Handelshøyskolen BI

GRA 19703 Master Thesis

Thesis Master of Science 100% - B

Predefinert informasjon

Startdato:	16-01-2022 09:00	**Termin:**	202210
Sluttdato:	01-07-2022 12:00	**Vurderingsform:**	Norsk 6-trinns skala (A-F)
Eksamensform:	T		
Flowkode:	202210||10788||IN00||B||T		
Intern sensor:	(Anonymisert)		

Deltaker

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Informasjon fra deltaker

Tittel *:	Job Insecurity and Intention to Leave, from a Job Insecurity Climate Perspective
Navn på veileder *:	Mats Glambek

Inneholder besvarelsen konfidensielt materiale?:	Nei	**Kan besvarelsen offentliggjøres?:**	Ja

Gruppe

Gruppenavn:	(Anonymisert)
Gruppenummer:	6
Andre medlemmer i gruppen:	

MASTER THESIS

- Job Insecurity and Intention to Leave, from a Job Insecurity Climate Perspective -

Supervisor:

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Hand-in date:

01.07.2022

Campus:

BI Bergen

Program:

Master of Science in Business, Leadership and Change

Acknowledgment

This thesis represents the final part of our Master of Science in Business, Leadership and Change at BI Norwegian Business School.

First and foremost, we want to express our gratitude to Mats Glambek, our supervisor for his guidance, inspiration, and support. We are grateful for his sincere, thorough, and efficient feedback, as well as insightful discussions. His guidance has been valuable to improve our work continuously. This thesis would not have been completed without his guidance and support.

Secondly, we would like to thank our friends and family for their endless support and encouragement. Finally, we would like to thank each other for great teamwork. The process of writing this thesis has been challenging, thrilling and we believe this thesis touches upon an interesting and relevant topic.

Abstract

Outcomes of job insecurity have in recent years attracted a lot of scholarly interest. However, job insecurity is not just an individual experience; employees can perceive that there is a climate of job insecurity at their workplace as well, as people collectively worry about their jobs. The overall aim for this thesis was to investigate job insecurity climate and intention to leave during COVID-19 and to see if this relationship could be mediated by individual job insecurity.

The data collection was conducted at the beginning of 2021, in the middle of the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out. The results of our analysis give support for individual job insecurity as a mediator between perceived job insecurity climate and turnover intention. Thus, the findings suggest that perceived job insecurity climate is contagious and increases individual job insecurity, which leads to turnover intentions.

The results are discussed through general stress theories such as appraisal theory and conservation of resources (COR) theory. A common feature of these theories is that they all highlight the critical role of resources, though in different forms. In addition, the crossover model is discussed, as it explains how stress transmits from one person to another. Implications and limitations and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: job insecurity, job insecurity climate, turnover intention, COVID-19, crossover, stress.

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1.0 Introduction

Today's business environment is characterized by rapid change because of globalization, new technology, and innovation. Over the past decades organizations have been downsizing, restructuring, and merging with increasing speed (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989; Shoss, 2017). These events have changed many people's assumptions about the stability of their employers (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984), leaving employees concerned about the future existence of their jobs. Recent trends and events in the business world, including the use of downsizing and outsourcing to reduce labor costs (Ashford et al., 1989) and the recent global recession, have given the rise to widespread concerns about job security (Cazes, Verick, & Heuer, 2009). It has long been known that humans seek security. Historically, Maslow (1954) addressed the need for safety and protection in his hierarchy of needs. These needs include security of body, employment, resources, morality of family, and of health (Maslow, 1954).

According to previous research, antecedents such as downsizing and restructuring are associated with feelings of job insecurity (De Cuyper et al., 2010). Organizational change, in general causes individuals to feel more insecure about their jobs, which has severe consequences for both employees and organizations. Job insecurity poses a threat to job continuity and stability (Shoss, 2017). Furthermore, considering economic, technological and political changes during the last few decades, job insecurity has attracted a significant amount of scholarly interest (Shoss, 2017; Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002). Both individual and organizational predictors and its consequences have been associated with job insecurity. The meta-analysis conducted by Cheng and Chan (2008), found that job insecurity can lead to lower organizational commitment, poor health and well-being, poor performance and workplace behavior, and greater intentions to leave. The latter was also supported by a previous meta-analysis (Sverke et al., 2002). Which shows that when people feel insecure about the future continuity of their job, they tend to look elsewhere for other possibilities, and thus remove oneself from the problem as a coping strategy. The stronger turnover intention among employees is a potential negative consequence also from an organizational perspective (Låstad, 2015).

The majority of these studies, however, are cross-sectional. Hence, they do not measure the development in job insecurity over time. In addition, most of these researchers have focused on an individual-analysis perspective, without taking the social context into account (Sora et al., 2009). Few researchers have examined the effect of the shared perceptions of job insecurity (i.e., job insecurity climate) on the employee (Hsieh & Kao, 2021). As far as we know, very few have investigated the individual perception of a job insecurity climate and its outcomes. In addition, previous studies on job insecurity have been conducted on relatively job secure employees and in relative stable circumstances (Vander Elst, Notelaers, & Skogstad, 2018)

The unpredictable outbreak of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic at the start of 2020, forced nearly all governments to adopt restrictive measures, with social distancing and isolation playing a crucial role (Eurostat, 2021). The virus spread rapidly, infecting millions, and bringing economic activity to a halt as governments enforced harsh mobility restrictions to prevent further spread (The World Bank, 2020). The pandemic has decimated jobs and placed millions of livelihoods at risk (Chriscaden, 2020). The economic harm is already visible as the health and human toll rises, and it constitutes the world's worst economic shock in decades (The World Bank, 2020). The pandemic has created uncertainties on several fronts. Millions of individuals have been unable to work as the pandemic and containment efforts have taken their toll on OECD economies, resulting in an unusually sharp decline in activity and significant job losses (OECD, 2020). Up to half of all workers in the most impacted sectors are on part-time, temporary contracts or are self-employed. Many lack job security and have limited access to unemployment benefits (OECD, 2020). In addition, millions of enterprises face an existential threat.

The COVID-19 pandemic poses a variety of real-world obstacles. Among other factors, it has had a significant impact on the unemployment rate across the world. The United States reached an unemployment rate of 14.7 by mid-April 2020, the highest it has been since the Great Depression (OECD, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020). COVID-19 has resulted in the most severe crisis for the world of work since the Great Depression of the 1930s (International Labour Organisation, 2021). The rising trend in unemployment may cause others to fear for their jobs (Rudolph et al., 2021). Brockner (1992) highlighted layoffs as direct causes of job

insecurity among employed surviving staff cuts, leaving a great amount of job insecurity for those who are still employed (Rudolph et al., 2021).

In January 2021, the world was still facing an unprecedent crisis in jobs and incomes and heightened levels of uncertainty (International Labour Organisation, 2021). With 93 % of the world's workers residing in countries with some form of workplace closure measures in place in early January 2021 (International Labour Organisation, 2021). However, in the USA nearly all restrictions were targeted at certain geographical areas or sectors, indicating a general easing of the situation (International Labour Organisation, 2021). Despite that, January 2021 turned out to be the deadliest month of the corona virus in the USA (Feuer & Rattner, 2021). Even though daily new cases and the number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 had a steep increase in the beginning of January, the rate was steadily decreasing at the end of the month. However, the discovery and potential spread of new strains of the virus that appear to be more infectious threaten to reverse progress made on combating the outbreak (Feuer & Rattner, 2021). The new mutations of the virus, and the race for the COVID-19 vaccination, created an uncertain day-to-day for most people. Given the special context of the study, with data obtained in the middle of the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out, resulted in a lot of uncertainty in the surroundings. Although the pandemic is something that hopefully passes, are there many other potential sources of job insecurity in the future. The world is continually changing, and history shows that both global financial crises, technological development, or more local crises tend to occur regularly. With the Ukrainian war, the green shift, social change, and more frequent technological development there is no reason to believe that other economic downturns and general uncertain periods will not occur.

It would be important to investigate the potential effects of perceiving a social climate that is defined by job insecurity given the negative effects related to individual job insecurity. The current study will therefore aim to explain what it is like when a job insecurity crisis is occurring. Additionally, what it means for individuals to work in such an environment, and what the consequences could be, so that we know what is worth knowing when the next crisis will happen. Our study is therefore an important contribution, whether similar situations or crises should arise.

Research question:

The purpose of this thesis will be to investigate the following question:

Does perceived job insecurity climate affect intention to leave during COVID-19, and is this association mediated by individual job insecurity?

2.0 Theory

In this section, we turn to organizational research to provide the definitions of important concepts of the existing literature. To examine our research question, we will elaborate on the theoretical background to understand what already exists in the area and dynamics between job insecurity climate, turnover intention, conservation of recourses, stress, crossover model, and individual job insecurity.

2.1 Perceived Job Insecurity Climate

Job insecurity has traditionally been studied as an individual's perceptions of their own job (Låstad, 2015). Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) defined individual job insecurity as "perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened work situation". However, many workplace situations include both social and individual aspects (Låstad, 2015), and in recent years scholars have researched the concept at a climate level.

Organizational climate is briefly defined as the meanings people attach to the shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices, and procedures (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013). Research on climate has suggested that climate emerges as an integration process, moving from an initial state in which there is little agreement among individuals' climate perceptions, through progressive states in which the level of agreement gradually increases as individual perceptions are shared between organization members to the eventual state in which high agreement is achieved (Chan, 1998; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). The social information processing model describes how people use information from their own prior experiences and other people's opinions to develop their own perceptions (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Based on social information processing theory, it could also be argued that rumors regarding organizational changes and poor organizational communication may lead to the emergence of a climate of job insecurity in a workplace. Employees might begin

to pay greater attention to negative cues in the organization when organizational changes become a topic of debate (Låstad, Vander Elst, & De Witte, 2016).

