

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Perceived job insecurity, affective and normative commitment: the moderating effect of organizational career development opportunities

K. ÖVGÜ ÇAKMAK-OTLUOĞLU

Department of Human Resource Management, Istanbul University School of Business, Turkey

BANU S. ÜNSAL-AKBIYIK

Derbent School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Kocaeli University, Turkey

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between perceived job insecurity, affective and normative commitment. The study also attempts to examine the moderating effect of organizational career development opportunities on these relationships. A survey from 351 white-collar employees was analyzed using moderated regression analysis. The results demonstrate that perceived job insecurity is negatively related to affective commitment. The relationship between perceived job insecurity and normative commitment is non-significant. Organizational career development opportunities do not moderate the relationship between perceived job insecurity and affective and normative commitment.

Keywords

Job insecurity, affective commitment, normative commitment, organizational career development opportunities

Rezumat

Scopul acestui studiu este de a investiga relația dintre insecuritatea percepută a locului de muncă și angajamentul afectiv și normativ. De asemenea, studiul își propune să examineze efectul moderator al oportunităților de dezvoltare a carierei în organizație în relația dintre cele două variabile. Studiul realizat pe un lot de 351 de angajați s-a bazat pe analiza de regresie. Rezultatele evidențiază că insecuritatea percepută a locului de muncă este corelată negativ cu angajament afectiv. Relația dintre insecuritatea percepută a locului de muncă și angajamentul normativ este nesemnificativă. Oportunitățile de dezvoltare a carierei în cadrul organizației nu moderează relațiile dintre insecuritatea percepută a locului de muncă și cele două tipuri de angajament investigat.

Cuvinte cheie

insecuritatea percepută a locului de muncă, angajament afectiv, angajament normativ, oportunități de dezvoltare a carierei în organizație

Résumé

Le but de cette étude est d'examiner les relations entre la perception de la précarité de l'emploi et l'engagement affectif et normatif. L'étude essaye aussi d'examiner l'effet de modulation des possibilités d'évolution de carrière organisationnelle sur ces relations. Une enquête impliquant 351 employés "cols blancs" a été analysée en utilisant l'analyse de régression modérée. Les résultats démontrent que l'engagement affectif a un effet modérateur sur la perception de la précarité de l'emploi. La relation entre la perception de la précarité de l'emploi et l'engagement normatif est insignifiante. Des possibilités d'évolution de carrière organisationnelles n'a pas d'effet modérateur sur la relation entre la perception de la précarité de l'emploi et l'engagement affectif et normatif.

Mots-clés

précarité de l'emploi, l'engagement affectif, l'engagement normatif, possibilités d'évolution de carrière organisationnelles

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to K. Övgü Çakmak-Otluoğlu, Istanbul Universitesi İletme Fakültesi Avcılar Kampusu 34320 Avcılar Istanbul, Turkey. Email: ovgu@istanbul.edu.tr

Introduction

The unemployment rate is an important predictor of perceived job insecurity (Bökerman, 2004; Chung & Oorschot, 2010; De Witte, 2005). For instance, Erlinghagen (2008) has found that the long-term unemployment rate has a significant negative impact on perceived job insecurity. Similarly, Green (2010) has found that the unemployment rate and the annual changes of unemployment significantly increase perceived job insecurity. Within this context, many employees in Turkey experience job insecurity since the unemployment rate was 9.1% in the first quarter of 2014 in Turkey (OECD, 2014). The aim of this present study is therefore to examine the associations of perceived job insecurity in Turkey.

Literature review shows that job insecurity is negatively related to the employees' organizational attitudes (Büssing, 1999; De Witte, 1999). Job insecurity is generally viewed as an important source of job dissatisfaction (Ashford et al., 1989; De Witte & Näswall, 2003), and turnover intentions (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Sverke & Goslinga, 2003). The present study builds upon the existing literature by examining the relationship between job insecurity and affective commitment. Even though previous studies have established a negative relationship between perceived job insecurity and affective commitment (e.g., Chirumbolo & Hellgren, 2003; De Cuyper, Notelaers, & De Witte, 2009), studies were mainly conducted in individualistic European countries. This study therefore allows us to extend past research on job insecurity by examining the relationship between perceived job insecurity and affective commitment in Turkey.

