

## **INFLUENCE OF THE EMPLOYMENT PRECARIZATION ON THE WORKING LIFE QUALITY OF RUSSIAN WORKERS**

**Alena Fedorova<sup>1\*</sup>, Nikita Morokhov<sup>2</sup>, Mark Gerasimovich<sup>3</sup>, Yulia Tyuyusheva<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Ural Federal University, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, a.e.fedorova@urfu.ru

<sup>2</sup>Graduate Student, Ural Federal University, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, judonekit@mail.ru

<sup>3</sup>Graduate Student, Ural Federal University, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, skintony23@gmail.com

<sup>4</sup>Graduate Student, Ural Federal University, RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
yuliyatyuyusheva@yandex.ru

\*Corresponding author

### **Abstract**

The increasing instability of the labor market expands the scope and forms of precarious employment, which ultimately becomes a factor in the unsustainable development of the Russian economy. The most vulnerable sector of the economy here is the labor sphere, as precarious labor relations have a negative impact on the quality of work life of employees and are one of the factors of social pollution from the economic activities of companies. Revealing the cause-effect relationships between certain forms of precarious employment and the physical and psychosocial well-being of workers is the goal of our study. The paper presents the intermediate results of our long-term monitoring research, which obtained with the use of content analysis and narrative analysis of texts in the Internet network. As respondents we selected the Internet users who posted their stories on thematic forums and in social networks on the following topics: placement, payment of wages, and organization of the work process. Focus of the study is: 1) the workers' opinions made on the Internet regarding their employers, 2) factors in the Russian companies' activities that have an adverse effect on the quality of working life of employees. Content analysis was performed by the grouping method: from the Internet distinguished the negative texts of employees of 25-35 years, working in the logistics, trade (retail) industry and medical services. In total, we reviewed 5407 texts, which were published by the Internet users from January 2015 to September 2017. Narrative analysis of respondents' text messages allowed obtaining a more voluminous picture from the point of view of the qualitative characteristics of the problem under study. As a result of this work, we ranked the toxic factors of labor relations between employers and employees and compiled a rating of the worst, according to respondents, Russian companies in terms of the scale of their use of toxic personnel management practices. The agenda for the next stage of our study includes the tasks of finding management solutions and tools that can prevent and counteract the expansion of the use of toxic personnel management practices within companies.

**Keywords:** Labor relations, Precarious Employment, Content analysis, Narrative analysis, Working life quality.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Since the 1970s, technological change and the increased workers' international mobility and capital have transformed employment conditions in the developed countries. The flexible labor markets development, as well as the declining influence of trade unions and the degradation of social protection led to the emergence of new forms of employment instead of the standard employment relations. Though there are currently no

single indicators that adequately capture the full extent of employment precariousness, there is empirical evidence that points to its increasing presence. Between 2004 and 2010, an increase in job insecurity was observed, especially in the liberal Anglo-Saxon countries, and in the Southern and Eastern European countries (Benach, et al., 2016, p. 1).

The majority of researchers note the expansion of forms of precarious employment in Russia (Lysenko, 2016, p. 1010). It is manifested in forced part-time employment, officially unregistered labor relations, in the replacement of perpetual labor contracts by fixed-term or civil-law contracts, in the transfer of formal labor relations into informal, work on call, etc. (Fedorova, et al., 2016, p. 814). In addition, precarious employment includes labor in the form of leasing, outsourcing, outstaffing, which are actively used in recent years. The peculiarity of precarization is that it extends not only to informal labor relations, but to officially formalized workers as well (Fedorova, et al., 2017, pp. 144).

It should be noted that precarization affects the participants of labor relations in different ways. But, in general, the impact is negative, both on workers and employers, and on the state as well. Undoubtedly, employees are the most aggrieved party from the precarious work. The consequences of precarization for the employees are manifested in: an absence of guaranteed employment, instability of labor incomes, instability of workplaces and labor content, absence of social protection and retirement insurance, reduction of work motivation, and deterioration in the quality of life.

Today, studies on precarious work are often based on statistical approaches. Nevertheless, labor markets can be noticeably more dynamic, and employment trajectories vary considerably as time passes. This requires research in which various unstable employment conditions are not considered in isolation, but in terms of an integrated approach that allows analyzing the impact of different employment trajectories on the health of the labor resources. This will help to clarify the degree of potentially toxic effects of precarious work that have been accumulating with time regardless any contextual factors (Dolzhenko, Ginieva, 2015, p. 359). For instance, sustained precarious employment over time can lead to a chronic stress. More serious impact on the workers' physical and mental health is possible (Tokareva, Tokarev, 2016, p. 1916). Comprehension of these aspects will enable us to answer many unresolved key questions.

