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## Non-standard work and workers: Organizational implications

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***Non-standard work and workers: Organizational  
implications***

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# 1. Introduction

Work contracts between individuals and organizations come in many forms. Some individuals have contracts that tie them to one organization for an unspecified length of time (typically considered a standard contract), while others have contracts that are limited to a specific period of time, and still others have employment contracts with one organization, but their work is conducted at another organization. The latter two types of contracts are exemplars of nonstandard work contracts that exist between individual workers and organizations. While more people are being employed under varying nonstandard employment contracts around the world, and new forms of employment arrangements are being added, our understanding of this phenomenon has not kept up with its practice, and the managerial and policy implications of nonstandard work arrangements have not been carefully considered.

In this paper we provide an overview of the research on nonstandard work with a view to answering the following questions: (i) why do organizations use nonstandard workers, (ii) how has the practice of using nonstandard workers affected human resource management practices in organizations, and (iii) how has the use of nonstandard workers affected the profitability, productivity and sustainability of organizations. We build on previous reviews of nonstandard work arrangements (Ashford, George, & Blatt, 2008; Connolly & Gallagher, 2004; George & Ng, 2010) that focused largely on the individual worker's experience of this practice. Our point of departure from these reviews is that we also focus our attention on the organizational implications of using nonstandard work and nonstandard workers. In addition, this review will consider updates to the literature since the most recent review by George & Ng (2010).

The paper is divided into the following sections. We begin with a review of the various definitions of nonstandard work and the challenges associated with these definitions. In section three we review briefly the prevalence of these work arrangements in a variety of countries. In section four we review the literature on why organizations use nonstandard workers, with a focus on the studies that have examined the extent to which these organizational goals eventuate. In the next section we review the studies that consider the implications of using nonstandard workers on the human resource management practices of organizations. In section six we examine the research on the effect of nonstandard workers on the performance of organization. In the final section we discuss some policy implications that can be derived from what we currently know about nonstandard work, and we suggest some directions for future research.

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## 2. Who are nonstandard workers and what are nonstandard work arrangements?

One of the most influential definition of nonstandard workers was provided by Pfeffer and Baron (1988) who categorized nonstandard workers into three broad groups: those who have a limited temporal attachment to organizations like temporary and part-time workers, those with limited physical attachment to the organization like teleworkers or those who work at home, and those with limited administrative attachment to the organization like those who are employed through labour intermediaries or are independent contractors. They proposed that these workers differ from standard workers who have fixed hours of work, work on indefinite contracts, at a fixed location of work, and under the direct administrative control of their employer.

Examples of studies that examined workers with limited temporal attachment to the organization include Parker, Griffin, Spriggs & Wall's (2002) study of temporary workers and Uzzi & Barsness's (1998) study of short term contract workers. One additional example of a work arrangement that involves limited temporal attachment to the organization is part-time work. This arrangement is different from the usual temporary or short term contract jobs since part-time employees can work for organizations on indefinite contracts, but for a limited number of hours per week. Also unlike other temporary or contract workers they are not always marginal members of the organization, but rather can be valuable employees who are permitted this part-time work arrangement as a way to retain them in the organization (Broschak & Davis-Blake, 2006). National labour statistics often issue separate reports on part-time workers as differentiated from other types of nonstandard workers.

Workers with limited physical attachment to the organization are those who work away from their main employers' place of business or work sites. These include at-home workers (Ammons & Markham, 2004), virtual workers (Hill, Ferris & Martinson, 2003), and teleworkers (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). An interesting point about this category of workers is that their physical detachment lies on a continuum such that some may never be co-located with their colleagues, while others might have agreements that involve working at-home for only one day of the week.

Workers with limited administrative connection to the organization are those who are under the managerial control of one organization while working for another. Contract workers (George & Chattopadhyay, 2005) and agency temporary workers (Chambel and Castanheira, 2012) are exemplars of this category of worker. Some independent contractors, or individuals who work for themselves and contract their services to organizations also fall within this category.

Multiple terms have been used by researchers studying the prevalence or consequence of nonstandard work, and this proliferation of terms has made it difficult to compare studies. For instance, while Povlika & Naradone (1989) defined contingent work as a work arrangement that contains no commitment for long-term employment, some researchers have used this term to study part-time workers (e.g. Feldman, 1990; Hulin & Glomb, 1999) whose contracts with organizations can sometimes involve long-term employment (e.g. Broschak & Davis-Blake, 2006). The label "contingent worker" has also been used to describe employees of temporary help service firms whose employment at a client organization might be of a short duration, but who might work for longer periods of time with the temporary help service firm (e.g. Subramony, 2014). Other terms that have been used to describe nonstandard work include *external workers* (George, 2003), and *casual workers* (Campbell & Burgess, 2001) highlighting different aspects of nonstandard work. For instance external or outsourced work (Harrison &

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Kelly (1993) makes salient the boundary of the firm outside which the work is conducted, while casual work highlights the limited commitment of the worker and the organization to each other (McDonald & Makin, 2000). Another term for nonstandard work, *precarious employment*, (Cranford, Vosko & Zukewich, 2003) describes working conditions that combine limited temporal attachment, often with limited administrative attachment, and these types of jobs are usually associated with low levels of legal protection and with low wages.

