

van Zyl, L.; van Eeden, C.; Rothmann, S.

## Article

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## Job insecurity and the emotional and behavioural consequences thereof

L. van Zyl, C. van Eeden and S. Rothmann\*

Optentia Research Programme, North-West University,  
P O Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark 1900, Republic of South Africa  
ian@ianrothmann.com

The aim of this study was to investigate the relations among negative emotional reactions (reduced affective organisational commitment and higher job-related stress), and behavioural reactions to job insecurity (coping behaviour). A non-experimental correlation research design was used and the participants were a convenience sample of employees working for a private hospital in Gauteng, South Africa ( $N = 242$ ). The measuring instruments included the Job Insecurity Inventory, the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire, the Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire, and the COPE Questionnaire. The results showed that job insecurity was associated with job-related stress. Affective job insecurity was associated with detachment from the organisation, while cognitive job insecurity was associated with low identification with the organisation. Experiences of affective job insecurity, job-related stress, and low organisational commitment were associated with the use of avoidance coping strategies. Employees who experienced cognitive job insecurity (compared to those who experienced lower cognitive job insecurity) were less inclined to apply active coping strategies, even if their job-related stress was low.

\*To whom all correspondence should be addressed.

### Introduction

Over the last decade employees in many countries have been subjected to far-reaching changes, such as organisational restructuring (Kinnunen, Feldt & Mauno, 2003; Schreurs, Van Emmerik, Notelaers & De Witte, 2010). Hence job security is vanishing (Gélinas, 2005) and job insecurity has become the reality. According to Sverke, Hellgren and Näswall (2002: 243), job insecurity refers to “the subjectively perceived likelihood of involuntary job loss.” Schreurs *et al.* (2010) found that job insecurity affected employees’ health, but that job control buffered the negative effects of job insecurity on health.

Job insecurity is regarded as one of the major stressors in the work environment, specifically because it is associated with uncertainty (De Witte, 1999). A sense of job insecurity will have a strong psychological impact on those affected, because there is a risk of losing economic and other highly valued aspects of life (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989). Consistent with the central proposition of stress research, the anticipation of a stressful event represents an equally important, or perhaps greater, source of anxiety than the actual event (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore job insecurity could be expected to have an impact on the work attitudes and behaviour of employees, and in the long run, on the wellness of the organisation (Hellgren, Sverke & Isakson, 1999, Meyer & Maltin, 2010).

Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002) propose a model of the effect of employee perceptions of job insecurity on negative coping behaviour. In the first stage of the model, two possible emotional reactions are likely to occur as a result of

perceptions of job insecurity, namely reduced affective organisational commitment and increased job-related stress. Security of employment is a forerunner of organisational commitment (Bernhard-Oettel, De Cuyper, Schreurs & De Witte, 2011). The second emotional reaction to job insecurity in the model of Jordan *et al.* (2002) is job-related stress. Since job insecurity involves the experiencing of a threat and implies a great deal of uncertainty regarding whether the individual gets to keep his/her job in the future, it has been described as a stressor (De Witte, 1999). The negative behaviour stemming from the above-mentioned emotional reactions to job insecurity, namely job-related stress and reduced affective organisational commitment, is conceptualised by Jordan *et al.* (2002) as negative coping behaviour.

Coping is a stabilising factor which can help individuals maintain psychosocial adaptation during stressful periods (Rothmann, Jorgensen & Marais, 2010). It encompasses cognitive and behavioural efforts to reduce or eliminate stressful conditions and associated emotional distress (Zeidner & Endler, 1996). Kleinke (1998) phrases it differently by stating that coping can be defined as continuously changing cognitive and behavioural efforts aimed at managing specific external and internal demands, perceived as threatening or exceeding the individual’s resources. During stress, two types of appraisal take place. Primary appraisal takes place first, namely when the individual evaluates the situation (stressor) as positive, negative, threatening or challenging. Then, during secondary appraisal, the individual evaluates his/her own capabilities and resources to deal with the stressor. This could be by

either using problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping, or both (Bala, Rohlof & Van Waning, 2005).

Private health care institutions are often seen as relatively stable work environments. However, due to a number of factors this picture has changed. Extensive structural changes in the South African health care service domain since 2000-2002 resulted in a decline in the quality of health care, and the current global economic recession has brought about that the competitive nature of private health care facilities have increased dramatically (Boshoff & Gray, 2004; Van Rensburg & Pelser, 2004). Competitiveness is often achieved by and associated with industrial mechanisms such as restructuring, downsizing, reducing overheads and moving towards specialization, all of which normally translate into reducing the number of employees involved in delivering a service (Van Rensburg & Pelser, 2004). An employment ecology such as described above for the private health care sector leads to perceived job insecurity in employees, with the resulting increased job-related stress and reduced organisational commitment (Jordan *et al.*, 2002; Meltzer *et al.*, 2010). In the private hospital where the proposed research is to take place, voluntary severance packages were offered to certain categories of staff. Since then the situation seems to have stabilised and no more severance packages were offered.

