



Will I Still Have a Job Tomorrow? The Structure and Research Agenda of Job Insecurity

Amanhã Ainda Terei Trabalho? Estrutura e Agenda de Pesquisa da Insegurança Laboral

¿Seguiré Teniendo Trabajo Mañana? Estructura y Agenda de Investigación sobre la Inseguridad Laboral

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Abstract

Job insecurity is characterized by fear and distress over the potential loss of employment, as well as a sense of powerlessness stemming from the inability to alter this reality. This systematic literature review aimed to identify the conceptual structure of job insecurity while proposing new directions for future research. The study was conducted using the Web of Science and Scopus databases. After applying the selection criteria, 277 articles were identified and analyzed using the bibliometrix and biblioshiny packages, constituting the final sample. The findings enabled the characterization of publication patterns, providing an overview of the scientific literature on job insecurity published between 1979 and 2024. The analysis was organized into two research streams: (i) identification of bibliometric indicators, encompassing both the publication profile and the conceptual structure of the job insecurity field; and (ii) the development of a research agenda outlining promising avenues for future investigation. This review is expected to stimulate further advances by building upon the current state of the art and generating new insights that foster the continued development of job insecurity research.

Keywords: job insecurity, labor precarization, systematic literature review.

Resumo

A insegurança no trabalho caracteriza-se pelo receio e pela angústia de perder o emprego, bem como pela sensação de impotência diante da impossibilidade de modificação dessa realidade. Esta revisão sistemática teve como objetivo identificar como se caracteriza a estrutura conceitual da insegurança no trabalho, ao passo que propõe novos direcionamentos de pesquisa. O estudo foi conduzido utilizando as bases de dados da Web of Science e Scopus, que, após aplicação de alguns filtros, encontraram 277 artigos, analisados por meio dos pacotes bibliométrix e shiny, formando a amostra final. Os resultados possibilitaram traçar o perfil das publicações, apresentando um panorama da produção científica sobre o tema no período de 1979 até 2024. A análise desses resultados foi dividida em dois tópicos de pesquisa: i) identificação dos indicadores bibliométricos, contemplando o perfil das publicações sobre insegurança no trabalho e estrutura conceitual do campo da insegurança no trabalho; ii) proposição de uma agenda de pesquisa com novos caminhos a percorrer. Prospecta-se que, com este estudo, novos desdobramentos possam ser desenvolvidos, partindo do estado da arte atual para avançar no conhecimento, ao propor novos insights que alavanquem o tema da insegurança no trabalho.

Palavras-chave: insegurança no trabalho, precarização do trabalho, revisão sistemática da literatura.

Resumen

La inseguridad laboral se caracteriza por el temor y la angustia asociados a la posibilidad de perder el empleo, así como por la sensación de impotencia ante la incapacidad de modificar esta realidad. Esta revisión sistemática tuvo como objetivo identificar las características de la estructura conceptual de la inseguridad laboral, al tiempo que propone nuevas direcciones para la investigación futura. El estudio se llevó a cabo utilizando las bases de datos Web of Science y Scopus, que, tras la aplicación de criterios de selección específicos, permitieron identificar 277 artículos, los cuales fueron analizados mediante los paquetes bibliométrix y shiny, conformando la muestra final. Los resultados permitieron caracterizar el perfil de las publicaciones y ofrecer una visión general de la producción científica sobre el tema durante el período comprendido entre 1979 y 2024. El análisis de los hallazgos se estructuró en dos ejes de investigación: i) la identificación de indicadores bibliométricos, incluyendo el perfil de las publicaciones sobre inseguridad laboral y la estructura conceptual del campo; y ii) la propuesta de una agenda de investigación con nuevas líneas de desarrollo. Se espera que este estudio contribuya a la generación de nuevos avances en el área, partiendo del estado actual del conocimiento para proponer perspectivas e ideas innovadoras que impulsen el desarrollo del tema de la inseguridad laboral.

Palabras clave: inseguridad laboral, precarización del trabajo, revisión sistemática de la literatura.

Introduction

Fear, distress, apprehension, and anxiety are common experiences among many workers who worry about losing their jobs (Graham et al., 2024). This concern regarding the continuity of employment can be understood as job insecurity (Sora et al., 2023). Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) offered one of the earliest conceptualizations of job insecurity, defining it as an employee's sense of powerlessness to maintain employment continuity in the face of potential threats. Over time, the concept has evolved, and contemporary scholars define job insecurity as uncertainty regarding the future of one's employment (Shoss & Vancouver, 2023). One of the primary drivers of this perception is downsizing, an organizational strategy aimed at reducing costs by decreasing the workforce (Sora et al., 2023). In this context, it is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped organizational practices by expanding remote work arrangements while simultaneously increasing many workers' concerns about job retention.