Given these considerations, it appears reasonable to suppose that individuals communicate with other members of their organization to understand employment policies and procedures. As a result of these interactions, employees' perceptions of job insecurity might be exchanged, consequently, members of the organization might share their perceptions of job insecurity, resulting in a collective perception or job insecurity climate emerging within the organization (Sora et al., 2009).

Sora et al. (2009) were among the first to study the concept of job insecurity climate, and defined the construct as "a set of shared perceptions of powerlessness to maintain the continuity of threatened jobs in an organization". In their study they used the direct consensus climate model (Chan, 1998). Where individual perceptions within an organization or organizational unit are aggregated to constitute an organizational climate, assuming that there is a sufficient degree of agreement among the employees (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). However, this approach has been criticized, since there is no information about how individuals perceive the climate around them (Låstad et al., 2018).

A social climate is composed of more than simply a set of individuals' perceptions about themselves; it can also reflect individuals' perceptions of their social surroundings (Låstad et al., 2018). In accordance with the referent-shift model, an alternative approach to define job insecurity climate is "individuals perceptions of a climate of job insecurity" (Låstad et al., 2015, p. 210), as a psychological collective climate. These person-level climate perceptions can in turn be aggregated to the workgroup level to reflect shared perceptions of the job insecurity climate at work (Låstad et al., 2018). Thus, the two approaches differ in their conceptualization of job insecurity climate. The direct consensus model considers job insecurity climate as individual job insecurity aggregated to the workgroup level. Whereas the alternative referent-shift model, focuses on the perception of job insecurity climate at the person and/or workgroup levels.

In contrast to previous studies on job insecurity climate which conceptualizes it at the group level, we studied perceptions of a job insecurity climate at the personal level and did not aggregate our data to the workgroup level. Hence, the individual perception of a job insecure climate, hereinafter referred to as perceived job insecurity climate (PJIC). Doing so it becomes

possible to study the consequences of perceiving an insecure climate at work, including for instance work- and health-related outcomes, regardless of the level of agreement in individual job insecurity perceptions (Låstad et al., 2016).

The few studies conducted on job insecurity climate has focused on validating the job insecurity climate concept and examine its influence on employees' job attitudes (Låstad et al., 2015; Sora et al., 2009), the role of climate strength (Sora et al., 2013), the relationship between individual job insecurity and job insecurity climate over time (Låstad et al., 2016), and distinction between qualitative and quantitative job insecurity climate (Låstad et al., 2018). To extend the research on the topic, and to enhance the understanding of the outcomes of job insecurity climate we wanted to investigate whether PJIC had an impact on turnover intention.

2.1.1 Turnover Intention

Tett and Meyer (1993, p. 262) defined turnover intention as "a conscious and intended willfulness to leave the organization". Similarly, Schyns, Torka and Gössling (2007) defined turnover intention as an employees' intention to voluntarily change jobs or company. Individual job insecurity has been identified as a precursor to job dissatisfaction (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke et al., 2002), and several studies have reported that job insecurity is associated with intention to leave the organization (Sverke et al., 2002). A consequence of PJIC may be that the employee "voluntarily" leaves the organization, as they experience the working conditions as too exhausting.

Secondly, the possibility of job loss may be perceived as a "shock" by an employee, prompting him or her to consider looking for a new job as a means of coping with and responding to this stressor (Mauno et al., 2014). In this perspective, leaving the organization can be a coping mechanism, as this is a way to detach from the source of the problem.

Thirdly, perceived opportunities in the labor market influence turnover intention (Mano-Negrin & Tzafrir, 2004). Different employees feel differently about the organizational conditions because they belong to different occupational groups, organizational settings, and geographic locations. Hence, they perceive their opportunities differently despite their common "objective" opportunities (Mano-Negrin & Tzafrir, 2004). Hence, intention to leave could depend on perceived opportunities in the labor market.

2.2 Conservation of Resources

COR theory is one of the leading theories of stress, along with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping (Chen, Westman, & Hobfoll, 2015). COR is a framework used for understanding and predicting the consequences of major and traumatic stress (Chen et al., 2015). Hobfoll and Shirom (1993) translated COR theory into an architecture for understanding and predicting work-related stress and translating both the stress and resilience that occurs within work settings and work culture. Consequently, it has been an important part of the theory in the field of organizational psychology, organizational stress, and research on burnout (Chen et al., 2015).

According to Hobfoll (2011) the key tenet in the COR theory is that individuals strive to obtain, retain, foster, and protect things they centrally value. Individuals are motivated to protect their current resources and acquire new resources, where resources are shortly defined as things that people value (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Resources include object resources (house and car), condition resources (employment), personal resources (personal traits) and energy resources (knowledge and money) (Hobfoll et al., 2018). As employment is defined as a resource, the potential loss constitutes a threat that may cause strain (Sender, Arnold, & Staffelbach, 2017).

It follows an understanding that cognition has a built-in and powerful bias to overweight resource loss and underweight resource gain (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Following this basis, COR theory posits that stress occurs when

a. Central or key resources are threatened with loss
b. Central resources are lost
c. There is a failure to gain central resources following significant effort.

Thus far, when individual are confronted with the threat of resource loss, one does not wait for the loss to occur, but instead actively try to position themselves and their resources in an advantageous way (König et al., 2010). As employees confronted with job insecurity perceive a threat to their valued resources of employment and its quality, it can result in the behavior to engage in efforts which conserve the resources available and withdraw from activities that put a further demand on them (König et al., 2010).

The fundamental understanding is that COR theory explains human behavior based on the evolutionary need to acquire and conserve resources for survival, which is central to human behavioral genetics (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In part, the theory has been of importance for advancing an understanding of stress in organizations because it can be viewed as a complementary of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) stress-appraisal theory.

2.3 Stress-Appraisal Theory

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p. 19) "*psychological stress is a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being".*

Cognitive appraisal is an evaluative process that determines why and to what extent a particular transaction or series of transactions between the person and the environment is stressful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It can be comprehended as the process of categorizing an encounter, and its various facets, concerning its significance for well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping is the process through which the individual manages the demands of the person-environment relationship that are appraised as stressful and the emotions they generate (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Further, coping refers to "cognitive and behavioral efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate the internal and/or external demands that are created by the stressful transaction" (Folkman, 1984, p. 843).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) distinguish in appraisal theory between primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. The primary appraisal is an assessment of what is at stake. The primary appraisal can be distinguished into three different kinds: (1) Irrelevant when an encounter with the environment carries no implications for a person's well-being. (2) Benign-positive, occurs if the outcome of an encounter is construed positively if it preserves or enhances well-being. (3) Stressful, include harm, loss, threat, or challenge.

The secondary appraisal is an assessment of coping resources and answers to the question "Can I cope with this situation". Thus, it indicates confidence in one's ability to cope with the situation because one has the resources to cope with it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified two broad categories of antecedents that directly will influence how people appraise and cope with the

situation: first, those in which are linked to the characteristics of the individual, second those linked to the characteristics of the situation. Among individual characteristics, we find commitments, beliefs, personal control, and personal traits (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The situational factors are related to novelty or predictability of the situation, uncertainty of the event, temporal factors, or the ambiguity of the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

On another note, a vast majority of the studies that empirically investigate the relationship between job insecurity and turnover intention have found a significant positive relation (Sverke et al., 2002). Which means that the higher degree of individual job insecurity, the higher intent to quit. Given that PJIC builds on how individuals perceive that people around them are afraid of losing their job, it is reasonable to believe that PJIC affects turnover intention. In addition, according to COR theory, employment can be seen as a resource (Hobfoll, 2011), and when this resource is threatened it can lead to stress (Chen et al., 2015). During COVID-19 a lot of industries and businesses were forced to close down as a consequence of governmental restrictions, and there was a lot of uncertainty concerning the future existence of jobs (International Labour Organisation, 2021). Unpredictability is stressful because the employee does not know what exactly will happen in the future, and hence, how to react best (De Cuyper et al., 2010). It was not possible to know how long the pandemic would last, and it was uncertain which jobs were safe and which were not. This uncertainty could be unbearable and stressful for many, leading them to look for work elsewhere. This leads us to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Perceived job insecurity climate affects intention to leave during COVID-19

2.4 Crossover Model

Bolger et al. (1989) defined crossover as the interpersonal process that occurs when job stress experienced by one person affects the level of strain of another person within the same environment. The crossover model (Westman, 2001) extended this definition of crossover by including stress and strain experienced by the individual at home leading to stress and experienced by the spouse in the workplace. The core assumption in the crossover model is that stress and strain experienced by an individual will generate a similar reaction in another

individual (Westman, 2001). It commences at the individual level and transfers to a partner within the home or work environments (Westman, 2001). Westman's (2001) theoretical explanation of crossover described three hypothetical mechanisms (direct crossover, indirect crossover, and shared stressors) by which negative or positive emotions, resources and emotions may transpire between individuals within the same organizational context.

Direct crossover is described as the interpersonal transfer of emotional states by empathy, frequently demonstrated by the transfer of stress between co-workers (Brough, Muller, & Westman, 2018; Westman, 2001). Crossover as an indirect process posits mediating and moderating variable, such as coping and social support, during interpersonal interactions (Westman, 2001). Lastly, shared stressors occur via common stressors mechanisms by which shared experiences can impact both partners (Westman, 2001)

Furthermore, van Emmerik and Peeters (2009) argue that individuals in the work team who share the same environment can start a crossover chain of stressors and strain among themselves whether the source of stress is in the family or at the workplace. A shared environment is essential to the crossover process, which characterizes workplaces where job incumbents work in cooperation (Bakker, Westman, & Emmerik, 2009). Further, Brough et al. (2018) found that negative work stressors were the most commonly experienced initiator of crossover.

