

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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# Qualitative and quantitative job insecurity: relations with nine types of performance

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## Abstract

This study adds to the understanding of the negative effect of job insecurity on employee performance, by investigating the differences between qualitative and quantitative job insecurity when predicting individual performance at task, team, and organization level, taking into account the individual's proficiency, adaptivity, and proactivity. We expect both types of job insecurity to be negatively related to performance. The hypotheses were examined using structural equation modelling on a sample of 225 Romanian employees. Data were collected at a single point in time. Results indicate job insecurity as negatively associated mostly with the proficiency facet of performance, and minimally with the proactivity dimension. Our analyses also indicate that qualitative job insecurity is negatively associated with more performance facets than quantitative job insecurity. This research contributes to the job insecurity literature by being one of the few studies to compare qualitative and quantitative job insecurity effects. Additionally, the in-depth look at performance facets sheds light on a possible reason as to why existing research on the relationship between job insecurity and performance has not been consistent in results. Being cross-sectional in nature, our study does not allow us to draw conclusions as regards causality. Given the importance of the topic, it would be warranted to replicate the study on different samples.

## Keywords

qualitative job insecurity, quantitative job insecurity, employee performance types

## Rezumat

Acest studiu își aduce contribuția la înțelegerea efectului negativ al insecurității locului de muncă asupra performanței angajaților, prin investigarea diferențelor dintre rolul pe care îl are insecuritatea calitativă și cea cantitativă a locului de muncă pentru performanța individuală în sarcină, performanța în echipa de lucru, performanța în organizație, luând în considerare competența, adaptabilitatea și proactivitatea individului. Ne așteptăm ca ambele tipuri de insecuritate a locului de muncă să fie negativ corelate cu performanța. Ipotezele au fost examinate cu ajutorul ecuației de modelare structurală pe un eșantion de 225 de angajați din România. Datele au fost colectate într-o singură sesiune. Rezultatele indică faptul că insecuritatea locului de muncă este asociată negativ, în cea mai mare măsură, cu dimensiunea competență

și, în cea mai mică măsură, cu dimensiunea proactivitate. Analizele noastre, de asemenea, indică faptul că insecuritatea calitativă a locului de muncă este asociată negativ cu mai multe dimensiuni ale performanței decât insecuritatea cantitativă a locului de muncă. Aceasta cercetare contribuie la literatura dedicată insecurității locului de muncă, fiind unul puținele studii care compară efectele calitative și cantitative ale insecurității locului de muncă. În plus, analiza de profunzime a dimensiunilor performanță contribuie la înțelegerea unor posibile motive pentru care rezultatele studiului relației dintre insecuritatea locului de muncă și performanță nu a fost consecventă. Fiind un studiu transversal, nu putem extrage concluzii privind relația de cauzalitate. Având în vedere importanța temei, ar fi justificată replicabilitatea rezultatelor pe eșantioane variate.

## Cuvinte cheie

insecuritatea calitativă a locului de muncă, insecuritatea cantitativă a locului de muncă, tipuri de performanță profesională

## Résumé

Cette étude ajoute à la compréhension de l'effet négatif de l'insécurité de l'emploi sur la performance de l'employé, en enquêtant sur les différences entre l'insécurité de l'emploi qualitative et quantitative pour prédire la performance individuelle à la tâche, l'équipe et le degré d'organisation, en tenant compte de la compétence, l'adaptabilité de l'individu, et proactivité. Nous nous attendons à deux types d'insécurité de l'emploi pour être négativement liée à la performance. Les hypothèses ont été examinées en utilisant modélisation par équation structurelle sur un échantillon de 225 employés Roumains. Les données ont été recueillies en un seul point dans le temps. Les résultats indiquent que l'insécurité de l'emploi est associé négativement surtout avec la facette de la compétence de la performance, et faible avec la dimension de la proactivité. Nos analyses indiquent également que l'insécurité de l'emploi qualitative est associée négativement à plusieurs facettes de performance que l'insécurité quantitative de l'emploi. Cette recherche contribue à la littérature de l'insécurité de l'emploi en étant l'un des rares études pour comparer les effets de l'insécurité de l'emploi qualitatifs et quantitatifs. En outre, le regard en profondeur sur les aspects de la performance met en lumière une raison possible pour expliquer pourquoi les recherches existantes sur la relation entre l'insécurité de l'emploi et la performance n'a pas été constante dans les résultats. Être transversale dans la nature, notre étude ne nous permet pas de tirer des conclusions en ce qui concerne la causalité. Étant donné l'importance du sujet, il serait justifié de reproduire l'étude sur différents échantillons.

