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Scientific-Theoretical Approaches to Assessing Types of Employment Based on Quality Characteristics

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Abstract: This paper examines the concept and significance of productive employment as a fundamental factor in socio-economic development and poverty reduction. In countries where labor income constitutes the main source of household income, promoting full, decent, and efficient employment becomes a central policy objective. The study analyzes various theoretical perspectives on employment, with a focus on qualitative characteristics and indicators categorized by workplace, employee, and overall employment level. Drawing from international organization frameworks, the paper systematizes employment quality metrics and explores their interpretation in global and national contexts, particularly Uzbekistan. It highlights the importance of aligning labor policy with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and emphasizes the role of productive employment in meeting these objectives. The research also compares productive employment with other forms such as underemployment, vulnerable, rational, and full employment, identifying key advantages of the former. It concludes that productive employment not only ensures decent working conditions and income above the poverty line, but also supports the optimal use of human resources. Despite its importance, the paper notes that productive employment is often misinterpreted or inadequately addressed in policy and literature. Therefore, it calls for a more structured, scientifically grounded approach to employment policy, including better integration of economic and social indicators to reduce poverty and increase labor market efficiency.

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1. Introduction

As labor income constitutes the main source of household income, promoting full, productive, efficient, and decent employment is considered one of the most essential macroeconomic factors in the socio-economic development of any country and plays a key role in reducing poverty[1].

In scientific literature, employment theory is distinguished by various approaches, which are based on the findings of different schools of economic thought.

The social functions of employment have not been as extensively studied as its economic functions. However, it should be emphasized that employment issues, like economic ones, are equally tied to social issues. This is because they arise from the social interactions of individuals, through which they and their dependents meet their material needs.

In accordance with Resolution No. 70 adopted at the United Nations General Assembly Summit on Sustainable Development held in September 2015, and within the framework of the UN Global Agenda through 2030, countries around the world have been actively implementing reforms to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[2]. Achieving all aspects of the SDGs requires greater efforts. The international community warns that failure to meet these goals may be detrimental to all stakeholders, including enterprises, investors, and future generations.

It is worth noting that the wide-ranging reforms launched in 2022 as part of the "New Uzbekistan Development Strategy for 2022–2026" have been acknowledged by experts as being fully aligned with the objectives and tasks in the field of sustainable development. Moreover, Uzbekistan has been recognized for making significant progress in advancing its sustainable development agenda .

Considering that people spend a significant portion of their lives at work, “enterprises and organizations have both direct and indirect influence on the well-being of their employees and their dependents. By supporting the well-being of their employees, enterprises and organizations can contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth for both themselves and society as a whole.” .

In any country where the majority of household income is derived from labor, the quality of employment holds a vital role.

It is well known that numerous studies have been conducted on employment quality indicators, primarily from economic and social perspectives[3]. The concept of labor quality , which originated in the United States in the 1970s, was fully developed by the 1980s and later attracted the growing interest of scholars from Russia, Uzbekistan, and other countries.

In the guidelines of international organizations and reports based on scientific research, employment quality indicators are described using various metrics. These indicators are classified into three categories: workplace-related, employee-related, and employment-level indicators[4]. It is considered appropriate for employers to assess workplace conditions, employees to evaluate their individual employment situations, and the government to monitor overall employment indicators (see Table 1).

Literature Review

Among labor economists in Uzbekistan, only a few have recognized the relevance of this issue and emphasized the importance of focusing on employment quality. The social dimensions of employment and approaches aimed at increasing labor income among the employed population have been extensively explored in the research of Uzbek scholar Academician K.H. Abdurakhmanov[5].

International reports reflect the qualitative characteristics and indicators of employment in the context of the workplace, the employed person, and the employment status (Table 1).

