



Special Issue Editorial on Job Insecurity

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In recent years, health-related, political, and economic crises have caused significant disruptions in labour markets across Scandinavia, Europe, and the world. Along with the ongoing digital transformation and the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, which are expected to profoundly reshape many jobs and work roles, employees are facing growing uncertainty about their future employment, job quality, and career prospects. Given these developments and ongoing transformations, the research on job insecurity presented in our two special issues are both timely and essential. The first special issue is edited by Katharina Klug, Anahí van Hootegem, and Katharina Näswall, and the second special issue by Hans De Witte and Eva Selenko. Their editorials introducing each part follow below.

PART I – ADVANCING RESEARCH ON THE CONCEPTUALISATION AND DYNAMICS OF JOB INSECURITY AND RELATED CONCEPTS

Katharina Klug, Anahí Van Hootegem and Katharina Näswall

The 21st century, especially the most recent years, can be characterised as an age of polycrisis (i.e., multiple, overlapping crises that influence each other globally; [Zaki et al., 2024](#)), such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, energy crises, or resurging trade wars. At the same time, “megatrends” like the digital transformation, including automation and artificial intelligence, lead to profound changes in jobs, tasks and work roles in the long run ([ILO, 2019](#); [OECD, 2022](#)). As a result, sudden fluctuations in business cycles and labour markets, often triggered by crises, continue to make uncertainty a persistent feature of modern jobs and careers. Long-term changes, which are also difficult to control or predict, further contribute to this uncertainty. Many people are bound to experience uncertainty about the future of their job, or the development of their careers at some point in their working lives ([Lee et al., 2018](#); [Spurk et al., 2022](#)).

In light of these developments, concerns about involuntary job loss or unwanted job changes (i.e., job insecurity; [Shoss, 2017](#); [Sverke et al., 2002](#)), or undesirable career developments (i.e., career insecurity; [Spurk et al., 2022](#)), remain salient experiences for many workers, and

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thus relevant phenomena in work and organisational psychology. Job insecurity has a well-established research tradition dating back to the 1980s, with several reviews and meta-analyses documenting extensive empirical evidence of its negative consequences for employees' well-being, attitudes, and behaviour (e.g., [Cheng & Chan, 2008](#); [Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018](#); [Lee et al., 2018](#); [Llosa et al., 2018](#); [Shoss, 2017](#); [Sverke et al., 2002, 2019](#)).

Nevertheless, research gaps still exist when it comes to our understanding of the mechanisms, dynamics over time, boundary conditions, and effectiveness of interventions aimed at alleviating job insecurity ([Klug et al., 2024a](#); [Lee et al., 2018](#)). Moreover, to keep up with an ever-changing world of work and broader social context, new research streams have emerged that address the repercussions of job insecurity beyond individual and job-related outcomes (e.g., [Hollywood et al., 2020](#); [Selenko & De Witte, 2021](#)), or expand the scope of insecurity conceptualisations from jobs to occupations and careers (e.g., [Höge et al., 2012](#); [Roll et al., 2023](#); [Spurk et al., 2022](#)). From this vantage point, *SIWOP* invited us to guest-edit a special issue aiming to advance research on the conceptualisation, antecedents, mechanisms and consequences of job insecurity and related constructs.

We were pleased to see that our call for papers was met with great interest and resulted in a collection of articles that 1) delves deeper into the mechanisms between job insecurity and its outcomes, as well as boundary conditions of these relationships ([Låstad et al., 2025](#); [Selenko et al., 2024](#); [Vander Elst et al., 2024](#)), and 2) broadens the scope from insecurity of the job and from individual, job-related outcomes to insecurity of whole careers, as well as career-related and political outcomes ([Låstad et al., 2025](#); [Selenko et al., 2024](#); [Spurk et al., 2025](#)). In the following, we will discuss how the individual papers come together to make up the central themes of Part I of this special issue, before concluding with a brief outlook on future research.