More recently, the effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution have intensified these concerns, as machines increasingly perform tasks that were previously carried out by humans, heightening fears of technological replacement (Tu et al., 2023). Furthermore, during the early stages of this transformation, new competencies are required to work with automation, digitalization, the Internet of Things, and augmented reality, prompting workers to question whether they possess the qualifications and skills necessary to meet these emerging job demands (He et al., 2024).

The fear of losing one's job extends beyond financial concerns, encompassing social belonging, a sense of purpose, the opportunity to engage in meaningful work, and the development of professional networks (Graham et al., 2024). The loss of these elements may generate significant psychological stress (Nawrocka et al., 2021), leading many workers to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety. In this regard, it is noteworthy that exhausted workers often have limited physical and psychological resources (Saeed et al., 2023), creating a cascading effect that extends to the organizational level by undermining job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, and trust-based relationships (Glambek et al., 2023; Haar & Broughman, 2022; Sverke et al., 2002).

Job insecurity also constitutes a violation of the psychological contract, which refers to the often implicit expectations shared between employees and employers (Cuyper & Witte, 2006). As employees offer loyalty and dedication, they expect to receive security and continuity of employment in return (Sverke et al., 2002). Job insecurity has become an

increasingly important topic because it is considered one of the most significant workplace stressors of the twenty-first century (Graham et al., 2024). Consequently, understanding the nuances, dynamics, and developmental trajectory of this field can provide organizations with valuable insights for designing effective strategies to address job insecurity and mitigate its adverse consequences.

Prior systematic reviews have examined job insecurity (Hngoi et al., 2024; Medina et al., 2023). Although these reviews have significantly contributed to the current body of knowledge and advanced understanding of the topic, they have generally investigated job insecurity alongside other variables, such as job performance, unemployment, career development, social support, health risks, and depressive symptoms. However, no studies were identified that primarily focus on the conceptual structure of the job insecurity field or that explicitly propose future research directions. Accordingly, the central research question guiding this review is: How is the conceptual structure underlying the field of job insecurity characterized, and what promising directions should future research pursue? Therefore, this study aims to identify the conceptual structure of job insecurity and to explore new avenues for future research.

Accordingly, this study examines the field and offers insights into how job insecurity can be further conceptualized and investigated. It seeks to advance the literature by addressing gaps in theoretical perspectives, conceptual structures, and publication trends, while also identifying emerging challenges and opportunities that can inform the development of a research agenda based on the gaps identified. In doing so, it contributes to a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the field. Through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), it is possible to map and understand key aspects of a research domain, including its conceptual structure, current trends, and future directions (Zupic & Carter, 2014). Review studies such as the present one are fundamental to scientific progress because they provide a systematic synthesis of a specific body of knowledge, promote a deeper understanding of the field, identify underexplored areas, and establish directions for future research (Tranfield et al., 2003). Furthermore, organizational leaders should remain attentive to projections regarding the future of work in a rapidly changing environment. Given these critical transformations, this study adopts a proactive perspective while also offering practical value to workers by enabling them to better plan their careers in response to the evolving world of work.

Methodological Procedures

A systematic literature review (SLR) represents a rigorous scholarly approach to mapping, synthesizing, and disseminating knowledge within a specific research domain (Kraus et al., 2020). Studies adopting this approach not only enhance the understanding of a given topic but also identify underexplored areas in the literature and outline directions for future research (Daim et al., 2006). Accordingly, this descriptive and qualitative review followed the protocol proposed by Tranfield et al. (2003), which comprises three essential stages: (i) Stage 1: defining the research problem and planning the SLR; (ii) Stage 2: conducting the SLR; and (iii) Stage 3: analyzing and disseminating the findings. In addition, this review incorporates bibliometric analyses, as they facilitate the systematization, organization, and dissemination of scientific knowledge (Gutiérrez-Salcedo et al., 2018).

During Stage 1 (planning), the research question was defined as follows: How is the conceptual structure underlying the field of job insecurity characterized, and what are the emerging directions for future research? Subsequently, the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases were selected to conduct the SLR. An initial advanced search was performed to identify previous review studies on the topic, thereby ensuring the originality of the present investigation. These databases were selected because of their relevance, influence in the field of management, and broad temporal coverage (Obregon et al., 2021). The search strings were developed using the following keywords: job insecurity, workplace insecurity, systematic review, systematic literature review, and literature review. In both databases, the search was restricted to article titles, as this criterion more accurately identifies studies that specifically address the topic under investigation. Table 1 presents the results of the initial search.

