



## **Job Security and Psycho-Occupational Burnout and Their Relationship to Alienation and Professional Social Identity: A Field Study on Contract Workers at the Community Health Institution in Messad – Djelfa**

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### **Abstract :**

*This field study was conducted to explore the impact of job security and psycho-occupational burnout on the level of alienation and professional social identity among full-time contractual workers in Algerian public hospitals. The study relied on a multi-theoretical framework (Bourdieu, Castel, Dubar, Paugam, Maslach, and the theory of organizational justice).*

*A multi-method approach was adopted, combining a quantitative survey of a sample of 250 workers (administrative staff, cleaning agents, security guards, maintenance workers, and drivers) and in-depth qualitative interviews with 20 participants. Reliable measurement tools were employed, including the Professional Identity Scale, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and indicators of symbolic, economic, and social capital.*

*The study revealed several key findings: low job security and high burnout levels contribute to an increase in alienation and erosion of professional identity, while symbolic capital and habitus help mitigate these effects.*

*Finally, the study concluded with a set of recommendations, the most important of which are:*

- *Adopting organizational policies aimed at enhancing job security.*
- *Reforming the professional classification system.*
- *Improving recognition mechanisms within public health institutions.*

**Keywords:** *Job security, psycho-occupational burnout, professional social identity, occupational alienation, Contractual Work.*

## **Sécurité de l'emploi, épuisement professionnel et leur relation avec l'aliénation et l'identité sociale professionnelle : une étude de terrain sur les travailleurs contractuels de l'établissement de santé communautaire de Messad - Djelfa**

### **Résumé :**

*Cette étude de terrain a été menée afin d'explorer l'impact de la sécurité de l'emploi et de l'épuisement professionnel sur le niveau d'aliénation et l'identité sociale professionnelle des travailleurs contractuels à temps plein dans les hôpitaux publics algériens. L'étude s'est appuyée sur un cadre théorique multiple (Bourdieu, Castel, Dubar, Paugam, Maslach et la théorie de la justice organisationnelle).*

*Une approche multiméthodologique a été adoptée, combinant une enquête quantitative auprès d'un échantillon de 250 travailleurs (personnel administratif, agents d'entretien, agents de sécurité, agents de maintenance et chauffeurs) et des entretiens qualitatifs approfondis avec 20 participants. Des outils de mesure fiables ont été utilisés, notamment l'échelle d'identité professionnelle, l'inventaire de Maslach sur l'épuisement professionnel (MBI) et des indicateurs de capital symbolique, économique et social.*



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*L'étude a révélé plusieurs conclusions clés : la faible sécurité de l'emploi et les niveaux élevés d'épuisement professionnel contribuent à accroître l'aliénation et l'érosion de l'identité professionnelle, tandis que le capital symbolique et l'habitus contribuent à atténuer ces effets.*

*Enfin, l'étude s'est conclue par une série de recommandations, dont les plus importantes sont les suivantes :*

- *Adopter des politiques organisationnelles visant à renforcer la sécurité de l'emploi.*
- *Réformer le système de classification professionnelle.*
- *Améliorer les mécanismes de reconnaissance au sein des établissements de santé publique.*

**Mots clés :** *Sécurité de l'emploi, épuisement professionnel, identité sociale professionnelle, aliénation professionnelle, travail contractuel.*

## Introduction

The Algerian labor market, particularly within the public health sector, is undergoing profound structural transformations that affect the nature of professional relationships and employment patterns. Contractual work has become the dominant form of employment in many public institutions. Within this context, contractual workers experience a state of professional precariousness and job insecurity due to the absence of guarantees for promotion or permanent integration. This situation makes them more vulnerable to existential anxiety and psychosocial exhaustion, affecting their sense of professional belonging and their social identity within the organization.