Table 1: Classification of employment quality indicators in international reports

N	International organizations	Indicators object		
		Workplace	Employed person	Employment
1.	International Labor Organization	1) Unacceptable work 2) Acceptable working hours 3) Stability and security of work	1) Sufficient income and effective work 2) Social protection	1) Employment opportunities 2) Work-life balance

		4) Fair treatment at work 5) Safe working environment	3) Social communication and relationships in the workplace 4) Economic and social content of decent work	
2.	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development	1) Quality of work environment 2) Security in the labor market	1) Personal employment rate 2) Gender wage gap 3) Stress at work 4) Job satisfaction 5) Quality of income	1) Employment rate 2) Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)
3.	World Bank	1) Social protection 2) Working hours	1) Work-life balance 2) Physical health and safety 3) Job satisfaction 4) Labor income	1) Formal employment

Table 1 (Continued)

N	International organizations	Indicators object		
		Workplace	Employed person	Employment
4.	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions [13]	1) Quality of work 2) Working hours	1) Employment risks	1) Work-life balance
5.	UN Economic Commission for Europe [14]	1) Labor safety and ethics 2) Social communication	1) Working hours, work-life balance 2) Stability of employment and social protection 3) Income and labor benefits	1) Advanced training and professional training 2) Labor relations and labor motivation

According to Chen Wei's research, published in the Bulletin of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, employment is a complex socio-economic phenomenon that arises as an important component of social production, and as a social relationship that provides the population with a workplace and at the same time the necessary funds for human survival, it ensures the formation of the main productive forces of society.

In the research of the Russian scientist I.S. Salnikova, the quality of employment is interpreted as follows: "the state of labor activity of a person as a carrier of his labor potential, which allows him to fully realize the totality of his needs as they arise through the labor process, while having a positive impact on the socio-economic and political spheres of society". This interpretation presents qualitative characteristics of employment and does not express approaches to qualitative indicators[6].

The opinion of the famous Russian scientist A.E. Kotlyar should be supported, since, unlike labor, employment is a purposeful activity carried out to obtain a certain income and meet daily needs. It characterizes the economically active population in relation to the material factors of production and reflects the relationship between people and their participation in social production[7].

In his article "On the Quality of Employment of the Russian Population," B.D. Breev "examines a number of general characteristics of the labor market: the dynamics of the unemployment rate over a certain period of time (14 years); the composition of the economically active and inactive population by criteria such as education, gender, age; labor productivity; employee mobility; the demographic situation in the country; the distribution of the employed population by status at the main place of work, and by field of activity" [8]. In this article, B.D. Breev limited himself to research on the state's employment policy in the labor market, and limited himself to the main indicators: demographic indicators, labor resources, and labor market indicators. At the same time, sources on qualitative indicators of employment are partially disclosed.

Russian researchers N.A. Smirnova and O.S. Krutova skillfully approached the subject matter and essence of their work in explaining the specific qualitative characteristics of employment. N.A. Smirnova is one of the scientists who studied the topic of employment quality in depth in her scientific research, mainly conducting active research on "identifying the characteristics of employment quality and their impact on the quality of life of the economically active population; directions for substantiating and implementing a new model of social policy aimed at increasing the quality of employment", while O.S. Krutova analyzed the specific characteristics of employment quality in households in her work, which is considered through the prism of three main elements of the "quality of employment" category: the labor market, the level of employment, and the standard of living in households" [9]. These specific approaches not only reflect the impact of the employed population on the standard of living of households, but also pay attention to updating the composition of the qualitative characteristics of employment.

In addition to the qualitative characteristics of employment, there are also specific quality indicators. Several researchers have expressed the following views regarding employment quality indicators:

Russian scientists M.E. Baskakova and I.V. Soboleva propose to include "job satisfaction; labor income; type of employment contract; employment stability; share of hidden wages, etc." in the qualitative indicators of employment.

T.Yu. Stuken considers indicators such as "employment by educational level and profile, formal and informal, full and part-time work" as qualitative indicators of employment.

I. Chernyshev explains the “quality of employment” as the level of wages, the number of working hours, the strength of the employment contract and the general stability of the work, and generally describes it as “quality of labor” .

