

THE ROLE OF CAREER FACTORS IN QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE JOB INSECURITY: A STUDY IN DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXTS

Ieva Urbanavičiūtė¹, Dalia Bagdžiūnienė, Jurgita Lazauskaitė-Zabielskė
Vilnius University, Lithuania

Tinne Vander Elst

Research Group Work, Organizational and Personnel Psychology, KU Leuven, Belgium

Hans De Witte

Research Group Work, Organizational and Personnel Psychology, KU Leuven, Belgium
Vanderbijlpark Campus, North-West University, South Africa

Abstract. Background. The aim of this study is to analyse the determinants of the occurrence of qualitative and quantitative job insecurity. It focuses on three career variables (employability, career exploration, and career uncertainty) and the way they contribute to individual reactions (defined as financial and social strain) to job insecurity. In addition, it takes into account the contextual factors, such as sector and organizational change in explaining how job insecurity is perceived and responded to. **Methods.** An online survey was carried out in a sample of 205 respondents employed in various Lithuanian organizations. They filled out a questionnaire which included measures of job insecurity, career attitudes, and financial/social strain. The data were analysed in the full sample, as well as in four subsamples that were split regarding two parameters (public vs. private sector; no recent organizational change reported vs. recent organizational change reported). **Results and conclusion.** The hierarchical regression analysis showed job insecurity to be strongly related to financial and social strain. However, it draws a slight distinction between qualitative and quantitative job insecurity as predictors of strain. Furthermore, a moderator analysis has revealed several moderating effects of career variables in the relationship between job insecurity and financial/social strain. Finally, it was found that organizational change and type of sector may play a role in determining the interplay between career factors, job insecurity and strain, as job insecurity effects were quite different across different subsamples. To generalize, this study emphasizes the importance of understanding how personal variables, such as career attitudes and beliefs, might change the subjective experience of job insecurity in objectively different contexts.

Keywords: job insecurity, strain, employability, career attitudes.

¹ Address for correspondence: Vilnius University, Department of Clinical and Organizational Psychology, Universiteto g. 9/1, LT-01513 Vilnius, Lithuania, ieva.urbanaviciute@sf.vu.lt

INTRODUCTION

In the seminal work of Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) job insecurity is defined as a potential threat to the continuity of the current job situation. Since then, numerous studies have focused on this phenomenon, and it is still considered a very important issue in the modern world of work.

It is argued that job insecurity has serious detrimental effects for both employees and organizations. Considering the situation in the labour market following the economic recession, a certain level of job insecurity is almost inevitable, raising a very important question about how and by what means employers, employees or other parties could prevent its negative effects.

Researchers focus on this question in quite different ways. Psychologists are particularly interested in individual (i.e. micro-level) indicators and the subjective side of insecurity. That is, they analyse perceived (though not always objectively existent) threat of losing job. Traditionally, perceived job insecurity has been seen as a multidimensional construct (e.g. Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989; Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002; Hellgren, Sverke, & Isaksson, 1999; De Witte, 2005). One of the most well-known distinctions is the distinction between qualitative and quantitative job insecurity introduced by Hellgren et al. (1999) and adopted by many researchers afterwards. Qualitative job insecurity is defined as a perceived threat of losing valued job features, whereas quantitative job insecurity reflects the perceived threat of losing the job itself.

The psychological mechanism of job insecurity. In psychology, job insecurity and its effects are best explained by stress models, such as Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model of coping with stressful events. More specifically, job insecurity is thought to be a stressor which decreases the sense of control and, if an employee does not possess an effective coping strategy, it might eventually cause various negative effects (Ashford et al., 1989; Sverke et al., 2006; Vander Elst, De Cuyper, & De Witte, 2011; Staufenbiel & König, 2010).

A number of studies report the link between job insecurity and its negative outcomes, such as psychosomatic complaints and an increased level of anxiety (Mohr, 2000), negative job attitudes (Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996; Mauno, Kinnunen, Mäkikangas, & Nätti, 2005), or a decrease

in work-related and general well-being (De Witte, De Cuyper, Handaja, Sverke, Näswall, & Hellgren, 2010). An important note is that it can not only affect work-related behaviours and attitudes, but may also spread to other areas of life (De Witte et al., 2010; Lim & Sng, 2006; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999). This is the so-called 'spill-over' effect, which can actually be an indicator of how far negative outcomes of job insecurity can reach. For example, by analysing how job insecurity affects well-being or family relations, the spill-over into personal life can be observed.

This effect might occur in various contexts and its analysis provides invaluable information on the psychological mechanisms underlying the relationship between subjective experience of job insecurity and its various outcomes. Adopting a multifaceted approach, we presume that the scope of job-related insecurity can differ. It might be quite concrete and focused on the present or the near future (e.g., losing the job soon, cf. job insecurity) as well as 'spilled-over' and more generalized (e.g. being insecure about one's future financial or social status due to the threat to financial/social functions of work, cf. financial/social strain). Therefore, this study focuses on a somewhat different aspect of the spill-over effect by analysing how qualitative and quantitative job insecurity spread to more generalized perceptions of strain related to the long-term financial and social consequences. By focusing on it, it addresses multiple layers of job insecurity and attempts to discover the meaning of loss of benefits provided by employment.

Work-related benefits in the context of job insecurity. In this study, the exploration of the job insecurity-strain relationship is based on the concept of work-related benefits, which are extensively depicted in the works of Jahoda (1982). In her Latent Deprivation Theory, Jahoda argued that work serves a two-fold function (thus, providing two types of benefits): manifest and latent. The manifest function is a direct function of work to assure financial benefits. The latent function, on the other hand, is related to satisfying a number of personal and social needs, such as the need for social contact, collective purpose, time structure, status, and activity (Jahoda, 1982).