The focus of this paper is aimed at analyzing of employees' opinions about their employers, as well as at identifying crucial negative factors in the activities of Russian organizations that have an adverse impact on the quality of working life and employee health.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

In the modern economic space the information environment is getting more and more important, that allows seeing many aspects of current life, including those related to the labor relations sphere. The choice of content analysis to identify negative factors in the activities of Russian organizations with respect to their employees is determined by the increasing role of the Internet in people's lives. The essence of quantitative content analysis, as a scientific method, is to bring the content of the text to numerical indicators and make statistical analysis possible. It should be noted that the content analysis method has its advantages and disadvantages. Among its benefits there is the absence of the researcher's influence on the object under study and the possibility of studying large text arrays. The negative parameters are, first of all, the complexity and large volume of the information collecting process.

Content analysis was conducted with the help of the grouping method: from the information base we have identified negative feedback from workers in the age group of 25-35 years who work in the field of logistics, trading (retail trade), industry and medical services. The study was conducted on the basis of feedback on the employers who, for instance, do not pay wages, do not provide decent working conditions, ask to perform tasks that are not direct duties of employees, etc. The destructive behavior of employers towards their employees has led to the creation of specialized Internet websites. On these sites, Internet users publish blacklists of employers, discuss problems that they encounter both being already employed and while seeking for a job, share information about the workers' rights and provide legal mini-consultations. Besides, the so-called "Solidarity Networks" are developed on the Internet. For example, they help the deceived employees to return the money that their employers withhold, and it's done free of charge.

Due to the large volume of the content analysis process, we selected three major networks. First, we studied the social network of labor mutual assistance "AntiJob: Labor Resistance" (<http://antijob.net/>), which has existed since 2004. For 13 years it has been actively providing assistance in the sphere of labor conflicts between the employee and the employer. This website classifies blacklists of employers by cities and headings, on the basis of which the rating of the worst companies of the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, Germany, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Georgia and other countries is subsequently formed.

Another source of our research is the news portal "Yekaterinburg Online" ([www.e1.ru](http://www.e1.ru)), which was founded in 1996. The portal combines 20 different services and sections, including the "Work and Career" forum. Site traffic per month is more than 4 million people. People actively discuss employers and problems they encounter in their employment and at work in various companies.

One of the websites devoted to the collection of feedback on employers is called "About Work: Tell the Truth about the Boss and Read Reviews of Employees on the Internet." This website discusses more than 100000 companies; there are about 500000 reviews on 3 main areas: production and supply, trade, services.

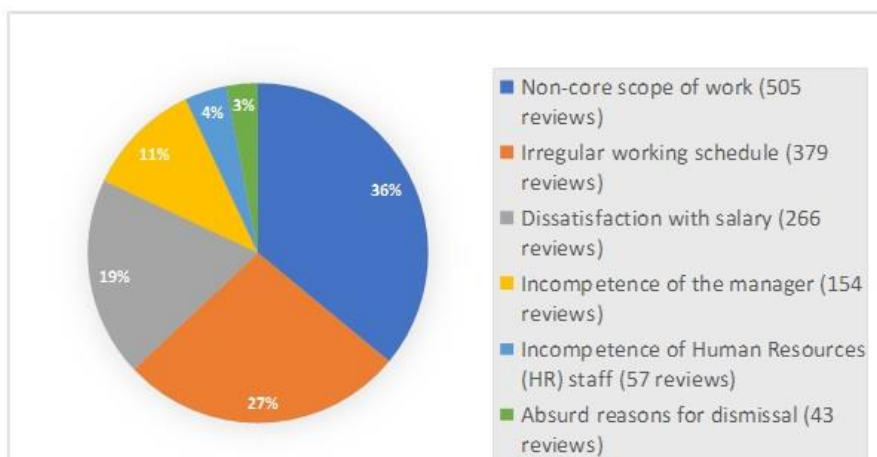
### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 The Worst Russian Employers Rating

Applying the method of content analysis, we have formed the rating of the worst Russian employers.