Although literature is available on job insecurity and the effects thereof on job-related stress and organisational commitment (e.g. Bernhard-Oettel *et al.*, 2011; Jordan *et al.*, 2002; Meltzer *et al.*, 2010), literature linking these constructs to coping behaviour of employees is lacking. In the current study we build on the job insecurity and coping literatures to hypothesize a model in which job insecurity, job-related stress and organisational commitment impact coping behaviour. It is proposed that job insecurity relates to job-related stress and low organisational commitment, and that these constructs impact coping strategies (e.g. active and avoidance coping). The aim of this study was to investigate the relations among negative emotional reactions (reduced affective organisational commitment and higher job-related stress), and behavioural reactions to job insecurity (coping behaviour) of employees at a hospital.

### Job insecurity, job-related stress, organisational commitment and coping

Job insecurity has been defined as the expectations an individual has concerning continuity in a job situation (Davey, Kinicki & Scheck, 1997) and as the personal concern of an individual regarding the continuity of the job (Klein Hesselink & Van Vuuren, 1999). These definitions reflect a global viewpoint of job insecurity because they focus on concerns regarding job loss or job discontinuity (De Witte, 1999; Sverke *et al.*, 2002). A multidimensional definition of job insecurity would include references to not only uncertainty about the continuity of a job as such, but also to uncertainty about other job-related dimensions such as the opportunity for promotion (Ashford *et al.*, 1989). Borg and Elizur (1992) differentiate between cognitive job insecurity and affective job insecurity. Cognitive job insecurity refers to the likelihood of job loss, while affective job insecurity refers to the fear of job loss. In this article the

focus is on the affective view of job insecurity, namely the fear of job loss.

Job insecurity is a subjective phenomenon, as indicated by De Witte (1999), meaning that it is based on the individual's perceptions and interpretations of the immediate work environment. This implies that feelings of job insecurity may differ between individuals exposed to the same objective situation and that individuals may differ in their reactions to these perceptions of a job at risk (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Klandermans, Van Vuuren and Jacobsen (1991) discuss the effect of such perceptions by stating that two dimensions may lead to a sense of job insecurity, namely the perceived probability of job loss and the perceived severity of the consequences of job loss. Therefore every factor, condition or circumstance that influences either the perceived probability or the perceived severity of the consequences, or both, may lead to increased feelings of job insecurity.

Since job insecurity is described as a subjective assessment of a person's chances of losing his/her job, the role of personality factors has special relevance in this regard (Kinnunen *et al.*, 2003). Klandermans and Van Vuuren (1999) reported that employees facing identical situations often differ in their feelings of job insecurity. In turn, feelings of job insecurity rather than the situation of the company impacted on employees' attitudes, health and behaviour. Research has found differences in attitudes and behaviour of employees experiencing job insecurity. Jordan *et al.* (2002) refer to the findings of Galup, Saunders, Nelson and Cervany (1997) who reported increased work involvement and effort due to perceived job insecurity, while Rosow and Zager (1985) found decreased work performance resulting from perceived job insecurity.

Jordan *et al.* (2002) developed a two-stage model that illustrates the link between job insecurity and workplace behaviour. The model is predicated on an emotional trigger that stems from an employee's perception of job insecurity. The cognitive evaluation of this perception results in two interrelated emotional reactions, namely reduced affective commitment and increased job-related tension. According to Jordan *et al.* (2002), these two emotional reactions then lead to negative behaviours. In the model these behaviours are conceptualised as negative coping behaviour, defined as behaviours that are either unsuccessful or only assisting in temporarily reducing perceptions of job insecurity or avoiding it.

De Ruyter and Burgess (2000) have found that job insecurity could have mixed consequences for a firm. Higher levels of job insecurity can lead to a more compliant workforce and increased managerial prerogatives. It could aid management in initiating workplace change, offering moderate wage increases and improving labour productivity. However, it could also reduce employee morale and commitment. Security of employment is a forerunner of organisational commitment (Bernhard-Oettel *et al.*, 2011). Organisational commitment is the identification an employee has with his employer and it includes the willingness to work hard on behalf of the organisation, as well as the intention to remain with the organisation for an

extended period of time (Meyer & Maltin, 2010). Bishop and Scott (2000) define organisational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation. Organisational commitment is, according to Bagraim (2003), the psychological bond between employees and their employing organisation and deals with the attitudes of people towards their organisation (Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2003). It has also been defined as the psychological link between an individual and his occupation based on an affective reaction to that occupation (Lee, Carswell & Allen, 2000). Organisational commitment may therefore be used to predict employees' absenteeism, performance, turnover and other behaviours (Camilleri, 2002, Meyer & Maltin, 2010).