WHY AND WHEN JOB INSECURITY RELATES TO OUTCOMES

The first theme of Special Issue Part I can be summarised as a more detailed analysis of the processes that link insecurity at work to its antecedents and outcomes. Job insecurity is typically conceptualised as a stressor and thus seen as an antecedent of employees' attitudes, well-being and behaviour. Theoretical explanations typically draw on 1) stress processes according to appraisal theory ([Lazarus & Folkman, 1984](#)) or Conservation of Resources theory ([Hobfoll, 1989](#)), as job insecurity constitutes a threat to valued resources associated with employment (e.g., [Vander Elst et al., 2016](#)); 2) social exchange violations, for example as job insecurity reflects a breach of the psychological contract ([Rousseau, 1995](#)) for employees (i.e., economic security in return for work, e.g.,

[Piccoli & De Witte, 2015](#)), 3) motivation and psychological need frustration ([Deci & Ryan, 1987](#)), as job insecurity can undermine employees' needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness (e.g., [Vander Elst et al., 2012](#)), and 4) social identity ([Tajfel et al., 1986](#)), as job insecurity may threaten employees' belonging to valued social groups (e.g., [Selenko et al., 2017](#); see also [Griep et al., 2021](#), for an empirical test of competing mechanisms). It is thus both theoretically plausible and empirically supported that job insecurity leads to negative consequences for employees (e.g., [Cheng & Chan, 2008](#); [Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018](#); [Llosa et al., 2018](#); [Sverke et al., 2002, 2019](#)). For a long time, the bulk of this evidence came from cross-sectional studies. Although longitudinal studies support job insecurity as an antecedent, such as to employee well-being, reverse or reciprocal relationships have often not been tested ([De Witte et al., 2016](#)). For example, it is plausible to assume that poor health or performance problems could make it difficult for employees to protect their resources, leading to greater job insecurity ([Griep et al., 2021](#); [Rudolph et al., 2024](#)). More research is therefore still needed to deal with endogeneity and directionality of effects in job insecurity research. Two papers in Special issue Part I do so: with longitudinal designs that allow exploring reverse and reciprocal relationships ([Vander Elst et al., 2024](#)), but also with the less common approach of instrumental variable estimation ([Selenko et al., 2024](#)), designed to address correlated error terms in cross-sectional designs (see [Antonakis et al., 2010](#)).

Related to aspects of causality, the explaining mechanisms between job insecurity and outcomes deserve more attention, as well as boundary conditions that can exacerbate or alleviate these relationships. All four papers in Special issue Part I ([Låstad et al., 2025](#); [Selenko et al., 2024](#); [Spurk et al., 2025](#); [Vander Elst et al., 2024](#)) address questions of "the Why and the When" ([De Cuyper & De Witte, 2021](#)). This pertains not only to explanations why and when job insecurity has an effect on well-being or behaviour ([Selenko et al., 2024](#); [Vander Elst et al., 2024](#), both in this issue), but also to job or career insecurity itself as an explaining mechanism in other stress-, motivational or behavioural processes, such as knowledge hiding ([Shoss et al., 2023](#)), health effects of illegitimate tasks ([Kottwitz et al., 2021](#)), or of career adaptability ([Spurk et al., 2025](#), in this issue). With the advancement of longitudinal research designs, the field has also moved towards exploring these processes as they unfold within persons over time (e.g., [Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2020](#); [Klug et al., 2024b](#); [Van Hooetegem, Nikolova, et al., 2021](#); [Van Hooetegem, Sverke, et al., 2021](#)), which is more in line with theoretical conceptualisations of stress ([Ford et al., 2014](#)), and also allows a focus on how people make sense of, and utilise their resources in response to job- or career insecurity ([Lee et al., 2018](#)). More long-term approaches are also needed to

distinguish one-time, sudden shocks of job insecurity from chronic experiences in inherently insecure jobs or careers (see [Låstad et al., 2025, in this issue](#)).

As for boundary conditions, that is, when or for whom effects of job insecurity will be particularly pronounced, we want to highlight two aspects, covered in two papers in Special issue Part I: The first aspect refers to the construct of job insecurity itself, which previous reviews have been called to operationalise more carefully to distinguish cognitive insecurity (i.e., evaluations of a job/career as more or less secure) from affective insecurity (i.e., anxiety and worries about the future job/career; [Lee et al., 2018](#); [Shoss, 2017](#)). Indeed, relationships between job insecurity and career attitudes and behaviours may vary depending on whether cognitive, affective, or global job insecurity experiences are in the focus of attention ([Låstad et al., 2025, in this issue](#)). Second, previous reviews have also called for a more process-oriented perspective that includes how people make sense of job insecurity ([Lee et al., 2018](#)). In this respect, causal attributions of blame for experiences of job insecurity can be a vital route to better understand these processes ([Vander Elst et al., 2024, in this issue](#)).