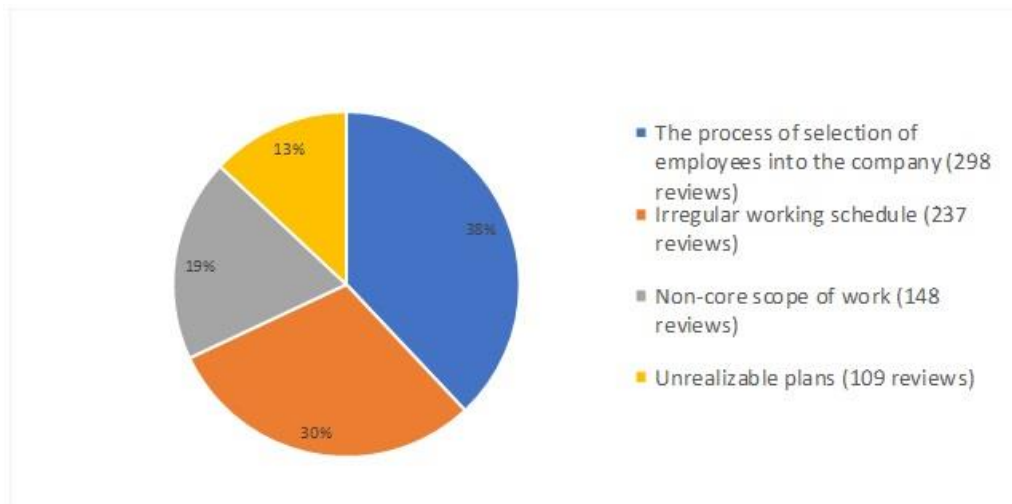
1. Tiens Group (1797 reviews). The company is a direct distributor of the company "Tiens" (production of biologically active additives, devices for pressure equalization, and medicines for strengthening bones, cosmetics and much more). 100% of reviews on the Internet were written about one scheme of the company's activity. It consists in the following: when a candidate calls to the company, they always ask 2 questions about age and education, while additional questions are not answered, referring to the fact that they will tell all necessary information at the interview. On the front door of the head office the words "Business Center" are written. At the entrance there is a man (who looks like a guard). The candidate is asked to go to the hall, where there are already several people, and to fill in the questionnaire. After that, a candidate is called by the head with whom he allegedly communicated by phone. He asks a few questions and at a very rapid pace tells something about the company, while the company's name is still not clear. If a question is asked, then in response the candidate can hear a quick memorized text or the option "you will learn everything at the training sessions". Further, free three-day trainings are offered, during which the marketing plan of the company and the future salary are explained in details. Moreover, all candidates are required to watch films based on the ideas of Robert Kiyosaki. They tell about how it is bad to work in somebody's favor. They clearly pronounce the name of the company and say that the candidate will act as a distributor of the company's products. In order to begin to work, the candidate needs to buy goods to the amount of 12,000 rubles.

2. In second position, due to the large number of employees' comments, there is a supermarkets chain "Magnit" (1404 reviews). Among the positive aspects of work in the company the following ones were noted: official employment, career development, free medical checking, development of such characteristics as stress resistance and work in a multitasking mode. However, the company has a high staff turnover (72%). The reasons, why the "Magnit" is in second place by the number of negative reviews, can be seen in Fig. 1.



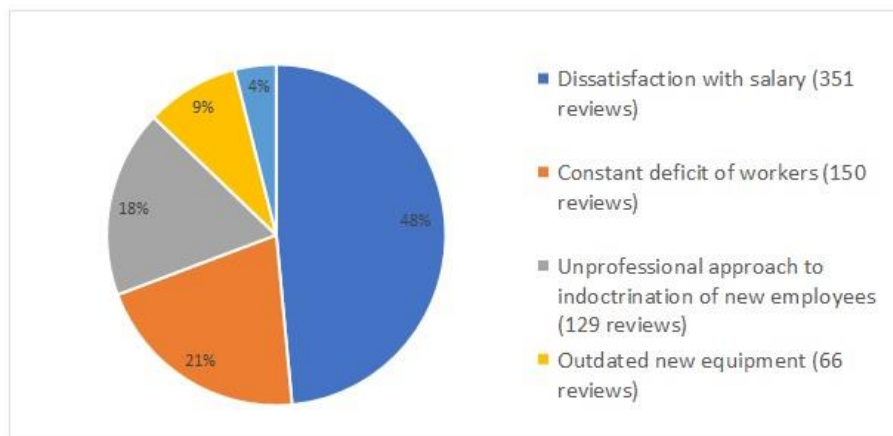
**Fig. 1: Statistics of the Internet users' negative reviews on the "Magnit" supermarket chain, %, 2017**

3. In the third place there is the electronics stores chain "Svyaznoy" (792 reviews). Among the benefits of work in the company the following ones were noted: office location, official salary, official employment, timely payment of wages, and the opportunity for career growth. The reasons, why the company is in the third place in the rating, are shown in Fig. 2.



