



# A Longitudinal Investigation of the Roles of Cognitive and Affective Job Insecurity Before and During the Pandemic

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**Abstract:** *Background:* While an increasing body of research has examined employees' job insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, we know little about the role of cognitive and affective job insecurity in the pandemic context. *Methods:* We conducted a two-wave study on 211 service employees in South Korea to assess the indirect effect of their cognitive job insecurity that existed before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic on their job performance after the onset of the pandemic, via affective job insecurity. *Results:* Mediation analysis revealed that pre-COVID cognitive job insecurity significantly indirectly affected mid-COVID job performance through mid-COVID affective job insecurity. Further, we found this indirect effect significant only among female employees. *Discussion:* These findings underscore the long-term effects of cognitive job insecurity on job performance in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, cognitive job insecurity, affective job insecurity, job performance, gender

COVID-19 research suggests that the pandemic severely impacted the service sector (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020). Because of the declining profits of service organizations since the COVID-19 outbreak, the level of job insecurity experienced by employees increased (Filimonau et al., 2020; Jung et al., 2021). Job insecurity, defined as “a perceived threat to the continuity and stability of employment as it is currently experienced” (Shoss, 2017, p. 1914), has been associated with predominantly negative outcomes, including impaired organizational commitment, psychological well-being, and physical health as well as increased counterproductive behavior and turnover intention (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018; Jiang et al., 2022; Probst et al., 2018). These adverse consequences are anticipated to be more pronounced in workplaces facing economic hardships and potential job losses. Indeed, the experience of job insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic has been reported to inhibit compliance with COVID-19 prevention guidelines (Lavalley et al., 2021; Probst, Lee, et al., 2020); increase work strain, anxiety, and depression (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021; Naranjo et al., 2021), and weaken job engagement (Jung et al., 2021).

While mounting research has examined service employees' job insecurity amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021; Gasparro et al., 2020; Jung et al., 2021), the question of how the cognitive and affective aspects of job insecurity play out in such extremely uncertain and volatile settings remains unanswered. Jiang and Lavaysse's (2018) meta-analysis showed the validity of the distinction between the cognitive and affective components, explaining that cognitive job insecurity pertains to the perceived threat to employment, whereas affective job insecurity focuses on emotional experiences related to threatened job security. The present study takes up extant theories on social cognitive processes (Frijda, 1986; Harré, 1986; Lazarus, 1991) by adopting the cognition-affect-behavior framework to explain the sequential relationship between cognitive and affective job insecurity. Drawing on the appraisal theory of emotions (Lazarus, 1991) and affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), we propose that service employees' cognitive job insecurity that existed before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic can predict their affective job insecurity after the onset, which in turn may have negatively impacted their job performance during the pandemic. Thus, the first objective of

our study was to assess whether the pre-COVID cognitive job insecurity – mid-COVID<sup>1</sup> job performance relationship is mediated by mid-COVID affective job insecurity.

Further, we postulate that the proposed mediating relationship is more pronounced for female service employees than for their male counterparts. This prediction stems from prior findings indicating that women experience more stress from the COVID-19 pandemic than men (Fu et al., 2020; Hwang et al., 2021; Park et al., 2020). Applying these findings to the domain of job insecurity, we predicted that, even though male and female employees experienced the same level of cognitive job insecurity before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, female employees would be more vulnerable to job precariousness arising from the pandemic, thereby experiencing greater affective job insecurity. Therefore, the negative indirect relationship between pre-COVID cognitive job insecurity and mid-COVID job performance, via mid-COVID affective job insecurity, should be more profound for female service employees than for their male counterparts. Accordingly, the second objective of the study was to test the moderating effect of gender on the relationships between cognitive and affective job insecurity and job performance.

We attempt to fill the gap in the job security literature in several ways. First, we examine the effect of the cognitive and affective components of job insecurity on job performance in pandemic settings to reveal the ramifications of the unprecedented crisis associated with the threat of job loss in the workplace. Because job performance is considered one of the key indicators of a psychologically and physically healthy workplace (Grawitch et al., 2006), it warrants further exploration concerning job insecurity. Second, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the construct of job insecurity. By distinguishing between its cognitive and affective dimensions and empirically testing their sequential effects on job performance, this study complements a growing body of research focusing on the conceptual development of job insecurity. Finally, based on the different gender effects on the job insecurity–job performance relationship, we suggest interventions to help reduce employees' (female employees' in particular) cognitive and affective loads because of job insecurity.

## Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Job insecurity is recognized as a major stressor that increases cognitive and affective overload, leading to decreased task performance (De Witte et al., 2016; Probst, Chizh, et al., 2020). From an employee's perspective, job insecurity implies a breach of the psychological contract between the employee and employer. The perception of

such an imbalance in the social exchange between employee and employer motivates employees to lessen their contribution to the organization (Shoss, 2017; Vander Elst et al., 2016). While job insecurity has been consistently reported to undermine job performance, we break down the construct of job insecurity by analyzing its cognitive and affective components, which allows for a more nuanced approach.

Cognitive job insecurity refers to “the perceived threat to the continuity of one's employment and/or to features of the job,” whereas affective job insecurity refers to “the emotional reactions to the perceived threat to one's job” (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018, p. 2308). Examples of such emotions include anxiety, fear, and worry. The present study draws on social cognitive process models to conceptualize the sequential relationship between cognitive and affective job insecurity (i.e., Harré, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). Specifically, we suggest that cognitive job insecurity indirectly shapes job performance via affective job insecurity. First, the appraisal theory of emotions contends that cognitive appraisals of the environment or stimuli precede emotional or affective reactions (Lazarus, 1991). The same stimulus can elicit different emotions depending on how it is cognitively evaluated using factors such as the extent to which the stimulus influences goals, matches expectations, or is controllable. In a similar vein, the model of the social construction of emotion posits that emotions are social products influenced by the cognitive processes of interpreting stimulus (Harré, 1986). Furthermore, emotions are associated with specific action and behavioral tendencies (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). For example, the emotion of joy is often followed by action tendencies to share positive outcomes and approach others, whereas an experience of fear or anxiety accompanies a desire to flee. Hence, compared to cognitive perception, affective reactions are more likely to directly shape behaviors or performance.

In addition, affective events theory provides a useful framework for understanding how emotion-eliciting events in the workplace lead to affective responses and work outcomes (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The theory postulates that negative work events (e.g., downsizing, layoffs) perceived by employees are expected to trigger negative affective reactions of worry, fear, and anxiety (Huang et al., 2010, 2012; Jiang et al., 2020). Furthermore, these negative affective reactions tend to reduce job satisfaction, performance, and commitment because they consume the energy and resources required to perform the job (Richter et al., 2020; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

Several studies provide empirical evidence that affective job insecurity reflects proximal outcomes more directly than cognitive job insecurity (Blomqvist et al., 2020; Jiang

<sup>1</sup> “mid-COVID” refers to the period from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to the present time during the pandemic (Shin et al., 2021).

& Lavaysse, 2018; Jiang et al., 2022; Probst, 2003). For instance, Jiang and Lavaysse's (2018) meta-analysis revealed that cognitive job insecurity negatively affects employee job performance through the mediating process of affective job insecurity in both the short and long term. Cognitive job insecurity was found to indirectly impair job satisfaction, well-being, and job performance via affective job insecurity (Huang et al., 2010, 2012). These theories and prior findings suggest that cognitive job insecurity may indirectly shape job performance via affective job insecurity.

Employees who perceive their employment as at risk are expected to exhibit negative affective reactions. Previous research showed that negative emotions increase the propensity to withdraw from job duties (Schat & Kelloway, 2000). Negative emotions tend to narrow the scope of attention and cognition and often lead to rigid responses (Staw et al., 1981). The threat of job loss was found to impair employees' innovation performance because of increased irritation and decreased concentration (Van Hootegem et al., 2019). While the perception of job insecurity itself is stressful and cognitively taxing, the negative emotional arousal (i.e., affective job insecurity) of worrying about losing a job severely drains energy and resources further, leaving fewer resources to be invested in the job (Richter et al., 2020). In summary, we propose that employees who experienced cognitive job insecurity prior to the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to report increased affective job insecurity during the pandemic, which in turn leads to a decrease in job performance.

*Hypothesis 1:* Mid-COVID affective job insecurity mediates the relationship between pre-COVID cognitive job insecurity and mid-COVID job performance.

