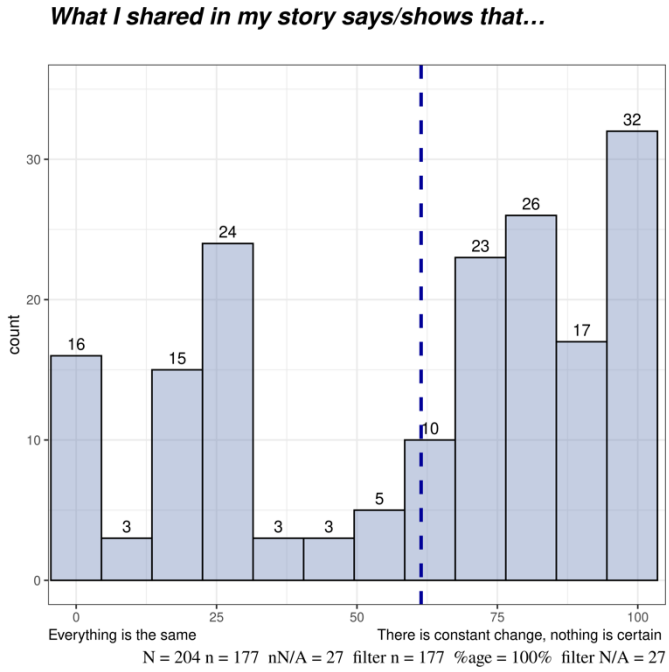
Interestingly, although people struggle to make ends meet, 25% of participants indicate that they are on the right path. Although many participants reflect dissatisfaction with their jobs due to aspects of precarity at work, such as a lack of psychosocial safety as evident in the above narrative, it can be inferred that their ability to take care of their family due to their jobs leads them to believe they are doing the right thing for their future. This may reflect a level of optimism, regardless of their lack of current stability, that people have that although their current situation is dissatisfactory, the ability to make ends meet will help them to obtain better opportunities in the future. This, again, confirms Barchiesi's (2008) finding, which states that South African people who work in precarious working situations do not necessarily view their situation as hopeless. However, it should be noted that a smaller percentage of participants believe that things will get better in the future (17%). As this is an unknown desire and cannot be guaranteed, it indicates that although some participants feel their future is stable, most participants indicate a lack of certainty and stability, heightening their precarity. Although these participants are not satisfied with their current work situations, they are not necessarily despondent about their future, given that half of the stories are associated with the top and right corner of the triad rather than the BL corner.

The dominant theme in this triad indicates that people struggle to make ends meet yet to demonstrate a sense of optimism about their future as they believe they are on the right path. Although people are struggling financially, the sense of optimism comes into play as the stories indicate that people can still care for their families, giving them a sense of hope that they are on the right path. Although work experiences manifest in subjective experiences of precarity at work, including a lack of psychosocial safety and income insecurity, affecting job attitudes by decreasing job satisfaction, participants stay in these precarious working situations because it allows them to meet their basic needs and care for their families. The PWF outlines these aspects of precarity at work and the outcomes, therefore adequately accounting for those experiences. However, the element of hopefulness and optimism needs to be captured in the PWF, thereby not accounting for all the outcomes of such precarious working situations.

Dyads

As previously described, dyads are viewed on a continuum; therefore, participants may place their stories anywhere on the slider, according to which label holds greater significance for their story. Participants are therefore tasked with evaluating the two opposite concepts and how strongly they relate to their micro-narrative. The dotted blue line represents the mean according to the distribution of stories.

