

Job Insecurity and Job Performance of Nurses in Pakistan: The Roles of Work Engagement and Organizational Justice

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Abstract

Job insecurity is a real concern for employees of every organization and especially the nurses. Having feelings of job insecurity can have detrimental effects on the performance of an employee. This study seeks to examine the relationship between job insecurity and job performance of nurses in Pakistan. Moreover, the mediating effect of work engagement and the moderating effect of organizational justice would also be investigated. Data were collected from 326 contractual nurses working in tertiary hospitals in Pakistan. Results show that job insecurity negatively affected the job performance of nurses and work engagement mediated this relationship. It was also found that organizational justice moderated the relationship between job insecurity and job performance. Implications for hospital management are also given in this study.

Introduction

During the last two decades, the concept of job insecurity has received special attention in the field of organizational research (Gallie et al., 2017; Shoss, 2017) and numerous investigators have emphasized the importance of such concept in an organizational structure (Lee, Huang, & Ashford, 2018). In addition, issues of job insecurity in nursing profession have also been discussed at length in previous studies and how they affect the work behaviors of nurses have been empirically examined (Hashish, All, & Mousa, 2018; Park & Jeong, 2019; Saquib et al., 2020). In the era of fast-changing and transient relationships, job insecurity has become a pivotal issue for the organizations since it entails interpretation and inference of individuals' motivations, personality, and morality. That is why efforts are being made by the chain of command to obtain a better understanding of such a concept in order to establish more effective functioning of the organization (Saquib et al., 2020). Repeated recessions, mergers, and acquisitions have contributed to the fact that job insecurity, or a person's concern about his or her future job permanence, has become a significant stressor in today's working life (e.g., Piccoli et al., 2017). Due to an ever increasing pressure on organizations to sustain and succeed amongst fierce rival forces, it is critical for managers to keep their employees performing effectively. Most of the organizations in pursuit of profits and cost minimization also devise a strategy to lay-off employees. Job insecurity has always been a threat to employees as they feel psychological pressure of losing their jobs. A recent reporter claims that more than half of the world's workforce does not have job security and that number is increasing (Koen, Low, & Van Vianen, 2019).

It is important to look for effective strategies to help employees deal with job insecurity so that they can work on their own, especially working under strict economic conditions. Therefore, researchers and managers of the organization should be aware of the conditions that can have negative staff responses to job insecurity. In particular, Lavigne et al. (2019) support further research on management of job insecurity, as this is necessary not only for the theoretical development of occupational insecurity but also for the practical application of organizations to manage the crisis of insecurity. However, in literature, there are only limited studies examining the workplace as managers for the impact of job insecurity on behavioral outcomes, most of which focus on job support (e.g., Selenko, Mäkikangas, & Stride, 2017). There has been a parallel increase in research on job insecurity following increases in organizational restructuring and downsizing in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Job insecurity research has been conducted in many developed countries (e.g., UK, USA, Canada, Finland), as well as developing countries (e.g., Taiwan). This accumulating body of research has contributed to several reviews of the literature (e.g., Boya et al., 2008; Fischmann, De Witte, Sulea, & Iliescu, 2018; Laine et al., 2009). Sverke, Hellgren and Naswall (2002) conducted a meta-analysis and review of job insecurity and consequences.

They considered short term or immediate reactions, as well as long term reactions to job insecurity and consequences for the individual and the organization. Short term individual reactions included lowered job satisfaction and job involvement; long term individual reactions included reduced mental and physical well-being. At the organizational level, short term reactions included decreased organizational commitment and organizational trust, and long term reactions included increased intentions to turnover. In summary, they found significant relationships between job insecurity and diminished levels of job satisfaction, job involvement, mental health, physical health, organizational commitment, organizational trust and increased intentions to quit. Job insecurity had mixed effects on job performance. This review of the literature provided convincing evidence that job insecurity almost always was associated with adverse individual reactions. Some of this work indicated that job insecurity was heightened by organizational changes, personal and work situation demographics such as employee age, marital status, parental status and level of education, as well as individual personality traits such as locus of control, self-esteem and job performance.

Job insecurity is one of the important concepts that need to be investigated in the organizations. There is limited work done on this concept especially in Pakistan. Job insecurity has been a major problem as employees who experience job insecurity are found to perform poorly in organizations. This study is going to examine the mediating role of work engagement on the relationship between job insecurity and job performance and the moderating role of organizational justice on job insecurity-job performance relationship. This study will highlight the importance of job-insecurity concept and its impact on the performance of the nurses. This study is going to be important for hospital managers because they cannot provide job security and permanent employment to their employees but what they can do is to increase perceptions of justice and engagement so that despite having job insecurity, employees would still perform better in their jobs.

