

Relationship among Psychological Climate, Pay Satisfaction & Job Insecurity in Layoff Survivors

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The study examined the influence of perception of job insecurity on pay satisfaction and psychological climate of layoff survivors. The influence of education on perceived job insecurity was also explored in the study. Respondents comprised 189 workers (male = 88, female = 101) selected from employees of four major oil marketing companies in the downstream oil and gas sector in Nigeria that had recently undergone organizational restructuring. Results showed that perceived job insecurity significantly influenced both pay satisfaction and psychological climate. Specifically, perception of job insecurity was positively associated with pay satisfaction and psychological climate. Also, there was significant negative influence of education on perceived job insecurity.

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Introduction

Forced termination of employment due to organizational restructuring exercise may result in layoff survivors perceiving high job insecurity. Survivor employees may experience survivor syndrome, a condition described as “a set of attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of workers who remain following involuntary employee reductions” (Robbins, 1999). Since the goal of any restructuring program is to improve organizational effectiveness (Sitlington & Marshall, 2011), success in managing the psychological transition of survivor employees towards contributing maximally to organizational efficiency may require that managers understand how the heightened threat of job loss affect layoff survivors’ attitudes and perceptions of critical employee work outcomes.

In Nigeria, job insecurity alongside other variables have been studied in such sectors as banks (e.g. Adejuwon & Lawal, 2013; Okurame, 2014), telecommunication (e.g. Ugwu & Asogwa, 2017), hospitality (e.g. Karatepe & Olugbade,

2016) and education (e.g. Akpan, 2013). Similarly, job insecurity has been examined outside Nigeria (Camgoz, Ekmekci, Karapinar & Guler, 2016; de Beer, Rothmann Jr. & Pienaar, 2016; Haynie, Svyantek, Mazzei & Varma, 2016; Vujić, Jović, Lalić, Gagić & Cvejano, 2015). But job insecurity and its likely effects on layoff survivors perception of work outcomes, especially among employees in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria, is under-researched, despite the mass retrenchment the sector witnessed in the recent past. Therefore, the present study aimed at bridging the knowledge gap by examining the relationship among pay satisfaction, psychological climate and perceived job insecurity in employees who survived forced dismissals in the downstream oil and gas industry in Nigeria.

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Most definitions of job insecurity relate it to the subjective feeling of high level of uncertainty about the sustainability of one's present job in the light of current happenings in an industry (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermans & Van Vuuren, 1991). Perception of job insecurity may increase during organizational restructuring (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Grunberg, Moore & Greenberg, 2001; 2006). Findings from previous studies showed that perception of job insecurity was positively associated with negative work attitudes

(Brockner, 1988; Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sutton, 1987; Sverke, Hellgren & Näswall, 2002; Wang, Lu & Siu, 2015). Studies also showed that perceived job insecurity is indirectly related to performance of volitional behavior through the perception of psychological contract breach (Piccoli, De Witte & Reisel, 2017). In other words, the finding implied that a heightened threat of involuntary job loss may be interpreted as a violation of the 'lifetime employment' which employees believed they were promised at the time of joining the organization. Such negative interpretation may affect employee perception of post-change work outcomes.

An employee outcome that may be adversely affected by perception of job insecurity is satisfaction with remuneration. Studies have reported that work attitude is affected by remuneration with pay being of significant importance to employees (Chng & Wang, 2015; Rynes, Gerhart & Minette, 2004). Pay satisfaction assesses an individual's overall positive and negative feelings associated with pay. Findings from past studies showed that pay is positively related to employee attitude and behavior (Baroudi, Fleisher, Khapova, Jansen & Richardson, 2017; Chng & Wang, 2015; Gupta & Shaw 2014; Wang & Seifert, 2017). Pay cut is negatively related to commitment even with the prospect of job loss (Wang & Seifert, 2017) and pay satisfaction (Haynie, Svyantek, Mazzei & Varma, 2016). This means that the higher the perception of job insecurity, the less likely it is that an employee will be satisfied with his/her pay. However, Haynie et al.

(2016) finding elucidated that pay satisfaction may be of less importance to an employee who is gripped by the threat of dismissal, than the security of the job itself. This is because unplanned job loss may mean the loss of important personal and social valuables that may compromise the individual's wellbeing and mental health (Mauno, Cheng & Lim, 2017; Stolove, Galatzer-Levy, & Bonanno, 2017; Vander Elst, Näswall, Bernhard-Oettel, De Witte & Sverke, 2016).