EXPANDING THE SCOPE FROM JOBS TO CAREERS AND SOCIETY

Parallel to zooming in on the processes of insecurity at work as described above, the second theme of Special issue Part I can be described as a zooming out: To keep pace with turbulent times and the declining norm of lifetime employment with one organisation (see [Lyons & Kuron, 2014](#); [Marcotte, 1999](#); [Rokkanen & Uusitalo, 2010](#)), the field is moving toward 1) examining the outcomes of job insecurity beyond the individual and the workplace (see e.g., [Klug et al., 2024a](#); [Selenko et al., 2025 for overviews](#)), and 2) broadening the scope of insecurity from jobs to occupations and careers ([Roll et al., 2023](#); [Spurk et al., 2022](#)).

Two papers in Part I of this Special issue address the first aspect ([Låstad et al., 2025](#); [Selenko et al., 2024](#)). Job insecurity as a work-related stressor has traditionally been investigated in relation to its effects on outcomes of stress, job-related attitudes and organisational behaviour (see e.g., [Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018](#); [Sverke et al., 2002, 2019](#) for meta-analytic evidence), sometimes also with respect to spillover into private life (see [Mauno et al., 2017](#) for a review). However, insecurity of the job may also extend to how people think and behave toward their entire career, for example by not just changing jobs, but changing occupations ([Hollywood et al., 2020](#)). A second growing stream of research expands the scope of job insecurity outcomes even further by examining social and political attitudes and behaviours ([Klug et al., 2024a](#); [Selenko et al., 2025](#)). Drawing on the idea of the workplace as a “social incubator” – a place where people experience society and learn about their role within

it ([Mutz & Mondrak, 2006](#)) – job insecurity has been linked to political cynicism ([Van Hootegeem et al., 2022](#)), institutional trust ([Wroe, 2014](#)) and compliance with public health mitigation guidelines in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic ([Selenko et al., 2024, in this issue](#)).

One paper in Part I of this Special issue broadens the scope of insecurity itself by investigating career insecurity ([Spurk et al., 2025](#)). Whereas job insecurity is usually defined strictly with respect to continuity of the *current job* and its content ([Shoss, 2017](#); [Sverke et al., 2002](#)), career insecurity captures a broader range of insecurity experiences that include, for example, a longer-term future time perspective (e.g., concerns of facing unemployment at some point), and career-developmental aspects beyond job characteristics (e.g., career goals and opportunities; [Spurk et al., 2022](#)). Like job insecurity, career insecurity has received empirical support as a salient stressor in modern working lives ([Colakoglu, 2011](#); [Hofer et al., 2021](#); [Höge et al., 2012](#); [Spurk et al., 2016](#)), yet there is still more to uncover when it comes to understanding the experience of insecurity beyond the current job.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF SPECIAL ISSUE PART I

This first part of the special issue brings together a collection of four empirical papers, each of which addresses different aspects of the two themes sketched out above and, in combination, move the field forward in terms of more detailed knowledge on the mechanisms of job (and career) insecurity, as well as broadening the scope of insecurity and its outcomes.

Vander Elst et al. ([2024](#)) investigate reciprocal within-individual relationships between job insecurity and perceptions of psychological contract breach, using a longitudinal design across three waves. Their findings indicate evidence of reverse causation, in which increases in psychological contract breach predict job insecurity, but not the reverse. They also examine the role of causal attributions in moderating these relationships. Contrary to expectations, employees who attribute job insecurity to external factors report stronger perceptions of contract breach. These findings suggest that employees' perceptions of blame could exacerbate negative reactions to job insecurity, particularly when job insecurity is viewed as a disruption, rather than an inherent part of the job or career (a distinction discussed by [Låstad et al., 2025, in this issue](#), that is also reflected in the pandemic-induced insecurity experiences investigated by [Selenko et al., 2024, in this issue](#)).

[Låstad et al. \(2025\)](#) provide a comprehensive meta-analysis on the effects of job insecurity on career-related attitudes and behaviours. They find that job insecurity negatively related to career satisfaction and perceptions of career opportunities, while also relating positively to turnover intentions. Their results suggest that affective job insecurity is particularly associated with outcomes

such as employability, while cognitive insecurity is more related to career satisfaction. This highlights the complex nature of job insecurity and the need for more research into career-specific outcomes, especially regarding the underlying cognitive and affective processes. Future research could focus on the interplay between these dimensions and identify the most effective interventions for specific outcomes like employability or career satisfaction.