These phenomena can be analyzed from a multidimensional sociological perspective that draws on Pierre Bourdieu's analytical tools for understanding relationships within the bureaucratic field (such as the logic of capital, symbolic violence, and organizational domination), and on Robert Castel's conceptualization of precariousness and unstable work. Furthermore, the approaches of Claude Dubar and Philippe d'Iribarne offer insights into the dynamics of professional dignity and the logic of honor in workplace environments, while Serge Paugam's framework can be employed to explain symbolic exclusion and the degradation of occupational status among lower categories of workers.

From this perspective, the present study aims to analyze the dialectical relationship between job security and psychosocial exhaustion on the one hand, and professional alienation and social-professional identity on the other, within Algerian health organizations that reflect a tension



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between the humanitarian nature of the profession and the crisis-ridden working conditions.

This leads us to the following general research question:

### ***General Research Question***

- To what extent do job security and psychosocial exhaustion affect professional alienation and social-professional identity among contractual workers in Algeria's public health sector?

### ***Sub-Questions***

- What is the nature of contractual workers' perception of job security in the public health sector?
- How does psychosocial exhaustion manifest itself in their daily practices and organizational relationships?
- To what extent does low job security contribute to the professional alienation of contractual workers?
- How is the social-professional identity of contractual workers influenced by the power and symbolic relations within the health organizational field?

### ***Research Hypotheses***

- Low levels of job security contribute to higher degrees of professional alienation among contractual workers.
- Psychosocial exhaustion leads to a weakened social-professional identity.
- The combination of job insecurity and psychosocial exhaustion increases the likelihood of professional alienation.

- Symbolic and social capital mitigate the impact of low job security on professional identity.

### *Research Objectives*

This study seeks to achieve a set of scientific and practical objectives aimed at analyzing professional realities through the examination of working conditions among contractual employees. It relies on sociological and psychological theoretical frameworks to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon. The main objectives can be summarized as follows:

- To measure the level of job security among contractual workers and identify the factors that threaten it, while exploring the extent to which work meets their material and moral expectations and how this affects their socio-professional integration.
- To analyze manifestations of psychosocial exhaustion resulting from work pressures and precarious conditions.
- To identify the forms of professional alienation experienced by contractual workers.
- To study the implications of these conditions on social-professional identity, particularly in terms of status and recognition within Algeria's public health sector.
- To describe the professional reality of contractual workers in Algeria's hospital sector by examining the nature of their relationships with the various social systems to which they belong, and to identify their attitudes toward contractual employment.
- To explore the management strategies adopted by institutions in handling their contractual human



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resources and the ways in which these workers are treated.

- To apply contemporary sociological and psychological theoretical approaches to understand and analyze the reality experienced by contractual workers, highlighting the main challenges they face both inside and outside the professional environment.
- To propose practical recommendations for improving the working conditions of this category of workers and enhancing their professional and social integration, by identifying the necessary requirements that can help strengthen their socio-professional inclusion and their sense of belonging to both the professional and social systems as a whole.

## **1. Study Concepts**

No sociological research can be considered complete without a clear and precise definition of its concepts, as these constitute the fundamental tools upon which scientific analysis is built. Through such clarification, the intended meaning of each concept becomes accessible, and the semantic framework of the study is delineated. On this basis, the present study will present both the core and related concepts as follows:

### **1.1. Job Security**

Job security is a relatively modern concept that has gained increasing importance in studies of work and organizations, especially amid the economic and social transformations shaping today's labor markets. It primarily relates to an individual's feeling of stability and reassurance in their

employment, ensured by the continuity of their position and the protection of their professional and social rights. This concept is considered a fundamental indicator of the quality of professional life: the absence of job security generates anxiety and stress, reducing job satisfaction and organizational commitment, whereas its presence enhances motivation, engagement, and productivity.

However, the current labor market has introduced new forms of employment, such as contractual arrangements and the emergence of a category of contractual workers. This group increasingly experiences professional instability and insecurity—what Vultur (2010) refers to as *job insecurity*, meaning “the absence of guarantees regarding the duration of employment, where the term of the contract is predetermined—as in fixed-term contracts—or uncertain, implying that the worker is constantly at risk of job loss or dismissal.”

