EXPLAINING THE RELATION BETWEEN JOB INSECURITY AND EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES DURING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: A MULTIPLE GROUP COMPARISON

DÉSIRÉE SCHUMACHER, BERT SCHREURS, HETTY VAN EMMERIK, AND HANS DE WITTE

We develop and test a mediation model linking job insecurity to affective commitment and psychosomatic complaints via two distinct theoretical mechanisms: fairness and energy depletion. Analyses were based on 6,268 Belgian bank employees facing organizational change. Results from structural equation modeling showed that fairness and exhaustion partially mediated the association of job insecurity with affective commitment and psychosomatic complaints, respectively. Multiple group analysis showed that the relation between job insecurity and fairness gradually decreased across the three change stages, and that the exhaustion process was most prominent amid the change. Implications and directions for future research are discussed. © 2015 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

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Employees are often exposed to organizational change initiatives, such as mergers or restructurings (e.g., Bernerth, Walker, & Harris, 2011; Fugate, Prussia, & Kinicki, 2012). Organizations initiate and implement such changes for various reasons. However, many of these change efforts fail to deliver the desired results (Dawson, 2003). Although not always successful, what seems to be true for most organizational changes is that change creates substantial feelings of insecurity among employees (Ivancevich, Schweiger, & Power, 1987; King, 2000). These feelings of insecurity can have deleterious effects on employees and organizations alike and form a challenge for human resource managers. Not surprisingly, job insecurity, and how HR managers should deal with these feelings of insecurity in the context of organizational change, has received growing attention (Baillien & De Witte, 2009; De Witte, 2005; DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998; Fugate et al., 2012; Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011; Pfeffer, 2007; Schreurs, van Emmerik, Günter, & Germeys, 2012).

Job insecurity can be defined as an employee’s feeling or an overall concern that his or her job is at risk or that an employee is likely to face involuntary job loss in the near future (Grunberg, Moore, & Greenberg, 2006). In recent years, researchers...
have gained a good understanding of the consequences of job insecurity. By now, there is compelling evidence that, to most people, job insecurity is a stressor that relates negatively to various job-related and health-related outcomes (for meta-analysis results, see Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002). In contrast, much less is known about possible mechanisms linking job insecurity to job-related and health-related outcomes and about how they operate over time. Time, or the different stages of a change, may influence employee attitudes and behavior (e.g., Kim, Hornung, & Rousseau, 2011). For example, while the beginning of a change might elicit feelings of threat and denial, later stages of change may promote anger, frustration, and hostility (Noer, 2009). These changes in employee feelings and the subsequent attitudes arise because they are susceptible to situational or contextual variables particular to the different stages of a change (Choi, 2011). Therefore, understanding and exploring potential processes or mechanisms and how they function in different change stages is important to HR managers, as it provides directions as to how organizations can deal with the negative effects of job insecurity.

The present study aims at contributing to the understanding of the job insecurity–employee outcomes relationship by addressing two important research issues that have received relatively little attention. First, we draw on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993) to propose that job insecurity affects employee outcomes via two coinciding but distinct processes. The first explaining mechanism, the fairness process, is assumed to affect job-related outcomes, such as affective commitment. The second explaining mechanism, the energy depletion process, is assumed to explain the relationship with health-related outcomes, such as psychosomatic complaints.

Second, we contribute to the human resource management (HRM) field by investigating the importance of these mechanisms in different stages of the organizational change process. Human resource (HR) managers play a crucial role not only in initiating but also in sustaining organizational change (Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank, & Ulrich, 2013). Dealing with the negative effects of job insecurity, therefore, has become a perpetual challenge for HR or change managers. Based on uncertainty management theory (UMT; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002) and COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993), we expect that the proposed mechanisms are conditional upon the change stage. More specifically, we expect that the fairness process is more prominent among respondents who are at the beginning of a change period, while the energy depletion process is more prominent among respondents who are at later stages of the change process. Understanding how these explaining mechanisms differ across change stages may reveal valuable insights for time-sensitive HR interventions and change practices, and assist HR and change managers in deciding when (at what change stage) to address fairness or energy depletion concerns.

In the following section, we first establish our baseline hypotheses about the relationship between job insecurity and employee outcomes. We then identify two coinciding but theoretically distinct mechanisms—fairness and energy depletion—that may describe why and how job insecurity translates into negative consequences for employees. Hence, we decided to first present empirical evidence on the direct effects of job insecurity prior to discussing more extensively the theoretical rationale as to why job insecurity associates with employee outcomes. In doing so, we devote most attention to areas where our knowledge is limited: possible mediators in the relationship between job insecurity and job-related and health-related outcomes. Next, we describe the survey design used in this study to collect data from 6,268 Belgian bank employees undergoing a merger. Finally, we describe the results of this study and its implications for research, employees, and organizations.

**Job Insecurity and Employee Outcomes**

Job insecurity is a cause for concern: It is an invasive work stressor with profound negative consequences for both the individual and the organization (De Witte, 1999; Sverke et al., 2002). With reference to individual outcomes, there is abundant evidence for the idea that job insecurity associates with poorer health and well-being (for meta-analyses, see Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke et al., 2002). Job insecurity relates to, for example, increased psychological distress, anxiety, and depression (Roskies, Louis-Guerin, & Fournier, 1993); recovery need (Schreurs, van Emmerik, Notelaers, & De Witte, 2010); and psychosomatic complaints (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989); and to objective indicators of poor health, such as medically certified sickness absence (Kinnunen, Mauno, Natti, & Happonen, 1999).
Job insecurity also has job-related correlates. Research shows that workers tend to emotionally and, to a lesser extent, behaviorally withdraw from the situation when they are uncertain about the future of their job (for meta-analyses, see Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke et al., 2002). Job insecurity is associated with, for example, declines in job satisfaction (Heaney, Israel, & House, 1994), job involvement (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995), trust in an organization (Ashford et al., 1989), and organizational commitment (Davy, Kinicki, & Scheck, 1991); and with a rise in intentions to quit (Probst, 2005).

