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## A qualitative study of coping strategies in the context of job insecurity

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### Abstract

Since the late 1970s economic recessions, technological changes and intensified global competition have dramatically changed the nature of work. For employees, these changes cause feelings of insecurity regarding the nature and future existence of their jobs. The aim of this study is to examine the factors that influence the coping strategies that employees may choose when they face job insecurity. A qualitative research is conducted with several in-depth interviews, and the results suggest that among many coping strategies with job insecurity, employees may engage in organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) or job search behavior depending on personal and organizational variables. This study enhances the literature in two ways: First of all, previous studies have treated OCB and job search behavior as consequences of job insecurity whereas this paper treats them as coping strategies. Additionally, this qualitative study investigates the relationship between situational and dispositional factors and adoption of coping strategies. Employers face the challenge of retaining human element by providing an environment of job security in order to keep their talented human resources high performing and motivated. Therefore it is also aimed to provide managerial suggestions on a practical organizational problem by shedding light on how organizations can enhance the adoption of constructive coping strategies.

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*Keywords:* job insecurity; coping strategies; organizational citizenship behavior; job search behavior

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### 1. Introduction

During the last decades, the nature of work life has gone through dramatic changes as a consequence of increased global competition, advancement of information technologies, and reengineering of business processes. In this rapidly changing environment of competition, economic uncertainty, and increasing need for flexibility, organizations have shifted towards reorganizational practices such as outsourcing, downsizing, and mergers in order to adapt to the new situation [1]. Especially after going through the

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tough economic consequences of the global crisis, many organizations have preferred cutting costs through manpower adjustments. In order to employ fewer people, downsizing, or more recently referred to as rightsizing, has been one of the most popular strategies to reduce costs. [2]

Downsizing and restructuring practices in organizations have caused a sense of insecurity and uncertainty about jobs among workers at all ranks. It has been argued [3,4,5] that employees can no longer expect life-long and secure relationships with the employing organization nor can they expect their job content to be permanent and reliable. In addition, feelings of job insecurity emerge among employees who survive initial layoffs after a downsizing process [3]. As a result of the changing conditions specified, studies on job insecurity have recently received growing recognition.

Obviously, ambiguity is one of the most evident features of job insecurity. According to stress theories, not knowing how to act against a threat to something valued will lead to stress experiences [6]. In order to reduce this stress level, employees look forward to adopting different coping strategies. Dewe [7] defines coping as active or passive attempts to respond to a threatful situation with the aim of removing the threat or reducing the discomfort. According to Lazarus and Folkman [6], coping is context specific. Therefore different coping strategies may be preferred by the individual depending on situational and personal factors.

In this paper, we will first introduce the relevant literature for job insecurity and coping strategies. Afterwards, we will explain the theoretical background that provides the foundation of the study. Methodology and findings will be discussed with their relation to the literature. Finally, in the conclusion part, academic and managerial implications will be discussed.

## **2. Job insecurity**

Job insecurity refers to a “sense of powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation” [3,p.438]. Also, Hartley et al. [4, p.7] defined job insecurity as “a discrepancy between the level of security a person experiences and the level she or he might prefer”. Davy et al. [8] described the concept as “the worry a person feels about the future of her or his employment situation”.

According to Kinnunen and Natti [9], the possible antecedents of job insecurity are classified into three groups: demographics factors (such as age, gender, marital status and education), positional characteristics (such as nature of the employment relationship, job tenure and access to information), and lastly environmental and organizational characteristics (such as regional unemployment rate and organizational climate) [9].

In terms of age, job insecurity is found to be decreasing for the elders as the responsibility for others decrease [10]. In some studies it is found that as people get older, they become more vulnerable to job insecurity [4]. Secondly, gender can also play an important role in job insecurity situations. Although there are exceptionalities, the main path for this demographic factor shows us that males experience more insecurity compared to women. Though, the main proposition here is that the person who is the breadwinner of the house experiences more job insecurity [10]. Positional characteristics, as the second group of antecedents, have considerable effect on the construct as well [11]. For instance, Barling and Gallagher [12] found that job insecurity is less for employees who are hired on full time or have permanent contracts. Similarly, Näswall and De Witte [13] found that employees who hold contracts with a time limit feel more insecure compared to permanent or full-time employees. However, there are some mixed results as well. In their study, Gallagher and McLean Parks [14] found the contrary result that insecurity is less for temporary employees. Last group of antecedents, environmental and organizational

characteristics such as social support, is a fundamental issue in dealing with job insecurity [6]. Those who are able to get support from others, i.e. family support [15], have reported lower levels of job insecurity [11].

