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Extended abstract
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Interrupted *v.* unstable careers and women’s health at older ages.
Evidence from the *Constances* cohort.

Constance Beauflis

1 Background

France has experienced massive changes in employment conditions over recent decades. Jobs have become precarious, with the development of short-term contracts and of arrangements falling between salaried and non-salaried employment (Marchand and Minni, 2019). Women have been at the forefront of these developments (Coron and Schmidt, 2021), and their career have become increasingly unstable (Ciganda, 2015). In parallel, despite an increase in their labor force participation, non-employment periods remain overrepresented in women’s careers (Pailhé and Solaz, 2012). Although employment conditions and employment status are closely related, most research has examined their health implications separately. Recently, a large body of longitudinal research has highlighted that continuous and stable careers are associated with better physical and mental health outcomes at older ages among women, compared to trajectories marked by periods of nonemployment (Frech and Damaske, 2012, Machů et al., 2022). Conversely, repeated or long periods of non-employment are associated with poor physical and psychological health later in life (Cambois et al., 2017, Wahrendorf et al., 2019). Some have explained this relationship by arguing that employment provides economic resources in the short run through wages, and in the long run through future career opportunities combined with pension rights (Meurs et al., 2010, De Freitas et al., 2011). It also provides important social and symbolic resources through social ties, socially prestigious status, and increased bargaining power within the household (Bartley, 1994, Damaske, 2011). Nevertheless, this literature has not examined the implications of nonemployment on women’s health by taking into account their employment conditions. Yet, it is known that non-standard employment is linked to poorer mental and perceived health (Rodriguez, 2002, Virtanen et al., 2005). Precarious employment in late career also relates to more activity limitations and chronic diseases at older ages (Donnelly, 2022). This article questions the health implications of career interruptions *v.* continuous but precarious employment. I hypothesize that withdrawal from the labor force may protect women from the risks associated with precarious and unstable employment. To address this hypothesis, I compare the health at older ages of women who have had different types of careers (continuous and stable, continuous but unstable, interrupted).

2 Method

I use data on 39119 women aged 50+ at inclusion in the French *Constances* cohort, a large general-purpose national population-based cohort. It contains long-term detailed retrospective information on employment status and conditions histories, as well as information on current and past health. I combine sequence analysis and clustering methods to build a typology of employment trajectories between ages 18 and 50. The typology distinguishes 9 patterns of employment trajectories: "stable careers", "unstable careers", "late stabilization", "unstable and interrupted careers", "short interruption", "early intermediate interruption", "late intermediate interruption", "long interruption" and "permanent exit". I run a series of logit models to estimate the associations between those four indicators and health in later life. I assess health through three dichotomized indicators: depressive episode (measured by the CES-D score), bad perceived health, and activity limitation. For each health outcome, I build two models. In the first, in addition to the typology, I control only for age, age squared, past health (number of past health problems, experience of a health problem before the job exit), past family trajectory (number of children, age at first child), and marital status in 2010. In the second model, I add controls for educational attainment, early socio-economic position, and migration background. Comparisons of the two models shows the health differences between the clusters that are due to their sociodemographic characteristics. I run these models several times defining different patterns of employment trajectories as reference groups. This allows to compare continuous but unstable trajectories to interrupted but stable trajectories.

3 Results

The typology characterizes the heterogeneity of employment conditions that lies behind continuous trajectories. In doing so, this work differs from previous research that has studied the links between careers and health at high ages. Tables 1, 2 and 3 display the models' results, with "stable careers", "unstable careers" and "late stabilization" successively defined as reference groups. First, they show that discontinuous employment trajectories and unstable employment trajectories are both associated with disadvantages in most health dimensions at older ages. Nevertheless, in the fully adjusted models, "long interruptions" and "early intermediate interruption" are associated with lower risks of bad perceived health and activity limitation than the "unstable careers" and "late stabilization" patterns. Then, the results qualify the idea that non-employment necessarily leads to health disadvantages. Women who had temporary interruptions are more likely to show better perceived and functional health than those who had been continuously employed, but who spent part or the totality of their career in unstable jobs. These differences are not explained by their socio-demographic characteristics. Only women who have experienced a permanent exit do not show significantly different health from those who have experienced an unstable career. These results show that women who have had both unstable and interrupted careers form the least healthy group, followed by those who have had continuous but unstable careers or permanent exits, and then those who have had stable but interrupted careers. Those who had continuous careers in long jobs form the healthiest group.