Additionally, normative commitment has received less attention compared to affective commitment (Allen, 2003; Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994). However, most authors (e.g., Allen, 2003; Wasti & Can, 2008; Yao & Wang, 2008) argue that normative commitment should be investigated in collectivist countries. We therefore attempt to additionally examine the relationship between perceived job insecurity and normative

organizational commitment by going beyond the common focus on affective commitment. According to Hofstede (1991), the organization–employee relationship in collectivist cultures is associated with moral terms rather than calculative terms. We therefore exclude continuance commitment in this present study. Taking into account that job insecurity is at the center of the non-fulfillment of psychological contracts (King, 2000) we will further investigate whether these relationships are moderated by organizational career development opportunities.

Perceived job insecurity and affective commitment

Job insecurity is generally defined as an overall concern about the continued existence of the job in the future (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Even though several authors treat job insecurity as an objective situation (Büssing, 1999; Ferrie, Shipley, Marmot, Stansfeld, & Smith, 1998), most authors consider job insecurity as a subjective experience based on an individual's perception of the current situation (De Witte, 1999; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). A growing body of literature has established the impact of perceived job insecurity on employees' well-being and their organizational attitudes, including work-related stress, strain, health problems, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions (For meta-analyses, see: Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002). Building upon the existing literature, we attempt to examine the relationship between perceived job insecurity and affective commitment in Turkey.

Affective commitment refers to an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990), and is best predicted by positive work experiences (Meyer & Allen, 1991). According to Allen and Meyer (1996), affective commitment is strengthened by favorable workplace conditions that make employees feel psychologically comfortable, such as organizational support (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001), lack of role

ambiguity and of role conflict (Meyer, Stanley, Hersovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Perceived job insecurity implies the likelihood of involuntary job loss. It therefore invokes feelings of uncertainty and concerns about employment continuity (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002).

The relationship between perceived job insecurity and affective commitment could be explained by Social Exchange Theory (De Cuyper, Notelaers, & De Witte, 2009). Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) has widely been used by organizational researchers in order to explain the mechanisms behind employee attitudes (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) argues that each party attempts to act in ways that benefit the other party based on an expectation of reciprocity and favorable returns. The main foundation of reciprocal exchange is that individuals want to return the benefits they receive in an exchange relationship; they tend to reciprocate the cooperation of the party with whom they develop that relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). However, perceived job insecurity creates the fear of losing the job. Social exchange is therefore disrupted by perceived job insecurity, leading employees to show decreased levels of affective commitment. In line with the Social Exchange Theory, previous studies have established the negative relationship between perceived job insecurity and affective commitment (e.g., Chirumbolo & Hellgren, 2003; De Cuyper, Notelaers, & De Witte, 2009; De Witte & Naswall, 2003). However, those studies were mainly conducted in relatively individualistic European countries. There is little empirical evidence on job insecurity in Turkey (e.g., Zeytinoglu, Keser, Yilmaz, Inelman, Özsoy, & Uygur, 2012a; Zeytinoglu, Keser, Yilmaz, Inelman, Özsoy, & Uygur, 2012b), a moderately collectivist country (Hofstede, 1980; Aycan, 2001). Several authors (e.g., Gomez, 2003; Meindl, Hunt, & Lee, 1989; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Probst & Lawler, 2006) have found that in collectivist cultures there is a strong tendency to be more concerned with job security. Based on both Social Exchange Theory and previous findings, we assume that job insecurity is

associated with a lower level of affective commitment.

We therefore suggest that concerns about employment continuity in the current organization might make employees less involved in their organizations in terms of affective commitment. We propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Perceived job insecurity is negatively related to affective commitment.