Latent Deprivation Theory is widely used in unemployment research to explain its negative effects (Hoare & Machin, 2009; Selenko, Batinic, & Paul, 2011; Paul, Geithner, & Moser, 2009). For example, in their study of unemployment, Hoare and Machin (2009) argue that losing

latent and manifest job benefits decreases the sense of control in life, which is one of the reasons why unemployment is experienced as such a stressful event. Similarly, a focus on latent and manifest job functions might better explain the stressful experience of job insecurity when unemployment has not yet happened but when certain changes in the job situation are expected. To illustrate the rationale of the current study, Figure 1 portrays a three-phase conceptual model of job insecurity in relation to latent and manifest job functions.

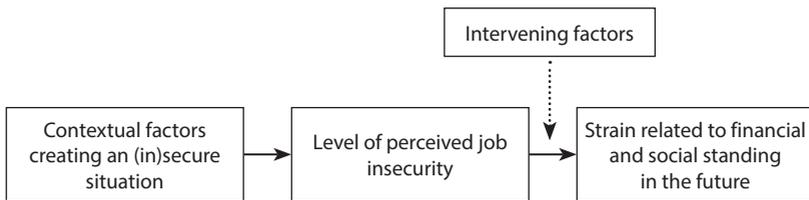


Figure 1. *Conceptual model of job insecurity.*

The first phase includes objective preconditions that determine the occurrence of job insecurity (e.g. organizational context). The second phase includes perceptions of job insecurity as such. Finally, the third phase encompasses more generalized perceptions of strain related to one's future social and financial standing (cf. anticipated loss of latent and manifest job benefits).

Based on Latent Deprivation Theory (Jahoda, 1982), a direct relationship between job insecurity and social and financial strain could be imposed. It applies to financial strain particularly, as financial need satisfaction is a direct function of work (while social need satisfaction may also be achieved by various other means). However, it is evident that individual reactions to job insecurity differ widely and they may or may not spill-over to a more generalized strain. Therefore, the main question addressed in this study is what factors prevent or promote the occurrence of future-related strain in case of job insecurity.

The moderators of job insecurity effects. The emergence and outcomes of job insecurity are thought to be determined by a number of subjective and objective factors. The subjective (psychological) factors are often treated as moderators determining individual reactions to insecure conditions (Sverke et al., 2006; Klandermans & van Vuuren,

1999; Hoare & Machin, 2009). According to stress models (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), certain individual characteristics may act as coping resources in stressful events; therefore, in the context of job insecurity, a focus on personal moderators (such as individual dispositions, attitudes or beliefs) has a proven practical value as they may help an employee to cope more effectively when threatened with uncertainty.

Differently from other studies, which focus on dispositional factors important for coping with stress (e.g., Mak & Mueller, 2000; Roskies, Louis-Guerin, & Fournier, 1993), this study takes into consideration specific attitudinal variables, which might help to understand individual reactions to job insecurity. Specifically, this study aims to explore the role of *career factors* (in the form of attitudes and beliefs) as potential moderators of the relationship between job insecurity and future-related financial/social strain. Furthermore, it takes into account the objective *organizational characteristics*, which might, in turn, determine the strength and outcomes of job insecurity. Both the career factors and the organizational factors are discussed below.

Career factors. Career factors are quite rarely explored in job insecurity research. An exception is *perceived employability*, which dominates such studies. It is defined as a perceived ability to find another employment that would be similar to the present one (Berntson, Sverke, & Marklund, 2006). In other words, perceived employability reflects how a person evaluates himself as a member of the labour market and how he perceives his chances of controlling his employment situation. Employability can be hypothesized to have a mitigating effect in case of job insecurity, as it should enable a person to retain at least some 'career control'. In line with this, several previous studies have found it to be directly related to reduced job insecurity (De Cuyper, Mäkikangas, Kinnunen, Mauno, & De Witte, 2012) or to act as a moderator of the relationship between job insecurity and its negative outcomes (Silla, De Cuyper, Gracia, Peiró, & De Witte, 2009). However, the results are not unambiguous, raising many questions about its role in insecure work situations and clearly indicating the need for further research on this issue.

Another career variable, *career exploration*, comes from the career construction paradigm and research on career adaptability (Super & Knasel, 1981; Savickas, 1997) that focuses on personal qualities necessary for adequate career development. It reflects an active interest in developing one's career and is considered as one of the main components

of career adaptability (Blustein, 1997; Savickas, 1997). Contrary to employability, career exploration is not related to self-evaluation; it reflects a proactive approach towards career planning by attempting to gain more information about career possibilities. A number of studies (e.g., Zikic & Klehe, 2006; Ebberwein, Krieschok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2011; Brown, Bimrose, Barnes, & Hughes, 2012) have shown career adaptability factors to be beneficial in actual career transitions, raising a question about their role in situations where such career change is only expected, but has not yet been undertaken.

The third career variable, on the contrary, belongs to the category of variables reflecting negative attitudes towards career planning, which can also be powerful predictors of individual reactions to job insecurity. This category includes such factors as perceived career barriers (Swanson, Daniels, & Tokar, 1996), dysfunctional career thoughts (Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1998) or career uncertainty (Orndorff & Herr, 1996; Ito & Brotheridge, 2001), to name just a few. This study focuses on *career uncertainty*, as this variable is the most person-centred. It reflects having serious doubts about one's vocational choice as well as doubting the chances to set and reach goals in the given career field. To some extent, it can also be related to low perceived control of personal career and, therefore, is hypothesized to have at least some explanatory power in job insecurity–strain relationship.

Organizational factors. The objective situational factors within the organization are thought to foster job insecurity (De Cuyper, De Witte, & Vander Elst, 2010; Sverke et al, 2002), therefore, their addition is a very important part of this study.