Selenko et al. (2024) broaden the scope by examining potential societal outcomes of job insecurity. Using cross-sectional data from three countries (US, UK, and Belgium) during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, they find that both job insecurity and changes in working conditions are related to individuals' compliance with public health guidelines. This relationship is mediated by social identification with the workforce, reinforcing the importance of work as a domain for developing collective identity. They also distinguish between quantitative job insecurity (concern about job loss itself) and qualitative job insecurity (concern about losing valued aspects of the job), finding that only quantitative insecurity related to social identification and collective behaviour. This highlights the importance of differentiating different types of insecurity (see Chirumbolo et al., 2020).

Finally, Spurk et al. (2025) investigate career insecurity and its relationship with career adaptability and exhaustion, based on a three-wave study of early-career researchers. Their findings suggest that career adaptability is associated with lower exhaustion two years later, with career insecurity acting as a mediator in this relationship. These results suggest that career adaptability relates to lower career insecurity, which in turn relates to lower exhaustion. Whereas Låstad et al.'s (2025) results suggest that (job) insecurity may undermine people's confidence and an optimistic outlook on their future careers, the findings by Spurk et al. (2025) show that these attitudes also function as personal resources that help reduce (career) insecurity and thereby protect employees' well-being. This points to the relevance of reciprocal relationships and processes of gain and loss spirals (Hobfoll, 1989) that unfold to create a more or less secure and sustainable career experiences.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The research showcased in Part I of this special issue offers valuable new insights into the various forms of insecurity in modern working lives and how individuals make sense of and respond to insecurity, both in their jobs and careers, as employees, career agents, and members of society. Collectively, the studies address important research gaps regarding the processes and scope of work-related insecurity and its outcomes (see Lee et al., 2018). At the same time, we aim to stimulate further research, particularly into how different types

of insecurity interact and relate to one another, as well as the distinction between short-term disruptions and chronic insecurity, and how these processes unfold within individuals over time. Finally, as others have called for (Probst et al., 2018), we hope this special issue inspires both researchers and practitioners to explore interventions and policy measures aimed at eliminating or alleviating insecurity in the workplace.

PART 2 – HIGHLIGHTING THE VERSATILE FLAVOURS OF JOB INSECURITY

Hans De Witte and Eva Selenko

This second special issue originates from a Small Group Meeting held on 20 and 21 September 2022 in Leuven. As part of an emeritus celebration, about 30 scholars from all over Europe were invited to present recent research and overviews on “*European contributions to job insecurity research*”. In total, 22 papers were presented and all authors were invited to send in their paper for a special issue of the *Scandinavian Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*. This resulted in the selection of six papers that together constitute this special issue on “*Advancing research on the conceptualisation and dynamics of job insecurity and related concepts – Part 2. Highlighting the versatile flavours of job insecurity*”. The focus of this special issue is on contributions from Europe.

The relevance of research on job insecurity has already been emphasised in the editorial of Klug et al. (in this issue) when presenting the first Job Insecurity special issue of this journal. The analysis of job insecurity is both timely and relevant. Its relevance is underscored by the continued economic, technological and societal turbulence that characterises contemporary society. A substantial body of reviews and meta-analyses consistently highlights the problematic nature of work related insecurity, for individual well-being as well as for organisational attitudes and behaviours of workers (see e.g. De Cuyper & De Witte, 2021; Jiang, 2025; Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018; Klug et al., 2024a; Probst et al., 2018; Shoss, 2017; Sverke et al., 2002 & 2019). Although the harmful nature of job insecurity is without question, important questions remain. These concern, among others, the inner-psychological processes of job insecurity, its embeddedness in a person's personal and wider context, and its measurement (see Klug et al., 2024a). The small group meeting in 2022 and this resulting special issue, try to respond to the call for more research on these questions. In what follows, we will first give an overview of the selected articles and their contribution. Next, we will discuss various ways of grouping these papers in broader themes, thus highlighting the versatile flavours of job insecurity.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL ISSUE PART 2

