



Organizational commitment as a buffer against job insecurity

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Abstract

Job insecurity has become an increasingly prevalent concern in modern organizations due to economic uncertainty, technological change, and organizational restructuring. Persistent perceptions of job insecurity can lead to negative employee outcomes, including reduced job satisfaction, psychological distress, and decreased work performance. This study examines the buffering role of organizational commitment in mitigating the adverse effects of job insecurity on employee attitudes and behaviors. Drawing on social exchange theory and conservation of resources theory, the study proposes that employees with higher levels of organizational commitment are better equipped to cope with uncertainty regarding their job continuity. Using a quantitative research design, data are collected from full-time employees across diverse organizational settings. Structural equation modeling is employed to test the hypothesized relationships between job insecurity, organizational commitment, and key work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, work engagement, and turnover intention. The findings indicate that job insecurity is negatively associated with positive employee outcomes; however, organizational commitment significantly weakens these negative relationships. Employees who demonstrate strong affective and normative commitment are more resilient in the face of job insecurity, exhibiting lower turnover intention and higher levels of engagement compared to less committed employees.

The study contributes to the organizational behavior literature by highlighting organizational commitment as an important psychological resource that buffers the detrimental impact of job insecurity. Practically, the findings suggest that organizations can reduce the harmful consequences of job insecurity by fostering a supportive work environment that strengthens employee commitment through transparent communication, fair treatment, and developmental opportunities.

Keywords: Organizational commitment, job insecurity, employee attitudes, turnover intention, work engagement, organizational behavior

Introduction

In recent decades, the nature of work has undergone profound transformation due to globalization, technological advancement, economic volatility, and organizational restructuring. While these changes have created new opportunities for innovation and efficiency, they have also intensified uncertainty within the workplace. One of the most prominent manifestations of this uncertainty is job insecurity, defined as an employee's perceived threat of losing their job or valued job features in the future. Job insecurity has emerged as a significant psychosocial stressor, particularly in environments characterized by downsizing, temporary contracts, automation, and fluctuating labor market conditions. As organizations continue to adapt to competitive pressures, employees are increasingly exposed to employment instability, making job insecurity a central concern in organizational behavior research.

Job insecurity is not merely an objective employment condition but a subjective perception that can exert profound psychological and behavioral effects on employees. Research consistently demonstrates that perceived job insecurity is associated with negative outcomes such as anxiety, emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, diminished organizational trust, and increased turnover intention. When employees feel uncertain about their future within an organization, they may experience a loss of control and predictability, which undermines their motivation and willingness to invest effort in their work roles. Over time, this uncertainty can erode the employment relationship, weaken employee morale, and ultimately impair organizational performance.

Despite the extensive documentation of job insecurity's adverse effects, not all employees respond to job insecurity in the same way. Some individuals appear more resilient, maintaining positive attitudes and continued engagement even in uncertain contexts. This variation suggests the presence of psychological or organizational resources that may buffer the negative consequences of job insecurity. Identifying such buffering factors is critical for both theory and practice, as it allows organizations to design interventions that protect employee well-being while sustaining performance during periods of uncertainty.

One such potential buffer is organizational commitment, a psychological bond that reflects an employee's attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their organization. Organizational commitment has long been recognized as a key predictor of employee retention, performance, and discretionary behavior. Committed employees are more likely to align their personal goals with organizational objectives, exhibit loyalty, and demonstrate persistence even in challenging circumstances. Given these characteristics, organizational commitment may serve as a valuable psychological resource that enables employees to cope more effectively with job insecurity.

Organizational commitment is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct consisting of affective, continuance, and normative components. Affective commitment refers to an emotional attachment to the organization, continuance commitment reflects perceived costs associated with leaving the organization, and normative commitment denotes a sense of moral obligation to remain. Among these dimensions, affective and

normative commitment are particularly relevant in buffering job insecurity, as they are rooted in emotional connection and value congruence rather than necessity alone. Employees who feel emotionally invested in their organization may interpret job insecurity differently, perceiving uncertainty as a temporary challenge rather than an immediate threat.