According to Meyer and Maltin (2010), organisational commitment is a multidimensional construct, with affective, normative and continuance dimensions. Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation. Continuance commitment is the employee's commitment based on the cost he/she associates with leaving the organisation. Normative commitment is the employee's feelings of obligation to stay with the organisation.

Meyer and Maltin (2010) and McDonald and Makin (2000) found that employees with strong organisational commitment remain with the organisation because they want to. Affective commitment originates from job conditions and expectations that are met, meaning the job provided what the employee expected (Spector, 2006). Meyer and Maltin (2010) argue that an employee who shows high affective commitment would be more likely to exert effort on behalf of the organisation, because he or she has a genuine desire to maintain employment compared to less committed employees. An organisation may benefit from this emotional link through reduced turnover, increased productivity, higher job satisfaction, higher self-actualisation and reduced overload (Camilleri, 2002). Bernhard-Oettel *et al.* (2011) found that perceived job insecurity, like any stressor, causes employees to be less inclined to stay with an organisation. Ashford *et al.* (1989); Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996); and McFarlane, Shore and Tetrick (1991) also found that job insecurity leads to reduced commitment.

The second emotional reaction to job insecurity in the model of Jordan *et al.* (2002) is job-related stress. Stress results from a perceived threat of danger, which could be physical or emotional, and the subsequent pressure to remove it. When an environmental situation causes a demand threatening to exceed a person's capabilities and resources for meeting it, the potential for stress will exist (Byars & Rue, 2000). Job-related stress has the same typical characteristics as stress in general, the exception being that it appears specifically in the work environment, is caused by work-related factors and also has consequences for the work situation (Kyriacau, 2001). Job-related stress victims experience reduced quality of both work life and job satisfaction. Symptoms of these stressed employees include a decrease in productivity, changes in work attitudes, low morale and increased absenteeism (Savery & Luks, 2001).

According to Cassidy (1999), researchers agree that common to most stressors are elements of controllability, predictability, threat and loss. The distinction between the presence and absence of stress often rests on the perception of a threat. Employees experience job insecurity as a threat because there is a great deal of uncertainty whether employees will keep their job; and therefore job insecurity has been described as a stressor (Barling & Kelloway, 1996). Likewise, Barling and Kelloway found that perceived job insecurity is an important source of stress. De Witte (1999), Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua and Stough (2001) and Cheng, Chen, Chen and Chiang (2005) came to similar conclusions.

Job insecurity as a stressor is not surprising if the functions of work in an individual's life are considered. Jahoda (1988) indicated that work provides financial security, it structures time, defines an individual's social status and provides social contact; thus the possibility of losing these meaningful aspects of life is likely to create severe stress.

Coping is the most common psychological mechanism for attempting to manage the experienced stress. Coping is a stabilising factor, which can help individuals maintain psychosocial adaptation during stressful periods. It encompasses cognitive and behavioural efforts to reduce or eliminate stressful conditions and associated emotional distress (Zeidner & Endler, 1996). Kleinke (1998) defined coping as continuously changing cognitive and behavioural efforts aimed at managing specific external and internal demands, perceived as threatening or exceeding the individual's resources. Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen and DeLongis (1986: 572) describe coping as "a person's cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage (reduce, minimise, master, or tolerate) the internal and external demands of the person-environment transaction that is appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person". The appraisal process will have, as an outcome, a coping response.

Coping skills are thus the means used to combat or prevent stress (Rice, 1992), and could manifest in the use of either problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping, or both (Bala *et al.*, 2005). According to Zeidner and Endler (1996), problem-focused coping involves strategies to solve, reconceptualise, or minimise the effects of a stressful situation. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, includes strategies that involve self-preoccupation, fantasy, or other conscious activities of affect regulation. According to Rice (1992), coping efforts have only one function, namely to prevent, eliminate or reduce stress.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) pointed out that the way individuals cope with a potentially stressful situation depends on the resources available to them and the constraints they face. Resources, such as commitment, motivate an individual towards coping activity and act to sustain coping activity (Armstrong-Stassen, 2004). If individuals experience stress, it might impact their coping strategies negatively, for example stress may lead to avoidance behaviour or cautiousness to tackle problems. Armstrong-Stassen (2004) found that coping mediated the relationship between organisational commitment and health

outcomes. Furthermore, affective commitment might lead to constructive coping and positive health benefits (Meyer & Maltin, 2010).