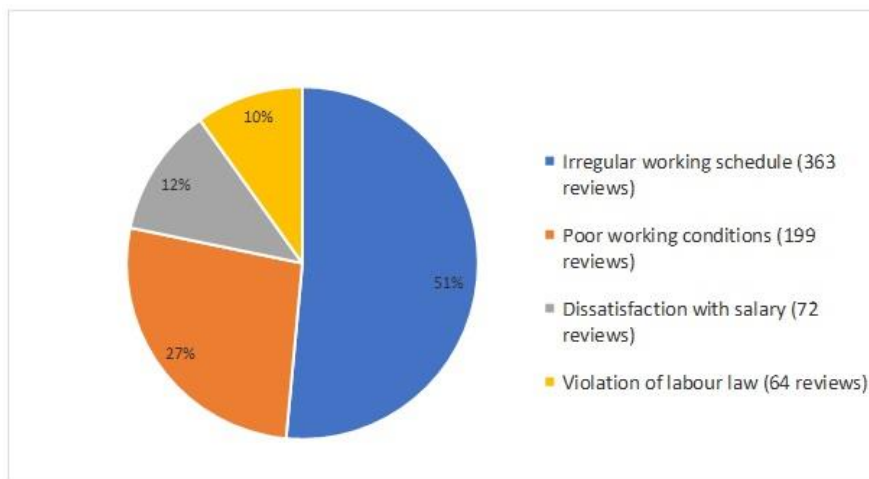
**Fig. 2: Statistics of the Internet users' negative reviews on the "Svyaznoy" store chain, %, 2017**

4. The fourth position is occupied by the telecommunication company "MTS" (718 reviews). Internet users noted the following positive aspects benefits of work in the company: office location, provision of voluntary medical insurance, fully official salary. A great number of negative reviews are connected with the reasons presented in Fig. 3.



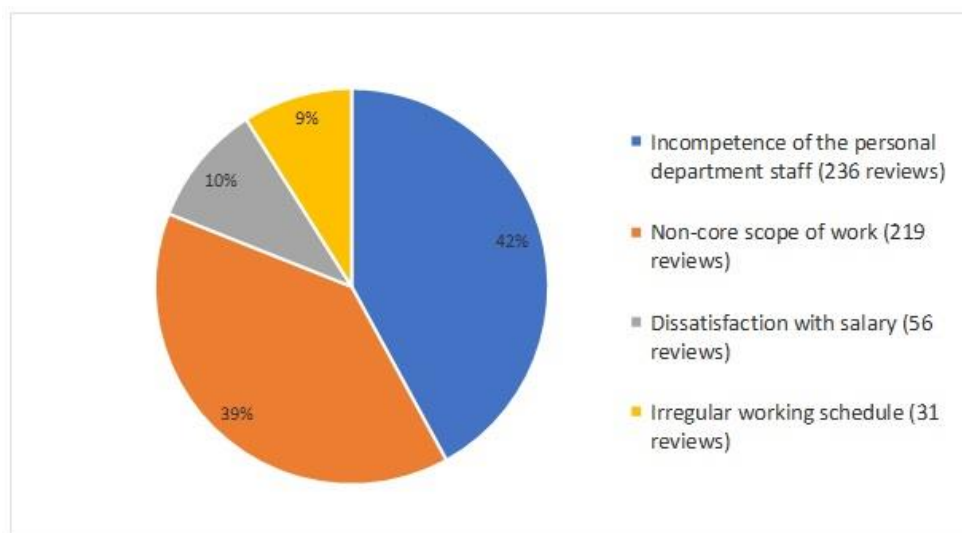
**Fig. 3: Statistics of the Internet users' negative reviews on the "MTS" telecommunication company, %, 2017**

5. The "Pyaterochka" grocery chain is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in this rating (698 reviews). Among the positive aspects of working in this company, Internet users noted: good location, official employment, official salary, friendly personnel. Along with it, a large number of reasons for the discontent of Internet users is shown in Fig. 4.