In our opinion, the quality of employment, unlike the “quality of the workplace” or “quality of the work process”, is not characterized by the impartiality of work, freedom in the workplace, management of excitement and nervousness, and specific non-quantitative, subjective aspects of the work environment.

2. Materials and Methods

This study explored both empirical and conceptual research related to productive employment and other forms of employment, as reflected in scientific sources from various online databases. The scientific approaches within these studies were systematized. Moreover, the research utilized methods such as systematic analysis, analysis and synthesis, comparative analysis, monographic analysis, and classification techniques.

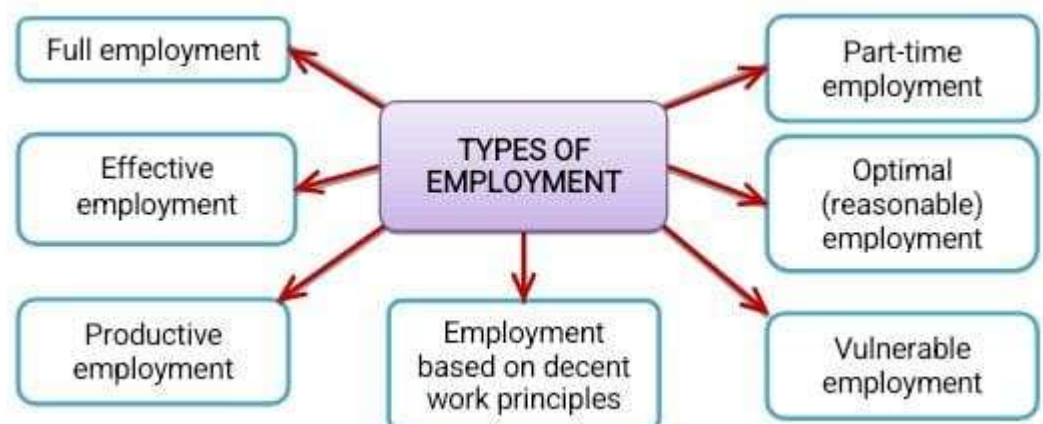
3. Results and Discussion

In the study of the qualitative characteristics and indicators of employment, it is important to clarify the types of employment and their specific features[10]. During the study, it was found that there are the following main types of employment according to qualitative characteristics: employment based on the principles of decent work, full employment, productive employment, underemployment, rational employment, productive employment, and weak employment (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1 visually presents a classification of employment based on qualitative attributes[11]. At the center is a core node labeled “**Types of Employment**”, from which **eight branches** extend to represent the following categories:

- a. **Full employment** – the ideal condition where all who are willing and able to work can find employment.
- b. **Part-time employment** – jobs involving fewer hours than full-time work, often without full benefits.
- c. **Effective employment** – employment that makes full use of a person’s skills and qualifications.
- d. **Optimal (reasonable) employment** – situations where workers are employed under fair, sustainable, and suitable conditions.
- e. **Productive employment** – work that yields meaningful output and contributes to economic growth.
- f. **Vulnerable employment** – jobs that are insecure, poorly paid, and lack social protection or formal arrangements.
- g. **Employment based on decent work principles** – employment aligned with international labor standards, fair income, security, and social dialogue.

Figure 1. Main types of employment by qualitative characteristics



Employment is the basis of the economy, income and well-being of any country. The level of employment of the population is the most important social and economic indicator. At the same time, employment of the population is directly and indirectly related to demographic processes[12].

The participation of the working-age population in labor activity is embodied in international statistics and labor indicators as an important economic category. This participation in value reflects the labor capacity, the state of satisfaction of the necessary social needs and interests of employed persons.

Therefore, the level of employment reflects the most important characteristics of the state of the labor market. With the help of the current market mechanism and laws, it is impossible to achieve "full employment" in the country". There are opportunities to regulate the employment of the population through state employment policy.

As is known, the level of full employment and the natural rate of unemployment in the economy are mutually exclusive. Another concept of the natural rate of unemployment is related not only to the concept of frictional, but also to the concept of structural unemployment.