## Mots-clés

l'insécurité qualitative de l'emploi, l'insécurité quantitative de l'emploi, les types de performance des employés

## Introduction

Job insecurity, a workplace stressor negatively affecting employee performance (Gilboa, Shirom, Fried, & Cooper, 2008), is present across the world, including Europe and, specifically, Romania. European citizens quoted the economic situation and unemployment as the two most important issues facing the EU (Eurobarometer, 2014a), with one fifth of the European workforce being unsure of their ability to keep their jobs within the next twelve months (Eurobarometer, 2011). In Romania, 15% (7% in the EU) expected their personal job situation to get worse within one year framework (Eurobarometer, 2014b). As compared to the EU, the situation in Romania seems to be worse on every measured aspect. In a market economy, it makes sense that job insecurity continues to exist and produce its effects, regardless of the employee's actual job, status, or country of residence and in spite of policies meant to dampen the negative

outcomes (e.g., flexicurity; for details see Burchell, 2009; Berglund, Furåker, & Vulkan, 2014). The negative relationship between job insecurity and employee performance is a current topic of interest for researchers, with a number of recent studies highlighting its existence (Gilboa et al., 2008; Staufenbiel & König, 2010; Wang, Lu, & Siu, 2015). Nevertheless, job insecurity and performance are both complex constructs, whose operationalization may be important in determining how they relate to one another. In the current study we address this issue by analysing the association between broad operationalisations of job insecurity and employee performance.

## Qualitative versus quantitative job insecurity

There are two types of job insecurity: quantitative job insecurity, commonly defined as "the perceived threat of job loss and the

worries related to that threat” (De Witte, 2005, p. 1) and qualitative job insecurity defined as “perceived threats of impaired quality in the employment relationship, such as deterioration of working conditions, lack of career opportunities, and decreasing salary development” (Hellgren, Sverke, & Isaksson, 1999, p. 182). The two have been studied either separately or combined as a single concept of job insecurity.

Even though it is reasonable to expect to find a mix of the two dimensions, since the employee is probably neither completely certain of his or her ability to keep the current job as a whole, nor about being able to prevent the loss of valued job features, in this paper we argue for separating qualitative from quantitative job insecurity when investigating possible effects, such as decreases in work-related performance. We base our position on three reasoning paths.

First, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt’s (1984) seminal paper approached the distinction from the conceptual point of view, clearly identifying the loss of valued job features as an important separate aspect of job insecurity, besides the loss of the job itself. A further step in this direction was made by Hellgren and colleagues (1999), who developed a two-dimensional scale for measuring job insecurity and underlined the possibility that qualitative and quantitative job insecurity evoke dissimilar reactions.

Second, past research has shown differences in antecedents, outcomes, and predictor and effect moderators for the two types of job insecurity. Thus, Arnold and Staffelbach (2012) showed that while trust in one’s employer buffers the relationship between perceived employability and qualitative job insecurity, it does not do so for quantitative job insecurity, implying that the relationship between perceived employability and quantitative job insecurity is independent of employees’ trust in their employer. Chirumbolo and Areni (2010) went one step further and showed opposite effects of a moderator (need for closure) on the relationship between quantitative job insecurity (where the moderator helped, by buffering the negative effects) and qualitative job insecurity (where the moderator amplified the negative effects) on mental health complaints and employee performance. When comparing permanent to

temporary employees, De Cuyper, De Witte, Kinnunen, and Nätti (2010) found that quantitative job insecurity relates negatively to job satisfaction but not to self-rated health, while qualitative job insecurity relates negatively to self-rated health but not to job satisfaction, among permanent but not temporary employees. A study by Hellgren, Näswall, and Sverke (2005) showed that, after a restructuring, survivors (employees who had not been laid off) whose work content had been changed exhibited less quantitative job insecurity as compared to survivors whose work content had remained unchanged; no differences were found related to qualitative job insecurity. On the other hand, De Witte and colleagues (2010) found the same relationships between job insecurity and work related well-being (job satisfaction and burnout dimensions), regardless of the type of job insecurity. All these results show us that we need more research to identify the ways in which quantitative and qualitative job insecurity behave in a similar manner, and the cases when they do not. Providing this kind of information would help both from a theoretical standpoint, by expanding the limits of current knowledge, but also from a practical perspective, by enabling HR departments to devise the best-fitting answers when they identify the presence of either type of job insecurity.