## Hypotheses

In this study the variables in the first stage of the model of Jordan *et al.* (2002) were investigated. The following hypotheses were formulated: Perceived job insecurity is associated with reduced affective commitment (hypothesis 1) and increased job-related stress (hypothesis 2). Emotional reactions (i.e. reduced commitment and job-related stress) are negatively associated with coping strategies (see Figure 1).

## Method

### Research design

A survey design was used, more specifically a non-experimental correlation research design. By completing the questionnaires, each individual was measured concerning all four the constructs. Thereafter the relation between the different measurements was determined (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).

### Participants

The study population can be described as a convenience sample of employees at a private hospital in Gauteng, South Africa ( $N = 242$ ). The participants were employees from all levels, ranging from semi-skilled to professional. All the employees have a level of literacy in English adequate for reliable completion of the questionnaires. Out of 400 potential respondents, 242 returned questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 60,5%. The biographical characteristics of the participants are detailed in Table 1.

The majority of the participants were female. The age group most represented was 26-35 years of age. Forty three percent of the participants had a grade 12 or lower qualification and 44% had diplomas or occupational certificates. The home language of most participants was Afrikaans. The majority of employees worked for 1-2 years in their specific organisation.

### Measuring instruments

The following measuring instruments were used in the empirical study:

The *Job Insecurity Inventory* (JII; De Witte, 2000) was used to measure the perceived job insecurity of participants. It is an 11-item questionnaire. A principal factor analysis with a direct oblimin rotation which was carried out on the JII resulted in two factors which explained 59,89% of the total variance. The two factors were labelled cognitive job

insecurity (the possibility of becoming unemployed) and affective job insecurity (emotional reaction to job insecurity). A Likert-type scale is used varying from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The JII is reported to be reliable with Cronbach alphas of 0,73 for cognitive job insecurity and 0,83 for affective job insecurity (Stander & Rothmann, 2010).

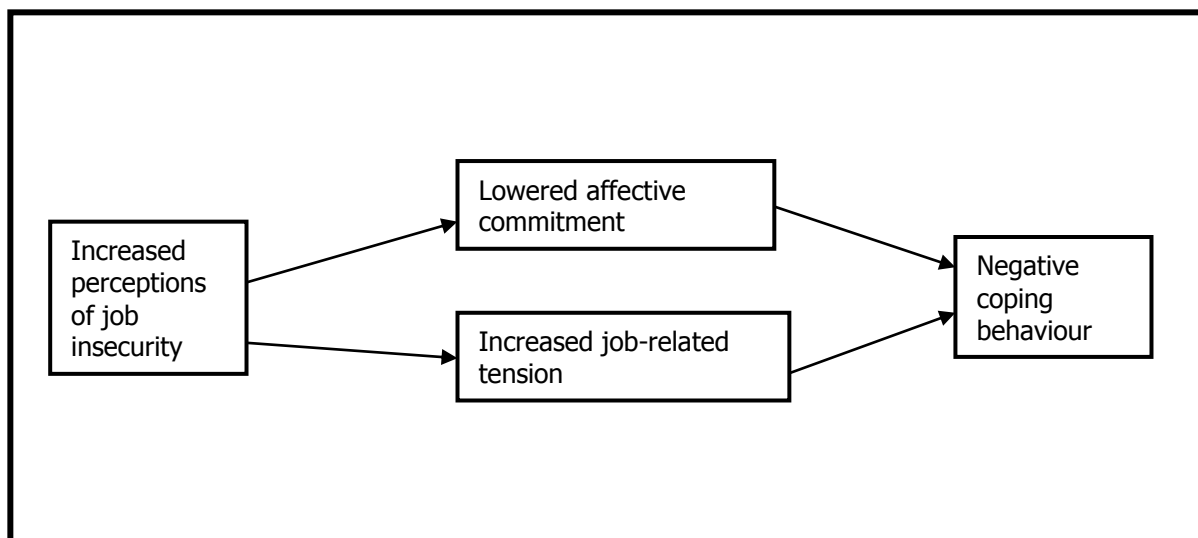
The *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire* (OCQ; Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993) was used to measure the affective organisational commitment of participants. In this study only the affective sub-scale of the OCQ was used. A principal factor analysis with a direct oblimin rotation which was carried out on the six items of the affective sub-scale of the OCQ resulted in two factors, namely organisational detachment (e.g. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organisation") and organisational identification (e.g. "I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own"). These two factors explained 72,86% of the total variance. A Likert-type scale is used varying from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The two scales are internally consistent with alpha coefficients of 0,87 (organisational attachment) and 0,82 (organisational detachment).