Although many studies do control for 'objective' personal characteristics (i.e. socio-demographics), not many attempt to explore job insecurity in objectively different organizational contexts. Whereas, a more profound look at the contextual factors (such as sector or organizational change) would be beneficial, as it can provide additional information on how perceptions of job insecurity develop or how they are responded to. For example, it may be implied that the relationship between job insecurity and social/financial strain would differ in the public and in the private sector, as they are quite different regarding job security, working conditions, prospects for employee career development, etc. Similarly, organizational change is an essential factor in exploring job insecurity and its outcomes, as changes within the organization (e.g., restructu-

ring) are thought to prompt job insecurity, which, in turn, leads to strain (De Cuyper et al., 2010). Therefore, while the subjective factors (i.e. the career factors in this study) may be implied to have a buffering effect on the relationship between job insecurity and strain, it is nonetheless important to investigate whether it would be observed in different organizational contexts.

Hypotheses

H1: *Qualitative and quantitative job insecurity are positively related to financial and social strain.*

H2: *Career variables moderate the link between job insecurity and financial/social strain.*

H3: *The link between job insecurity, career variables and financial/social strain is determined by objective organizational characteristics (i.e. sector and organizational change).*

METHODS

Participants

The sample consisted of 205 respondents employed in various Lithuanian organizations. It was composed by contacting representatives of different organizations and sending them an invitation to participate in the study. Respondents' mean age was 36.26 years ($SD=11.38$) and their average tenure was 7.85 years ($SD=8.01$). Slightly over half of the respondents were employed in the public sector (56%), the rest of them represented the private sector (44%). Regarding organizational change (restructuring, merge, lay-offs), nearly half of the respondents reported no change (49%), while the rest of them reported having experienced one or more types of change in their organizations (51%).

Measures and procedure

The survey was conducted online and included the following measures:

- 1) A short socio-demographic question list, including questions on age, gender, tenure, sector, experience of organizational change, etc.
- 2) Job Insecurity Scale (De Witte, 2000). It is a four-item scale measuring quantitative job insecurity (i.e. the perceived threat to lose one's job), further validated in the study of Vander Elst, De Witte and De Cuyper

(2013). Additionally, a new short four item qualitative job insecurity scale (measuring the perceived threat of experiencing unfavourable changes in working conditions) was used, developed by De Witte and De Cuyper.

3) Financial Strain Scale (Meireman, Meuleman, Billiet, De Witte, & Wets, 2004) consists of four items measuring strain related to one's financial standing in the future.

4) Social strain was measured using the Latent Benefits Scale (adapted from Muller, Creed, Waters, & Machin, 2005). It measures strain related to being unable to satisfy the latent benefits of the job in the future (e.g. losing opportunity to make new contacts, to retain social status, etc.). The adapted version consists of five items.

5) Employability Scale (De Witte, 2000). It is a four-item scale measuring perceived employability (a belief about one's ability to find a job equitable to the present one).

6) Career Exploration Scale was designed specifically for this study. It has a unidimensional structure and consists of six items measuring the frequency of career exploration behaviours (e.g. seeking for information about training, exploring new career opportunities, etc.) within the last year.

7) Career Uncertainty Scale, designed specifically for this study, has a unidimensional structure and consists of four items measuring the frequency of career uncertainty related thoughts within the last year (e.g. being uncertain about reaching career goals, questioning one's career choices, etc.).

All responses were marked on a five-point scale ranging from 'totally disagree' to 'totally agree', except for the Career Uncertainty and Career Exploration scales which were marked on a five-point scale ranging from 'never' to 'very often'.

The first five scales were chosen and included in the survey in collaboration with Prof. Hans De Witte and dr. Tinne Vander Elst as part of an ongoing international study on job insecurity. In order to prepare the Lithuanian version of the scales, three independent translators translated the items. The final version was obtained by comparing draft translations and selecting the most precise wordings. Before the launch of the study, all items were repeatedly reviewed by a language editor. Finally, all measures were checked for reliability and factor structure: the reliability coefficients and the summary of exploratory factor analyses are provided in Table 1.

Data analysis

The data were analysed using SPSS software. Multiple regression analysis was run in order to determine the predictors of financial and social strain. In addition, the MODPROBE macro (Hayes, 2009) was used to run the moderator analysis which allows a check for interaction effects.

RESULTS

Firstly, the data were analysed in the full sample ($N=205$). A regression analysis was conducted in order to determine the predictors of financial and social strain. Two 3-block hierarchical regression models were built, the first one having financial strain as an outcome variable, whereas in the second model social strain was set as an outcome. Only background characteristics (i.e. age, gender and monthly salary) were entered in the first step of the analysis, quantitative and qualitative job insecurity were included in the second step, and all career variables were included in the third step. Table 2 provides means, standard deviations and scale intercorrelations of the main variables. The results of regression analyses are provided in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 1. Scale reliability coefficients and the summary of exploratory factor analyses results

Scale	No. of factors	Eigenvalues	% of variance	Range of factor loadings	Cronbach α
Job insecurity:	2	–	72.93	–	–
<i>quantitative</i>	–	4.37	54.72	.72–.88	.88
<i>qualitative</i>	–	1.46	18.21	.75–.85	.85
Financial strain	1	2.97	74.35	.75–.90	.88
Latent benefits	1	2.99	59.79	.68–.81	.83
Employability	1	3.06	76.42	.84–.91	.90
Career exploration	1	3.87	64.47	.75–.88	.89
Career uncertainty	1	2.51	62.72	.74–.84	.79

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the variables analyzed in the study (N=205)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Quantitative job insecurity	2.23	.88	–						
Qualitative job insecurity	2.65	.80	.52**	–					
Financial strain	3.01	.94	.41**	.57**	–				
Social strain	2.20	.73	.41**	.47**	.49**	–			
Employability	2.95	.88	–.33**	–.36**	–.37**	–.30**	–		
Career exploration	3.27	.86	–.01	–.03	–.12	–.12	.26**	–	
Career uncertainty	2.49	.85	.21**	.41**	.30**	.32**	–.20**	.10	–