Consequences of the construct are also numerous. Experience of uncertainty for the future employment has severe effects on a person's overall life situation [16]. Economic, social and personal facets of threats create uncertainty and ambiguity in one's life [6]. Job insecurity is also associated with several different health related, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes [10, 4]. Health related outcomes include physical health complaints, mental distress, and work-to-leisure carry over [11]. As for attitudinal and behavioral effects of job insecurity on organizational effectiveness, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt [3, p.438] assert that "workers react to job insecurity, and their reactions have consequences for organizational effectiveness" Usually, job satisfaction is found to be decreasing as job insecurity increases [16, 4]. Other consequences of job insecurity are decreased organizational commitment, reduced trust in management, and lower levels of job involvement [11]. The main behavioral effect of job insecurity is about the intention to stay in the organization. When people feel insecure in their job, they are less willing to remain in their organization. Job insecurity, can lead to increased levels of turnover intention [4, 8]. Nevertheless, there is another view, where it is found that employees who perceive a risk of layoffs may increase their work effort in order to be more valuable to the organization, and therefore not be redundant [11, p. 13]. In this paper, we aim to find out the relevant coping strategies in the context of job insecurity.

### 3. Coping strategies

Since job insecurity has negative consequences for employee attitudes and well-being, coping strategies enter the stage at this point in order to reduce the negative outcomes either for the individual or the organization. Coping strategies that employees use to deal with job insecurity influence their adjustment to this stressful and threatening event.

There exist many definitions of coping. Coyne, Aldwin and Lazarus [17] refer to coping as cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage environmental and internal demands and conflicts affecting an individual that exceed the person's resources. According to Dewe [7] coping is defined as active or passive attempts to respond to a threatening situation with the aim of removing the threat or reducing the discomfort.

Lazarus and Folkman [6] refer to two types of coping strategy. The first type, problem- focused coping, intends to address the source of the job-related tension directly. The second, emotion-focused coping, aims at minimizing the emotional consequences of stress. Negative emotion-focused coping behaviors with potential negative outcomes include withdrawal, self-blame, wishful thinking, and emotional avoidance. Catalano et al. [18] suggests that employees under stress are most likely to deal with stressful situations by adopting negative coping behaviors, whether problem focused or emotion focused. Thus they exhibit behaviors that are reactive, rather than proactive.

Latack and Havlovic [19], in their search for a comprehensive conceptual definition of coping, suggested two main components; namely focus of coping and method of coping. Focus of coping is problem versus emotion focused coping. Regarding method of coping, they make the following three distinctions: cognitive/behavioral; control/escape; social solitary. Problem or emotion-focused coping can be comprised of any of this variety of methods. According to the first distinction; coping can be cognitive (mental strategies and self-talk) or behavioral (taking action or doing something) which are more observable behavioral actions. The second distinction is made between proactive/control-oriented methods versus escapist/avoidance methods. A third category of coping method is social versus solitary.

Coping can utilize methods that involve other people (social method) or it can be done alone (solitary method). In addition, Roskies, Louis-Guerin and Fournier [20] mentioned six different coping strategies to reduce the stress of job insecurity: Emotional discharge; cognitive avoidance; disengagement; cognitive redefinition; direct action to maintain current job (for example, working harder); and direct action to improve future job prospects (for example, active search for possible jobs).

Coping is a process that evolves from resources. Coping resources are those psychological, social and organizational resources available to a person, which influence whether a particular coping strategy can or will be implemented [6]. Personal and organizational variables can be treated as coping resources in the context of job insecurity.

