

Precariousness during an ongoing crisis. Cultural workers and the corona pandemic

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Abstract

This study examines precariousness among cultural workers during an ongoing crisis. A survey of Norway's largest trade union for performing artists 1 year into the pandemic shows that precariousness before the pandemic was amplified during the crisis. Lack of economic buffer and social benefits rendered economic insecurity most burdensome for those with precarious work arrangements. For future crises, we suggest that the authorities need to develop better targeted economic compensations for labour with precarious work arrangements.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Global crises such as economic crises, natural disasters and pandemics have potentially large effects on the structure of the labour market. Therefore, we need knowledge about the consequences of such extreme situations for different segments of the workforce. One example is the global economic and financial setback that began in 2008. In the United Kingdom, unemployment and underemployment increased especially among young people (Goujard et al., 2011, Heyes et al., 2017), and self-employment expanded substantially from 2010 to 2017 (Heyes et al., 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic, which unfolded as a worldwide crisis at the beginning of 2020 (Nicola et al., 2020), also has potentially dramatic consequences for the labour market, which is the topic of this paper.

A vulnerable group in the labour market are workers who even before the pandemic experienced precarious working conditions. A key question is whether the corona crisis has amplified differences in precariousness between permanently employed compared to workers

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with other work arrangements such as self-employment. Specifically, we investigate whether differences *before* the pandemic have consequences on the perception of insecurity and well-being *during* the crisis. A pertinent issue is if uncertainties matter more or less for the permanently employed compared to workers with precarious work arrangements. On one hand, new uncertainties may matter relatively more for workers with the comfort of permanent employment because they are less accustomed to coping with insecurity. On the other hand, those with precarious work arrangements will presumably be relatively less resilient against economic hardships and may consequently experience the crisis as more stressful.

The study is situated among professional cultural workers for several reasons. The cultural sector, here defined as all subsectors whose activities are based on cultural values and/or artistic and other creative expressions, has been among the hardest hit by the lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2020).¹ Following the onset of the pandemic, cultural employment in the EU decreased by 2.6% compared with 1.3% for the total employment (Eurostat, 2021).

The cultural sector has for decades had a large proportion of workers in a precarious working situation due to a constant excess supply of recruits (Bennett, 2009; Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015; Dowd & Pinheiro, 2013; Eurostat, 2021; Faulkner & Anderson, 1987; Hennekam, 2017; Mangset et al., 2018; Menger, 1999, p. 545; Steiner & Schneider, 2013), and with a wide array of precarious work arrangements such as freelancing, self-employment, and temporary work contracts. In addition, cultural workers frequently combine different types of work arrangements (Ashton, 2015; Pollard, 2013; Throsby & Zednik, 2011). The cultural sector is therefore familiar with precarious work, with corresponding skills to cope with uncertainty but also with weaker economic buffers to deal with a crisis. Notably, the impact of the pandemic varied greatly depending on the subsector within the cultural sector (Salvador et al., 2022). The performing arts sector such as music, dance and drama which are performed for an audience, were most affected by the lockdown (Lamonica & Iserna, 2022). Social distancing measures meant that venue-based sectors such as performing arts, live music, and festivals could no longer remain open. Overall, the performing arts sector is a suitable context for comparing work arrangements with regard to precarious work characteristics and implications for well-being during the crisis.

This article contributes to knowledge about whether and how precariousness in 'normal' times is amplified during a crisis. If we find such a 'Matthew-effect' in the labour market, where the authorities fail to reach those that need it most (Bonoli & Liechti, 2018), there is an urgent need to improve economic compensation schemes during crises for labour in precarious working situations. The first section of the paper describes the empirical context which is cultural workers in Norway, with a particular focus on performing arts. We then present theory and hypotheses regarding precariousness and well-being to address our research questions. The obtained self-reported data are collected from a sample of members of *Creo*—the largest interest organisation for artists and cultural workers in Norway. The members have various work arrangements such as permanent employment, temporary employment, freelancing, self-employment and many in addition combine different work arrangements. We collected data short of 1 year after the crisis hit Norway. At that juncture, respondents had substantial experience with the pandemic and there was still considerable uncertainty concerning further infection control and the longevity of the lockdown.

¹The definitions of cultural and creative sector vary across countries and continents, and typically include subsectors such as architecture, archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audio-visual (including film, television, video games and multimedia), tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design, festivals, music, literature, performing arts, publishing, radio and visual arts and fashion (OECD, 2020).