Operationally, **job security** is defined as the worker’s sense of reassurance regarding the continuity of their income and employment, through stable and permanent work arrangements free from clauses that reduce protection or guarantees, with fair evaluation of performance, and without exposure to organizational or interpersonal conflicts and excessive work pressures.

## 1.2. Psychosocial Exhaustion

The quest for employment represents a constant concern for contractual workers—both during periods of unemployment following contract expiration and even while employed—especially when the possibility of obtaining a permanent or longer-term position arises. This concern intensifies as the end of a contract approaches, when job



search efforts occupy much of their time, thoughts, and energy, often more than any other aspect of life. Such strain is compounded by strong social pressures from family members or their broader social environment (Malenfant et al., 2002, p. 120).

This situation often leads to negative emotions among contractual workers, as they devote much of their time to job searching at the expense of family, social, and recreational activities, in exchange for limited material and professional rewards. Such conditions may undermine both family and social stability.

Moreover, the nature of contractual employment pushes some workers to act strategically—avoiding conflicts or confrontations with colleagues—in order to maintain their contracts. Aware of their vulnerable status, they tend to exhibit higher performance, adaptability, and compliance, even in competitive or conflictual environments, particularly between contractual and permanent employees.

From this, **psychosocial exhaustion** in contractual work can be defined as a state of emotional fatigue and loss of motivation resulting from anxiety about job instability. It is measured by levels of tension, job dissatisfaction, and reduced social integration at work, caused by the social pressures inherent to their precarious professional situation both inside and outside the organization.

### 1.3. Professional Alienation

Work is among the most fundamental human activities that provide individuals with a sense of identity and belonging and help them achieve self-realization. However, certain work environments can lead employees to feel

detached from their work and deprived of meaning in what they do—this is known as *professional alienation*. This phenomenon affects not only individuals but also negatively impacts institutional performance and society as a whole. Studying professional alienation is therefore crucial for understanding its causes, dimensions, and ways to mitigate it, ensuring a healthier and more productive work environment.

Linking this concept to modern employment forms—such as contractual, part-time, or fixed-term work—reveals important socio-psychological dimensions. The precariousness and instability of contractual work, often accompanied by fluctuating income and an uncertain future, weakens both social and professional relationships, as “material instability and the resulting difficulty in planning for the future strongly affect workers’ social organization of life—limiting their ability to plan long-term projects, secure independent housing, or participate in social and community activities” (Tremblay, 1994, p. 33).

Furthermore, “the absence of stable employment imposes a specific dynamic on social relations at work and fosters competitiveness; the unstable and temporary nature of one’s position does not allow workers to establish or sustain strong social ties within their workplace environment” (Malenfant et al., 2002, p. 122).

Operationally, **professional alienation** is defined as the direct consequence of weak professional and social stability, where work becomes a temporary activity devoid of emotional and moral bonds connecting the individual to their profession and institution.



#### 1.4. Social-Professional Identity

According to Émile Durkheim, work “is not merely a technical relationship for the purpose of production; rather, it is a fundamental factor in one’s position within the social structure. In addition to being a source of income that enables participation in economic exchange and integration into consumer society, it contributes significantly to the construction of social identity” (Castel, 1994, p. 1).

Moreover, the search for employment is an essential pursuit for individuals in society, and the social significance of work varies according to the symbolic value attributed to it within each social context. There exists “a strong connection between the position one occupies in the social division of labor and their participation in the various social networks to which they belong” (Chikhi, 1994, p. 9).

Operationally, **social-professional identity** is defined as an individual’s perception of themselves and their social standing through their profession, along with the values, norms, and affiliations that guide their behaviors and orientations within and beyond the professional sphere. However, within the context of contractual work, this identity tends to be more flexible and fragile due to the temporary nature of employment contracts, which weakens collective belonging and links identity more closely to individual competencies and adaptability to the rapid transformations of the labor market.

#### 1.5. Contractual Work

In general, *work* is defined, according to the *Dictionary of Sociology*, as “a human activity or effort directed toward achieving a specific goal” (Ghaith, 2006, p. 243). Méda (1995,

p. 30) adds that it is “the exertion of effort or energy through a set of interrelated activities aimed at producing something of utility, which may be pleasurable or coercive in nature, and may or may not involve material exchange.”