Literature Review and hypotheses development

Job insecurity and Job performance

Job insecurity refers to the feelings of uncertainty an employee has about his/her job that he/she would lose the job in near future. According to Burke, Ng, and Wolpin (2015), job insecurity is a continuous work stressor and it has negative effects on employees due to anxiety and increased stress. There are many factors that contribute to an increase in feelings of job insecurity among employees (Barzideh, Choobineh, & Tabatabaee, 2014). Rapid technological development might cause employees to think that more work is being done by machines and robots and their need in organizations is minimized. For example, in case of factory workers, mostly automated machines work instead of humans and a single machine can handle work burden of multiple individuals. This aggravates an employee's feeling of becoming irrelevant to the organization's workforce. Another definition presented by Shoss (2017) comes from Jung et al. (2007) and includes a comparison of the preferred and the actual situation. They define job insecurity as the difference between the preferred level of security by an individual and the actual level, the individual experiences. Heaney et al. (1994) however, define job insecurity as a potential threat, perceived by an individual, towards the job of this individual.

Bitmiş and Ergeneli (2015) chooses a similar definition as Heaney et al. (1994) and defines job insecurity as an overall concern about the existence of a job in the future. The definition of job insecurity, as a concern about future existence of job features is stated as qualitative job insecurity. Greenglass, Burke, and Fiksenbaum (2001) expand the definition from Heaney et al. (1994) by including concerns about a potential involuntary job loss next to perceptions. Vander Elst et al. (2014) define job insecurity as a subjectively perceived and undesired possibility of losing the current job involuntarily in the future and the fear or worries associated with this job loss probability. Ellonen and Nätti (2015) however focus again on the subjectivity of job insecurity and define it as the evaluation of an employee about how likely it is that he respectively she will lose his respectively her job in the near future. Finally, after presenting different definitions, Shoss (2017) focuses on the perceived threat for the continuity and stability of a job, the subjectivity and the future-orientation and defines job insecurity as a threat, perceived by an employee, regarding the continuity and stability of the job this employee experiences. A further literature research on definitions of job insecurity identified one additional definition, which is not presented in the review by Shoss (2017).

Seen from a social identity theory perspective, employment can be understood as a social group membership that forms part of a person's self-concept. Social identity categories such as employment can function as systems of orientation to "...define the individual's place in society" (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 15-16). People perceive reality in terms of social category memberships that enable them to make sense of their social environment and their position within it, and also guide their behaviour and evaluations. Simply said, "who one is" is defined by the social categories one feels part of. Striving for a positive social identity is assumed to be a fundamental goal of almost everyone, and to achieve that positive identity many people aspire to be part of positively evaluated social categories. To an individual, almost any group can function as a social category, as long as it enables a differentiation between "us vs them". In classic minimal group experiments Billig and Tajfel (1973) showed that even if groups were formed based upon the most superficial ad-hoc criteria, participants still showed more favourable attitudes and preferential behaviour towards their own group than towards the other group. Being employed is likely to mean more than just a minimal group membership, as it is attached with considerable emotional and psychological significance. It is very probable that employment can function as a social identity category, that allows a differentiation in 'us employed vs them unemployed'. Certainly, the social identity as an employed person is only one out of several social identity categories that a person can have. For example, a person can simultaneously be employed, married, a member of a work team, a fan of a football team (and many more).

Job insecurity has been related to the affiliated subgroup identity as an organizational member before (e.g., Buitendach & De Witte, 2005; Feather & Rauter, 2004). For example, Buitendach and De Witte (2005) investigated job insecurity and organizational identity as two separate factors that independently influence post-merger satisfaction of employees. This is slightly different to our argument, which is that job insecurity and social identity (as an employed person) are two connected processes, the one informing the other. This connected-processes argument finds some, albeit mixed support in the organizational identity literature. Feather and Rauter (2004), for example, did not find a significant difference between permanently and temporarily employed teachers in their organizational identity; whilst other studies that measured perceived job insecurity did find such a relationship (e.g., Buitendach & De Witte, 2005). However neither of these studies paid attention to the social identity as an employed person as a possible mechanism.

Job insecurity can have significant negative effects on the organizations as well as the individual employee. Research has overwhelmingly demonstrated the impact of job insecurity and often, these are negative outcomes. While in the past people would be expected to work for the organization for a very long time without worrying about the security of their jobs, there has been a dramatic change in recent decades regarding job security. These changes have affected the behavior of employees and the wellbeing of organizations. Studies have shown that job insecurity badly affects work attitudes and behavior of employees. For example, Greenlough and Rosenblatt (2010) observed that employees' reactions to job insecurity had repercussions for organizational effectiveness and wellbeing. Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996) observed that job insecurity was linked to reduced organizational support, as well as negatively associated to perceived work performance. Furthermore, job insecurity has been linked to reduced organizational trust and organizational loyalty (Burke, Ng, & Wolpin, 2015). Laine et al. (2009) also found that job insecurity affects organizational commitment, resistance to change and intention to leave.