The *Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire* (WLQ; Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991) was used to measure work-related stress. A principal factor analysis which was carried out on the WLQ resulted in one factor which explained 51,42% of the total variance. Measurement is conducted through the assessment of 40 questions on a five-point Likert-type scale which indicates how often certain stress emotions (for example; anxiety, depression and frustration) occur. A high score indicates a high level of stress (Van Zyl & Van der Walt, 1991). Although Oosthuizen (2004) found a four-factor structure for the WLQ, the alpha coefficients varied from 0,72 to 0,92 in a South African sample.

The *Coping Orientations to the Problems Experienced Questionnaire* (COPE) (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989) was used to measure the different ways in which people cope with stress. The 53-item questionnaire measures 14 different coping strategies. The COPE has a self-report format and participants have to describe what they mostly do or think in stressful situations. A four-point Likert-type scale ranges from 1 (*I don't usually do this at all*) to 4 (*I usually do this*). A principal factor analysis with a varimax rotation resulted in four factors which explained 52,30% of the total variance. Three of the extracted factors, namely active coping, avoidance and seeking social support were used in this study. Higher scores indicate that the particular coping strategy is more likely to be applied in a stressful situation. Pienaar and Rothmann (2003) found alpha coefficients varying from 0,83 to 0,92 for the COPE scales.

**Table 1: Biographical characteristics of the participants (N = 242)**

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	17	7
	Female	223	92,1
	Missing	2	0,8
<b>Age</b>	25 years and younger	64	26,4
	26 – 35 years	79	32,6
	36 – 45 years	55	22,7
	46 years and older	41	16,9
	Missing	3	1,2
<b>Qualifications</b>	Grade 12 and lower	104	43
	Diplomas/ Certificates	107	44,2
	Higher degrees	24	9,9
	Missing	7	2,9
<b>Home language</b>	Afrikaans	110	45,5
	English	37	15,3
	Sesotho	72	29,8
	Setswana	14	5,8
	isiZulu	5	2,1
	Other	2	0,8
	Missing	2	0,8
<b>Years of service</b>	Less than 1 year	69	28,5
	1-2 years	76	31,4
	2-4 years	53	21,9
	5 years and longer	37	15,3
	Missing	7	2,9

**Figure 1. The first stage of the adapted theoretical model of Jordan, Ashkanasy and Härtel (2002: 362).**

## Procedure

Permission was obtained from the private hospital in Gauteng to hand out questionnaires to their employees. The questionnaires were printed in booklet form and on the front page was an explanatory letter to participants. This letter informed them of the nature of the research and stated that permission was granted by their employer for their participation in the study. Instructions were given on how to complete the questionnaires. Assurance of anonymity was given. Participants were asked to put the completed questionnaires in a sealed box, provided by the researcher. Participation was voluntary at all times and no employee was forced to take part in the research. Where possible, groups of employees were assembled and given an explanatory talk by the researcher before the booklets were handed out. The researcher collected the sealed boxes containing the completed questionnaires after two weeks and personally processed the data obtained.

## Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the PASW-program (PASW, 2009). Cronbach alpha coefficients were used to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs measured in this study. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relation among the variables. In terms of statistical significance, the value was set at a 95% confidence interval level ( $p \leq 0,05$ ). Effect sizes (Steyn, 1999) were used to decide on the practical significance of the findings. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect, (Cohen, 1988)) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable predicted by the independent variables. The value of  $R^2$  was used to determine the proportion of the total variance of the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. The F-test was used to test whether a significant regression exists between the independent and dependent variables (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003).

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach alpha coefficients of the Job Insecurity Inventory; the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire; the Experience of Work and Life Circumstances Questionnaire; and the COPE for employees working in the private hospital ( $N = 242$ ) are reported in Table 2.

The results in Table 2 show that the alpha coefficients for all the measuring instruments are acceptable ( $\alpha > 0,70$ ) (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). These findings provide support for the internal consistency of the measuring instruments used in this study.

Table 2 shows that cognitive job insecurity is statistically and practically significantly and positively related to affective job insecurity (medium effect). Cognitive job insecurity is statistically and practically significantly positively related to job-related stress, and negatively related to organisational identification (both medium effects). Cognitive job insecurity is statistically significantly and positively related to organisational detachment and negatively related to active coping and seeking of social support. Affective job insecurity is statistically and practically significantly and positively related to job-related stress and avoidance (both medium effects). Affective job insecurity is also statistically significantly negatively related to organisational detachment. Job-related stress is statistically and practically significantly and positively related to avoidance (both medium effects).