The contribution of Bazzoli, Brondino, Morgan, Phillips and Pasini (2025) is particularly important, as it synthesises 40 years of job insecurity research. Reviewing no less than 1000 papers from different disciplines published between 1984 and 2023, they provide an exceptional mapping of the job insecurity landscape. Their aims are twofold: First, they take stock of research designs in the job insecurity field and sketch their evolution over time. Second, they summarise the most-used job insecurity scales across an interdisciplinary body of literature and evaluate their psychometric characteristics. They note that the number of papers on job insecurity has grown exponentially over the years, especially after 2010. Design-wise, quantitative studies dominate the field, with about half of the studies being cross-sectional and about one fourth longitudinal; the latter showing a clear upward trend since 2020. A multitude of measurement scales have been developed, even though only a limited amount of them have been thoroughly validated internationally. To advance the field, the authors present a useful table in which they summarise the main characteristics of the scales that are well-validated in several languages. This allows selecting the most appropriate measurement scale in future research, suited to analyse the specific research question at hand. The authors conclude their overview with a set of recommendations to strengthen future research on job insecurity, as well as with the discussion of some open issues that require attention from researchers in the future.

The next paper, from Otto and Kleszewski (2025), adds to the literature that attempts to explain the detrimental consequences of job insecurity for well-being. In doing so, they explore a new explanatory pathway, by analysing the cognitive and affective processes during leisure time that might link job insecurity to subsequent exhaustion, as component of burnout complaints. Lack of detachment and problem-solving pondering are selected as cognitive processes, and affective rumination as affective process. These three mediators are tested in a three-way longitudinal study and the associations are controlled for several other work-related stressors, such as workload and role ambiguity. The results show that the two cognitive processes were not related to exhaustion later in time, and that only affective rumination mediated the relationship of job insecurity at T1 with exhaustion at T3, two months later. The authors conclude by stating that affective processes during leisure time are dominant in explaining the negative consequences of job insecurity. Cognitive processes during non-work hours, such as mentally disengaging from work or thinking about work-related problems or solutions to improve work in the future, do not seem to play a relevant role. They explain their findings by suggesting that potential job loss triggers affective rumination that in turn reinforces

the fear of potential job loss, amplifying aspects like uncertainty and uncontrollability.

Messioui and van Vuuren (2025) also focus on explanatory variables (mediators) in their longitudinal study, but this time the authors seek to explain causes of job insecurity, rather than consequences. In their three-wave longitudinal study, they test whether sickness absence duration contributes to job insecurity. They assume that sickness absence initiates a resource loss process, leading to two kinds of skill obsolescence: technical and economic. Skills obsolescence refers to previously acquired skills becoming outdated or declining in effectiveness, due to wear or atrophy (technical) or technological or organisational changes (economic). Even though they could not find a direct link between sickness absence and job insecurity later in time, their results suggest an indirect path from sickness absence (T1+T2) through economic skills obsolescence (T2) to job insecurity (T3). Sickness absence was also related to technical skills obsolescence, but the latter did not affect job insecurity later on, suggesting that technical skills obsolescence did not mediate the sickness absence to job insecurity relationship. This innovative study thus suggests that sickness absence increases the perceived risk to be dismissed because workers have been missing technological advancements, workplace learnings or evolving job requirements during their absence.

Taulla, Sora, Höge, Mauno and Boada (2025) focus on a 'higher level' variable: job insecurity climate. They conceptualise job insecurity as a collective phenomenon and define it as "a shared concern about the continued existence of the job" (Sora et al., 2012, p. 385). Following the direct consensus model, these authors aggregate individual assessments of job insecurity to the level of their organisation. Next, they test a large set of possible organisational antecedents of this job insecurity climate in a cross-sectional study in two countries: Spain and Austria. All hypothesised antecedents significantly contributed to the job insecurity climate in their study, explaining no less than 64% of the variance after performing a multiple hierarchical regression analysis. Interestingly, rumours proved to be the main predictor, followed by organisational communication, the percentage of temporary workers in the organisation, organisational resilience, and working in the private sector. The country proved to be the least important predictor. The authors conclude that one can indeed distinguish two levels when studying job insecurity: an individual level and a collective (organisational) level. Additionally, they show that aspects related to communication (like rumours and official communication from the organisation) are crucial in shaping a climate of job insecurity.

The last two papers of this special issue again follow a different analytical strategy compared with the other papers. Both use a person-centred perspective and broaden the conceptualisation of insecurity. Bernhard-

Oettel et al. (2025) focus on a specific segment of the working population: gig workers in Sweden. In an attempt to analyse whether gig workers can really be portrayed as precarious and vulnerable workers, they assess four different forms of work-related insecurity: gig job insecurity (worrying about getting assignments), financial insecurity, career insecurity and business insecurity (uncertainty about the future as gig worker). They then perform a latent profile analysis to determine profiles regarding these insecurity aspects and their prevalence. Finally, they analyse a large set of possible antecedents of these profiles, including gig employment characteristics, personal demographics, labour market aspects and personal motivation. Their results reveal four different profiles, ranging from 'highly secure' to 'highly insecure', suggesting that not all gig workers perceive themselves as precarious or vulnerable. The four profiles also differ in a meaningful way regarding the antecedents tested, with especially the high versus low secure profiles contrasting each other on aspects such as demographics and motivation.