2 | RESEARCH CONTEXT: CULTURAL WORKERS IN THE PERFORMING ARTS SECTOR IN NORWAY

A meta-analysis of 63 studies of precarious employment shows that core characteristics are employment insecurity, income inadequacy, and lack of rights and protections (Kreshpaj et al., 2020). Careers in the cultural sector have traditionally been described as ‘involving chronic unemployment and underemployment’ (Bridgstock et al., 2015, p. 334) with a persistent supply surplus of artists and with job insecurity and low incomes (Menger, 1999; Steiner & Schneider, 2013). Also in Norway, there has been a surplus of cultural workers over time (Heian et al., 2015; Mangset et al., 2018). Furthermore, a large survey among cultural workers in Norway shows that most are self-employed (64%) and/or freelancers (10%), 5% had temporary work contracts, and only 17% had permanent employment (Heian et al., 2015, p. 12). Among musicians, 54% were self-employed, 8% were freelancers (10%), 3% had temporary work contracts, and only 26% had permanent employment. Regarding income generated from artistic work, musicians with permanent employment earned NOK 348,000 NOK (about 35,000 euro) whereas self-employed musicians earned only NOK 176,000 NOK (Heian et al., 2015, pp. 85/88).

Even in a comprehensive welfare state such as Norway, those with precarious work arrangements also have less access to social benefits. Permanent employees are entitled to holiday and sick pay, protection against redundancy, right to compensation when laid off, and are covered by the Working Environment Act. In contrast, freelancers are only to some degree covered by the Working Environment Act, whereas self-employed are not covered by the Working Environment Act and do not get sick pay for the first 16 days of absence. Furthermore, workers on temporary working contracts, freelancers, and self-employed have weaker pension rights (Jensen & Nergaard, 2019, pp. 17–18).

The culture sector showed immediately to be one of the hardest-hit sectors economically by the corona crisis in Norway. A 60% decrease in gross product for art, entertainment, and other services was estimated from January to April 2020 (Holden et al., 2020, p. 17). A report initiated by the Norwegian Arts Council showed that music and performing arts were particularly affected with an income loss of 33% and 53% in 2020 (Røed et al., 2021). To cope with these challenges, the authorities implemented economic compensation measures and schemes. Some of them were universal while others were specifically designed for the cultural sector. A report half a year after the lockdown shows that artists estimated that 38% of the income loss had been compensated for from 12 March 2020, until September 2020 (Grünfeld et al., 2020, p. 5).

Summing up, cultural workers in Norway experienced precarious working conditions even *before* the pandemic with a large degree of precarious work arrangements, lower income level, and fewer social benefits. They were therefore particularly vulnerable when the corona crisis hit society. Additionally, even though the government implemented economic compensation schemes, the cultural sector in general and especially the performing arts sector was among the hardest affected immediately after the lockdown in Norway in 2020.

3 | PRECARIOUSNESS AND WELL-BEING

According to Campbell and Price (2016), precariousness can be used at five different levels of social life: precariousness in employment, precarious work, precarious workers, precariat and precarity. We focus on the first three levels in our study.

3.1 | Precarious work arrangements

The first level is grounded in the official categorisation of employment or work arrangements used in official labour market statistics. Despite institutional differences between countries, there is a large degree of consensus on which categories are appropriate. Full-time, permanent employment is the norm in many industrial nations, whereas nonstandard work arrangements deviate from this norm (Kalleberg et al., 2000). In our study, we focus on a dominant categorisation of the labour market among cultural workers in Norway. Permanent or direct employment involves a direct relationship between an employer and an employee and can be full-time as well as part-time (Cappelli & Keller, 2013). Temporary employment implies an employment contract for a limited time and can also be full-time or part-time within the contract period. In Norway, freelancer is defined as an independent labourer with contracts with different organisations without being employed, whereas self-employed with sole proprietorship run their company on their own account and risk (Jensen & Nergaard, 2019).

3.2 | Precarious work characteristics

The next level of analysis is precarious work characteristics. Kalleberg and Vallas (2018, p. 1) define precarious work as ‘work that is uncertain, unstable, and insecure and in which the employees bear the risk of work (as opposed to business or government) and receive limited social benefits and statutory protections’. From this perspective, various dimensions of precariousness tend to cluster in certain work characteristics (Bain & McLean, 2013; Garrick, 1998; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018). Despite challenging working conditions commonly labelled as ‘bad jobs’ (Kalleberg, 2011), many choose artistic careers because of an intense ‘inner drive’ to create art (Jeffri & Throsby, 1994; Røyseng et al., 2007). At the same time, there are a limited number of permanent positions and an oversupply of artists and cultural workers, leaving precarious work arrangements as the only option for many cultural workers (Becker, 2008; Bielby & Bielby, 1999; Dowd & Pinheiro, 2013; Faulkner & Anderson, 1987; Menger, 1999). The intrinsic value of artistic work seems to compensate for precarious working conditions (Adler, 2021; Bridgstock et al., 2015; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; Jeffri & Throsby, 1994; Menger, 1999; Røyseng et al., 2007; Steiner & Schneider, 2013; Umney and Kretsos, 2015). Therefore, artists and cultural workers are constantly coping with the gap between the importance of the artistic job in itself and economic reality. Hence, increased insecurity regarding job content and economic situation are two major dimensions we included in the study.