The concept of *contractual work* is linked to the employment contract, defined as “an agreement based on the hiring of labor power by an employer, resulting in the worker’s legal and economic subordination, which are subject to negotiation between employer and employee” (Aija, n.d., p. 157). Similarly, Ben Sari (2004, p. 6) defines it as “an agreement whereby a person undertakes to place their activity at the service of another person and under their supervision, for a specified or unspecified period, in return for a predetermined wage.”

Contractual work is closely related to *precarious or insecure employment (le travail précaire)*, which refers to “work that provides the least guarantees for obtaining or maintaining an acceptable standard of living in the near future, generating a deep sense of uncertainty and ambiguity about the future” (Taquet, 2009, p. 2).

According to the International Labour Office (ILO), there are four key characteristics of insecure work (Taquet, 2009, p. 1):

- The stability and guarantee of employment;
- The nature of working conditions;
- The stability of income;
- Access to social protection.

Precaire or insecure work thus encompasses all employment forms differing from the so-called “permanent” or “standard” models, characterized by open-ended contracts and a stable employer-employee relationship.



Operationally, **contractual work** in this study is defined as any manual or intellectual activity performed by an individual for remuneration, within an organizational framework, and for a public or private institution, under a fixed-term contract that is subject to renewal.

## 2. Theoretical Approaches and Conceptual Analysis of the Study

The process of *conceptual analysis* represents a fundamental step in sociological and psychological research, as it enables the researcher to deconstruct the theoretical concepts in use and clarify their dimensions and scientific meanings so that they do not remain vague or overly general.

This methodological process is one of the essential research mechanisms that seeks to break down concepts into measurable dimensions and indicators, based on theoretical approaches that aim to clarify the mechanisms of inquiry. Through this process, the researcher is assisted in analyzing concepts and examining the interrelated relationships between variables.

Accordingly, **Table (1)** below has been developed to illustrate the general framework of this study, which concerns **contractual workers in the health sector in Algeria**, showing the conceptual and theoretical structure upon which the research is based.

**Table (1): Conceptual Analysis of the Study**

<b>Theory Thinker</b>	<b>Core Concepts</b>	<b>Related Variable</b>	<b>Theoretical Implications for Contractual Workers</b>
<b>Pierre Bourdieu</b>	Capital - Field - Symbolic Violence	Job Security / Alienation	The absence of economic and symbolic capital places workers in a marginal position within the health field.
<b>Robert Castel</b>	Precarious Work - Vulnerability - Exclusion	Job Security	A state of fragility between integration and exclusion makes job stability uncertain.
<b>Serge Paugam</b>	Social Recognition of Work - Stigmatization	Alienation / Professional Identity	The lack of recognition generates professional stigma that



Theory Thinker /	Core Concepts	Related Variable	Theoretical Implications for Contractual Workers
			weakens the sense of belonging.
Claude Dubar	Lived / Ascribed Identity - Career Path	Social Professional Identity	The contradiction between self-identity and ascribed identity produces an identity crisis.
Henri Tajfel & John Turner	Social Identity - Identification - Social Comparison	Social Professional Identity	The weak integration of contractual workers undermines their professional identity.
Christina Maslach	Emotional Exhaustion - Depersonalization - Reduced	Psychological Burnout	Unstable working conditions generate

Theory Thinker /	Core Concepts	Related Variable	Theoretical Implications for Contractual Workers
	Accomplishment		professional exhaustion.
<b>Stevan Hobfoll</b>	Resource Loss - Psychological Stress	Job Security / Burnout	The loss of resources creates increased pressure and psychological fatigue.
<b>Social Exchange Theory (Peter Blau)</b>	Reciprocity - Mutual Fairness	Burnout / Identity	The lack of balance between effort and reward weakens commitment and professional identity.
<b>Organizational Justice Theory (Jerald Greenberg)</b>	Distributive - Procedural - Interactional Justice	Alienation / Identity	The absence of justice produces feelings of unfairness and alienation.



