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Mediating Effects of Job security on the Relationship between Trust in Management and Organizational Commitment in Downsizing Organizations

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ABSTRACT: Organizations have underestimated the adverse effects of downsizing and often overlook the challenges of motivating a remaining workforce that is emotionally affected by witnessing others lose their jobs. Yet, motivating these survivors to achieve higher productivity is vital for the company's success and the job security of employees. It should be noted that, next to the death of a relative or friend, losing a job is one of the most traumatic experiences, as it disrupts careers and families. This research paper aims to study the mediating effect of job security on the relationship between trust in management and organizational commitment of employees. The present research findings suggest that if organizational downsizing is carried out in such a manner that employees perceive positive changes in their daily work experiences in the form of increased organizational support that enhances their trust for management and inculcates perceptions of the accuracy of the performance appraisal system, their affective and continuance commitment to the organization can be maintained or even increased. The study has significance for maintaining member loyalty by organizations which are resorting to downsizing through voluntary retirement schemes as in the Indian context. Research strongly suggests that survivors in the organization also suffer adverse effects after downsizing has occurred.

KEYWORDS: Downsizing, Organizational Commitment, Voluntary Retirement Scheme

INTRODUCTION

Downsizing has become a common reality for organizations, and numerous surveys have shown that those who remain after corporate restructuring are often overlooked before, during, and after the process. However, these remaining employees are crucial to future profitability. Those who lose their jobs during downsizing endure a deeply emotional ordeal, but their colleagues who stay with the company experience similar feelings. Today's survivors might become tomorrow's dissatisfied, unproductive employees or tomorrow's team players, eager to be part of a workplace community that appreciates their efforts. A significant reason many organizations fail to meet their corporate goals post-downsizing is their inability to address adequately and effectively the "people factor" concerning the employees who remain. Previous studies indicate that organizations often see an initial boost in productivity as employees work harder and more competitively to retain their jobs. However, this surge in productivity is temporary and is soon followed by a pervasive "malaise" within the organization. Human resource professionals describe this survivor syndrome as a 'mixed bag' of behaviours and emotions often displayed by employees who remain after downsizing. The current study aimed to identify certain positive aspects of the internal organizational environment that can assist human resource management in integrating downsizing survivors into the organizational mainstream without diminishing their commitment. In this context, identifying mediator variables can help explain why the psychological and behavioural reactions to downsizing may vary in intensity. Recognizing these mediating variables is a crucial step in managing a downsizing or redundancy program proactively and effectively. Understanding these variables should not be seen as merely a prescriptive or normative approach to managing downsizing, given the importance of situational and contextual factors unique to each downsizing effort.

In common parlance, "downsizing" is often equated with redundancy. It is also used interchangeably with various other terms, some of which are paradoxical, like "de-recruiting," "de-massing," "re-engineering," "re-sizing," "restructuring," "reorganization," and "rightsizing." The practice of organizational downsizing, when the term is used, reinforces this link to redundancy. Quality newspapers frequently report on downsizing linked to redundancies, leading to a general understanding that these terms are merely euphemisms for the more straightforward, albeit less appealing, term redundancy. However, literature that discusses downsizing and evaluates its outcomes presents a more complex picture related to organizational decision-making and conceptual intricacy. Due to the high frequency of organizational downsizing in recent years, particularly in Britain and North America, a substantial

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body of literature on this topic has developed. Much of this literature is characterized as being largely descriptive, normative, and prescriptive. Downsizing is defined as "a deliberate organizational decision to reduce the workforce with the aim of enhancing organizational performance." While this definition is not exhaustive, it emphasizes three key aspects of this process from an organizational viewpoint. The primary goal of downsizing is to enhance effectiveness, efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness, thereby improving organizational performance. The intentional nature of downsizing is also crucial in defining it and distinguishing it from the related concept of organizational decline. While decline is linked to the unintentional loss of market share, revenue, or personnel, downsizing is viewed as a deliberate effort by management to adapt the organization to changes in its operating environment. Organizations have underestimated the adverse effects of downsizing and often overlook the challenges of motivating a remaining workforce that is emotionally affected by witnessing others lose their jobs. Yet, motivating these survivors to achieve higher productivity is vital for the company's success and the job security of employees. It should be noted that, next to the death of a relative or friend, losing a job is one of the most traumatic experiences, as it disrupts careers and families. Noer has reported that survivors experience 12 different types of negative feelings and concerns, including job insecurity—survivors worry about how long they will keep their jobs and fear they are not prepared to find work elsewhere or that there are no comparable jobs available. This affects their daily work behaviours and attitudes. Unfairness also arises, as doubts emerge about the wisdom of the layoff decisions made by managers and the competence with which management has guided the organization. Most organizations downsized for the first time, so the process was not planned, managed, or implemented effectively. Employees felt that the process was unfair.