Consistent with previous empirical findings, we advance the baseline hypotheses that job insecurity associates with reduced affective commitment and an increase in psychosomatic complaints. Affective commitment describes “an employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 1). We focus on affective commitment because affective commitment is one of the most important attitudes at the workplace. Moreover, affective commitment is preferred as the core concept of organizational commitment (Solinger, Van Olffen, & Roe, 2008) and emphasizes the emotional component of this attitude. Job insecurity triggers emotional reactions in employees (Jordan, Ashkanasy, & Hartel, 2002), making affective commitment the most likely dimension of organizational commitment to be associated with job insecurity. Moreover, previous research shows that affective commitment is a significant attitude in predicting absenteeism, turnover intentions, and organizational performance (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002).

As an indicator of employee health, we study psychosomatic complaints, which refer to symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, and fainting. These context-free health complaints are seen as an indicator of impaired work-related well-being or as a response to work stressors (Grebner et al., 2003). Job insecurity has been shown to be among those work stressors showing the highest correlation with psychosomatic complaints (Mohr, 2000). Additionally, it is widely recognized that factors (i.e., job insecurity) influencing employee health (i.e., psychosomatic complaints) can have a significant negative impact on the profitability of an organization (Danna & Griffin, 1999). In sum, we chose to study psychosomatic complaints because of their prevalence among job-insecure employees (e.g., Frese, 1985; Mohr, 2000) and their relevance in general to occupational health scholars and practitioners (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Michie & Williams, 2003).

Hypothesis 1: Job insecurity is (a) negatively related to affective commitment, and (b) positively related to psychosomatic complaints.

Two Theoretical Explanations for the Effects of Job Insecurity

Two coinciding but theoretically distinct mechanisms can explain the effects of job insecurity: a fairness process and an energy depletion process (see Figure 1). First, we propose fairness to explain the relation between job insecurity and affective commitment. Second, we expect emotional exhaustion, as an indicator of the energy depletion process, to mediate the relationship between job insecurity and psychosomatic complaints. In the following paragraphs, we develop our hypotheses concerning these two explaining mechanisms.
The Fairness Explanation for the Consequences of Job Insecurity

We derive the fairness explanation from social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964). SET posits that social exchange relationships develop between employers and employees through a series of mutual exchanges. These exchanges yield a pattern of interactions that generate reciprocal expectations and obligations concerning duties and entitlements (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Employees will repay or reciprocate a favorable work environment through favorable attitudes, but also adjust their attitudes downward in response to treatment that they perceive as unfair (Lavelle et al., 2009). More specifically, when employees expect their employer to offer a reasonably secure job, they will exchange job security for loyalty and effort (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2006; De Cuyper, De Witte, McIntyre, & Houdmont, 2007; Millward & Brewerton, 1999). However, a failure to provide employees with job security (i.e., job insecurity) often leads employees to interpret the situation as unfair, which creates an imbalance in the social exchange relationship (Bernhard-Oettel, De Cuyper, Schreurs, & De Witte, 2011; Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). To perceive a situation as unfair means that the employee perceives himself or herself as a victim of unfair treatment that violates a certain moral code or ethical principles (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002).

From a SET perspective, perceptions of unfairness and the resulting fairness judgments are assumed to predict reciprocative behaviors. When employees perceive that they are being treated unfairly, they are likely to restore the balance in the social exchange relationship by psychologically and behaviorally withdrawing from the situation (Adams, 1966; Howard & Cordes, 2010). Perceptions of fairness relate, for example, to job satisfaction (Sparr & Sonnentag, 2008), work alienation (Howard & Cordes, 2010), increased turnover intentions and absenteeism (De Boer, Bakker, Syroti, & Schaufeli, 2002; Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005). Unfairness has also been shown to trigger discrete emotional reactions (Weiss, Suckow, & Cropanzano, 1999) and to relate to affective attitudes, such as affective organizational commitment (e.g., Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Conlon, Meyer, & Nowakowski, 2005; De Boer et al., 2002; Gopinath & Becker, 2000; Lavelle et al., 2009).

In conclusion, based on SET and the related empirical evidence, we argue that employees interpret job insecurity as unfair, and that these fairness judgments, in turn, will be related to employees’ affective commitment toward the organization. Therefore, we expect that fairness judgments by employees explain or mediate the negative relationship between job insecurity and affective organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 2: Fairness mediates the relationship between job insecurity and affective organizational commitment.

The Energy Depletion Explanation for the Consequences of Job Insecurity

We draw from the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) to develop the energy depletion explanation. COR theory states that individuals will experience strain when their resources are threatened or lost, or when invested resources do not result in anticipated returns. Resources are defined as “those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued in their own right, or that are valued because they act as conduits to the achievement or protection of valued resources” (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 339). Job stressors may pose a threat to individuals’ resources and may therefore trigger strain in the form of emotional exhaustion—a lack of energy and a sense of emotional resources being consumed fully by work (Maslach & Jackson, 1986).

Another tenet of COR theory is that people strive to protect themselves from resource loss. To this end, they must bring in additional resources. If resources are used to prevent loss of other resources, such loss will make it even less likely to preserve necessary resource reserves (i.e., loss spirals; Hobfoll, 1989). A job is a valuable resource. It can satisfy various needs, such as earning an income, having social contacts outside the family, being able to structure one’s time, and to develop individually and socially (De Witte, 1999). Hence, according to COR theory, strain occurs when a person’s job is on the line. Also, facing potential job loss, COR theory predicts that employees will mobilize additional resources, for example, cognitive resources (i.e., anticipate the financial and social consequences of unemployment) and emotional resources (i.e., keeping anger under control). These additional investments, in turn, will result in further energy depletion and increased emotional exhaustion.