** p<.01

Table 3. Hierarchical regression model predicting financial strain

Financial strain					
Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Gender (ref. male)	.00	Gender	.04	Gender	.04
Age	.24***	Age	.08	Age	.06
Monthly salary	–.27***	Monthly salary	–.10	Monthly salary	–.08
–	–	Quantitative job insecurity	.13*	Quantitative job insecurity	.13*
–	–	Qualitative job insecurity	.48***	Qualitative job insecurity	.45*
–	–	–	–	Employability	–.08
–	–	–	–	Career exploration	–.05
–	–	–	–	Career uncertainty	.08
R ²	.13	R ²	.40	R ²	.42
ΔR ²	–	ΔR ²	.27***	ΔR ²	.02
F(3;201)=9.58***		F(5;199)=26.83***		F(8;196)=17.35***	

Note: Results are based on standardized (Beta) coefficients

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 4. Hierarchical regression model predicting social strain

Social strain					
Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Gender (ref. male)	-.02	Gender	.02	Gender	.01
Age	.22**	Age	.12	Age	.08
Monthly salary	-.15*	Monthly salary	-.01	Monthly salary	.03
-	-	Quantitative job insecurity	.21**	Quantitative job insecurity	.20**
-	-	Qualitative job insecurity	.31***	Qualitative job insecurity	.24**
-	-	-	-	Employability	-.10
-	-	-	-	Career exploration	-.04
-	-	-	-	Career uncertainty	.16*
R ²	.07	R ²	.25	R ²	.28
ΔR ²	-	ΔR ²	.18***	ΔR ²	.03*
F(3; 201)=4.92**		F(5; 199)=13.24***		F(8; 196)=9.60***	

Note: Results are based on standardized (Beta) coefficients

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

According to the results, all predictor variables explain approximately 42% of variation in the outcome variable financial strain in the first model and approximately 28% of variation in the outcome variable social strain in the second model. In both cases, qualitative and quantitative job insecurity seem to be the strongest predictors.

Subsequently, a similar analysis was conducted in the split sample in order to test the role of organizational context. Four subsamples were obtained by splitting the total sample according to the following parameters: public sector (N=115) vs. private sector (N=90); reported recent organizational change (N=105) vs. no recent organizational change reported (N=100). Job insecurity and career factors were set as predictors of strain; background variables were not included, as they had shown to be significant in the first step only in the previous analyses. The results are provided in Table 5 and Table 6.

The results revealed slightly different prediction patterns in the four subsamples suggesting the role of context in explaining the occurrence of financial and social strain. Similarly to the previous analysis in the total

sample, both qualitative and quantitative job insecurity are the strongest predictors, although it should be noted that they are not significant in all cases.

Table 5. Predictors of financial strain in the split sample

Predictors	Subsample			
	Public sector	Private sector	Recent organizational change – yes	Recent organizational change – no
Quantitative job insecurity	.17	.20*	.28**	-.03
Qualitative job insecurity	.42***	.53***	.33**	.62***
Employability	-.10	-.02	-.17	-.10
Career exploration	.09	-.23**	-.04	-.12
Career uncertainty	.10	.11	.13	.02
R ²	.39	.47	.43	.44
F value	F(5;109)=13.74***	F(5;84)=15.10***	F(5;99)=14.66***	F(5;94)=14.89***

Note: Outcome variable: financial strain; results are based on standardized (Beta) coefficients
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 6. Predictors of social strain in the split sample

Predictors	Subsample			
	Public sector	Private sector	Recent organizational change – yes	Recent organizational change – no
Quantitative job insecurity	.31**	.10	.32**	.06
Qualitative job insecurity	.24*	.25*	.35**	.15
Employability	-.10	-.11	.05	-.24*
Career exploration	-.05	-.10	-.07	-.12
Career uncertainty	.10	.23*	-.01	.34***
R ²	.34	.23	.33	.36
F value	F(5;109)=11.11***	F(5;84)=5.07***	F(5;99)=9.53***	F(5;94)=10.57***

Note: Outcome variable: social strain; results are based on standardized (Beta) coefficients
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

One of the striking findings is that quantitative job insecurity seems to be as important as qualitative job insecurity in the public sector, when predicting social strain. However, especially organizational change seems to change the impact of job insecurity. Quantitative and qualitative job insecurity seem to be equally important in predicting strain when there have been recent organizational changes. When no such changes occurred, both kinds of insecurity are unrelated to social strain, whereas only qualitative job insecurity affects financial strain.

In order to better explore the role of career variables, the moderator analysis was carried out separately in all four subsamples. It allows the detection of interaction effects between job insecurity and career variables when predicting financial/social strain. As the analysis is carried out in the split sample, it enables the evaluation of the role of sector and organizational change as well.

In the moderator analyses, qualitative and quantitative job insecurity were set as main predictors of financial or social strain. Career variables were, in turn, set as moderators (one at a time, the rest of the variables including as covariates in the model). To avoid multicollinearity, both interaction variables were centred.

According to the results, a few interactions were significant. Two significant interactions were obtained in the private sector subsample, two in the subsample with reported organizational change, and two in the subsample with no organizational change reported. No significant interactions between job insecurity and career variables were obtained in the public sector subsample. The results of the statistically significant interactions are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7. Overview of the significant interactions between job insecurity and career variables in predicting financial and social strain

Subsample	Main predictor	Moderator	Outcome	Model statistics
Private sector	Quantitative job insecurity	Employability	Social strain	R ² =.28 F(6;83)=5.33, p=.000
Private sector	Qualitative job insecurity	Career uncertainty	Social strain	R ² =.29 F(6;83)=5.54, p=.000
Organizational change – yes	Qualitative job insecurity	Career exploration	Financial strain	R ² =.45 F(6;98)=13.40, p=.000
Organizational change – yes	Qualitative job insecurity	Employability	Social strain	R ² =.36 F(6;98)=9.04, p=.000
Organizational change – no	Qualitative job insecurity	Career uncertainty	Financial strain	R ² =.48 F(6;93)=14.02, p=.000
Organizational change – no	Quantitative job insecurity	Employability	Social strain	R ² =.43 F(6;98)=11.67, p=.000

Figures 2 to 7 illustrate conditional job insecurity effects on financial/social strain under different values of the moderator. The solid lines show the link between job insecurity and strain under low values of the moderator (1SD below mean), whereas the dotted lines illustrate the same link when values of the moderating variable are high (1SD above mean).