This proliferation of terms is perhaps a natural outcome of the fact that there are many forms that nonstandard work can take, and that many such arrangements do not neatly fall within the three categories identified by Pfeffer and Baron (1988). For instance, employees of temporary help agencies have both limited temporal and administrative contact with their client organization, while contract workers might have both limited administrative and physical contact with their employer. A challenge that this creates for academics, managers and policy makers is that multiple arrangements have differing effects and thus make clear causal relationships between the form of employment and outcomes difficult to discern. To further complicate this issue definitions vary across national boundaries and as a result cross-national studies that could be used to inform policy could be muddled by the fact that comparisons cannot easily be made of types of workers across countries.

A more recent conceptualization of nonstandard work arrangements has tried to create a taxonomy that avoids some of the problems inherent in Pfeffer and Baron's categorization of three forms of nonstandard work. This taxonomy by Capelli and Keller (2013) distinguishes between the levels of control that the organization has over employees, with standard workers being those over whom the organization has the maximum control and nonstandard the ones over whom it has the least control. While Capelli and Keller's taxonomy is helpful in clearly distinguishing between different types of work arrangements it makes less clear the different challenges in managing these kinds of workers. While both remote workers as well as contract workers might work at a distance from the principal employer, the former have the additional challenge of managing their commitment to their principal employer in the absence of frequent contact and the possibility of developing interpersonal relationships with co-workers.

A key issue in any discussion of the definition of nonstandard work is Ashford et al.'s (2008) observation that implicit in the term "nonstandard work" is the assumption that there is a form of "standard work" from which this new work arrangement deviates. They argue that in any serious discussion of nonstandard work or workers one must consider the context in which that type of work or worker operates. Their point is that some of the effects of nonstandard arrangements on individuals, and on the organization, stems from the newness of this type of employment arrangement. Workers might respond to nonstandard work in ways that reflect their sense that expectations of work have not been met (Capelli, 1999), while the effect on organizations might be a reflection of the fact that these organizations do not as yet have systems and practices that take into account the challenges of these work arrangements. We highlight this point because it suggests that the definitions and effects of nonstandard work might change over time, as it becomes a widespread practice, and as individuals and organizations adjust their attitudes and practices to it.

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### 3. Prevalence of nonstandard workers around the world

There are three key issues that warrant attention when we consider the prevalence of nonstandard work arrangements around the world. The first is that the proliferation of terms used to describe nonstandard work has made it difficult to get comparable data from different countries. For instance, in the United States the Bureau of Labor Statistics has issued periodic reports on the numbers of individuals who are independent contractors, on-call workers, temporary help agency workers, workers provided by contract firms, and part-time workers. The data from the Australian government provides information on casual work, which though roughly equivalent to temporary work in the United States, is slightly different in its definition. The OECD in its glossary of statistical terms distinguishes between employees on stable contract and others (1998) but does not provide a more fine grained definition of work contracts. This difference in definitions of types of employment contracts, and the consequent difficulty of gaining data that is comparable across nations, may result in policy makers not having the information they need on which to base sound policy. The scattered nature of the data could prevent these policy makers from fully understanding the issues that merit their attention, or possibly need further investigation.

The second issue is that while the use of nonstandard workers has remained unchanged in some countries and has risen in others, the sheer numbers of individuals around the world who work in these nonstandard work arrangements warrants the attention of researchers and policy makers. Data from China show that between 2008 and 2010 the number of urban workers who held temporary jobs more than doubled to a total of over 60 million workers, or one-fifth of the work force (Liu, forthcoming). The Bureau of Labor Statistics in the US in 2005 reported that over 11 per cent of workers in the US workforce consisted of nonstandard workers including independent contractors, on-call workers, temporary help agency workers and workers provided by contract firms. In India, contract workers formed approximately 20 per cent of the workforce in the manufacturing industry in 2001, as compared to 10 per cent of the workforce in 1991 (Bhandari & Hesmati, 2006). In the OECD countries, the share of temporary employment as a percentage of total employment has remained between 11 and 12 percent since 2000 with some countries like Poland reporting almost 27 per cent of the workforce in temporary employment, while others like the United Kingdom reporting approximately 6 per cent. (OECD Stat Extracts, 2015). The statistics for emerging economies like the Philippines and Vietnam also suggest a significant proportion of the workers in the non-agricultural sector are in informal jobs (42.2 per cent and 68.2 per cent respectively). These informal jobs are jobs that do not provide workers basic social or legal protections or employment benefits (ILO, 2012). While not all informal jobs are nonstandard, many temporary jobs fall within this category. These statistics indicate that there are many individuals and organizations around the world who experience nonstandard work arrangements. We need to understand their experiences and challenges.

The third issue is that much of the research on nonstandard work arrangements has been undertaken in North America, Europe and Australia. As a result, our understanding of these work arrangements in these national contexts is far better developed than that of other countries. The question then remains of whether we expect nonstandard workers' experiences, and the managerial challenges associated with them, to vary greatly in other countries. The research done to date suggests that the two most relevant factors that might help to explain the experience of individuals and organizations in nonstandard work across countries would be (i) the level of choice that individuals have in engaging in this work practices, and (ii) how and where the organizations deploy nonstandard workers. Specifically, we expect that when nonstandard work arrangements are adopted

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to provide individuals greater flexibility in dealing with non-work issues such as taking care of their families then we could expect more positive responses from workers to this work arrangement. However, when the work arrangement is not freely chosen, but rather is forced on to workers, then it is less likely to be valued by workers (Ellingson, Gruys & Sackett, 1998). Unfortunately, we do not have good data on the extent to which nonstandard work arrangements are voluntary in countries around the world. It is highly likely that the large numbers of individuals in informal jobs around the world, especially those that involve jobs that offer little legal and social protection are not likely to be in jobs of their choice (ILO, 2012).