Table 1

Identification of previous systematic literature reviews

Database	Search string	n
WoS	TI=((("job insecurity*" OR "workplace insecurity*") AND ("systematic review*" OR "systematic literature review*" OR "literature review*")))	7
Scopus	ARTICLE TITLE ("job insecurity*" OR "workplace insecurity*") AND ("systematic review*" OR "systematic literature review*" OR "literature review*")	7

The search retrieved 14 studies, of which six were duplicates. The remaining eight reviews examined job insecurity in relation to other topics, such as job performance, social support, unemployment, depressive symptoms, and health-related risks. Therefore, the present SLR is justified by its primary focus on characterizing the conceptual structure underlying the field of job insecurity while proposing a research agenda that identifies promising directions for future investigation.

During Stage 2, which involved conducting the SLR, the advanced search was expanded after confirming the absence of previous reviews with the same objective. The search remained restricted to article titles and was conducted without applying temporal restrictions to maximize coverage of the field. Table 2 summarizes the results of the second search.

Table 2

Systematic literature review search strategy

Database	Search string	n
WoS	TI=((“job insecurity*” OR “workplace insecurity”*))	1,078
Scopus	ARTICLE TITLE (“job insecurity*” OR “workplace insecurity”*)	1,200

The search results were refined using the following filters: document type (articles) and research area (management). In Scopus, the research area filter was set to Business, Management and Accounting, as the database does not provide Management as a standalone category. After applying these filters, 227 articles were retrieved from WoS and 431 from Scopus. To ensure the quality of the literature included in the review, an additional inclusion criterion was established whereby only articles published in journals with a minimum Impact Factor (IF) of 3.0 were considered. This criterion yielded 186 articles from WoS and 234 from Scopus. At this stage, 238 articles were excluded for failing to meet the inclusion criterion. The preliminary sample comprised 420 articles, and after removing duplicate records (n = 143), the final sample consisted of 277 eligible articles. Data collection was conducted between March and April 2024.

During the final stage (analysis and dissemination of knowledge), the data were analyzed using the bibliometrix and biblioshiny packages developed by Aria and Cuccurullo (2017), implemented in RStudio. Two analytical dimensions were established for this stage: bibliometric indicators and content indicators (Obregon et al., 2021). The bibliometric analysis focused on the publication profile and characteristics of the literature, including annual scientific production, authors, institutional affiliations, journals, the five most cited articles, and the field’s social structure (country-level scientific output and international collaboration networks). The content analysis comprised two categories: (i) the conceptual structure of the field, which depicts the state of the art and the evolution of the research domain; and (ii) the research agenda, developed from the gaps identified in the literature and the insights generated through an in-depth analysis of the selected studies.

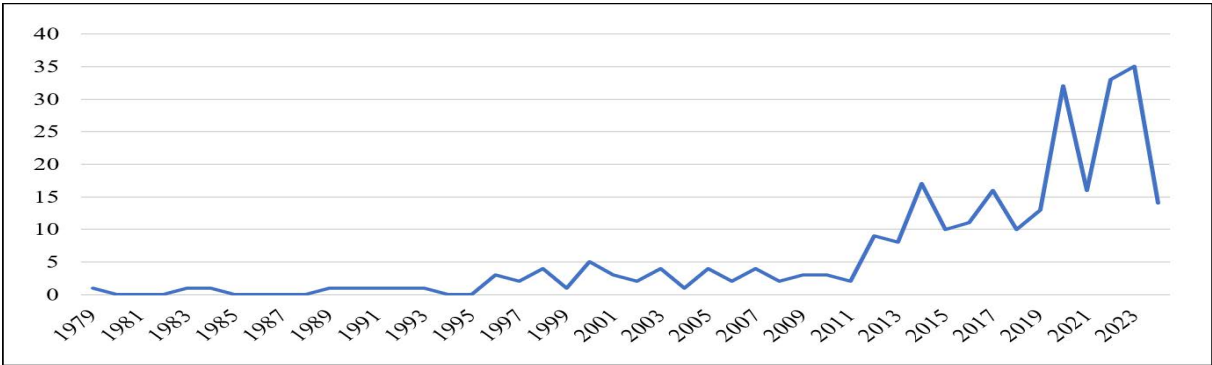
Results Analysis

Bibliometric Indicators: Publication Profile in the Job Insecurity Literature

Research on job insecurity has increased substantially over time, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Saeed et al., 2023). This growing scholarly interest is largely attributable to the direct and detrimental effects of job insecurity on individual well-being and job performance. Indeed, many scholars have described job insecurity as the occupational disease of the twenty-first century (Shoss, 2017; Saeed et al., 2023). Figure 1 illustrates the annual growth in scientific output within this field, revealing an average annual growth rate of 6.04%.

Figure 1

Annual scientific output on job insecurity



Note: Generated using bibliometrix.

As shown in Figure 1, the literature on job insecurity spans the period from 1979 to 2024 (including publications from January and February), representing more than four decades of scholarly research on the topic. Between 1979 and 1999, annual publication output remained relatively modest, averaging between one and five articles per year. A marked increase in scientific production began in 2017, culminating in publication peaks in 2020 (32 articles), 2022 (33 articles), and 2023 (35 articles). This expansion was largely driven by the global COVID-19 health crisis, during which many researchers focused on understanding the pandemic's effects on workers' health, safety, and well-being (Vo-Thanh et al., 2022). During the first two months of 2024 alone, 14 articles had already been published.

