



Job insecurity and counterproductive behavior of casino dealers – the mediating role of affective commitment and moderating role of supervisor support



Qing Tian, Licheng Zhang, Wenchi Zou*

School of Business at Macau University of Science and Technology, Macao, P. R. China

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Job insecurity
Counterproductive behavior
Affective commitment
Supervisor support

ABSTRACT

Job insecurity, a prevalent and chronic organizational stressor, is an important factor for workplace counterproductive behavior, but has long been overlooked. Based on the characteristics of stressor and cognitive appraisal theory, we examined the relationships between job insecurity, affective commitment, and counterproductive behavior. Drawing upon the theory of planned action, the paper also examined how perceived supervisor support moderates the mediated relationship between job insecurity and counterproductive behavior through affective commitment. This study was conducted with 366 casino dealers and their supervisors in Macao. The data revealed that employees' affective commitment mediated the relationship between job insecurity and counterproductive behavior. In addition, supervisor support moderated the path of this mediated relationship. Theoretical and practical implications to enhance affective commitment and supervisor support are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Organizations suffer enormous financial losses due to employees' counterproductive behavior (Lawrence and Robinson, 2007), which refers to voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and thus threatens the well-being of an organization or its members (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Sagie et al. (2002) developed a model to calculate the direct cost of a mild form of counterproductive behavior, which encompass lateness, absenteeism, and turnover. According to this model, a medium-sized Israeli high-tech company might suffer a loss of about US\$ 2.8 million per year due to employee withdrawal (Sagie et al., 2002). In addition to these measurable costs, counterproductive behavior may exert a deleterious effect on firms' overall business performance (Dunlop and Lee, 2004), which often goes unnoticed and is hard to estimate.

It has been implied in the psychological literature that job insecurity may predict counterproductive behavior partly because it violates the psychological contract between employer and employee (Chiu and Peng, 2008), and partly because it negatively affects employees' health and well-being (Lawrence and Robinson, 2007). Job insecurity may occur in both secure and insecure

organizations (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984; Roskies and Louis-Guerin, 1990). Though blue-collar workers are evidently vulnerable to job insecurity (Kinnunen and Natti, 1994), managers and white-collar workers are not immune to this threat (Roskies and Louis-Guerin, 1990; King, 2000). Against this background, we suggest that job insecurity may be an antecedent of counterproductive behavior due to its stress on employees and examine this effect using empirical data.

The hospitality industry is notably characterized by its high employee turnover (Aziz et al., 2007; Cho et al., 2006; Song and Chathoth, 2011; Back et al., 2010). Casino employees in Macao are especially concerned about their job security (Wan, 2009). The counterproductive behavior as one of the effects of turnover also exists in the hospitality industry, where the staffs are largely young, less-educated, and thus susceptible to the workplace ostracism (Zhao et al., 2013; Jung and Yoon, 2012). As a result of workplace ostracism, sense of belonging to and identification with the organization will decline. The emotional bond of employees to their organization (i.e., their affective commitment) has been considered an important determinant of dedication and loyalty (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Based on the relevance to emotional stress perceived by the employees, the current study focused on the impact of affective commitment in the relationship between job insecurity and counterproductive behavior. To the best of our knowledge, there has been no examination of the relationship between job insecurity and counterproductive behavior through the mechanism of

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +853 88972901.
E-mail address: wczou@must.edu.mo (W. Zou).

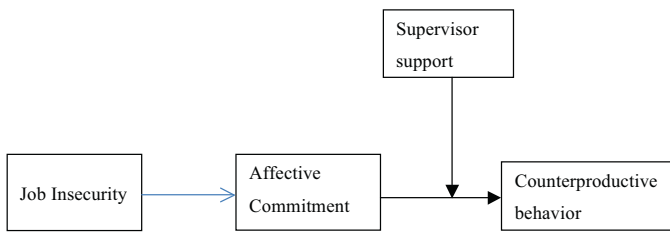


Fig. 1. Proposed moderated-mediation model.

affective commitment. Moreover, no studies on these relationships have been conducted toward the casino employees. Previous researches showed that the majority of casino dealers were middle school graduates. The educational level of employees in Macao casinos is lower than that of workforce in other service industry sectors (Gu et al., 2009). The index of employee confidence and satisfaction in Macao casinos showed that the young and less educated casino workers were obviously less confident about their job and less happy than those highly educated employees who worked outside the gaming industry (MECSI, 2012). Meanwhile, the casino setting is particularly appropriate for examining employee attitudes and behavior because casino dealers work in an environment where they interact with supervisors and customers at the same time and the same location. In such work circumstances, employees' job perception strongly impacts their work behavior (Wan, 2009). Moreover, the influence of supervisor support is of great importance to employees' work behavior and a supportive work environment can support and facilitate employees' work (Day and Bedeian, 1991).