The last paper of this special issue, by Klug, Decius and Van Hootegem (2025), analyses the data of two large scale cross-sectional samples from the European Working Conditions Survey, covering almost 100,000 respondents. They broaden the scope by analysing a larger set of economic stressors simultaneously, covering both objective and subjective variables. They focus on four broad categories: employment instability, employment uncertainty, economic deprivation and economic strain. After performing latent class analysis they explore the amount (and size) of distinct classes based on these aspects. Next, they assess the consequences of belonging to these profiles by looking at differences in well-being and training participation. Finally, they test whether the accumulation of economic stressors at the country level exacerbates the associations of profiles with well-being and training participation. The authors find three distinct classes: high on all economic stressors, low on all economic stressors and 'subjective stressors dominant'. The latter score high on subjective indicators, but comparatively low on the objective ones. All classes are associated with specific demographical variables and well-being as well as training participation. Surprisingly, the 'subjective stressors dominant' and the 'high economic stressors' classes did not differ in (lower) mental well-being, suggesting that especially the subjective variables mattered in determining well-being.

HIGHLIGHTING THE VERSATILE FLAVOURS OF JOB INSECURITY

The six papers of this special issue have not been selected to fit a specific theme or point of view. Consequently, they can be grouped in various ways. One could highlight the variety of theoretical frameworks used, and emphasise the use of theories not yet used in the field, like

preservative cognition theory (Otto & Kleszewski, *in this issue*) or socialisation theory (Taulla et al., *in this issue*), next to favourites such as conservation of resources (Messioui & van Vuuren, *in this issue*). One could also refer to the multitude of methodologies and designs, ranging from a systematic literature review (Bazzoli et al., *in this issue*), over longitudinal designs (Otto & Kleszewski; Messioui & van Vuuren, *both in this issue*) to person oriented analysis, like latent profile analysis (Bernhard-Oettel et al., *in this issue*) or latent class analysis (Klug et al., *in this issue*). The editors however decided for another way of classifying the papers. Depending on the reader's interest, the six contributions can be read as telling three different "stories", as exemplifying three different foci, each of which with slightly different implications for future research: (1) a focus on the multifaceted operationalisation of work related insecurity, (2) a nomological lens, and (3) a context lens.

On the various faces of work-related insecurity

Several authors in the past have recommended that the *conceptualisation* (and *operationalisation*) of work-related insecurity is broadened (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). The overview paper of Bazzoli et al. (*in this issue*) indeed shows that work related insecurity has mostly been conceptualised and operationalised as quantitative job insecurity, and to a lesser extend as qualitative job insecurity. The papers of Otto and Kleszewski (*in this issue*) and Messioui and van Vuuren (*in this issue*) follow this trend by focussing on quantitative job insecurity. Bernhard-Oettel et al. (*this issue*) enlarge our knowledge of work-related insecurity by analysing four different aspects of insecurity, related to the gig job, finances, careers and business. As such, they manage to cover a much broader range of insecurity dimensions, tailored to the specificity of the category under scrutiny: gig workers. Even though the four different operationalisations of insecurity are strongly correlated (correlations varying between roughly .60 and .80), their combination in profiles shows some variation, with some profiles scoring high on some dimensions, but not on all. Their results thus underpin the relevance to differentiate between various aspects of work-related insecurity. Taulla et al. (*in this issue*) raise their focus to a higher level, by analysing the job insecurity climate: the shared perceptions of job insecurity within a given organisation. This focus is complementary to the individual perception of workers and complements the dominant focus in the job insecurity literature. Their paper adds to the limited number of papers on job insecurity as a collective phenomenon, and shows that this higher level construct also needs to be added to future research in this field. Klug et al. (*in this issue*) broaden our focus even more by analysing job insecurity as just one aspect of (the larger conceptualisation of) precarious work. In doing so, they first show that different subjective operationalisations of

precarity (like job insecurity) are correlated and combine into coherent profiles. Next, their analysis shows that subjective indicators of precarity can sometimes deviate from their objective counterparts, even though they are most often aligned. This illustrates the relevance of distinguishing subjective and objective indicators of precarious work (see e.g. [De Witte & Näswall, 2003](#); [Klandermans & van Vuuren, 1999](#)). At the same time, these results suggest that there is a future for the analysis of (subjective perceived) job insecurity in studies on work related precarity, as job insecurity seems to have an additional impact on some outcome variables, like well-being.