Depression, anxiety, and exhaustion—The process is both demoralizing and stressful for managers tasked with laying off employees, as well as for the employees who lose friends and colleagues. No one is adequately prepared, including the managers who must deliver the difficult news about the new structure. A survey by the American Management Association of 1,142 companies that downsized found that nearly half were either "badly" or "not well" prepared for the restructuring and had not foreseen the problems that arose afterward. More than half admitted to starting the downsizing process without any policies or programs in place. High on the list of anxieties were often unspoken questions like: "Will I be the next to go—even though it seems I'm staying for now?" Reduced risk-taking and motivation—many remaining employees are hesitant to seize new job opportunities, accept new assignments, or discuss work-related issues for fear of attracting criticism or poor performance reviews, which could make them targets for future layoffs. They strive to fit securely into their current "safe" positions. Distrust and betrayal—Some employees no longer feel a sense of belonging or see a future within the organization. They question why they should care about their employer when it seems the employer did not care about their colleagues. In some cases, the process was so poorly managed that Mitchell Marks, an industrial psychologist, identified this deep distrust as the "Perot Syndrome." He likens the leadership styles of many U.S. business CEOs to Ross Perot's decision to withdraw from the 1992 presidential race, which left his supporters shocked and angry, resulting in strong negative emotional reactions. "...Organizations have underestimated the negative effects of downsizing and fail to consider the challenges of motivating a workforce emotionally scarred by witnessing others lose their jobs..." Lack of reciprocal commitment—Some employees feel abandoned by the organization, believing they were not treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. The mutually beneficial relationship (employee-employer) developed over the years was completely nullified. Dissatisfaction with planning and communication—Inadequate communication and preparation for layoffs lead survivors to view the entire process with suspicion. Only 44 percent of companies that downsized in the past five years shared their plans with employees, and even fewer (34 percent) informed survivors of their role in the company's new strategy, according to a survey of 1,020 human resources directors. Dissatisfaction with the layoff process—Layoffs handled insensitively or humiliatingly create lasting resentment among employees. Lack of strategic direction—Focusing on short-term financial issues causes employees to doubt the validity of the organization's long-term strategy. Most companies communicate their long-term

Trust in management is shown to buffer the negative consequences of job insecurity, which otherwise tends to reduce affective commitment. Specifically, trust in management mitigates the adverse effects of job insecurity on employee burnout, psychological distress, and job satisfaction, thereby supporting sustained commitment levels despite insecurity (Jiang and Probst, 2016).

Empirical evidence indicates that job insecurity can undermine organizational commitment by increasing work-related anxiety and stress. However, collective trust in management attenuates these negative impacts. High trust in management reduces the harmful effect of both objective (actual job loss risk) and subjective (perceived risk) job insecurity on organizational commitment, supporting

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the idea that trust acts as a protective mediator in the relationship between job insecurity and employee commitment (Wang et al., 2018).

Furthermore, organizational commitment itself has been found to mediate some job insecurity effects on outcomes such as turnover intention, showing that reduced commitment links job insecurity to increased intent to leave the organization (Lee and Jeong, 2017). This mediation role highlights commitment as a crucial mechanism by which job insecurity impacts employee behaviour, with trust in management potentially preserving commitment levels under insecurity.

Job insecurity also interacts with psychological contract breach and perceived control, which mediate its effects on employee attitudes including commitment and trust-related outcomes. Perceived breaches in the psychological contract due to job insecurity led to decreased commitment and increased counterproductive behaviours, demonstrating that the mediation involves not just job insecurity itself but also cognitive and emotional appraisals linked to trust in organizational management.

In summary, job insecurity negatively influences commitment through increased anxiety, distress, and psychological contract breaches. Trust in management mediates this relationship by reducing the adverse effects of job insecurity on affective commitment and related work attitudes. Thus, fostering trust in management is critical to maintaining commitment in contexts of job insecurity, positioning job insecurity as a key mediator in the trust–commitment dynamic within organizations (Ma et al., 2019).