A recent article by Gallie et al. (2017) distinguishes between job tenure insecurity in terms of ‘anxiety about loss of employment’ and job status insecurity in terms of ‘the threat of loss of valued features of the job’. Based on the ‘Skills and Employment Survey, 2012’, they find that job status insecurity includes less interesting work and less pay. We focus on these two main dimensions of job status insecurity adjusted to cover all types work arrangements and to the corona pandemic. Job content insecurity is defined as the degree to which the individual experience increased uncertainty regarding which tasks to work with in the future because of the corona crisis. Correspondingly, economic insecurity is defined as the degree to which the individual experience increased uncertainty regarding their future economic situation because of the corona crisis. We also include loss of job opportunities such as the experience of being laid off, not renewing temporary contracts, losing freelance jobs, or losing contracts in your own company because of the corona crisis. Additionally, income inadequacy is a major dimension of precarious employment (Kreshpaj et al., 2020). We, therefore, included income level last year, income loss due to the pandemic, and economic compensation during the pandemic.

3.3 | Overall well-being among precarious workers

The precarious worker is engaged in precarious work and has to live with the consequences of such working conditions. This may have an impact on physical, mental and social well-being as well as how they integrate their working life into broader areas of their social life (Campbell & Price, 2016). We focus on subjective overall well-being in terms of overall life satisfaction in our study. According to (Diener et al., 1999), subjective well-being is a broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions and global judgments of life satisfaction. In this perspective, life satisfaction is a subdimension of well-being and is defined as an individual's overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular point in time.

3.4 | Hypotheses

The relationship between different work arrangements and work characteristics has been studied in different contexts. Significant contributions are Kalleberg et al. (2000) analysis of bad jobs in America and Kalleberg's (2011) study of changes in job good and bad jobs in the United States from 1970 to 2000. They argue that standard work arrangements are characterised 'by the exchange of a worker's labour for monetary compensation from an employer with work done on a fixed schedule—usually full-time—at the employer's place of business, under the employer's control, and with the mutual expectation of continued employment' (Kalleberg et al., 2000, pp. 257–258). Deviation from standard work arrangements is labelled as nonstandard work arrangements. They focus on 'bad' job characteristics such as low-income level, lack of health insurance, and pension benefits. They found that nonstandard work arrangements strongly increased the probability of low pay without access to union and pension membership. Also, nonstandard work arrangements were stronger related to employment insecurity than standard work arrangements. McGovern et al. (2004) conducted a similar study in Britain. Despite some institutional differences from the United States, they also found that nonstandard employment increases workers' exposure to bad job characteristics. They included almost the same bad job characteristics in terms of as low wages, no sick pay, and no pension, as well as the unavailability of a career ladder.

Relevant dimensions to describe precarious work characteristics vary between different contexts. We will include dimensions that are of particular importance for cultural workers in Norway during the coronal crisis. All in all, based on research on the relationship between work arrangements and work characteristics we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: *Cultural workers with precarious work arrangements compared to permanent employment will to a larger degree experience (a) increased insecurity regarding future job content and economic situation, (b) loss of job opportunities, and (c) income inadequacy during the corona crisis.*

Artists and cultural workers have a very strong internal motivation to create art (Jeffri & Throsby, 1994; Røyseng et al., 2007). A study of job satisfaction among German artists indicated that the artistic work itself, such as increased job variety and on-the-job learning, made artistic work particularly rewarding and thereby contributed to differences in job satisfaction (Steiner & Schneider, 2013). Furthermore, Kalleberg's (2011, p. 168) study of changes in good and bad jobs in the United States showed that intrinsic rewards were positively and consistently related to overall job satisfaction both in 1977 and 2006. Additionally, a study of how economic recession impacts well-being among young people in 24 European countries, based on the Europeans Social Survey, indicated that economic risk and hardship affected subjective well-being (Reeskens & Vandecasteele, 2017). We, therefore, propose the following hypothesis:

H2: *Increased insecurity regarding future (a) job content and (b) economic situation are negatively related to overall well-being among cultural workers during the corona crisis.*

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic conditions for those with permanent employment were far better than for those with precarious work arrangements. The latest published national-wide survey of Norwegian artists' working conditions showed that permanent employees had the highest annual income of NOK 546,000, while temporary employees earned an average of NOK 445,000, freelancers earned NOK 438,000, and the self-employed had the lowest average annual income of NOK 366,000 (Heian et al., 2015, p. 87). A survey of artist members in the largest work union among cultural workers in the performing arts sector in Norway (Creo) at the beginning of the pandemic showed that in 2019, those with permanent employment earned an average of NOK 602,766 (full-time) Temporary employees earned NOK 495,970 (full-time), whereas self-employed running with sole proprietorship earned NOK 456,026 and freelancers earned NOK 402,803 ([Author 1], [Author 2] & [Author 3], 2020). In comparison, average annual salary among full-time employees in Norway in 2019 was about NOK 575,000 corresponding to about 57,500 euros (Statistics Norway, 2022).