Dyad 1: Examining change and uncertainty



Some participants describe a need for certainty around the work itself, specifically regarding the quantity of work, including working hours and wages earned. Participants often need more control and an increased reliance on their employers or customers to determine how often they work and how much they earn. In contrast to the PWT, participants display a lack of work volition, or choice, over their working arrangements because of their dependence on this job, reducing their ability to obtain decent work (Duffy et al., 2016). This perpetual state of uncertainty has been identified as a means for employers to exercise control over vulnerable workers, maintaining their marginality and dependence on the organisation (Arnold, 2013; Bodibe, 2006). Although South Africa has good labour laws which protect workers in these instances, their vulnerability and dependence on income in the face of limited alternative income force people to hold onto these uncertain situations (Arnold, 2013). As a result, this has negative consequences for their ability to meet their basic survival needs and provide for their families, eroding the idea of obtaining decent work. Moreover, this also negatively impacts their well-being and attitudes towards work (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018). “My story makes me feel really bad” can be seen as a stress response to unpredictability and uncertainty, which increases the likelihood of developing depressive symptoms, anxiety, and reduced job satisfaction (Benach et al., 2014). Thus, the consequences of uncertainty can be said to permeate other areas of life. This is evident in both of the stories below:

“My story makes me feel really bad. Our company book us on and off if we work or if we do not work. They only book who they want to and who they know. Sometimes we don’t get booked for a whole month. We have people to provide for, this is unreal. The people at work is so nice and friendly but not our bosses and mangers”

“I’m currently working as a call center agent. We were required to sell insurance to our clients. The is a certain target that we were required to meet and you get paid based on the target. I’m always working hard to make sure I exceeded the expected target. I work long hours but the rate per hour that I’m getting is really not worthy the time I sacrifice from my family and social life. Our boss is also not understanding he’s always pushing for work to be done. I’m always tired and hardly spend time with my daughter I’m only staying in the job to make means to live otherwise I would have resigned.”

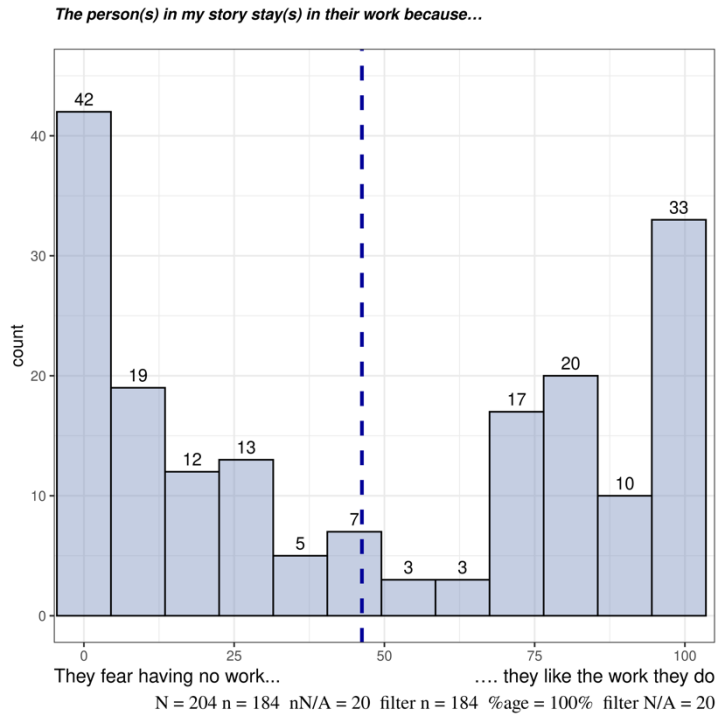
The other side of the continuum reflects the opposite of uncertainty and speaks to consistency. Although some stories reflect consistency in terms of their work prospects, depicting their work in a positive light, as intended by the design of this triad, some stories rather depict consistency in a negative light. For example, ongoing instances of poor workplace safety, discrimination, insufficient income, harassment, and exploitation are all consistent themes among the stories on this side of the dyad. This indicates that the dyad was interpreted by participants, highlighting a need for change where change is needed. Several negative stories highlight the continuation of poor workplace practices, which participants

endure because they need income. Moreover, it could also indicate that participants view this lack of change as a way work has always been experienced in this context. Several authors emphasise that precarious working conditions have become a way of life, or the norm, in South Africa (Barchiesi, 2008; Al-Bulushi, 2013; Munck, 2013; Betti, 2018). Therefore, it is unsurprising that participants reflect a lack of change in their working experiences, as indicated in the narrative below:

"I am a general cleaner for a cleaning company... I work 5 days a week. I don't love my job, I like my job...meaning, I make just enough money to feed my kids...and travel back and forth from work. It's a thankless job to clean, unless you get the opportunity to make someone tea...then you'll get the occasional "Thanks" but that's if you lucky. This one day I had to do a double shift due to some stock take, no prior notice was given to me...but because they knew how I needed the extra cash, of course, I wouldn't refuse."

The distribution of stories in this dyad indicates that the dominant theme is that participants are experiencing constant change and uncertainty. Allan et al. (2021) describe uncertainty as a distinctive feature of precarious work, not only in relation to the unpredictability of work itself but also the uncertainty about the inability to cope with the consequences of this uncertainty due to a lack of access to alternative resources. Therefore, uncertainty can relate to the quantity and the continuity of work itself. These negative experiences due to the quantity of work are highlighted in participants' inability to cope with the uncertainty and their inability to cope with the continuation of these poor working conditions. The uncertainty evident in these stories is indicative of precarity at work. The consequences of this uncertainty, including negative well-being and the inability to meet basic survival needs, are outlined in Allan et al. (2021) PWF as outcomes of work precarity. The PWF, therefore, sufficiently accounts for the experiences of participants in this study as it accounts not only for the experiences of work precarity but also for the outcomes indicated in the stories mentioned above.

Dyad 2: Examining why participants stay in their jobs



Unsurprisingly, most stories related more closely to the left side of the dyad. Not only is this indicative of the poor social and political safety nets that are remiss in South Africa, but also may reflect the importance of the responsibility to provide for one's family. Al-Bulushi (2013) describes instances of families pooling income to make ends meet, where a threat to one person's income threatens the livelihood of an entire family. Here, the fear of having no work extends beyond just the individual but is a collective means of survival which several people depend on. This explains why 42 data points are placed in the far left corner, indicating the severity of the impact that a loss of income could have on people. This theme is supported by the narrative below:

"I'm currently working as a call center agent. We were required to sell insurance to our clients. The is a certain target that we were required to meet and you get paid based on the target. I'm always working hard to make sure I exceeded the expected target. I work long hours but the rate per hour that I'm getting is really not worthy the time I sacrifice from my family and social life. Our boss is also not understanding he's always pushing for work to be done. I'm always tired and hardly spend time with my daughter I'm only staying in the job to make means to live otherwise I would have resigned."

On the other side of the continuum, fewer participants reflect that they stay in their jobs because they like their work. Stories in this segment of the dyad speak more about a poor work environment created by other employees or superiors rather than a dislike of the job itself. These stories present the major themes of poor relationships with colleagues and unfair,

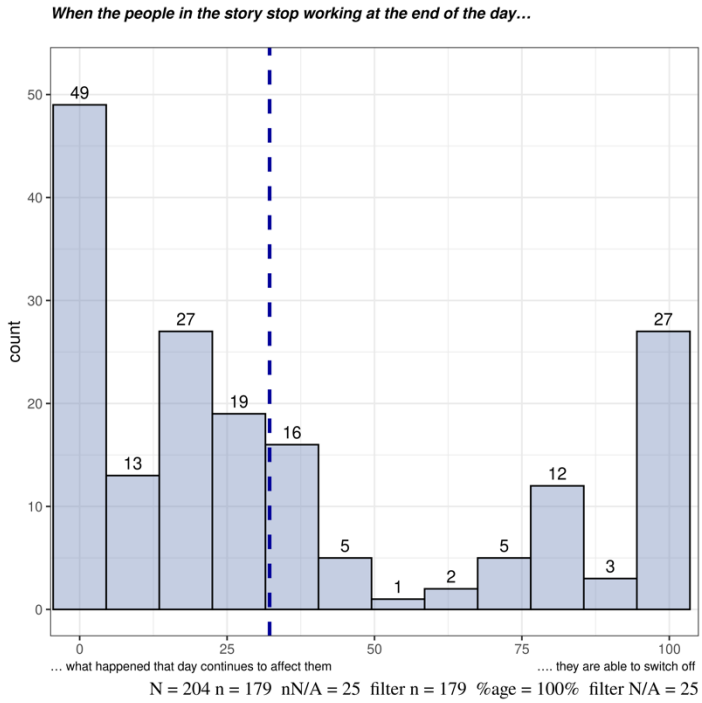
disrespectful, and discriminatory treatment by managers or employers. Titles of stories include “Judgement in the workplace”, “Victimisation in the workplace”, and “Deception at work”. The experiences and treatment of people by others where discrimination, inequality and unlawful practices are being carried out the place these employees under undue stress and put their employment at risk if they speak out against it. Thus, these experiences create precarious working conditions.