Figures 2 and 3 show the results that were obtained in the private sector subsample: While employability buffered the positive relationship between quantitative job insecurity and social strain, qualitative job insecurity was related to higher levels of social strain when employees experienced more career uncertainty.

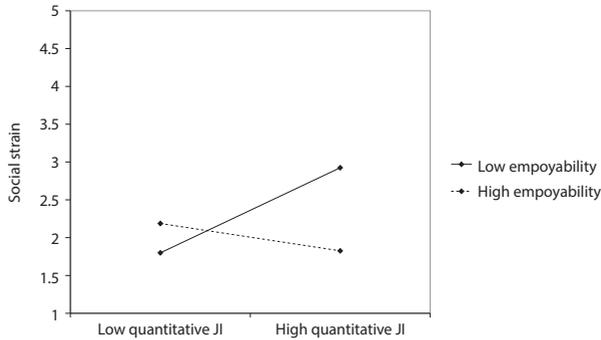


Figure 2. Interaction between quantitative job insecurity and employability predicting social strain in private sector subsample

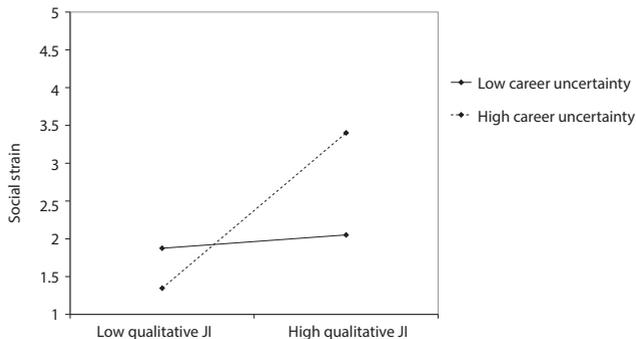


Figure 3. Interaction between qualitative job insecurity and career uncertainty predicting social strain in private sector subsample

Figures 4 and 5 show the moderating effects between job insecurity and career variables in the subsample with reported organizational change. These figures demonstrate that career exploration mitigates the relationship between qualitative job insecurity and financial strain. Employability was, however, found to increase the relationship between qualitative job insecurity and social strain.

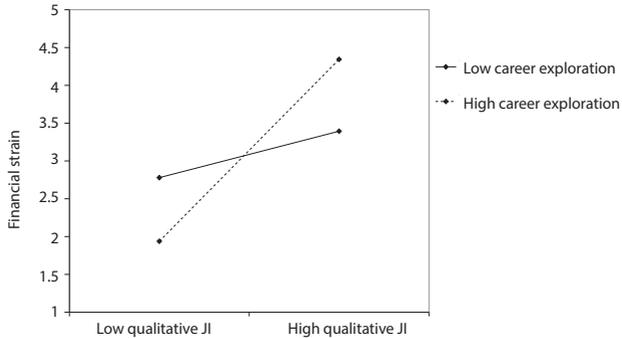


Figure 4. Interaction between qualitative job insecurity and career exploration predicting financial strain in reported organizational change subsample

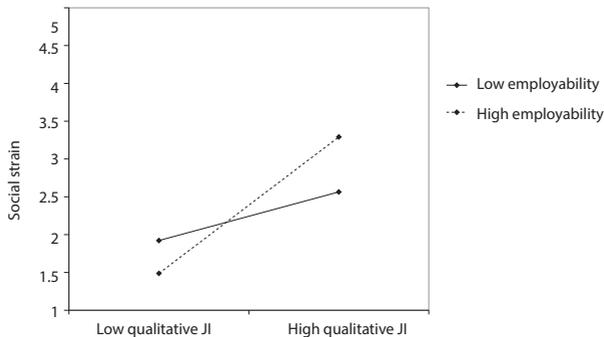


Figure 5. Interaction between qualitative job insecurity and employability predicting social strain in reported organizational change subsample

Furthermore, Figures 6 and 7 illustrate the moderation results obtained in the subsample with no reported organizational change: Unexpectedly, the relationship between qualitative job insecurity and

financial strain was stronger when employees experienced lower levels of career uncertainty. Furthermore, employability buffered the relationship between quantitative job insecurity and social strain. These results seem to suggest that employability is important in the job insecurity-social strain relationship, whereas career exploration and career uncertainty seem to act as moderators of the relationship of job insecurity and financial strain (with one exception).

