

Job Insecurity: a challenge or hindrance stressor?

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Abstract: Job insecurity refers to subjective concerns about the continued existence of the actual job, alternatively defined as the perceived threat of job loss and the worries related to that threat. In this lecture, a short overview of job insecurity research will be presented, focussed on some of the ‘popular assumptions’ in media and consultancy nowadays: that job insecurity motivates employees (e.g. it constitutes a challenge) rather than being a factor that demotivates (e.g. a ‘hindrance’).

The keynote will cover: (a) a definition of job insecurity (e.g. is it the same as losing your job?), (b) some information on prevalence (How many workers feel insecure in the ‘low countries’ and abroad?), (c) antecedents (is it ‘all in your mind?’ or related to the socio-economic position of the individual and the country?), (d) consequences for individuals and organisations (‘Does it affect e.g. well-being, performance and organizational attitudes?’), (e) a short discussion on causality (Does job insecurity affect outcomes, or is it the other way round?), (f) some reference to theoretical explanations (How to explain the detrimental consequences of job insecurity?), (g) and some suggestions for practice and interventions (Can we reduce or buffer insecurity?).

The core conclusion is that job insecurity as a hindrance stressor rather than a challenge. Insecurity is consistently associated with higher levels of strain and burnout and lower levels of health and work engagement. Additionally, meta analyses show job insecurity to be associated with reduced performance. A differentiated view of the latter shows that job insecurity is *negatively* associated with in-role and extra-role behaviours at work, and with innovative work behaviours. Additionally, job insecurity is *positively* associated with counter-productive behaviours at work. As a consequence, HRM policy and practitioners should focus on preventing job insecurity and on strengthening factors that might buffer its negative consequences.

Biography: Prof. Hans De Witte is a Full Professor in Work Psychology at Leuven University, Belgium and Extraordinary Professor at the North-West University, South Africa. He is a world-renown expert on the topics of work stress and the psychological consequences of job insecurity. Prof. Hans De Witte has over 25 years of research experience, during which he published about 200 articles in international peer reviewed journals, in addition to over 12 English books (as co-editor), and over 60 book chapters on topics such as job insecurity, unemployment, temporary employment and downsizing, as well as mobbing and stress versus engagement at work.

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When: 12 October 2018, from 16h00 to 17h15

Organisation : Dr. Ieva Urbanaviciute and Prof. Jérôme Rossier

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