“As I am working with small kids has always been a good experience but these days it’s bad because of the bad behavior they are showing. It makes it difficult to teach because they are unruly. It is worse now as I was sweared by a learner. You report to the parents they don’t take you seriously or reprimand their kids. The learner is Soo disrespectful to a fact that he says racist words. I really feel bad about this because I have to deal with this every day.”

On the other hand, several participants whose stories indicated that they enjoyed their job also recounted positive experiences, including narratives of how they were treated well and enjoyed did their work. Although these stories are in the minority (n= 33), it is important to mention that there are instances where participants are being treated well and with dignity, obtaining decent work as outlined by the PWT (Duffy et al., 2016)

The majority of participants reflect a fear of losing their jobs, with the severe effects that this job loss will have on their family being a salient theme in these narratives. Therefore, the fear of having no job is not just about individual survival but the survival of the collective group or family, which these participants are responsible for supporting. Not only does this speak to the three survival needs that need to be met as outlined in the PWT, but it also indicates the distress that participants experience from having few alternative work opportunities, therefore staying in precarious working situations. The lack of alternative opportunities is reflected in the economic situation in South Africa, demonstrating how economic conditions affect experiences of precarious work as outlined in the PWF. Both the PWT and PWF are, therefore, able to provide context for participants' experiences and the reasons why participants stay in work, which is objectively deemed as precarious.

Dyad 3: Effects of work situations outside of work



Upon examination of the stories from the left side of the dyad, it is evident that these comprise mostly negative stories that continue to play on participants' minds. Many of the stories told depict extremely poor working conditions, with stories often reflecting past work experiences. The fact that participants remember and reflect on past stories shows that they are important reflections of work at the forefront of their minds when reflecting on their work experiences. This demonstrates the importance of these events for the participants and the significance that they hold when reflecting on their work experiences. As a result of the lasting impacts that some of the stories describe, including physical ailments, psychological trauma, feelings of inadequacy due to discrimination and the impact on their livelihood, it is evident that there is significant precarity at work which is experienced. As the Precarious Work Framework indicates, precarity at work encompasses several aspects, including discrimination and reduced psychological safety (Allan et al., 2021). In particular, the lack of psychological and physical safety, expressed in many of the stories in this cohort, demonstrates why these stories have such a lasting impact. Psychological safety severely impacts mental well-being, extending far beyond the workplace to affect individuals in their personal lives (Duffy et al., 2016). This is evident in the stories below, which highlight the outcomes of enduring such precarious working conditions:

"Do you have to support for your family? My job treated me bad, and it wasn't the best days for me. I got hurt at work and had to go to the doctor. The company refused to pay the doctors' bills and I was fired. This was hard and kind of weird because a company should have

a employees back. Finding another job was very very hard. But I found a workspace where I feel appreciate and well taken care of."