Similarly, if the manner in which organizations deploy nonstandard workers provide no threat to standard workers then the use of this work arrangement is not likely to be detrimental to the organization. For example, if firms use nonstandard workers only in jobs that are peripheral to the core competencies of the organization and in small numbers then standard workers are unlikely to interpret the presence of nonstandard workers as a sign of the organization's decreasing investment in its' people (George, 2003). However, if the key form of employment growth in the organization is via nonstandard work arrangements then organizations in any country would have to deal with issues of managing employee commitment, retention of valued workers and knowledge, and being able to control and coordinate the efforts of workers throughout the organization. We discuss these managerial challenges below.

#### **4. Why do firms adopt nonstandard work arrangements?**

Organizations have a choice to hire individuals in standard work contracts (full-time, indefinite work contracts) or in nonstandard contracts (any variation on the standard contract). How do they choose between these alternatives? An agency-theory perspective (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) would suggest that firms offer standard contracts to workers in order to more closely align the interests of the worker with that of the organization. Incentives that ensure job security such as full-time employment, for an indefinite period of time would presumably cause workers to act with the good of the firm rather than simple self-interest in mind.

There are also transaction cost considerations (Williamson, 1979) in the use of nonstandard contracts. When the cost of making and enforcing the contract exceeds the value derived from the contract itself then the firm could decide to keep the activity in-house. However, if a contract can be made such that the interests of the organization are not jeopardized then that activity can be outsourced. For jobs that are difficult to fully specify, that require firm-specific skills and knowledge, and that cannot be easily assessed, the firm should have workers in standard contracts where the long term interests of the worker and the firm coincide. When tasks do not require firm-specific knowledge, or where the input-outcome link can be easily monitored firms can contract those jobs out to nonstandard workers. For example, the proliferation of organizations that contract out their janitorial work exemplifies this transaction cost perspective on the strategic use of nonstandard work arrangements.

A further refinement of the logic for outsourcing is provided by Lepak and Snell's (1999) model of HR configurations where they argued that the strategic value of human capital to the organization should determine whether the human capital should be situated within the firm or can be hired through nonstandard contracts. They proposed that when human capital contributes positively to the effectiveness of the organization, or helps the firm exploit market opportunities or neutralize external threats then the firm should make sure that human capital is tied to the organization with standard, employment contracts, and related human resource practices. When the strategic value of

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human capital to the organization is low, then the organization can consider alternate means of contracting such as short-term hires (when the human capital is not unique or rare) and alliances or partnerships with third party firms for the supply of services that are unique (e.g. legal or financial advice to the firm) but are not of core strategic value to the organization.

Consistent with Lepak and Snell's main arguments, Doeringer and Piore (1970) proposed that there are two labour markets that operate, with the primary market consisting of jobs that are well paid, stable and that exist within a career ladder, while the secondary market had jobs that are typically low wage, low skill and that have no clear career progression. Their description of jobs in the secondary market matches those nonstandard jobs that Kalleberg, Reskin and Hudson (2000) described when they studied nonstandard work in the United States.

In summary, the theoretical argument put forth for when and why firms should use nonstandard work arrangements suggest that these arrangements make strategic sense for jobs that are peripheral to the core tasks of the organization, where the knowledge and skills for the job are not rare or unique, and where task performance can be easily assessed and controlled. However, as we discuss below, the reasons that firms give for the use of nonstandard workers are slightly different.

There are three major reasons that have been mentioned in the literature for why organizations use nonstandard workers. These are (i) the cost advantages that nonstandard workers provide since they are often paid less than standard workers (e.g., Nesheim, Olsen, & Kalleberg, 2007), (ii) the flexibility advantages that nonstandard workers provide since they can be deployed in different jobs, at different locations and with short notice (e.g. Kalleberg, Reynolds and Marsden, 2003), and (iii) the technological changes that enable nonstandard work (e.g. Levesque, Wilson & Wholey, 2001). These are not independent motivations in that organizations adopt nonstandard work for any one, or a combination of, these three motivators.

Cost: Most studies of the impetus for the adoption of nonstandard work suggest that organizations value the lower costs associated with nonstandard workers. Temporary workers are often cheaper than nonstandard workers since they do not get the benefits given to longer term employees both in the US (von Hippel, Magnum, Greenberger, Heneman, & Skoglund, 1997) and countries like Japan (Osawa, Kim & Kingston, 2013). Workers who work virtually save the organization the costs associated with acquiring, managing and maintaining real estate (Bloom, Liang, Roberts & Ying, 2013). Workers who are managed by third parties save the organization the expenses involved in administering and supervising workers (Kalleberg et al., 2003).

The empirical evidence to support this claim is however mixed. Kalleberg et al (2003) found that firms that provide better benefits for standard workers also tend to hire more temporary workers (using temporary workers to offset costs). Similarly, Bryson (2013) found that wages are typically higher in firms that use more temporary workers, but lower for standard workers who are in the same occupation as the temporary workers, suggesting the cost advantage operates only for organizations with particular configurations of temporary workers. Nollen and Axel (1996) found that when other costs like turnover and productivity are controlled for, the use of nonstandard workers was not cost effective in two out of three of the companies they studied. In a sample of German manufacturing firms, Nielen & Schiersch (2014) found an inverse U-shaped relationship between the extent to which temporary workers are used in the organization and labour costs, suggesting limits to the cost advantage of using temporary workers.