Research corroborates the link between job insecurity and strain, suggesting that job insecure employees face higher levels of strain and...
experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion (Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2011; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2006, 2007; Schreurs et al., 2010). In addition, there is good empirical evidence for the positive link between emotional exhaustion and ill health: Workers who are emotionally exhausted are more prone to develop various physical and mental health problems, including psychosomatic complaints (Jourdain & Chénévert, 2010; Shirom, Melamed, Toker, Berliner, & Shapira, 2005; Toker & Biron, 2012).

To conclude, we assume job insecurity to evoke an energy-depleting process that results in emotional exhaustion and physical and mental health problems. We expect emotional exhaustion to explain (i.e., mediate) the relationship between job insecurity and psychosomatic complaints.

**Hypothesis 3:** Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between job insecurity and psychosomatic complaints.

### The Moderating Role of Organizational Change Stage

Many change models describe organizational change as consisting of various stages (Judson, 1991; Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1947; Zell, 2003). For example, the well-known change model of Lewin (1947) states that organizations sequentially go through three change stages: an introduction (i.e., unfreezing), implementation (i.e., changing), and stabilizing (i.e., refreezing) phase. Judson’s (1991) change model consists of five phases: analyzing and planning the change, communicating the change, gaining acceptance of new behaviors, changing from the status quo to a desired state, and consolidating and institutionalizing the new state. Although many change stage models exist, eventually they all share a similar idea. That is, they all describe how the “flawed” organization is moved into a transition or implementation stage to finally arrive at the desired and improved stage.

Each change stage bears its own HR challenges (Crawford & Nahmias, 2010). For example, people skills, such as the ability to persuade others and consensus building, may be particularly useful to communicate the change and gain acceptance in early change stages. Consolidation of the change, however, may ask for strategic abilities, such as aligning of compensation and incentive systems with the new objectives in the change plan (Kotter, 1996). Similarly, each change stage may pose different cognitive and emotional challenges to the employees involved. Even though this has been recognized (e.g., Kim, et al., 2011; Liu & Perrewé, 2005), the idea that the various change stages might have a different influence on the relation between job insecurity and employee outcomes has yet to be empirically tested. In the next paragraphs, we develop our hypotheses on the moderating role of change stage in the relationship between job insecurity and employee outcomes.

Organizational change often is characterized as something unexpected that elicits feelings of surprise, shock, or threat (Cox, 1997; Kiefer, 2002). Employees at the beginning of a change are most likely to be overwhelmed and shocked by the new situation (Noer, 2009). They often associate these feelings of shock, surprise, and threat with breaking a promise or expectation (Kiefer, 2002). As argued before, feelings of job insecurity create an imbalance in the social exchange relationship between employer and employee that leads employees to interpret the situation as unfair (Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2011). As a result, employees may interpret the beginning of a change as especially unfair because this is when the shock and disbelief are most prominent.

To formulate our moderating hypothesis, we draw on UMT (Van den Bos & Lind, 2002). UMT is an offshoot of fairness heuristic theory (see Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; Levy, 2001), which can be used to consider how employees assess the fairness of the organizational change. UMT proposes that individuals make use of fairness judgments when they experience and try to cope with any form of uncertainty (e.g., job insecurity). More specifically, fairness judgments are seen as a way to cope with uncertainty because they provide employees a means on how to behave and may guide attitudes and actions that are needed to deal with job insecurity. (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002). Coping is generally seen as situation-specific thoughts (i.e., fairness judgments) that individuals use to manage the demands resulting from a threatening situation at hand (i.e., job insecurity; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

According to UMT, therefore, fairness is of greater importance in the context of organizational change than at “normal” times. Moreover, fairness is assumed to be especially important for coping with uncertainty at an early change stage as compared to later change stages. To cope with uncertainty, people develop new fairness judgments or adjust previous ones. Because levels of uncertainty are most likely highest at the
beginning of a change process, this is when people are most receptive to fairness information and fairness judgments are being made (Lind, 2001; Lind & Van den Bos, 2002).

In the early stage of organizational change, employees will not have time or resources to carefully assess information and easily revert to fairness judgments to assess the situation. For example, in the early stage of organizational change, employees who perceive the situation will make justice judgments and respond to the change situation almost immediately and without careful deliberation. Accordingly, we argue that in early change stages feelings of job insecurity will serve as the main input for employees to conclude that they have been treated (un)fairly. As the organizational change unfolds and the surprise has run its course, a more elaborate assessment of the fairness of the situation can take place. Although still uncertain about the future, employees may come to understand that job security is the exception rather than the rule. Also, over time other factors may become more relevant to the fairness judgment process (e.g., participation in decision making, equal opportunities, transparency of information, and voice). Accordingly, we expect that in later change stages employees’ fairness judgments will show a lower association with job insecurity.

Hypothesis 4: Organizational change stage moderates the negative relationship between job insecurity and fairness, so that the negative relationship between job insecurity and fairness will be stronger in the early stage of organizational change than in later stages of organizational change.

Uncertainty is generally viewed as an aversive state that humans (and other organisms) are motivated to reduce (Bar-Anan, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2009). Prolonged periods of uncertainty may even be more detrimental. Research in several areas, such as severe illness (e.g., HIV or cancer patients) research, has shown that prolonged periods of uncertainty are associated with chronic stress and sorrow (Brashers et al., 1999; Burke, Hainsworth, Eakes, & Lindgren, 1992).