Hence, the overall pattern is that cultural workers in Norway with precarious work arrangements had lower income compared to those with permanent employment before the pandemic. In addition, they had fewer social benefits and probably a lower economic buffer to face the economic challenges caused by the lockdown. Therefore, we expect that a lower income level and economic buffer *before* the pandemic implies a larger vulnerability regarding the effect of precarious work characteristics on well-being *during* the pandemic among cultural workers with precarious work arrangements. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3a: *The negative relationship between increased economic insecurity and overall well-being is stronger for cultural workers with precarious work arrangements compared to permanent employment.*

On the other hand, cultural workers with precarious work arrangements have generally more experience living with insecurity. Thus, they have a greater potential for informal learning where they learn to cope with uncertainty from everyday practice (Garrick, 1998) such as learning from their own experience (Kolb, 1984) and learning from being a part of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) such as arts ensembles, groups, and collectives. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that those with precarious work arrangements to a larger degree have acquired skills to deal with insecurity regarding future job content before the pandemic and therefore were better able to cope with this kind of insecurity imposed by the lockdown. All in all, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3b: *The negative relationship between increased job content insecurity and overall well-being is weaker for cultural workers with precarious work arrangements compared to permanent employment.*

4 | DATA AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 | Participants and procedure

We administered an online survey to cultural workers from 19 January to 14 February 2021. The participants in the survey were members of *Creo*—Norway's largest trade union for performing artists. *Creo* members include musicians, singers, conductors, composers, music and drama teachers, organists, cantors, dancers, choreographers, actors, dramaturgs, directors,

audio/light/studio engineers, scenographers, costume designers, producers, stage managers and administrative staff. We used the internet-based survey system *Nettskjema*, provided by the University of Oslo, to collect the data. This platform ensures the anonymous processing of data. In the invitation letter to the participants, they were informed about the implication of participating and the possibility to withdraw and not responding to the survey. Descriptions of the respondents in the survey are presented in The final net sample includes cultural workers with four types of work arrangements: permanent employment, temporary employment, freelancers and self-employed running their own company. Permanent employment and self-employed are the largest groups, whereas freelancers and temporary wage workers constitute a minority. Fifty-six percent combine different work arrangements such as an independent labourer with contracts with different organisations without being employed (freelancers) and simultaneously working as independent contractors with a sole proprietorship (self-employed).

A majority have a graduate degree (60.5%) and the mean gross annual income is 486,368 NOK (approximately 48,000 euros). The median age is 41–45 years and 49% are female. Furthermore, 57.5% are musicians including composers, conductors, and other performers such as dancers and actors, 25% are music teachers and therapists, and 18% are backstage workers such as scenographers, sound and light engineers, as well as administrative staff. We compared those answering the survey with key characteristics of all members of Creo recorded in their membership database. We found that the sizes of the occupational groups in the research sample ranked in the same order as in the Creo membership base: (1) musicians and other performers, (2) music teachers and (3) backstage workers. The median age for Creo's members is also 41–45 years, and 46% of members in Creo are female.

4.2 | Measurement

4.2.1 | Work arrangements

We apply the same categories as those used in the national-wide survey about working conditions among artists in Norway (Heian et al., 2015) to assess work arrangements. We first asked about their *main* work arrangement, where they could choose one major work arrangement such as permanent employment full-time, permanent employment part-time, temporary employment full-time, temporary employment part-time, freelancer (independent labourer without being employed), or self-employed running their own company. Because many cultural workers combine more than one work arrangement, we also included a question where they could tick off all work arrangements in use at the moment of filling out the survey.

4.2.2 | Perceived insecurity and well-being

Perceived insecurity consists of two dimensions: economic insecurity and job content insecurity. We assessed job content insecurity by a question adjusted from the QPS Nordic Questionnaire (Skogstad, 2001) 'To what degree have you experienced increased uncertainty' because of the corona situation with regard to: (1) what you should work with 2 years from now; (2) your personal economy (we designed Items 1 and 2 specifically for cultural workers during COVID lockdown). Responses were captured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = *to a very little degree* to 5 = *to a very large degree*. Life satisfaction is typically assessed by

self-reporting. Fisher et al. (2016) reviewed various single-item measures in organisational research and concluded that the overall single-item measures of life satisfaction were acceptable. We adapted a measure from their article with the following item: 'As a whole, I am satisfied with my life'. We used a Likert scale from 1 to 10 (1 = *not at all satisfied* and 10 = *very satisfied*).