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The use of temporary workers could also reduce hiring costs since organizations are able to screen potential employees by initially hiring them as temporary workers (Faccini, 2014). However, these savings will only eventuate if employees who started off in the organization as temporary workers perform better than those who were hired directly into the firm. In a study in the United Kingdom, Dahling, Winik, Schoepfer, & Chau (2013) found that a year after they were employed, workers who had been converted to permanent status from temporary positions performed equally well as workers who had been directly hired into the organization through employee referrals or online advertisements. Both groups did not do as well as employees who were moved internally into a new position. This study suggests that the cost advantage suggested by the “temp-to-permanent” strategy might not be as clear as it is hypothesized to be.

A Deloitte Consulting study (2005) found that a quarter of their sample of 25 large international corporations found cost and efficiency benefits for bringing back in-house work that had previously been outsourced. Similarly, thirty nine per cent of business professionals surveyed by Information Week (2006) attributed failure in outsourcing to the hidden costs involved. Further, in addition to the immediate cost to the organization the use of nonstandard workers is associated with lowered firm performance (Battisti & Vallanti, 2013; Hirsch & Mueller, 2012). We discuss this long term impact in great detail in sections six and seven of this paper.

Finally, in a quasi-experimental study conducted in a Chinese travel agency Bloom et al. (2013) found that allowing employees to work from home four days a week with the fifth day at the office provided cost savings for the firm. The experiment was run over a nine month period and the results showed that the performance of the at-home workers went up by 13 per cent, driven largely by fewer breaks and sick days and longer hours logged on to work, resulting in savings of about \$2000 per employee. These researchers also examined if there was a spill-over effect such that workers who had volunteered to be part of the experiment but were not given the work-at-home option lowered their performance resulting in an artificial positive effect for working at home. They found no support for this alternative explanation. The longitudinal nature of the study permitted the researchers to observe a “learning and re-selection” effect such that workers who performed poorly at-home moved back to working in the office, resulting in a further improvement in performance of the unit. Thus, they found that over time the option of at-home work improved performance by 22 per cent, significantly more than the 13 per cent they first found.

In summary, the research to date suggests that the cost savings from the use of temporary and contract workers might not be as forthcoming as that from the use of teleworkers or at-home workers. However, we need more studies to have more confidence in these conclusions.

Flexibility: Organizations use nonstandard workers to attain numerical and/or functional flexibility. Workers are brought in at short notice to help the organization deal with seasonal demand (Harrison & Kelley, 1993), or to deal with fluctuations in the labour supply (Ko, 2003). The ability to hire workers for short durations of time provides organizations numerical flexibility by enabling them to grow (or shrink) their workforce fairly rapidly. Organizations attain functional flexibility when they are able to hire workers to deal with special, typically short term, needs such as the need for special skills or equipment currently not available in-house (Kalleberg et al., 2003). This type of flexibility is typically attained through the use of temporary workers (numerical flexibility), or contract workers (functional or skill flexibility).

Kalleberg et al (2003) reported that managers explain their use of contract workers as a way to get skills that their in-house workers do not have. However, they also found a

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negative relationship between the difficulty of getting these skills in the labour markets and the use of nonstandard workers. One explanation for their findings is specific to their data - difficulty of hiring particular sets of skills was measured at the firm level, not at the job level. The coarseness of the measure could explain why the relationship was not as predicted. Deloitte Consulting (2005) reported findings in a survey that a quarter of the firms bring functions back in-house after having outsourced them because outsourcing does not increase the flexibility of the firm. Information Week's (2006) survey similarly showed that 45 per cent of 420 business technology professionals attributed failure of outsourcing to lack of flexibility. A study of 8000 establishments in Germany examined the proposition that the flexibility offered by hiring workers from temporary agencies or workers on fixed term contracts should protect firms from exogenous shocks such as those caused by the global financial crisis (Zagelmeyer & Heckmann, 2013). They found no evidence of this buffering effect in that their data showed no relationship between the use of both types of nonstandard workers and the extent to which the firm had been affected by the economic crisis.

One tentative conclusion that can be drawn from this limited evidence is that the flexibility advantage of using nonstandard workers appears to be short-term, at best. The longer term benefits that could be attained by using nonstandard workers appear to be elusive. From the organization's perspective the financial advantage that comes from flexibility and short term contracts might be offset by costs involved in training and managing these workers. Firms could strategically use short-term contracts when they are able to hire quickly from the market for skills that are not firm specific. However, these conclusions are tentative and more research on this issue is needed.

Technological Imperative: Technology allows firms to do work in different physical locations (Townsend & Bennett, 2003; Kalleberg, 2000), and also simplifies tasks so they can be done by less skilled workers. There is some evidence to support this claim. The more firms use computerized technologies the more likely they are to use fixed term contractors and part-time workers (Uzzi & Barsness, 1998). Similarly, the use of nonstandard workers is higher in less dynamic environments. Sahayn, Steensma & Schelling (2007) found that IT investment resulted in the use of agency temporary workers only when the rate of change of technology was low.