#### **4. Theoretical background**

In this framework, we integrate two complementary theories, namely social exchange theory and rational choice theory to explain coping strategies adopted by employees in the context of job insecurity. Social exchange theory suggests that human relationships are formed by a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives. According to Blau [21, p. 91], social exchange involves the voluntary actions of individuals, which are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring. Consistently, Gouldner's [22] norm of reciprocity states that the parties involved in relationships are likely to attempt to maintain a balance in terms of the rewards and costs that are exchanged. Similarly, in rational choice theory, social interaction, such as the interaction between employer and employees, is an economic transaction which is guided by the actors' rational choice among available alternative options [23]. Therefore employees tend to display certain forms of work behavior that they expect will bring desirable outcomes.

Linking the theory to the context of job insecurity, in the workplace, employees are expected to perform satisfactorily in exchange for fair rewards and continuous employment. The fulfillment of these expectations by both employees and employer constitutes the continuous obligations of the two parties [24]. Job insecurity can be viewed as a situation in which an employer violates the long-term obligation of providing stable and continuous employment for employees. When an organization fails to fulfill its obligations such as providing sufficient job security, its employees would carefully consider the possible consequences of their decreased or increased work effort, extra role behaviors and performance, and then decide what action to take. They will choose whichever coping strategy provides them with the maximum benefit in order to ensure their own welfare.

According to Coleman [23], people's rational choices always take place in a wider social environment. In different work settings, the constraints, costs, and benefits that are associated with an individual's behavior may vary, and therefore the individual would have different payoffs and expectations of the consequences of their actions. This explains why, in response to job insecurity, some employees try to improve their OCB and job performance while others do not. For example, according to the social exchange theory, work environment situations that trigger OCB involve high levels of perceived justice [25].

#### **5. Methodology**

After a comprehensive literature review, a qualitative study has been conducted, in which 22 in-depth interviews were realized. Interviews were conducted with 22 individuals from different organizations which function at different industries ranging from telecommunications to FMCG. During the interviews,

the aim was to explore the general feelings of employees during crisis periods in addition to the way he/she copes with job insecurity. We tried to uncover the factors that have an influence on the person's attitudes towards the undesirable situation. Among the coping strategies, we focused on the problem focused behavioral and proactive coping strategies that people choose when coping with job insecurity.

## 6. Findings

Results of the interviews have been content analyzed by using NVivo8 software which helped to form categories. First, free nodes are formed and then tree nodes are made up by the combination of the free nodes. As a result of the study, a total of 118 sub-categories is formed which are then formed 12 general categories by two independent referees. The inter-judge reliability between the referees is high (Cohen's Kappa=0.89) and the points of disagreements are negotiated with the referees and a consensus is reached. Themes that were infrequently mentioned in conversations (e.g., less than 10 times) were discarded. The resulting 8 classes of themes and their frequencies are shown in figure 1. These include organizational justice, perceived organizational support; locus of control, self-esteem, optimism and positive/negative affectivity, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and the last one is job search behavior.

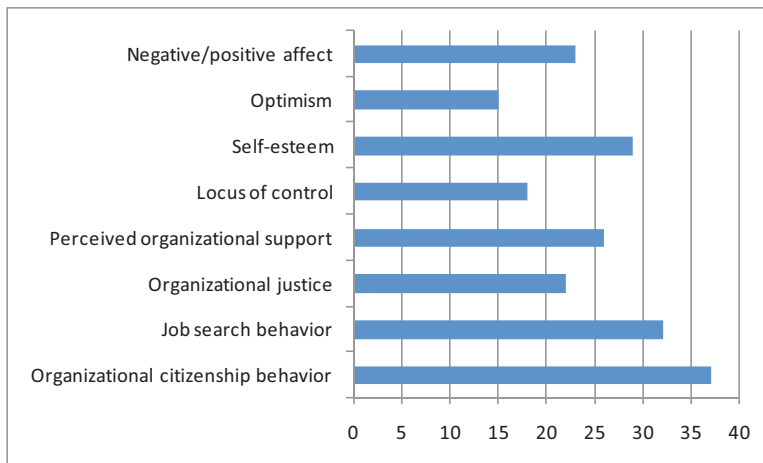


Fig. 1. General categories that are cited more than 10 and their number of citations

The coping strategies and personal and organizational variables found in the qualitative study yielded results that are consistent with the relevant literature. In the following sections, we will discuss each of the general categories in more detail, explaining their relations to the existing literature.