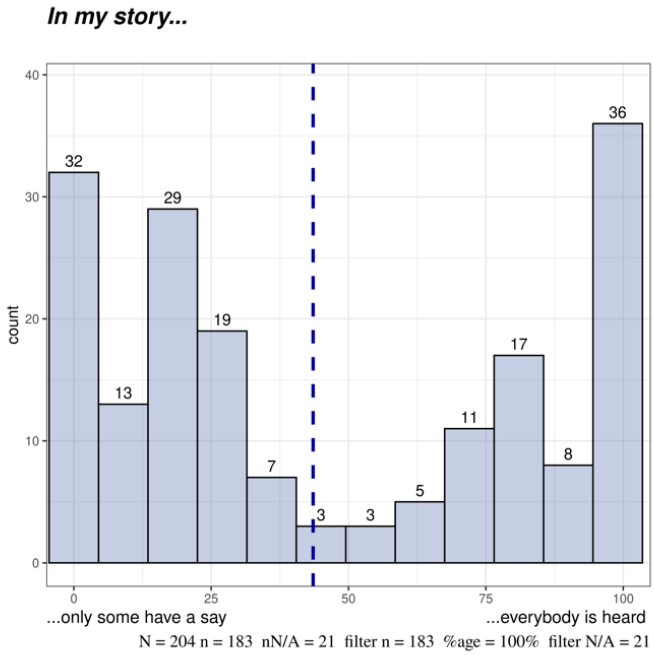
"My story is about how I worked in a boat Monday to Monday without getting a day off. I was overworked and it seems like it was only or should I say mostly black people who were doing overwork but the pay wasn't even worthy it. Our health was compromised as well as we were not given protective clothing or freezer jackets as we were working in the sea everyday it was very cold. You could only be off for a day but most times I couldn't spend with my family because the job was too demanding."

On the other hand, stories told from the right side of the dyad reflect a much more positive tone regarding their experiences. This is evident from a participant's extract mentioned below, which speaks to the order at their workplace and the recognition they receive for good work. Many participants reflect on happy work environments with order, collaboration, respect, and a certain amount of autonomy.

"As an employee at this particular company, there is order, your salary is always on time and you get recognition for the work produced. The work environment is strict and professional, yet it feels like home."

When comparing the stories along the continuum, it is evident that the stories on the right present the opposite experiences of those on the left. Feelings of orderliness, feeling valued for work done, and a happy work environment which "feels like home" is reminiscent of decent working experiences. As outlined in the PWT, decent work includes a safe working environment, fosters greater mental health, and helps individuals to meet their life needs through adequate income (Duffy et al., 2016). In contrast, as discussed above, the negative stories from the left side of the slider recount negative and extreme working situations, with participants' attitudes reminiscent of complete despair. The continuum of these opposing sides demonstrates two ends of the working extreme, the left side representing precarious working situations and the right side representing decent working situations. As 49 of the data points are on the far-left side, it can be said that working in precarious working situations has lasting effects on individuals, making this a salient theme in this dyad. Allan et al. (2021) highlight these lasting effects in their model as outcomes of precarious work. Therefore, the results of this dyad show the PWF's usefulness in describing participants' experiences. Moreover, the results from this dyad also demonstrate a clear example of decent work representing the inverse of precarious work.

Dyad 4: Exploring experiences of marginalisation



Due to the context of South Africa, where there is significant poverty and a high rate of inequality, perpetuating the marginalisation of people in precarious working conditions (Barchiesi, 2008), it was expected that stories would be placed more towards the left side of the slider, which was the case in the data. However, those who felt their stories reflected being heard at work felt strongly about this as their data points fell on the end of the right side of the slider. However, more stories were placed on the left side of the dyad (n= 100). Specifically, those participants who described their stories as indicating that only some were heard gave titles to their stories such as “Racism at work”, “Unfairness”, “Hustle”, and “Work depression”. These titles suggest a sense of inequality, discrimination, and discontent at work leading to poorer well-being as outlined in their stories. These elements of marginalisation impede the obtainment of decent work and increase the likelihood of working in precarious conditions, according to Scully (2016) and Allan et al. (2021). This is highlighted in the story below:

“… I was a domestic worker in Seapoint working for a family of 10 people. Life was ok at first, me working, minding my own business, while they do theirs but things started to change when they became rich. Their son opening a big company outing on high his family name. I raised that kid, I was so proud of him we used to talk about anything cause his parents were very strict when I came to the kids. I don’t know why, but they were. So the kids loved talking to me a lot. So that also changed when their mother found out that they talked with me not with her, saying that these aren’t my kids, don’t act as if you raised them… I continued with my work. When I’m busy working they called me names saying I’m not cleaning properly these days, I’m getting old they need to find someone fresh now. I went to my room and cried waiting

for my off day to tell my husband about my days that just changed. So I did. My husband asked me to hang in there, we need the money. So I did, but I didn't enjoy my work anymore. I was just there for money and they became racist towards me. I had my plates to eat on, not their things. My food was just aside for me to eat, own a toilet, and not get into their cars. I'm black but I stayed. Even so it was killing me inside – hurt, betrayed – let me not go in too deep. It still hurts me until this day. People don't know what they say to others makes them lose self-esteem…."

The above stories bring to life some of the poor work circumstances through a lack of dignity that the participants in this cohort are forced to endure to make a living. Moreover, they also highlight the trauma or lasting effects that participants experience as a result of their precarious working conditions. Many participants, including the one in the story, cannot speak out against the injustices they experience at work due to their reliance on income for themselves and their families. Structural racism and limited access to economic resources are key characteristics of marginalisation, which many participants in these stories attest to. This is highlighted by Allan et al. (2021) in the PWF as factors that worsen precarious working conditions. Moreover, these elements of marginalisation enhance aspects of precarious work, including a lack of psychosocial safety, economic insecurity from low wages, workplace discrimination and alienation, leading to poor mental health, reduced self-esteem, and decreased job satisfaction (Kalleberg & Hewison, 2012). Therefore, the experiences of marginalisation can be seen as a salient theme in this dyad which the PWF accounts for in its theory, thereby adequately representing the experiences of workers in this study.

4.1. Summary of findings

The key findings of the above results will be outlined below in a manner which shows how they address this study's research question:

Do existing theories of precarious work reflect the experiences of precarious workers in South Africa?

The findings above outline the subjective experiences of precarious work that people in this study described through their personal narratives and evaluated through interactions with triads and dyads. The PWF and PWT were both instrumental in designing the dyads and triads to ascertain whether these theories adequately captured the experiences of precarious workers in South Africa. From the results presented above, several main themes capture the sentiments and experiences of the participants in this study. The main themes are outlined

below, followed by a discussion of whether the PWT and PWF adequately explain these themes.

From the results, it is clear that many participants struggle to make a living due to the precarious work situations in which they are employed in. However, the results indicated that participants continue to endure their work situations in order to be able to meet their basic survival needs, a key element being able to take care of their families. As the PWT indicates, the three survival needs, namely, safety at work, adequate compensation and hours which allow for free time to complement familial and social values, are met through the obtainment of decent work, which, in the literature review, was outlined as the inverse of precarious work. The PWT adequately accounts for these survival needs as they were referred to throughout many of the story's participants shared across multiple dyads and triads, even though this aspect of decent work was only explicitly examined in triad 1. The results also indicated that the struggle to survive as mentioned above directly results from objective factors of precarious work, such as insufficient earnings, a lack of workplace safety and a lack of power or agency at work. Specifically, psychological safety included discrimination, toxicity in the workplace, a lack of value, judgement, unfair treatment, misuse of power, respect, and equality, with the subjective experiences of these objective factors of precarious work being delved into by the stories that participants shared. Consequentially, participants manifest feelings of anger, resentment, poor mental well-being and reduced satisfaction and commitment to their jobs. These subjective experiences speak directly to the aspects of precarity at work, which are mentioned in the PWF, demonstrating support for the theory, and showing that the theory adequately captures the experiences of people in this study. Moreover, the explicit mention of psychological safety as a characteristic of precarious work, as outlined by the PWF, adequately captures not only the objective characteristics of safety but also outlines the subjective experiences thereof, demonstrating the relevance of precarity at work in South Africa.