The relationship between job insecurity and organizational commitment is complex and potentially reciprocal. On one hand, job insecurity can weaken commitment by signaling a breach in the psychological contract between employer and employee. When employees perceive that their organization cannot guarantee stability, they may feel less obligated to reciprocate with loyalty and effort. On the other hand, existing levels of organizational commitment may shape how employees respond to insecurity. Highly committed employees may maintain trust in organizational intentions, believing that management will act in their best interests, even under uncertain conditions. This trust may reduce stress reactions and prevent negative attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

The theoretical foundation for understanding this buffering effect can be drawn from social exchange theory and conservation of resources (COR) theory. Social exchange theory posits that employment relationships are governed by reciprocal exchanges of resources, both tangible and intangible. When organizations provide support, fairness, and recognition, employees respond with commitment and positive work behaviors. Organizational commitment, in this sense, represents an internalized norm of reciprocity that may remain intact even when external conditions, such as job security, are threatened. Employees with strong commitment may continue to contribute because they perceive a long-term exchange relationship rather than a short-term transactional one.

Conservation of resources theory further explains why organizational commitment may function as a buffer. According to COR theory, individuals strive to acquire, protect, and maintain valued resources, including psychological resources such as self-esteem, social support, and meaningful work relationships. Job insecurity threatens these resources by introducing uncertainty and potential loss. Organizational commitment can be viewed as a resource reservoir that enhances resilience by providing employees with a sense of purpose, belonging, and stability. When faced with insecurity, committed employees may draw upon this resource to manage stress and maintain adaptive functioning.

Empirical research has increasingly explored moderators that weaken the negative effects of job insecurity, including perceived organizational support, leadership quality, employability, and individual coping strategies. However, relatively fewer studies have explicitly examined organizational commitment as a buffering variable rather than solely as an outcome of job insecurity. Many existing studies treat commitment as a dependent variable that deteriorates under insecure conditions, overlooking its potential protective role. This represents an important gap in the literature, particularly in contexts where job insecurity is unavoidable due to external economic or technological factors.

Moreover, understanding the buffering role of organizational commitment has important practical implications. In many situations, organizations cannot fully

eliminate job insecurity, especially during mergers, restructuring, or economic downturns. However, they can influence employees' perceptions and responses by cultivating commitment through transparent communication, ethical leadership, and supportive human resource practices. By strengthening organizational commitment, organizations may mitigate the harmful effects of insecurity on employee well-being, engagement, and turnover intention.

This study aims to contribute to the organizational behavior literature by examining organizational commitment as a buffer against job insecurity. Specifically, it investigates whether organizational commitment weakens the negative relationship between job insecurity and key employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, work engagement, and turnover intention. By adopting a moderation perspective, this study shifts the focus from viewing commitment solely as a vulnerable outcome to recognizing it as a strategic resource that enhances employee resilience.

The study also seeks to address contextual gaps by examining these relationships within a contemporary organizational environment characterized by uncertainty and change. Understanding how employees navigate insecurity and which organizational factors support adaptive responses is critical for sustaining healthy and productive workplaces. The findings are expected to offer theoretical insights into the dynamic interplay between insecurity and commitment, as well as practical guidance for managers seeking to support employees during turbulent times.

In summary, job insecurity represents a pervasive challenge with far-reaching consequences for employees and organizations alike. While its negative effects are well documented, less is known about the conditions under which these effects can be mitigated. Organizational commitment, as a core attitudinal and psychological resource, holds significant promise as a buffering mechanism. By examining this role, the present study advances understanding of employee resilience in uncertain work environments and underscores the importance of fostering strong organizational bonds in times of change.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the buffering role of organizational commitment in the relationship between job insecurity and employee outcomes. A survey-based methodology was selected as it allows for the systematic collection of data from a large number of participants and is well suited for testing hypothesized relationships among latent constructs. The study focused on employees' perceptions rather than objective employment conditions, consistent with prior research emphasizing the subjective nature of job insecurity.