Theory Thinker	Core Concepts	Related Variable	Theoretical Implications for Contractual Workers
<b>Philippe d'Iribarne</b> Logic of Honor	Culture of Honor - Respect - Dignity - Symbolic Recognition	Professional Identity / Alienation	Workers seek not only wages but also dignity and honor in their work; the lack of recognition of professional honor generates alienation and identity crisis.

*(Table prepared by the researchers in the scientific paper)*

### 3. Fourth: Methodological and Field Framework and Analysis of Research Hypotheses

#### 3.1. Adopted Method:

It is well established that the first step in any scientific study lies in selecting the appropriate method upon which the field approach of the research topic is based. The scientific method in sociology is considered the foundation

that guides the researcher in studying and analyzing social phenomena objectively and systematically. It is defined as :

“the clear path to uncovering the facts of social life as they manifest in its various groupings and complex interrelations, through adherence to general rules that guide the mind in its intellectual operations, allowing it to proceed step by step according to a structured and sequential methodology” (Al-Saati, 1982, p. 31).

In this study, we relied on the **descriptive-analytical method** in order to describe and examine in depth the phenomenon of contractual workers in the Algerian public health sector, with the aim of understanding its dimensions and underlying dynamics.

### 3.2. Spatial and Temporal Framework:

The study was conducted at the **Public Institution for Primary Health Care in Messâad**, located in the **province of Djelfa**. It covered **three multi-service clinics and four treatment rooms**. The research was carried out over a period extending from **July 2024 to October 2024**.

### 3.3. Population and Research Sample:

A **comprehensive survey** was conducted, encompassing all members of the research population, estimated at **272 workers** employed under **full-time contractual agreements**. It is worth noting that the institution had recently converted its workers' contracts from **part-time to full-time employment**, in accordance with a ministerial directive mandating this change.

Although the contract duration was modified, the substantive content of the contract remained the same. During questionnaire distribution, it was not possible to reach some participants, while others were excluded due to



invalid or incomplete responses. Consequently, the **final study sample** consisted of **250 full-time contractual workers**.

The following table illustrates the **sample distribution**.

**Table (2): Sample Distribution**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	155	62%
	Female	95	38%
<b>Occupational Category</b>	Cleaning Staff	90	36%
	Security Agents	70	28%
	Maintenance Workers	50	20%
	Administrative Staff	40	16%
<b>Years of Service</b>	Less than 5 years	110	44%
	5-10 years	95	38%
	More than 10 years	45	18%

### 3.4. Validity and Reliability

The validity results were as follows:

- **Content Validity:**

The items were developed based on established published scales – *Professional Identity Scales* and *Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)* – with some modifications introduced to

adapt the wording to the local context, following expert discussion by the researchers.

- **Construct Validity:**

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on a pilot sample of **60 questionnaires** prior to the final survey. The resulting factor structures were consistent with the theoretical dimensions of each scale.

As for **reliability**, it was assessed using **Cronbach’s alpha** coefficient. The reliability coefficients for the different scales ranged between  $\alpha = 0.79$  and  $\alpha = 0.87$ , indicating acceptable to good reliability levels, which support the statistical validity of the results, as shown in the following table.

**Table (3): Validity and Reliability Values**

Type of Test	Instrument	Result	Interpretation
<b>Content Validity</b>	The questionnaire was reviewed by academic experts specializing in Organizational Sociology and Work & Organizational Psychology.	Agreement rate = <b>0.89</b>	High – indicates that the items adequately represent the study domains.
<b>Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha)</b>	Overall questionnaire	<b>0.87</b>	Indicates good reliability of the instrument.
	Job Security	<b>0.83</b>	High



Type of Test	Instrument	Result	Interpretation
			reliability.
	Psychological-Occupational Exhaustion	0.79	Acceptable reliability.
	Job Alienation	0.81	Good reliability.
	Professional Social Identity	0.85	High reliability.