Full employment is a state in which every person who is ready and able to work is provided with work.

The social aspects of employment and approaches aimed at increasing the labor income of the employed population are widely covered in the research of Academician of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan Kalandar Kh. Abdurakhmanov[13]. In particular, the scientist included the following as the main features of employment of the population in a socially oriented market economy: ensuring full and effective employment, for this purpose, the formation of a balance of labor resources of the population and its effective use; the voluntariness of work and the compatibility of human rights and duties in the field of labor, the elimination of social dependence of employees, ensuring equal responsibility of citizens and the state for the opportunity to find a job that ensures a decent life; the effective use of labor resources across industries, sectors, professions and regions in order to increase labor efficiency, and the free movement of labor; creation of an environment of strong interest in private entrepreneurship and highly productive work of employees on the basis of new incentives for work; One of these is mitigating the negative consequences of the market economy for the benefit of the population.

The UNESCO International Thesaurus defines full employment as follows: "Full employment is a situation in which all persons who are willing to work are in paid work". Also, permanent work with a duration significantly less than a fixed standard is defined as underemployment.

Tejvan Pettinger, explains on full employment that "The first definition of full employment is a situation in which everyone who is willing to work at the wage rate is available for work. This means that unemployment is zero, because if you don't want to work, you shouldn't be considered unemployed[14]... However, in practice we never see 0.0% unemployment, and this can make it difficult to define full employment. In general, an unemployment rate of 3.0% or less is considered full employment".

Although part-time employment is not a widely used scientific category in economic terminology, it is used to describe the qualitative characteristics of employment on the spectrum of "unsatisfactory employment", implying that the available working time, the wage offered, or the qualifications, skills, and potential of workers are not being used to their full potential.

The resolution "On Statistics on Employment, Employment, and Full Utilization of Labour", adopted by the 19th ICLS (International Conference of Labour Statisticians) in 2013, reaffirms the time-based definition of full employment and its strong role as a measure of underutilization of labour.

As stated in the decision of the 16th ISC, the determination of full employment based on working hours is based on three criteria. This applies to employed persons who were willing to work overtime in a short period of time, who worked less than the national working time limit, and who were willing to work overtime in the next reference period [15].

Thus, underemployment reflects the underutilization of the productive potential of the workforce. At the same time, underemployment is an indication that the employee, for various reasons, often voluntarily, works less than a full day or week.

Research E.A. Shinkarenko on the quality of employment, studying the social problems of students and youth, in particular, issues of employment, considers them "necessary and relevant to have an adequate salary, employment in their specialty, stability of employment and work experience". It is known that the lack of necessary work experience, low competitiveness in the labor market, and especially the greater likelihood of experiencing socio-professional uncertainty among young people entering the labor market can be cited as the main reasons for the increase in the level of underemployment among them.

Employment based on the principles of decent labor is understood as work in conditions of justice, safety, and respect for labor rights.

Academician of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, founder of the scientific school "Labor Economics and Human Capital" K.Kh. Abdurakhmanov defines the quality of labor activity as follows: "The quality of labor activity is a characteristic that reflects the complexity, intensity, conditions, and the level of importance of a specific type of labor for the development of the economy[16]. The quality of labor is expressed in the employee's attitude to work".