Detailing the nomological network of job insecurity

A second way of classifying the six contributions to this special issue, is by highlighting their position in the *nomological network* of job insecurity research. All papers deal with at least one of the elements of this nomological network, like conceptualisation, antecedents, consequences, mediation and moderation. *Conceptualisation* has already been discussed in the previous theme, and the paper of Bazzoli et al. (*in this issue*) also discussed the quality of their measurements. The study of *antecedents* of job insecurity did not receive that much research attention in the past (but see [Keim et al., 2014](#); [Jiang et al., 2021](#)). No less than four papers in this special issue focussed on this (rather) neglected issue. Bernard-Oettel et al. (*in this issue*) and Klug et al. (*in this issue*) analysed the demographical antecedents of their classes/profiles. Their results mostly aligned with an insider/outsider perspective, in which those with ‘stronger labour market positions’ (e.g. the higher educated, white collar, male...) were overrepresented among the ‘better’ profiles. In both studies, the antecedents under scrutiny were complemented with job and employment characteristics (like gig employment features) which completed the latter findings. Messiou and van Vuuren (*in this issue*) added an important antecedent to job insecurity to the literature by analysing sickness absence. Their findings, however, suggested no direct relationship, but rather a more complex indirect relationship via perceived skills obsolescence – a promising new factor for advancing our understanding of the causes of job insecurity. Their study thereby answers to a classic call to better understand the relationship of job insecurity with its more recent and more extended progenitors ([Sverke & Hellgren, 2002](#)).

Finally, Taulla et al. (*in this issue*) analysed the antecedents of the job insecurity climate and found that mainly rumours and communications were of relevance. Their findings suggest the antecedents of higher order conceptualisations to be different to those of individual level job insecurity, with a stronger emphasis on organisational level antecedents.

Only two papers in this special issue focussed on *outcomes*, perhaps illustrating that these have already been covered quite extensively in the literature (see [De Witte et al., 2015 & 2016](#); [Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018](#); [Klug et al., 2024a](#); [Probst et al., 2018](#); [Shoss, 2017](#)). Otto and Kleszewski (*in this issue*) analysed exhaustion as outcome, and Klug et al. (*in this issue*) mental well-being. The latter authors however also added training participation to their study, an aspect that did not receive much research attention in the past. The focus on analysing *explanations* of the job insecurity-outcome relationship has been increasing over the years. Two papers specifically focussed on testing specific explanations. Otto and Kleszewski (*in this issue*) focus on psychological mechanisms and found that affective rumination during leisure time, and not cognitive processes such as detachment or problem-solving pondering, explained the association of job insecurity with exhaustion over time. In doing so, they added a new explanatory mechanism to the nomological network of job insecurity. The paper of Messiou and van Vuuren (*in this issue*) added economic (but not technical) skills obsolescence as novel explanation of perceived job insecurity, as already mentioned above. Finally, moderators of job insecurity associations were only analysed in the paper of Klug et al. (*in this issue*). They created an aggregate variable based on their own findings: the prevalence of a given pattern at the country level. Contrary to other analyses (e.g. [Sverke et al., 2019](#)), their results did not show much moderation, with only one – small – significant effect (out of eight). Contrary to expectations, the association between economic stressors and well-being was somewhat weaker (instead of the expected stronger relationship) when the high economic stressors class was more prominent in a country. This finding illustrates that ‘good moderators are often hard to find’ ([De Witte et al., 2025](#)).

A focus on context

A third theme that unites the papers in this collection relates to a notable awareness of *context* in its different forms and its relevance for job insecurity. “Context” is a broad term for many multilayered and interlinked influences; ranging from broad country-level, employment-institutional, influences that affect many, to narrower (but still broad) organisational, employability-specific influences, to the highly personal family and personal context of the worker. The papers of this special issue highlight job insecurity as a universal feature of contemporary work found across many countries (Klug et al., *in this issue*), even though its localised expression, its specific meaning and effect will be shaped by organisational (Taulla et al., *in this issue*) and individual influences. Even within single country contexts, when people are exposed to similar employment conditions (Bernhard-Oettel et al., *in this issue*), and sickness absence dismissal protections (Messiou & van Vuuren,

in this issue), job insecurity's impact will still vary – influenced by the personal context. All of this underlines Bazzoli et al (*in this issue*)'s call to explore more of the 'localised understandings' of job insecurity.

