

Gender Regimes and Precariousness in the Neoliberal Academy: The Specific Case of Romania

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Abstract

The casualisation of academic employment and the rise of 'flexible' financed researchers seem to be a normalised characteristic across both Western and Eastern European countries and for a long time now, it is not a novelty. Higher education and public research institutions in Romania have witnessed radical neoliberal measures and increasing growth of the number of flexible work arrangements. The article seeks to demonstrate how these new requirements and managerial changes are affecting the employment insecurity and uncertainty of researchers. In addition, the article is wondering how these transformations of higher education system became normalised in practice and whether the consequences are affecting differently men and women from both sides of working conditions and affective life strategies. For arguing about the neoliberal transformations of labour in higher education, the concept of precariousness is in the core of this study because it challenges the understanding of the labour insecurity in terms of gender regimes and care issues.

Keywords: *higher education, academic labour, gender regime, neoliberalism, precariousness*

Introduction

Addressing precariousness and pursuing gender inequalities in higher education is a very broad and complex topic. The field of gendered precariousness in higher education can be conceptualised from many interdisciplinary fields: employment policy and political reforms; equal opportunities on labour market (Stoiciu, 2013; Trif, 2013; Ban, 2016; Eurofound, 2010; 2013; EC, 2016; SHE Figures, 2018); educational performance & recruitment in higher education (Ylijoki, 2010; Busso & Rivetti, 2014; Bozzon et al. 2017, Murgia, et al, 2018) or science policy (Davies, 2005; Cannizzo, 2017). The research known so far on the intersection between precariousness and gender in the academic labour has been focused strongly on programs for mentoring and promoting opportunities for women in science and strategies for gender equality (Fogelberg, et. al, 1999; O'Connor, 2014; Nobauer, H. et. Al, 2005; Heijstra et al 2017) and less on the understanding of the feminization of academy under precarious working conditions (Leathwood & Read, 2009; Ylijoki, 2010). Moreover, the new empirical evidence on academic employment and recruitment demands in higher education is showing that there has been relatively poor debate on the issue of gendered precariousness (Ivancheva et al, 2019; Bozzon et al., 2017; 2018; Murgia et al., 2018).

Higher education is not different in terms of the cultural construction of organizations more generally. Gender polarisation is still a common aspect across institutions with a research and education profile. Men continue to dominate top management positions and they are more likely to be better paid than women. They manage to promote more easily in higher research grades and to have a permanent position rather than part-time or fixed-term work agreements. Hence, higher education and research institutions are not immune to the ‘production and reproduction of dominant ideologies’ (Fogelberg, 1999).

First, in this article the concept of ‘higher education’ is important for emphasizing the process of ‘gendered knowledge formations’ of a precarious culture in the academic labour (Murgia et al, 2018). Thus, the ‘masculinised’ culture in higher education is building up the ideal image of an ‘academic worker’, with no interests and responsibilities outside work, willing to marginalise the affective and relations lives (Ivancheva et al., 2019; Stalford, 2005). In a Weberian understanding of the concept (Weber, 1922), when performing the ‘ideal type’ of the worker, the women were named “winners among losers” (Zimmer & Siemieńska, 2007). Comparing with their men peers, women academics appear to react to the increasing ‘managerialism pressures’ in ways that are more unfavourable to their careers and personal lives (Nobauer, H. et. Al, 2005; Ylijoki 2010; Heijstra et al 2017; Murgia et al, 2018).

The higher education system has become subject to neoliberal managerial demands on efficiency, transparency and accountability of labour. Many countries around Europe implemented educational policies designed to increase student participation and develop mass higher education (Leathwood & Read, 2009). Universities and public research institutions in Romania weren't out of these reforms. The Romanian academic system has witnessed neoliberal measures for competition and commercialisation of education, with an increased number of researchers working with flexible arrangements, as part-time, fixed-term and short-term post-doc contracts (SHE report, 2018).

Second, I believe that gender experiences in academia can be well described by the term ‘precariousness’ for indicating a major cause of insecurity among researchers. The employment insecurity is related to the possibility that the job will end in the near future with important consequences on the work continuity, skill reproduction and social protection (Rodgers & Rodgers, 1989; Olsthoorn, 2013, 3-4).

In the academic discourse, Bourdieu (1964; 1998) by ‘precarité’ considers precariousness as a reference for threatening insecurity caused by both employment status and the risk of poverty. Precariousness as increasing phenomenon in Europe has important consequences that cross many policy research areas: quality of life, living conditions, psychological and long-term affective effects, social and gender inequalities in the context of neoliberal working conditions etc. As Castel (1996) is remarking, the precarization of labour is representing a central process and a direct consequence of the new technological demands of the modern capitalism seen also as “new social issues”. More frequently, the concept of precariousness is often describing the changes from stable full-time jobs to some more flexible work arrangements in the ‘favourable’ context of post-Fordist labour markets (Castel, 1996; Standing, 2011; Vallas, 2015; Kalleberg. 2009; 2011).

In the policy discourse, precariousness is analysed more recently as a result of the increased demand of labour flexibility in Europe, mostly after the economic crisis (Kalleberg, 2009; 2011; Broughton et al., 2010; Vallas, 2012; 2015, Eurofound, 2013). These changes are revealed by opening the local labour markets to transnational capital and neoliberal measures for labour internationalisation and flexibilization (Stoiciu, 2013; Trif, 2013; Ban, 2016).