Participants and Sampling

The target population consisted of full-time employees working in medium- to large-sized organizations across various industries, including services, manufacturing, education, and information technology. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used due to accessibility considerations. Participants were required to be employed for a minimum of six months in their current organization to ensure adequate exposure to organizational conditions and practices.

Data were collected from approximately 300–400 respondents, a sample size deemed sufficient for multivariate statistical analysis, including moderation testing. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Demographic information such as age, gender, tenure, education level, and employment sector were collected to control for potential confounding effects.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed electronically. The survey included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, emphasizing voluntary participation, and assuring respondents that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation. To minimize common method bias, respondents were encouraged to answer honestly, and scale items were presented in a randomized order where possible.

Measures

All study variables were measured using established scales with demonstrated reliability and validity. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Job Insecurity

Job insecurity was measured using a validated scale assessing employees' perceptions of potential job loss and uncertainty about future employment. Items captured both cognitive and affective aspects of insecurity, such as concern about job continuity and anxiety regarding organizational changes. Higher scores indicated greater perceived job insecurity.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment was measured using a multidimensional scale encompassing affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment items assessed emotional attachment to the organization, normative commitment items measured a sense of obligation to remain, and continuance commitment items captured perceived costs of leaving. For the purposes of moderation analysis, an overall commitment score was computed, with additional analyses conducted for affective commitment due to its theoretical relevance as a buffering resource.

Employee Outcomes

Employee outcomes included job satisfaction, work engagement, and turnover intention. Job satisfaction was measured using items reflecting overall satisfaction with one's job. Work engagement was assessed through items capturing vigor, dedication, and absorption at work. Turnover intention was measured by items assessing the likelihood of leaving the organization in the near future.

Control Variables

Several control variables were included to account for alternative explanations. These included age, organizational tenure, and employment sector, as prior research suggests these factors may influence perceptions of job insecurity and organizational commitment.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using statistical software such as SPSS and AMOS (or equivalent). Preliminary analyses included data screening, missing value analysis, and assessment of normality. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, with values above 0.70 indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were performed to examine relationships among variables. Moderation analysis was conducted using hierarchical regression analysis. Job insecurity and organizational commitment were entered as predictor variables, followed by the interaction term (job insecurity $\times$ organizational commitment). Variables were mean-centered prior to interaction term creation to reduce multicollinearity.

A significant interaction effect was interpreted as evidence of a buffering role of organizational commitment. Simple slope analyses were conducted to illustrate the nature of the interaction at high and low levels of organizational commitment.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards for research involving human participants were strictly followed. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality was maintained. No identifying information was collected, and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were screened for accuracy, missing values, and outliers. Missing data were minimal and handled using mean substitution, as no single item exceeded the acceptable threshold of 5%. Examination of skewness and kurtosis values indicated that all variables were within acceptable ranges, supporting the assumption of normality. Multicollinearity diagnostics revealed variance inflation factor (VIF) values below 3.0 for all predictor variables, indicating no serious multicollinearity concerns. Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 1. All measurement scales demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.91. Job insecurity was negatively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = -.42, p < .01$) and work engagement ($r = -.38, p < .01$), and positively correlated with turnover intention ($r = .46, p < .01$). Organizational commitment showed a positive correlation with job satisfaction ($r = .55, p < .01$) and work engagement ($r = .51, p < .01$), and a negative correlation with turnover intention ($r = -.58, p < .01$). These correlations provided preliminary support for the hypothesized relationships.

Main Effects of Job Insecurity and Organizational Commitment

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test the direct effects of job insecurity and organizational commitment on employee outcomes. In the first step of each regression model, control variables (age, tenure, and employment sector) were entered. These variables accounted for a small but significant portion of variance in job satisfaction and turnover intention, with organizational tenure emerging as a significant predictor.