4.2.3 | Income level and loss of income and job opportunities

We measured income level by asking the respondents to report their gross annual income in 2020. To assess income loss during the pandemic, we asked an additional question: 'To what degree have the following affected you during the corona situation'. The respondents should tick off all the items that described their own experiences. One option was 'Income/wage loss'. There were other alternatives related to the loss of job opportunities such as 'being laid off', 'not renewed temporary work contracts', 'lost freelance jobs', and 'lost contracts in own company'. Lack of appropriate economic compensation during COVID-19 was measured with the following item: 'I realize that I fall between all the stools and that the compensation schemes and measures from the authorities match poorly with my situation'. The answers were captured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = *highly disagree* to 5 = *highly agree*.

4.2.4 | Controls

We also included relevant control variables such as age, educational level, gender and occupational groups. Because we wanted to collect data where we identified different occupational groups, and some of them are quite small, we chose to measure age in intervals of 5 years to ensure the anonymity of the respondents (Table 1).

5 | RESULTS

Table 2 shows precarious work characteristics by four types of main work arrangements. There are notable differences across all indicators, particularly between the permanently employed and those with precarious work arrangements. Respondents with precarious work arrangements experience significantly more insecurity regarding future job content and economic situation compared to cultural workers with permanent employment. Regarding job loss, 77% of the freelancers have lost freelance jobs and 71% of the self-employed with sole proprietorship have lost contracts in their own company. In contrast, only 12% with permanent employment have been laid off. For income inequality, those with precarious work arrangements have lower income, experienced more income loss last year, and find the economic compensations less appropriate during the pandemic. Overall, H1 is supported where cultural workers with precarious work arrangements experience a higher level of precarious work characteristics during the corona crisis than permanently employed.

Table 3 reports the result from ordinary least squares linear regression analysis with regard to overall well-being. The three types of precarious work arrangements typical for cultural workers (self-employed, freelance and temporary work) are included in the analysis as a single dummy variable. We did this analysis in three steps: Model 1 includes controls and two aspects of insecurity, the precarious work arrangements dummy was added in the second step, and the final step includes two interaction terms each as a product of the precarious work arrangement dummy and the two

TABLE 1 Sample descriptives

Age reported in 5-year intervals	Median and mode: 41–45 years
Female	48.6%
Educational attainment	
No college/university degree	10.1%
Undergraduate degree	29.5%
Graduate degree	60.5%
Total	100.0%
Gross annual income (NOK)	Mean = 486,368 SD = 197,385
Main work arrangement	
Permanent employment	59.3%
Temporary employment	4.9%
Freelancer (independent labourer without being employed)	4.3%
Self-employed (independent contractor, running own company)	31.5%
Total	100.0%
More than one work arrangement	56.0%
Occupation, main categories	
Musicians and other performers	57.5%
Music teachers and therapists	24.9%
Backstage workers	17.7%
Total	100.0%
<i>N</i>	696

variables capturing insecurity. We mean-centred variables before multiplication. Models 1 and 2 show that job content insecurity and economic insecurity are negatively associated with well-being, as expected according to hypothesis 2a and hypothesis 2b.

We hypothesised (h3.a) that there would be a stronger negative relationship between well-being and economic insecurity for those in precarious work arrangements compared to permanently employed cultural workers. In a regression analysis, the interaction term should accordingly be negative. The interaction term with economic insecurity is significant ($p = 0.016$), the sign of the interaction term is as expected, and h3.a is supported. The supplementary subgroup analyses further illustrate this finding in terms of a greater negative coefficient for cultural workers in precarious work arrangements (Supporting Information Appendix: Table SA1).