The present paper is asking how these neoliberal requirements and new managerial changes are affecting the employment situation in higher education for the specific context of Romania. I am wondering how these changes became 'normalised' in the recruitment system and whether consequences are affecting the gender representation in higher education.

The objective is to present a background situation of the neoliberal context of the academy in terms of the structure of gendered career opportunities interconnected with the care issues and precariousness. The analysis will draw a theoretical analysis of the local context of employment regimes in higher education using the gender dimension. The methodology is desk-based on secondary data from the EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey, National Statistics Institute of Romania, MORE 3 Survey and labour policy analysis on the Romanian Labour Code and on the policy reports on gender representation in higher education employment in the EU (SHE Figures, 2018; GEAR, 2016).

Neoliberal policies in higher education employment. Overview from the national context

The circumstances of researchers' precarious experiences can be analysed in a larger European transformation of capitalist economies. Over the past few decades, higher education systems have become a 'corporate ideology'. The new modes of surveillance and autonomy of the academic labour in terms of 'productivity', 'competition' and 'flexibility' were implemented in the majority of the institutions with a research and education profile in Europe. After the reconstruction of the neoliberal recruitment system, many researchers had to deal with the emphasis on 'individual responsibility' and 'freedom of choice' sometimes by way of despising any institutional support in the name of a more individualist orientation (Davies, 2005; Bosso & Rivetti, 2014; Bozzon et al, 2015; Cannizzo, 2017).

Thus, for the majority of Romanian academics, tenure employment is still a privileged practice of the current recruitment system. In the same time, other tiers of academics proceed from one contract to the next in a more 'flexible conception' of the academic labour. The employment casualisation is no longer marginal or exceptional within academia but rather become a common practice, especially for the research contracts. In conformity with the Romanian Labour Code, the fixed-term contracts are not typical for a specific category (e.g. junior academics) but it's become a frequent feature also for researchers in senior positions for which the labour law is allowing to have two maybe three fixed-term or part-time contracts in different institutions.

Academics in Romania have their research rankings annually judged by their line manager superior. This fact is leading regularly to stress and pressure for producing the expected outputs in conformity to the national rankings requirements established by both intern audit and the external audit of the Minister of Education. In Romania, the quality audit is focused mostly on research

outputs to produce worthy and excellent research results and less on the quality of the teaching activities. “Such principles are oriented towards productivity, performance and excellence – principally defined in terms of the number and quality of publications produced, levels of funding obtained by both public and private bodies and by the number of graduates ‘produced’ by universities” (Teelken, 2012; Murgia et al. 2018).

To bring in the current analysis the interconnection between precariousness and gendered employment, I will examine first the political transformations of higher education and public scientific research.

Perhaps, the most visible and radical turn among the academic recruitment system has started immediately after the period of the economic crisis in Romania (2009). The crisis started with a significant reduction of the available research resources and public funding for conducting research together with a gradual precarization of the young researchers by limiting the access to tenure - track positions. After 2009, the tenure - track opportunities in research and higher education system suffered various transformations through more flexible arrangements, as fixed-term contracts or project-based contracts favoured by the new projects funded by the European Social Fund and POSDRU Program, lately by SIPOCA and POCU programs.

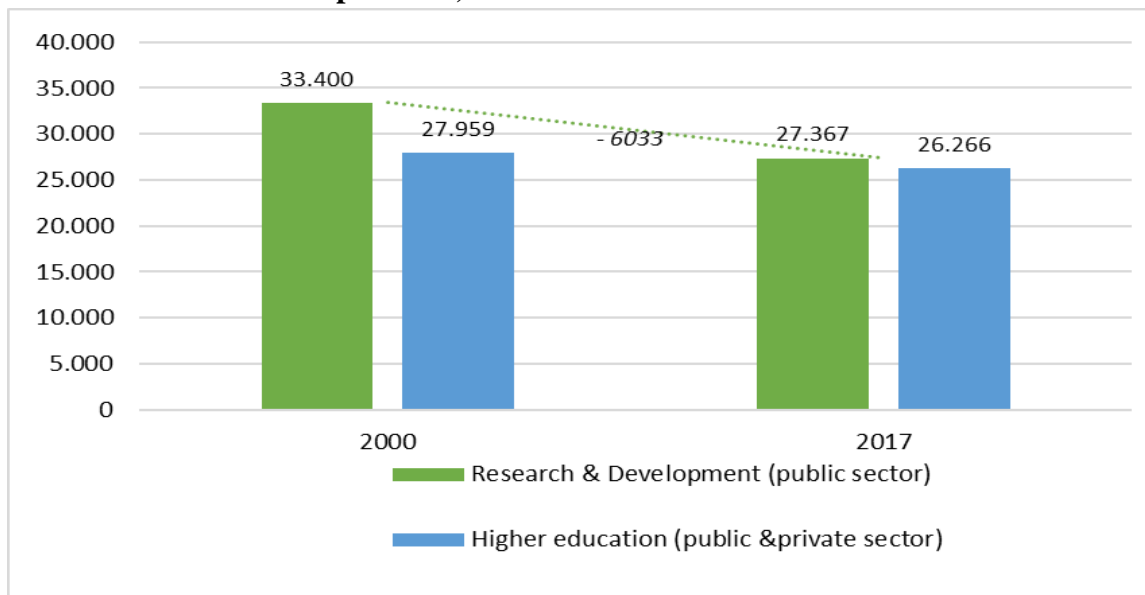
One of the most prominent impacts of the institutional context after the crisis was the Educational Law adopted in 2011. The educational legislation caused major changes in the employment conditions for higher education and research. The conditions for entering in academia were based on high competition and hyper-productivity concerning the scientific publications, high mobility demands to participate in international conferences and academic exchanges, high skills requirements for both early and senior research stages. The government proceeded in 2011 with the implementation of these reforms and changed the National Educational Law. The new law implemented produced a new model of governance of the national higher education system. The changes approved a rigid classification and a new ranking system for higher education institutions in Romania. Moreover, the classification has the scope to radically differentiate the ‘productive’ universities from the ‘unproductive’ ones, with an unequal allocation of funds based on their research performance. The Educational Law of 2011 came with a complex and diversified methodology for evaluating the universities for their academic and institutional performance (Gog, 2015). The methodology worked with four categories of indicators: scientific research, teaching-learning skills, the relationship with the external environment and institutional capability (Gog, 2015).