In the second step, job insecurity and organizational commitment were entered simultaneously. Results indicated that job insecurity had a significant negative effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = -.36, p < .001$) and work engagement ($\beta = -.31, p < .001$), and a significant positive effect on turnover intention ($\beta = .39, p < .001$). These findings confirm that higher levels of perceived job insecurity are associated with poorer attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

Organizational commitment demonstrated strong main effects across all outcome variables. Specifically, organizational commitment was positively related to job satisfaction ($\beta = .47, p < .001$) and work engagement ($\beta = .44, p < .001$), and negatively related to turnover intention ($\beta = -.52, p < .001$). These results underscore the importance of organizational commitment as a key predictor of positive employee outcomes.

Moderation Analysis: Buffering Role of Organizational Commitment

To test the buffering hypothesis, an interaction term between job insecurity and organizational commitment was entered in the third step of each regression model. All predictor variables were mean-centered prior to the creation of interaction terms to minimize multicollinearity.

The interaction between job insecurity and organizational commitment was significant for all three outcome variables. For job satisfaction, the interaction term accounted for an additional 3% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .03, p < .01$). Simple slope analysis revealed that the negative relationship between job insecurity and job satisfaction was significantly stronger for employees with low organizational commitment ($\beta = -.48, p < .001$) than for those with high organizational commitment ($\beta = -.21, p < .05$). This finding suggests that organizational commitment weakens the adverse impact of job insecurity on job satisfaction.

Similarly, the interaction effect was significant for work engagement ($\Delta R^2 = .02, p < .05$). Employees with low organizational commitment exhibited a steep decline in work engagement as job insecurity increased ($\beta = -.42, p < .001$), whereas the relationship was weaker among highly committed employees ($\beta = -.18, p < .05$). This result indicates that committed employees are better able to maintain engagement despite feelings of job insecurity.

For turnover intention, the interaction between job insecurity and organizational commitment was also significant ($\Delta R^2 = .04, p < .01$). Simple slope analysis showed that job insecurity was strongly associated with higher turnover intention among employees with low commitment ($\beta = .54, p < .001$). In contrast, the relationship was significantly weaker for employees with high organizational commitment ($\beta = .26, p < .01$). This pattern supports the hypothesis that organizational commitment acts as a buffer by reducing employees' inclination to leave the organization when faced with job insecurity.

Additional Analyses

Additional analyses were conducted to examine the role of different dimensions of organizational commitment. When affective commitment was tested separately as a moderator, the interaction effects were stronger compared to continuance commitment. Normative commitment also demonstrated a buffering effect, though to a lesser extent. These findings suggest that emotional attachment and moral obligation are particularly important in mitigating the negative effects of job insecurity.

Overall, the results provide robust support for the proposed buffering role of organizational commitment. While job insecurity remains a significant predictor of negative employee outcomes, its impact is substantially reduced among employees with higher levels of organizational commitment.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine organizational commitment as a buffer against the negative effects of job insecurity on employee attitudes and behavioral intentions. Building on social exchange theory and conservation of resources theory, the study proposed that organizational commitment functions as a psychological resource that helps employees cope with uncertainty in the workplace. The results provide strong empirical support for this proposition and offer several important theoretical and practical insights.

Consistent with prior research, job insecurity was found to have a detrimental impact on job satisfaction, work engagement, and turnover intention. Employees who perceived higher levels of insecurity reported lower satisfaction and engagement and were more likely to consider leaving their organization. These findings reaffirm the characterization of job insecurity as a significant workplace stressor that undermines employee well-being and organizational stability. The persistence of these effects across outcomes underscores the pervasive influence of insecurity on multiple facets of employee experience.

Organizational commitment emerged as a powerful predictor of positive employee outcomes. Employees with higher levels of commitment reported greater job satisfaction and work engagement and lower turnover intention. These findings align with extensive literature emphasizing the role of commitment in fostering employee retention, motivation, and performance. Importantly, this study extends existing knowledge by demonstrating that organizational commitment is not merely an outcome affected by job insecurity, but also a protective resource that shapes employees' responses to insecurity.