Third, research on job insecurity and performance has not always yielded congruent results, and we assume that this is at least partially due to the non-uniform way in which both job insecurity and performance have been measured. Probst, Stewart, Gruys, and Tierney (2007) argued that job performance has been defined, operationalized, and measured in so many different ways that this may have become a reason for the conflicting results obtained on its association with job insecurity. We could apply the same reasoning from the perspective of job insecurity definitions. In some cases, authors clearly distinguished between qualitative and quantitative job insecurity in relationship with performance by means of measuring either one, the other, or both (e.g., Chirumbolo & Areni, 2010) and in other cases they used the umbrella term job insecurity, while actually measuring either quantitative job insecurity (e.g., Chirumbolo & Areni, 2005), or

global job insecurity, including both quantitative and qualitative items (e.g., Reisel, Chia, & Maloles, 2005). Given this diversity of measurements employed in the case of both constructs, it is not surprising that results have been quite different, sometimes even opposite. It is therefore advisable to try to define both job insecurity and performance as precisely as possible in future studies, to be able to safely compare and correctly aggregate results.

In the current paper, we seek to shed light on the details regarding what exact aspect of decrease in performance is related to which facet of job insecurity. To be able to do this, we use a job performance scale with nine aspects of performance, and separate scales for quantitative and qualitative job insecurity.

### Job insecurity and performance

Griffin, Neal, and Parker (2007) conceptualized a refined way of looking at individual performance, taking into account how environmental uncertainty affects performance through its unpredictability. The authors defined three sub-dimensions of work role performance, where *proficiency* refers to meeting the requirements of formalized roles according to certain standards, *adaptivity* represents how the employees accommodate to changes in their roles or systems at work, and *proactivity* meaning that “the individual takes self-directed action to anticipate or initiate change in the work system or work roles” (p. 329) — the last two being considered relevant under uncertainty conditions. Additionally, considering the way an individual’s role is integrated in the social context of his or her team and organization, Griffin and colleagues (2007) included in their model three levels where effectiveness can be analysed, namely individual, team, and organizational. Therefore, by combining all these facets, nine types of performance emerge. In the current study we used the performance conceptualization and scale provided by Griffin and colleagues, because of the added level of detail provided when compared to other simpler definitions of performance.

Studies found job insecurity to be negatively correlated with job performance (e.g., Chirumbolo & Areni, 2005; Staufenbiel

& König, 2010; Wang et al., 2015), a recent meta-analysis also showing a moderate negative relationship (Gilboa et al., 2008). As explained above, the results have not always been consistent, possible reasons for that including different operationalisations for the constructs. Based on the majority of studies on this topic, as well as on meta-analysis results, we hypothesize negative relationships between job insecurity types and performance facets, while discussing the associated theoretical grounds. The relationship between job insecurity and performance can be and has been explained in a number of ways, by looking at it through various theories. For the current study we have chosen social exchange theory, transactional stress theory, and threat-rigidity theory as frames of reference, each for one of the performance facets, based on the most frequently used explanation models in current job insecurity research. We did this to add a clearer structure to our research, yet most of the identified relationships can also be explained by more than one theory.

When people encounter stressors, they engage in two types of appraisals, parts of a cognitive process: a primary one, when the individual evaluates what is at stake (e.g., the future of the job), and a secondary one, where the individual considers what can be done in the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Various studies argue that the effort people invest in coping may lead to fatigue and decreased energy, and, in turn, to lower performance (e.g., Cohen, 1980). Accordingly, we argue that job insecurity is appraised as a threat, a harm that might happen in the future, and therefore the individual may engage in cognitive and emotional processes needed to manage this threat, which detracts him from performing at his best. Thus, we assert that the stress experience associated with the anticipation of job loss or negative job change might decrease the employee’s proficiency, due to their energy involvement in dealing with the stressor and associated discomfort. We hypothesize that:

*H1. Both types of job insecurity (quantitative and qualitative) negatively predict the proficiency aspect of performance.*

The relationship between job insecurity and the adaptivity aspect of performance can be explained by the threat-rigidity theory (Cowen,

1952; Niesen, De Witte, & Battistelli, 2014). Job insecurity, a classic workplace stressor, causes strain for the employee (Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002). When the individual experiences strain, his focus is set more on central cues and less on marginal ones, thus ending up relying mostly on habitual responses (Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981). Such a limitation in focus and preference for familiar responses and solutions may be detrimental to job performance, by limiting the variety (consequently, the potential quality) of responses the employee can engage in so as to answer job demands. We thus propose:

*H2. Both types of job insecurity (quantitative and qualitative) negatively predict the adaptivity aspect of performance.*