These neoliberal demands were translated in action by a higher level of competition for entering in academia that came with increased insecurity especially for those researchers with fixed-term contracts and hourly-paid teaching contracts looking for permanent positions in higher education. As long as the universities tended to open a minor number of new positions for young researchers and teaching assistants, immediately after 2009 the institutions were preferring to open instead tenure-track, more fixed-term contracts. Furthermore, the competition at the national level became higher for the very few available tenure positions, by imposing both high mobility demands and hyper-productivity for publication in high-rated journals.

To some extent, the growing constraints for higher education employment inevitably created a polarised stratification of the academic staff into two tiers: professors and other senior academics with tenure-track positions which belonged to the ‘privileged’ and secure part of academy, while mainly young researchers with short-term contracts were experimenting insecure job prospects in an ‘a growing academic underclass’ unstable and less remunerated (Ylijoki, 2010).

As a historical sign of the ongoing neoliberal market transformations over the past few decades, the rising of precarious jobs is associated also with major institutional changes of social dialogue law and neoliberal labour market demands for flexibility and mobility (Harvey, 2005; Kalleberg, 2009; Trif, 2013; Ban, 2016). These precarious jobs increased the work-insecurity and have significant repercussions for the working conditions and additional effects on work-life balance and forthcoming poor life strategies to ensure a decent life (Rand Report, Guthrie et. al, 2017; UCU report, 2019).

Fig. 1. Full-time employment in research and higher education, in 2000 and 2017, age 16-65, (fixed-term & tenure-track positions)



Source: INSEE, FOM1054, SCL104A, CDP102H

Due to the economic crisis when in Romania a lot of public positions in higher education were temporarily 'banned', the low ratio of permanent academic contracts was into a continuing fall until the present. A continuing decrease of the available positions was presented from 2000 to 2017, with approximately 6000 positions that disappeared in the public research institutions, and around 3000 in higher education.

Considering the total number of researchers and higher education employees from 2000 to 2017, the employment situation can be seen as a relatively positive trend for women representation in both research and higher education positions. Following the growth of the full-time positions in higher education from 2000 to 2017, the women are the 'winners' of the Romanian transition

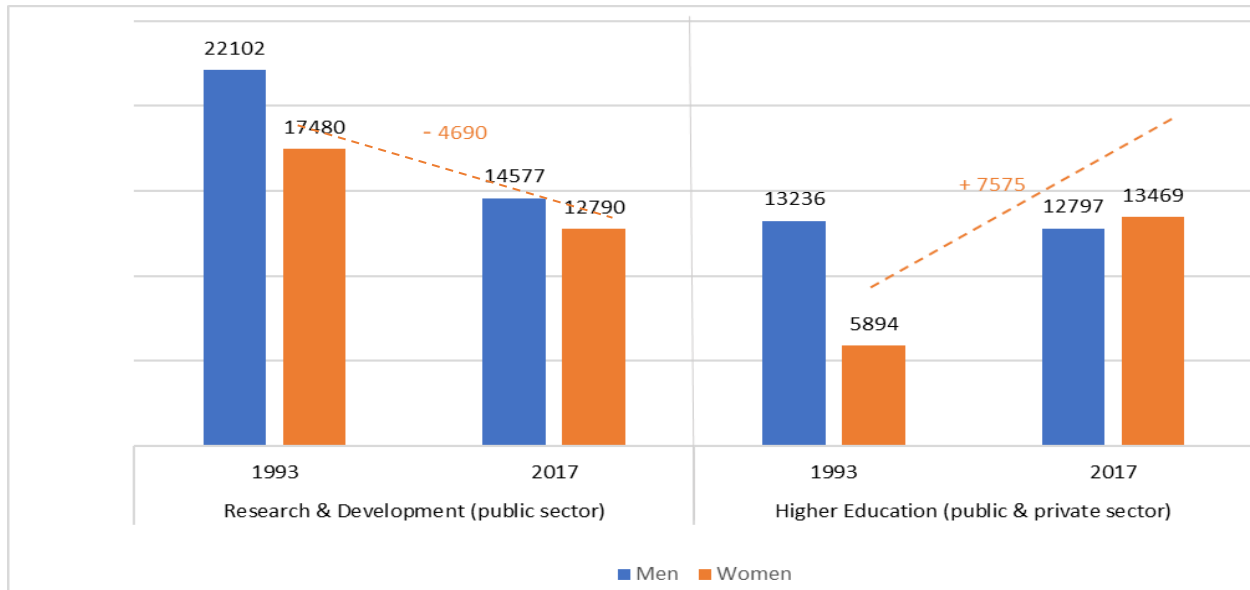
period, with more than 7500 new positions that were created immediately after 1990. The tendency for the research positions is negative when comparing women to men. One possible explanation is concerning the direct consequences of the reformation of higher education recruitment system after the economic crisis, that came together with a lack of funding opportunities in conducting scientific research, but also with a significant and continuous decrease of the total number of students due to the demographic issues in post-communist Romania.