Perceived job insecurity and normative commitment

Normative commitment reflects a sense of obligation to remain in the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Reviewed literature demonstrates that normative commitment has received less attention compared to affective commitment (Allen, 2003; Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994) partly due to the strong correlation between affective and normative commitment, and because affective commitment predicts similar outcomes better than normative commitment does (Allen, 2003; Meyer, Stanley, Hersovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). However, most authors (e.g., Allen, 2003; Wasti & Can, 2008; Yao & Wang, 2008) assert that normative commitment should be investigated in collectivist cultures. Taking into account that the present study is conducted in Turkey, a moderately collectivist country (Hofstede, 1980; Aycan, 2001), we attempt to examine the relationship between perceived job insecurity and normative commitment by going beyond the common focus on affective commitment. To our knowledge, there are no other studies on the relationship between perceived job insecurity and normative commitment. Even though normative commitment was initially grounded in Wiener's (1982) work on moral duty (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2009), it also indicates an indebted obligation to stay in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2009; Scholl, 1981). Social Exchange Theory could also provide a framework to explain the relationship between perceived job insecurity and normative commitment. Considering the fact that

normative commitment develops from the receipt of benefits that create within the employee a sense of obligation, perceived job insecurity generates a detrimental effect on the social exchange relationship. Thus, we assume that employees might react to perceived job insecurity with a decreased level of normative commitment. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Perceived job insecurity is negatively related to normative commitment.

The moderating effect of organizational career development opportunities

Most empirical studies have revealed negative effects of perceived job insecurity on employees' organizational attitudes. Sverke and Hellgren (2002) suggested to analyze different moderator variables that might reduce the negative effects of perceived job insecurity. Previous studies have investigated the moderating role of situational (e.g., job dependence and organizational justice; Sora, Caballer, Peiró, Silla, & Gracia, 2010; Sora, Caballer, & Peiró, 2010) and individual factors (e.g., personal characteristics; Näswall, Sverke, & Hellgren, 2005) on the relationships between perceived job insecurity and its outcomes. We focus on organizational career development opportunities as a moderator variable in the present study. Organizational career development opportunities are formally offered by the organizations to their employees in order to develop their careers effectively. Due to the fact that organizational career development opportunities including career guidance, mentoring, and coaching (Greenhaus, Collins, Singh, & Parasuraman, 1997) can be viewed as a kind of organizational support (Sturges, Conway, Guest, & Liefoghe, 2005) we suggest that these opportunities might mitigate the negative effects of perceived job insecurity on affective and normative commitment.

The moderating role of organizational career development opportunities might stem from psychological contract theory. Psychological contract theory asserts that job insecurity indicates a lack of balance in fulfilment of the psychological contract

(Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). When employees perceive non-fulfilment of the psychological contract, they may engage in negative workplace behaviours in order to create balance. Thus, organizations should attempt to mitigate negative outcomes that result from job insecurity through training, fringe benefits, etc. Organizational career development opportunities might foster the fulfilment of the psychological contract by reducing the negative effects of perceived job insecurity.

The availability of organizational career development opportunities might decrease the uncertainties that result from job insecurity by leading employees to think that their organizations value and care about them (Herr, 2001). In addition, organizational career development programs enhance the skills of employees in their current positions or career paths (Tansky & Cohen, 2001). One can therefore assert that employees who have more organizational career development opportunities might be less exposed to the negative impacts of job insecurity in terms of affective commitment. Thus, we suggest that the negative effect of job insecurity on affective commitment might be lessened when organizational career development opportunities are high.

H3: The effect of perceived job insecurity on affective commitment is moderated by organizational career development opportunities; the negative association between perceived job insecurity and affective commitment is lessened when organizational career development opportunities are high.

Normative commitment is mainly associated with the norm of reciprocity (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Scholl, 1981), which is an important component of social exchange. Gouldner (1960) suggests that individuals help and do not injure those who helped them. This means that employees show a higher level of normative commitment when they feel that their organizations provide them more than they can easily reciprocate (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Organizational career development opportunities might make employees indebted by creating feelings of obligation. In other words, employees who

have more organizational career development opportunities might be less exposed to the negative impact of perceived job insecurity in terms of normative commitment. We therefore suppose that organizational career development opportunities can mitigate the negative effect of perceived job insecurity on normative commitment.

H4: The effect of perceived job insecurity on normative commitment is moderated by organizational career development opportunities; the negative association between perceived job insecurity and normative commitment is lessened when organizational career development opportunities are high.