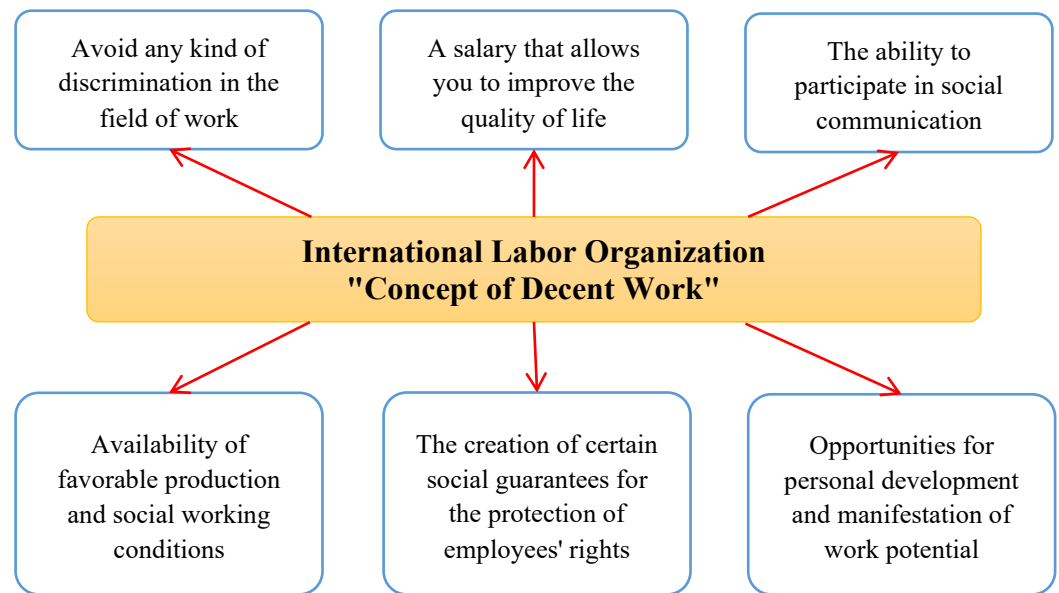
The term "decent work" is a term officially recognized by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and refers to the opportunity for women and men to work in conditions of freedom, equality, justice and respect for human dignity. The International Labor Organization's "Concept of Decent Work" was first developed in 1999, and it includes six points (**Figure 2**).

The term "decent work" was first used in 1999 by Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labor Organization, in his report to the 87th session of the International Labor Conference entitled "Globalization has brought prosperity and inequalities that are testing the limits of collective social responsibility," and he defined it as follows: "Decent work is work that protects workers' rights, provides adequate income and ensures social security. Decent work also means adequate work in the sense that everyone has the full and free access to income and the means to earn it" [17].

A broader definition of decent work is provided in the International Labour Organization's Decent Work Pilot Programme, which defines decent work as "work that provides time for other aspects of life, provides a decent income, provides family security, respects human rights, gives voice and enables social inclusion." Decent work is a way to connect economic and social goals.

This **Figure 2** visually explains the International Labor Organization's (ILO) core components of "Decent Work." At the center of the figure is a labeled node—**"International Labor Organization: Concept of Decent Work"**—from which six arrows extend to define key qualitative principles.

Figure 2. "Concept of Decent Work" of the International Labor Organization"



Professor G.K. Abdurakhmanova gave the following author's definition of decent work in narrow and broad senses: in the narrow sense - "Decent work is work that satisfies a person in terms of his level of income, social protection, opportunities for career growth, as well as in terms of its content and moral characteristics", and in the broad sense: "Decent work is a complex system of socio-economic, institutional, organizational factors that meet the requirements of the current stage of the gradual development of the system of "human - production" relations and the participation of employees in social production"[18].

The Sustainable Development Goals emphasize that "decent work" means access to productive employment that provides everyone with a decent income, job security and social protection for families, and good prospects for personal development and social inclusion.

Effective employment implies the most efficient use of labor in accordance with its skills and capabilities.

As a social concept, employment is associated with labor potential, with human capital, which is national wealth. An analysis of existing classifications shows the diversity of approaches used and allows us to present their generalization in the classification of forms of employment proposed by the author.

Effective employment is "a qualitative characteristic of the correspondence of the population's needs for employment to the available jobs, which from an economic point of view means the most rational use of labor resources, and from a social point of view, the most appropriateness of labor activity to human interests".

Effective employment includes productive and productive employment. Productive and productive employment is formed on the basis of decent labor principles[19].

Many scientists value research on the effective use of the employed population rather than on their protection. In particular, they emphasize that the effective use of the labor potential available in the country is one of the important factors ensuring the achievement of goals, and point out that the effective use of labor potential is also important for the interests of the employee and his family members.