Social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity perspective (Blau, 1964/2009; Gouldner 1960) emphasize that when a party engages in beneficial or detrimental actions and behaviours towards another party, feelings of obligation to respond in the same manner occur. Job security is perceived by the employees as part of what the organization agrees to offer in exchange for individual efforts that benefit it (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). Accordingly, job insecurity could be interpreted by the employee as a negative change in the relationship with the organization, thus inducing a reciprocal response from the employee. While proactive behaviour partially stems out of a proactive personality (Bateman & Crant, 1993), it entails situational antecedents, with felt obligation as part of the explanatory mechanism (Caesens, Marique, Hanin, & Stinglhamber, 2015; Wikhamn & Hall, 2012). We argue that employees who experience insecurity as to the future of their jobs would feel that they are not fairly treated by their organization, lowering their felt obligation to make efforts for the benefit of the organization, thus showing a decrease in proactivity regarding their task, team, and organization. Consequently, we formulate:

*H3. Both types of job insecurity (quantitative and qualitative) negatively predict the proactivity aspect of performance.*

Furthermore, we also aim to explore the pattern of multivariate relationships between, on one hand, qualitative and quantitative job insecurity, and the nine types of performance (proficiency, adaptivity, and proactivity at an

individual task, team member, and organization member level) on the other hand, as well as to compare these relationships based on their statistical significance.

## Method

### Participants and procedure

The 225 participants were employees in three private companies in Romania, with a wide range of jobs (11% manual labourers; 15% administrative white collar workers e.g., secretary, typist; 27% mid-level with-collar workers e.g., instructors, sales representatives; 39% high-level white-collar workers and middle management e.g., engineers, sales managers, administrators; 8% senior management). The sample is skewed towards white-collar employees, because the questionnaire was administered on-line, and only the employees whose workplace included the possibility to access a computer with Internet connection were able to answer it. Half of the participants (112) were female, 98% had a full time job, and 77% had a permanent contract. Most of the employees in our sample (83%) had a university degree, or higher, 8% were studying to get a university degree, and the rest had high school education. Regarding age, our respondents were between 21 and 55 years old ( $M=29.97$ ,  $SD=6.22$ ).

The online questionnaire was sent to all of the employees by their respective HR department, together with an explanatory note composed by the study authors. The explanatory note, as well as the instructions at the beginning of the online form, described the general purpose of the study (analysis of work-related experiences), the fact that the participation is completely voluntary, that the provided data would be used for scientific purposes on a collective level and abides by confidentiality norms on an individual level, data transmission being protected by using a secure connection. The authors also provided a name and email address where anyone could enquire for further details.

### Measures

We used Romanian versions of all instruments which were evaluated using the standard back-translation technique (Brislin, 1970). We

collected demographic variables regarding age, gender, and educational level.

*Qualitative job insecurity* was measured with a 4-item scale, tapping into similar aspects as the items of De Witte and colleagues (2010). This scale was previously used in e.g., Roll, Siu, Li, and De Witte (2015) and Urbanavičiūtė, Bagdžiūnienė, Lazauskaitė-Zabielskė, Vander Elst, and De Witte (2015). A sample item reads "I feel insecure about the characteristics and conditions of my job in the future". Respondents were asked to evaluate the items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 ("totally disagree") to 5 ("totally agree").

*Quantitative job insecurity* was measured with the 4-item Job Insecurity Scale developed by De Witte (2000) and validated by Vander Elst, De Witte, and De Cuyper (2013). The items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = "totally disagree"; 5 = "totally agree"). A sample item is "I think I might lose my job in the near future". One item which was reverse-scored in the original scale ("I am sure I can keep my job"), was negated in the current study ("I am not sure I can keep my job") and normal-scored.

*Work performance* was measured with the 27-item scale of Griffin and colleagues (2007). The scale cross-classifies task, team member, and organization member behaviours with proficiency, adaptivity, and proactivity, measuring nine facets of work performance, each with three items (individual task proficiency, individual task adaptivity, individual task proactivity, team member proficiency, team member adaptivity, team member proactivity, organization member proficiency, organization member adaptivity, and organization member proactivity). The scale was previously used in studies such as Leroy, Anseel, Gardner, and Sels (2015), or Zhang, Waldman, Han, and Li (2015). Participants were asked to rate how often they had carried out the behaviour (e.g., "Ensured your tasks were completed properly") over the past month, on a scale ranging from 1 ("very little") to 5 ("a great deal").

Factor scores were imputed for all latent variables (job insecurity types and performance facets), by using the regression imputation method in Amos.