### *6.1. Coping strategies: OCB and job search behavior*

Individuals were asked for their preferred coping strategies with job insecurity, emphasizing the problem focused strategies they choose. The findings of the in-depth interviews that have focused on the behavioral and proactive (control oriented) methods of coping have led us to select two major coping strategies of direct action to maintain current job (represented by organizational citizenship behavior) as opposed to direct action to improve future job (represented by job search behavior) as the most cited categories. These two coping strategies express two extreme ends which emphasize employees' proactive actions where they look forward to control either their current job or future job by taking behavioral actions. The related literature regarding these two problem focused coping strategies is mentioned below.

Although the accumulated evidence offers strong support for the view of job insecurity as a stressor, the positive effect can also be expected because job insecurity might also motivate people to work hard because one might believe that good performance decreases the chance of being redundant. Throughout the literature, some researchers [26, 27, 28] argue that the fear of losing one's job may motivate employees to engage in individual action to actively cope with the threat. If, for example, individuals think that higher performing employees have a lower risk to be laid off, it would be functional for them to increase the effort they put into their work. At this point, employees would engage in extra-role behaviors in addition to their in-role activities. As the results of the qualitative research suggests, this is the case for many individuals facing job insecurity. Organizational citizenship behavior is used to reflect the extra-role behaviors.

In 1977, Organ [29] introduced the term "organizational citizenship behavior" (OCB) for the first time suggesting it to be a component of job performance. After a year, in 1978, Katz and Kahn [30] argued that besides their prescribed roles, employees should engage in behaviors that go beyond formal obligations for effective functioning of organizations. The characteristics of OCB have evolved over the past two decades. There have been many modifications, additions, and enhancements since Smith et al. [31] began exploring the topic in 1983 empirically. Organ has been an extremely influential pioneer on the topic of OCB. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) was defined by Organ [32, p.4] as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization". According to Diefendorff et al. [33], in general OCBs differ from in-role performance in two main aspects. First, as stated by Organ [34] unlike in-role performance, OCBs do not directly support the technical core but rather influence the social and psychological environment of organizations, which in turn influences the technical core. Second, OCBs are more discretionary and less constrained by work-process technology and other task features than in-role activities. Task performance is influenced by individual ability and work-process technology; on the other hand, OCBs are influenced by what individuals think and feel about their jobs [35, 36]. Throughout the literature, many scholars who are interested in the topic of OCB have established different dimensions for OCBs. Examples of these dimensions include altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, sportsmanship, and courtesy [37, 38].

Job search behavior is defined as the specific behaviors through which effort and time are expended to acquire information about labor market alternatives, irrespective of the motives for, or consequences of, the information gathering activity [39]. Job search behavior is usually found to facilitate turnover [40], although it may not always lead to turnover [41].

Job search behavior may endanger psychological processes that trigger withdrawal behavior while reducing commitment to the current job and organization [42]. The labor economics literature suggests that personal factors may vary the cost of the job search [41]. According to Devine and Kiefer [43], an individual's contacts or the degree of his visibility in the market which makes him more attractive in the job market, affect the degree of the job cost. Furthermore, individual differences on allocating time between work and non-work activities might also vary the level of the job search behavior [41]. According to the classical labor economics theory, people would look for a new job if the value they assign to leisure is more than the actual leisure time they have [44]. So, there is a threshold which is specific to every individual and this threshold determines the level of job search behavior [41].

Social exchange theory suggests that organizational commitment would be increased with organizational support, such that employees who receive organizational support are less likely to seek out new job opportunities [45]. On the other hand, when employees experience low organizational support through high levels of job stress and/or job dissatisfaction, they may initiate a job search process [45, p.237]. Job dissatisfaction, low perceived organizational support and organizational commitment are some of the job attitudes that have affect on employee job search behaviors [45].