There are different views on ensuring effective employment, for example, B.I. Petrishche sees the solution to the problem of ensuring effective employment in the development of small businesses . Researcher I.V. Yusupov explains that effective employment can be achieved only through continuous vocational training . E.S. Uzyakova and M.N. Uzyakov argue that effective employment is considered through labor productivity indicators [20].

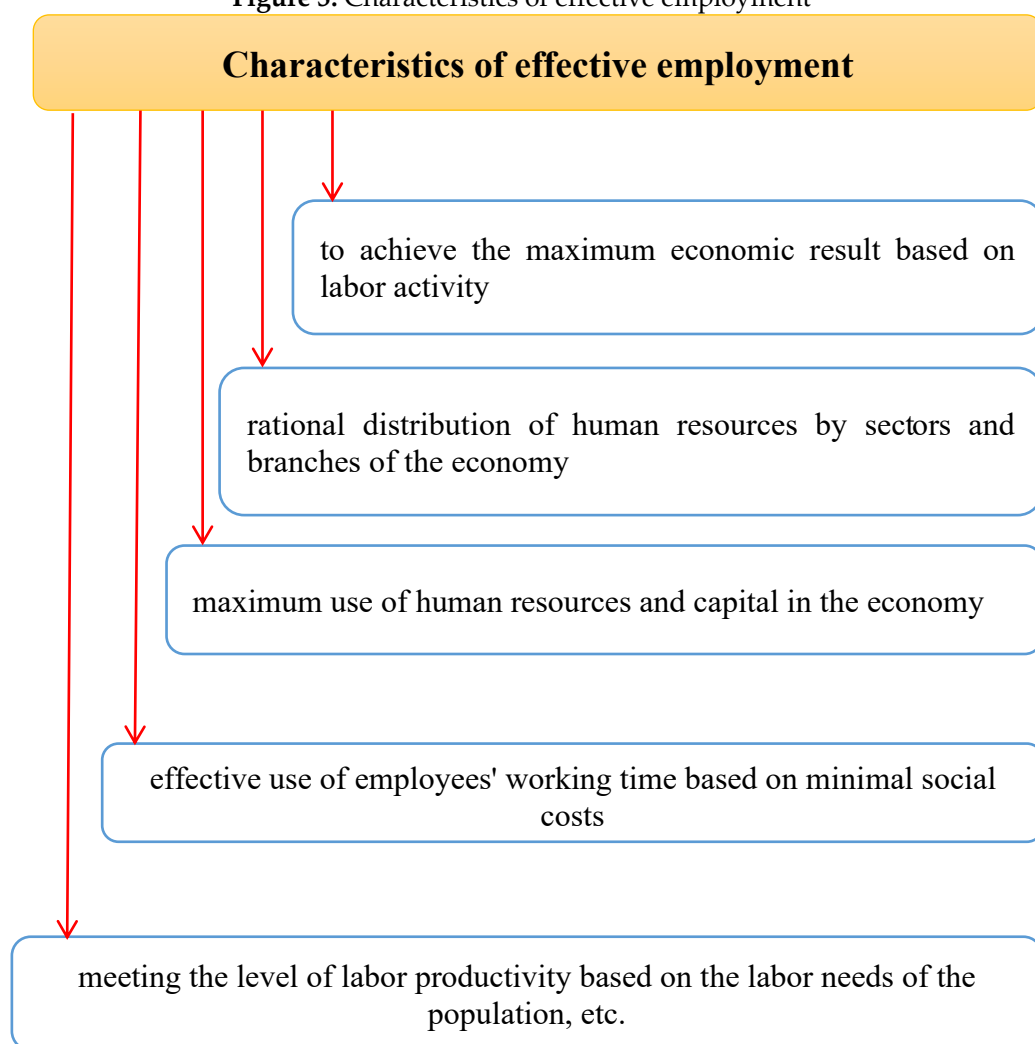
The specific characteristics of productive employment are fundamentally different from other types of employment and are mainly based on the principles of maximum use of human resources and capital in the economy (**Figure 3**).