However, that downsizing equally elicited positive reactions (e.g. increased commitment) in layoff survivors who perceived fairness in the process of organizational downsizing has been reported (Grunberg, Moore & Greenberg, 2001; van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2012). In fact, Wiesner, Vermeulen & Littler (1999) reported that downsizing had a positive effect on job satisfaction of layoff survivors and suggested that perceived job insecurity may have a positive influence on pay satisfaction since it is a component of global job satisfaction. This is consistent with Bewley (2005) & Li & Ahlstrom (2016) who found that the fear of job loss elicited favorable attitudinal and behavioral responses in employees.

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Also, the process involved in organizational restructuring implementation may influence organizational climate perception in layoff survivors. The psycho-

logical climate in work setting is a reference to the degree of satisfaction associated with an employee's subjective appraisal of organizational practices, procedures and outcomes (Baltes, 2001). Perception of unfairness in the organizational process that culminated to the involuntary retrenchment of former colleagues is capable of eliciting a feeling of psychological contract breach (Richter et al., 2016) because it communicates to layoff survivors that the organization no longer reciprocated hard work, loyalty and dedication with lifetime employment. But it has been reported that when an accurate explanation for the rationalisation is shared with layoff survivors, it led to positive influence on their future commitment to the organization (van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2012). It is expected that treating employees as stakeholders should reduce their tendency to exhibit negative attitude that otherwise would have occurred if accurate reasons for the decision were not provided.

Elman and O'Rand (2002) reported that both highly educated and less educated employees perceived job insecurity but that the perception differed, and underscored the need to examine educational attainment as a factor in perceived job insecurity. Furthermore, Zemsky (1998) posited that education and technical knowledge played critical roles in organizational restructuring, and implied that it may determine which employee is retained. Evidence from studies indicate that possessing cutting-edge skills and credentials improved job marketability such that a skilled employee is

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more likely to be retained in their current employment or could easily find a new one in case of forced termination of employment (Laserson, 1998; Murphy & Welch, 1993; Salsman, 1998). These findings corroborated de Bustillo & de Pedraza (2010) who reported that education reduced job insecurity, and implied that highly educated employees will perceive low job insecurity compared to less educated ones.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the present study is social exchange theory. Bultena (1998) suggested that social exchange theory be applied to the understanding of the effects of job insecurity on employee outcomes. This means that as employee outcomes, social exchange theory (SET) could be used to further the understanding of the relationship between pay satisfaction, psychological climate and job insecurity. SET is based on the idea that receiving something of benefit from a party to a relationship obligates the recipient to reciprocate in kind in future exchanges (Gouldner, 1960). It further argued that consistently receiving and reciprocating benefits strengthened the felt obligations to reciprocate between the parties in an exchange relationship (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961). In work organizations, employees expect they would be rewarded with continuous employment if they contributed meaningfully to organi-

zational functionality. Thus, it is assumed that the expectations of both parties are met in a situation of continuous employment. But when the organization 'reneges' to fulfill its own aspect of the obligation (e.g. by involuntary termination of appointment), the employee will in turn perceive the organization as untrustworthy and assess everything about it negatively.

Hypotheses

- i. Perception of job insecurity will be negatively related to pay satisfaction and psychological climate perception.
- ii. Education will be significantly negatively related to perceived job insecurity.

Respondents & Procedure

Participants in this study were selected from among employees in the downstream oil sector in Ibadan, Nigeria. The oil sector in general was adversely affected by the recent fall in oil price occasioned by a weak global oil demand. As a result, the sector experienced a lot of uncertainties that culminated in business closure, and the drop in revenue led to salary fractionalization and arrears, suspension of benefits, promotion freeze and massive rationalization. In consultation with management of the participating oil companies, the study questionnaires were distributed to employees, of which 189 were completed and returned.

Instrument & Analysis

The data for this voluntary survey were collected with structured question-

naires that contained existing standardized scales that measured pay satisfaction, psychological climate and job insecurity. Respondents indicated in the questionnaire demographic characteristics such as sex, age, education, marital status and experience. Also, they were asked to indicate whether management discussed the reasons for embarking on the restructuring exercise with staff prior to the exercise.

Pay satisfaction was measured by the 18-item version of the questionnaire developed by Heneman & Schwab (1985). The respondents expressed their degree of satisfaction with each statement on a 5 point scale in which respondents checked 1 = 'very dissatisfied' when they disagreed with a statement, and 5 = 'very satisfied' when they agreed with the statement. Total score on the scale was used as a measure of high and low levels of pay satisfaction. Judge (2006) reported coefficient alpha reliability estimate of .89 for the overall scale. The Cronbach Alpha of the scale in the present study is .94.

Psychological climate was assessed with the scale developed by Furnham & Leonard (1997). It is a 42-item questionnaire adapted to measure perceived psychological climate in workplace. Responses were based on a 5-point rating scale with strongly disagree scored 1, and strongly agree scored 5. Two sample items in the scale were: 'I receive all the information I need to carry out my work' and, 'People in this company do not spend too much time on inessentials'. The Cronbach Alpha of the scale in the present study is .94.