There is ample evidence demonstrating that job insecurity has a negative association with employees' health and attitudes (Boya et al., 2006). However, less research has examined the behavioral consequences and our understanding of mechanisms that predict performance outcomes of job insecurity is less well known. In the literature, the work performance domain primarily refers to the dimensions of task and contextual performance (Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002). Task performance is defined as behaviors that directly contribute to the organization's technical core and is considered the least discretionary of work behavior. By contrast, contextual or extra-role performance is associated with the level of effort or persistence that an individual exerts beyond what is formally required. The literature regards OCBs as the most important contextual behaviors because they contribute to a positive social climate and support organizational effectiveness (Fischmann et al., 2018). Amidst the uncertainties of work environments, employees are called upon to perform and to be more productive because organizations are increasingly dependent on their performance. However, empirical evidence has shown that job insecurity leads to reduced task performance and fewer OCBs. Two recent meta-analyses (Koen, Low, & Van Vianen, 2019; Selenko, Mäkikangas, & Stride, 2017) found negative and significant relationships between job insecurity and various forms of performance (task and contextual). In an earlier meta-analysis, Sverke et al. (2002) also reported a negative relationship, albeit non-significant.

The most widely cited explanation in the studies on job insecurity and performance draws upon stress theory. As an important work stressor, job insecurity may negatively affect performance because it leads to a strain reaction. Job insecure employees experience strain because they need to expend emotional and physical resources to cope with the threatening anticipation of job loss, distracting effort away from performance-related objectives (e.g. Lavigne et al., 2019). Moreover, employees may evaluate the insecure situation as difficult to control, because the source of uncertainty is often outside of individual control (e.g. economic conditions, organizational restructurings). Related to stress theory is the explanation of perceived control. Low levels of perceived control may lead to negative affective and behavioral reactions (Park & Jeong, 2019). Reduced performance and OCBs (i.e. behavioral withdrawal) may be a means of coping with an uncontrollable situation such as job insecurity. Another explanation for the negative relationship between job insecurity and performance comes from the perspective of psychological contract theory. Previous research found that job insecurity represents a breach of the psychological contract, wherein employees exchange loyalty and commitment for job security (Piccoli et al., 2017). Consequently, job insecurity may reduce employees' felt obligations to engage in OCB, due to their perception of a breach in social exchange with the organization (Hashish, All, & Mousa, 2018). Based on above arguments, it is reasonable to hypothesize:

H1: There is a significance negative relationship between job insecurity and job performance.

The mediating role of work engagement

Work engagement in nursing is becoming strategically important as three important factors converge: a global shortage of nurses who are the largest group of healthcare providers; political resolve to restrain the growth of rising healthcare costs in industrialized nations; and a medical error rate that threatens the health of nations. Since nurses report low levels of work engagement (Fasoli, 2010) by scoring lower than other hospital groups (Blizzard, 2005) on measures of work engagement, understanding engagement is important. While the concept of work engagement emerges from the new 'positive psychology' (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 541) that focuses on human strengths, rather than limitations, work engagement has captured global research attention because it is amenable to change (Luthans et al., 2007). Work engagement has been studied by the disciplines of nursing, psychology, education and business in more than one million people. The participants for these studies have been nurses and other professionals in the US (Mackoff & Triolo 2008; Simpson 2009), Canada (Spence-Laschsinger et al., 2006), the Netherlands (Brake et al., 2007), South Africa (Rothman, 2008), Australia (Parker & Martin, 2009), Ireland (Freeney & Tiernan, 2009), Norway (Andreassen et al., 2007), China (Lu et al., 2011) and Spain (Jenaro et al., 2010).

Work engagement contributes to a distinctive body of nursing knowledge because it theoretically underpins the actions of nurses and nurse managers as they create a practice environment that either supports safe and effective care or does not. According to the Simpson (2009), the US nurses' work environment is a threat to patient safety. Luthans et al.'s (2007) review of 54 nursing studies of the practice environment, and Lu et al.'s (2011) review of 53 studies of the effects of nursing leadership on nursing practice attest to an enduring nursing interest in creating a practice environment that supports safe and effective care. According to Antoinette Bargagliotti (2012), work engagement refers to a "*persistent, positive, affective motivational state of fulfilment*" (p. 1421), characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption. As García- Sierra et al. (2016) point out, fair treatment of uncertainty makes "less concern, or even a fair and pleasant gamble," and unfair treatment creates uncertainty "severe skin color and discomfort to most people." Therefore, justice (unfair) can reduce the correlation coefficient of uncertainty with negative emotional reactions. Engagement is defined as a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74). Research about the relation between job insecurity and work engagement is not as extensive as the research on burnout, but a number of interesting studies have been done. For example, the study of Knight, Patterson, Dawson, and Brown (2017) investigated the relationship between job insecurity, affectivity, burnout, and work engagement of almost three hundred employees in a government organization.