Similarly, extended periods of job insecurity have been shown to increase health problems over and above the effects of job insecurity at any single point in time (Burgard, Brand, & House, 2009; Ferrie, Shipley, Stansfeld, & Marmot, 2002; Heaney et al., 1994). Ferrie et al. (2002), for example, found that chronic job insecurity was associated with poor self-rated health and depression. Similarly, Heaney et al. (1994) showed that prolonged periods of job insecurity increased physical somatic symptoms besides the effects of job insecurity at one point in time. The idea that time, or the stage of the organizational change, can have an impact on the relation between job insecurity and employee outcomes has been recognized by other scholars (Geuskens, Koppes, van den Bossche, & Joling, 2012; Kim et al., 2011).

These empirical findings suggest that the adverse effects of job insecurity accumulate and become more permanent or potent as the time of exposure increases. These results are consistent with COR theory and its notion of loss spirals (i.e., the energy depletion process; Hobfoll, 2001). Loss spirals are triggered by initial resource losses and can develop because each loss results in resource depletion for facing the next threat or loss. Especially those people who lack resources are most vulnerable to further energy depletion (Hobfoll, 1989). Consequently, unabated exposure to job insecurity will eventually wear out employees’ resources needed to cope with this stressor (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995).

Accordingly, based on COR theory and the presented empirical evidence, we expect that at the later change stages employees’ exhaustion will be more strongly affected by job insecurity than at the early change stage.

Hypothesis 5: Organizational change stage moderates the positive relationship between job insecurity and emotional exhaustion, so that the positive relationship between job insecurity and emotional exhaustion will be stronger in later stages of organizational change than in the early stage of organizational change.

Methods
Organizational Context

The “Stress and Well-Being in the Banking Sector” study took place in 2001 in Belgium (Van Ruysseveldt, Manshoven, De Witte, Bundervoet, & Van Hootegem, 2003); in the years preceding this study, the banking sector had experienced several changes. Increased diffusion of the boundaries between different products, services, and market segments led to a diversification of the financial sector (Van Ruysseveldt, Cambre, Depickere, & Adiele, 2004). This diversification implied restructuring and role changes for the banks and their employees. Moreover, the growing internationalization led to increased competition and the wish to grow and expand. As a response, many banks formed mergers (some with rival competitors) to stay or be more competitive. One immediate consequence of organizational changes is that affected employees experience increased feelings of job insecurity (Probst, 2000).
Similarly, the formation of mergers in the Belgian banking sector also caused increased job insecurity for many employees (Van Ruysseveldt et al., 2003). In the collective agreement of 1999, the banking sector (i.e., the “Paritair Comité 310 voor de Banken”) decided to examine the impact of these industry changes on employees. Therefore, a detailed and structured approach was taken to study the influence of work pressure, stress, and job insecurity on the well-being and health of employees (Van Ruysseveldt et al., 2003).

Data and Sample

Data were collected through a written questionnaire in the first half of 2001 in all 63 Belgian banks affiliated to the sector’s joint industrial committee. A random sample of 21 percent (n = 15,003) of all the employees with a permanent contract were invited to fill out the questionnaire. Confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were emphasized. A total of 7,146 usable questionnaires were returned (response rate of 47.6 percent). The sample was representative for employees in the banking sector, as far as gender, age, and educational level were concerned. From the total sample, we used only responses of employees currently undergoing organizational change (i.e., merger). Therefore, the final sample consisted of 6,268 Belgian bank employees, who indicated to be at the beginning, in the “middle” and facing ongoing change, or going toward the end of a merger. We termed participants indicating they were at the beginning of the change early-stage respondents (n = 1,815). Participants who indicated they were in the middle (n = 3,784) and toward end of the change (n = 669) are referred to as later-stage respondents. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents were male. Of the respondents, 3.8 percent belonged to the “under 25” age category; 24.9 percent were between 25 and 34; 33.5 percent between 35 and 44; and 33.7 percent between 45 and 54; the remaining 4.1 percent was the “older than 55” category. Eighty-five percent indicated they worked full time. In terms of education, 5.9 percent had completed a junior secondary vocational program, 30.1 percent had a high school or secondary vocational education, 42.5 percent had completed higher vocational studies, and 21.6 percent held an academic degree.

Measures

Job insecurity was measured with four items developed by De Witte (2000), and validated in the recent study of Vander Elst, De Witte, and De Cuyper (2013). The items refer to the probability or worry related to keeping or losing one’s job. Sample items are “I feel insecure about the future of my job” and “I am sure that I will be able to keep my job (reverse coded; 1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha was .82.

Fairness was measured using five items based on Colquitt (2001). Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they perceived the change process to be fair. Items were adapted to fit the context of the change at hand (i.e., bank merger), and closely resemble the change fairness items developed by Caldwell, Herold, and Fedor (2004). Sample items are “Employees are able to express their views and feelings during the change process” and “Employees are treated fairly during the change process” (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha was .87.

Emotional exhaustion was assessed using five items of the Utrecht Burnout Scale (UBOS; Schaufeli & van Dierendonck, 2000), the Dutch validation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Emotional exhaustion indicates the extent to which stress symptoms emerge as a consequence of the job (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). This scale has been extensively used in previous studies and has been shown to have high reliability and validity. Response alternatives could be given on a 7-point scale (1 = never; 7 = always). Sample items are “I feel emotionally drained from my work” and “At the end of a work day, I feel empty.” Cronbach’s alpha was .88.

Affective commitment was assessed using four items developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). These items measure the extent to which respondents experience an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Sample items are “My bank means a lot to me” and “I really feel as if my banks problems are my own” (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha was .90.