Job insecurity questionnaire (De Witte, 2000) was used to assess job insecurity. The JIQ is an 11-item scale in short format that assessed cognitive and affective aspects of job insecurity. The responses were rated on a 5-point scale such that strongly agree was scored 1, and strongly disagree was scored 5. Sample items in the scale are: "I am sure I can keep my job", and, "I am worried about keeping my job". Higher scores on the scale were interpreted as an indication of higher levels of perceived job insecurity.

Data generated in the study were analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS - version 22). The analyses performed included simple percentages, bi-variate correlation to test relationship between the variables, and hierarchical multiple regression analysis to test the prediction of the independent variable.

Results

The study had two main independent variables which were deemed acceptable for a sample size of 189 respondents (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Normality was tested using z-test for skewness and normal Q-Q plot. Inspection of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests showed the computed significance level to be greater than 0.05 (.074). Therefore, normality was assumed. The inspection of the normal Q-Q plot showed adequate normality for the job insecurity variable. Lastly, both pay satisfaction and psychological climate were established as independent variables, and therefore the assumption of singularity was not violated (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Table 1 Respondents' Socio-demographic Characteristics

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (in years)	20-25	34	18.0
	26-30	28	14.8
	31-35	60	31.7
	36-40	36	19.0
	41 and above	31	16.4
Gender	Male	88	46.6
	Female	101	53.4
Marital status	Never married	66	34.9
	Married	11	63.0
	Divorced	94	2.1
Education	No formal education	6	3.2
	High school certificate	16	8.52
	National diploma	42	2.23
	First degree	68	6.01
	Master's degree	26	3.81
Did management give reasons for restructuring?	Yes	31	6.4
	No	16	88.9
Did management give reasons for restructuring?	No	81	9.0
	Don't remember	74	2.0

Table 2 Correlations among Study Variables

	PS	PC	JI	Age	Education	Experience
PS	-					
PC	.38**	-				
JI	.43**	.36**	-			
Age	.05	.15**	.01	-		
Education	.15*	-.09	-.15*	.31**	-	
Experience	-.04	.05	.03	.51**	.23**	-

Significant at **p<.01, *p<.05, PS = Pay satisfaction, PC = Psychological climate, JI = Job insecurity

The results in Table 2 showed that there were significant correlations between the variables: pay satisfaction and psychological climate ($r = .38, p < .01$); pay satisfaction and job insecurity ($r = .43, p < .01$); psychological climate and job insecurity ($r = .36, p < .01$); pay climate and age ($r = .15, p < .01$); job insecurity and education ($r = -.15, p < .05$); age and education ($r = .31, p < .01$); age and experience ($r = .51, p < .01$); education and experience ($r = .23, p < .01$). All of these

relationships showed weak to moderate correlations that ranged between $r = .15$ and $r = .51$. It was therefore concluded that the assumption of multi-collinearity was not violated in the study (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

The results in Table 3 showed that in Step 1, control variables (age, education, and experience) had non-significant combined influence on job insecurity, but they jointly accounted for 3% variance in job

Table 3 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Job Insecurity

Variables	β	T	P	R	R ²	Adj R ²	ΔR^2	ΔF
Step 1								
<i>Age</i>	.04	.46	Ns	.17	.03	.01	.03	1.73
<i>Education</i>	-.17	-2.22*	<.05					
<i>Experience</i>	.05	.64						
Step 2								
<i>Age</i>	-.03	-.38	Ns	.38	.14	.12	.11	23.23
<i>Education</i>	-.12	-1.62	Ns					
<i>Experience</i>	.06	.75	Ns					
<i>PC</i>	.35	4.82**	<.01					
Step 3								
<i>Age</i>	-.02	-.28	Ns	.53	.28	.25	.13	30.20
<i>Education</i>	-.21	-2.97*	<.05					
<i>Experience</i>	.10	1.38	Ns					
<i>PC</i>	.18	2.49*	<.05					
<i>PS</i>	.40	5.49**	<.01					

**p<.01, *p<.05 PC=Psychological climate, PS=Pay satisfaction

The result indicated that the higher the level of education, the lower the level of perception of job insecurity.