The intersection between gender, care and precariousness in higher education

a. Gender regimes and care

The existence of gender inequalities in higher education is nothing new. Thus, the norms based on competition and self-responsibility goes more into 'gender mainstream' policy and less on promoting equal opportunities in academic recruitment. The understanding of the gender regimes in higher education is related to the set of norms and principles that determine the gender representation in the organisation. The higher education reforms in Romania have a historical turn in the 'favour' of women representation. The inclusion of women on the labour market was an economic demand during the communist policies of labour which encouraged an equal gender representation in industries that traditionally were represented by men. Despite the women inclusion in Eastern and Central Europe labour markets (see fig. 3), the masculinity 'as system' is very deeply inscribed both historically as well as habitually in the institutions, "that the exemption of women is always reproduced annexe even though there have been numerous university reforms" (Nobauer, et. al, 2005: 30). Therefore, "the academic and research careers generally continue to be shaped by traditional gender models, which are binding for female researchers and this happens more frequently to them than to their male colleagues (O'Connor et al. 2017; Murgia et. al, 2018: 23)". Below, figure 2 is showing the positive trend for women representation in higher education from 1993 to 2017, with more than 7500 women that are working in teaching tenure -track positions while the number of men remains relatively constant from 1993 to 2017, with less than 500 positions that decrease in this period of time. The employment situation is very different in the research sector, where more than 4500 women positions declined from 1993 to 2017. Even though the number of men working in research decreased as well with more than 7500 positions, in 2017 they are dominating research with a significant difference from women, around 2000 positions.

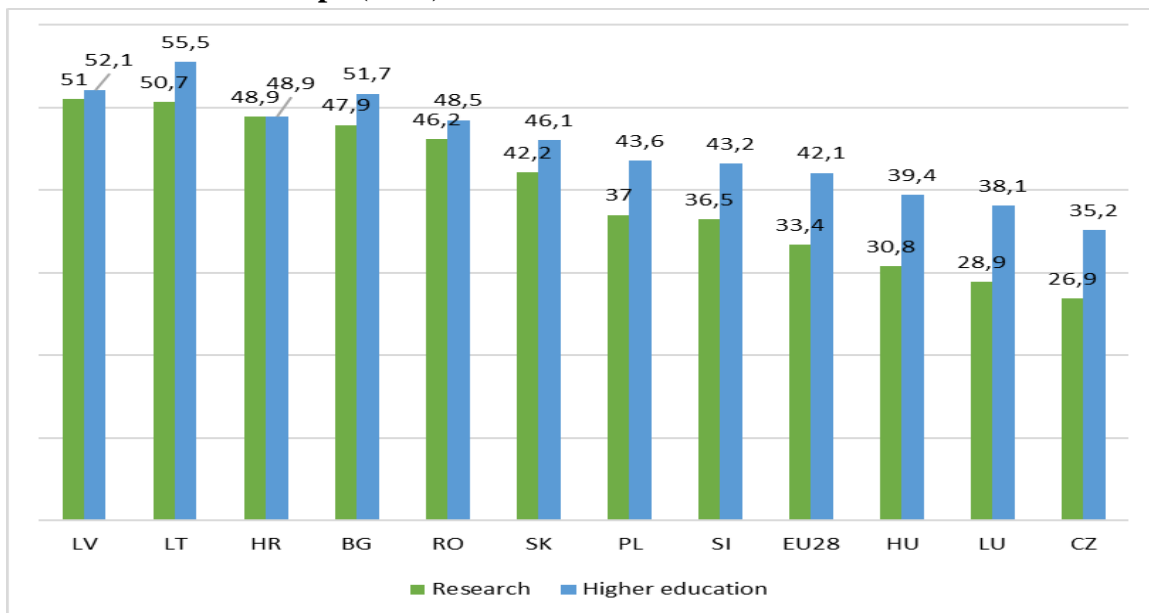
Fig. 2 The total number of researchers by gender in Romania (1993- 2017)



Source: INSEE RO FOM105E

The distribution of women in higher education and research in the EU remains at a low level, only 33,4% of women were working in research and 42,1% in higher education. The men are dominating the academic positions in the majority of Eastern and Central Europe countries. The exception is made in Latvia and Lithuania. In 2015, the proportion of the total number of women in Romania was 46,2% in research and for higher education 48,5%. In the majority of the European countries, SHE Figures report (2018) is showing that the women researchers are concentrated in the higher education sector, as it is mainly visible for the Romanian case.