2.4.1 Crossover of Resources

The principles of COR theory can be integrated in the crossover model, which combined provides a key mechanism for multi-person exchange of emotions, experiences and resources (Chen et al., 2015). Commerce in resources can be defined by the two primary definitions of commerce which are as follows:

1. the interchange of ideas, opinions, and sentiments

2. the exchange from commodities and resources.

These two definitions combined to express the exchange of valued social, personal, and material resources in which is captured in both COR theory and crossover models (Chen et al., 2015).

Work-associated distress is critical and, as stated in COR theory, resource loss is more salient than resource gain (Hobfoll, 2011). Resilience is fostered by circumstances where people are able to apply, grow and sustain their social, material and personal resources (Chen et al., 2015). The term resilience has two different meanings (Hobfoll, 2011). Firstly, it refers to people's ability to withstand the negative consequences of stressful challenges, which includes the range from everyday challenges to traumatic challenges (Hobfoll, 2011). This focuses on people's capability to remain free of depression, post-traumatic stress, burnout and more, in the light of stress and trauma or to recover from it promptly after some initial disequilibrium and distress. Secondly, it refers to people remaining vigorous, committed, and engaged in important life tasks, even amidst significant stressful circumstances (Hobfoll, 2011). This focuses on how people continue to function in their work, social and family spheres, even if simultaneously they may experience both positive and negative emotions.

2.5 Job Insecurity as a mediator

Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) criticized prior empirical research on job insecurity for its lack of conceptual development and clarity and proposed a theoretical model of the job insecurity process. Their model of job insecurity is a multidimensional construct, that consists of two basic dimensions; perceived severity of threat and perceived powerlessness to resist threats (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). The severity to workplace continuity is determined by the magnitude and the importance of the potential loss, as well as the subjective likelihood of the loss occurring (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). This might apply to certain aspects of the job, or to the entire job itself (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). The former is referred to as qualitative job insecurity, such as career opportunities, specific work tasks, and wage (Låstad et al., 2015). The latter is referred to as quantitative job insecurity. Through the growing interest in the job insecurity construct, researchers seem to agree on the following characteristics:

First, job insecurity is a subjective experience, resulting from a person's perception and interpretation of the actual work environment (De Witte et al., 2012; De Witte, Vander Elst, & De Cuyper, 2015; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). Focusing on an individual's subjective experience involves a distinction between perceptions and objective reality, as well as an emphasis on how

interpretations shape subjective reality (Sverke et al., 2002). As a result, two individuals in the same situation can perceive and interpret the same event somewhat differently (De Witte et al., 2012; Låstad et al., 2016; Shoss, 2017; Sverke et al., 2002).

Second, job insecurity only occurs in the case of involuntary loss (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984), one does not know whether one will retain or lose the current job (De Witte et al., 2012). This is in contrast with certainty about dismissal (De Witte et al., 2012), willingly leaving a job, an individual might have given up valued job features and might consequently experience a sense of job loss (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). However, this individual would not be powerless to maintain continuity, and therefore would not experience job insecurity as it is defined (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984, p. 440). Employees who feel insecure cannot prepare themselves to the same extent, because they do not know if they should act or not (De Witte et al., 2015).

Since job insecurity is associated with a fear of losing one's current employment, the subjective experience is likely to have a significant psychological influence (Sverke et al., 2002). Employment is an important part of many people's lives since it allows them to meet their economic and social needs. Among other factors, work provides a source of income, enables social contacts, influences the structuring of time, and contributes to personal development (De Witte, 1999). The perceived threat of unemployment involves frustration of these needs and the potential loss of important financial and social resources. Indeed, evidence shows that job insecurity may have just as bad an impact as job loss. Consistently with transactional stress theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), job insecurity is one of the most prominent work stressors, may negatively affect well-being in workplaces because it leads to strain reaction. Job insecure employees experience strain because they need to invest emotional and physical resources to cope with the threatening anticipation of job loss (De Witte et al., 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic implications have brought in job insecurity perceptions that are considerably different from those reported in previous studies in various ways (Rudolph et al., 2021). Job insecurity has historically meant a permanent departure from the organization. This was true throughout the 1980s recessions and the Great Recession, as well as the significant business downsizings and restructurings that occurred in the 1990s

(Rudolph et al., 2021). What the difference is now, is that employees may hope to return to work for their employer after the crisis, given the specific circumstances of the current crisis (Rudolph et al., 2021). Given the rapidly increase in unemployment rate during COVID-19, leaving many people without a job, this thesis will look deeper into the quantitative aspect of job insecurity. Hence, the fear of losing the entire job.

Together, the previously mentioned theoretical reasoning and empirical findings indicate that many employees are exposed to "job insecurity climate" that may evoke concerns about the permanence of their own employment. Based on the crossover model, we believe it is reasonable to assume that PJIC affects individual job insecurity. However, since the crossover is supposed to happen in a shared environment, the contextual factors, such as the use of home office, might affect the crossover process. Based on this rationale, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived job insecurity climate increases individual level of job insecurity

The present study looks at the mediation effect of job insecurity on turnover intention. Here we argue that PJIC will have a crossover effect on the individual. When the individual perceives that his or her colleagues are afraid of losing their job, they are likely to become afraid of losing their own job. The growing threat of their own job will subsequently influence their intentions to seek work elsewhere. Thus, PJIC primes employees to feel their job is threatened, and thus seek alternative work in different organizations and industries.

The meta-analyses conducted by Cheng and Chan (2008) and Sverke et al. (2002) showed a moderate level of effect between job insecurity and intention to leave. As such, job insecurity is highly likely to influence turnover intentions and here, we believe perceptions around job insecurity will be shaped by perceptions of a job insecurity climate. We expect job insecurity to influence turnover intentions and mediate the influence on PJIC. Altogether, this suggests that individual job insecurity mediates the relation between PJIC and turnover intention. We hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3: Job insecurity mediates the relationship between perceived job insecurity climate and turnover intention.

2.6 Research Model and Hypothesis

The research model in Figure 1, is presented to illustrate what we investigate in our study. All study variables are included in this model and will be tested piece by piece through the hypotheses.

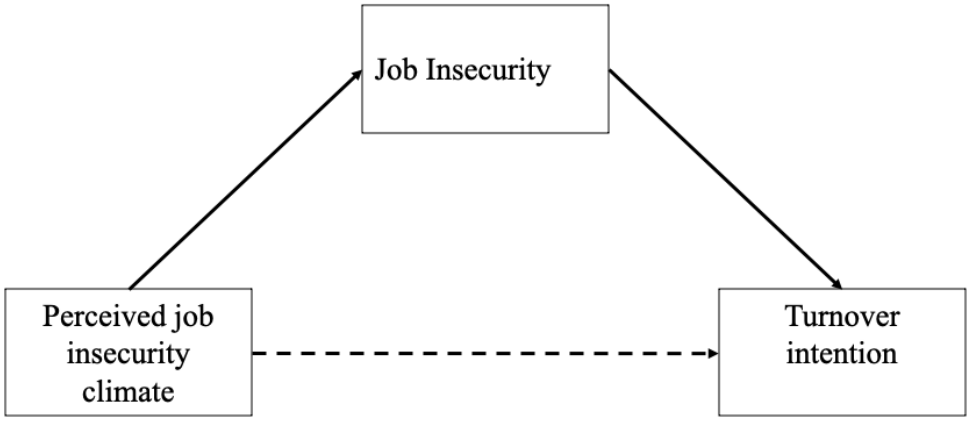

Figure 1: Overall research model for research study

Research question: Does perceived job insecurity climate affect intention to leave during COVID-19 and is this association mediated by individual job insecurity?

3.0 Research Methodology

Derived from the theoretical ground presented, the following chapter will elaborate on the methodological choices in this study concerning approach, design, data collection, and measures. The methodology will be evaluated regarding the validity, reliability, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

The main purpose of our study is to investigate the relationship between variables in a specific context that has not been studied before, and therefore, an explanatory design is chosen for this purpose (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). An explanatory design studies a situation or a problem to explain the relationship between the variables, which can be conducted through, e.g., statistical testing (Saunders et al., 2019).

According to Saunders et al. (2019), the choice of research approach depends on the nature of the research and the amount of existing theory about the phenomenon. As our research utilizes existing theory to formulate the study goal and objectives, we will utilize a deductive approach. This contradicts with the inductive approach, where one first collects data before exploring it to develop a theory (Saunders et al., 2019).

In the deductive strategy, concepts need to be operationalized in a way that enables facts to be measured (Saunders et al., 2019). Further, the deductive strategy is often linked with the quantitative research method, where one is deducing hypotheses and testing theories by quantifying attitudes, opinions, and behaviors (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). The data is quantitative if they are countable, that is, the data can be categorized in a manner where one can count how many give different answers (Larsen, 2017). Another characteristic of this strategy is that a quantitative method allows us to employ questionnaires to make generalized research findings to a certain extent (Saunders et al., 2019). Feasibly, combining the deductive strategy with a quantitative research method allows us to explain relationships between concepts and variables (Wilson, 2014).

3.2 Data collection

Saunders et al. (2019) argue that questionnaires are a widely used data collection method when having a quantitative strategy. Based on our explanatory design, quantitative strategy, and our main goal for the study, we will use questionnaires to collect data (Saunders et al., 2019).