Table 1: Parameter estimates and standard-errors of models with "stable careers" defined as reference group

	MSP		Épisode dépressif		Limitation d'activité	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Emplois longs	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>
Interruption courte	0,10 (0,08)	-0,01 (0,09)	0,12 (0,08)	0,11 (0,09)	0,23** (0,08)	0,21* (0,09)
Interruption moyenne précoce	0,13⁺ (0,08)	-0,03 (0,08)	0,17* (0,08)	0,07 (0,09)	0,14 (0,09)	0,06 (0,09)
Interruption moyenne tardive	0,15* (0,07)	0,07 (0,08)	-0,02 (0,07)	-0,07 (0,08)	0,06 (0,08)	0,08 (0,09)
Interruption longue	0,17⁺ (0,10)	-0,05 (0,11)	0,19⁺ (0,10)	0,09 (0,11)	0,06 (0,12)	-0,01 (0,13)
Sortie définitive	0,28** (0,11)	0,30** (0,11)	0,25* (0,11)	0,24* (0,12)	0,28* (0,12)	0,21⁺ (0,13)
Emplois courts	0,20** (0,06)	0,21** (0,07)	0,15* (0,07)	0,09 (0,07)	0,25*** (0,07)	0,26** (0,08)
Stabilisation tardive	0,12⁺ (0,07)	0,18* (0,08)	0,10 (0,07)	0,03 (0,08)	0,28*** (0,08)	0,29*** (0,08)
Interruption et emplois courts	0,62*** (0,14)	0,63*** (0,15)	0,24 (0,15)	0,19 (0,16)	0,14 (0,17)	0,07 (0,18)

Note: ⁺p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Table 2: Parameter estimates and standard-errors of models with "unstable careers" defined as reference group

	MSP		Épisode dépressif		Limitation d'activité	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Emplois courts	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>
Emplois longs	-0,20** (0,06)	-0,21** (0,07)	-0,15* (0,07)	-0,09 (0,07)	-0,25*** (0,07)	-0,26** (0,08)
Interruption courte	-0,10 (0,10)	-0,21⁺ (0,11)	-0,03 (0,10)	0,01 (0,11)	-0,02 (0,11)	-0,05 (0,12)
Interruption moyenne précoce	-0,07 (0,10)	-0,23* (0,11)	0,01 (0,10)	-0,03 (0,11)	-0,11 (0,11)	-0,20⁺ (0,12)
Interruption moyenne tardive	-0,05 (0,09)	-0,14 (0,10)	-0,17⁺ (0,10)	-0,17 (0,11)	-0,19⁺ (0,11)	-0,19 (0,11)
Interruption longue	-0,02 (0,12)	-0,26* (0,13)	0,04 (0,12)	-0,01 (0,13)	-0,19 (0,13)	-0,27⁺ (0,15)
Sortie définitive	0,08 (0,12)	0,09 (0,13)	0,09 (0,12)	0,15 (0,14)	0,03 (0,14)	-0,05 (0,15)
Stabilisation tardive	-0,08 (0,09)	-0,03 (0,10)	-0,05 (0,09)	-0,06 (0,11)	0,03 (0,10)	0,03 (0,11)
Interruption et emplois courts	0,42** (0,15)	0,42* (0,17)	0,09 (0,16)	0,09 (0,18)	-0,11 (0,18)	-0,19 (0,20)

Table 3: Parameter estimates and standard-errors of models with "Late stabilization" defined as reference group

	MSP		Episode dépressif		Limitation d'activité	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Stabilisation tardive	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Ref.</i>
Emplois longs	-0,12⁺ (0,07)	-0,18* (0,08)	-0,10 (0,07)	-0,03 (0,08)	-0,28*** (0,08)	-0,29*** (0,08)
Interruption courte	-0,02 (0,10)	-0,19⁺ (0,11)	0,02 (0,10)	0,07 (0,12)	-0,04 (0,11)	-0,08 (0,12)
Interruption moyenne précoce	0,01 (0,10)	-0,21⁺ (0,11)	0,06 (0,10)	0,03 (0,12)	-0,14 (0,11)	-0,23⁺ (0,12)
Interruption moyenne tardive	0,03 (0,09)	-0,11 (0,11)	-0,12 (0,10)	-0,11 (0,11)	-0,21* (0,11)	-0,22⁺ (0,12)
Interruption longue	0,05 (0,12)	-0,23⁺ (0,13)	0,09 (0,12)	0,05 (0,14)	-0,22 (0,14)	-0,30* (0,15)
Sortie définitive	0,16 (0,12)	0,12 (0,14)	0,14 (0,13)	0,21 (0,14)	0,003 (0,14)	-0,08 (0,15)
Emplois courts	0,08 (0,09)	0,03 (0,10)	0,05 (0,09)	0,06 (0,11)	-0,03 (0,10)	-0,03 (0,11)
Interruption et emplois courts	0,50** (0,15)	0,45** (0,17)	0,14 (0,16)	0,15 (0,18)	-0,13 (0,18)	-0,22 (0,20)

Note: ⁺p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

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