We further hypothesised (h3.b) that there would be a weaker negative relationship between well-being and job content insecurity for those in precarious work arrangements compared to permanently employed cultural workers. We note that the two-tailed p value for the interaction term is 0.107. Because our hypotheses are specific about the sign of the interaction effect, a one-tailed p value is warranted. Furthermore, because the test statistic has a symmetric distribution,

TABLE 2 Main work arrangements and precarious work characteristics for cultural workers during the pandemic (means or percentages)

	All	Precarious work arrangements			p value ^a	
		Permanent employment	Temporary employment	Free-lancer		
Job content insecurity ^b	2.88	2.48	3.71	3.57	3.42	<0.001
Economic insecurity ^b	3.01	2.49	3.47	3.73	3.81	<0.001
Gross annual income 2020 (NOK) ^c	486,368	552,501	350,215	367,395	399,087	<0.001
Income loss last year ^d	54.0%	40.2%	67.6%	60.0%	77.2%	<0.001
Lack of appropriate economic compensation ^b	3.17	2.97	3.68	3.67	3.27	0.004
Being laid off ^d		12.3%				
Not renewed temporary work contracts ^d			17.6%			
Lost freelance jobs ^d				76.7%		
Lost contracts in own company ^d					71.2%	
N	696	413	34	30	219	

^aAnalysis of variance (*F* test) or Pearson χ^2 test.

^bScale 1–5.

^c100 NOK was about 10 euros at the time of data collection.

^dDummy (percent answered 'Yes').

TABLE 3 OLS regression analysis of well-being^a

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i> value	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i> value	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i> value
Age in 5-year intervals	0.03	0.04	0.325	0.04	0.04	0.280	0.04	0.04	0.236
Female ^b (ref. male)	-0.08	0.15	0.620	-0.07	0.15	0.637	-0.05	0.15	0.737
Educational attainment (ref. master's degree)									
Bachelor's degree ^b	-0.33	0.17	0.050	-0.33	0.17	0.050	-0.34	0.17	0.042
No university degree ^b	-0.34	0.27	0.202	-0.36	0.27	0.177	-0.37	0.27	0.168
Gross annual income (100,000 NOK)	0.10	0.04	0.015	0.11	0.04	0.009	0.11	0.04	0.012
Occupation (ref. musicians/performers)									
Backstage ^b	0.16	0.21	0.452	0.19	0.21	0.373	0.17	0.21	0.430
Music teacher ^b	-0.07	0.18	0.698	-0.02	0.19	0.922	-0.06	0.19	0.763
Income loss last year ^b (yes = 1, no = 0)	-0.02	0.17	0.923	-0.04	0.17	0.833	-0.08	0.17	0.654
Job content insecurity ^c	-0.22	0.07	0.003	-0.22	0.07	0.002	-0.23	0.07	0.002
Economic insecurity ^c	-0.41	0.09	<0.001	-0.43	0.09	<0.001	-0.43	0.09	<0.001
Precarious work arrangements ^b (ref. permanent employment)				0.19	0.19	0.299	0.25	0.19	0.185
Precarious work arrangements interactions ^d									
Job content insecurity × precarious work arrangements							0.233	0.144	0.107
Economic insecurity × precarious work arrangements							-0.402	0.167	0.016
Constant	5.56	0.34	<0.001	5.40	0.37	<0.001	5.47	0.37	<0.001
<i>R</i> ²	0.19			0.19			0.20		

Note: *B* = Unstandardised coefficients; two-tailed *p* values.

N = 696.

Abbreviation: OLS, ordinary least square.

^aScale 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 10 (*very satisfied*).

^bDummy variables.

^cScale 1–5.

^dVariables were mean-centred before multiplication.

the corresponding one-tailed *p* value is 0.053 or just above the conventional 0.05 threshold. To further scrutinise this issue, the supplementary subgroup analyses show that the relationship between job content insecurity and well-being is significant only for cultural workers with permanent employment ($p < 0.001$ —see Supporting Information Appendix: Table SA1). While this result is noteworthy, we cannot conclude that hypothesis h3.b is supported.

Figure 1 compares the relationship between economic insecurity and well-being for permanent employment and precarious work arrangement according to estimates in Model 3 (Table 3). This chart illustrates that economic insecurity is substantially more negatively related