### Multiple regression analyses

The effect of job insecurity on affective organisational commitment and job-related stress was determined by hierarchical multiple regression analyses. Table 3 shows the results of multiple regression analyses with job-related stress (as measured by the WLQ), and organisational commitment (as measured by the OCQ) as dependent variables, and cognitive and affective job insecurity (as measured by the JII) as independent variables.

As can be seen from Table 3, the entry of cognitive and affective job insecurity to predict job-related stress produced a statistically significant model ( $F_{(2,236)} = 31,65; p < 0,01$ ), accounting for 21% of the variance. The regression coefficients of cognitive job insecurity ( $\beta = 0,17; p < 0,01$ ) and affective job insecurity ( $\beta = 0,36; p < 0,01$ ) are statistically significant. Therefore hypothesis 1 is accepted. Both cognitive and affective job insecurity predicted stress, although the effect of affective job insecurity was higher.

Cognitive and affective job insecurity, and job-related stress predict 9% of the variance in organisational detachment ( $F_{(3,235)} = 12,18; p < 0,01$ ). The regression coefficient of affective job insecurity ( $\beta = 0,23; p < 0,01$ ) was statistically significant. Low cognitive and affective job insecurity predict 24% of the variance in organisational identification ( $F_{(3,235)} = 23,85; p < 0,01$ ). The regression coefficient of cognitive job insecurity ( $\beta = -0,52; p < 0,01$ ) is statistically significant. Therefore hypothesis 2 is accepted. Affective job insecurity statistically significantly predicts organisational detachment, while cognitive job insecurity predicts low organisational identification.

Table 4 shows the results of multiple regression analyses with coping strategies (as measured by the COPE) as dependent variables, and as independent variables: cognitive and affective job insecurity (as measured by the JII), job-related stress (as measured by the WLQ), and organisational commitment (as measured by the OCQ).

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of the measuring instruments**

	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Cognitive job insecurity	3,78	0,67	0,75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Affective job insecurity	2,49	0,75	0,88	0,39 <sup>***+</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Job-related stress	2,21	0,66	0,98	0,31 <sup>***+</sup>	0,44 <sup>***+</sup>	-	-	-	-	-
4. Organisational detachment	3,67	1,19	0,82	0,21 <sup>**</sup>	0,28 <sup>**</sup>	0,32 <sup>***+</sup>	-	-	-	-
5. Organisational identification	4,69	1,23	0,77	-0,48 <sup>***+</sup>	-0,08	-0,25 <sup>**</sup>	-0,24 <sup>**</sup>	-	-	-
6. Active coping	2,78	0,54	0,94	-0,18 <sup>**</sup>	-0,02	0,09	-0,05	0,20 <sup>**</sup>	-	-
7. Avoidance	2,14	0,57	0,91	0,10	0,31 <sup>***+</sup>	0,45 <sup>***+</sup>	0,05	-0,04	0,49 <sup>***+</sup>	-
8. Seeking social support	2,78	0,64	0,92	-0,18 <sup>**</sup>	-0,10	0,10	-0,03	0,13 <sup>*</sup>	0,64 <sup>***+</sup>	0,43 <sup>***+</sup>

\*  $p < 0,05$ \*\*  $p < 0,01$ +  $r > 0,30$  (practically significant, medium effect)++  $r > 0,50$  (practically significant, large effect)**Table 3: Multiple regression analyses of job insecurity on job-related stress and organisational commitment**

Variable	Job-related stress	Organisational detachment	Organisational identification
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
Constant	(1,99)	(10,89)	(1,66)
Cognitive job insecurity	0,17*	0,13	-0,52*
Affective job insecurity	0,36*	0,23*	0,12
$R^2$	0,21	0,09	0,24
$F$	31,65*	12,18*	23,85*

 $p < 0,01$ **Table 4: Multiple regression analyses of job insecurity, organisational commitment and job-related stress on coping strategies**