Method

Participants and procedure

The data was collected from 351 white-collar employees who were working for several private sector organizations located in Istanbul, Turkey. The respondents participated in the survey via Internet and originated from 62 organizations that varied broadly in terms of industry and size. Females comprised 53.4 % of the sample. The average age of participants was 30.25 years old (SD=4.48), ranging from 22 to 54, with an average work experience of 8.45 years (SD=5.19), ranging from 1-32, and an organizational tenure of 4.39 years (SD=3.52), ranging from 1-22. 57.4 % of the participants had a bachelor degree, 30.6 % had a post-graduate degree, 8 % finished college education, and 4 % were high school graduates.

Measures

Perceived Job Insecurity was measured using the 4-item scale of De Witte (2000), validated in the study of Vander Elst, De Witte and De Cuyper (2014). A sample item is "I feel insecure about the future of my job". The Cronbach alpha for this scale in the present study was .85. The items were scored on a 5-

point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Affective and Normative Commitment were measured using the 6-item scales of Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993). Items were scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item of these scales are "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization" (affective commitment, Cronbach alpha= .90) and "This organization deserves my loyalty" (normative commitment, Cronbach alpha= .86).

Organizational Career Development Opportunities were measured using the 7-item scale of Greenhaus, Collins, Singh, and Parasuraman (1997). Items were scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item is "How often have you received guidance or assistance from a mentor?". The Cronbach alpha for this scale in the present study was .88.

We controlled for gender, educational level, and organizational tenure because some of these categories have different levels of affective and normative commitment.

The scales were translated into Turkish by the authors and the translated scales were back translated into English by a bilingual academic (Brislin, 1986). The items that showed discrepancies were re-written to be clear and back-translated again.

Results

The hypothesized relationships were tested using hierarchical moderated regression analyses. Prior to analyses, checks of the theoretical assumptions underlying regression analysis were undertaken, including normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. In order to investigate these assumptions, a histogram, a normal probability plot and a linear regression plot were interpreted and no extreme deviations were identified. Thus, the assumptions were met. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of the study variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of study variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1-Gender	-	-	-						
2-Education Level	-	-	.00	-					
3-Organizational Tenure	4.39	3.52	-.02	-.25**	-				
4-Perceived Job Insecurity	2.32	.84	-.00	-.10	.05	-			
5-Affective Commitment	3.31	.83	-.08	-.06	.02	-.19**	-		
6-Normative Commitment	2.92	.80	-.07	-.05	.01	-.07	.57**	-	
7-OCDO	2.34	.86	.04	.03	.15**	-.23**	.37**	.30**	-

N=351, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, Gender; 0=Male, 1=Female, Education Level; 0=College education and high school graduates, 1= bachelor and post-graduate degree, OCDO= Organizational Career Development Opportunities

Two hierarchical moderated regression analyses were carried out. Four steps were specified for each dependent variable in the analyses (affective and normative commitment). Gender (0=male, 1=female), educational level (0=College education and high school graduates, 1= bachelor and post-graduate degree), and organizational tenure were entered as control variables in the first step. The main effect of perceived job

insecurity was entered in the second step and the main effect of organizational career development opportunities was entered in the third step. Finally in the fourth step, the interaction terms were entered. In line with Aiken and West (1991), independent and moderator variables were centered before creating the interaction term. The results of hierarchical moderated regression analyses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The moderating effect of organizational career development opportunities on the relationship between perceived job insecurity, affective and normative commitment

Variable	Affective Commitment				Normative Commitment			
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Gender	-.08	-.07	-.07	-.08	-.07	-.06	-.069	-.07
Educational Level	-.06	-.09	-.07	-.07	-.06	-.06	-.059	-.06
Age	.02	.06	.11	.12	.05	.06	.113	.11
Org. Tenure	-.01	-.02	.01	-.01	-.04	-.04	-.019	-.02
Job Insecurity		-.21***	-.13*	-.14**		-.09	-.024	-.03
OCDO			.38**	.37***			.33***	.33***
Job Insecurity X OCDO				-.09				-.03
ΔR^2	.01	.41***	.13***	.01	.01	.01	.09***	.01

OCDO = Organizational Career Development Opportunities

In the first hierarchical moderated regression analysis, affective commitment was regressed on perceived job insecurity, using the moderator variable of organizational career development opportunities. The results showed that gender, educational level and organizational tenure as control variables did not contribute significantly to the prediction of

affective commitment ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $p > .05$). When perceived job insecurity was added in the second step, the model became significant ($\Delta R^2 = .04$, $p \leq .001$). Perceived job insecurity was negatively related to affective commitment, supporting hypothesis 1 ($\beta = -.21$, $p \leq .001$).