### 3.5. Research Instruments Used in the Study

Two main research tools were used – the **questionnaire** and the **semi-structured interview** – in order to provide both breadth and depth in the investigation, as shown in the following table:

**Table (4): Research Instruments Used in the Study**

Instrument	Description	Purpose of Use
<b>Questionnaire</b>	Comprised <b>45 items</b> distributed across four dimensions: Job Security, Psychological-Occupational Exhaustion, Job Alienation, and Professional Social Identity. A <b>five-point Likert scale</b> was used (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5	To quantitatively measure the contractual workers' attitudes toward the study variables.

Instrument	Description	Purpose of Use
	= Strongly Agree).	
<b>Semi-Structured Interview</b>	Conducted with 20 <b>contractual workers</b> from different occupational categories (security, cleaning, maintenance, administration).	To deepen the qualitative understanding of workers' experiences regarding professional identity, job insecurity, and their perceptions of job stability.

### 3.6. Analysis of the Study Results in Light of the Hypotheses:

- **Analysis of the First Hypothesis:**

*Low job security contributes to a higher degree of job alienation among contract workers.*

**Table (5): Analysis of the First Hypothesis**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig Value	Result
Job Security × Job Alienation	-0.63	0.000	Statistically significant negative relationship (supports the hypothesis)

The feeling of job insecurity does not only mean irregularity in work and income due to the unstable professional status of contract workers; it also extends to all



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dimensions of their social lives. It deprives them of the ability to meet their own needs and those of their families adequately, to maintain material and social independence, and to plan and achieve life projects – even in the short term. This negatively affects their professional stability compared to permanent workers, as they perceive contractual work as lacking social protection.

Such conditions often lead to **professional alienation**, where workers feel that although they perform the same duties as others, they are deprived of many benefits such as promotion opportunities. This situation impacts their productivity and creates a sense of **professional exclusion**.

Based on the results shown in the table above, the hypothesis is confirmed: *The lower the employee's sense of job security, the higher their feelings of alienation and loss of belonging to the institution.*

• **Analysis of the Second Hypothesis:**

*Psychological-professional burnout leads to a weakened professional social identity.*

**Table (6): Analysis of the Second Hypothesis**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig Value	Result
Psychological-Professional Burnout × Professional Identity	-0.58	0.000	Significant negative relationship confirming the hypothesis

Professional instability resulting from modern forms of wage labor reflects a profound transformation in the standards of professional and social integration, within a context characterized by ongoing uncertainty. In this framework, **low job security** intersects with **limited social protection**, leading to a decline in social integration among workers.

However, the likelihood of social non-affiliation resulting from the lack of job security – of which **contractual work** is a prime example – remains limited thanks to the role played by **kinship-based solidarity networks** and **collective cooperation mechanisms** that continue to function within the social fabric.

It is useful here to distinguish between **economic or material insecurity**, which stems from the nature of contractual work and affects a growing segment of society, and **social insecurity**, which traditional and community-based mechanisms are still able to mitigate.

Accordingly, **job insecurity weakens the ability of contract workers to achieve full social integration**, though it does not necessarily lead to total exclusion. Instead, it places them in a state of **social and economic vulnerability**, which can be alleviated through **informal social protection practices**.

In conclusion, **full-time contractual employment** does not effectively contribute to achieving strong social integration for workers. Rather, it pushes them into a **transitional zone** marked by instability and social fragility.

### **Analysis of the Third Hypothesis:**

*Low job security and psychological-professional burnout together increase the likelihood of job alienation.*

**Table (7): Analysis of the Third Hypothesis**

Independent Variable	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	Sig Value	Result
Job Security	-0.42	0.000	Strong negative effect
Professional Burnout	+0.39	0.000	Strong positive effect
$R^2 = 0.57$	—	—	The two variables explain 57% of the variance in alienation.

Contract workers suffer from **chronic professional burnout**, which causes them to lose their sense of distinction and social recognition in the workplace. The study results and respondents' answers confirm that the search for permanent employment, combined with low and fixed wages, lack of benefits compared to permanent staff, and experiences of exclusion, lead to psychological strain.