Further, we contend that the indirect relationship between cognitive job insecurity and job performance via affective job insecurity is conditional on gender: Female employees may report a stronger negative indirect relationship. Compared to their male counterparts, female employees are more prone to experience anxiety when faced with the threat of job loss and economic insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The gender effect on anxiety is well established: Women tend to report anxiety and fear of anxious arousal at a higher rate (Allan et al., 2019; Fu et al., 2020), and they tend to develop anxiety disorders more frequently than men (Bourdon et al., 1988). This gender effect is often explained by cultural expectations and socialization into traditional gender roles from an early age (Stoyanova & Hope, 2012).

In addition, research has consistently indicated that women are more psychologically vulnerable to occupational and chronic stress and minor daily stressors than men (Matud, 2004; Michael et al., 2009). After the spread

of COVID-19, women scored higher on emotional exhaustion (Hwang et al., 2021). Their minority status, home responsibilities, and insufficient time for self-development were noted as major contributors to increased stress levels. By undertaking multiple roles that are often incongruous, female employees experience more work-family conflict than their male counterparts, especially when lacking adequate social support (Greenglass, 1993; Shin et al., 2021).

Previous studies found that the negative job insecurity-job performance relationship is buffered when job threats are viewed as controllable (Schreurs et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2015). Because women tend to rate their life events as less controllable than men (Matud, 2004), female employees' cognitive job insecurity may more likely lead to negative affective job insecurity and ultimately adverse outcomes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the lockdown and social distancing measures significantly increased the caring responsibilities for female employees (Toscano & Zappalà, 2021), thus adding to the feeling of uncontrollability. Hence, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 2:* Gender moderates the relationship between cognitive job insecurity, affective job insecurity, and job performance such that the negative indirect relationship is stronger for female employees than for male employees.

## Method

### Sample and Procedure

We administered a two-wave online survey to South Korean service employees in diverse service sectors (e.g., airlines, banks, and retail stores). We sent email invitations to non-managerial employees from a list of employees registered on an online survey platform. To ensure that our study participants had sufficient time to experience job insecurity, we invited only full-time service employees with over a year of tenure in their current job.

The first COVID-19 case was confirmed in South Korea on 20 January 2020. Time 1 (T1) and Time 2 (T2) data were collected in July 2019 and December 2020, respectively. Of the 651 T1 survey participants, 211 participated in the T2 survey (retention rate: 32.4%). We conducted a priori power analyses using the Monte Carlo power analysis for indirect effects (Schoemann et al., 2017) and G\*Power 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2009). Our analyses indicated that, to test for mediation and moderation effects with a power of at least .8 and medium effect size, the study needed to include at least 55 participants for moderation and 210 participants for mediation. 41% of the participants were male. The average

age and job tenure of the participants were 35.86 ( $SD = 8.13$ ) years and 5.29 ( $SD = 4.74$ ) years, respectively. They were employed in four service sectors: retail ( $n = 121, 56.9\%$ ), food and beverage ( $n = 29, 13.7\%$ ), hospitality ( $n = 37, 17.5\%$ ), and banking and finance ( $n = 24, 11.4\%$ ). The results of the  $t$ -tests demonstrated that the final sample and the individuals who did not respond to the T2 survey did not exhibit any systematic differences regarding demographic characteristics and job insecurity levels.

## Measures

We used the backtranslation method by Brislin (1970) to ascertain the equivalence of the original and translated questionnaires. We adopted a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) for all measurement items (see Table 1). We measured cognitive and affective job insecurity each using three items from Pienaar et al.'s (2013) 8-item scale that evaluates employees' general perceptions about job insecurity. Previous studies had employed and validated the scale (e.g., Akgunduz & Eryilmaz, 2018; Menéndez-Espina et al., 2019). Through an initial reliability analysis, we eliminated one item from each of the cognitive and affective job insecurity scales because of low item-to-total correlation (i.e., below .7). Drawing on prior research (Hur et al., 2020; Shin et al., 2020), we assessed job performance by employing the four highest-loading items from Williams and Anderson's (1991) 6-item in-role performance scale. The scale evaluated the extent to which employees fulfilled formal and required job responsibilities.