We choose a survey strategy administered through the online survey software Qualtrics, with self-reported questionnaires (Appendix 01). The survey strategy allows us to gain insight into the participants' thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, and behavior (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

Regarding the research time horizons, Saunders et al. (2019) differentiate between two primary approaches: longitudinal and cross-sectional. Considering we want to measure change over time a longitudinal approach was chosen. As this approach utilizes the capacity to study change and development over time (Saunders et al., 2019). On the contrary, when using a cross-sectional approach, one investigates a particular phenomenon at a particular time (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.3 Sample and Procedure

To test our hypotheses, our data is collected from employees who are currently working in different workplaces around the USA. Our sample was found using convenience sampling, the most common form of haphazard sampling (Saunders et al., 2019). The questionnaire was distributed to full-time employees who previously have agreed to participate in questionnaires.

To generalize findings from a random sample and to avoid errors or biases, the sample needs to be of adequate size (Taherdoost, 2016). Where larger the sample decreases the chances of biases and sampling errors (Taherdoost, 2016). Further, the sample size is the single most significant factor affecting the statistical power of a study (Dawson, 2014). The statistical power often relies on a larger sample size, however, smaller sizes do not automatically indicate a lack of reliability (Dawson, 2014). When searching for a sufficient sample size, we got access through Qualtrics to potential respondents pre-registered as American full-time workers consenting to participate in survey-based research.

At time 1 (T1), questionnaires were distributed to an agreed sample size of 1,400 respondents was reached, who were full-time workers in the USA. Those who consented to participate received a compensation (about USD 2.5), and questionnaires included measurements of uncertainty, work-environment concerns, and stress. The data were screened for quality issues in several steps, eliminating and replacing 26 responses. After removing one last answer from the substitutes, the final T1 sample included N=1,399.

Three months later, May 2021, the second round (T2) of questionnaires were conducted. All respondents from the first round were invited to participate again. The relative short time lag captures potentially evolving and escalating process of the COVID-19 pandemic, while at the same time measuring outcomes before too many leave their organizations. The context of the situation gave indications of having a short-time lag between the rounds of survey to capture the differences between T1 and T2, where a three-month time lag was chosen. The final cross-lagged date compromised 532 respondents. Surveys longer than 9-12 minutes to complete decreases the completion rate significantly (Qualtrics, n.d.). The questionnaire is estimated to be longer than 12 minutes, this might be a possible explanation why there are fewer respondents in T2 than T1, combined with respondents ending the survey before completing it.

From the 532 respondents, there are 50.1% men, and 49.8% women, the sample is drawn in a manner that ensures full gender balance. With a mean age of 58 years, and an estimated standard deviation of 10,98. The to ensure full geographical coverage of the USA, employees are selected based on their geographical location. However, when differentiating between ethnicities, there is a higher concentration, 89% of white employees.

3.3.1 Research ethics

There are multiple ethical considerations that might arise when conducting research (Bell et al., 2019). The Ethical Committee for Medical Research in Eastern Norway reviewed the project before data collection and concluded that approval was not required. Further, to ensure that we follow ethical guidelines and adhere to participant anonymity, The Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) reviewed and approved the study with respect to personal data protection. Codes or principles can help to ensure that ethical risks are minimized (Bell et al., 2019), therefore, we primarily focused on three essential aspects of research ethics.

Firstly, as Bell et al. (2019) argues lack of informed consent can be a reason for ethical issues. The principle of voluntary informed consent seeks to ensure that prospective research participants are given information about the study and can based on this make an informed decision about whether they want to participate (Bell et al., 2019). In this study, all the participants provided informed consent to participate (Appendix 01). There were added a participation agreement at the beginning of the survey, which allowed us to use the participants' responses.

Secondly, in terms of confidentiality, all acquired data should be anonymized to not be traced back to the individual respondent (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The survey was conducted anonymously, which ensures confidentiality for participants. Further, the survey is based on respondents' perceptions and experiences, in this manner it contains to a certain amount personal information. However, questions that required sensitive information were not included. Additionally, respondents had the opportunity to withdraw without consequences which Saunders et al. (2019) argue the importance of.

Lastly, Saunders et al. (2019) emphasizes the importance of the analyses and interpretations that follow from the findings should be reported fully and

accurately. We have worked hard to achieve transparency in all our analyses, findings, and conclusions, to demonstrate that we are aware of any biases.

3.4 Data credibility and measures

Data credibility is important for us to reach our goal of conducting a successful and valuable study. Saunders et al. (2019) argue that data credibility is determined by both the reliability and validity of the data. This indicates that if one can trust the data collection techniques it will yield consistent findings.

Yilmaz (2013) defines reliability as to which extent the results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the population of the study. Further, a reliable study can be reproduced under a similar methodology. According to Johnson and Christensen (2014) validity concerns the correctness or truthfulness of the interference that is made from the results of the study.

There are multiple ways to ensure reliability in a study. Transparency regarding the accuracy of the data, how the data is gathered, and how it is analyzed are essential parts for increased reliability. Additionally, using previously validated measures is another way for ensuring credibility. According to Bonett and Wright (2015) Cronbach's alpha (α) is one of the most used measures for reliability within the different sciences. A measure with alpha greater than .70 is considered adequate (Cortina, 1993). All the measures used in this study have an alpha greater than this.

Furthermore, to ensure valid and reliable responses across measures, a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 was used in all measures in this study. We will discuss the measures used in the questionnaire in the sections below.

3.4.1 Job Insecurity Climate

Job insecurity climate was measured using an inventory consisting of four items (Låstad et al., 2015) as "At my workplace, there is a general feeling of being let go". Respondents evaluated each item on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= "fully disagree" to 5= "fully agree" with 3= "neither disagree nor agree". Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .96 at both measurement times.

3.4.2 Quantitative Job Insecurity

Job insecurity was measured using a standardized scale (Hellgren, Sverke, & Isaksson, 1999). The standardized scale consists of three items assessing subjective fear of imminent job loss. “I am worried about having to leave my job before I would like to”. Respondents evaluated each item on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= “fully disagree” to 5= “fully agree” with 3= “neither disagree nor agree”. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .91 at both measurement times.

3.4.3 Intention to leave

Intention to leave was measured by using a three-part instrument (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000). Each part would be evaluated by respondents on a five-point Likert-type scale. Where part and respondent-alternative can be seen in the appendix (Appendix 02) in the questionnaire. “I am actively looking for other jobs”. Respondents evaluated each item on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1= “fully disagree” to 5= “fully agree” with 3= “neither disagree nor agree”. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .79 and .75 at T1 and T2, respectively.

3.4.4 Control Variables

In the questionnaire, we included age, gender, tenure (in years), and the use of home office. Saunders et al. (2019) argue that such variables must be included to avoid influence on the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The association between individual job insecurity and outcomes has been demonstrated to be influenced by a number of demographic factors (Låstad et al., 2015). More specifically, according to Cheng and Chan (2008), the effects have been stronger for older workers. Gender has also been linked with turnover intention, as men have been reported to be more inclined to search for alternative employment (Wahn, 1998). Gender was a dichotomous variable (0 = women, 1 = man), age was a continuous variable. To rule out these factors as alternative explanations, they were used as control variables in our regression analysis. Because of governmental restrictions many employees were forced to work from home, any contagion effect can easily be affected by the use of home office. Therefore, the effect of home office was controlled for.

4.0 Data analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire was described, explained, and analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.1., as well as PROCESS macro, developed by Hayes (2018) for executing mediation analysis. Furthermore, JASP version 16.1 was used for our confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

The initial step was to assess reliability by calculating Cronbach's alpha values. Cronbach's alpha is one of the most used indicators of internal consistency and ranges from 0 to 1 and reflects how closely items on a scale measure the same concept. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale should ideally be greater than .7 (Cortina, 1993; DeVellis, 2012), however, values above .8 are preferable (Pallant, 2013). To estimate means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations between all our variables, a descriptive analysis was conducted. This was done by using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the respective variables by producing a three-factor solution through JASP. The likelihood extraction method was used for this purpose. The purpose of CFA is to identify factors that account for the variation and covariation among a set of indicators (Brown, 2015). The quality of CFA models is determined in part by the size of resulting parameter estimates and how well each factor is represented by observed measures (Brown, 2015). CFA offers a strong analytic framework for evaluating the equivalence of measurement models across distinct groups (Brown, 2015), it is often used to test or confirm specific hypotheses (Pallant, 2013). Model fit was assessed with Chi-square, the goodness of fit index (GFI), the Bentler comparative fit index (CFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The CFI and RMSEA were chosen because they are less sensitive to sample size. Values of .94 or higher for the GFI and the CFI, and values lower than .08 for the RMSEA indicated good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Since we achieved results that are within the recommended values, we continued with regression analyses.

A linear hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to test hypothesis 1 (H1) and hypothesis 2 (H2), with the intent to evaluate the linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables and account for the effect of relevant control variables. All the independent variables are entered into the equation in steps, with each independent variable being assessed in terms of

what it adds to the prediction of the dependent variable after the previous variable has been controlled for. For both H1 and H2 we added age, gender, tenure (in years), the use of home office, and T1 of our dependent variable in the first block. In the second block, we added PJIC at T1. Once all sets of variables are entered, the overall model is assessed in terms of its ability to predict the dependent measure. The relative contribution of each block of variables is also assessed.