Psychosomatic complaints were measured using four items taken from the Body Sensations Questionnaire (Chambless, Caputo, Bright, & Gallagher, 1984). Respondents were asked to rate how often they had recently experienced symptoms for which an unambiguous physical cause is unlikely, such as headache or dizziness (1 = never; 5 = very often). Cronbach’s alpha was .77.

Change stage was determined by asking respondents to evaluate their current situation or stage of change. The question was introduced by stating that there had been a lot of changes in the banking sector; for example, different banks were put together (i.e., mergers). Subsequently,
respondents were asked to indicate their perception of the current change stage. Respondents specified whether the organizational change process (i.e., the merger) was, in their experience, at the beginning, the middle, or more going toward the end.

We calculated the intraclass correlation, ICC(1), and its reliability coefficient, ICC(2), for the change stage, to determine how much variability in individual responses can be predicted by group membership (i.e., bank). Results showed an ICC(1) of .13, which can be interpreted as an effect size, and an ICC(2) of .94. This indicates that there is a fair amount of agreement between employees from each bank concerning the stage of change they are currently in.

**Data Analysis**

Following the two-step approach procedure recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we first tested the divergent validity of our constructs by testing a measurement model by means of item-level confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). We then continued by conducting structural equation modeling (SEM) applying the maximum-likelihood method in LISREL 8.80 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2007) to test the hypotheses. We compared the fit of the hypothesized model to that of several competing models, using the full sample. The best-fitting model was then selected to examine the invariance of the model across the three groups.

Model fit was evaluated using the following absolute goodness-of-fit indices (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1986): (1) the chi-square ($\chi^2$) goodness-of-fit statistic, (2) the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), (3) standardized root mean square residual (SRMR); the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and (4) the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI). In addition, we calculated two relative goodness-of-fit measures: (1) the comparative fit index (CFI), and (2) the non-normed fit index (NNFI). An RMSEA value smaller than .08 is indicative of an acceptable fit, and values smaller than .05 are indicative of good fit. An SRMR value less than .08 is generally considered a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Because the distribution of the GFI and AGFI is unknown, no statistical test or critical value is available. For the relative fit indices, values closer to 1.00 are indicative of good fit (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1986). The chi-square difference test was used to compare nested models.

To test the hypotheses, we first tested the expected associations of fairness and emotional exhaustion with affective commitment and psychosomatic complaints, respectively (model A). Following the criteria of Holmbeck (1997) for mediational analysis, in the next step, we examined the direct relations from job insecurity to commitment and complaints (model B). We then continued with computing the mediation model in which job insecurity relates to the two mediating variables and from the mediators to commitment and complaints (model C—fully mediated model). Although not hypothesized, we also tested a model (model D) in which we included cross paths, from emotional exhaustion to affective commitment and from fairness to psychosomatic complaints. Finally, we tested whether allowing direct relations from job insecurity to commitment and complaints resulted in increased model fit (model E—partial mediation model). In all analysis, results were considered to be significant if the accompanying $p$-value was at least .05.

**Results**

**Preliminary Analyses**

Table I presents reliabilities, descriptive statistics, and intercorrelations of the measured variables. The internal consistencies of all scales were satisfactory with values higher than .70. The results further show that job insecurity was negatively correlated with fairness and affective commitment, and was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion and psychosomatic complaints. Table I also shows significant differences between

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<tr>
<th>TABLE I</th>
<th>Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among the Study Variables</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Change stage</td>
<td>1.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Job insecurity</td>
<td>1.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Fairness</td>
<td>2.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Emotional exhaustion</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Affective commitment</td>
<td>2.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Psychosomatic complaints</td>
<td>1.75</td>
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*Note: Reliabilities are on the diagonal.  
*p < .05; **p < .01.
the respondents in the three change stages: mean levels of job insecurity, emotional exhaustion, and psychosomatic complaints were higher among respondents in the early change stage, whereas fairness was higher among respondents in the later stages.

Test of the Measurement Model

We estimated a full measurement model including job insecurity, fairness, emotional exhaustion, affective commitment, and psychosomatic complaints. All variables were presented by their respective items. This model, including 22 observed variables and five latent factors, yielded a good fit to the data (see Table II). All observed variables had significant ($p < .001$) loadings ranging from $.69$ to $.94$ on their latent factor (mean $\lambda = .79$). A valid measurement model was thus obtained.

Data were collected via surveys, and although we followed the recommendations for questionnaire design as suggested by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), the potential of common method variance (CMV) exists. To address the CMV issue, we first conducted Harman's one-factor test. Problems would exist if a single factor accounted for most of the variance among variables. Results of the exploratory factor analysis showed that five factors, representing our model constructs, emerged. Additionally, results showed that one single factor did not account for the majority of the variance among the variables. Second, we included an unmeasured latent factor by adding a common factor to the measurement model (e.g., Thomas & Lankau, 2009). This common method factor had no unique indicator items but had paths to all items of our measurement model. When comparing the individual factor loadings of the measurement model and the common method factor model, results showed that although most standardized path coefficients decreased, all loadings remained significant at $p < .001$. The minimal impact on the factor loadings suggested that CMV was unlikely to be a serious problem in our study.

Testing the Hypothesized Model

First, the direct associations between the presumed mediators and the outcome were examined (model A). As can be seen from Table II, this model provided a good fit to the data. As expected, fairness related positively to affective commitment ($\gamma = .26$), and emotional exhaustion related positively to psychosomatic complaints ($\gamma = .53$); all $p$'s < .001.

We then computed a direct-effect model (model B), which included the direct relations from job insecurity to affective commitment and psychosomatic complaints. The fit indices shown in Table II suggest that the fit of this model was acceptable. In support of Hypothesis 1, job insecurity related negatively ($\gamma = -0.09, p < .001$) to commitment, and positively to psychosomatic complaints ($\gamma = .26, p < .001$).