Economists M. Mirzakarimova and M. Khaidarov defined productive employment as follows: "Professional employment is employment that provides a decent income, health, education, and professional development for each member of society based on increasing social labor productivity" . The researchers did not provide specific indicators or requirements for the lower limit of "decent income" in their definition.

According to researcher H.N. Shadmanov, "Effective employment is employment that satisfies the economic and social needs of members of society and allows them to use their labor potential productively" . In addition to this definition, we believe that it is possible to introduce general minimum indicators or requirements for those with potential to satisfy themselves economically and socially.

Figure 3 presents a vertical flowchart summarizing the key features that define **effective employment** within an economic and social framework. At the top of the diagram is the central concept box: "**Characteristics of effective employment**", from which **five descending arrows** lead to specific criteria that collectively illustrate what constitutes employment that is efficient and socially valuable.

Figure 3. Characteristics of effective employment



In our opinion, productive employment implies employment in socially beneficial activities that generate income, full-time employment of the workforce, and employment in workplaces that are socio-economically appropriate and have a high level of efficiency, as well as employment in workplaces equipped with modern technologies and equipment.

Optimal (reasonable) employment is the most appropriate form of employment that achieves maximum efficiency and satisfaction for employers and employees.

According to Professor Sh.R. Kholmuminov and Professor K.Z. Khomitov, “reasonable employment means achieving a market balance between the demand for labor and its supply. In this case, an acceptable (natural) level of unemployment is created. Such a balance ensures the most optimal realization of the economic interests of employers and those with “labor capacity”. Then the labor force will be assigned prices corresponding to its professional-qualification training. Due to the same, reasonable employment of the population, social reproduction and increase in the standard of living of those who offer their “ability to work” for sale on the market based on the value of labor power are ensured.

Economist K.Z. Khomitov emphasizes that rational employment includes: first, the full satisfaction of the population's need for socially useful labor; second, the effective coordination of the means of production and human labor; third, the highest possible level of social labor productivity and its effectiveness; fourth, the most complete satisfaction of the material, social and spiritual needs of the population at a given level of development of productive forces .

Decent employment means achieving a balance between supply and demand for labor. The formation of a decent employment of the working-age population can only be achieved on the basis of the effective development of the labor market and structural reforms in all sectors of the economy. This type of employment is aimed at the interests of neither the employee himself nor his dependents. This type of employment can only be an example of the principles of decent work.

Vulnerable employment is employment with unstable working conditions, guaranteed social protection and labor rights. This type of employment is characterized by the following main features:

First, the work activity is unstable, and persons employed in this type of work often have temporary or informal working conditions, in which there is no guarantee of stability of work or income.

Secondly, the lack of social security. These workers are often not covered by social security standards such as pension contributions, health insurance or unemployment benefits. This may vary between countries.

Table 2 categorizes and defines six types of vulnerable employment as identified by major international organizations. It is structured into three columns:

1. Type of Employment – The classification or label of the job condition.
2. Description – A brief explanation of the nature of the employment and its disadvantages.
3. Organization Report – The institution or agency that provided the classification or definition, along with the year of the report.

Table 2: Types of vulnerable employment described in reports of international organizations

N	Vulnerable type of employment	Description	Organization report
1.	Working on the basis of a temporary and short-term employment contract	Working on short-term contracts without the guarantee of transfer or permanent employment	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work [47], 2019

2.	Part-time employment	Working less than full time without full formal benefits and guaranteed protection at the workplace	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [48], 2019
3.	Self employment	Self-employment in low-income sectors with unstable earnings and without guarantees of social protection	Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) [49], 2020
4.	Unskilled labor migration	Permanent or temporary migration to other countries or regions based on consent to perform low-skilled work with unstable wages and limited access to social services	United Nations (UN) [50], 2020
5.	Working in high-risk jobs	Employment in unregulated working conditions with a high risk of injury, such as domestic work, construction, agriculture, and other similar sectors	World Health Organization (WHO) [51], 2021
6.	Informal employment	Engaging in labor activities without a formal employment contract, without contributions to social insurance or pension funds, including self-employment, temporary or seasonal work, and domestic work	International Labour Organization (ILO) [52], 2021

Third, there is a risk of violation of relevant labor rights. Vulnerable employment entities often have no control over the minimum wage, working hours, workplace, and occupational safety regulations.