Organizations adopt nonstandard work practices because they can. This is especially the case with virtual work and the use of contract workers. Technological developments have facilitated organizations' assembling teams of employees who work around the world in virtual contact with each other and the organization (Brews & Tucci, 2004). The more recent development of online contracting services like Elance and ODesk allows organizations to find individuals to whom work can be subcontracted. In these cases the work is often done in virtual mode and thus involves both limited administrative and limited physical attachment to the organization (Rockman & Bollinger, 2015). Bloom et al.'s (2013) study suggests that work done at least partially in a virtual mode has positive benefits for employees and organizations. However, there is no consensus that telework, or work in a virtual mode, results in positive outcomes (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Further, the more firm-specific and valuable the knowledge and skills the less likely firms are to use nonstandard workers (Davis-Blake & Uzzi, 1993; Mayer & Nickerson, 2005) such as in the case of projects that needed proprietary technology and which performed better financially when done in-house rather than outsourced (Mayer & Nickerson, 2005), possibly because of additional cost of training outsourced workers.

These studies collectively suggest that technology has facilitated the use of nonstandard employment arrangement in some jobs, and in some environments. While some researchers have argued that the use of temporary and contract workers is associated with the deskilling of jobs, and the reduction of employee involvement and

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empowerment in the workplace (Smith, 1997; 1998), more empirical work is needed to examine the long term effects of technologically facilitated nonstandard work on employee attitudes, and on firm performance.

## **5. How do nonstandard work arrangements affect employees and organizations?**

Much of the research on nonstandard workers has focused on the attitudes and behaviours of nonstandard workers, especially as compared to standard workers. This stream of work has, for the most part, been based on the assumption that nonstandard workers on account of their limited temporal, physical or administrative attachment to organizations demonstrate weaker attachment to the organization. This weaker attachment is argued to be manifested in the form of fewer citizenship behaviours (Ang & Slaughter, 2001), lower performance (Belous, 1989), lower identification with the organization (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 1999), lower job satisfaction (Hall, 2006; Miller & Terborg, 1979) or lower commitment to the organizations (Van Dyne & Ang, 1998). However, the literature has not provided uniform support for these arguments.

While some studies have found that nonstandard workers are less attached to the organization (Van Dyne & Ang, 1998; Forde & Slater, 2006; Hall & Gordon, 1973), others have found no differences between standard and nonstandard workers (Haden, Caruth, & Oyler, 2011; Pearce, 1993), and still others have found that nonstandard workers are more attached to organizations than their standard colleagues (De Cruyter & De Witte, 2007; Eberhardt & Shani, 1984; Galup, Saunders, Nelson & Cerveney, 1997; Katz, 1993; McDonald & Makin, 2000; Parker et al., 2002). Most of these studies have been done using samples of temporary workers who have limited temporal connections with the organization. However, the same logic that limited exposure to the organization would decrease the attachment of remote workers or contract workers was proposed and tested by researchers. As was the case for temporary workers, the findings were again mixed with these types of nonstandard workers also not all uniformly responding more negatively to the organization than comparable standard workers (e.g. Pearce, 1993).

Researchers have tried to understand these mixed results by examining if the differences in attitudes and behaviours are caused perhaps not merely by the work arrangement but also by factors such as the extent to which the individual nonstandard worker has chosen this work arrangement (Ellingson et al., 1998), or the type of tasks they undertake (Ang & Slaughter, 2001) or indeed the nature of their employment arrangements (Chambel & Castanheira, 2012). For instance, one set of arguments was that individuals who chose to work on reduced hours or flexible hours would be more positively inclined towards organizations that facilitate their working in this way (Holtom, Lee & Tidd, 2002). These arguments were also consistent with the focus on the *boundaryless career* (Marler, Barringer & Milkovich, 2002) which made the point that individuals' careers involve movement in and out of organizations, and that nonstandard work might be a temporary arrangement that is desired by the worker.

There is some empirical support for these arguments in that individuals who work in arrangements of their choice are more positively inclined to the organization, than individuals who do not (Holtom et al., 2002; Tan & Tan, 2002). However, there are no quantitative studies that have followed individuals over their careers to study movement in and out of formal standard organizational work arrangements. Also, there is some empirical evidence that the type of job that a person does affects their attachment to the organization. Individuals who have more autonomous jobs are more attached to the organization, even when they are in a temporary position (Ang & Slaughter, 2001;

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Hundley, 2001). Chambel and Castanheira (2012) argued that there is a social exchange process that underlies workers' attachment to organizations. They found in a sample of Portuguese blue-collar workers from a temporary help agency that when organizations provided training to these workers they reciprocated by reporting high affective commitment to the organization. More recently, Van Jaarsveld & Liu (2015) found in a study of call-centre workers in China that when workers experienced low involvement practices in the workplace the turnover in the workplace was high.

A second broad stream of work that has examined the effect of nonstandard work arrangements has examined the consequence to workers of being in a blended workforce or work group. This stream of research arose from the observation that contrary to the core-periphery hypothesis (Piore & Deoringer, 1971), standard and nonstandard workers are not segregated from each other in the workplace (Davis-Blake et al., 2003). Rather they work alongside each other, often in similar jobs, and this contact is likely to make salient to them the different terms of employment (Chattopadhyay & George, 2001). For instance, by working alongside each other they would be aware of different wages, different levels of job security and different benefits. Researchers like George (2003) and Davis-Blake et al., (2003) examined whether the proportions of nonstandard workers in a department or workgroup affected the attitudes of standard workers towards the organization and towards their co-workers. These researchers found that the greater the proportion of nonstandard workers, the more negative the standard workers' attitudes. They argued that the reason for this was that the presence of nonstandard workers signalled the management's decreasing intention of investing in its workforce and consequently standard workers started worrying about the security and value of their own jobs. More recently, George, Chattopadhyay & Zhang (2012) found that standard workers who believe that nonstandard workers cannot move up the organizational hierarchy (and thus threaten their jobs) perceive their nonstandard colleagues to be helping hands rather than competition. Under these conditions standard workers respond positively to working with nonstandard workers. Chattopadhyay & George (2001) also found that the lower the proportion of nonstandard workers in the workgroup was, the more positive were the attitudes of the temporary workers in the workgroup. This they suggested was because temporary workers view the opportunity to work with standard workers positively, while if they had more nonstandard colleagues they would view their work team as peripheral to the organization.