Organizational commitment is a critical factor influencing employee retention, performance, and overall organizational effectiveness. Perceived trust in management plays a pivotal role in shaping this commitment, as it fosters a positive work environment and strengthens the psychological bond between employees and the organization. However, the presence of job insecurity can significantly disrupt this relationship by inducing anxiety, psychological distress, and diminished affective commitment. Job insecurity acts as a mediating factor that influences how perceived trust translates into organizational commitment. Specifically, trust in management has been shown to buffer the negative impact of job insecurity by mitigating its effects on employee burnout, stress, and job satisfaction. Moreover, job insecurity interacts with cognitive and emotional appraisals such as psychological contract breach and perceived control, further affecting employee attitudes and behaviours. Understanding the mediating role of job insecurity in the trust–commitment dynamic is essential for developing strategies that sustain employee commitment even under conditions of uncertainty. This study aims to examine how job insecurity mediates the relationship between perceived trust in management and organizational commitment, highlighting the importance of fostering trust to counterbalance the adverse effects of job insecurity within organizations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The well-being perspective frames downsizing as a threat that can have direct or indirect effects on employees, depending on their proximity to the layoffs Grunberg, et al. and Engidaw, et al. and the characteristics of the downsizing event, such as its magnitude and frequency. Within the stress resilience/vulnerability framework, Dougall, et al. argue that the similarity of stressor events determines whether resilience or chronic stress develops. They suggest that only similar stressors allow individuals to adapt and build resilience, whereas varying types of stressors heighten stress and vulnerability.

The negative impact of downsizing on personal networks within organizations further exacerbates vulnerability among survivors. The elimination of employees weakens communication, social exchange, and friendship links such that survivors feel additional stress because of their proximity to downsizing victims Moore, et al. and the feelings of isolation and diminished emotional support available when victims leave the organization.

Empirical evidence overwhelmingly supports the vulnerability perspective, with repeated downsizing contact associated with worsening employee outcomes. For example, Ferrie, et al. found that chronic job insecurity from downsizing led to adverse health effects, particularly self-reported measures like depression, even when physiological indicators showed limited changes. Moore, et al. observed that employees exposed to multiple downsizing waves, especially direct layoffs, experienced significant declines in health, attitudes, and behaviours. Mixed contacts (direct and indirect) further exacerbated these effects, underscoring that the nature and order of exposure play critical roles. Similarly , Armstrong-Stassen found that managers with repeated layoff experiences reported diminished affective commitment and increased continuance commitment, suggesting they stayed out of necessity rather than loyalty. She concluded that the psychological damage from the initial downsizing event was so significant that subsequent experiences had a limited incremental impact.

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Moore, et al. further explored the temporal and sequential effects of downsizing. Their findings revealed that recent layoffs had a greater influence on outcomes like job security, depression, and intention to leave than past experiences. Notably, employees who initially experienced indirect layoffs and la ter faced direct layoffs reported worse outcomes compared to those with two direct exposures, suggesting that dissimilar layoff experiences intensify stress and hinder resilience. While the vulnerability perspective dominates, there is some evidence for a resilience effect under specific conditions.
Armstrong-Stassen found that employees with greater exposure to downsizing demonstrated stronger action-oriented coping and positive thinking. Kalimo, et al. identified that the type of downsizing event—such as layoffs versus cutting temporary contracts—shaped employee reactions. They noted that while past downsizing experiences had limited impact on survivor well-being, repeated or anticipated downsizing activities increased emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and psychological distress.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the nature of the relationship between member's perception of trust in management and managerial organizational commitment in downsizing organizations.
2. To examine the nature of the relationship between perceived job security and managerial organizational commitment in downsizing organizations.
3. To examine the mediating effects of perceived job security on the relationship between perceptions of trust in management and organizational commitment in downsizing organizations.

Hypothesis

1) The employees trust in management is likely to have a positive relationship with their level of organizational commitment the downsizing organizations.

2) Member's perception of job security is likely to have a positive relationship with their level of organizational commitment in the downsizing organizations.

3) The relationship between the perception of trust for management and organizational commitment, is likely to be mediated by the degree of members' perceived job security in the organizations.

METHODOLOGY

MEASURES:

The following measuring instruments were developed, modified, and adapted for being used in the study:

Trust for management: The scale for measuring trust was adapted from the scale reported by Schoorman, Mayer and Davis (1996). The scale initially consisted of 20 items but based on item total correlation analysis following the pilot study, 19 items remained. The scale thus, contained a total of 19 items measuring 3 dimensions of interpersonal trust, that is, ability, benevolence, and integrity. Six items assessed levels of ability-based trust, 8 items measured benevolence- based trust and 5 items measured integrity- based trust. The items were also translated in Hindi. Responses were collected on a Likert- type five- point scales ranging from (1) "strongly agree" to (5) "strongly disagree", indicating the extent of respondent's agreement with each of the statement about a specific peer, subordinate and superior at work. The Cronbach reliability coefficient of the scale was .87.