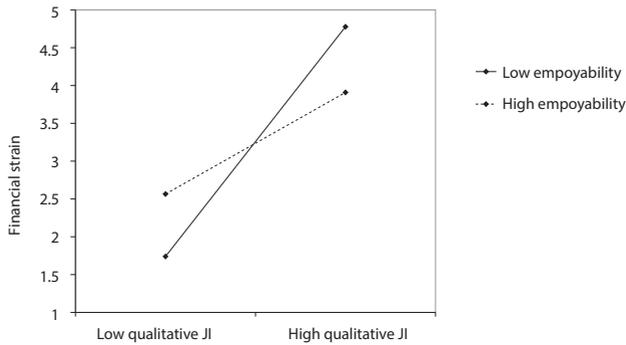


Figure 6. Interaction between qualitative job insecurity and career uncertainty predicting financial strain in subsample of no organizational change

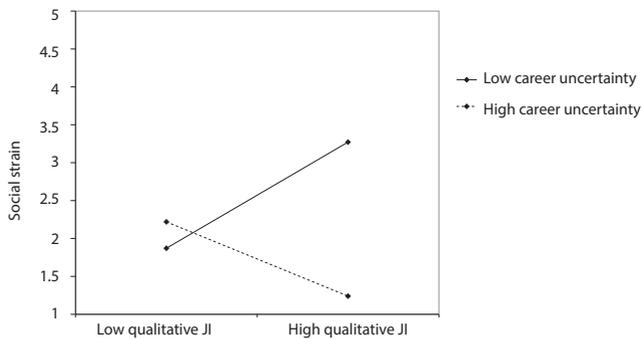


Figure 7. Interaction between quantitative job insecurity and employability predicting social strain in subsample of no organizational change

DISCUSSION

The results of this study allow for the exploration of financial and social strain as the outcomes of job insecurity. The first hypothesis suggesting the link between job insecurity and strain was confirmed, as both social and financial strain are quite well predicted by perceived level of job insecurity. However, the results are more consistent when financial strain is set as an outcome (in this case, job insecurity is often the only significant predictor). These results may suggest that perceived threat of losing the job or its valued features affects the anticipated fulfilment of manifest work functions first, and probably more strongly, compared to latent work functions. In the research literature, the role of manifest and latent work functions is understood and interpreted differently. Some studies underline the importance of latent functions (e.g., Paul et al., 2009; Selenko et al., 2011) by linking their (un)fulfilment to unemployment related stress. Others argue that the loss of both latent and manifest work benefits might be treated as a serious stressor causing threat to the well-being (Hoare & Machin, 2009). Others, yet, emphasize the role of manifest work functions and their accompanying benefits – for example, Lim and Sgn (2006) have found a positive link between job insecurity and what they called ‘money anxiety’. Unfortunately, a wider comparison of our own and similar studies is quite complicated due to different methodologies and different definitions of stressor variables that were measured.

Another point, which turned out to be worth attention in this study, is the distinction between quantitative and qualitative job insecurity. At the measurement level, many studies do not distinguish between the two and measure an aggregate indicator of job insecurity. Our results, however, have revealed slightly different results regarding their relationship with social and financial strain. As argued by De Witte et al. (2010), both quantitative and qualitative job insecurity can lead to negative outcomes, and the strength of their negative effect depends on the outcome under consideration. Focusing on the benefits that come with employment, quantitative job insecurity would be expected to have a stronger negative effect. However, based on our results, qualitative job insecurity was found to be a better predictor of social and financial strain. A possible explanation of this lies in the source(s) of insecurity.

Although quantitative job insecurity is defined as more threatening, its relevance is rather dependent upon external conditions (i.e. upon an objective threat to lose one's job); therefore, it seems to be the context that 'determines' the impact of job insecurity.

A subsequent question of this study concerns the moderating role of career variables. Preliminary results are in line with earlier arguments (e.g., Berntson et al., 2006; Blustein, 1997; Zikic & Klehe, 2006; Orndorff & Herr, 1996) about the mitigating effect of such variables as employability and career exploration, and the exacerbating effect of career uncertainty. On the other hand, the second hypothesis cannot be fully confirmed as only a few significant interactions were obtained and the moderator analysis has posed many questions. Employability taken as an example, the results are rather contradictory. In the private sector or when employees report no organizational change, low employability seems to strengthen the link between job insecurity and social strain. These results imply the deteriorating role of low employability (and the mitigating effect of high employability in reverse) and are consistent with findings obtained in similar studies (e.g., Silla et al., 2009). However, in case of ongoing organizational change, namely high employability is related to significantly stronger link between qualitative job insecurity and social strain. These results may be interpreted in several ways. First, they can be explained by the extent of subjective situational control: It seems that ongoing change within the organization creates such a situation that cannot be perceived as controllable and, in this way, is restricting for those who demonstrate higher levels of employability. Second, high employability is more or less associated with ranking oneself well as a professional. It is, therefore, possible that anticipated change in the workplace is associated with greater threat to one's status. Finally, one may not reject the idea that employability should be treated as a direct antecedent of job insecurity and not as a moderator of its effects.

Similar interpretations apply to other career variables as well. For example, career exploration has shown to be a direct predictor of lower financial strain (in the private sector subsample). However, the ongoing organizational change possibly creates such a situation that restricts career opportunities; therefore, high career exploration seems to bring a reverse effect.

Interesting effects were obtained when analysing the interaction between qualitative job insecurity and career uncertainty. First, under high career uncertainty, qualitative job insecurity was found to be significantly related to increased social strain (in the private sector subsample). These results are very well interpreted in the context of the career adaptability paradigm (Savickas, 1997; Brown et al., 2012). Career uncertainty reflects lack of belief in being able to plan one's career effectively; therefore, it is not surprising that it 'strengthens' the job insecurity effect. On the other hand, in certain cases, the insecurity-strain relationship is stronger when career uncertainty is low, suggesting that taking charge of one's career might evoke even stronger reactions to anticipated change in the workplace.

Finally, this study has confirmed the third hypothesis drawing attention to contextual factors that may also affect the way in which job insecurity is perceived and responded to. As expected, organizational factors, such as ongoing change and sector, do play a role as job insecurity effects were quite different across different subsamples.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, this study emphasizes the importance of understanding how personal variables (i.e. career attitudes and beliefs) change the subjective experience of job insecurity in objectively different contexts. Our preliminary findings have revealed that, in specific cases, career variables might act as moderators between job insecurity and financial or social strain, therefore, determining the extent of experienced strain. It is important to note that these variables are not necessarily the 'mitigators' of job insecurity: According to our results, their role is determined by contextual factors and might change from context to context.