The final sample of 277 articles was authored by 601 researchers. Among them, Hans De Witte, affiliated with Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium) and a leading scholar in organizational psychology, was the most prolific author, contributing 28 publications. He was followed by Nele De Cuyper, also affiliated with Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and specializing in work and organizational psychology, with 14 publications. Completing the top three was Lixin Jiang, from the University of Auckland (New Zealand), whose research focuses on industrial and organizational psychology and who authored 13 publications. Hans De Witte can therefore be regarded as one of the leading scholars in the field of job insecurity, given his outstanding publication record, representing 0.2% of all contributing authors. It is also noteworthy that 471 authors published only a single article (78.4% of all authors), highlighting the substantial number of researchers who have contributed only occasionally to this research area.

Regarding institutional affiliations, the four most productive universities were public institutions: (i) Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Leuven, Belgium), with 39 publications; (ii) North-West University (Potchefstroom, South Africa), with 24 publications; (iii) University of Jyväskylä (Jyväskylä, Finland), with 22 publications; and (iv) Stockholm University (Stockholm, Sweden), with 14 publications. Completing the top five was the only private institution, Northeastern University (Boston, Massachusetts, United States), with 13 publications.

A total of 82 journals published the 277 articles included in the sample. The five most productive journals were: (i) Career Development International (IF = 3.0), with 24 articles; (ii) European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology (IF = 4.3), also with 24 articles; (iii) Journal of Organizational Behavior (IF = 6.8), with 17 articles; (iv) Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (IF = 6.2), with 16 articles; and (v) Journal of Applied Psychology (IF = 9.9), with 14 articles. Table 3 presents the five most highly cited publications in the field.

Table 3

Top five most cited publications on job insecurity

#	Authors/Year	Article title	TC	MCA	Journal	IF
1	Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984)	<i>Job Insecurity: toward conceptual clarity</i>	870	21.22	Academy Of Management Review	16.4
2	Ashford, Lee and Bobko (1989)	<i>Content, cause, and consequences of job insecurity: a theory-based measure and substantive test</i>	766	21.28	Academy of Management Journal	10.5
3	Shoss (2017)	<i>Job Insecurity: an integrative review and agenda for future research</i>	465	58.13	Journal of Management	13.5
4	Cuyper and Witte (2006)	<i>The impact of job insecurity and contract type on attitudes, well-being and behavioural reports: a psychological contract perspective</i>	292	15.37	Journal Of Occupational And Organizational Psychology	6.2
5	Staufenbiel and König (2010)	<i>A model for the effects of job insecurity on performance, turnover intention, and absenteeism</i>	277	18.47	Journal Of Occupational And Organizational Psychology	6.2

Note: Generated using bibliometrix.

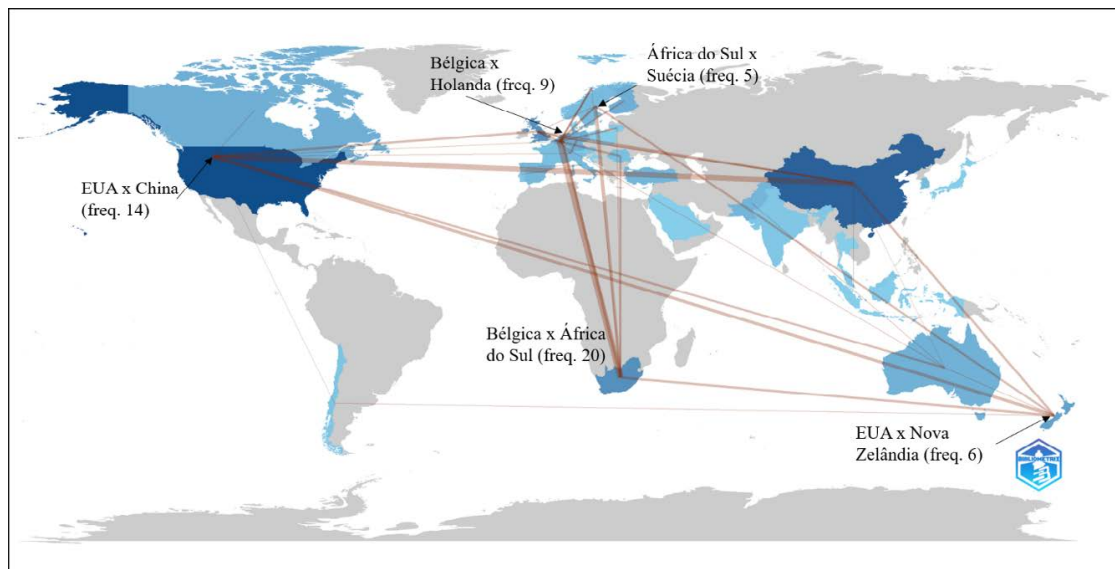
The five most cited studies primarily focus on the nature, antecedents, and consequences of job insecurity (Ashford et al., 1989; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984), its effects on job performance and turnover intentions (Staufenbiel & König, 2010), and its implications for employee well-being and the psychological contract (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2006). Finally, Shoss (2017) conducted an integrative review aimed at advancing conceptual clarity in the field by addressing several longstanding theoretical ambiguities.