Job Security A scale was developed to suit the changing job security conditions in Indian organizations. Items were framed based on the scale reported by Vandenberghe and Stinglhamber (2005). Initially it contained 10 items which were translated into Hindi but based on item total correlation analysis in the pilot study, 8 items were retained. Responses to each item was obtained on five-point rating scales ranging from '1' (very large extent) to '5' (not at all). The reliability coefficient of the scale was .75.

Organizational Commitment: The organizational commitment scale reported by Meyer and Allen (1987) was adapted for the present study in which the measure of organizational commitment included 16 items of affective and continuance commitment. Initially the scale contained sixteen items but based on item total correlation analysis of the two dimensions following the pilot study, 15 items were included for the final study. Responses of the items were obtained on five-point rating scale ranging from '1' (very large extent) to '5' (not at all). Factor analysis of the 15 items by principal components method and varimax rotations on a sample of 250 respondents confirmed the two factors of organizational commitment, namely affective commitment (23.31 % variance), and continuance commitment (21.19 % variance). Each factor was represented by the total score of the total number of items in the factor separately.

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Sample
For the study a sample of 250 managerial level participants were drawn from various public and private sector organizations.

Procedure
The managers in the human resource management department of each organization were approached and permission was obtained for administering the measures to personnel who were willing to participate in the study. Questionnaires were administered individually to each participant during the working hours. The questionnaires were available in two languages – Hindi and English. All participants were assured anonymity and convinced that their identity would never be revealed. The importance of frank and sincere responses was emphasized. The way the questions had to be answered on five-point scales was explained to them and any confusion was overcome. They were made aware of the fact that they were required to report their genuine perceptions of the organization and its human resource practices.

RESULTS

Correlations of variables with affective and continuance commitment (N = 125)

Variables	Affective	Continuance
Demographic Variable		
Salary	.15	.05
Duration	.01	-.03
Promotion	-.02	.01
Trust in Management		
Ability	.37***	.45***
Benevolence	.41***	.28**
Integrity	.35***	.45***
Perceived job security	.32***	.35***

*p <.05, ** p <.01 , ***p<.001*

Results showed that none of the demographic variables were significantly correlated with both affective and continuance commitment.

Trust for Management: Trust for management was significantly and positively correlated with affective and continuance commitment of employees. All the three dimensions, namely, ability (r = .37 & .45; p<.001), benevolence (r =.41, p<.001 & r= .28, p<.01) and integrity (r=.29 & r=.25, p<.01) were significantly correlated with the two types of organizational commitment.

Perceived Job Security
Members' perception of job security had significant and positive correlation with both affective and continuance commitment (r = .32 p<.001 & r= .35, p<.001).

Stepwise Regression Analysis of dimensions of trust in management with affective commitment among the managerial employees

Variable	**R**	**R square**	**R Square change**	**% variance**	**% variance change**	**Beta Coefficient**	**t value**
Benevolence	.41	.17	.16	17%	17%	.33	3.92***
Ability	.48	.24	.22	24	7%	.27	3.18***

**p <.05, ** p <.01 , ***p<.001*

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Results revealed that among the dimensions of trust in management two factors i.e. ability significantly predicted 24 % variance in affective commitment with a beta value .27 (p>.05) and benevolence significantly predicted 17% variance with a beta value .33 (p>.001) in the downsizing organization. The factor 'integrity' did not emerge as a significant predictor of affective commitment.

Stepwise Regression Analysis of dimensions of trust in management with continuance commitment among the managerial samples

Variable	R	R square	R Square change	% variance	% variance change	Beta Coefficient	t value
Integrity	.45	.21	.20	21%	21%	.28	2.81**
Ability	.50	.25	.24	25%	4%	.27	2.72**

**p <.05, ** p <.01 , ***p<.001*

Results revealed that among the dimensions of trust in management the factor integrity significantly predicted 21 % variance in continuance commitment with a beta coefficient .28 (p>.05) and ability also significantly predicted 25 % variance with beta value of .27 (p>.05). The factor 'benevolence' did not emerge as a significant predictor of continuance commitment.

Stepwise Regression Analysis of perceived job security with affective commitment among the managerial employees

Variable	R	R square	R Square change	% variance	% variance change	Beta Coefficient	t value
Job security	.32	.11	.10	11%	11%	.33	3.86***

**p <.05, ** p <.01 , ***p<.001*

Results revealed that perceived job security significantly predicted 11% variance in affective commitment with a beta value .33 (p>.001).