In summary, this body of research suggests there is a social comparison process which influences how workers perceive their work arrangements. If they feel valued and secure in their jobs they are more likely to be positively inclined towards their co-workers and the organization. This research also highlights the social exchange process where individuals who feel short-changed by the organization reciprocate by decreasing their commitment to the organization. Individuals' perceptions are key to predicting their responses to nonstandard work arrangements. Consequently, how management communicates its intent to all workers would be critical in managing expectations related to nonstandard work arrangements and their effect on workers.

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## 6. How has this affected the management of human resources in organizations?

In this section we will consider two key issues that are relevant to organizations. The first is how to manage workers when you have both standard and nonstandard workers in the same workplace. There is a small but growing body of research on this topic that we will discuss with a view to understanding its implications for competencies that the organization must have to manage nonstandard workers and blended workgroups. The second issue is how organizational capabilities are affected by nonstandard work. This is a more difficult issue to explore empirically and has not been directly studied by researchers. Nevertheless we will use other studies from human resource management more generally to extrapolate on how the use of nonstandard workers might affect the managerial competencies of organizations.

### Managing Nonstandard Workers

There are at least four ways in which organizations can think of building a connection with the nonstandard workers that they employ (Ashford et al., 2008). These include the design of jobs that are suitable for nonstandard workers, managing the terms of exchange between the firm and these workers, managing relationships of nonstandard and standard workers in the workplace and aligning the interests of the organization with those of the nonstandard workers. We discuss these below.

Managing Job Design: Organizations can manage their nonstandard workforce by carefully designing jobs that are amenable for workers who do not work full-time or on location, or are employees of a third firm. Typically these are jobs with less complexity or that demand fewer or lower levels of skills (Davis-Blake & Uzzi, 1993), or jobs that are linked to seasonal demands of products or services (Houseman, 1997). The key competency required of the organization is ability to match jobs with the individuals in the job. For example Cascio (2000) argued that virtual work is not appropriate for individuals new to a task, but rather a better fit when they are comfortable with the tasks and the organization. Similarly, assigning complex tasks that require working interdependently with others will not work for temporary workers who are with the organization for a short period of time (Sias, Kramer & Jenkins, 1997).

Managing the Terms of Exchange: The employment relationship is one that is defined by exchange between individuals and organizations. This would suggest that the management of nonstandard workers entails having a good understanding of what these nonstandard workers consider as fair or appropriate terms of exchange. Liden, Wayne and Kraimer (2003) found that contingent workers are more committed to organizations that provide them support and treat them fairly. Barley & Kunda (2004) found that contract workers prefer organizations that allow them to stay out of the politics of the workplace. Both Tan and Tan (2002) and Van Dyne and Ang (1998) found in studies of temporary workers in Singapore that temporary workers in a tight labour market are willing to work harder than their standard colleagues in the anticipation that their work will be rewarded with permanent contracts. These studies indicate that there is heterogeneity in what workers want and that the social exchange is affected by the labour market at a point in time.

Managing Interpersonal Relationships: Nonstandard workers are often in a liminal position trying to manage a position that is both within and outside the organization. Thus one way in which to manage them is through managing the nature of their relationships with people in the workplace. There are multiple reasons why nonstandard workers are excluded from social networks at work. These include their physical distance

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from others as is the case for virtual workers (Wiesenfeld et al., 1999), or because they are temporary (Rogers, 2000; Wheeler & Buckley, 2000), or because of organizational practices such as making temporary workers wear distinctive badges and uniforms that highlight the difference between them and standard workers (Smith, 1998). However, a number of studies have shown that good interpersonal relationships with co-workers (Chattopadhyay & George, 2001), or supervisors (Benson, 1998) can improve contract workers and temporary workers' identification with their client organizations. The managerial competency required for the effective management of nonstandard workers is one of developing processes that facilitate good horizontal and vertical interpersonal relationships.

Managing Identity. A small set of studies show that managers can connect temporary or contract workers to the organization by helping these workers see how their identities are aligned with that of the organization (Chattopadhyay & George, 2001; George & Chattopadhyay, 2005). These studies show that when workers can see how their personal interests, and the ways in which they view themselves, can be facilitated by the organization they are more committed to the organization and its' interests. Barley and Kunda's (2004) research on knowledge workers suggests that these workers are happy to be outside of organizations, or "hired guns" since they see this liminal position as consistent with their own professional identities. Similarly, George & Chattopadhyay's (2005) study of leased workers in the IT industry show that these workers identified with more prestigious firms, since the positive image of the organization helped facilitate their own positive views of themselves. The managerial competency that this research suggests is of understanding the core of nonstandard workers' identities (and their related motivations) and engaging with them in a way that can help these workers realize, maintain or enhance these identities.

#### Effect of Nonstandard Work Arrangements on HRM competencies.

Nonstandard work arrangements change the ways in which organizations can, and do, manage their human resources. Right from the decision on whether to have the work done in-house with standard workers, or to hire workers on short term contracts, or to outsource the work to an external agency that manages contract workers, nonstandard work affects basic human resource management practices such as employee selection, training and skill development, career planning and retention. We discuss these below.