We then proceeded by calculating the fully mediated model (model C), which included indirect paths from job insecurity to affective commitment and psychosomatic complaints through fairness and emotional exhaustion, respectively. Fairness and emotional exhaustion were allowed to correlate because previous research has shown that fairness and exhaustion are not independent (Howard & Cordes, 2010). Although this model showed a good fit, the indices as shown in Table II suggest that there is still room for improvement.

Next, we computed a model including cross-links (model D) from emotional exhaustion to affective commitment and from fairness to psychosomatic complaints. Again, this model provided an acceptable fit to the data but showed room for improvement.

Therefore, we computed the partially mediated model (model E), in which direct paths from job insecurity to commitment and complaints were added. As shown in Table II, the partial mediation model (model E) provided a good fit to the data, and was superior to that of the fully mediated model (model C), $\Delta \chi^2 (2) = 34.91, p < .001$, and the model including cross-links (model D), $\Delta \chi^2 (2) = 168.83, p < .001$.

In line with the hypotheses, job insecurity related negatively to fairness ($\gamma = -.35, p < .001$), and positively to exhaustion ($\gamma = .32, p < .001$). Job insecurity related positively to psychosomatic complaints ($\gamma = .08, p < .001$), and, unexpectedly, also positively to affective commitment ($\gamma = .05, p < .001$). As expected, fairness related positively to commitment ($\gamma = .28, p < .001$), and exhaustion related positively to complaints ($\gamma = .50, p < .001$). Fairness and emotional exhaustion were moderately negatively correlated ($-0.22$).

We used Sobel tests to formally evaluate whether job insecurity yielded indirect associations with commitment and complaints through fairness and exhaustion (Sobel, 1982). The indirect relation between job insecurity and commitment through fairness ($z = 14.20, p < .001$) was confirmed, as was the indirect association between job insecurity and psychosomatic complaints ($z = 18.78, p < .001$) through emotional
### Table II: Goodness-of-Fit Indices of the Measurement and Structural Models ($N = 6,268$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>NNFI</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>$\Delta \chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>2,605.44</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (mediator-&gt;outcomes)</td>
<td>2,676.11</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (direct-effects)</td>
<td>3,807.44</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>A–B</td>
<td>1131.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (fully mediated)</td>
<td>2,676.60</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>B–C</td>
<td>1130.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (cross-links)</td>
<td>2,845.43</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>C–D</td>
<td>168.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (partially mediated)</td>
<td>2,641.69</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>C–E</td>
<td>34.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple Group Models</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>NNFI</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>$\Delta \chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model E1 (constrained)</td>
<td>4,332.31</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.076/.044/.067</td>
<td>.93/.96/.88</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model E2 (paths free)</td>
<td>4,268.11</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.069/.043/.067</td>
<td>.93/.96/.88</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>E1-E2</td>
<td>64.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model E3 (cov var free)</td>
<td>4,204.31</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.063/.043/.059</td>
<td>.93/.96/.88</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>E2-E3</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model E4 (all free)</td>
<td>3,698.06</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.060/.048/.062</td>
<td>.94/.94/.91</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>E3-E4</td>
<td>506.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model E5 (final)</td>
<td>3,697.09</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.057/.043/.055</td>
<td>.94/.96/.90</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: $\chi^2 = \text{chi-square};$ df = degrees of freedom; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square error of approximation; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-to-fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index.
exhaustion. Model E explained 7 percent of the variance in affective commitment and 29 percent of the variance in psychosomatic complaints, and was used for the following multigroup analyses. Taken together, the results provide at least partial support for Hypotheses 2 and 3 concerning the mediating role of fairness and emotional exhaustion.

Multiple Group Analyses

Next, the invariance of the baseline model (model E), the partial mediation model, across both samples was studied by placing constraints on particular parameters. We first tested a model in which all factor loadings, path coefficients, and structural variances and covariances were constrained to be equal across samples (model E1—baseline). We then estimated the structural paths (i.e., relations between latent factors) for the two phases independently (model E2). The next model allowed the structural paths, structural covariances (i.e., the covariance between fairness and exhaustion), and structural variances to be different for each sample (model E3). Finally, we tested a model that allowed all parameters, those of the measurement model and those of the structural model, to be freely estimated (model E4). The results showed that all less restrictive models significantly deviated from the baseline model, which assumed all parameters to be equal across the change stages. This means that the partial mediation model is not invariant across change stages.

To inspect which parameters accounted for not achieving invariance, an iterative process was applied. With the fully constrained model as a starting point, we allowed parameters one by one to be freely estimated. When model fit did not improve significantly after testing a parameter independently for the three groups, equality constraints were retained. Using this procedure, a final model (model E5) emerged, which yielded a good fit to the data (see Table II). Standardized model coefficients are depicted in Figure 2. For noninvariant parameters, three values are displayed—one for each group.

Hypothesis 4 stated that change stage would moderate the negative relationship between job insecurity and fairness, so that the negative relationship between job insecurity and fairness would be stronger among early change respondents than among later change respondents. As shown in Figure 2, this hypothesis was supported. Job insecurity related negatively to fairness in all three groups, but the negative relationship was strongest among early change respondents ($\gamma = -0.42$) than among later change respondents ($\gamma = -0.32$ for the middle group; $\gamma = -0.22$ for late group). Hence, the relationship between job insecurity and fairness gradually decreases as respondents perceive that they are getting closer to the end of the change process.

Hypothesis 5 stated that change stage would moderate the positive relationship between job insecurity and emotional exhaustion, so that the positive relationship between job insecurity and exhaustion would be stronger among later change respondents than among early change respondents. This hypothesis was partially supported. Job insecurity related positively to emotional exhaustion in all three groups, but the positive relationship was more pronounced among respondents at the middle of the change ($\gamma = 0.35$) as compared to respondents at the beginning ($\gamma = 0.26$) and at the end of the change process ($\gamma = 0.25$).