To investigate hypothesis 3 (H3), the mediation effect, a simple mediation analysis was performed using PROCESS analysis – model 4 (Hayes, 2018). The PROCESS mediation analysis allowed us to see the total, direct and indirect effects of PJIC (T1) on intention to leave (T2) accounting for the mediating effect of individual job insecurity. According to Baron and Kenny (1986) a variable is confirmed as a mediator if (1) the independent variable and the dependent variable have a significant relationship, (2) there is a significant relationship between the independent variable and the mediator, (3) the mediator predicts the dependent variable after controlling for the independent variable, (4) the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable is reduced when the mediator is in the equation. If the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable completely disappears, when the mediator is included in the regression, mediation is said to be perfect (or full, or complete); if the relationship is diminished but not to zero, mediation is said to be partial (Baron & Kenny, 1986) Our analysis was conducted with a 95% confidence interval, and a bootstrap iteration of 5,000. Bootstrapping is a technique for generating confidence intervals for indirect effects by repeating data (Hayes, 2018; Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

5.0 Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations among our study variables for both T1 and T2, and our control variables. The Cronbach's alphas of the majority of the scales are excellent (above or equal .90), while the remaining are within an acceptable range ($.80 > \alpha \geq .70$) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

The correlation matrix appears to provide some indications regarding H1 and H2, namely those connected to PJIC. The results of the Pearson correlation revealed a moderate, positive correlation between PJIC at T1 and turnover intention at T2, $r = .32$, $n = 532$, $p < .01$. Furthermore, a strong, positive correlation was revealed for the relationship between PJIC at T1 and quantitative job insecurity at T2, $r = .54$, $n = 532$, $p < .01$. Further, we used a simple hierarchical regression analysis to test our hypotheses since the correlation matrix (Table 1) merely offers indicators of the relationship between data.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics, Correlations and Reliability Estimates

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Age	58.14	10.96										
2 Gender	1.50	.50	.125**									
3 Tenure	16.64	11.17	.297**	.075**								
4 Home office	35.74	39.19	-.031	-.015	-.020							
5 Turnover Intention T1	2.24	1.10	-.172**	-.037	-.138**	.005	(.792)					
6 Turnover Intention T2	2.14	1.03	-.114**	-.004	-.138**	.067	.659**	(.745)				
7 Quantitative Job Insecurity T1	2.14	1.12	-.116**	-.008	-.129**	.048	.428**	.373**	(.907)			
8 Quantitative Job Insecurity T2	2.03	1.11	-.025	.008	-.090*	.076	.344**	.431**	.710**	(.906)		
9 Perceived Job Insecurity Climate T1	2.15	1.09	-.153**	-.001	-.043	.091**	.410**	.322**	.697**	.541**	(.961)	
10 Perceived Job Insecurity Climate T2	1.98	1.03	-.023	-.013	.009	.122*	.339**	.412**	.582**	.680**	.696**	(.965)

Note. N=532; Coefficient alphas specifying scale reliabilities are in parentheses. *p<.05, **p<.01.

5.2 Factor Analysis: CFA

The analysis is presented stepwise in terms of evaluating the model fit and the model parameters. The results from the CFA analysis are shown in Table 2.

CFI values can range between 0 and 1, where values greater than .90 indicate a good fit. Hu and Bentler (1999) suggests a CFI $\geq$ .95 as a cutoff value for a good fit. Further, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) values can range between 0 and 1, where 1 is a perfect fit. Hu and Bentler (1999) proposed in this indices a cutoff value of $\geq$ .95 for a good fit. Both indices indicate a good fit for the model, where CFI = .986 and TLI = .980.

Table 2

Results of Confirmatory Factory Analysis

	χ2	*df*	*CFI*	*GFI*	*TLI*	*RMSEA*
Model A	131.684	32	0.986	0.966	0.980	0.063

Note: Structural equation modeling was used for the analysis. *NFI* = normed fit index; *CFI* = comparative fit index; *RMSEA* = root-mean-square error of approximation. In Model A, the 3 items of turnover intention were loaded into one factor, the 4 items of job insecurity climate were loaded onto a second factor, and the 3 items of quantitative job insecurity were loaded onto a third factor.
***p<.001

5.2.1 Overall goodness of fit

The overall goodness of fit is evaluated using a range of model fit indices, which assess the relationship between the observed data and the theoretical data which would be expected from the model (Alavi et al., 2020). According to Hair et al. (2014) RMSEA is the most used measure in attempting to correct for model complexity. A RMSEA value below .05 is considered a close fit, while values between .05 and .08 are considered an approximate fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1992; Sharma et al., 2005). In our model the RMSEA is .063, and it is therefore considered an approximate fit, and can be categorized as within the recommended value.

The value of Chi-square (χ2) is 131.684 , and a smaller p-value than .001 which is significant (.05>.001). The imperfection with this model is that when the n-value is 830, which is fairly large, it results in a high chi-square value. A high chi-square value indicates that the model is a good fit, however, the chi-squared statistic is affected by large samples, and therefore the model might not be a good

fit. According to Wheaton et al. (1977) to correct for large samples the ratio of the chi-square statistics is measured with respective degrees of freedom ($\chi 2$/df). Where a ratio of < 2.0 indicates a superior fit, where our model gives a ratio of 4.1.

5.3 Hypothesis testing

H1 and H2 were tested using a simple linear hierarchical regression, where our control variables age, gender, tenure, and the use of home office were added in the first block, since these were the ones we found significant. Additionally, T1 of our dependent variable was included. The results of the linear hierarchical regression analysis are shown in Table 3, and Table 4. The tests were conducted using a 95 % confidence interval. Further, H3 was tested using the PROCESS macro, model 4 (Hayes, 2018), the results are displayed in Table 5, and Figure 2. The bootstrapping results are shown in Table 6.

5.4 Direct Effects

H1, stated that PJIC at T1 predicts increased level of turnover intention at T2 (during COVID-19). Control variables of turnover intention (T1), age, gender, tenure (in years) and the use of home office was entered in step 1, and exposure to PJIC (T1) was entered in step 2. As shown in Table 3, PJIC (T1) predicted stability-adjusted turnover intention (T2) three months later (β=.119, p=.01). Model 1 accounts for 43.9 % of the variance in the outcome, [F (5, 270) = 42.2, p<.001]. The variance explained by the final model was 45.1%, [F (6, 269) = 36.8, p<.05], and exposure to PJIC significantly contributed to the changes in turnover intention. Adjusted for our control variables and turnover intention at T1, PJIC explains an additional 1.2% of the variance in turnover intention, three months later, measured approximately a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, R-squared change = .012, F change (1, 269) = 6.1, p<.05. These results are presented in further detail in Table 3.

Table 3

Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis for the relationship between Turnover Intention and Perceived Job Insecurity Climate

	Turnover Intention	
Variable	Step 1	Step 2
	β	*β*
Age	-.043	-.034
Gender	-.007	-.007
Tenure	.011	.004
Turnover intention T1	.654**	.617**
Home Office	.012	.004
Job Insecurity Climate T1		.119*
Total R^2	.439	.451

*N=275, *p*<.05, **p*<.01

H2 stated that PJIC at T1 predicts increased of job insecurity at T2. Again, control variables of quantitative job insecurity (T1), age, gender, tenure (in years) and the use of home office was entered in step 1 of the simple hierarchical regression analysis, and PJIC (T1) was entered in step 2. As seen in Table 4, PJIC also predicted increased level of individual job insecurity (β=.145, p=.01). Model 1 accounts for 53.8% of the variance in the outcome [F (5, 285) = 66.4, p<.001]. The variance explained by the final model was 55%, [F (6, 284) = 57.8, p<.001], and PJIC (T1) significantly contributed to the changes in quantitative job insecurity. Adjusted for our control variables and stability adjusted individual job insecurity (JI) by controlling for T1, PJIC explains an additional 1.2% of the variance in quantitative job insecurity, three months later, measures approximately a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, R-squared change = .012, F change (1, 284) = 7.55, p<.05. These results are presented in further detail in Table 4.

Table 4

Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis for the relationship between Individual Job Insecurity and Perceived Job Insecurity Climate

	Quantitative Job Insecurity	
Variable	Step 1	Step 2
	β	*β*
Age	.048	.059
Gender	.096	.102
Tenure	-.004	-.016
Home Office	-.009	-.013
Quantitative Job Insecurity T1	.732**	.639**
Job Insecurity Climate T1		.145*
Total R^2	.538	.550

*N=291, *p*<.05, **p*<.01

In summary, it appears to be clear associations between PJIC and the outcomes of the study, as indicated by correlation and regression analyses. Moreover, in support of both H1 and H2, exposure to PJIC (T1) predicts increased levels of turnover intention and quantitative job insecurity 3 months later (T2).

5.5 Mediation analysis

H3 was tested using Hayes (2018) PROCESS SPSS macro supplement (Model 4). H3 proposed that perceived individual job insecurity (M) at T2 mediates the relationship between PJIC (X) at T1 and turnover intention (Y) at T2. More specifically, the experience of PJIC results in uncertainty about the future existence of one's job, and the more such feelings of job insecurity, the greater the desire to leave the organization. So individual job insecurity was hypothesized as a mediator of the effect of PJIC on turnover intention. Mediation analysis is a statistically method used to evaluate evidence from studies designed to test hypotheses about how some causal antecedent variable X transmits its effect on a consequent variable Y (Hayes, 2018). A simple mediation model is any causal system in which at least one causal antecedent X variable is proposed as influencing an outcome Y through a single intervening variable M (Hayes, 2018).