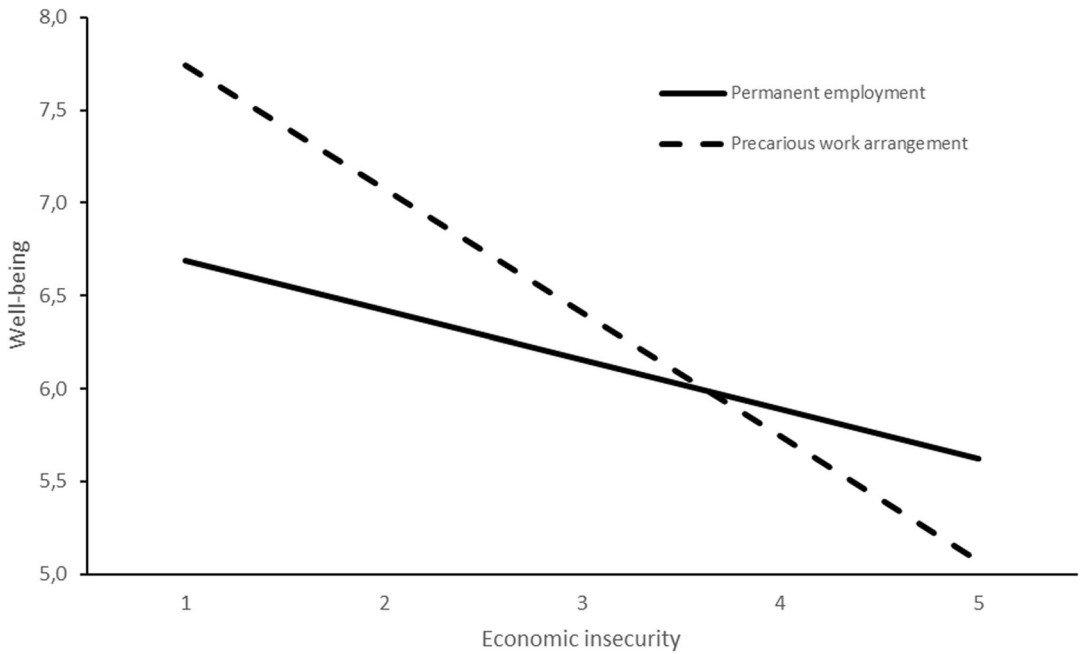


FIGURE 1 The relationship between well-being and economic insecurity for two types of work arrangements. Predicted values for well-being are obtained from Model 3 in Table 3, all other independent variables are held constant.

to well-being for precarious work arrangements compared to respondents with permanent employment. The key finding is in other words that economic insecurity harms happiness for all but most for those in precarious work arrangements. Figure 1 further shows that at low levels of economic insecurity, all else being equal, cultural workers in precarious work arrangements are more satisfied than the permanently employed, whereas at higher levels of insecurity permanently employed cultural workers are the most satisfied.

Regarding control variables, the regression coefficient for income level is estimated at 0.11 indicating that cultural workers with 100,000 NOK higher income also report 0.11 higher well-being. This indicates as expected that cultural workers with more income are also more satisfied. Furthermore, the regression coefficient for the dummy variable indicating bachelor's degree is significantly negative implying that cultural workers with only a bachelor's degree on average perceive lower well-being than cultural workers with a master's degree. This indicates that cultural workers with a master's degree are more satisfied.

6 | DISCUSSION

6.1 | Precarious work arrangements and work characteristics

Cultural workers with precarious work arrangements had 'bad' working conditions even *before* the pandemic crises and the lockdown intensified their precariousness. During the pandemic, they overall experienced a higher degree of insecurity regarding future job content and economic outlook, more loss of job opportunities, and larger income loss during the first year of

the pandemic. At the same time, the government's compensation schemes missed the needs of cultural workers with precarious work arrangements to a larger degree than the permanently employed. A government-commissioned evaluation of the compensation schemes in the cultural sector in Norway during the pandemic showed a strongly skewed distribution where some parts of the sector were substantially better compensated and stimulated than others. Almost a third of the support recipients by June 2021 was self-employed with sole proprietorship, but these had only received 5% of the allocated funds (Arts Council Norway, 2021a, p. 6). Combined with prior worse working conditions in terms of lower mean gross income before the pandemic and less social benefits, we observe a 'Matthew effect' with a widening gap between those with permanent versus precarious work arrangements in terms of bad job characteristics during the pandemic. Additionally, supplementary analyses shows that income level is significantly negatively related to well-being only for cultural workers with precarious work arrangements (see Supporting Information Appendix: Table SA1). Even though the variables in our study are not fully identical to those included in the study of good and bad jobs in the United States (Kalleberg, 2011; Kalleberg et al., 2000) and the United Kingdom (McGovern et al., 2004), our findings are overall consistent with their results.

Notably, those with permanent employment did experience the same level of economic and job content insecurity whereas the level of economic insecurity and job content insecurity were different for those with precarious work arrangements. Gallie et al.'s (2017) study of job status insecurity, did not find any significant relationships between part-time or temporary employment contracts and level of job status insecurity. Further research is needed to better understand differences in job status insecurity for various work arrangements.

6.2 | Insecurity, precarious work arrangements and well-being among cultural workers

We found a negative relationship between increased economic insecurity and well-being. This is consistent with previous studies that found economic insecurity to affect individuals' well-being (Reeskens & Vandecasteele, 2017). We included work arrangements as a moderator and found that the effect of insecurity on well-being differed between permanent employment and those in precarious work arrangements. The lower gross income before the pandemic and fewer social benefits supports our assumption about a shortage of economic buffers for respondents with precarious worker arrangements. Thus, it seems that the lack of economic buffer and social benefits *before* the pandemic amplified the negative relationship between economic insecurity and well-being *during* the pandemic. Those without permanent employment simply had less economic resources and social benefits in the first place to cope with the crisis. This seems to be aggravated by how those with precarious work arrangements to a higher degree experienced that the economic compensation schemes from the government during the pandemic did not apply to their needs.