## Control Variables

We controlled for the effects of age, gender, job tenure, and positive and negative affectivity in the analyses, as these variables might affect perceptions of job insecurity and performance (e.g., Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018; Shin & Hur, 2021). Affectivity, defined as one's dispositional propensity to experience certain emotional or mood states, is known to be a fundamental factor that largely shapes individuals' perceptions and reactions to external stimuli (Watson et al., 1988). The perceptions and feelings of job insecurity were found to correlate with both positive and negative affectivity (Debus et al., 2014; Näswall et al., 2005), which were measured using the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule Short Form (Thompson, 2007).

## Analysis Strategy

To test the mediating effect of affective job insecurity on the cognitive job insecurity-job performance relationship,

we ran bootstrapping ( $N = 5,000$ ) using the M-plus macro (Hayes, 2017; Stride et al., 2015). It was necessary to ascertain whether the results of the mediation analysis held when we controlled for the measures in the previous time. Therefore, to estimate the time-lagged effect of pre-COVID cognitive job insecurity on mid-COVID job performance via mid-COVID affective job insecurity, we controlled for the respective variables measured at the previous time point applying a half-longitudinal design (Cole & Maxwell, 2003; Little, 2013). Specifically, in addition to the proposed paths, we included a path from T1 affective job insecurity to T2 affective job insecurity and a path from T1 job performance to T2 job performance. We also investigated the conditional indirect effects of pre-COVID cognitive job insecurity on mid-COVID job performance through mid-COVID affective job insecurity across gender.

## Results

Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics and correlations. All reliability statistics fulfilled the standard for a reliable measure (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The proposed 7-factor measurement model (i.e., T1 positive affectivity, T1 negative affectivity, T1 cognitive job insecurity, T1 affective job insecurity, T1 job performance, T2 affective job insecurity, and T2 job performance) fitted the data well ( $\chi^2_{(209)} = 354.04, p < .05, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .05$ ), significantly better than any other alternative measurement model (see Table 3). Furthermore, all variables exhibited composite reliability ranging from .81 to .92. All the average variance extracted values were larger than the values of the squared correlation between the target construct and any of the other constructs (Voorhees et al., 2016) (see Table 2). In summary, these findings confirmed the reliability and validity of our measures.

Because this study uses self-report measures, we conducted Harman's single-factor test to detect the common method variance (CMV; Podsakoff et al., 2012). The confirmatory factor analysis results showed that the 1-factor model ( $\chi^2_{(230)} = 2,496.36, p < .05, CFI = .37, TLI = .31, RMSEA = .22, SRMR = .18$ ) exhibited a worse fit than the measurement model. Furthermore, the difference between the two chi-squared values was significant ( $\chi^2_{(21)} = 2,142.32, p < .01$ ). These altogether indicate that there is no serious CMV issue with our data.

Mediation analysis revealed that, after we controlled for T1 affective job insecurity and job performance, T1 cognitive job insecurity exerted a significant indirect effect on T2 job performance via T2 affective job insecurity ( $b = -.021, 95\%$  confidence interval [CI] =  $[-.001, -.066]$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1 (see Table 4). The path coefficient

**Table 1.** Measurement items

Construct	Measurement items	T1	T2
Cognitive job insecurity	I am very sure that I will be able to keep my job. (R)	.92	-
	I think that I will be able to continue working here. (R)	.86	-
	I am certain/sure of my job environment. (R)	.85	-
Affective job insecurity	I fear that I might get fired.	.96	.98
	I worry about the continuation of my career.	.92	.94
	I feel uncertain about the future of my job.	.81	.76
Job performance	I adequately complete assigned duties.	.84	.88
	I perform tasks that are expected of me.	.89	.89
	I fulfill the responsibilities specified in my job description.	.83	.83
	I meet the formal performance requirements of my job.	.81	.81
Positive affectivity	Alert	.81	-
	Inspired	.86	-
	Active	.62	-
Negative affectivity	Afraid	.90	-
	Nervous	.83	-
	Upset	.58	-

$\chi^2_{(209)} = 354.04; p < .05, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .05.$

Note. Items are measured on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). All factor loadings are statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ). (R) indicates the reverse-coded items. CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; CFI = comparative fit index; T1 = time 1; T2 = time 2; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.