Fig. 3. The proportion of women among researchers in higher education and research sector, Eastern and Central Europe (2015)



Source: SHE Figures report (2018), EUROSTAT (2015)

In the majority of countries, as is also the case of Romania, the women are concentrated in the higher education sector while men have a 'disproportionately high share' in the research sector. SHE Figures report (2018) is showing that across the European Union countries, 42,1 % of women researchers are employed in the higher education sector, while 33,4% of women worked in research, in 2015.

In the Eastern and Central European countries, the proportion of women researchers oscillate between 27% in the Czech Republic and 51% the highest proportion on Lithuania. Looking at the overall score of women representation in both higher education and research, they can be considered as 'gender-balanced'. Latvia and Lithuania are the countries with the highest proportion of women researchers (51,0 % and 50,7 %).

The women representation issue in higher education and research cannot be explained only by looking to the structural changes of post-communist societies from both sides of the institutional frameworks and employment policies. The gender inequalities in the overall academy must be analysed also by including the cultural understanding of traditional gender roles in the institutional context (Murgia et. al, 2018: 23). First, the academic research positions are not equally accessible to male and female PhD holders (Murgia et al, 2018, Ivancheva et. 2019). Second, the gender differences in academia are showing that male occupy sometimes a better position in the global research market and are better paid than their female colleagues that are struggling to find a permanent research position (Canal-Dominguez & Wall, 2014 In Murgia et al, 2018: 23-24). Ultimately, the gendered regimes in a typical neoliberal higher education system require a complex interpretation of the working conditions issues related to precarious experiences, employment insecurity and care precarity (Ivancheva et al, 2019).

In the core of gendered precariousness understanding in academia, the care issue is representing an important feature. By only focusing the analysis on women representation in higher education and research, we can have an estimation about how women are dealing with employment insecurity. Even so, the care dimension in higher education is reflecting different structural changes that occur in both personal and institutional relations which are perceived differently in the personal lives of men and women (Heijstra et al., 2017). Moreover, the care issue is reproduced in complex forms within the organisational cultures of the neoliberal academy (Murgia et al, 2018).

The link to labour insecurity is not a novelty in the case of women. As this article noted already, the assumption of the 'ideal academic worker' is ignoring the 'care precarity' of the personal lives of women with children. The data from MORE 3 survey (2018) (Mobility patterns and career paths of EU researchers) is presenting evidence at country level that men are more mobile than their female colleagues when travelling for work (for example, in Slovakia the sex differences for international academic mobility goes with 10,9% in the favour of men, in Poland 10,4% and in Belgium 8,4%, both in the favour of men). The international mobility among researchers is seen as a necessary step for finding a tenure-track position and it's representing an important line for academic quality. When it comes to career advancement, "having children is

still representing an obstacle to obtaining a stable position in academia for women, regardless of their scientific profile” (Murgia et. al, 2018: 23-24).

Several data evidence on gender precariousness in higher education is pointing out to the conclusion that women who have a permanent position “are more frequently single and without children compared with their male peers” (Palomba 2008; Ivancheva et. Al 2019).

b. The precariousness issue

One of the standing points of the gender regimes in academia is the concept of 'precariousness' understood as a transversal dimension for studying gender regime. The academic work was described as being 'uncertain and precarious' by many sociologists studying before this phenomenon (della Porta 2015; Lempiäinen, 2015; Bozzon et al, 2017; Murgia et al, 2018). The main argument for describing the concept of precariousness is that many researchers are employed with fixed-term contracts and the majority of them are represented by women. The rapid changing time and schedule, especially the rise of fixed-term employment combined with heavy time pressure, evoke important questions as to how academics live with insecurity and uncertainty (Ylijoki, 2010).

For describing the employment insecurity in academia, I use the concept of 'precariousness' because I think that involved a complex understanding of the working conditions concerning the gender dimension. First of all, the link between gender and precariousness was previously analysed as an economic issue in the context of the casualisation of academic employment (Bozzon et al, 2017; Ivancheva et. al 2019). The rise of externally financed project-based positions and other fixed-term and part-time staff seem to be a common characteristic across many European countries (Ylijoki, 2010). In conformity with the European Framework for Research Careers (EFRC), these 'flexible' contracts in higher education and research correspond to first Stage Researcher (up to the point of PhD) and the Recognised Researcher (PhD holders or equivalent who are not yet fully independent). The early stages of an academic career, such as the first stage researcher to a second stage after PhD were considered particularly insecure and precarious, even the work-related experiences are perceived differently for men and women. As is shown mainly in the ethnographic literature (Bozzon et al, 2017, Ivancheva, et. al, 2019); qualitative research (Davies, 2005; Lempiäinen, 2015) and critical approach to neoliberal policies (Pulignano, 2018; Murgia, 2012), the concept of 'precariousness' appears to go along with the age, gender and contract dimension in a matter of auto-identification with working 'under' precarious working conditions (SHE Figures, 2018; Jones & Oakley, 2018; UCU report, 2019).