With respect to the social structure of the field, scientific production is geographically diverse. The 15 most productive countries were China (frequency = 131), the United States (113), Belgium (71), the United Kingdom (44), the Netherlands (42), Finland (36), South Africa (30), New Zealand (29), Canada (25), Italy (25), Germany (24), Sweden (22), Switzerland (21), Turkey (20), and Australia (20). Western Europe — represented by Belgium, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands — emerged as one of the most productive regions in the sample. This was followed by Central Europe (Switzerland and Germany), North America (the United States and Canada), and Oceania (New Zealand and Australia). As explained by Aria and Cuccurullo (2023), when a publication includes authors affiliated with institutions in Switzerland, Canada, and Belgium, that single article is counted as a publication for each of those countries.

The global collaboration network among countries is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Global collaboration network



Note: Generated using bibliometrix.

The collaboration map highlights the five strongest international research partnerships. Belgium and South Africa jointly produced 20 publications, followed by China and the United States with 14 publications, Belgium and the Netherlands with nine publications, the United States and New Zealand with six publications, and South Africa and Sweden with five publications. In addition, Belgium collaborated with researchers from 13 different countries, China with 16, the Netherlands with nine, South Africa with eight, the United Kingdom with 15, and the United States with researchers from 20 different countries, underscoring the highly international nature of research on job insecurity.

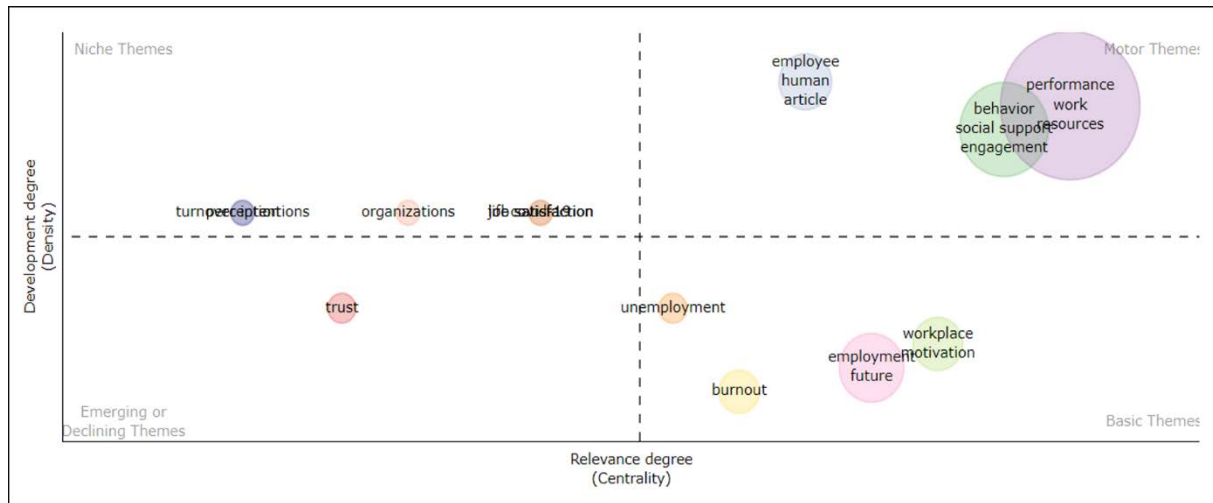
Conceptual Structure of the Job Insecurity Field

To identify the underlying conceptual structure of the job insecurity field, Figure 3 presents a thematic map analysis. Proposed by Cobo et al. (2011), this map enables the examination of research themes grouped into clusters according to four categories: (i) motor themes, which are well developed and important to the field; (ii) basic themes, which are relevant but remain relatively underdeveloped; (iii) emerging or declining themes, which represent either newly developing topics or topics that are gradually disappearing from the field; and (iv) niche themes, which are highly developed but have limited relevance to the broader field. The map comprises four quadrants organized along two axes: the centrality axis, which represents the degree of interaction among clusters and their relevance to the field, and the density axis, which represents their internal cohesion and level of development (Santana & Cobo, 2020).

Given the number of articles included in the sample, specific analytical parameters were established to generate the map and guide the analysis of the publications. Keywords Plus were selected as the units of analysis, and the minimum term frequency was set at 15. Within each cluster, the most highly cited articles were prioritized.