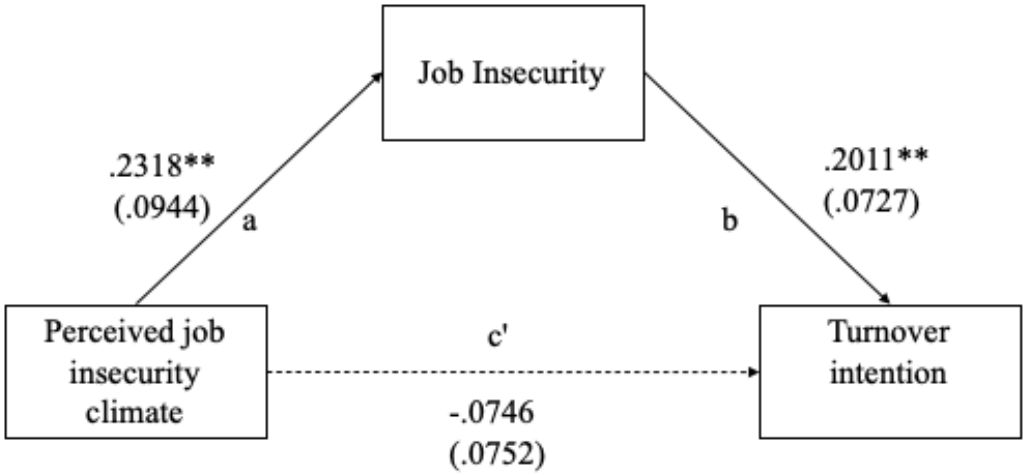

Figure 2. Standardized coefficients and standard errors (in the parentheses) for the indirect effect of PJIC on Turnover intention through individual job insecurity.

The results indicated that path a, the link between PJIC (T1) on perceived individual job insecurity (T2) was positive and significant (β = .2318, t(202) = 2.4552, p<.01) as seen in figure 2. The results also indicate that the influence of perceived individual job insecurity (T2) on turnover intention (T2) (path b) was positive and significant (β=.2011, t(201)=2.7670, p<.001), further details are displayed in Table 5. Moreover, the indirect effect of PJIC, the independent variable, on turnover intention, the dependent variable, through individual job insecurity, the mediator, was positive (β=.0466, SE=.2061) and significant, as suggested by the confidence interval, which did not include zero [.0028, .1028], further details displayed in Table 6. The c' path, the direct influence of PJIC (T1) on turnover intention (T2) (β=-.0746, t(202)= -.9915, p=.3226) is no longer significant, because p >.05. Since the effect of PJIC at T1 on turnover intention (T2) completely disappears, individual job insecurity (T2) fully mediates the relationship between PJIC and turnover intention, thus H3 is supported.

Table 5

OLS Regression Coefficients With Confidence Intervals. Estimating Perceived Job Insecurity Climate, Quantitative Job Insecurity and Turnover Intention.

		Quantitative Job Insecurity T2						Turnover Intention T2				
		B	*SE*	*95% CI*	*β*	*p*		*B*	*SE*	*95% CI*	*β*	*p*
Age		.010*	.005	[.00,.02]	.085	.05		-.005	.005	[-.01,.01]	-.050	.30
Gender		.185	.108	[-.03,.39]	.080	.08		-.031	.108	[-.24,.18]	-.015	.77
Tenure		-.007	.004	[-.02, .00]	-.064	.17		.004	.006	[-.01,.02]	.040	.54
Home Office		-.001	.001	[-.00, .00]	-.026	.58		.000	.001	[-.00,.00]	.003	.96
Turnover Intention T1		.052	.059	[-.06, .17]	.045	.37		.577**	.062	[.45, .69]	.557	.00
Quantitative Job Insecurity T1		.567**	.082	[.41, .73]	.565	.00		.088	.072	[-.05,.23]	.098	.21
Job Insecurity Climate T1	*a*	.232**	.094	.0456	.207	.01	*c′*	-.075	.075	[-.22,.07]	-.074	.32
Quantitative Job Insecurity T2							*b*	.201**	.073	[.05, .34]	.224	.00
				R^2 = .55						R^2 = .46		
				F(46.47), *p* = .000						F(26.70), *p* = .000		

Mediating effects	Indirect effects		
Job Insecurity Climate → Quantitative Job Insecurity → Turnover Intention	.046	.026	[.00, .10]

Note. N = 210. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. *B* = Unstandardized regression coefficients; *β* = Standardized regression coefficients; *CI* = Confidence Interval for B; This table shows 95% confidence interval for B.

Table 6

Bootstrapping results

Hypothesized mediating relationship	*Indirect effect*	*SE*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*
Job Insecurity Climate → Quantitative Job Insecurity → Turnover Intention	.0466	.0261	.0028	.1028

6.0 Discussion

In this study, we found that the relationship between PJIC, as perceived by full-time employees located in the United States, affected the intention to leave under the unexpected environmental changes caused by COVID-19. The study found that subjective job insecurity mediates the relationship between PJIC and turnover intention. The hypotheses and research question were given support. The following chapter will discuss these findings, which will be linked and compared to the presented theory and research.

6.1 The relationship between PJIC and turnover intention

In the first hypothesis, we examined the effects of PJIC on intention to leave during COVID-19. The analyses showed that the PJIC affects the intention to leave, which is consistent with previous studies on job insecurity and intention to leave (Brougham & Haar, 2020; Cheng & Chan, 2008; Elshaer & Azazz, 2022; Sverke et al., 2002). Indicating that PJIC and job insecurity have similarities in their effect on the intention to leave, however, this was not the studied objective.

First, the result from the study can indicate that a PJIC presents a collective job stressor, which is consistent with previous studies on job insecurity climate (Sora et al., 2013). Members of an organization perceive the shared concern about potential job loss as stressful. As a result, a PJIC is linked to employees' negative reactions as a stressor. Hence, the risk of unemployment may be presented as a source of collective stress. Accordingly, the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic during the time of the testing can potentially also play an important role as a stressor.

Primary appraisal, from the transactional model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), is an assessment of what is at stake. The risk of unemployment can be distinguished as a primary appraisal, where it can be categorized as a stressful situation. Further, the coping mechanism from the transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) can be applied to understand the consequences. Since PJIC is positively related to intention to leave, it indicates from the transactional model perspective that the employees do not have confidence in having the ability and resources to cope with the situation (Berjot & Gillet, 2011; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). As the COVID-19 pandemic is not something that the individual can

influence, one must cope with the situation, this can be seen as extra stressful since there is a perceived threat and perceived powerlessness to handle the threat. With actual job loss, people can engage in coping strategies to change their situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Mauno et al., 2014). The consequence of these two stressors combined is an increase in intention to leave among employees, due to people wanting to leave the organization if everyone else is insecure about their future state of work.

Second, COR theory provides the framework for understanding and explaining why PJIC leads to intention to leave. PJIC can lead to a perceived threat of losing one's job. As stated in COR-theory, employment is considered an important resource. COR-theory posits when threatened with the loss of resources individuals might withdraw from activities that put further demand on them (Sender et al., 2017). The results from the study support the notion that individuals want to withdraw from the organization when exposed to PJIC. This can be viewed as a paradox when there is a perceived threat to lose one's job that leads to one wanting to leave the organization. As previously established, security is a basic human need, hence, it is plausible to assume that you would do what you can to preserve your resources. Previous studies have shown that when people are feeling insecure about their jobs, it leads to increased turnover intentions (Brougham & Haar, 2020; Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke et al., 2002).

However, consistent with COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll & Shirom, 1993), predicting that job security is an important resource for most employees, and that when this resource is jeopardized, as in the presence of a PJIC, other resource losses are likely to occur. As a result, an insecure employee will try to minimize resource losses, i.e., unemployment, by refocusing his or her attention on alternative employment, which is at the heart of turnover intention. The findings suggest that individuals' tendencies to take active steps to gain control over their situations may play an important role in the job insecurity process. However, the context of the situation made it difficult for employees to change their workplace, since it affected most workplaces. The circumstances changed this view as employees might hope to return to work after the crisis (Rudolph et al., 2021).

As the study was conducted one year into the pandemic, it can be debated that the business's resources were already used. A study conducted by Mahmud, Ding and Hasan (2021) showed a selection of American businesses' immediate

responses to the pandemic. Paid leave, sick pay with health care benefits, coverage for COVID-19 tests and pay protection program, were some examples of initiatives implemented (Mahmud et al., 2021). In the early stages of the pandemic, many businesses had financially supported employees. Which can indicate that many businesses already had done what they could to protect their staff during the early stages, and therefore, had already used potential resources. Total civilian employment fell by 21 million from the fourth quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2020, and the unemployment rate more than tripled from 3.6% to 13.0% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Late in the second quarter, the labor market began a slow recovery that continued for the rest of the year (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021).

In the fourth quarter of 2020 the unemployment rate was 6.7% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). However, the unemployment rate was still 3.1 percentage points higher than a year earlier (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Considering our findings, it can be argued that when employees still want to leave the organization this far into the pandemic when the unemployment rate had started rising, the results could have been strong if the timing were different. There could potentially have been a decrease in full-time employees during this period as employees could have left their organization. Further, we have no data on how many employees left their organization between T1 and T2. The studied employees were full-time employees, and it can therefore give indications that our findings would have been higher if part-time employees were included. Part-time employees accounted for 29 % of the employment decline from the fourth quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). As employees had already coped with the situation for a year, it can give indications that employees showed resilience. Employees could withstand some of the negative consequences of the stressful challenge, as they continued to work from home. Since the pandemic continued, it is reasonable to assume that one year into the pandemic employees were tired of the situation. However, as we still found that PJIC led to an increase in intention to leave, it strengthens our findings. Which can indicate that we found some of the lowest predictions of PJIC to intention to leave, and that therefore the effect could be higher during other stages.

PJIC is the individuals' perceptions of the job insecurity climate, and is not an actual climate measure. This is important to address because it speaks to

individual's perceptions about how other people think. It is the individuals personal ideas that "many here have lost their jobs". This is probably well correlated with how many people actually are afraid of losing their jobs, but seen from an individual perspective.