The theory of academic feminization (Leathwood & Read, 2009) is explaining how the increasing number of women is taking over the academic employment in part-time and fixed-term contracts. Due to the lack of institutional support from the public research institutions and universities, these contracts are particularly associated with insecurity and insufficient remuneration. The new managerial demands are legitimizing precariousness as a necessary step related to the transition to the labour market in order to obtain a tenure -track position (Busso & Rivetti; Bozzon et al. 2017). “To avoid interruptions of their careers, the researchers need to deal

with frequent mobility between jobs or work-related mobilities” (Murgia, et al, 2018). Therefore, precariousness in higher education is not to be restricted to temporary, discontinuous and uncertain employment. Uncertainty and insecurity are representing frequent experience in higher education (Knights & Clarke 2014; 2015).

In Romania, the link between precariousness and gender in academia is a relatively new issue studied so far by social scientists (Eurofound, 2010; 2013; Eurostat, 2018; della Porta et. al, 2015). During and after the economic crisis in Romania, in late 2009, many labour market reforms marked the recruitment system in all the industries with a high share of high-skills workers. The case of higher education wasn't out of these reforms. The so-called decline of ‘typical -standard’ work contracts in favour of an increasing number of ‘atypical – flexible’ contracts are interpreted as rising with a precarization effect on high-skill workers (Quinlan et al. 2001; Barbier 2004; Vosko 2006; Kalleberg, 2011; Standing, 2011; Olsthroom, 2013; della Porta et. al, 2015, Murgia, 2017). The precarious employment in Romania was the subject to different research and policy reports at the EU Level (Eurofound, 2010; 2013; EC, 2016; SHE Figures, 2018). The data from MORE 3 Survey is presenting a descriptive overview of the employment situation of researchers working in higher education and scientific research institutions (public institutions & business). Comparing to the data available at EUROSTAT (2018) which have a specific conceptual scheme for measuring precarious work¹, in MORE 3 Survey one of the questions is related to the self-perception about insecurity where researchers may point if they are working under precarious conditions or not. The precarious working contracts were considered those without a contract, with fixed-term agreements, non-permanent contracts and part-time. Particularly, MORE 3 Survey results are pointing out the career insecurities among both young scientists and women. In this case, SHE Figures report (2018) are proving empirical evidence at the EU Level that the lack of job security can also have a “negative impact on the scientific output of researchers already in the system, especially women in the early stages of their careers. (...) It can reduce many sorts of opportunities, including obtaining research funding, working with leading scientists, achieving tenure or long-term contracts, or having sufficient time for research” (SHE Figures, 2018).

¹ Measuring employment quality by EUROSTAT: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/labour-market/quality-of-employment>

Fig. 4 Part-time employment of researchers in higher education out of total researcher population (2016)

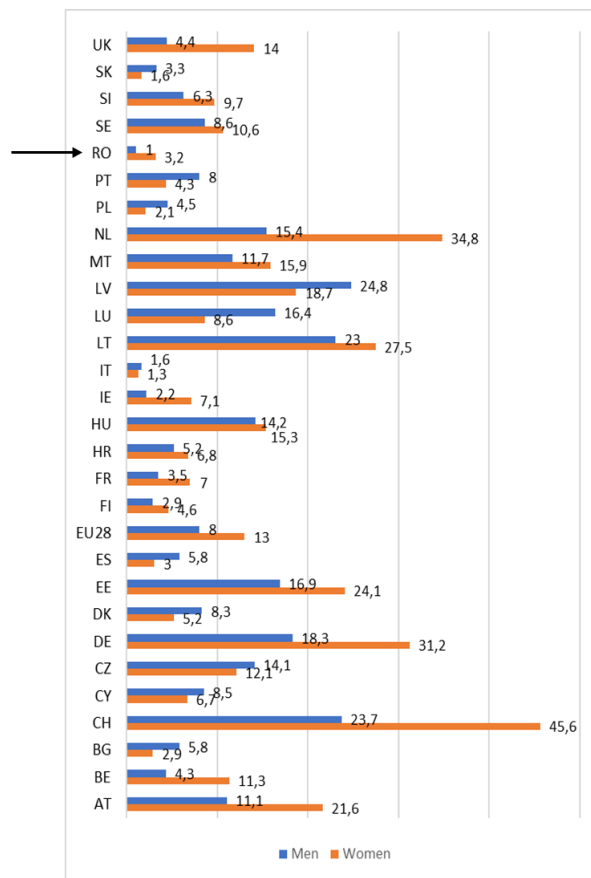
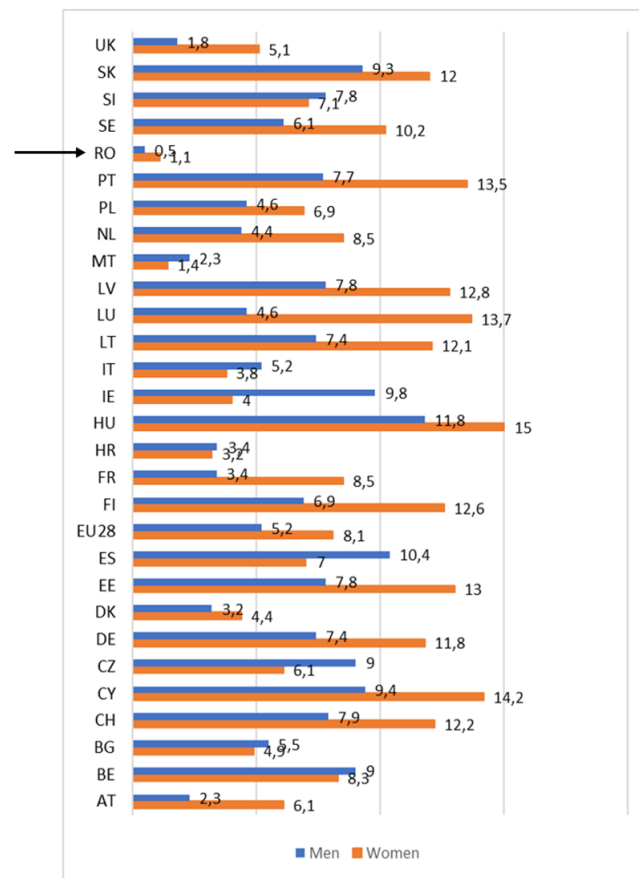