Fourth, they are characterized by uncertainty or lack of prospects for labor income. Vulnerable employment entities often face unplanned, irregular, or unpredictable income, which makes it difficult to plan life and create a family budget.

Vulnerable employment is most often observed in the informal economy, agriculture, domestic services, and other low-wage sectors.

In our view, vulnerable employment refers to types of work in which workers face instability, low wages, limited social protection, and insufficient protection of labor rights. International organization reports identify several types and classifications of vulnerable employment (see **Table 2**).

In the reports of international organizations from 2019 to 2021, the following forms of employment were highlighted as types of vulnerable employment: temporary and short-term employment contracts, underemployment, self-employment, unskilled labor migration, work in high-risk jobs, and informal employment.

Productive Employment. According to the terminology of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the concept of “employment” encompasses three main categories: Individuals engaged in any activity in exchange for wages—whether in cash or in kind—such as workers and employees; Persons who are self-employed for the purpose of

generating profit; Family workers involved in household businesses or farming operations for the sake of family livelihood . These categories collectively reflect the broad scope of what is defined as employment in ILO recommendations.

Table 3 evaluates how productive employment stands apart from other forms of employment based on two key criteria:

1. Job Content – Describes the conditions, structure, and challenges of each employment type.
2. Benefits of Productive Employment versus Type of Employment – Highlights how productive employment offers superior social and economic advantages.

Table 3 : Advantages of productive employment compared to other types of employment

Type of employment	Job content	Benefits of productive employment versus type of employment
Part-time employment	Employment characterized by instability, reduced working hours, or limited workload	Enhances the ability to fully utilize skills, professional competencies, and knowledge to achieve higher labor income.
Effective employment	Employment that ensures the most efficient use of human resources by taking into account skills and capabilities	Productive employment often aligns with efficient employment, but it additionally ensures not only the quality and efficiency of work, but also its profitability.
Full employment	Employment in which every person who is willing to work must be provided with a job	Unlike full employment, productive employment emphasizes earning labor income above the poverty line based on high qualifications and technological specialization.
Vulnerable employment	Employment that is unstable and lacks social protection and guarantees	Unlike vulnerable employment, it guarantees social protection.
Employment based on the principles of decent work	Employment conducted under conditions of fairness, safety, and respect for labor rights	Productive employment ensures not only decent working conditions but also labor income above the poverty line.
Optimal (reasonable) employment	An optimal combination of employment that ensures maximum efficiency and satisfaction for all parties involved	Productive employment may not always be reasonable from the perspective of work-life balance, but it guarantees income that corresponds to the level of labor efficiency and quality.
Productive employment	Guaranteed employment that provides a level of labor income sufficient to	-

	ensure consumption above the poverty line for the individual and their family members	
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4. Conclusion

Based on the above-mentioned recommended definition by the ILO, it is worth noting that in much of the literature, the term “productive” is often replaced with “efficient.” This not only leads to the inclusion of productive employment within the broader concept of efficient use of the labor force, but also narrows and limits the precise definition of productive employment itself.

Although labor supply in the labor market remains stable, the labor income of employees engaged in efficient and rational employment should not fall below the national poverty line for themselves and their dependents (family members). However, this issue often escapes the attention of both employers and responsible authorities. The main reason is that the risk of employees - officially recognized as employed - falling into poverty has not been thoroughly studied.

One of the foremost goals of socio-economic reforms is poverty reduction, which fundamentally relies on increasing and promoting productive employment. However, the lack of a systematic approach and insufficiently grounded methodological and conceptual frameworks call for a deeper theoretical, methodological, and practical exploration of these problems.

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