Furthermore, Sobel test results showed that the indirect effect of job insecurity on affective commitment was significant in all three change stages ($z = 11.82$, $p < .001$ for group 1; $z = 12.17$, $p < .001$ for group 2; $z = 13.15$, $p < .001$ for group 3).
mediated the negative relation between job insecurity and psychosomatic complaints was found \( (z = 9.80, p < .001; z = 16.10, p < .001; z = 6.48, p < .001 \) for each group respectively).

Unexpectedly, the relationship between emotional exhaustion and psychosomatic complaints also differed across the three groups. The positive relationship was stronger among respondents at an early change stage \( (\gamma = .60) \) than among respondents at the middle and at the end of the change process \( (\gamma = .46) \). Moreover, results show that the direct relation between job insecurity and psychosomatic complaints differed across the change stages. This relation was found to be the strongest among respondents who indicated that they were going toward the end of the organizational changes \( (\gamma = .17) \) compared to respondents at an early or middle change stage \( (\gamma = .07) \).

**Discussion**

In this study, we examined two theoretically derived processes that we expected to explain the relationships between job insecurity and outcomes: assessment of fairness of the change process and energy depletion during the change period. Fairness partially mediated the negative relation between job insecurity and affective commitment, and exhaustion partially mediated the positive relation between job insecurity and psychosomatic complaints. The results also showed that being at different stages of organizational change affected the strength of the relationship between job insecurity and employee outcomes. The fairness process seems to be more important at early change stages relative to later change stages. The energy depletion process seems to be most important when being at the middle of organizational change.

Our findings extend the body of literature on job insecurity in several ways. First, over the past decades a tremendous amount of effort has been put into illuminating the nomological network of job insecurity. With respect to its consequences, there is strong empirical evidence that employee attitudes and health are negatively affected by increasing levels of job insecurity (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke et al., 2002). What can be learned from the current study is that at least two different mechanisms underlie the effects of job insecurity: fairness and energy depletion. The negative relation between job insecurity and affective commitment can be partly understood in terms of perceived fairness. Based on the tenets of SET (Blau, 1964), we suggest that job insecurity promotes feelings of unfairness, which in turn lower employees’ affective commitment. The positive relation between job insecurity and psychosomatic complaints can be partly understood by a process of energy depletion as described by the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989): Job insecurity—the constant worrying about the possibility of losing one’s job—consumes mental resources and is emotionally exhausting, which in turn results in psychosomatic complaints.

The fact that we did not find full mediation hints at the possibility of additional explanatory mechanisms. For example, lack of control may also partially explain the association of job insecurity and employee outcomes (Vander Elst, De Cuyper, & De Witte, 2011). The difficulty to cope with or counteract an insecure job situation might lead employees not only to interpret the situation as unfair and exhausting, but perhaps also to interpret it as difficult to control. Perceptions of lack of control may in turn influence employee attitudes and health. Future research should explore and investigate potential alternative mechanisms to better understand why job insecurity affects employees’ attitudes and health.

Second, job insecurity is often claimed to be an important stressor, particularly in times of organizational change. Yet the majority of job insecurity studies has not, or has only indirectly, taken into account the change context. That is, typically the change context forms the backdrop of job insecurity studies, but rarely is the change trajectory explicitly modeled or measured. Instead, paradoxically perhaps, the change context is implicitly assumed to have an invariable influence on the constructs under investigation and their relationships. We took this assumption as a starting point and made a distinction among three different change stages.

Departing from uncertainty management theory, our results showed that the negative relationship between job insecurity and fairness was stronger among early change respondents than among change respondents in later stages. UMT states that fairness is especially important for coping with uncertainty during early stages of a change process (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002). Hence, we provide supportive evidence for this proposition by showing that the relation between job insecurity and fairness gradually decreased across the three change stages.

We also found that the relation between job insecurity and exhaustion is negative across all
change stages. Contrary to our predictions, the strength of this relationship did not gradually increase. Rather, the positive relation was strongest among employees amid the change, and somewhat weaker among those indicating to be at the beginning and at the end of the change. This finding seems to go against the idea stipulated in COR that job insecurity is a chronic stressor and that exhaustion builds up over time as employees are increasingly exposed to job insecurity. Although tentative, our findings seem to suggest a pattern that is similar to the grieving process, in which there are no linear developments of emotions or reactions but rather cyclic patterns (Noer, 2009). Based on our findings and design, it is too early, though, to discard COR’s proposition of gradual increase: A repeated measurement design rather than a cross-sectional design (see Potential Limitations section) is needed to examine change in emotional exhaustion and to draw conclusions about its trajectory.

Results further showed that the relation between emotional exhaustion and psychosomatic complaints differed according to change stage, such that the positive relationship was stronger among early change respondents than among later change respondents. It may be that employees get accustomed to a certain level of being emotionally exhausted and accordingly redefine their sensitivity to psychosomatic complaints (Galais & Moser, 2009; Terborg, Richardson, & Pritchard, 1980). Moreover, the direct relation between job insecurity and psychosomatic complaints was strongest for employees toward the end of organizational changes. Hence, job insecurity translates into psychosomatic complaints, but less so through emotional exhaustion at later stages of the change. This suggests that there are additional and other mechanisms at play, which become more prominent at later change stages. For example, it may be that job-insecure employees gradually start to adopt a more unhealthy lifestyle, which in turn results in more psychosomatic complaints. Indirect support for this idea stems from the observation that temporary workers compared to permanent workers are more likely to be alcohol dependent (De Cuyper, Kiran, De Witte, & Aygoglu, 2008).