They often avoid conflicts with other employees because the law is not in their favor – their contracts can be terminated without notice or recourse to a joint committee. Workers also note that the transition from a fixed-term to a full-time contract merely changes the duration of employment but not its conditions, maintaining a continuous sense of job insecurity, albeit less severe than before. While fear once centered on contract renewal, it now focuses on the enforcement of contractual terms and

inequality in benefits compared to permanent employees, perpetuating a state of anxiety.

Thus, **contract workers who experience both job insecurity and psychological exhaustion are the most vulnerable to alienation and loss of belonging.**

**Analysis of the Fourth Hypothesis:**

*Symbolic and social capital mitigate the effect of low job security on professional identity.*

**Table (8): Analysis of the Fourth Hypothesis**

Mediating Variable	Partial Correlation Coefficient	Sig	Result
Symbolic Capital × Job Security	+0.31	0.002	Positive interactive effect
Social Capital × Professional Identity	+0.36	0.001	Strengthens the sense of identity

The situation of full-time contract workers in Algeria’s public health institutions (particularly cleaning staff, security guards, maintenance workers, and drivers) is characterized by a **high level of organizational instability**. They often work under contracts without genuine stability guarantees, with low wages and limited productivity, and are deprived of certain union rights and participation in joint committees.

Despite these conditions, field data show that **social recognition** – whether from colleagues or administrative staff – can make a significant difference in the reconstruction of their professional identity.



Hence, **social recognition and symbolic status within the institution contribute to preserving professional identity even amid contractual fragility.**

### 3.7. Analysis of Results in Light of Theoretical Approaches

#### • Pierre Bourdieu's Approach: Field, Capital, and Habitus

From Bourdieu's perspective, contract workers operate within an unstable professional field that lacks both symbolic and material recognition. This results in a **fragile professional habitus**, oscillating between belonging and withdrawal.

Contract work fails to provide **symbolic capital** (recognition, promotion, institutional trust) or **economic capital** (stable income, professional guarantees). Consequently, an **alienated professional habitus** develops – an internal system of representations and behaviors marked by fear, hesitation, and a weak sense of meaning and belonging. This sociologically explains why the lower the job security, the higher the degree of alienation.

#### • Robert Castel's Approach: Precarious Work and the Erosion of Social Protection

Castel argues that modern societies are transitioning from stable employment to "zones of social precariousness," where workers lose connection with safety and protection networks.

Contract workers in Algerian hospitals clearly embody this "**gray zone**": they are neither unemployed nor fully integrated.

Here, job insecurity translates into a **fragile professional identity**, as individuals cannot establish a stable relationship with their work or institution. Consequently, weak

protection (lack of tenure, guarantees, promotion rights) leads to a **double alienation** – both from oneself and from the organization.

- **Claude Dubar’s Approach: Constructing Professional Identity through Interaction and Recognition**

According to Dubar, professional identity is formed through a **socially interactive process** between the individual and the institution, involving two key dimensions:

- **Institutional recognition**, and
- **Self-recognition**.

When contract workers are deprived of this recognition due to job insecurity and unstable status, they fail to rebuild their professional selves. This failure leads to **feelings of alienation**, as the relationship between the individual and the group becomes unbalanced – turning work into a **forced performance devoid of social meaning**.

- **Serge Paugam’s Approach: The Logic of Professional Honor and Social Recognition**

Paugam links work to dignity, asserting that **social recognition lies at the core of professional relations**. When contract workers are excluded from promotion committees or treated as a secondary class, they lose their **sense of professional honor**, which gives meaning and worth to their labor. Thus, **the absence of job security becomes a symbolic humiliation** that generates deep **psychological and professional alienation**.

- **Theory of Organizational Justice:**

This theory highlights that the perception of injustice – in pay, promotion, appreciation, or recognition – leads to a decline in organizational commitment and belonging.



Contract workers who receive a productivity bonus amounting to only **1.4% of the base salary** and are excluded from joint administrative committees experience a state of **administrative injustice**, which translates behaviorally into **alienation and emotional detachment** from the institution.