There are two motivational processes that might lead to job search behavior: push and pull processes [41]. "Push process" suggests that people are pushed towards considering alternative jobs when they are not comfortable with their current job and life situations. Level of job satisfaction, job stress, perceived internal promotion opportunities and pay level can be some of the factors creating discomfort in one's job conditions [46, 47]. "Pull process", on the other hand, suggests that whenever there is an opportunity outside the current work environment, this opportunity would "pull" the individual to search for it. According to this perspective, the level of search activity will be positively correlated with the expected income in the prospective job and negatively correlated with the perceived costs of the search [48].

## 6.2. *Organizational variables: organizational justice and perceived organizational support*

As a result of the in-depth interviews, two general categories reflect the organizational variables that are influential in the strategies that people choose in coping with job insecurity. First category is related with organizational justice and the second one is perceived organizational support.

With respect to organizational justice, respondents stated that organizational justice is highly influential in their following behaviors when faced with job insecurity. They explicitly mentioned that, some factors such as fair allocation of rewards and resources, and fair treatment to employees in the workplace are very important for them and hence results in extra-role behaviors when properly supplied. This is in line with the related literature. In broad terms, organizational justice refers to employee perceptions of fairness in the workplace [49]. Researchers have differentiated at least three different forms of justice; which are: distributive justice [50], procedural justice [51], and interactional justice [52]. Distributive justice, which is based on Adams' [50] equity theory, is concerned with equitable distributions of rewards and resources [53]; procedural justice, which is introduced by Thibaut and Walker [51], is related with the perceived equity of organizational policies and procedures determining resource allocation and other managerial decisions [54]; and interactive justice involves respectful and equitable treatment of employees by immediate supervisors [55].

When rewards and resources are fairly distributed (distributive justice), decision-making procedures are equitable (procedural justice), and supervisors treat employees with dignity and respect (interactive justice), organizations show a sense of concern for employee well-being and their contribution to

organizational success. Research [56, 57] demonstrated that inequitable treatment influenced employee decisions to engage in acts intended to harm co-workers or the organization, reduce work effort, or terminate employment. As to the results of the study conducted by Kausto et al. [58], employees who perceived the organization as unfair and experienced job insecurity were at a higher risk in terms of emotional exhaustion and stress symptoms. In contrast, it is found out that, when individuals are treated fair in social settings, their confidence levels increase and they start to be fair in return, which results in a tendency of working more and engaging in extra efforts [59].

The second organizational variable is perceived organizational support. Individuals stated that when they feel that they are a part of the organization they behave differently and show extra effort. Related literature supports the findings.

Perceived organizational support (POS) is defined as an employee belief that the organization cares for and values his or her contribution to the success of the organization [60, 61]. As Rhoades and Eisenberger [62] suggest, antecedents include procedural justice, supportive and respectful acts by supervisors, recognition, fair pay and rewards, promotions, job security, autonomy, and training. Consequences include increased organizational commitment, job satisfaction, positive affect, task interest, task performance, and intentions to remain with the organization. It has been found out that perceived organizational support relates to a range of positive employee attitudes and behaviors at work, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, various forms of citizenship and discretionary behavior, attendance and intention to stay. In organizations where perceived organizational support is valued, policies promoting employee well-being and feelings of accomplishment, a sense of positive contribution to the organization, and personal and organizational goal attainment are emphasized [63]. Findings by Cardona et al. [64] demonstrated that employees reporting higher POS had stronger social attachment to the organization, which resulted in increased OCB.

Perceived organizational support (POS) is highly important at hard times and seen as assurance that aid will be available from the organization when it is needed to carry out one's job effectively and to deal with stressful situations [65]. In the context of job insecurity, for those employees who feel stress, the role perceived organizational support plays gets more vital.

### *6.3. Personal variables: locus of control, self-esteem, optimism and negative and positive affectivity*

As its definitions imply, job insecurity is a subjective and perceived phenomenon based on the individual's perceptions and interpretations of the immediate work environment [3, 4]. Therefore it is expected that the differences in the way individuals perceive job insecurity will lead to different behavior patterns. As noted by Davis and Phares, [66, p. 558], in ambiguous situations personality variables are quite important in their effects on behavior. Accordingly, the expectation is that with job insecurity, workers suffer from a sense of helplessness and loss of control over their environment where personal variables gain importance to shape how an individual will perceive and cope with insecurity. Engagement in negative versus positive coping behaviors will be moderated by dispositional variables. The results of the in-depth interviews also supported the literature in that personal variables were influential in the preference of different coping strategies. The findings have yielded four aspects of personality that have received attention in previous research on job insecurity, namely, locus of control, self esteem, optimism and negative - positive affectivity.