	Coping								
	Active coping			Avoidance			Seeking social support		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Constant	41,32	36,77	35,74	25,85	14,24	16,05	25,67	20,27	19,74
Cognitive job insecurity ( $\beta$ )	-0,21*	-0,23*	-0,14	-0,03	-0,10	-0,05	-0,18*	-0,22*	-0,18*
Affective job insecurity ( $\beta$ )	0,07	0,01	-0,02	0,33*	0,19*	0,19*	-0,01	-0,09	-0,10
Job-related stress ( $\beta$ )	-	0,14	0,17	-	0,38*	0,42*	-	0,22*	0,23*
Organisational detachment ( $\beta$ )	-	-	-0,05	-	-	-0,11	-	-	-0,01
Organisational identification ( $\beta$ )	-	-	0,15	-	-	0,07	-	-	0,07
$R^2$	0,04	0,06	0,08	0,10	0,22	0,23	0,03	0,07	0,08
$F$	4,40*	4,41*	3,94*	13,58*	22,54*	14,67*	4,19*	6,26*	3,94*
$\Delta R^2$	0,04*	0,02	0,02	0,10	0,12	0,02	0,03*	0,04*	0,01
$\Delta F$	4,40*	3,84	2,41	13,58*	36,55*	2,45	4,19*	10,07*	0,50

\*  $p < 0,01$



As can be seen from Table 4, the entry of cognitive and affective job insecurity to predict active coping produced a statistically significant model ( $F_{(2,230)} = 4,40$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), accounting for 4% of the variance. The regression coefficient of cognitive job insecurity ( $\beta = -0,21$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ) is statistically significant. In the second step, job-related stress which was entered did not statistically significantly contribute to the model ( $\Delta F = 3,84$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ;  $p > 0,01$ ). In the third step, organisational detachment and organisational identification which were entered did also not make a statistically significant contribution to the model ( $\Delta F = 2,41$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ;  $p > 0,01$ ).

Table 4 shows that the entry of cognitive and affective job insecurity to predict avoidance produced a statistically significant model ( $F_{(2,233)} = 13,58$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), accounting for 12% of the variance. The regression coefficient of affective job insecurity ( $\beta = 0,33$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ) is statistically significant. In the second step, job-related stress which was entered made a statistically significant contribution to the model ( $\Delta F = 36,55$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), which explained an additional 12% of the total variance. The regression coefficients of affective job insecurity ( $\beta = 0,19$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), and job-related stress ( $\beta = 0,38$ ;  $p < 0,04$ ) were statistically significant. In the third step, organisational detachment and organisational identification, which were entered, did not result in a statistically significant model ( $\Delta F = 2,45$ ,  $\Delta df = 2$ ;  $p > 0,01$ ).

Table 4 shows that the entry of cognitive and affective job insecurity to predict seeking social support produced a statistically significant model ( $F_{(2,233)} = 4,19$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), accounting for 3% of the variance. The regression coefficient of cognitive job insecurity ( $\beta = -0,18$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ) is statistically significant. In the second step, job-related stress which was entered made a statistically significant contribution to the model ( $\Delta F = 10,07$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), which explained an additional 4% of the total variance. The regression coefficients of cognitive job insecurity ( $\beta = -0,22$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ), and job-related stress ( $\beta = 0,22$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ) were statistically significant. In the third step, organisational detachment and organisational identification which were entered did not result in a statistically significant model ( $\Delta F = 0,50$ ,  $\Delta df = 2$ ;  $p > 0,01$ ).

Based on the above findings, hypothesis 3 is accepted. Cognitive job insecurity predicted less active coping of employees. High cognitive job insecurity also predicted less seeking of social support, even when job-related stress was low. Affective job insecurity and job-related stress predicted avoidance coping.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relations among negative emotional reactions (low affective organisational commitment and high job-related stress), and behavioural reactions to job insecurity (coping behaviour) of employees in a hospital. The results showed that both components of job insecurity were associated with job-related stress, although the affective component of job insecurity had a stronger effect on job-related stress. Affective and cognitive job insecurity were both associated with low organisational

commitment, although the two dimensions seem to affect organisational commitment differently. Affective job insecurity was associated with detachment from the organisation, while cognitive job insecurity was associated with low identification with the organisation. Experiences of affective job insecurity, job-related stress, and low organisational commitment were associated with the application of avoidance coping strategies. Employees who experienced cognitive job insecurity (compared to those who experienced lower cognitive job insecurity) were less inclined to apply active coping strategies, even if their job-related stress was low.

In their model, Jordan *et al.* (2002) propose that perceptions of job insecurity will lead to lower affective organisational commitment. The results of this study confirmed that cognitive job insecurity is moderately negatively related to organisational identification (a dimension of organisational commitment). Thus, if perceptions of job insecurity increase, organisational identification will decrease. Employees who experienced affective job insecurity and job-related stress were more inclined to detach themselves from the organisation. This indicates that increased perceptions of job insecurity and job-related stress could result in decreased organisational commitment. The relation obtained between job insecurity and organisational commitment is in line with the findings of Cooks (2007), who reported a negative correlation between job insecurity and organisational commitment.