**Fig. 4: Statistics of the Internet users' negative reviews on the "Pyaterochka" grocery chain, %, 2017**

6. The "Euroset" trading network is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the rating (563 reviews). Among the positive aspects of working in this company, Internet users pointed official employment, salaried placement, and good location. Nevertheless, negative feedback turned out to be much larger (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5: Statistics of the Internet users' negative reviews on the "Euroset" trading network, %, 2017**

Thus, considering the reasons for getting into the rating of the worst employers, according to Internet users, it is possible to draw certain conclusions. Thus, considering the reasons for getting into the rating of the worst employers, according to Internet users, it is possible to draw certain conclusions. Leading positions in the rating are occupied by both dubious structures of multilevel marketing (number 1 in the rating) and by large trading and telecommunication networks, in which they do not respect their employees. Internet users are actively looking for methods of combating the injustice of employers, seeking advice and help from other people who have already faced similar challenges.

### 3.2 Results of Narrative Analysis of Internet Users' Texts

During our research, we reviewed 5407 reviews on various Russian websites: [www.e1.ru](http://www.e1.ru) ("Work and Career" Forum, <http://antijob.net/> ("Black" lists of employers in 127 cities and 52 headings), <https://orabote.top/>, heading "The most sympathetic companies").

The largest number of negative narratives users post on "grey" wages, unpaid wages, heavy fines and poor working conditions. For visual clarity, these findings can be illustrated by narratives grouped by negative factors.

1) *Dissatisfaction with wage rate and late payment.* The following are typical examples of Internet user texts.

"I would like to submit a review about the transport company "TechTransService". The salary is constantly unpaid or late, the earned money is paid by small installments. The ad says that salary is 30000-45000 rubles, but this is a fake. Only per diem payments are paid regularly. Kilometers that you've run are reduced. And you have to take on with them... also constant nitpickings on fuel consumption. The director ... a sleazebag, I do not advise you to trust him."

"I want to share my bad feedback on the hotels "Zhuravushka", "Ob" and "Samotlor". All hotels belong to the general director ... The salary is not paid for 2 months or more, labour standards are not observed, and they cook the accounts. People work for free, hoping that the debts will be paid off. Meanwhile the director launder honestly earned money and makes a profit ... Be sure to immediately put people like him on MegaBlackList!"

"A DISHONEST EMPLOYER! LLC "TrionMedUral", which is also the center of Doctor Gavrillov in Yekaterinburg!... At the first interview, as well as at the second one, they named the salary and also made a passion mention that the salary would be "about 20000 rubles or higher." Nobody said that an official salary was 7000 rubles, and the rest is bonus from clients. And there were no customers, so the salary turned out to be miserable, not mounting up to this amount! Also, they did not have service instructions! The new services for some reason were imposed by an inadequate director, who also allows himself to hob and nob with the staff!!!!"

2) *Carrying out work that is not part of job duties.* The second most discussed issue includes job content. Recently, there has been an increasing trend of "shifting" responsibilities (not included in official duties) of the absent/fired employees on others. On the website [www.pravoved.ru](http://www.pravoved.ru), which provides legal advice online, the following comments are published.

"I have been working for 2 years in the company Metro Cash & Carry as a specialist in market research. Under the labor contract, my duties include researching the prices of competitors, analyzing and sending reports to the central office. In the last week of December, they force me to perform the duties of other employees such as unloading trucks, laying out the goods in the shopping center. How can I deal with it and how can I assert my rights?"

"I work as an engine driver's assistant in the electric engine house; my job is to maintain the rolling stock, observe service rules and safe railway operation, but certainly not to work as a head of shunting service. So I have to make up a train. How do I deal with it? Where should I appeal to?"

3) *Unofficial employment.* Another key problem faced by employees in job placement is the official employment. There are two groups of employers here: 1) try to maximize the probationary period, thereby saving on payment of salary, 2) small businesses that have to create "shady employment" and pay "grey" illegal salary in order to reduce the tax burden.

As practice shows, a fixed-term contract or a service contract for an indefinite period can be concluded with the new employee more often. But they do not secure the protection of many rights. At the same time, the official employment conditions that are promised later and seem outwardly acceptable are in fact impossible. The following are examples of forum users' opinion on this issue.