Low job security is not merely a matter of material fragility; it represents a **symbolic social structure** that weakens professional capital and fragments the worker's relationship with both the self and the institution. Thus, **job alienation** emerges as the natural outcome of the intersection between:

- Field fragility (Bourdieu),
- Erosion of protection (Castel),
- Failure of identity construction (Dubar),
- Absence of recognition (Paugam), and
- Lack of organizational justice.

### 3.8. Study Recommendations:

- **Reconsider the contract system:** Transition from precarious to more stable contracts to reduce fear of termination and strengthen workers' professional identity.
- **Improve salaries and bonuses:** Implement a fair wage policy reflecting actual effort, especially for the most vulnerable groups (cleaning and security staff).
- **Reform the classification scale:** Create promotion opportunities through internal competitions and training programs instead of the stagnation that deepens frustration.
- **Symbolic recognition:** Offer certificates of appreciation, display workers' names on honor

boards, and highlight their contributions to enhance their symbolic capital.

- **Continuous training:** Launch professional development programs to strengthen cultural capital and skills, thereby improving professional habitus.
- **Strengthen union organization:** Empower contract workers to defend their economic and symbolic rights.
- **Create regular dialogue spaces:** Establish periodic communication channels between management and contract workers to discuss their concerns directly, through mediation mechanisms that prevent escalation or dismissal conflicts.
- **Enhance social recognition:** Involve cleaning and security staff in official events (e.g., Labor Day, Health Day) to raise their symbolic standing.
- **Highlight their role in internal and local media:** Conduct awareness campaigns showcasing their essential contribution to public service functioning.
- **Adopt a human-centered approach:** Promote administrative communication based on respect rather than dominance to reinforce their professional identity.
- **Encourage comparative studies** among health, administrative, and educational institutions to identify variations in professional identity determinants.
- **Expand theoretical approaches** to measure the evolution of professional identity over time or in response to changes in public policies.



## Conclusion:

This field study – which examined **job security, psychological-professional burnout, and their relationship to alienation and professional social identity among contract workers in Algeria’s public health sector** – yielded several theoretical and empirical findings that reveal the **complex interaction between organizational structures and social fragility** within the healthcare work environment.

The empirical data indicate that **contractual employment**, though intended as a human-resource management tool in public institutions, has instead produced **professional and economic instability** characterized by low wages, fragile legal guarantees, and exclusion from decision-making mechanisms. This situation directly affects **job security**, a core component of organizational belonging and integration.

It also appears that **contract workers operate within an unequal professional field**, where permanent employees monopolize institutional capital, while contract workers seek compensation through **symbolic capital** – namely, social recognition and professional esteem that provide them with a minimal sense of legitimacy within the institution.

Furthermore, this group of contract workers experiences a state of **“moderate precariousness”** – not complete social exclusion, but constant exposure to job loss due to weak legal and economic protection.

**Social recognition and symbolic status** are therefore crucial factors in preserving professional identity among contract workers. The analysis shows that those who receive appreciation from supervisors and colleagues exhibit higher

levels of commitment and belonging despite their fragile contracts.

Conversely, **low job security and high psychological-professional burnout** are associated with increased professional alienation and diminished sense of dignity, confirming that **material security and symbolic security are inseparable in shaping workplace identity**.

The results of the **qualitative interviews** further support the interactive nature of professional identity. They show that a contract worker's identity is continuously formed through **negotiation between self-perception and the institution's representations**, particularly regarding **professional dignity** – explaining how lack of recognition leads to symbolic humiliation that threatens belonging and deepens vulnerability.

In light of these findings, it can be concluded that **contractual employment in Algeria's public health sector, in its current form, does not foster genuine professional integration**. Instead, it produces a **fragile form of integration** – balancing participation in work with fear of job loss. However, ongoing **mechanisms of social recognition and collegial solidarity** partially mitigate the effects of exclusion, allowing contract workers to **rebuild their professional identity within a fragile yet symbolically cohesive field**.



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