In the second hierarchical moderated regression analysis where normative commitment was predicted, gender, educational level and organizational tenure as control variables did not contribute significantly to the prediction of normative commitment ($\Delta R^2=.01$, $p > .05$). When perceived job insecurity was added in the second step, the model remained non-significant ($\Delta R^2=.01$, $p > .05$). According to the results, perceived job insecurity did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with normative commitment, rejecting hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that organizational career development opportunities would lessen the negative relationship between perceived job insecurity and affective commitment. Even though organizational career development opportunities were positively related to affective commitment ($\beta = .38$, $p \leq .001$), there was no significant evidence for a moderating effect ($\Delta R^2=.008$, $p > .05$), rejecting hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that organizational career development opportunities would lessen the negative relationship between perceived job insecurity and normative organizational commitment. Results demonstrated that there was no significant evidence for a moderating effect of organizational career development opportunities ($\Delta R^2=.001$, $p > .05$), rejecting hypothesis 4. Organizational career development opportunities yielded a significant main effect on normative commitment ($\beta = .33$, $p \leq .001$).

Discussion

We found empirical support for the negative relationship between perceived job insecurity and affective commitment in the present study. Due to the fact that job insecurity leads employees to feel uncertain and concerned about their current position, it might become harder for them to involve in and identify with the organization. On the other hand, we did not find a significant relationship between perceived job insecurity and normative commitment. This means that normative

commitment, which is developed from moral duty and the norm of reciprocity (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2009), is not affected by perceived job insecurity in the present study. The meta-analysis of Meyer, Stanley, Hersovitch, and Topolnysky (2002) did not identify unique antecedents of normative commitment. Our study adds to their findings by also showing that job insecurity is not associated to normative commitment.

Taking into account that perceived job insecurity is one of the prominent characteristics of contemporary working environments, the issue of how to reduce the negative impact of perceived job insecurity on commitment is of great importance for organizations (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Thus, we suggested that organizational career development opportunities could be used as a tool to mitigate the impact of perceived job insecurity on affective and normative commitment. Counter to expectations, we did not find a moderating effect of organizational career development opportunities on the relationships between perceived job insecurity and affective and normative commitment in the present study. Thus, both hypotheses on the moderating effect of organizational career development opportunities on the relationship between job insecurity, affective, and normative commitment were rejected. This result suggests that career development opportunities are not sufficient to overcome the impact of job insecurity. One possible explanation could be that individuals might place greater emphasis on job security than on career development opportunities. Even though the results showed a non-significant moderating effect of organizational career development opportunities, we found positive direct relationships between organizational career development opportunities and affective and normative commitment, consistent with the literature (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009). With regard to affective commitment, it seems reasonable that providing career development opportunities to employees creates the perception that their organizations value and support them. This

can facilitate employees' emotional attachments to their organizations. In regard to normative commitment, we can assert that employees might perceive career development opportunities as an investment of the organization in their employees. This contributes to a sense of obligation to remain in the organization.

There are a few limitations that need to be addressed regarding the findings of the present study. Self-reported cross-sectional data is one such limitation. Second, the present study focused on the moderator role of career development opportunities. Future research could benefit from using organizational and supervisor support as moderators. The findings should also be considered taking into account that the present study was conducted in a single country, namely Turkey. Future research could also benefit from conducting cross-cultural studies.

The main practical implication of the present study is that these findings confirm the negative link between perceived job insecurity and affective commitment. Consistent with the empirical studies conducted in different European countries (De Witte, De Cuyper, Vander Elst, Vanbelle, & Niesen, 2012), the present study findings demonstrate that perceived job insecurity is associated with a decreased level of affective commitment. Moreover, the findings establish the importance of career development opportunities in order to foster commitment. Even though recent studies emphasize career self-management activities instead of organizational career development practices (Sullivan, 1999), the findings of the present study demonstrate that organizational career development opportunities still play an important role for employees. This suggests that organizations should include career development opportunities in their human resource management practices.

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