"... call-center "7Time ". Evgeniya calls you for the job interview, sweetly sings about the beauty of the work. Then you meet Olga, who excites you with different things right off the bat: apprenticeship contract for the first two months, the first month you receive hourly pay (90 rubles per hour) and the second month you receive payment for the number of calls (8 rubles per call). After a month of work you get 30% advance fee, at the end of the second month you get the underpaid sum for the first month. In fact, it turns out that if you are worthy then from the third month your employment becomes official, you get fixed salary + an hourly rate if you handle workload, you are allowed to get an adequate pay schedule and hope to receive payment for the second month."

"The company ETP-Ural, their director is a boor, he swears in front of the staff members and while talking to the workforce, they also hire managers of applicant administration and speak kindly on the phone that the employment is official, but in fact they feed you with empty hopes and do not intent to hire you!"

"The Clinic "Yasnaya". I do not recommend working for this so-called "entrepreneur"! He's a very weak leader. Everything is as usual: he does not enroll employees, wastes time, fobs off with promises of "bonuses" that in fact you will never receive, sets ridiculous tasks that you have to cope with in a very short time! Do not waste time! Do not believe in their promises! It's a fly-by-night company."

4) *Toxic working conditions.* The working conditions offered by the employer are also very significant in the

view of applicants.

LLC "Domani-Spa" is a warehouse ... They promise you a mechanic position, but when your probation starts, they put you in a paint room that is inadequately equipped... with non-working air extraction system, and at the end of the shift there is a risk to faint. It's a hyper toxicity chamber. Of course, they don't pay extra for occupational hazards. They do not deliver new gloves, but instead they set surveillance cameras, old gloves are impregnated with chemicals. And the salary of 30-35 thousand rubles... they will not be useful to you as in a year or two you will die from all these chemicals."

"I got a job two months ago. Under the labor contract the workplace is a rented office. In the office there is only a table and a couple of chairs, there is nothing more there, the conditions of work are very poor. I work on my laptop. Where can I appeal to, so that the employer betters working conditions?"

As a result of the content analysis and narrative analysis of texts on the Internet, we have complied the ranking of the worst employers of Russian companies, as well as identified the major negative factors in the activities of Russian companies towards employees.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

Despite the fact that a non-standard employment can offer economic empowerment for companies, more and more facts show that these new ways of working are health and security hazards for some workers. What kinds of risks and how many risks exist, how many employees carry risks of non-standard types of employment are still insufficiently studied issues.

Particular attention should be paid to identifying cause-and-effect relationships between different forms of precariousness of employment and the level of the labor resources welfare, including their physical health and psychosocial well-being.

It should be noted that the research presented in this paper is not complete. In a further research we are planning to use the method of narrative interview, in which qualitative data obtained will allow us to propose methods of reducing the influence of the precarization on quality of work life and the health of Russian labor resources. Also, the agenda for the next stage of our study includes the tasks of finding managerial solutions and tools that can prevent and counteract the expansion of precarious employment and the use of toxic personnel management practices within companies.

#### **5 ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The work was supported by Act 211 of the Government of the Russian Federation, contract №02.A03.21.0006.

#### **REFERENCE LIST**

- Benach, J., Vives, A., Tarafa, G., Delclos, C., & Muntane C. (2016). What should we know about precarious employment and health in 2025? Framing the agenda for the next decade of research. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 1–7.
- Dolzhenko, R.A., & Ginieva S.B. (2015). Employee engagement as an indicator of staff attitude to the changes in organization. In 9th International Days of Statistics and Economics (pp. 359–369). Prague: Melandrium, Czech Republic.
- Fedorova, A., Dvorakova, Z., Kacane, I., Khan, H., Menshikova, M., & Sölek-Borowska, C. (2017). Labour Relations Trends in Employee Evaluations: Country To Country Comparison. In the European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences EpSBS, Vol. XXI, pp. 133-144.
- Fyodorova, A., Katashinskikh, V., & Dvorakova Z. (2016). Precarious labour relations as a factor of social pollution. *Economy of Region*, 12 (3), pp. 802–814.
- Lysenko, E. (2016). Labour Adaptation of Migrants as an Aspect of Corporate Social Responsibility. In 10th International Days of Statistics and Economics (pp. 1099–1108). Prague: Melandrium, Czech Republic.

Tokareva, Yu., & Tokarev, A. (2016). Job Satisfaction as a Factor of Professional and Economic Efficiency. In 10th International Days of Statistics and Economics (pp. 1916–1925). Prague: Melandrium, Czech Republic.