Cromwell et al. [67] appear to be the first to have used the term locus of control referring to the construct of internal versus external control of reinforcement. Rotter's [68] discussion provided the grounded theory on the locus of control construct. Accordingly, internal locus of control results from the



perception that reinforcement is contingent on one's own behavior or traits. On the other hand, in external locus of control, reinforcement is perceived to be due to luck, chance, fate, or factors beyond one's control. It has been reported that individuals with an external locus of control report higher levels of job insecurity than individuals with an internal locus of control [4]. Also, Salter [69] found that internal control was associated with lower job insecurity, since individuals with a strong internal orientation believe that they can influence their work environments. In addition, it has been suggested that an internal locus of control relates to lower levels of perceived stress, thus it increases the belief in one's own control, and therefore facilitates the use of problem-focused strategies [70].

Self-esteem has been one of the most extensively investigated personal variables in the work context [71]. Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall self-evaluation of his/her competencies [72]. It is the extent to which a person believes him/herself to be capable, significant, worthy, successful, and the extent to which a positive or negative attitude is held toward the self. Brockner [71] has suggested that a person with high self-esteem and optimism is more likely to view a stressful work situation as challenging rather than threatening, and therefore may avoid feelings of job insecurity. Kinnunen et al. [73] found that high job insecurity and low self-esteem were predictors of each other. Many studies have also found an association between coping behavior and self-esteem [74]. People with high self-esteem have more capacity to engage in a wide range of coping behaviors [75] whereas people with low self-esteem are more likely to exhibit defensive coping strategies such as denial or repression. Also it has been found that people with higher self-esteem tend to engage in more beneficial problem-focused coping behaviors [76] and they prefer more active coping strategies, such as seeking social support or advice and information than people.

The concepts of optimism and pessimism concern people's expectations for the future. Dispositional optimism can be defined as a person's positive outlook towards life events [77]. Optimists believe that good outcomes will occur in life and therefore they can appraise stressful events more positively and arrange their resources to take direct action in response to a stressor. In the findings of the study, consistent with the literature, dispositional optimism is found to moderate an individual's job insecurity perceptions, since a more optimistic individual would perceive job insecurity in a more positive approach. It's been found that individuals lacking in optimism and self-esteem experience greater negative stress and to use more withdrawal and passive forms of coping to manage stressful events [78].

Positive and negative affectivity, which are not opposites of one another, are self-reported mood measurements used to specify the level of affect. Watson and Clark [79] suggest that individuals high on negative affectivity perceive the negative attributes in themselves more and they experience higher levels of stress. High negative affect can be represented by words such as irritable, distressed, and guilty. On the other hand high positive affect can be represented by words such as interested, excited and active. It is predicted that, individuals high in negative affectivity would not only feel that they had fewer coping resources available, but would also be more likely to use defeatist strategies such as emotional discharge, cognitive avoidance and disengagement in coping with the perceived threat, and less likely to use the more productive strategies like direct action [80]. Conversely, individuals high on positive personality disposition are expected to be both more confident of their coping resources and employ more adaptive and effective coping strategies [78]. Again in line with the literature, the findings of our study support that affectivity affects the choice of coping strategies in the job insecurity context.