With their survey study, they found that cognitive job insecurity had a significant negative correlation with engagement, which suggested that higher levels of cognitive job insecurity are associated with lower levels of engagement. Furthermore, Çağlar (2012) examined the relationship between psychological empowerment, job insecurity and employee engagement. The sample consisted of 442 governmental employees and employees from a manufacturing company.

They found a main effect between affective job insecurity and psychological empowerment and employee engagement. Furthermore, psychological empowerment interacted with affective job insecurity to affect employee engagement. In particular, the negative correlation between job insecurity and employee participation at a lower (higher) level of organizational justice (relative to weakness) will be stronger. Workers who work hard at work not only recognize the strength of their work, but also their motivation to allocate resources (for example, knowledge and skills) to their roles. These factors highlight the fact that if the healthcare world is to adapt to new social and economic challenges, there will be a need for professional proactive nurses who have initiative, take on the responsibility for their professional development and are committed to high standards of quality. Work engagement stems from positive psychology, which proposes the study of factors of normal and satisfactory activity rather than those of mental disorders, and in this sense, engagement was first conceived as the opposite of burnout (Maslach & Leiter 1997). Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined work engagement as ‘... a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind, and characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption’. Vigour refers to the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, dedication is related to involvement, and absorption is related to concentration and being engrossed in one’s work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). People with high levels of engagement show positive attitudes towards their jobs and organizations, including job satisfaction and commitment to the company, and they do not frequently shift jobs. Furthermore, those with high work engagement exhibit high learning motivation and proactive behaviours (Andreessen et al., 2007), and they work diligently because they enjoy their work even when they are tired, describing fatigue as pleasant because they can associate it with positive achievements (Brake et al., 2007). There are indications that the level of engagement is positively associated with job performance in terms of financial benefits, greater client loyalty and better adaptation to the working environment (Lu et al., 2011; Rothman, 2008). Empirical studies are also available that indicate that engagement is positively related to health. For example, engaged employees have been shown to suffer less from depression and stress and to have fewer psychosomatic symptoms (Parker & Martin, 2009). The literature shows that both lab our and personal resources are important predictors of engagement; working environments with adequate lab our resources foster engagement, especially when the work is highly demanding, and personal resources such as self-esteem, optimism and self-efficacy are also useful for coping with the everyday demands of working life. In 2009, Simpson conducted a systematic review to synthesize the research about engagement in the organizational psychology, business and nursing literature.

A growing body of research reports finding non-linear associations between job insecurity and work-related behavior. Here, non-linear associations are thought to result from a differential effect of job insecurity on affective or motivational processes. For example, Saquib et al. (2020) propose that job insecurity simultaneously operates as a challenge and hindrance stressor, and Selenko et al. (2013) explain a u-shaped association between job insecurity and performance via varying degrees of vigour. In addition, Koen, Low, and Van Vianen (2019) found an inverted u-shaped association between job insecurity and effort, and Lam et al. (2015) explain the u-shaped association between job insecurity and organizational citizenship behavior as resulting from increased attempts to assert control under high job insecurity. Resources are defined as those objects, characteristics, circumstances, or energies that are either valued by themselves or that are valued because they facilitate the gain or protection of further resources (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000). Besides rendering it possible to earn one’s living, a job as a resource might also encompass access to further resources such as social contacts, meaning or status. Given the importance of resources, it is obvious that individuals align their resource investment or behavior toward obtaining, retaining and protecting resources. Thus, if employees experience job insecurity, they should direct their attention and behavior towards evaluating the probability of losing their resource (job) and how to prevent this. With respect to the threat of job loss, low job insecurity reflects low threat of resource loss and high job insecurity reflects high threat of resource loss. In contrast, uncertainty (i.e., probability judgment) should be lowest at both low and high levels of job insecurity, as here, employees perceive there to be a high subjective probability that they either keep (low job insecurity) or lose (high job insecurity) their job.

But at medium levels of job insecurity, uncertainty should be highest, because here, keeping or losing one’s job seems equally possible. Based on these arguments, this study proposes:

H2: Work engagement mediates the effect of job insecurity on job performance.