Jordan *et al.* (2002) furthermore propose that perceptions of job insecurity will lead to increased job-related stress levels. The results showed that both cognitive and affective dimensions of job insecurity are moderately related to job-related stress. Therefore, if job insecurity increases, levels of job-related stress also increase. Hartley, Jacobsen, Klandermans and Van Vuuren (1991), while Meyer and Maltin (2010) also linked job insecurity to job-related stress. Näswall, Sverke and Hellgren (2005) found that employees experiencing more job insecurity experienced more job-induced tension. The results indicated that job insecurity explained 21% of the variance in job-related stress.

Jordan *et al.* (2002) thirdly propose that lower levels of organisational commitment and higher levels of job-related stress will lead to negative coping behaviour. The two dimensions of job insecurity were differentially related to coping behaviour in this study. Cognitive job insecurity was negatively related to active coping and seeking social support, although both effect sizes were small. Affective job insecurity was positively related to avoidance coping. This finding corresponds with the conclusion of Jordan *et al.* (2002) that people tend to respond defensively to job insecurity in an attempt to escape from the stressful reality because of stress or from having to deal with it. Job-related stress was indeed moderately associated with avoidance coping. This implies that rising job-related stress levels could lead to increased manifestations of avoidance as a negative coping strategy.

Organisational identification (as a dimension of organisational commitment) was related to active coping and seeking social support, but the effect sizes were small.

This means that when affective organisational commitment decreases the use of active coping and seeking social support as coping mechanisms may decrease as well. Job insecurity was a powerful predictor of emotional consequences such as a decrease in affective organisational commitment and increased levels of job-related stress. This finding supports the model of Jordan *et al.* (2002) which advocates that lower levels of affective organisational commitment and higher levels of job-related stress could bring about negative coping behaviour in employees.

The results of this study showed that cognitive job insecurity inversely predicted active coping. Although cognitive job insecurity was associated with a tendency not to apply active coping strategies, the effect size was small. Affective job insecurity and job-related stress explained 23% of the variance in avoidance coping. Therefore individuals who experience high affective job insecurity and high job-related stress were inclined to apply avoidance coping strategies. High cognitive job insecurity and low job-related stress were the best predictors of not seeking social support. Although the effect size was small (7% of the variance explained), it seems that individuals who think they might lose their jobs, might tend to isolate themselves from social support.

Based on the above discussion of the findings of this study, it is concluded that perceived job insecurity will lead to emotional reactions, namely reduced organisational commitment and increased job-related stress levels, and that these emotional reactions affect coping behaviour negatively. These variables had the largest effect on avoidance coping. Low job insecurity, high organisational commitment and low job-related stress seem to motivate an individual towards less avoidance coping, more active coping and more social support seeking (Armstrong-Stassen, 2004).

Savery and Luks (2000) stated that organisations must be careful when they downsize or delayer, to provide counselling not only for those who have to leave, but also for those who stay and might be worried about losing their jobs and feel sorry for those who had to leave. To prevent the deterioration of organisational commitment during times of crises and uncertainty, Camilleri (2002) recommended provision of high quality information regarding the organisation's plans and activities to reduce uncertainty and maintain organisational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1991) also mention two-way communication and participatory style of management, amongst others, to specifically enhance affective commitment. It seems that employees high in commitment are better able to cope with changes and ambiguity and less likely to want to leave the organisation (Judge, Thoreson, Pucik & Welbourne, 1999). These recommendations can be applied by employers in private hospitals during times of organisational change to minimise perceptions of job insecurity leading to lower affective organisational commitment, which in turn leads to deterioration of service quality.

Cooper (2006) is of the opinion that much of the stress experienced by employees is due to the way in which change (which may lead to perceptions of job insecurity) is

managed. He suggests open and honest communication with employees, understanding employees' fears and encouraging greater ownership by employees in the change process. Gillespie *et al.* (2001) also suggest employee consultation and more transparency regarding organisational change when attempting to manage job-related stress. Stress management programmes can help to reduce the negative effects of job-related stress and aid in building better coping skills.

This study had various limitations. The findings of this study may not be generalised because the results were obtained from a relatively small sample of employees working in a private hospital in Gauteng, South Africa. Job insecurity, affective organisational commitment, job-related stress levels and coping behaviour were subjectively measured (using self-report data) and this could affect the validity of the findings. A longitudinal study would possibly provide more complete data on the long-term effects of job insecurity. Qualitative data (narrative) in conjunction with quantitative data could provide a better understanding of the causes and consequences of job insecurity. Validation of the model of Jordan *et al.* (2002) through further research is recommended.

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