## Analyses

We performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the measurement model and compared five models: M1) the hypothesized eleven-factor model where quantitative job insecurity, qualitative job insecurity, and the nine performance facets each load on an individual factor, M2) a one-factor model, M3) a two-factor model, with job insecurity items loading on one factor and performance items loading on a second factor, M4) a three-factor model where qualitative job insecurity, quantitative job insecurity, and performance items load on their respective factors, M5) a five-factor model with separate quantitative and qualitative job insecurity, and three types of performance, proficiency, adaptivity, and proactivity, M6) a five-factor model with separate quantitative and qualitative job insecurity, and three types of performance, individual, team, and organizational, M7) a ten-factor model where the nine facets of performance load on individual factors, while job insecurity loads on one factor, and M8) a common-latent factor model, where, in addition to the contents of model 1, we included a common latent factor, with all observed variables loading on it. We selected the best model and continued with it, including the measured demographics, to see if they relate to any of the study variables. Out of all the demographics only gender had a marginally significant relationship with one performance facet, but after removing the other demographics this relationship became not significant. As a result, we did not include any demographics in our final model. We then built the structural model (M9) starting from the best fitting measurement model and used structural equation modelling (SEM) to test our hypotheses.

The structural model (see Figure 1) contained nine latent variables for work performance (one for each performance facet), two latent variables for job insecurity (one for quantitative job insecurity and one for qualitative job insecurity), and the common latent factor, with paths leading from each job insecurity latent variable to each performance latent variable, and from the CLF to each observed variable. We did not allow for any correlation between error terms, except

between the error terms for the nine performance latent variables in the structural model (not shown in the figure, for readability purposes), and a correlation between items 2 and 3 of qualitative job insecurity in both the measurement and the structural models. We used bootstrapping with 5000 samples to obtain significance levels for path coefficients, and bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals. The models' goodness-of-fit were evaluated

by using absolute fit indices like the chi-square statistic, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). We also included the non-normed fit index (NNFI) and comparative fit index (CFI) as relative fit indices. Values smaller than .08 for SRMR and .06 for RMSEA and values greater than .95 for the NNFI and CFI are considered to indicate a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