A further significant theme that emerged from the results is that safety was regarded as a top priority and main theme for participants, particularly because it allows them to meet other important survival needs, such as earning an income and providing for their family. Although income was not necessarily a salient theme when participants were asked to weigh this up against taking care of their family, these results foregrounded that basic survival is not just individualistic but primarily relates to the ability to take care of one's family, a responsibility that many participants bear the burden of. As such, many participants demonstrate the intention to quit their jobs; however, they do not follow through on this desire because of their familial responsibilities. The precarity from work which participants outlined through their perceived income inadequacy is therefore contingent on other responsibilities. This is a core aspect of the PWT as a need for survival that must be met. Although the results indicate

negative job attitudes and behaviours, including job dissatisfaction and turnover intention, as outlined as an outcome of work precarity in the PWF, a key factor affecting this experience is whether participants can meet their familial responsibilities.

In contrast to the outcomes of work precarity mentioned in the PWF, many participants reflect optimism regardless of their lack of income or poor psychological safety because they believe they are doing the right thing in staying in their jobs. After all, it allows them to take care of their families. Therefore, as evident from these results, the PWF provides a sufficient basis to explore these elements, including precarity from work and its outcomes; however, it is the PWT which brings contextual factors like familial responsibility to the forefront. The PWT is, therefore, integral in highlighting and uncovering these context-specific and cultural nuances.

Further to the point mentioned above, although many participants desire the need for radical change, instability and insecurity seem only to be a concern when it threatens the ability to take care of one's family. Interestingly, participants are willing to adapt to other situations; however, they are dissuaded from doing so because of their personal and familial responsibilities. Here, again the results demonstrate that contextual factors are an important influence in deciding whether change is acceptable. Moreover, this need for change also stems from poor working conditions, which erode the employment relationship and foster perceptions of unfair treatment, inequality, respect, and agency. This lack of agency is a salient theme throughout many participants' stories because they lack autonomy over their working conditions, including income and unfair treatment because of their limited alternative opportunities for work. Despite these conditions of precarity, participants still seem to show a sense of optimism for the future. This optimism or hopefulness stems from the fact that in that they have a willingness for change to happen. Although change and uncertainty are seen as a fear for many participants, the negative lasting impacts that precarious working conditions have for them actually make them want change to occur. Here, the continuation of work is still a primary concern; however, it is outweighed by the lack of ability to cope with staying in precarious working conditions. The PWF, although sufficient in its ability to account for the objective factors of precarious work and its negative affect on people, does not seem to take into account the nuance of the South African context. For example, it does not account for experiences of optimism in precarious working conditions, even though evidence for this is from prior studies (Barchiesi, 2008). Moreover, participants' willingness for change and uncertainty, despite the anxiety that it provokes, is also not an experience which is accounted for in the PWF. These context-specific aspects are elements the PWF does not account for in the South African experiences of precarious work.

Participants also demonstrate a sense of shared experiences of working conditions showing that this way of work is a norm for people. Thus, although the stories shared are

predominantly based on individual experiences, the participant's indication that other people experience similar things alludes to a sense of collectivism and normative societal experience. The PWT and PWF point out that these are grounded in and shaped by the contextual factors of South Africa, including elements of social and economic marginalisation which were evident in these results. Although the PWT and PWF are critical in directing the researcher to acknowledge these underlying contextual factors, they do not adequately capture the nuances of precarious work experiences in South Africa. Although participants are aware of the world and the impact that it may have on their narratives, the use of both the PWF and PWT does not account for specific and contextually relevant contextual factors which may affect these experiences. Therefore, although it directs the researcher to consider these elements, it does not provide a holistic set of contextual factors which adequately account for all experiences of precarious work, specifically in the South African region.