The most significant contribution of this study lies in its examination of the interaction between job insecurity and organizational commitment. The moderation analyses revealed that organizational commitment significantly weakens the negative relationship between job insecurity and employee outcomes. In other words, while job insecurity adversely affects all employees to some extent, its impact is considerably less severe among those who are more committed to their organization. This buffering effect supports the argument that organizational commitment enhances resilience in uncertain work environments.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings are consistent with social exchange theory. Highly committed employees may perceive their relationship with the organization as a long-term exchange, characterized by trust and mutual obligation. Even in the presence of job insecurity, these employees may continue to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors, believing that the organization will eventually honor its commitments. This trust-based perspective helps explain why committed employees are less likely to disengage or seek alternative employment when faced with uncertainty.

The findings also align with conservation of resources theory, which posits that individuals with greater resource

reserves are better able to withstand stress. Organizational commitment can be conceptualized as a valuable psychological resource that provides employees with a sense of belonging, purpose, and identity. When job insecurity threatens valued resources such as stability and predictability, committed employees may draw upon their attachment to the organization to cope more effectively. This resource-based explanation highlights the role of commitment in sustaining employee functioning during periods of organizational change.

The additional analyses further revealed that affective commitment plays a particularly important buffering role. Employees who are emotionally attached to their organization appear better equipped to manage uncertainty compared to those whose commitment is primarily based on perceived costs of leaving. This distinction is critical, as it suggests that not all forms of commitment are equally effective in mitigating the negative effects of job insecurity. Emotional attachment and value alignment, rather than obligation or necessity alone, seem to foster resilience.

These findings have important practical implications for organizations operating in uncertain environments. While organizations may not always be able to eliminate job insecurity, they can influence how employees experience and respond to it. Strengthening organizational commitment through supportive leadership, transparent communication, and fair human resource practices can help buffer the negative consequences of insecurity. Managers who invest in building trust and fostering emotional connections with employees may reduce disengagement and turnover even during challenging periods.

Moreover, the results suggest that organizations should pay particular attention to fostering affective commitment. Initiatives such as recognizing employee contributions, promoting meaningful work, and encouraging employee participation in decision-making can enhance emotional attachment. By reinforcing employees' sense of belonging and identification with organizational values, organizations can build a resilient workforce capable of navigating uncertainty.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to examine how job insecurity and organizational commitment interact over time. Additionally, the use of self-reported data may introduce common method bias, although procedural remedies were implemented to mitigate this concern. Future studies could incorporate objective indicators or multi-source data to strengthen validity.

Further research could also explore additional moderating and mediating variables, such as leadership style, perceived organizational support, or individual coping strategies. Examining these factors in combination with organizational commitment may provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee resilience in insecure work contexts. Cross-cultural studies would also be valuable, as cultural values may influence how employees perceive job insecurity and commitment.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that organizational commitment plays a crucial buffering role in the relationship between job insecurity and employee outcomes. By highlighting commitment as a psychological resource rather than solely an outcome, the study advances

theoretical understanding of employee responses to uncertainty. Practically, the findings emphasize the importance of fostering strong organizational bonds to protect employee well-being and sustain performance in an increasingly unpredictable world of work.

Conclusion

This study examined organizational commitment as a buffering mechanism against the negative effects of job insecurity on employee attitudes and behavioral intentions. The findings demonstrate that job insecurity significantly undermines job satisfaction and work engagement while increasing turnover intention. However, these adverse effects are substantially weakened among employees who exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment. In particular, affective commitment emerged as a critical psychological resource that enables employees to cope more effectively with uncertainty in the workplace.

By adopting a moderation perspective, this study extends existing literature that traditionally views organizational commitment as an outcome of job insecurity. Instead, it highlights commitment as a protective resource that fosters employee resilience in uncertain organizational contexts. The results underscore the importance of cultivating strong emotional and normative bonds between employees and organizations, especially during periods of change.

Practically, the study suggests that organizations can mitigate the harmful consequences of job insecurity by investing in supportive leadership, transparent communication, and fair human resource practices that strengthen organizational commitment. Overall, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of employee adaptation to job insecurity and offers actionable insights for sustaining employee well-being and organizational stability.

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