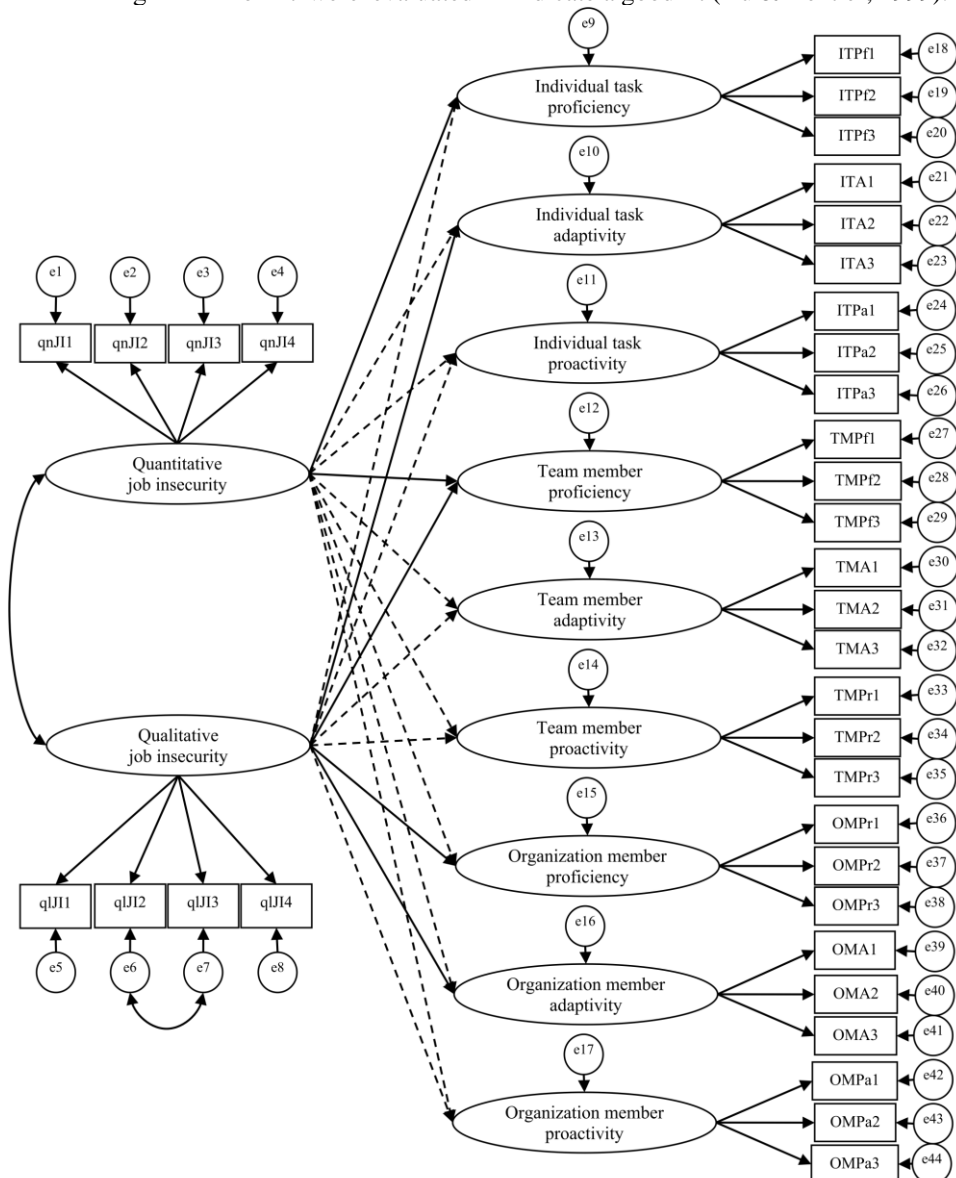


Figure 1. The proposed structural model. Continuous lines indicate paths with significant effects at  $p < .01$ . Dotted lines show non-significant paths ( $p > .05$ ). The CLF, as well as covariances between performance facets error terms (e9-e17) are not displayed, but included in the model.

## Results

The comparison performed on the measurement models (see Table 1) showed that the hypothesized theoretical model (M1), containing both types of job insecurity and the nine facets of performance, each modelled separately, has the best fit, significantly better than any of the other tested models (M2-M7). The test for common method bias indicated that a model (M8) based on M1 and

additionally including the common latent factor (CLF) showed a significantly better fit ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 184.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Furthermore, M8 presented fit indices which qualified it as a good fitting model. Because of this, we decided to control for the potential common method bias effects by keeping the CLF both in the measurement model and in the structural model.

Table 1. Fit indices of SEM analyses and model comparisons

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	NNFI	SRMR	RMSEA	Compared	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	$p$
<i>Measurement models</i>											
M1 eleven-factor model	961.02	504	1.91	.92	.91	.07	.06				
M2 one-factor model	4406.21	559	7.88	.35	.31	.19	.18	M2-M1	3629.31	90	< .001
M3 two-factor model	3240.60	558	5.81	.55	.52	.14	.15	M3-M1	2463.7	89	< .001
M4 three-factor model	2872.27	556	5.17	.61	.58	.13	.14	M4-M1	2095.37	87	< .001
M5 five-factor model	2255.29	549	4.11	.71	.69	.10	.12	M5-M1	1478.39	80	< .001
M6 five-factor model	2384.44	549	4.34	.69	.67	.16	.12	M6-M1	1607.54	80	< .001
M7 ten-factor model	1353.31	514	2.63	.86	.84	.07	.09	M7-M1	576.41	45	< .001
M8 common factor model	776.90	469	1.66	.95	.93	.04	.05	M1-M8	184.12	35	< .001
<i>Structural model</i>											
M9 structural model	776.90	469	1.66	.95	.93	.04	.05				

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, scale reliabilities, and correlations, in the measurement model M8. Since the CLF's covariance with the other latent variables is constrained to zero, the CLF is not displayed in the correlations table. As expected, we found negative correlations between both types of job insecurity and

performance dimensions and positive correlations between the performance facets. The organizational member proactivity dimension of performance may be seen as an exception from the general findings, since it did not correlate significantly with neither type of job insecurity, nor with most of the performance facets.

Table 2. Correlations, reliabilities, means, and standard deviations (N=225)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Quantitative job insecurity	2.11	0.98	(.94)										
2. Qualitative job insecurity	2.00	0.98	.68**	(.95)									
3. Individual task proficiency	7.20	0.94	-.22**	-.16*	(.82)								
4. Individual task adaptivity	6.80	0.96	-.15*	-.24**	.79**	(.77)							
5. Individual task proactivity	4.25	0.87	-.17*	-.20*	.29**	.48**	(.89)						
6. Team member proficiency	7.53	0.91	-.23**	-.21**	.63**	.53**	.22*	(.76)					
7. Team member adaptivity	4.12	0.48	-.21*	-.16	.69**	.63**	.38**	.85**	(.75)				
8. Team member proactivity	4.16	0.86	-.12	-.18*	.15	.33**	.63**	.31**	.47**	(.90)			
9. Organization member proficiency	4.70	0.97	-.15*	-.29**	.14	.31**	.38**	.40**	.43**	.45**	(.85)		
10. Organization member adaptivity	5.14	0.92	-.15*	-.24**	.22**	.29**	.41**	.40**	.64**	.45**	.66**	(.70)	
11. Organization member proactivity	2.26	0.87	-.00	-.09	.00	.09	.22*	-.03	.02	.32**	.23*	.38**	(.94)

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; analyses based on imputed factor scores, calculated in Amos with regression imputation, in model M8; scale reliabilities on the diagonal;



Table 3 shows the unstandardized and standardized direct effects from each type of job insecurity to all types of performance, including 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals and significance levels.