Figure 3

Conceptual structure of job insecurity based on the thematic map



Note: Generated using bibliometrix.

The thematic map comprises 14 clusters: behavior, performance, employee, workplace, burnout, unemployment, employment, trust, organizations, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and COVID-19. The last two clusters overlap within the niche themes quadrant. The turnover intentions and perception clusters also overlap within this quadrant.

The behavior cluster, located in the motor themes quadrant, comprises studies examining the complex relationship between job insecurity and various dimensions of worker behavior. Research in this cluster has shown that job insecurity can hinder career planning and the accumulation of resources such as self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and perceived social support. This process may create a vicious cycle in which job insecurity depletes personal resources, thereby increasing individual insecurity and psychological strain. Röhlmann et al. (2021) also demonstrated that job insecurity may affect behaviors and outcomes such as employee voice and burnout. Furthermore, job insecurity may function as a chronic stressor that affects not only workers who experience it directly but also their family lives. This spillover effect has been demonstrated in studies examining how workers' job insecurity influences the beliefs and attitudes of their children (Barling et al., 1999).

The performance cluster was the largest, comprising 143 studies examining the effects of job insecurity on performance. Most studies identified a negative relationship between the two constructs, either directly or through mediating and moderating variables (Staufenbiel & König, 2010; Vuuren et al., 2019). De Cuyper and De Witte (2006) reported negative correlations between job insecurity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, emphasizing how perceived employment instability can weaken workers' engagement with their professional responsibilities. Wang et al. (2015) further highlighted the moderating role of organizational justice in the relationship between job insecurity and performance, suggesting that fair organizational practices may mitigate the adverse effects of insecurity. This argument is supported by Lin et al. (2021), who identified job insecurity as a threat to employees' psychological and physical resources, with detrimental consequences for their well-being.

The complexity of the relationship between job insecurity and performance is illustrated by the meta-analysis conducted by Jiang et al. (2022), which identified variations in employee performance according to the perceived level of insecurity. The findings indicated that employees may increase their performance in response to moderate levels of insecurity as a compensatory strategy. At high levels of insecurity, however, performance may either improve or decline depending on additional contextual factors. Wong et al. (2005) emphasized this paradoxical effect, whereby insecurity may, under certain circumstances, stimulate greater effort and improved performance. This response may reflect a coping mechanism through which employees attempt to demonstrate their value during periods of uncertainty. Research on job insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic also showed that global crises heighten employees' sensitivity to changes in the work environment, leading to emotional exhaustion and negatively affecting both organizational identification and performance (Khan et al., 2022; Lian et al., 2022).

Within the basic themes quadrant, studies in the employment cluster examined how job insecurity affects organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and how it relates to employees' interpersonal and extrapersonal skills. Feather and Rauter (2010) suggested that OCBs may be positively associated with job insecurity, particularly among temporary workers, who may engage in such behaviors as a strategy to reduce uncertainty regarding their employment status. Coupé (2019) concluded that developing interpersonal skills is more effective in mitigating job insecurity than enhancing creative skills. The study also indicated that automation alone does not eliminate concerns about job loss because workers remain aware of other potential causes of unemployment.

Lingmont and Alexiou (2020) found that awareness of STARA — Smart Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Algorithms — was positively associated with job insecurity and that this relationship was stronger in authoritarian organizational cultures. However, no statistical support was found for the moderating effect of retraining expectations. Caselli et al. (2023), in turn, concluded that organizations' adoption of technological innovations generally reduces employees' perceptions of job insecurity because such practices are interpreted as signs of organizational health and commitment to business continuity. Nevertheless, this effect was partially influenced by individual and occupational factors.

Studies within the workplace and burnout clusters examined the implications of job insecurity across distinct organizational contexts. Kmiecik (2023) investigated knowledge hiding among Information Technology (IT) professionals and found that work overload increases job insecurity, which subsequently encourages knowledge-hiding behavior. Park and Ono (2017), meanwhile, analyzed the effects of workplace bullying and found that job insecurity negatively affects work engagement and exacerbates the adverse health consequences associated with bullying.

The study by Yan et al. (2023), the only publication located in the emerging or declining themes quadrant within the trust cluster, examined human–robot interactions in the workplace and their psychological consequences. The findings showed that the presence of robots increases job insecurity, leading to higher levels of burnout and workplace incivility among employees. The study also assessed self-affirmation interventions, which proved effective in mitigating these adverse effects. The applicability and relevance of these findings were reinforced by extending the research across different cultures and industrial sectors. The results underscore the importance of adaptive human resource management strategies for addressing the challenges introduced by automation while protecting worker well-being.