LIMITATIONS

The results obtained in this study suggest an under-explored research perspective; however, only a few significant interactions were obtained indicating a need for inclusion of additional personal or contextual factors that would have more explanatory power. It has to be noted as well that due to a rather small sample, the outcomes of this study should be interpreted with care, particularly when interpreting the results in the separate subsamples.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study was funded by a grant (No. MIP-015/2012) from the Research Council of Lithuania.

References

- Ashford, S. J., Lee, C., & Bobko, P. (1989). Content, cause, and consequences of job insecurity: A theory-based measure and substantive test. *Academy of Management Journal*, 32 (4), 803–829.
- Berntson, E., Sverke, M., & Marklund, S. (2006). Predicting perceived employability: Human capital or labour market opportunities? *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 27, 223–244.
- Blustein, D. L. (1997). A Context-Rich Perspective of Career Exploration Across the Life Roles. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 45 (3), 260–274.
- Brown, A., Bimrose, J., Barnes, S. A., & Hughes, D. (2012). The role of career adaptabilities for mid-career changers. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80 (3), 754–761.
- De Cuyper, N., De Witte, H., & Vander Elst, T. (2010). Objective Threat of Unemployment and Situational Uncertainty During a Restructuring: Associations with Perceived Job Insecurity and Strain. *Journal of Business Psychology*, 25, 75–85.
- De Cuyper, N., Mäkikangas, A., Kinnunen, U., Mauno, S., & De Witte, H. (2012). Cross-lagged associations between perceived external employability, job insecurity, and exhaustion: Testing gain and loss spirals according to the Conservation of Resources Theory. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33, 770–788.
- De Witte, H. (2000). Arbeidsethos en jobonzekerheid: Meting en gevolgen voor welzijn, tevredenheid en inzet op het werk [Work ethic and job insecurity: Assessment and consequences for well-being, satisfaction and performance at work]. In R. Bouwen, K. De Witte, H. De Witte & T. Taillieu (Eds.), *Van groep naar gemeenschap* [From group to community]. Liber Amicorum Prof. Dr. Leo Lagrou (pp. 325–350). Leuven: Garant.
- De Witte, H. (2005). Job Insecurity: Review of the International Literature on Definitions, Prevalence, Antecedents and Consequences. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 31 (4), 1–6.
- De Witte, H., De Cuyper, N., Handaja, Y., Sverke, M., Näswall, K., & Hellgren, J. (2010). Associations Between Quantitative and Qualitative Job Insecurity and Well-Being: A Test in Belgian Banks. *International Studies of Management and Organisations*, 40 (1), 40–56.
- Eberwein, C. A., Krieshok, T. S., Ulven, J. C., & Prosser, E. C. (2011). Voices in Transition: Lessons on Career Adaptability. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 52 (4), 292–308.
- Greenhalgh, L., Rosenblatt, Z. (1984). Job Insecurity: Toward Conceptual Clarity. *The Academy of Management Review*, 9 (3), 438–448.

- Hayes, A. F., Matthes, J. (2009). Computational procedures for probing interactions in OLS and logistic regression: SPSS and SAS implementations. *Behavior Research Methods*, 41, 924–936.
- Hellgren, J., Sverke, M., & Isaksson, K. (1999). A Two-dimensional Approach to Job Insecurity: Consequences for Employee Attitudes and Well-being. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 8 (2), 179–195.
- Hoare, P. N., Machin, M. A. (2009). Some Implications of the Psychological Experience of Unemployment. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 18 (3), 57–61.
- Ito, J. K., Brotheridge, C. M. (2001). An Examination of the Roles of Career Uncertainty, Flexibility, and Control in Predicting Emotional Exhaustion. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 59 (3), 406–424.
- Jahoda, M. (1982). Employment and unemployment: A social psychological analysis. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Klandermans, B., van Vuuren, T. (1999). Job Insecurity: Introduction. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 8 (2), 145–153.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, appraisal, and coping. New York: Springer.
- Lim, V. K. G., Sng, Q. A. (2006). Does Parental Job Insecurity Matter? Money Anxiety, Money Motives, and Work Motivation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91 (5), 1078–1087.
- Mak, A. S., Mueller, J. (2000). Job insecurity, coping resources and personality dispositions in occupational strain. *Work & Stress: An International Journal of Work, Health & Organisations*, 14 (4), 312–328.
- Mauno, S., Kinnunen, U., Mäkikangas, A., & Nätti, J. (2005) Psychological consequences of fixed-term employment and perceived job insecurity among health care staff. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 14 (3), 209–237.
- Mauno, S., Kinnunen, U. (1999). Job insecurity and well-being: A longitudinal study among male and female employees in Finland. *Community, Work & Family*, 2 (2), 147–171.
- Meireman, K., Meuleman, B., Billiet, J., De Witte, H., & Wets, J. (2004). *Een onderzoek naar de beeldvorming over en de houding ten aanzien van asielzoekers*. KU Leuven, Hoger instituut voor de Arbeid.
- Mohr, G. B. (2000). The changing significance of different stressors after the announcement of bankruptcy: a longitudinal investigation with special emphasis on job insecurity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21, 337–359.
- Muller, J. J., Creed, P. A., Waters, L. E., & Machin, M. A. (2005). The development and preliminary testing of a scale to measure the latent and manifest benefits of employment. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 21 (3), 191–198.
- Orndorff, R. M., Herr, E. L. (1996). A Comparative Study of Declared and Undeclared College Students on Career Uncertainty and Involvement in Career Development Activities. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 74 (6), 632–639.