6.2 The relationship between PJIC and individual job insecurity

In the second hypothesis, we examined the effects of PJIC on individual job insecurity. The analyses showed that PJIC affects individual job insecurity. The findings indicate that when the individual perceives the climate in the organization as everyone is afraid of losing their job, it influences stability adjusted JI. This effect can be characterized as a crossover effect (Westman, 2001), which will be discussed further.

PJIC can be characterized as evoking negatively loaded emotions and it has been demonstrated in previous studies that negative emotions spread more easily than positive emotions (Hatfield & Cacioppo, 1994; Låstad et al., 2016). When applying it to the relationship between individual job insecurity and PJIC, it can indicate that insecure individuals transmit their insecurity to others, who in turn contaminate yet others, producing a perceptions of job insecurity at work. This is consistent with previous studies on the relationship between job insecurity and job insecurity climate (Låstad et al., 2016).

The PJIC effect on individual job insecurity can be explained by the crossover model (Westman, 2001). For a crossover to be possible there must be a shared environment to start a crossover chain of stressors (Bakker et al., 2009). The perceived climate in the organization will be interpreted as a shared perception, by one individual or among multiple employees, as a PJIC. The crossover model was developed as a theory to explain how resource losses from one individual influence others (Westman, 2001). The research was conducted on how stress experienced in the workplace by the individual leads to stress being experienced by the individual's spouse at home (Westman, 2001).

However, in the setting of this study, we are exploring the crossover effects from the environment to individuals, which has not been studied before. Previous studies have focused on crossover between co-workers (Westman & Etzion, 1999). As our research found that PJIC led to an increase in individual job insecurity, it indicates that it is possible to find a crossover from the environment to the individual. This aligns with the discussion on negative loaded emotions,

which further can be relevant for explaining the formation of job insecurity climate as a shared construct. Where the emotional cognition works through a process where the precipitating stimuli arise from one individual acting upon other individuals, and yield a corresponding emotion in these individuals (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993; Låstad et al., 2016; Sora et al., 2013). Emotional cognition has been shown to occur in groups and work teams (Bakker et al., 2009). This is consistent with our findings of PJIC and individual job insecurity and therefore gives indications that this kind of crossover also is possible between coworkers and not just between simple individuals.

6.3 Job insecurity as a mediator

In the final hypothesis, we examined the mediating effect of perceived individual job insecurity on the relationship between PJIC and intention to leave. Based on previous research on aggregated individual job insecurity, along with transactional stress theory, and the fact that we had already established that turnover intention (H1) and individual job insecurity (H2) are caused by PJIC, we expected that individual job insecurity would be a mediator in the relationship between PJIC and turnover intention. The fact that our results show that subjective job insecurity mediates the relationship between PJIC and turnover intention, indicates that when individuals feel that they are "exposed" to job insecurity climate it leads to individual job insecurity. Here the individuals perceive that colleagues are afraid of losing their jobs, and acquire the same perceptions, becoming insecure about the future existence of their job. Which in turn leads to turnover intention.

The study was conducted during a time with high economic instability, thus theoretically placing severe constraints on the job market. There was no one who could predict COVID-19, at least not foresee the ripple effects the pandemic would have. When the world entered 2021, it was still facing an unprecedented crisis in jobs and incomes and heightened levels of uncertainty (International Labour Organisation, 2021). Given the fact that our questionnaire was sent out in the middle of the COVID-19 vaccination rollout, it was reasonable to assume that there was a lot of general uncertainty. This uncertainty was not necessarily linked to job insecurity, but there were many contextual factors that could be perceived as stressful for individuals. The stress could be caused by fear of being infected by the virus, fear that someone you love will get sick, uncertainty regarding the

vaccine race, and vaccine rollout, to name a few possible sources. This uncertainty could influence the answers, and it is not certain we would have received the same results if the situation and the surroundings had been different.

In contrast to the financial crisis in 2008/2009, the COVID-19 crisis has affected labor markets worldwide, resulting in greater job losses and unemployment hikes everywhere (International Labour Organisation, 2021). There were similar trends regarding uncertainty during the financial crisis, however, it only hit parts of the world, and did not have as great an impact on the world economy as COVID-19 has had (International Labour Organisation, 2021). Recent research has shown that the current COVID-19 pandemic has more severity in terms of economic activity than the global financial crisis has experienced (Li et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented economic ramifications and job loss. As a consequence of the rapidly-changing nature of the pandemic, those currently employed may be experiencing heightened job insecurity and financial concern, consequentially impacting their mental health (Wilson et al., 2020). Which can explain why our results are significant.

The meta-analysis conducted by Cheng and Chan (2008), found that both organizational tenure and age moderated the relationship between job insecurity and turnover intention. Their findings indicate that organizational tenure and age are closely related as employees with longer tenure are likely to be older than those with shorter tenure (Cheng & Chan, 2008). The findings showed that the older you are the less insecure you are about the future existence of your job, and the more committed you are to your organization, hence the less likely you are to leave. Given that our sample is relatively old (average age = 58), and has been in their respective organizations for a relatively long time (average tenure = 16.64 years), this should imply that our sample could be quite secure about the future existence of their jobs. However, the unusual circumstances of the study indicate that our contextual factors are not secure. De Witte (1999) also suggests that older employees may simply consider job loss as an earlier retirement, and thus suffer less from job insecurity than younger employees. It would have been interesting to see if the results would have been different if the sample would have been younger, and the average tenure had been shorter.

Furthermore, as previously stated, our findings suggest that a crossover effect can occur even when shared environment is changed. Because of the

study's unusual setting, characterized by isolation and unpredictability, is it possible that the exchange of adequate information and details with the employees has become more difficult. A lot of the daily contact between colleagues has changed from being physical, to becoming digital. The work environment has transformed from being physical to digital, leaving fewer employees physically present at work. This makes it harder to get an idea of how many employees are actually afraid of losing their jobs. Although we controlled for the use of home office, it might have affected our results. On one hand it can be argued that since employees are left to themselves and their own thought, that PJIC is just a reflection of your own job insecurity feeling. On the other hand, it can be argued that our findings extend the crossover model by arguing that the crossover can also happen in a digital environment. This finding contributes to gain an understanding of how and through which mechanisms PJIC interacts with turnover intention.

6.4 Implications

The previous paragraphs discussed the main findings. The combined results of this thesis have some implications for theory and organizational practice on PJIC, individual job insecurity and turnover intention.

From a theoretical perspective, this study offers several contributions. First, the findings imply that a crossover-effect is possible from an environment to the individual. A crossover from environment to the individual has to our knowledge not been investigated in previous research. For this reason, the current study extends the existing literature by providing a broader understanding of the possible crossover-effects. In an environment where "everyone" is afraid of losing their job, it increases the individual job insecurity and turnover intention. This theoretical extension of the crossover model includes a crossover from the environment to an individual, in a shared environment. Previous researchers have only studied and therefore, found that crossover is possible from individual to individual, in a shared environment (Bakker et al., 2009). Notably, as the period for the study, many were working remotely out of office, it could be investigated further if a crossover is possible without a physical shared environment.

Second, the research extends and enriches the research stream on PJIC on turnover intention. Previous studies have found that job insecurity is a predictor of intention to leave (Brougham & Haar, 2020). To our knowledge, this is the first

study to explore PJIC as a predictor of intention to leave. The findings indicate that PJIC and job insecurities have similarities in their effect on intention to leave. Hence, this study helps us understand how the perceptions of a climate interpreted by an individual influences their intention to leave the organization. Further, the results from the study add value beyond what the COR and job insecurity climate literature has emphasized previously. As neither of the theoretical frameworks highlights perceived job security as a concrete resource, one could argue that perceived job security should be accentuated as a resource in the COR literature and perceived job insecurity as a primary predictor of intention to leave in the job insecurity climate literature. A question related to the sharing of perceptions is whether the person assessing the climate sees themselves as a part of the job insecurity climate or if they observe it from a distance. As the questionnaire referent does not define the personal inclusivity of the respondent. Specifying the inclusion or exclusion of the respondent could influence the results.

Taking the results to a practical level, the results can help practitioners and organizations that are interested in securing employees. The study found that PJIC led to an increase in individual job insecurity and turnover intention, where crossover was a contributing factor of this effect. It was studied in a time where individuals were powerless to control the contextual factors. With the current uncertain times in the world, the findings from the study contributes to the theory and practice for how individuals react in relation to job insecurity, PJIC and turnover intention during uncertain times. The findings from the study have value beyond the context of a global pandemic. As the world is in constant change, where the unexpected will occur again. The past two years the pandemic has been in the headlines, a few years back financial crisis, oil crisis and during this spring the war in Ukraine. It is not unlikely that uncertain times will be a part of the headlines in the future. Changes happen fast, with the green shift, social change, and more frequent technological development, and it is something the world must adapt to in the future as well. Further, these changes can influence the labor market on both sector and organizational level, even without a global crisis.

Therefore, this study is an important contribution to this knowledge, as the studied variables individual job insecurity, job insecurity climate and turnover intention were researched during uncertain times, while other researchers have studied this during stable times. For this reason, future practitioners and organizations would have interest in this knowledge to counteract the crossover

effect among employees. Previous researchers have found that spending time and working through issues together can be a useful tool to counteract the crossover effect (Brough et al., 2018).