The moderating role of organizational justice

The ever-changing nature of organizations and work environments continue to present various challenges for many employees in organizations. Over the years, organizations have experienced tremendous changes that have

come in the form of new policies, an ever-increasing ageing workforce, work processes being automated and new technological changes (Lavigne et al., 2019). Given the increased competitive nature of the global business environment and global markets, and the need for organizations to survive the prevailing economic conditions, organizations engage in strategies that lead to restructuring and downsizing to reduce costs. Sora et al. (2010) argued that to cope with economic demands and remain afloat, organizations could either work at increasing their profitability and gains or they could decrease their cost of operations, which unfortunately involves a reduction in labor personnel. Most organizations generally use downsizing as a common means of sailing through the various tough economic situations they find themselves in. Job insecurity is a sense of powerlessness in the context of a threatening situation during individual's work. For most of employees in service industry, their career has high mobility and instability, and lacks cyber protection and financial security to some extent. These uncertain factors may cause insecurity. According to the theory of conservation of resources, when employees think that their job roles are ambiguous, their relationships are confused, there isn't career development security, lacking of work control, they will evaluate their work as insecure, which motivate them to protect their personal resources, and reduce intellectual and emotional resources of the input. Career adaptability is a personal resource for copying with job needs. Koen, Low, and Van Vianen's (2019) study indicated that individuals with high adaptability showed better flexibility when confronting with challenges. Employees with high adaptability are able to accept new changes, such as new tools and platform, and have more positive attitude to new things, so their job insecurity is relatively low. Working staff interact with the actions and decisions of the organizations that employ them.

Organizational justice refers to the perception of staff that the organization was largely interested (e.g., Gilliland, 2008). This study expect job insecurity to respond to negative responses (for example, to reduce performance) when organizations are unfairly affected by the organization. There is considerable evidence that job insecurity – as an important stressor at work – is negatively associated with well-being, psychological health, attitudes, and intentions with regard to job-related behavior. Fairness judgments become more influential when they are confronted with uncertainty. Uncertainty is generally aversive and causes anxieties. In order to deal with uncertainty, people would be more concerned with fairness information and use it to guide their emotions, attitudes and behaviors. People would react particularly well to fair treatment and particularly badly to unfair treatment under conditions of uncertainties. There is growing evidence from field studies supporting the proposition that employees make a greater use of fairness information to react when they are experiencing uncertainty in organizations (e.g., Kausto, Elo, Lipponen, & Elovainio, 2005). As fairness has greater impact in uncertainty contexts, UMT posits that fairness is more useful under conditions of uncertainties because fairness provides people a way to cope with uncertainty. A closely related implication is that the potential negative psychological consequences associated uncertainties might be reduced if people are treated fairly in those uncertain situations. As Lind and Van den Bos (2002) pointed out: “. . . the theory points to other, potentially more valuable, benefits from fair treatment under uncertainty... Specifically, the theory suggests that people look for indications of fairness and use them to manage psychologically the stress of uncertainty.” (p. 215).

In the context of job insecurity, employees are faced with a performance management dilemma. That is, on the one hand, employees might be motivated to work hard in an attempt to keep their jobs or at least to reduce the risk of job loss; on the other hand, they may also be worried that working hard may be fruitless because it is the organization that makes firing decisions. Information about fairness at work provides an important guide for employees to direct their attitudes and behaviors that are needed to deal with such job-insecure situations (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002). We expect that when employees are treated unfairly by the organization, job insecurity is related to more negative responses (e.g., reduced performance). Some early laboratory and field studies have provided evidence to support the importance of fairness factors during organizational downsizing, when job insecurity is expected to be especially pronounced. More recently, two studies supported that job insecurity in general situations is associated with lower job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and higher intention to quit when organizational justice is low than when it is high (Silla, Gracia, Mañas, & Peiró, 2010; Sora et al., 2010). Degoe (2000) argued that employees use social information to develop their justice judgments. They exchange information with each other, which tends to lead to shared perceptions about justice, and collective interpretations of justice emerge.

Consistent with these theories, some studies have aimed to investigate the emergence of justice climate. Moss holder et al. (1998) were probably the first to study justice from a multilevel perspective. They treated procedural

justice as a contextual variable, and they demonstrated that the justice context influenced individual job satisfaction. Ehrhart (2004) pointed out that procedural justice climate emerges from individual procedural justice perceptions, and it positively influences unit-level organizational citizenship behavior. Therefore, when employees perceive a procedural justice climate, they develop higher overall levels of helping and conscientious behaviors. Along the same lines as previous work, Walumbwa et al. (2008) indicated that procedural justice climate was positively related to satisfaction with supervisor, organizational commitment and rated organizational citizenship behaviour. Liao and Rupp (2005) found four different types of justice climate: organization-focused procedural and informational justice climate, and supervisor-focused procedural and interpersonal justice climate. Furthermore, they showed that these types of justice climate were associated with commitment, satisfaction and citizenship behaviour. Colquitt et al. (2002) pointed out that procedural justice climate was related to team performance and team absenteeism. Thus, outcomes were more positive when climates were stronger. With respect to performance, empirical evidence indicates positive, negative or non-significant association between job insecurity and performance-related constructs. Building on these arguments, it is hypothesized:

H3: Organizational justice moderates the effect of job insecurity on job performance such that the negative relationship between job insecurity and job performance will be stronger.