In this study, we link job insecurity and counterproductive behavior by conceptualizing job insecurity as a chronic and prevalent frustrating organizational stressor, which is often recognized as a potential cause of workplace deviance (Lawrence and Robinson, 2007; Robinson and Bennett, 1997). To interpret why and how the relationship between job insecurity and counterproductive behavior arises, we developed a moderated mediation model (Fig. 1) wherein affective commitment mediates job insecurity and counterproductive behavior, and supervisor support moderates the mediating effect of affective commitment.

This research represents one of the very few efforts to theorize the relationship between job insecurity and counterproductive behavior and is perhaps the first among these studies to adopt supervisor ratings as a measure of employees' counterproductive behavior. Theoretically, we bring together two research streams that have been evolving separately. We not only identify a new and prevalent antecedent of counterproductive behavior, but we also extend the consequence of job insecurity to include counterproductive behavior. Therefore, this study will advance the development of these two academic domains.

Another contribution is that the moderated mediation model used in this study captures the nature of the relationship between job insecurity and counterproductive behavior and enriches the understanding of its underlying mechanism. This model opens up new avenues for investigating any antecedent of the counterproductive behavior by examining its effect on affective commitment and how supervisor support may modify this possible mediation path. Practically, this model will help management to formulate organizational intervention programs intended to contain the dysfunctional actions of employees at work.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1. Job insecurity and counterproductive behavior

Job insecurity incorporated stressful work situations that induce the perception of insecure job (Grunberg et al., 2006). It is perceived

as powerlessness in response to anticipating or experiencing a disparity between an individual's desired employment situation and his or her actual situation. Job insecurity originates from organizational changes and thus has organizational antecedents such as intended and unintended organizational signals (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984; Ashford et al., 1989; Kinnunen and Natti, 1994; Kinnunen et al., 2000). Job insecurity is threatening to individuals because it is an anticipation of an involuntary job change and may occur in both secure and insecure organizations. Whether severance results or not, the concerned employee is likely to feel angry about the change as has been suggested in the literature addressing psychological contract violations (Rousseau, 1995). Hence, we conclude that job insecurity is a prevalent and chronic organizational stressor. When job insecurity becomes an imposed cognitive burden to employees, they have yet to let go of its negative influence but need to cope with what is required to do with the work. It is this enduring and uncertain set of conditions that may tend to heighten stress and susceptibility to negative emotions (Roskies and Louis-Guerin, 1990; Strazdins et al., 2004).

On the other side, workplace counterproductive behavior is driven by frustration, which arises from the perceived disparity between the ideal state and the current state (Robinson and Bennett, 1997; Lawrence and Robinson, 2007). As job insecurity is considered an organizational stressor, insecure employees tend to blame the organization for their sufferings. Insecure employees attribute job insecurity to the organization because they believe the organization has broken the psychological contract of offering secure employment conditions (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984; Ashford et al., 1989; Davy et al., 1997; Chiu and Peng, 2008). If such stress cannot be released by suffering employees, they may then take revenge upon the organization, underpinned by the concept of a negative form of reciprocity (Mitchell and Ambrose, 2007). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the anticipation of a negative event is more harmful than its actual occurrence. Another serious consequence of job insecurity is that it threatens the social identity built around the organizational membership (Levinson, 1965). According to Levinson (1965: 373), 'affiliation with a work organization is a major device for coping with the problems resulting from economic, social, and psychological changes.' Within the relationship with the work organization, an individual may seek help when needed from his or her supervisors or colleagues (Levinson, 1965). Therefore, affiliation with the work organization represents the single most important social identity to an individual (Schreurs et al., 2010; Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 2010). Job insecurity imposes a serious threat to the continuity of an individual's affiliation with the organization. The literature on retaliation articulates that threats to one's social identity may trigger counterproductive behavior targeted at the organization (Bies and Tripp, 1996; Aquino and Douglas, 2003). Thus, we propose job insecurity-induced traumas, i.e., stressor, might predict counterproductive behavior on the part of affected employees:

Hypothesis 1. Job insecurity is positively related to counterproductive behavior.

2.2. Job insecurity and affective commitment

Similarly, the stressor caused by perceived powerlessness can also make the employees feel afraid and uncertain. This kind of negative emotions will in turn result in the negative appraisal on working environment. Affective commitment signifies employees' personal and spontaneous desire to work toward the benefit of their organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Negative feelings and appraisal of work environment may decrease the level of affective attachment (Ashford et al., 1989). In addition, job insecurity elicits the negative emotions, such as anxiety, depression, and

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