Results partially supported our hypotheses. Direct effects reached significance levels in the relationships between qualitative job insecurity and individual task adaptivity

( $\beta = -.25$ ,  $p = .001$ ), organization member adaptivity ( $\beta = -.26$ ,  $p = .002$ ), team member proficiency ( $\beta = -.11$ ,  $p = .014$ ), and organization member proficiency ( $\beta = -.31$ ,  $p = .001$ ). For quantitative job insecurity we found significant direct effects in relationship with individual task proficiency ( $\beta = -.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and team member proficiency ( $\beta = -.16$ ,  $p = .002$ ).

Table 3. Direct effects in the proposed model – standardized and unstandardized values are shown, with their respective 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals and significance levels.

Path	$\beta$	95% CI	$p$	$b$	95% CI	$p$
Quantitative JI -> Individual task proficiency	-.20	[-.32, -.09]	< .001	-.10	[-.15, -.05]	< .001
Qualitative JI -> Individual task proficiency	-.02	[-.13, .09]	.725	-.01	[-.07, .04]	.727
Quantitative JI -> Individual task adaptivity	.02	[-.08, .11]	.764	.01	[-.05, .07]	.757
Qualitative JI -> Individual task adaptivity	-.25	[-.34, -.16]	.001	-.16	[-.22, -.10]	.001
Quantitative JI -> Individual task proactivity	-.07	[-.21, .25]	.685	-.04	[-.13, .14]	.696
Qualitative JI -> Individual task proactivity	-.15	[-.50, .03]	.131	-.09	[-.27, .02]	.136
Quantitative JI -> Team member proficiency	-.16	[-.25, -.06]	.002	-.07	[-.12, -.03]	.002
Qualitative JI -> Team member proficiency	-.11	[-.18, -.02]	.014	-.05	[-.09, -.01]	.013
Quantitative JI -> Team member adaptivity	-.19	[-.32, .03]	.087	-.10	[-.16, .01]	.065
Qualitative JI -> Team member adaptivity	-.03	[-.30, .14]	.774	-.02	[-.15, .07]	.736
Quantitative JI -> Team member proactivity	.00	[-.15, .32]	.941	.00	[-.11, .13]	.942
Qualitative JI -> Team member proactivity	-.18	[-.50, .02]	.079	-.11	[-.22, .01]	.076
Quantitative JI -> Organization member proficiency	.03	[-.05, .11]	.505	.02	[-.03, .07]	.499
Qualitative JI -> Organization member proficiency	-.31	[-.39, -.22]	.001	-.21	[-.27, -.15]	.001
Quantitative JI -> Organization member adaptivity	.02	[-.09, .11]	.827	.02	[-.06, .08]	.804
Qualitative JI -> Organization member adaptivity	-.26	[-.37, -.15]	.002	-.18	[-.25, -.10]	.001
Quantitative JI -> Organization member proactivity	.11	[-.04, .39]	.155	.07	[-.03, .22]	.169
Qualitative JI -> Organization member proactivity	-.17	[-.42, .03]	.128	-.11	[-.25, .03]	.126

Note: Quantitative JI = Quantitative job insecurity; Qualitative JI = Qualitative job insecurity

## Discussion

Our study highlights a negative relationship between both types of job insecurity and the proficiency and adaptivity types of performance. We obtained non-significant results for the proactivity dimensions of performance. Results are in line with previous research on the job insecurity-performance relationship (e.g., Gilboa et al., 2008), suggesting that job insecurity may be indeed a hindrance stressor having a negative association with performance, while at the same time providing a new and more refined perspective by testing nine types of performance with two types of job insecurity. Specifically, we have found qualitative insecurity to be negatively related to two types

of performance, namely proficiency (at the team and the organization level) and adaptivity (manifested at the individual and the organizational level). This means that when employees anticipate negative changes in the features of their jobs, they tend to perform less proficiently in coordinating their work with other colleagues and may support their organization in a lesser manner by, e.g., speaking less highly about it (Griffin et al., 2007). Moreover, they will adjust less constructively to changes in their work or their organization. Additionally, our results showed that quantitative job insecurity may also be related to lower proficiency. That is to say that employees concerned about keeping their jobs could be less preoccupied with how they carry

out their tasks (individual level) and could be less proficient as team members (team level).