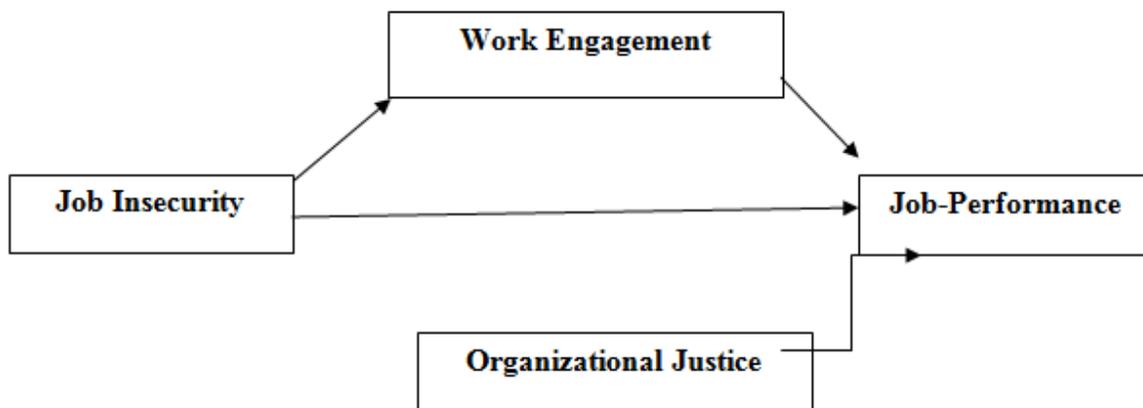


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

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Method

The study was quantitative in nature. The researcher distributed questionnaires among the nurses in various public and private hospitals of Pakistan. Initially, a total of 13 public and 10 private hospitals were contacted. The hospital management of six public and five private hospitals agreed to participate in the study. After receiving ethical approval from an independent research ethics committee (Blinded), the data collection was conducted. The study selected only those nurses from the public hospitals who were on contractual basis because they faced job insecurity more as compared to nurses who had regular and permanent status.

A total of 680 nurses were contacted. Out of these nurses, 354 responded back (response rate = 52%). Due to missing data 28 cases were removed from the analysis. So the researcher used a final sample of 326 cases for the data analysis. Among these, 87% were females, the average age was 32.9, the average tenure was 6.95 years, and 76% had bachelor degree.

Measures

Job insecurity was measured using the Job Insecurity Scale (JIS) (O'Neill & Sevastos, 2013), an 18-item instrument that uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "very inaccurate" to (5) "very accurate", in which participants rate the extent to which each of the given statements accurately represented them. A Cronbach Alpha of 0.81 for reliability was observed for the current study.

Work engagement was assessed with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). The long version consisting of seventeen items was used. The scale measures absorption ($\alpha = 0.83$), vigour ($\alpha = 0.88$) and dedication ($\alpha = 0.93$) with three items for each dimension. Cronbach's α for the total work engagement scale was 0.95. Examples of items are "When I am working, I forget everything else around me" (absorption), "At my job, I feel strong and vigorous" (vigor) and "I am enthusiastic about my job" (dedication). The items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 ("never") to 5 ("always"). Ambrose and Steinke's (2009) three item scale was used to measure perceptions of organizational justice. The items assess individuals' experiences of personal justice. A sample item is: "Overall, I'm treated fairly by my organization." All of the items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The Job Performance Scale of Goodman and Symantec (1999) was used to measure employees' performance. It measured both task (e.g., "You achieve the goals of your function; $\alpha = .80$) and contextual performance (e.g., "You help other colleagues with their work when they have been absent"; $\alpha = .82$). The scale consisted of 16 items and respondents were asked to rate these items on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 ("totally disagree") to 5 ("totally agree"). Cronbach's α of the overall performance scale was 0.85.

Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out in SPSS software version 22. Descriptive (mean, standard deviation, frequency) and inferential statistics were implemented in the data analysis process. In order to meet the established objectives of the study, the PROCESS 3.3 macro for SPSS was used. The mediation analysis was conducted using a bootstrapping method with 5000 samples at 95% confidence interval (CI). The interaction terms were mean-centered and probed by plotting conditional effects at high and low levels of the moderator for moderation analysis. As data were collected from multiple hospitals, to test non-independence of observations, interclass coefficients (ICCs) were calculated for each item. ICCs ranged from 0.09 to 0.22 indicating that responses were independent of the hospitals. We followed Kenny and La Voie (1985) procedure as well, and removed variation in the data due to hospital by mean-centering each nurse's survey responses using the mean responses for his/her hospital.