- Paul, K. I., Geithner, E., & Moser, K. (2009). Latent Deprivation among People who Are Employed, Unemployed, or Out of the Labor Force. *Journal of Psychology*, 143 (5), 477–491.
- Rosenblatt, Z., Ruvio, A. (1996). A Test of Multidimensional Model of Job Insecurity: The Case of Israeli Teachers. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 17, 587–605.
- Roskies, E., Louis-Guerin, C., & Fournier, C. (1993). Coping with Job Insecurity: How Does Personality Make a Difference? *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 14 (7), 617–630.
- Sampson, J. P. Jr., Peterson, G. W., Lenz, J. G., Reardon, R. C., & Saunders, D. E. (1998). The Design and Use of a Measure of Dysfunctional Career Thoughts Among Adults, College Students, and High School Students: The Career Thoughts Inventory. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 6 (2), 115–134.
- Savickas, M. L. (1997). Career adaptability: An integrative construct for life-span, life-space theory. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 45, 247–259.
- Selenko, E., Batinic, B., & Paul, K. (2011). Does latent deprivation lead to psychological distress? Investigating Jahoda's model in a four-wave study. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 84 (4), 723–740.
- Silla, I., De Cuyper, N., Gracia, F. J., Peiró, J. M., & De Witte H. (2009). Job Insecurity and Well-Being: Moderation by Employability. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 10, 739–751.
- Staufenbiel, T., König, C. J. (2010). A Model for the Effects of Job Insecurity on Performance, Turnover Intention, and Absenteeism. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 83, 101–117.
- Super, D. E., Knasel, E. G. (1981). Career development in adulthood: Some theoretical problems and a possible solution. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 9 (2), 194–201.
- Sverke, M., Hellgren, J., & Näswall, K. (2002). No Security: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Job Insecurity and Its Consequences. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 7 (3), 242–264.
- Sverke, M., Hellgren, J., & Näswall, K. (2006). Job Insecurity: A Literature Review. Report No. 1. National Institute for Working Life, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Swanson, J. L., Daniels, K. K., & Tokar, D. M. (1996). Assessing Perceptions of Career-Related Barriers: The Career Barriers Inventory. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 4 (2), 219–244.
- Vander Elst, T., De Cuyper, N., & De Witte, H. (2011). The Role of Perceived Control in the Relationship between Job Insecurity and Psychosocial Outcomes: Moderator or Mediator? *Stress and Health*, 27, 215–227.
- Vander Elst, T., De Witte, H., & De Cuyper, N. (2013). The Job Insecurity Scale: A psychometric evaluation across six European countries. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, (ahead-of-print), 1–17.
- Zikic, J., Klehe, U. C. (2006). Job loss as a blessing in disguise: The role of career exploration and career planning in predicting reemployment quality. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 69 (3), 391–409.

KARJEROS VEIKSNIŲ SVARBA KOKYBINIO IR KIEKYBINIO NESAUGUMO DARBE RAIŠKAI SKIRTINGAME ORGANIZACIJOS KONTEKSTE

Ieva Urbanavičiūtė, Dalia Bagdžiūnienė, Jurgita Lazauskaitė-Zabielskė
Vilniaus universitetas, Vilnius, Lietuva

Tinne Vander Elst
Leveno katalikiškasis universitetas, Belgija

Hans De Witte
Leveno katalikiškasis universitetas, Belgija,
Šiaurės vakarų universitetas, Pietų Afrika

Santrauka. Tyrimo problema. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjami psichologinio nesaugumo darbe ypatumai, t. y. siekiama įvertinti karjeros veiksmų (įsidarbinamumo, domėjimosi savo karjeros galimybėmis ir netikrumo dėl karjeros) reikšmę kokybinio ir kiekybinio nesaugumo kontekste. Straipsnyje pateiktas tyrimas, kuriame nagrinėjama, kaip minėti karjeros veiksniai siejasi su darbuotojų nerimu dėl finansinės ir socialinės padėties ateityje, kuris laikomas tiesioginiu darbuotojų atsaku į patiriamą nesaugumą darbe. Taip pat tyrime atsižvelgiama į objektyvius konteksto veiksmus (organizacijoje vykstančius pokyčius ir sektorių), kurie, manoma, turi nemažai reikšmės psichologinio nesaugumo darbe raiškai. **Metodika.** Tyrimas atliktas internetinės apklausos būdu. Jame dalyvavo 205 įvairių Lietuvos organizacijų darbuotojai. Jie pildė klausimyną, matuojantį nesaugumą darbe, karjeros veiksmus ir nerimą dėl finansinės / socialinės padėties ateityje. Duomenų analizė buvo atlikta ir pilnoje imtyje, ir ją išskaidžius pagal parametrus, atspindinčius organizacijos kontekstą (organizacijoje pokyčiai vyksta, organizacijoje pokyčių nėra; organizacija priklauso privačiajam, viešajam sektoriui). **Rezultatai ir išvados.** Hierarchinės regresijos analizė parodė, kad kokybinis ir kiekybinis nesaugumas darbe tiesiogiai susijęs su nerimu dėl būsimos finansinės / socialinės padėties. Kita vertus, nustatytas skirtumas tarp kokybinio ir kiekybinio nesaugumo (pastarasis yra kiek stipresnis prognostinis veiksnys, ypač prognozuojant nerimą dėl būsimos finansinės padėties). Moderacinė analizė atskleidė, kad keletu atvejų karjeros veiksniai moderuoja ryšį tarp kokybinio / kiekybinio nesaugumo darbe ir nerimo dėl būsimos finansinės / socialinės padėties. Taip pat nustatyta, kad organizacijoje vykstantys pokyčiai bei sektorius, kuriam organizacija priklauso, iš dalies determinuoja nesaugumo darbe raišką. Apibendrinus tyrimo rezultatus, atkreipiamas dėmesys į individualių karjeros veiksmų reikšmę subjektyviam nesaugumo darbe suvokimui skirtingomis organizacinėmis aplinkybėmis.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: psichologinis nesaugumas darbe, nerimas dėl ateities, įsidarbinamumas, karjeros veiksniai.

Received: December 16, 2013

Accepted: December 16, 2014