Further, by making employees prepared for what is expected of them during this situation, and how the situation will impact their job situation will create awareness for potential challenges and pitfalls. Not only will individuals be more experienced to handle difficult situations, they may also attain a higher belief that one can master such tasks, through coping mechanisms (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The initiative can potentially result in a lower crossover effect. An increased awareness of individual job insecurity as social and individual stressor is needed among practitioners. Considering the negative outcomes related to perceptions of a job insecurity climate. By both including individual job insecurity and PJIC in psychosocial work environments questionnaires, the social climate of the organization can be tracked and give the organization opportunity to prevent turnover intentions among employees, during the next crisis or other uncertain times.

Taken together, the present study offers new insight to the crossover model (Westman, 2001). Where this study suggests an extension of the crossover model by examining whether individual job insecurity mediates the relationship between PJIC and turnover intention. One prerequisite of the crossover model is that the cross over happens between people who are closely related and who genuinely care for each other. Our findings extend this research by suggesting that a crossover can exist between co-workers, and not only people who are “closely” related. Previously the model only showed a possible crossover from one individual to another individual. However, our findings indicate that there is a possibility that crossover can occur from a shared environment to the individual, where the perceived climate influences the individual.

6.5 Limitations and future research

Despite its contributions, the current study has some limitations worth reporting. As argued by Ioannidis (2005), it is more likely that research yields reliable findings after confirmation from multiple studies and ideally from low-bias meta-analyses. However, in our case this not available as our topic is still somewhat unexplored, thus lack of a theoretically solid framework to operationalize and measure concepts. The limitations of the study offer some insights for future research.

Firstly, all measures are based on a self-reported questionnaire with single-source data, which allows the researcher to gain insight into the participants' subjective world in terms of their perceptions and feelings (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Despite the convenience of self-reported questionnaires in terms of time, costs and efforts, self-reported questionnaires may arise issues about common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003) and social desirability bias (Latkin et al., 2017). Burke, Brief and George (1993) deliberate that self-reports of negative features of the job situation and negative affective reactions can both be influenced by negative affectivity. However, since we used stability adjusted outcomes for both "job insecurity" and "turnover intention" combined with a time interval were utilized to be preventive for these kinds of errors, single source bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Secondly, in nonexperimental research, it is very difficult to attribute causality to an independent variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). If there is a systematic difference in a dependent variable associated with levels of an independent variable, the two variables are (with some degree of confidence) to be related, but the cause of the relationship is unclear (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Our study has a longitudinal design, which can give us an indication of the direction of causation, and not only the strength of it. The use of prospective data, gives us an indication of the causal connection of our variables.

Thirdly, even though the data had a significant sample size, which is sufficient to perform the quantitative analyses, there could be a question of generalizability (Pallant, 2013). The sample of this study contained only full-time workers, therefore, generalization could also be problematic, as full-time employees indicate that the respondents have relatively safe and stable jobs. In addition, our sample consists of 89 % white employees, which gives indications of a homogeneous sample. The results are generally restricted because the

samples are limited to white American employees. It would be interesting to replicate the results in representative samples, and a direction for future research is, thus, to explore if our findings hold in other countries, cultures and with temporarily employed workers. Future studies may replicate our findings using a larger sample, thus enabling a wider generalizability of the model's findings and allow for a more precise estimation of the strength of the effects. Regardless, our findings are significant, and important to many. Which in turn indicates that the trends may be generalized, but the effect size are possibly stronger elsewhere.

A fourth possible limitation is related to the three-month time lag between the points of data collections and whether this time lag is appropriate for capturing changes in both individual or climate perceptions of job insecurity perceptions (Låstad et al., 2016). The time frame of the thesis made our longitudinal approach limited to two rounds of surveys. Additional rounds of surveys after the "end" of the pandemic would have been specifically valuable for investigating how the intention to leave and individual job insecurity developed over time. This could have provided our study with valuable data if we researched both before, during, and after the pandemic. Yet, this was not possible for us due to the starting point and timeframe of this thesis. Thus, a direction for future research is to investigate the aftermath of the pandemic in relation to the studied variables.

Previous research on job insecurity and outcomes have been conducted when people are quite job secure (Vander Elst et al., 2018). Hence, will only measure a degree of job insecurity. Measuring job insecurity, when there is a lot of uncertainty and unpredictability in the world, and feelings of job insecurity fluctuate more can give a more nuanced picture. This could help explain why our findings contradict with the findings of Låstad et al. (2016). Låstad et al. (2016) studied job insecurity by using the referent shift model, by asking respondents to report their perception of climate in their workplace. The perceptions of individual job insecurity were not aggregated to workgroup level. However, they found that the relationship between job insecurity climate and individual job insecurity could be found over time when job insecurity feelings fluctuate (Låstad et al., 2016). As our study was conducted in a period where individual job insecurity can be argued to fluctuate more, this might be the reason for why our study found that job insecurity climate influences individual job insecurity.

Further, PJIC is measured on the individual level in different organizations, and could have been measured on the climate level. As a perception

might not be shared among the entire organization. We acknowledge that the application of a shared environment in the study would strengthen the observed crossover effect. As the climate of job insecurity is described to be a group level phenomenon, in the sense that people are collectively worried that they might lose their jobs (Låstad, 2015). We found that job insecurity exists at the industry level, in a time where many working remotely, out of office. It would be of interest for future researchers to examine if there is a difference in how PJIC influences individual job insecurity in a shared environment versus in a home-office environment.

7.0 Concluding Remarks

The present study strengthens previous literature and research on PJIC, intention to leave and job insecurity. Particularly, this study extends the crossover theory by suggesting that crossover can occur from a shared environment.

Referring to our main goal for the study, "*Does perceived job insecurity climate affect intention to leave during COVID-19 and is this association mediated by individual job insecurity?"*. The results showed that subjective job insecurity mediates the relationship between PJIC and intention to leave. We also found that PJIC influences both individual job insecurity and intention to leave.

The findings indicate that when individuals feel that they are "exposed" to job insecurity climate it leads to individual job insecurity. Here the individuals perceive that colleagues are afraid of losing their jobs, and acquire the same perceptions, becoming insecure about the future existence of their job. Which in turn leads to turnover intention. With this, when organizations are going through turbulence, it becomes important that employees are able to cope with stressors in the work environment.

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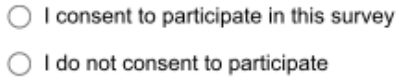
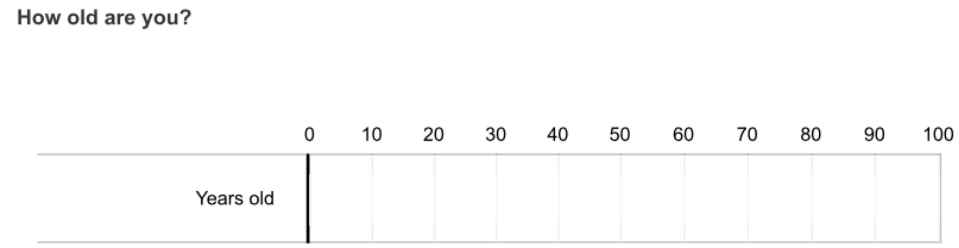
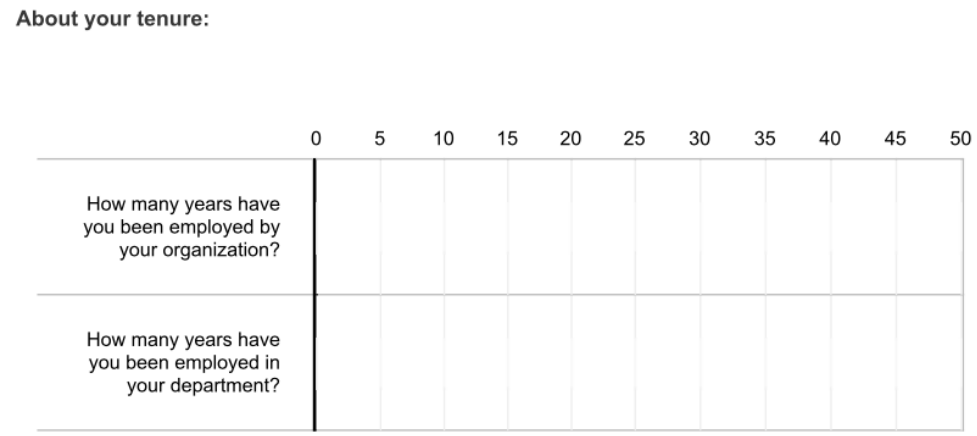
Appendices:

Appendix 01: Consent to participate

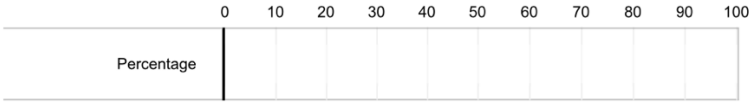


Appendix 02: Questionnaire





At what percentage are you employed?



Intention to leave

The following statements are about your inclination to quit your job. Please respond to each statement on a five-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

I am actively looking for other jobs.

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○

I feel that I could leave this job.

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○

If I was completely free to choose I would leave this job.

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○

Job insecurity

Next, we would like to learn about how secure you feel in your current working relationship. Please look at the following statements, and evaluate how well they apply to you on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

I am worried about having to leave my job before I would like to.

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither agree nor disagree	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○

There is a risk that I will have to leave my present job in the year to come.

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither agree nor disagree	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○

I feel uneasy about losing my job in the near future.

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neither agree nor disagree	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○

Job insecurity climate

Next, we would like to learn about the general level of employment security where you work. Please look at the following statements, and evaluate how well they apply to your workplace on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

At my workplace there is a general feeling of anxiety over being let go.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○

At my workplace there is a general feeling that someone/ several people are going to lose their jobs.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○

Many people are worried about losing their jobs at my workplace.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○

At my workplace people often talk about whether they will be able to keep their job.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
○	○	○	○	○