Results

The descriptive statistics, Cronach's alpha (α) and correlations of the constructs are presented in Table 1. All correlation variables are positively correlated to one another and are significant at $p < 0.01$. The fit indexes ($\chi^2[67] = 165.49$, $\chi^2/df = 2.47$, CFI = .96, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .07) indicated that the model achieved an acceptable fit. All of the standardized factor loadings of the latent variables on their indicators were significant ($p < .001$); they ranged from 0.66 to 0.89.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Variables	M (SD)	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Age	32.93 (7.19)		1							
2 Gender	0.84 (.08)		-.04	1						
3 Tenure	6.95(4.58)		.23*	.01	1					
4 Education	2.19(.72)		.03	.02	.01	1				
5 Job insecurity	4.01(.41)	.82	-.03	.02	-	.07	1			
6 Work engagement	3.14(.22)	.85	.04	-.05	.06	.06	-	1		
7 Organizational justice	3.91(.47)	.91	.08	.02	.11*	-.03	.22	.11	1	
8 Job performance	4.19(.51)	.86	.03	.01	.06	.14**	-	.31***	.17	1
							.11*	.32***		.44***

Note: * $P < .05$, ** $P < .01$, *** $P < .001$ (2-tailed test).

As shown in Table 2, the beta coefficient value between job insecurity and job performance was -0.688 at 0.001 significance level, which shows that there is a significant negative effect of job insecurity on job performance, supporting H1. The mediation analysis was conducted using Model 4 in the PROCESS macro. The results indicate that job insecurity significantly predicts work engagement ($\beta = -0.31, t = -6.34$ and $p < 0.001$) and the overall model (job insecurity predicting work engagement) is statistically significant, $R^2 = 0.24, F(1, 976) = 229.86, p < 0.001$. Similarly, the results also indicate that given the presence of job insecurity in the model, work engagement significantly predicts job performance ($\beta = .738, t = 17.42$ and $p < 0.001$) and the overall model (job insecurity predicting job performance through work engagement) is statistically significant, $R^2 = 0.66, F(2, 975) = 679.94, p < 0.001$. However, the direct effect of job insecurity on job performance is insignificant ($\beta = -0.09, t = -1.60$ and $p = 0.10$). Further, the result also indicates that the total effect ($\beta = 0.31, CI_{low} = 0.32, CI_{high} = 0.86$) and the indirect effect ($\beta = 0.43, CI_{low} = 0.44, CI_{high} = 0.67$) is significant while the direct effect ($\beta = -0.09, CI_{low} = -0.092, CI_{high} = 0.072$) is insignificant. Hence, the results support H2 that work engagement significantly mediates the positive relation between job insecurity and job performance. Mediation analysis was also performed through Baron and Kenny (1986) approach. Results from Table 2 illustrate that job insecurity has a significant negative effect on work engagement ($\beta = -0.362$); the second step of mediation analysis, this inclines toward acceptance of H2. The steps of mediating effect of work engagement are as follows: Job insecurity has direct, significantly negative effect on job performance ($\beta = -0.688$); work engagement has direct, significantly positive effect on job performance (0.432); in mediating effect job insecurity has insignificant effect, and work engagement has significant negative effect, which shows that there is full mediation effect of work engagement (0.459). These results lead toward acceptance of H2.

Table 2: Mediating effect

	Work engagement	Job performance		
Constant	0.225* (0.124)	1.372*** (0.241)	1.378*** (0.288)	1.268*** (0.237)
Job insecurity	-0.688*** (0.036)	-.688*** (0.071)		-0.246 (0.158)
Work engagement			0.473* (0.065)	0.368*** (0.148)
R-Square	0.809	0.361	0.388	0.397
Adjusted R-Square	0.807	0.357	0.384	0.390
F Statistics	701.039	94.012	105.258	54.291
P value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Bootstrapping (5000 samples)				
	β Indirect effect	t-value	Confidence interval (5%–95%)	
Job Insecurity → Work Engagement → Job Performance	0.43	7.85	0.44, 0.67	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Next, moderation analysis was conducted using Model 1 in the PROCESS macro. Table 3 represents the effect of job insecurity on job performance and the moderating role of organizational justice. The results indicate that job insecurity and organizational justice predict job performance and are statistically significant. Similarly, in model 3, the interaction term ($\beta = 0.49, t = 2.38$ and $p < 0.01$) and the overall model are both statistically significant, $R^2 = 0.62, F(3, 976) = 1022.86, p < 0.001$. Further, the interaction between job insecurity and organizational justice accounts for more variance, $\Delta R^2 = 0.0029, \Delta F(1, 975) = 5.70, p < 0.01$. Hence, H3 is supported.