### 7. Proposed model & propositions

Our proposed model is based on the findings of the qualitative study. The 8 general categories formed the bases of the model. Based on the related literature, we attempted to link the findings and show the relationships in the conceptual model. Throughout the literature, many scholars have studied the subject of job insecurity mainly focusing on its antecedents, consequences and moderating effects. Additionally, there are studies analyzing the coping strategies employees use in times of insecurity. In this study and conceptual model, the focus is mainly on the coping strategies that employees engage in order to prevent the stress they may feel during insecurity. As to the coping strategies, qualitative research suggested that organizational citizenship behavior and job search behavior are the two extremes of a behavior that an employee may undertake. Although job search behavior has been studied before as a coping strategy for job insecurity, it is the contribution of this study to include OCB as a coping strategy. In the literature, OCB has been studied in the context of job insecurity, but not as a coping strategy rather as a consequence of job insecurity. The findings suggesting to include OCB in the framework has two grounds, one of which is the claim that is justified by rational choice theory that employees who feel insecure about their jobs may engage in extra-role behaviors in addition to their in-role behaviors to show that they are loyal to the company and if someone is going to be fired, they should not be the ones and the company needs them. Another claim is based on the social exchange theory that employees who feel that the organization treated them in the best way possible during non-crises times, they should be giving more to the organization in crises times and engage in extra-role behaviors in exchange to help the organization overcome the hard time. Several researchers have found out different moderating variables that influence the outcome when they feel insecure. As the findings of the qualitative research suggest, these are categorized as organizational and personal variables.

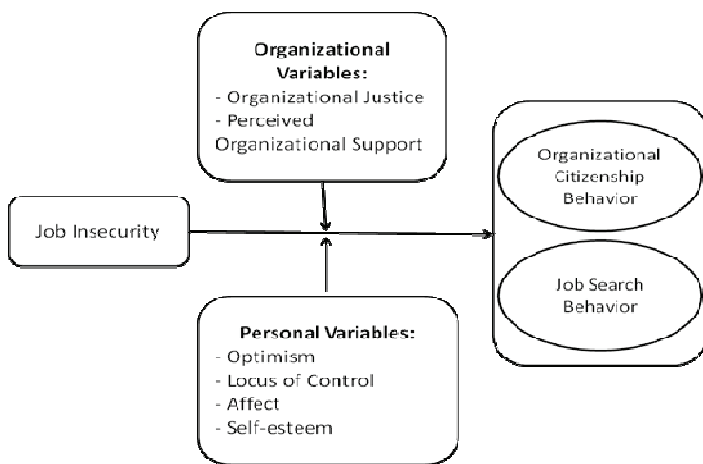


Fig. 2. Proposed conceptual model

In the qualitative research, we figured out that, there are 6 general categories which are influential in coping with job insecurity. Two of them, organizational justice and perceived organizational support reflect organizational variables and the other four, locus of control, affect, self-esteem and optimism reflect personal variables. In line with the findings, we claim that these organizational and personal variables play a vital role in employees’ coping strategies when they feel insecurity about their jobs. In a

more specific manner, we argue that, for those employees who feel job insecurity, if they feel that the organization is just then it is more likely that employees will engage in extra-role behaviors and undertake citizenship behaviors rather than engaging in job search behavior. The same logic is applicable for perceived organizational support, as well. Employees who feel insecure about their jobs would engage in organizational citizenship behaviors if they feel that the organization supports them, otherwise, they would start searching for new jobs. With respect to the personal variables, if employees feeling insecure are optimistic about the job and have positive affectivity, then we expect them to engage in citizenship behaviors rather than job search behaviors. With regard to locus of control and self-esteem, we conclude that employees with internal locus of control and high self-esteem would engage in citizenship behaviors, not in job search behaviors.

## 8. Conclusion

The previous studies have analyzed OCB and job search behavior as consequences of job insecurity. The main contribution of this article is that it treats them as coping strategies adopted by employees rather than being the ultimate outcome of job insecurity. For further studies on job insecurity and coping strategies, the model proposed in this qualitative study can be tested empirically. It is suggested to measure the impact of organizational and personal variables on the preferred coping strategies statistically with such an empirical study. In the proposed model, OCB and job search behavior represent two problem focused behavioral and proactive (control oriented) coping strategies of direct action either to maintain their current job or to improve future job. However in further studies, other coping strategies can be included in the model and tested empirically in order to obtain more comprehensive results. Besides the academic contribution of this study, it also aims to serve as a guide for employers in their approaches to job insecurity which is a contemporary problem. According to the findings of this study, in the context where employees feel job insecurity, it is important for organizations to be just and to provide organizational support for their employees to exhibit positive behavior. In addition, in terms of human resources strategies, recruiting employees with the mentioned personality attributes will ensure that employees cope with job insecurity in a more positive way.

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