insecurity [$R^2 = .03$, $F(3,167) = 1.73$, $p > .05$]. The results further showed that education predicted job insecurity [$b = -.17$, $t = -2.22$, $p < .05$]. The result indicated that the higher the level of education, the lower the level of perception of job insecurity. In Step 2 of the model, introducing the psychological climate variable into the relationship explained an additional 11% variance in job insecurity and this change in R^2 was significant [$R^2 = .14$, $F(1,166) = 23.23$, $p < .01$]. This means that the addition of psychological climate led to an incremental prediction of 11% in perceived job insecurity. The result further revealed that psychological climate independently predicted job insecurity [$b = .35$, $t = 4.82$, $p < .01$]. This means that the more favorable the psychologi-

cal climate, the higher the level of perceived job insecurity. Finally, the addition of pay satisfaction in Step 3 explained an additional 13% variation in job insecurity and this change in R^2 was significant [$R^2 = .28$, $F(1,165) = 30.20$, $p < .01$]. This means that the addition of pay satisfaction led to an incremental prediction of 2% in perceived job insecurity. The result further revealed that pay satisfaction [$b = .40$, $t = 5.49$, $p < .01$], perceived psychological climate [$b = .18$, $t = 2.49$, $p < .05$] and education [$b = -.21$, $t = -2.97$, $p < .05$] independently predicted job insecurity in Step 3. The independent predictions suggested that the higher the level of pay satisfaction, the higher is the level of perceived job insecurity. Also, more favorable perception of psychological cli-

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mate was associated with higher perception of job insecurity. Similarly, the result showed that the higher the level of education, the less the perception of job insecurity.

Discussion

Against the backdrop of the growing feeling of job insecurity among employees and the consequences of threatened job loss on employee attitudes, the present study examined the relationship between job insecurity, psychological climate and pay satisfaction in a sample of workers in the downstream sub-sector of the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. It was hypothesized that job insecurity would have significant positive relationship with employee outcomes, specifically with respect to pay satisfaction and psychological climate. The results showed that although pay satisfaction and psychological climate influenced job insecurity, however, the hypotheses were not confirmed in the direction predicted in the study.

The finding showed that pay satisfaction and job insecurity are positively related. It indicated that levels of satisfaction with pay increased as the fear of possible job loss increased. The finding did not support Haynie, Svyantek, Mazzei & Varma (2016) who found a negative association between pay satisfaction and job insecurity. It also contradicted the findings of previous studies that had reported negative relationship between pay satisfaction and job insecurity. But it is supported at least, indirectly by past studies (e.g. Brockner, 1988; Li & Ahlstrom, 2016). The finding in the present study

suggests that the negative consequences of job insecurity may be context dependent. The positive relationship between pay satisfaction and job insecurity in the present sample may reflect the fact that employees re-evaluated their remuneration more favorably in the light of a threatened layoff. The postulation is relevant because employees in the oil and gas industry earn higher wages on the average compared to other employee groups in Nigeria. It is therefore not unlikely that the value of their pay may have been magnified by a heightened fear of job loss.

Perception of higher job threats resulted in more favorable perception of the psychological climate.

Similarly, the finding that psychological climate and job insecurity are positively related indicated that perception of higher job threats resulted in more favorable perception of the psychological climate. In other words, employees who felt threatened with a dismissal assessed their work environment more favorably. The finding is consistent with Sutton (1987) who found that employees exhibited more positive attitude towards the organization in order to increase the chance of being retained when the organization downsized. Similarly, the outcome may be expected if lay-off survivors perceived fairness in the decision for the organizational restructuring process, management having previously discussed it with them (van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2012). The finding is possible in Nigeria because employees are known to make favorable com-

ments that tend to portray the organization in a good light to increase the chances that they might be retained in unpredictable economic conditions that can trigger staff rationalization.

Lastly, the finding showed that education was negatively related to job insecurity. It indicated that higher levels of education resulted in reduced perception of job insecurity. The finding concurred with previous findings that reported differences in perceived job insecurity in educated and less educated employees (de Bustillo & de Perra, 2010; Elman & O'Rand, 2002). An explanation for the finding in this study is that highly educated employees may have felt empowered that they had the resources (such as technical knowledge and skills) to confront difficulties in the labor market in the event of involuntary job loss.

Conclusion

Major conclusions that can be drawn from the findings of this study are that layoff survivors who perceived job insecurity reported higher pay satisfaction and favorable perception of psychological climate. Furthermore, a sense of job insecurity was higher among less educated layoff survivors, while those with higher education reported less job insecurity.

Limitation

The limitations of this study can constrain the generalizability of its findings to layoff survivors in organizations other than the oil and gas industry. The first

concerned the sample size of 189 respondents which is considered insufficient to be representative of the layoff survivors in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. A larger sample size might be more representative of workers in this industry. Another limitation relates to the exclusive use of self-report questionnaires only for data collection. Findings suggest that the exclusive use of self-report measures increased the likelihood that method variance would contribute to shared variance between measures used in the study (Schaufeli, Enzmann & Girault, 1993).

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