Recruitment and Selection: The use of nonstandard workers can have multiple effects on the recruitment and selection functions of organizations. Since nonstandard work is often associated with tasks that are not core to the organization (Shi, 2007), or that do not involve valuable and proprietary knowledge or technology (Mayer & Nickerson, 2005), the recruitment and selection of workers to these positions does not require the care and precision that would be required for hiring workers who would move into longer term contracts in jobs that are central to the competitiveness of the organization (Lepak and Snell, 2002). Further, short term contracts enable organizations to "try out" workers before they move them into more permanent positions, involving longer term contracts (Bauer, & Truxillo, 2000). The use of nonstandard work arrangements is then seen as a way to reduce the uncertainty in the selection process. If firms can try before they hire, they can be sure that the individuals they finally offer standard contracts to are indeed the ones who add the most value to them. Nevertheless, this dependence on external sources to find employees could reduce the organization's capability of recruiting from the external market, and the practice of prolonging the selection process, as it were, could reduce the organization's selection capability. The effect of using temporary workers on the recruitment and selection capability of organizations has however not been studied so this is clearly an area that needs further investigation.

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**Training and Skill Development:** The use of nonstandard work arrangements has to a large extent shifted the responsibility of training and development from organizations to individual workers (Barley and Kunda, 2004). As a result, the greater the proportion of nonstandard workers in an organization there is a commensurate decrease in the organizational investment in the training of these employees (Davis-Blake & Uzzi, 1993). One of the implications of these work arrangements is that the HR function shifts its competencies from training and development of employees within the organization to identifying the sets of skills they need to buy from the markets and procuring these skills in an efficient and timely manner.

This shift requires the organization to have good HR systems that facilitate the timely recognition of the needs for particular types of skills or competencies in the organization. At the same time this dependence on buying all the skills that the firm needs could affect organizations in two ways. First, it could result in a gradual erosion of firm-specific skills in the organization (Lepak & Snell, 2002). Organizations that describe their human resources as one of their key assets then have assets that are not very distinct from that of their competitors, thus diminishing the role of people as a source of competitive advantage. A second implication of the use of temporary or contract workers rather than training employees is that the firms' ability to respond to changing markets might be restricted. Since the focus is less on training-for-skills and more on hiring-for-skills, firms might be limited in the extent to which they can change by the availability of skills in the labour market. Again, this is an area that has not been examined and warrants further research.

**Career Planning and Retention:** Nonstandard work arrangements have shifted the onus of career planning from organizations to individual workers. As individuals develop portable skills that they move from organization to organization, the traditional view of workers who build their careers in a single organization has eroded significantly (Ashford et al., 2008). Nonstandard work arrangements have also affected the organization's ability to retain standard workers.

The studies examining the blended workforce suggest that a key issue in the retention of standard and nonstandard workers is how one manages the social integration of these two groups of workers (Davis-Blake et al., 2003; George, 2003). If firms are able to integrate nonstandard workers in such a way that they do not threaten the security of standard workers (George et al., 2012; Von Hippel & Kokokimminon, 2012), or that enable standard workers to engage in supervisory tasks (George, 2003), or that reduce rather than increase the workload of standard workers (Geary, 1992) then they are more likely to retain these standard workers. In addition when organizations offer employees the opportunity to shift from full-time to part-time employment, the presence of these "retention part-time workers" has a positive spill-over effect on their standard co-workers (Broschak & Davis-Blake, 2006).

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## 7. Benefits and drawback with respect to organizational performance and innovation

Researchers have argued that workers who move between organizations, such as temporary and contract workers, are a good source of knowledge and learning for the organization on account of their expertise and exposure to practices in different organizations (Kunda & Barley, 2004; 2006). The use of nonstandard workers should also provide firms advantage through the minimization of costs, and the provision of flexibility. Earlier in this paper we reviewed the few studies that have examined the extent to which nonstandard work arrangements have provided firms these cost and flexibility related benefits. There are few studies in the management literature that have systematically studied the effect of nonstandard work arrangements on the performance of organizations. Part of the reason for this could be the difficulty in being able to isolate the effect of this employment practice on organizational profitability (George & Ng, 2010).

Nevertheless there are a few studies that have attempted to establish the relationship between the use of nonstandard, (especially temporary and contract, workers) and the performance of the organization. For example, Kleinknecht, van Schaik, & Zhou (2014) found that organizations that relied on firm specific knowledge as a basis for their innovation benefited less from the flexibility afforded from having temporary workers. As we discussed earlier, two recent studies reported inverse U-shape relationships between the use of temporary workers and firm productivity. Specifically, Nielen & Schiersch (2014) found that the use of temporary agency workers initially improved the firms' competitiveness (as indicated by unit labour costs), but that beyond a point the relationship was negative. Similarly, Hirsch & Mueller (2012) found support for their argument that the use of temporary workers improved firm productivity because of the facility it provide firms to screen employees before hiring them, and because of the numerical flexibility it affords them. Beyond a certain point however, the use of temporary workers results in the firm losing firm-specific human capital and along with the associated spill-over effects results in a loss of productivity.