Within the niche themes quadrant, job insecurity was examined from several perspectives. In the perception cluster, Låstad et al. (2016) highlighted the reciprocal relationship between individual job insecurity and an organization's job insecurity climate, emphasizing the importance of communication, participation, and employability in mitigating the negative effects of insecurity. Nam (2019) subsequently concluded that long-term expectations concerning employment and work sustainability shape current perceptions of job insecurity, which, in turn, influence expectations about future employment. Individuals with lower levels of technology use also reported greater concern about job insecurity, indicating the need for a proactive approach to adaptation during the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Within the organizations cluster, Marx-Fleck et al. (2021) investigated defensive decision-making, whereby individuals select less effective alternatives to minimize personal risk. Drawing on conservation of resources theory, the study showed that environments characterized by high psychological safety can reduce resource depletion and defensive decision-making. By contrast, job insecurity increases the likelihood of defensive decisions as individuals attempt to protect their personal resources. Improving organizational conditions such as psychological safety may therefore reduce defensive decision-making and help organizations foster a culture of more effective decisions aligned with organizational interests.

In the job satisfaction cluster, Soomro (2022) found that job insecurity is positively associated with job stress and negatively affects job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study also emphasized that supervisor support can mitigate the effects of job stress, improve job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and moderate the indirect effects of job insecurity on work-related outcomes.

In the turnover intentions cluster, Röhlmann et al. (2021) investigated whether expressing opinions in the workplace benefits or harms occupational well-being, considering the role of job insecurity. The study suggested that job insecurity, through the potential threat of job loss and the depletion of personal resources, may be particularly harmful, underscoring the need to address it within organizational settings. Similarly, Brougham and Haar (2020) found that employees' awareness of disruptive technologies increases perceived job insecurity and may intensify turnover intentions, particularly when employees perceive themselves as having high occupational mobility and access to alternative employment opportunities.

In the COVID-19 cluster, Vo-Thanh et al. (2022) highlighted the role of union support during the pandemic, particularly in mitigating job insecurity and emotional exhaustion among hotel employees. The findings demonstrated that union support effectively reduced job insecurity. The perceived health risks associated with COVID-19, by contrast, increased both job insecurity and emotional exhaustion.

Finally, within the life satisfaction cluster, Hu and Wang (2022) examined the effect of a competitive psychological climate on mentoring. Their findings indicated that mentors' job insecurity compromises the quality of mentoring support received by protégés, with stronger effects under conditions of high job insecurity. Mentors' trait competitiveness also influenced this dynamic by similarly moderating the relationship between a competitive climate and mentoring support. These findings demonstrate how mentors' individual characteristics may either amplify or mitigate the effects of a competitive work environment.

Overall, research on job insecurity reveals a network of consequences that extends beyond the immediate workplace, affecting workers' personal lives, families, and social relationships. The literature consistently emphasizes the predominantly negative consequences of job insecurity, although it also identifies nuances suggesting that positive responses may arise under specific conditions. These findings indicate that contextual factors, individual characteristics, and organizational strategies play a decisive role in shaping the effects of job insecurity.

Research Agenda: Promising Directions for Future Research

Shoss's (2017) theoretical study, which sought to advance conceptual clarity regarding job insecurity, proposed a brief research agenda organized around three primary directions: the antecedents of job insecurity, the use of quantitative and qualitative research designs, and the ways in which workers in disadvantaged circumstances perceive or experience job insecurity. The research agenda proposed in the present study may be regarded as an extension of Shoss's agenda, particularly because more recent studies, including those by Nam (2019) and Lee et al. (2024), continue to recommend mixed-method, longitudinal, and antecedent-focused investigations.

According to Haar and Broughman (2022), protecting workers' mental health is essential to maintaining a healthy and high-performing work environment. These authors sought to understand job insecurity processes at the team level. Accordingly, the first proposed research direction involves testing moderated mediation effects to determine how contextual and psychological factors operating at the team level influence individual outcomes. In a study examining both team- and individual-level factors, Lee et al. (2024) similarly recommended investigating how toxic leadership affects individual job insecurity and how social support may mitigate this perception and strengthen employment security.

Chhabra and Pandey (2023) argued that perceptions of potential job loss increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby intensifying job insecurity. For future research, they recommended conducting studies across different contexts and cultures because perceptions of insecurity vary according to individuals' cultural and contextual circumstances. They also proposed examining the relationship between job insecurity and individual thriving, as well as whether benevolent leadership moderates this relationship, thereby providing greater empirical and conceptual refinement.

Job insecurity may also act as a major occupational stressor and contribute to a tense work climate (Glabek et al., 2023). These authors therefore recommended examining perceptions of insecurity among temporary workers, individuals with low levels of perceived employability, and workers in precarious employment contexts. Future research should investigate how these conditions generate stress and contribute to perceptions of an insecure work climate.