Stepwise Regression Analysis of perceived job security with continuance commitment among the managerial employees

Variable	R	R square	R Square change	% variance	% variance change	Beta Coefficient	t value
Job security	.35	.12	.11	11%	11%	.35	4.07***

**p <.05, ** p <.01 , ***p<.001*

Results showed that perceived job security significantly predicted 15 % variance in continuance commitment with a beta value .38 (p>.001).

Mediating effects of perceived job security on predictions of affective commitment by dimensions of trust in management in downsizing organization

Model	Standardized beta coefficient		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Salary	.19*	.19*	.13
Duration	.10	.11	.17*
Promotion	-.13	-.11	-.11

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Ability		**.24***	**.30***	
Benevolence		**.26****	**.21***	
Integrity		.11	.12	
Perceived Job Security			.34***	
R	.19	.52	.61	
R square	.04	.27	.37	
R square change	.04	.24	.10	
df	121	118	117	
F ratio	1.45	12.37***	19.29***	

**p <.05, ** p <.01 , ***p<.001*

Mediating effects of perceived job security on predictions of continuance commitment by dimensions of trust in management in downsizing organization

Model	**Standardized beta coefficient**		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Salary	.05	.11	.03
Duration	-.03	-.02	.06
Promotion	.01	.04	.04
Ability		.29***	.35***
Benevolence		.06	-.01
Integrity		**.27****	**.28*****
Perceived Job Security			.42***
R	.05	.52	.65
R square	.00	.27	.42
R square change	-.02	.23	.39
df	121	118	117
F ratio	1.13	7.28***	12.28***

**p <.05, ** p <.01 , ***p<.001*

Results showed that among the three dimensions of trust for management, the factor *ability* significantly predicted affective commitment with a beta coefficient of .24 (p>.05; step 2) and even more significantly with a beta coefficient of .30 (p>.001;

step 3) when perceived job security was entered into the equation. Thus, perceived job security exercised suppressor effects on the prediction of affective commitment by the factor 'ability. Perceived job security also partially mediated the prediction of affective commitment by the factor *benevolence* which predicted affective commitment with a beta coefficient of .26 (p>.001; step 2) and less significantly with a beta coefficient of .21 (p>.05; step 3) when perceived job security was entered into the equation.

Regarding the effects of perceived job security on the prediction of continuance commitment by the dimensions of trust in management, the results revealed suppressor effects of perceived job security on the prediction of continuance commitment by the factor *integrity* which significantly predicted continuance commitment with a beta coefficient of .27 (p>.01; step 2) and even more significantly with a beta coefficient of .28 (p>.001; step 3) when perceived job security was introduced into the equation.

FINDINGS & SUGGESTIONS

The present research findings suggest that if organizational downsizing is carried out in such a manner that employees perceive positive changes in their daily work experiences in the form of increased organizational support that enhances their trust for management and inculcates perceptions of the accuracy of the performance appraisal system, their affective and continuance commitment to the organization can be maintained or even increased. If employees perceive an increase in job complexity and opportunities for promotion, if they receive support from their superiors who treat them with respect and dignity, and if they perceive the company to be responsive to new ideas and methods, then they are likely to experience an increase in their continuance commitment to the organization even after the trauma of downsizing. Hence, how the organizational change process is managed appears to be as important as the content of the change itself. The present study is an important step in this direction which has tried to identify those dimensions of the organization's internal environment that can help employees to cope with the changes in their job security if following downsizing by their organization and which will help them to function as effectively.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has significance for maintaining member loyalty by organizations which are resorting to downsizing through voluntary retirement schemes as in the Indian context. Research strongly suggests that survivors in the organization also suffer adverse effects after downsizing has occurred. In researches it is indicated that a loss of attachment, lack of information, and a perception of apparent managerial capriciousness as the basis for decisions on who will be terminated causes anxiety and an obsessive need for survival, which often leads employees to leave the company with bitterness and hostility. However, Schweiger *et al*. indicated that, ultimately it was apparently not the terminations *per se* that create this bitterness but the way the terminations were handled. Those who remained expressed feelings of disgust and anger that their friends and colleagues were fired and felt guilty that they were not the ones who were let go because they believed their co-workers performed at least as well or better than they did.

The findings related to the suppressor effects of perceived job security on the prediction of continuance commitment in the downsizing organization by performance appraisal fairness are a pointer to this effect on survivors of the downsizing process in such an organization. It could be inferred from the findings that survivors of downsizing are likely to feel guilty about the continuance of their jobs in the organization which in turn could suppresses the positive effects of performance appraisal fairness on their continuance commitment.

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