Fig. 5 Proportion of researcher in the higher education under precarious working contracts (2016)



Source: *She Figures Report (2018), MORE3 survey (online database, flag GMD3)/ (Q2, Q31, Q32).*

The two figures are presenting the gender differences in higher education by taking into account part-time employment and working under precarious conditions. The available data from the MORE Survey includes spontaneous answers regarding self-perception about the working status and the insecurity regarding the work contract. For the majority of the European countries, part-time employment in higher education is feminised. The situation for part-time employment in higher education is the same in Romania (3,2% of women compared to 1% of men) and at the EU28 level, 13% of women were working part-time in 2016, compared to only 8% of men. The data available for Romania is based on a small sample of researchers and the proportion for part-time contracts is under-represented. Comparing to the national statistics on employment and labour market at EU level, as is the case of EUROSTAT or Labour Force Survey, the MORE 3 Survey is gathering data based on the self-declaration of researchers and not by counting the actual number of part-time contracts provided by the national institutes or by the statistics provided by the universities. Moreover, the National Statistics Institute of Romania is not collecting national data on part-time employment in higher education and research. In the case of MORE Survey, the full-

time/part-time distinction was made based on the spontaneous answer of respondents. On one side, part-time employment is reflecting the dominant cultural patterns and the organisational factors that go more in the benefit of men obtaining tenure-track positions compared to women researchers which are more 'trapped' in the life-work balance paradigm (Ivancheva et. al, 2019). Second, the part-time positions are indicating the gender regimes: "female academics are disproportionately affected by the masculinist care-free norms of geographic mobility" which is an important characteristic of the academic career (Ivancheva et. al, 2019). The gender differences in part-time work can be explained also by the gender labels of the family primary carer and housework duties which are pointed though the responsibility of women.

Part-time employment in academia is interrelated with other 'temporal changes' taking place in the institutions: accelerating time, loss of autonomy, over-time management and growing time pressure of the academic work. These contracts in higher education are usually characterised by the basis of free choice regarding working hours and schedule. But, a large proportion of the precarious contracts are assumed to be intensive or very flexible because of the variable working hours that reflect an imbalanced work-life in the case of women, but also by referring to the "over-commitments" and "over-work" to compensate for career advancement (Eurofound, 2013) or sometimes for compensate for an insufficient income. In addition to the main research and teaching duties, "the academics are expected to attract external revenue, to establish large networks within and outside academia, to engage in international collaboration, publishing, it is expected to produce not only more but also better scientific results in a short period" which create a lot of pressure (Ylijoki, 2010:2).

Higher education institutions in Romania are preferring to open temporary or fixed-term positions for PhDs instead of permanent contracts, because the first category is considered to be 'more advantageous' in terms of budget savings. Due to a 'flexible policy' within Romanian universities, the Ph.D. students are employed sometimes as teaching assistants without having a teaching contract. In the legal terms of the doctoral contracts, the students with a doctoral scholarship are working without being extra-paid for the number of teaching seminars that they currently conduct. In the doctoral contract terms is stipulated that a Ph.D. student must have a minimum teaching activity in the limit of 6 hours/ week (around three seminars). Due to insufficient remuneration and for attracting extra revenues, many academics have more than one contract, usually two or three flexible contracts, working fixed-term in different research projects or having small-jobs for teaching activities.

Table 1. The gross salaries for teaching positions¹ and research positions² at the University of Bucharest and Romanian Academy of Science (2018)

Salary degree (no bonus included)	Assistant professor (R1)	Lecturer (R2)	Associate Professor (R3)	Full Professor (R4)
The gross amount (in RON and euro/ 2018 for University of Bucharest)	3568 (750 €)	4307 (920 €)	5381 (1120 €)	11103 (2500 €)
The gross amount (in RON and euro/ 2018 for Romanian Academy of Science)	2632 (550 €)	3803 (800 €)	4540 (980 €)	10132 (2150 €)

Source: www.unibuc.ro/ www.acad.ro/ INSEE

For instance, the University of Bucharest, one of the biggest universities in Romania and Eastern Europe, has a huge number of Teaching Associated Staff with hourly-paid contracts in the majority of the faculties, especially in the biggest ones, as is the case of the social science. The rate of one teaching hour is related to the teaching rank and it is depending of the vacancy of the leading course.