Klug et al. (*in this issue*) use latent class analysis to generate profiles of economically stressed workers, and to investigate the effect of country context. Their original assumption, that in countries where more people are economically stressed, economic stress would be worse for mental health, was not supported – rather, they found a small effect to the opposite, people were more stressed when others were generally less stressed. This curious finding may suggest a type of social comparison effect, in which individuals assess their job insecurity against a social comparative norm and may develop a sense of relative deprivation (Festinger, 1954; Jiang, 2025). Indeed, the investigation by Taulla et al (*in this issue*) shows us that job insecurity is a personal assessment that is not immune to people's perceptions of their immediate context. In their two country study they show that people make collective job insecurity assessments under the influence of specific contexts: in organisations in the private sector with more temporary workers, the job insecurity climate was higher; whereas in organisations where workers appreciated the communication quality and where they felt that staff generally were able to deal with problems (an aspect of organisational resilience), the job insecurity climate was lower. Together, both studies show that individual understandings of job insecurity are under the influence of the broader country level occurrence of precarity (Klug et al., *in this issue*), and the immediate organisational context, its ownership structure and inner-organisational communication and resilience (Taulla et al., *in this issue*).

Bazzoli et al.'s (*in this issue*) job insecurity review of measurement instruments does not explicitly concentrate on context. However, it notes that despite the global interest in job insecurity only a limited set of measures are tested for cross-cultural validity. They point out that although job insecurity is a universal phenomenon, it might have different meanings for different populations and subpopulations ('localised understandings'). This highlights the need to do more cross-cultural but also within-culture validation research, to ensure the measurement truly captures universal but also localised aspects of job insecurity. The studies by Bernhard-Oettel et al. (*in this issue*) and Messiou and van Vuuren (*in this issue*) do not explicitly discuss or compare the influence of context, but could be read as case study examples of specific employment context influences. Bernhard-Oettel and colleagues (*in this issue*) showcase an interesting Swedish employment type: the case of umbrella-employed gig workers, who (like self-employed workers) work project-based, but also are employed under an umbrella company, who handles their legal and payroll

affairs. Heterogenous profiles of insecurity were identified, each associated with a specific set of work and individual contextual factors: lead times on jobs, how dependent the household income was on the gig workers contribution, whether people had experienced changes to their job, and whether they had other jobs as well, all seemed to matter. Messiou and van Vuuren (*in this issue*)'s investigation of sickness absence, skills obsolescence and job insecurity is also located in the policy context of a single country only. While they do not discuss context explicitly, the employment context is a weighty influence on their approach and study: In the Netherlands workers on sick leave are protected from dismissal by law. This is different in many other countries in the world (e.g. the US, the UK, India do not have a blanket protection during sickness absence). Their study shows that even in a relatively privileged institutional context in terms of employment rights, people are not spared feelings of job insecurity, nor is their experience uniform, as it will differ depending on personal and psychological variables.

TO CONCLUDE

In conclusion, the present collection of six papers reflect a lively and increasingly mature research field. The fundamental questions ("Is job insecurity something good or bad?") have been solved (see Cheng & Chan, 2008; Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018; Sverke et al., 2002), allowing the field to move on toward deeper, more complex questions to do with the multifaceted nature of job insecurity, its nomological network, and its contextual embeddedness. As becomes increasingly apparent, job insecurity is not a research topic with a few remaining gaps to be filled. Rather, it reflects a work-related manifestation of a deep-seated human aversion of uncertainty and unpredictability. As the nature of contemporary work will continue to evolve, new applied questions will emerge – concerning new sources of insecurity (including most recently occupational insecurity e.g. Roll et al., 2023), boundary conditions, and interventions. So, while those contemporary manifestations of job insecurity will continue to evolve alongside developments in work and society, the underlying negative psychological sentiment that insecurity activates will remain important and universal. For this reason, job insecurity research will continue to demand our sustained attention, creativity and wit.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Hans De Witte, Katharina Näswall and Eva Selenko are part of the extended editorial board of the journal.

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