Finally, in addition to the indirect path, we also found a direct positive path from job insecurity to affective commitment, across the different stages of organizational change. Yet the bivariate correlation between job insecurity and affective commitment was negative. These opposing results might indicate the presence of suppressor variables, changing the direction of the relationship. In general, a negative relation between job insecurity and employee attitudes is assumed. However, when its stressful nature is taken into account, job insecurity may exert a positive influence on employee attitudes (Staufenbiel & König, 2010). This remaining positive effect arises because employees may come to realize that a treasured resource (i.e., the job) is at stake, which, in turn, may lead to increased motivation or, in this case, increased affective commitment. This fits the popular belief that it is only when people are about to lose something, they realize how valuable it is.

**Potential Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

This study has potential limitations. First, our study relied on a cross-sectional survey design. The implication of this is that we cannot make any definite inferences about causal relationships. Our proposed relations are derived from theory and build on previous empirical findings. For example, Hellgren and Sverke (2003) showed that job insecurity affects mental and physical health, and not vice versa. Future research could develop and test more complex and longitudinal models on the consequences of job insecurity associated with organizational change. Change stage models may be a good starting point and are in any case useful in calling attention to the underemphasized role of time in organizational change research (Kim et al., 2011). Our findings indeed suggest that organizational change is a dynamic process, and support calls for explicitly considering time (i.e., change stages) in organizational change research (George & Jones, 2000; Pettigrew, Woodman, & Cameron, 2001; Schreurs et al., 2012).

Second, because our study rests on employee perceptions for all variables, there is the possibility of common method variance. To reduce the possibility of common method variance, we followed the recommendations—for questionnaire design as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003) instructing participants that there are no right or wrong answers, protecting participants’ anonymity, using validated measures. In addition, the results from two post hoc statistical techniques (i.e., Harman’s single-factor test, unmeasured method factor) suggested that common method variance is unlikely to be a serious problem in our study. Even though self-reports may be the most appropriate way to measure perception-based constructs such as job insecurity or fairness, we recommend...
future studies to complement these with more objective measures (e.g., the official change stage as determined by the company, or more objective health outcomes such as blood pressure).

Third, our sample of this study is exclusively composed of Belgian bank employees. Hence, we need to be cautious when generalizing our findings to employees from other countries or cultures. Future studies may consider cross-cultural research designs to detect differences or similarities and to determine whether our proposed model can be generalized. The fact that our sample involved only bank employees undergoing a merger implies caution when generalizing to other industry or change settings. However, it made it possible to study the influence of a specific type of change (i.e., a merger) on employees. Future research may explore the proposed mechanisms in different change settings and see if the relations are contingent on the type of organizational change.

Finally, our results suggest that there may be additional explanatory mechanisms underlying the relationship between job insecurity and employee outcomes, for example perceived control (Vander Elst et al., 2011) and lifestyle (De Cuyper et al., 2008). Accordingly, obvious directions for future research are to investigate which mechanism is most important, how mechanisms develop over time, and what organizations can do to offset the negative effects of job insecurity and simultaneously reap the potential motivational benefits.

Practical Implications

Our findings have a number of practical implications for organizations and offer several opportunities for human resource (HR) managers. The results of this study show that two distinct mechanisms, that is, fairness and energy depletion, can at least partly explain the negative effects of job insecurity. These mechanisms may also provide directions as to how organizations can prevent or cope with the negative effects of job insecurity. For example, HR managers could justify why organizational change is needed, how the organizational change will proceed, and which procedures will be used. Moreover, HR managers may try to frame organizational change as an opportunity for personal development so that employees perceive job insecurity as less unfair (Millward & Kyriakidou, 2004). Furthermore, adequate communication practices can ensure that attention is given to the quality of the relationship between employer and employee and as such emphasize fairness of the organizational change process (Conway & Monks, 2008; Kernan & Hanges, 2002).

The fact that job insecurity associates differently with fairness and exhaustion across change stages calls for a time-sensitive change management approach that supports the dynamics of organizational change. Therefore, HR management may decide to monitor their employees on a regular basis. This may allow HR managers to intervene at the right time with the right approach (i.e., when to address fairness or exhaustion). Change recommendations that are unspecific to a change stage may be limited as the results of our moderation hypotheses point out. For example, employees at an early change stage are more attentive to fairness. This implies that addressing change fairness by communicating potential mutual gains, justification of the change or any way of sense giving, should have especially high priority during an early change stage (Choi, 2011; Lind & Van den Bos, 2002; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999).

Moreover, the findings of our study show that job insecurity associates more strongly with exhaustion in the middle of the change process. HR managers could focus on providing additional or changing resources to counteract the negative effects of job insecurity and to increase the well-being of their job-insecure employees in other ways (Hobfoll, 2001; Schreurs et al., 2010). If possible, managers should make these resources accessible early in the change process to break a potential loss spiral before it gains momentum as this leads to detrimental employee outcomes (Hobfoll, 2001). These additional resources could take the form of supervisor support or increasing employees’ employability, or providing role clarity (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Halbesleben, 2006). Previous research indicates that resources such as supervisor support may alleviate the negative consequences of job insecurity (Lim, 1997).

Conclusion

We contributed to the job insecurity literature by identifying two coinciding but distinct mechanisms that explain the relationship between job insecurity and employee outcomes. Our findings indicated that fairness and exhaustion partially mediated the association of job insecurity with affective commitment and psychosomatic complaints, respectively. Furthermore, multiple group analysis revealed that the negative relation between job insecurity and fairness was stronger at an early change stage, whereas the association...
between job insecurity and exhaustion was strongest for respondents amid the organizational change. The results of this study may have important implications for job insecurity research. Specifically, our findings suggest that multiple processes may exist through which job insecurity influences employees and that these processes may differ over time.

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