Table 3. Estimation of the moderating effects

Hypothesis 3	β effect	Indirect t-value	Confidence interval (5%– 95%)
Job Insecurity*Organizational Justice→Job Performance	.218	4.839**	(0.021; 0.197)

** $p < .001$

Discussion

In this study, the negative effect of job insecurity on employees' job performance was examined. We found that when nurses fear more about losing their jobs in near future, they tend to perform less effectively and as a result the overall job performance deteriorates. This finding is consistent with Wang et al.'s (2015) study on employees of various insurance companies in China. They also found out that due to insecurity and uncertainty in jobs, Chinese employees showed poor performance. The main reason that they ascribed to this poor performance was losing personal integrity and taking more stress due to uncertain nature of job. When an employee is not given enough job security, he/she might feel unimportant, irrelevant, and unworthy all of which may contribute to lowering of integrity. Second major finding of this study is that work engagement mediated the effect of job insecurity on job performance such that employees who are engaged in their work might not perform poorly even if job is insecure in nature. The last major finding of this study is that if employees perceive that justice is being delivered in the organization, the negative effect of job insecurity on employee's job performance decreases.

Job insecurity could be seen as a threat to self-integrity (e.g., Wiesenfeld et al., 2001), because Job insecurity is phenomenon that has to be explored in banks as well because banks have contractual jobs. This contractual nature of jobs makes employees to fear about uncertain future (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Fair treatment Job insecurity is phenomenon that has to be explored in banks as well because banks have contractual jobs. This contractual nature of jobs makes employees to fear about uncertain future. Most job insecurity research has been conducted in Western societies; relatively small studies have been conducted in Pakistan on the scale of the modern scenario. The process of ongoing economic globalization and political and social transition in Pakistan has become increasingly important for job insecurity.

Job insecurity has been rapidly increasing as a result of the ongoing global economic and financial crisis. Thus, more research is needed to find ways to help employees feel less vulnerable to potential job loss and at the same time to maintain their motivation and performance. In particular, researchers have suggested that more work is needed to examine work contexts as moderators of the relationship between job insecurity and performance because existing research on the effect of job insecurity on performance has so far reported mixed results (e.g., Rosen et al., 2010). In this study, we chose organizational justice as a work contextual variable. The results of our study help clarify the previous mixed findings on the job insecurity–job performance relationship by identifying organizational justice as an important boundary condition. Moreover, the mediating effect of work engagement is another contribution of this study. As noted earlier, this study contributes to job insecurity literature in the hospital setting. The contractual nature of jobs makes employees to fear about uncertain future. Thus, job insecurity is phenomenon that has to be explored in hospitals that are emphasizing more and more on contractual jobs. This contractual nature of jobs makes employees to fear about uncertain future phenomenon (e.g., Rosen et al., 2010).

Practical implications

Job insecurity has become a common and largely unavoidable organizational phenomenon. Yet our findings demonstrate that the negative effects of job insecurity are less severe if the organization improves the employees' perceptions of justice. The quality of human resources is of vital importance to the success of organizations, especially in uncertain working environments. In today's rapidly changing business world, organizations demand their employees to be more energetic, dedicated, and engaged in their work than ever, even though it is increasingly difficult for organizations to promise permanent employment for their employees. To deal with this management dilemma, organization managers should pay more attention to issues of justice, especially during times of organizational change or crisis when employees tend to experience more feelings of job insecurity.

It has been suggested that organization managers should listen to employees' concerns, increase their participation in change-related decision making, and spend more time clearly explaining the aim of the changes using accurate, unbiased procedures. These may help increase the employees' general perceptions of fairness (e.g., Cropanzano, Bowen, & Gilliland, 2007; Greenberg, 2004; Parker et al., 1997). To conclude, by eliciting more positive affect and helping employees manage uncertainty as part of their jobs, the perception of fairness would help employees stay engaged and productive in an uncertain working environment. Organizational justice has been revealed to have an outstanding role in uncertain situations given that it seems to help the employees cope with these situations, such as job insecurity. Accordingly, organizations should put considerable emphasis on fair treatment as much as in times of restructuring as in more stable times. Likewise, these buffering factors should be taken into consideration when designing organizational interventions for enhancing collective coping with job insecurity. Creating practice environments that fully engage nurses in their practice is a central issue for the nursing profession, a safety issue for patients, and an important economic issue for all the nations. Since the antecedents of work engagement are relational rather than transactional, they have no financial costs. These antecedents shed important light on the direction that healthcare organizations, nurse managers and nurses can take to create a work environment that supports the work engagement of nurses. Managers should encourage nurses to take responsibility, make them feel supported, and foster work climates (Caricati et al., 2013) that will improve work engagement over time during a nurse's career.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of the current study require careful interpretation of its findings. Firstly, only Pakistani context could cause problem in generalizing the findings of the study. Future researchers should test the model in other cultures and industries. Second, the nurses surveyed in this study reported directly to doctors, caution is recommended in generalizing the results to other areas of the globe. Third, the cross-sectional research design does not allow us to establish a causal relation between the variables under discussion. Longitudinal research designs may assist in a better understanding of the relationship among the variables. Fourth, the sample came from nurses working in one city only. Furthermore, we suggest researchers consider few options when planning future studies. Future researchers may conduct a comparative study between public and private hospitals because nurses in private hospitals may experience job insecurity more intensely as compared to government sector hospitals.

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