Abusive supervision may similarly contribute to an unsafe or insecure work climate. Wu et al. (2025) recommended investigating how abusive leadership affects individuals' work engagement and whether procedural justice moderates this relationship. According to the authors, perceptions of justice may provide an important protective response for workers who experience abuse in the workplace. Investigations into organizational participation in abusive practices also represent a promising avenue for advancing knowledge of abusive supervision and its relationship with job insecurity.

In the context of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Nam (2019) and He et al. (2024) argued that long-term expectations of employment continuity will depend substantially on workers' knowledge of emerging technologies and their ability to use them in the workplace. Individuals with lower levels of knowledge and practical experience with AI tend to report greater concern about job insecurity than those with more extensive knowledge and use of the technology. Accordingly, these authors recommended comparative studies examining performance levels among workers with higher and lower levels of practical AI knowledge. Such research could help identify the tools and training initiatives needed to increase workers' familiarity with AI and reduce perceptions of job insecurity. This is particularly important because stronger perceptions of insecurity tend to be associated with poorer performance and higher levels of worry and stress.

Zadi et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of organizational policies that support organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), given their potential to improve both individual and organizational performance. Future studies examining whether OCBs can reduce perceptions of job insecurity may provide a robust theoretical framework for understanding the role of these behaviors in preventing insecurity and promoting organizational success.

Several additional questions offer promising directions for research, particularly regarding human resource management practices. How can these practices help prevent perceptions of job insecurity? How can they promote a harmonious, fair, and healthy work climate? How can communication, training, and professional development programs be improved to strengthen workers' sense of security? In an era of remote work and teleworking, how do individuals experience and express job insecurity? Can workers experience job-related insecurity even while working from the comfort of their homes? How can organizations shape a culture capable of providing workers with greater security under these new working arrangements?

These questions may inspire further investigation into job insecurity and generate new insights that enrich the theoretical and empirical foundations of the field. A deeper understanding of the factors associated with job insecurity may also enable organizations to develop more effective strategies for promoting safer, more sustainable, and more productive work environments.

Final Considerations

This study aimed to characterize the conceptual structure of job insecurity and propose new directions for future research. Job insecurity is characterized by fear, apprehension, and distress regarding the possibility of job loss, whether as a result of organizational restructuring associated with changes in work that reduce workforce size or because of the new dynamics that emerged after the COVID-19 pandemic, which also enabled cost reductions and consequently led to workforce downsizing.

From this perspective, the study examined the effects of the initial stages of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which require new competencies while simultaneously creating a bottleneck, as the skills workers currently possess are often misaligned with those required by emerging forms of work. Another prominent concern is the possibility of losing one's job to machines, given that many activities previously performed by workers are now carried out using technological equipment. Consequently, many workers perceive new technologies primarily as threats rather than as tools that can support their work.

Job insecurity therefore represents a promising field for further investigation because its conceptual structure encompasses multiple dimensions. These range from personal consequences that affect workers' private lives to the loss of financial resources, social belonging, and the sense of purpose associated with performing meaningful work. This study contributes to the conceptual structure of job insecurity, which lies at the intersection of economic and global transformations that shape workers' perceptions of the future of their employment. As previously discussed, the fear of being replaced by machines may generate feelings of panic and compromise employment continuity. Accordingly, this study emphasizes the importance of examining job insecurity as part of workers' career planning, thereby helping them prepare to address potential risks within an environment characterized by uncertainty and contingency.

Several concerns within the field of job insecurity should also be acknowledged. In addition to being a stressor that may contribute to occupational illnesses and counterproductive outcomes, job insecurity is a subjective experience that varies among individuals. Organizations are therefore expected to mitigate its effects. However, an important question remains: how can these effects be reduced when the emerging changes associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution have resulted in many workers being replaced by machines? Will these workers be reassigned to other roles? How can such a large segment of the workforce be effectively redeployed when workers may not possess the competencies required to meet emerging job demands? These preliminary questions require more extensive discussion because the future of work is fundamentally concerned with these new employment dynamics.

Furthermore, considering the diversity of work arrangements and generational differences, how will job insecurity be experienced by people from different generations and cultural backgrounds? Will individuals with greater technological experience be less concerned about employment security? Will those who use technology less frequently experience greater concern regarding employment continuity? How are these perceptions and experiences related to the changing meaning attributed to work in recent years? This article therefore encourages researchers to reflect on these questions and undertake further investigation.

This study is limited by its lack of an in-depth examination of the antecedents and consequences of job insecurity, thereby creating opportunities for future studies to address these issues. Furthermore, this research represents an initial step toward exploring the broader complexities of job insecurity, particularly because it includes a dedicated section highlighting directions for future research. Future studies are therefore expected to build on the recommendations presented herein and examine the changing configurations of work, which have become increasingly versatile, dynamic, and unstable in relation to the future of employment.

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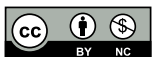
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