Our analyses indicate that qualitative job insecurity is negatively associated with more performance facets than quantitative job insecurity, with job insecurity being equally detrimental to the employees' performance on their own tasks, as team members, or as members of their organization, each role being affected in two out of six possible combinations. The observed differential relationships draw attention to the fact that the two types of job insecurity may need to be considered independently and testing separate facets of performance might be a more realistic avenue to understanding how job insecurity damages individual performance on work tasks, in teams, and inside organizations. Perhaps surprisingly, job insecurity seems not to be related to any of the proactive performance facets. Besides the potential study limitations (explained below), it could be that proactivity is less affected by job insecurity when compared to other performance dimensions. A possible reason could be that the personal predictors for proactive behaviour (proactive personality, Bateman & Crant, 1993) are stronger than the situational antecedents in this specific case (felt obligation due to job insecurity).

### Implications for practitioners

Improving employee performance, especially those types of performance that bring more value in specific contexts, should be a goal both for managers and HR personnel in organizations. Based on the results of our study, one way to achieve this may be to reduce the level of job insecurity, both quantitative and qualitative, by focusing on job insecurity antecedents, which can be classified in three levels (De Witte, 2005): the macro level, the individual background characteristics (positional variables), and personality traits. While being a subjective perception, job insecurity is also related to objective reality. People feel insecure about their job especially when there is good reason to do so. Adkins, Werbel, and Farh (2001) showed that lack of tenure status was a predictor for job insecurity. They extrapolated

that employees with long-term employment status would feel less insecure about their jobs compared to other employees. Their finding seems to be in agreement with that of Kinnunen and Nätti (1994), who showed that there is a relationship between contract type (long term or permanent, versus temporary) and job insecurity, with permanent contracts providing higher security levels. Keeping employees informed about organizational changes and policies may also play an important role in having lower levels of job insecurity. The job insecurity literature seems to be in agreement regarding the beneficial role of organizational communication, found to be a predictor of lower job insecurity (e.g., Huang, Niu, Lee, & Ashford, 2012; Vander Elst, Baillien, De Cuyper, & De Witte, 2010) and sometimes a moderator for the effects of job insecurity (Jiang & Probst, 2013; König, Debus, Häusler, Lendenmann, & Kleinmann, 2010).

### Limitations and future research

Our study comes with a number of inherent limitations. First, the cross-sectional design does not allow us to draw conclusions regarding causality: while it is probable that job insecurity causes the decrease in performance, it is also conceivable that decreases in performance may cause job insecurity. Second, our analyses showed that common method bias may have affected our data. We did, however, control for this possible effect by including the common latent factor in our model. Finally, even though our study found no significant relationship between job insecurity and the proactivity facet of performance, the results were close to statistical significance in some cases (e.g., a larger sample size would have probably provided a significant result for the relationship between qualitative job insecurity and team member performance; see Table 3). Therefore, we cannot disregard the possibility that job insecurity has an even wider impact on performance than reported by our study.

Regarding future research, the main unaddressed topic in this study is the causality issue. While we assume that job insecurity causes a decrease in performance, this cannot

be shown through a cross-sectional study. We think that longitudinally investigating the relationship between job insecurity and performance would make for an important contribution to the existing knowledge on this topic. Currently, while there are longitudinal studies with job insecurity as a predictor, almost all focus on well-being as an outcome, with a very small number of studies investigating performance (e.g., Selenko, Mäkikangas, Mauno, & Kinnunen, 2013), and none of them including qualitative job insecurity. Additionally, while there are a number of overview studies regarding known antecedents of job insecurity which may be of interest for managers or HR personnel (e.g., Cheng & Chan, 2008; De Witte, 1999; De Witte, 2005; Sverke et al., 2002), the same is not true when discussing moderators for the negative effects of job insecurity on performance. Even though there are studies on moderators of job insecurity effects, most of them focus on employee well-being as an outcome, and it is our opinion that much more could be done to investigate the moderators of job insecurity effects on performance.

The end goal of our research is to be a useful tool for addressing job insecurity in organizations. Once the association between job insecurity and employee performance has been established, a next logical step would be to develop interventions with the ability to *fix* the outcomes, *undo the harm* generated by job insecurity, or *prevent* job insecurity from happening. Developing these interventions would be something that researchers may want to focus on, in the future. We expect that the research regarding moderators of the effects of job insecurity would yield clear indications with regard to where to direct such interventions.

## Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of operationalization when investigating relationships between complex constructs, such as job insecurity and employee performance. It shows that qualitative and quantitative job insecurity may affect performance facets differently. As such, we found negative associations between qualitative job insecurity and individual task

adaptivity, organization member adaptivity, team member proficiency, and organization member proficiency, while quantitative job insecurity was found to be negatively related to individual task proficiency and team member proficiency. Additionally, our data indicated no relationship between job insecurity and the three proactivity-related facets of performance.

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