The moderation effect in Figure 1 also suggests that under predictable economic conditions, all else being equal, a cultural worker is happier being one's own master. This is consistent with a study the European Community Household Panel for the EU-15 showing that self-employed are more likely to be satisfied with their type of work whereas they are less likely to be satisfied with their job security (Millán et al., 2013). Furthermore, a study among German artists suggests that job satisfaction is positively related to self-employment (Steiner & Schneider, 2013). The self-employed have more job autonomy and self-determination theory does predict

that meeting the need for autonomy will increase work motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Furthermore, autonomy is a core job value among many artists (Røyseng et al., 2007).

The negative relationship between well-being and job content insecurity is significant *only* for cultural workers with permanent employment. In other words, it seems to be burdensome not knowing future job content for those with permanent employment. A possible explanation is that they are used to more predictable work situations as employed in organisations. For example, many symphonic orchestras in Norway have a regular pattern of weekly concerts with preceding rehearsal schedules. In contrast, the relationship is not significant for those with precarious work arrangements. Freelancers and self-employed are used to planning and developing their work portfolios based on multiple short-term contracts (Ashton, 2015; Pollard, 2013; Throsby & Zednik, 2011). Such working situations allow informal learning about coping with uncertainty (Garrick, 1998; Kolb, 1984; Wenger, 1998). Although the moderation coefficient is at the margin of being significant in a one-tailed test, we nonetheless believe that these results are noteworthy, given that statistical tests of moderation tend to suffer from low power (Aguinis, 1995). While this result is intriguing, our conclusion is cautious and additional studies are needed to better understand how different types of insecurity affect well-being depending on types of employment arrangements.

6.3 | Implications and limitations

Our results suggest a need for better targeted economic compensation for those with precarious work arrangements during a crisis. Because a vast majority of the cultural workers in Norway are in such work arrangements, it is important to improve their working conditions making them less vulnerable in times of crisis. In general, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development concludes that access to support during the COVID-19 has often been more difficult for workers who are disproportionately employed in more precarious jobs with worse working conditions such as frontline workers, migrants and racial/ethnic minorities (OECD, 2022). In Norway, the compensation schemes designed for the cultural sector were highly skewed distributed where self-employed received a relatively small proportion of the compensation (Arts Council Norway, 2021a, p. 6).

Regarding the external validity of our study, the research sample is cultural workers in the performing arts sector, which together with museums had the greatest loss of income due to social distancing measures. At the same time, some parts of the cultural sector, such as digital bookstores and online entertainment, had an economic upturn and discovered new earning opportunities. This benefitted to a greater extent international actors than Norwegian ones (Arts Council Norway, 2021b). Therefore, additional studies are needed in other parts of the cultural sector. Furthermore, a majority of the sample have higher education. Thus, our findings do not necessarily apply to workers with lower education or other reasons for precarity such as discrimination in the labour market (Adler, 2021; Pager and Pedulla, 2015; Sugie, 2018). A high educational level may indicate that they have privileged backgrounds that enable them to make more risky career choices. For example, a study of the labour force in Britain showed that there is an under-representation of people from working-class backgrounds in creative occupations (O'Brien et al., 2016). In the Norwegian educational system, universities are predominantly fully publicly funded, and all admitted students are eligible for loans from the State Student Loan Fund. We have no data on class background in the present study, but it could be a topic for further studies to investigate whether recruitment into cultural work is

skewed toward individuals from the middle or upper-middle class. A study among jazz musicians in London indicated that socioeconomic factors, and especially the family background, enable them to cope with precarity (Umney & Kretsos, 2015). One interesting issue is to what degree have class background consequences for career prospects in the cultural sector after the pandemic crisis.

7 | CONCLUSION

The study shows that during an ongoing crisis such as the first year of the corona pandemic, differences in precarious work characteristics for various work arrangements were strengthened. Cultural workers with precarious work arrangements had worse economic conditions and fewer social benefits even before the lockdown. After the first year of the pandemic, the differences were amplified. We thus observe a ‘Matthew effect’ where those that needed support the most received it to a lesser degree. Notably, economic insecurity was most burdensome for those with precarious work arrangements probably due to a lack of economic buffer and fewer social benefits. In contrast, job content insecurity was significantly negatively related to well-being only for permanently employed.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The authors used the internet-based survey system ‘Nettskjema’ provided by the University of Oslo to collect the data. This platform ensures the processing of anonymous data.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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