Last, but not least, the direct consequences of precarious working conditions are reflected by the low and insufficient wages for researchers in the early -stage positions. In the same time, due to the work intensity, the personal lives of researchers are affected "in terms of mental and physical wellbeing, and terms of the balance or integration of work and other spheres of personal life" (Lynch & Ivancheva, 2015 In. Bozzon et al, 2017: 7). The biographical studies done so far on the precarious working conditions in academia pointed to the (in)capacity to plan the professional career and the life spheres (Bozzon et al, 2017: 8).

Conclusions

This article intended to theoretically ground a discussion about the intersection between precariousness and gender in the context of the structural uncertainties of flexible capitalism. Based on a theoretical framework of precariousness (Rodgers & Rodgers, 1989; Quinlan, 2001; Vosko, 2006; Kalleberg, 2009; 2011; Standing, 2011) linked to the gender regimes in academia (Davies, 2005; Cannizzo, 2017; Ivancheva et. al, 2019), the article aims to combine the institutional level of gender representation in Romanian higher education with dimensions related to care and work insecurity. The analysis intended to critically expose an example of the 'privileged' precariousness of academic work. Firstly, the focus on researchers with temporary and part-time contracts is motivated by the particular interest of this category to obtain a 'permanent' position. In the specific case of Romania, they are more vulnerable to a future

¹ The teaching grades in the higher education system in Romania are the following: 1. Assistant Professor/2. Lecturer/3. Associate Professor/4. Professor

² The research grades for working in research & development are the following: 1. Researcher 0 degree/2. Researcher 3th degree/3. Researcher 2 degree/4. Researcher 1 degree.

precarious career and working poor with low wages. Secondly, the interrelations between gender, care and precariousness (Canizzo, 2017; Busso & Rivetti, 2014) is presenting the impact on career and life prospects that affects women differently than men – emotionally, intellectually and socially (Murgia et al, 2018; Ivancheva et. 2019; Cardozo, 2016).

The case of higher education employment is rarely in the attention of social research or policy-related reports. Moreover, it is urgent and necessary to discuss all the implications on the gender dimension and working under precarious working conditions in higher education. So far, MORE 3 is the only survey which allowed close estimations on these issues at the European level. The National Institute of Statistics from Romania is not providing any specific data on temporary and part-time employment in higher education and scientific research.

The critical view of the paper pointed out the context of Romania, in terms of neoliberal policies and labour legislation after the economic crisis, which completely changed the employment conditions and the access to tenure positions. Facing the neoliberal institutionalism, the higher education has experimented so far: extensive cuts in public funding; public positions ‘banned’ in the universities and public research; long-term effects of reducing the number of academic staff; extreme pressure for regular migration mobilities and 'no boundaries jobs' to secure visibility and the access to a permanent contract; deep polarization of jobs between tenure track and fixed-term, gender inequality in top management positions etc. (Gog, 2016; Busso & Rivetti, 2014; Ivancheva et. al, 2019). By taking into account the article demonstration, these neoliberal changes in the academic labour are more visible among the early-career academics and women for the majority of the European countries (Busso & Rivetti, 2014 Bozzon et al. 2017; Ivancheva et. al, 2019).

The neoliberal model in the Romanian academy is devoted to the need for a professional competition, mobility related to the specific academic work, intensive writing practices and fluid working hours for the ‘passion for doing science’. The working conditions in higher education usually come with an increasing pressure to respect the academic rankings, to move to an upper position in the institution or to obtain a tenured position. The competition for completing the academic rankings is concerning the publications in international scientific journals, the geographical mobility for networking and the applications for European grants. Working under precarious conditions is considered a barrier to gender balance and also a source of power relations. In Romania, the researchers working part-time have limited possibilities to negotiate the tasks and to control the work schedule. Along with part-time, the fixed-term contracts are not taken into consideration for the decision-making process in the institution and for the majority of the cases, the workers are not collectively represented. So, usually, any issue related to the work continuity and working conditions is representing the subject of direct negotiation between worker and director.

In the past decade, the political context coincides with many labour market reforms on social dialogue representations and flexible employment relations in the name of work competition, social mobility and skills reproduction. Looking back in time, the neoliberal transformations of the higher education have significative consequences on the research funding

with an extensive bureaucratization based on the measurement of one's academic rankings, high competition and particularly a neoliberal discourse that goes to the imperative passion for labour (Cannizzo, 2017; Ivancheva, 2019; Busso & Rivetti, 2014). Today's higher education institutions "are shaped by following the logic of big markets in which academic workers are re-imagined as competitors whom the state rewards and penalises by following offer-demand tools of assessment and cost-benefit schemes of evaluation (...) as a commodification model similar to corporations" (Busso&Rivetti, 2014). The neoliberal policies are conducting more precarious jobs that creates insecurity. The individuals have to adapt and internalise the norms of the institutions, even the work circumstances are insecure for one's work continuity and life satisfaction (Kalleberg, 2012). Fixed-term and part-time researchers are not protected by the legislation of social dialogue and they don't have the same rights as those employed in tenure- track positions. Their position in the institution is demanding the direct negotiation of working conditions and work continuity, with a financial- dependency of the informal and power relations.

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