One reason why nonstandard workers, especially those who are in the organization for a limited period of time, might affect the firms' performance negatively is that they do not have relationships that facilitate the transfer of knowledge within the organization. Sias and colleagues (1997) found some support for this argument in a study of communication patterns of temporary workers who tended to share information with others less often than even newly hired full-time employees. A complementary explanation was given by Battisti & Vallanti (2013) who found, in a sample of Italian firms, that a higher proportion of temporary workers resulted in lower productivity and absenteeism. They argued that this is because the increasing use of temporary workers results in a deterioration of the workplace resulting in lowered motivation and effort by all workers. Further, they speculated that permanent workers are likely to see their jobs as relatively protected when they have a buffer of temporary workers and as a result they lower their effort. However, in a study of the British private sector Bryson (2013) showed that the presence of temporary agency workers was associated with higher financial performance for the firm but also lower job satisfaction and higher job anxiety. These opposing effects could possibly explain the finding that the rise in the use of temporary agency workers had no effect of value added per employee.

A problem associated with using temporary workers, especially if they are low skilled, is that they end up deskilling the organization as a whole and deteriorating the working environment for all workers (Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012). In other words, the use of temporary workers can over time erode the motivation that workers have to

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contribute to the organization, and can lower the level of ability available in the organization to innovate or in other ways contribute to firm performance. Subramony (2014) found that when the relationship between temporary help agencies and client organizations is good, the agency workers feel supported at the client site, thus developing more positive attitudes towards work. These positive attitudes, over time, resulted in greater unit level productivity. Roca-Puig, Beltran-Marti, Segarra Cipres, (2012) found in a study of Spanish firms in the manufacturing sector that the relationship between human capital and return on sales is greater in large firms with fewer temporary workers than in smaller firms with more temporary workers. Human capital development they argued is antithetical to the use of temporary workers.

There are two tentative conclusions we can derive from this body of research. The first is that we do not have a full understanding of the conditions under which nonstandard workers can positively affect firm performance. The second is that it appears that the mechanism through which nonstandard work arrangements affect firm performance is through the effect they have on the interpersonal relationships and motivation of employees.

## 8. Implication for policy and future research directions

As nonstandard work arrangements proliferate, the number of individuals who work under these conditions and organizations that have these contracts is increasing. In this section we discuss some possible policy implications that can be derived from the research we reviewed in the previous sections. We outline below two key issues that might require the attention of policy makers around the world. One relates to the *choice* that workers have in working in nonstandard contracts, and the second is related to *data and information* that are needed to understand the experience of organizations that use, and individuals who are in, nonstandard work contracts. We also discuss some avenues for future research that can help us increase our understanding of these work arrangements.

Previous research has shown that workers in nonstandard contracts are most satisfied with their work and working conditions when this contract is of their choosing (Holtom et al., 2002; Tan & Tan, 2002). Part-time work, short term contracts or telecommuting in order to balance work-life demands provide opportunities for individuals to remain in the workforce while managing non-work responsibilities, and facilitates their return to the workforce on a more standard contract if and when their circumstances change, especially if that is what they choose to do. One way for individuals to get work contracts of their choice is to have the human capital (e.g. more or unique skills or a higher education) that is valued by organizations. Highly skilled information technology specialists, for instance, might prefer contract based jobs for the variety they offer (Barley & Kunda, 2004).

Another factor that shapes individuals' choices about the work contracts that they prefer is the extent to which employment is tied to the provision of the basic social services such as medical care, or a living wage that affords the family shelter, food and education. When these basic needs are taken care of then alternate work arrangements can truly help workers in managing multiple demands on their time and attention. For example, individuals who have access to reasonable government subsidized medical care or education for their children are more likely to feel positively about a job that gives them the flexibility to work from home but offers few medical benefits, compared to individuals who have no flexibility in their jobs and need those jobs to provide for medical and educational benefits for their families. In these instances, the co-workers of temporary workers, for instance, would see them not as a threat to their own continued

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employment, but rather as co-workers who are choosing to work in this temporary capacity (von Hippel & Kokokimminon, 2012). Public policy makers should examine how basic social services can be delinked from organizational benefits such that individuals do not have to be employed in standard work contracts in order to meet these minimal needs. For instance, medical benefits, not restricted to specific forms of employment, enable individuals to choose employment contracts that suit their interests, their preferences, or their responsibilities at any given point in time. Future research could examine cross-national samples to examine how differences in levels of social services are associated with individuals' perceptions of nonstandard work arrangements. Future research could also examine if the preferences for and experiences of nonstandard work change over an individual's career. These longitudinal studies can help inform subsequent policy related to employment practices.

Another set of recommendations from this review is that we need more data about the prevalence and nature of nonstandard work and workers around the world. As a first step we need common definitions of the different work arrangements on which data should be collected. These data are needed to have a systematic, cross-national view of the prevalence of nonstandard work arrangements. Also, mechanisms need to be put in place that allow for the periodic modification of definitions of nonstandard work arrangements in order to collect data on new forms that might evolve over time. The difficulty of developing the framework for collecting this data is exemplified by the case of drivers associated with companies like Uber and Lyft who would not be categorized as independent contractors by the United States Internal Revenue Service, but would be by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. In addition to developing widely shared definitions of different forms of nonstandard work, and large scale data collection efforts, we need more industry specific studies that examine how nonstandard workers are used in specific industries, how this affects outcomes for workers, and for the organization.

## **9. Conclusion**

The research that has been done to date on the management of nonstandard work arrangements suggests that the outcomes of these work arrangements are, at best, mixed for both individual workers and organizations. While the use of nonstandard workers might provide some benefits to organizations this review suggests that more work needs to be done to understand how the benefits and costs of this management employment practice can affect organizations in the long term.

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