4.2. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The focus of the current study was to investigate the experiences of precarious work, and although this was achieved, the study still recognises some limitations. Concerning the research question, the study primarily focused on the subjective experiences of precarious work to highlight individual experiences. Although this serves to answer the research question, there is a lack of understanding of whether the participant’s employment conditions can objectively be defined as precarious. It would be insightful if comparisons may be drawn of the objective versus subjective characteristics of precarious work in order to understand whether these are, in fact, true experiences of precarious work. Given the limited and restricted time frame and scope of this study, this was not possible. However, future research could therefore aim to include questions which provide insight into objective factors which make work precarious.

The research question aims to understand whether the existing theories capture the experiences associated with precarious work in South Africa. However, although the sample size was sufficient for using SenseMaker, it may not be sufficient to capture all the experiences in precarious work. The sample adequately represents workers from Khayelitsha and Mitchel’s Plain; however, as this is a distinct section of the population, the experiences captured may not reflect experiences of the broader South Africa. Future studies that explore the experiences of precarious work should aim to include a larger and more representative sample to capture experiences of precarious work in South Africa truly.

4.3. Practical Contributions

The current study holds important practical implications around the understanding of experiences of precarious work in South Africa for employers, policymakers and researchers.

Firstly, the results of this study indicate the importance of limiting exposure to precarious working conditions to improve people's lives at work and outside of work because of the deeply interwoven relationship between life and work. This includes eradicating objective aspects of precarious work, including offering a minimum wage which exacerbates economic insecurity, unsafe working environments and inconsistency of work in terms of contracts and working hours. However, the more salient contribution of this study is its insight into the aspects which South African employees deem important. Firstly, treating employees with fairness, dignity, and respect is a significant contributor to subjective experiences of precarity and, therefore, should aim to be more positive, fair, and respectful. This highlights the emphasis this study places on providing a physically safe working environment and a psychologically safe environment where employees feel safe, valued, and dignified. This study, therefore, also highlights the need for practical recourse against workplace discrimination, inequality, and psychological unsafety so that South African employees feel fully protected from employers, acting to minimise social and economic marginalisation.

4.1. Theoretical Contributions

The current study made important theoretical contributions to understanding whether the existing theories of precarious work adequately account for the subjective experiences of precarious work in the Southern context. Specifically, this study enhanced the limited knowledge of subjective experiences of precarious work in South Africa and corroborated prior findings of precarious work in both the Global North and the Global South. Importantly, this study demonstrated support for using the PWT and PWF in the Global South because they could account for a significant proportion of participants' experiences. However, these results indicate that the existing theories do not adequately account for all contextual factors that may influence these experiences, as well as the outcome of attitudes of hopefulness and optimism even when precarious work is experienced.

4.2. Conclusion

This study set out to understand whether the current theories of precarious work adequately capture the experiences of precarious workers using a unique tool. The use of the SenseMaker tool allowed for critical insight into the lives and experiences of workers in South Africa and served to add to the limited research that is currently available on this topic in the Southern context, bringing to light the importance of including the Global South in such a global topic. The findings of this study suggest that both the PWT and PWF, used together, adequately account for the experiences of precarious workers in South Africa. These theories

help researchers to understand not just the objective factors of precarious work but also shine a light on how they are subjectively experienced, as well as the outcomes that they may have on individuals. The theories, therefore, sufficiently accounted for elements of work precarity, including precarity of work, precarity at work and precarity from work, as well as the outcomes related to these, including job attitudes, job behaviours, effects on identity and mental health.

Although these theories account for most experiences of precarious work in this context, the theories did not capture elements including positive attitudes towards one's future, including hopefulness and optimism, despite being in precarious working situations. Moreover, these theories were also remiss in accounting for the contextual nuances shaping precarious work experiences in South Africa. Therefore, for the most part, the theories sufficiently account for the experiences of precarious work in South Africa; however, they do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors, including individual and context-specific cultures, that influence the subjective experiences of precarious work.

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