**Table 2.** Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variables	M	SD	$\alpha$	CR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	0.41	.49	-	-	-									
2. Age	35.86	8.13	-	-	.12	-								
3. Job tenure	5.29	4.74	-	-	.05	.50**	-							
4. Positive affectivity (T1)	2.51	.84	.80	.81	.13	.07	-.15*	<b>.59</b>						
5. Negative affectivity (T1)	2.89	.96	.81	.82	-.11	-.29**	-.11	-.21**	<b>.61</b>					
6. Cognitive job insecurity (T1)	2.40	1.02	.90	.91	.06	.08	.06	-.30**	.16*	<b>.77</b>				
7. Affective job insecurity (T1)	2.19	1.03	.92	.93	.14*	-.12	.11	-.15*	.12	.71**	<b>.81</b>			
8. Affective job insecurity (T2)	2.46	1.09	.92	.93	.02	.05	-.00	-.08	.08	.49**	.58**	<b>.81</b>		
9. Job performance (T1)	3.88	.65	.91	.91	-.06	-.05	-.12	.23**	-.05*	-.28**	-.29**	-.19**	<b>.71</b>	
10. Job performance (T2)	3.87	.68	.91	.91	-.10	-.11	-.17*	.20**	-.03	-.15*	-.22**	-.24**	.57**	<b>.73</b>

Note.  $N = 211$ .  $M$  = mean;  $SD$  = standard deviation;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha; CR = composite reliability; T1 = time 1; T2 = time 2. Gender: 0 = women, 1 = men. Bold numbers along the diagonal are average variance extracted values. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 3.** Comparison of measurement models

Measurement models	$\chi^2$	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	CFI	RMSEA
Hypothesized 7-factor model	354.04**	209	-	-	.96	.06
4-factor model: Combining PA and NA into a single factor, cognitive job insecurity into a single factor, T1 and T2 affective job insecurity into a single factor, and T1 and T2 job performance into a single factor	1,315.07**	224	1,122.52**	15	.70	.15
3-factor model: Combining PA and NA into a single factor, cognitive and T1/T2 affective job insecurity into a single factor, and T1/T2 job performance into a single factor	1,476.56**	227	961.03**	18	.65	.16
2-factor model: Combining PA and NA into a single factor and cognitive job insecurity, affective job insecurity, and job performance in T1 into a single factor	2,102.60**	229	1,748.56**	20	.48	.20
1-factor model	2,496.36**	230	2,142.32**	21	.37	.22

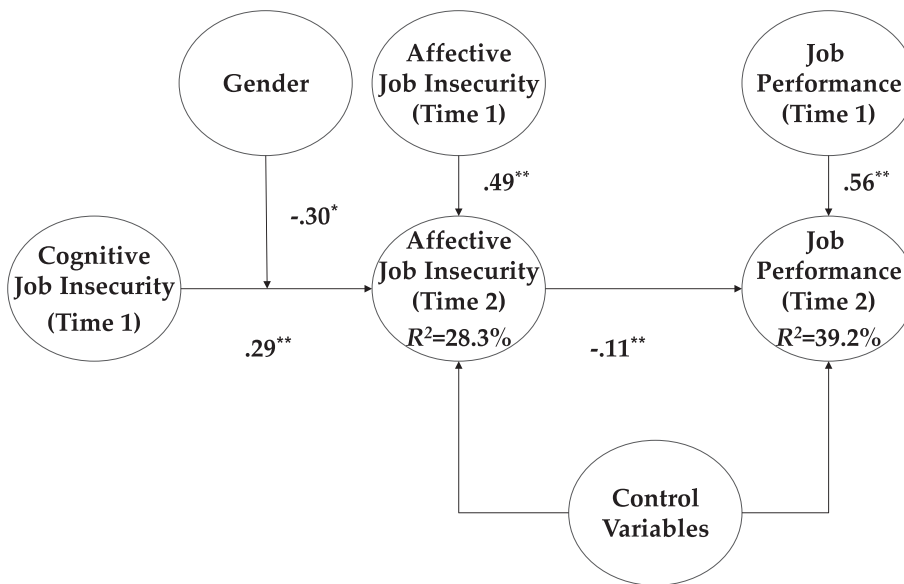
Note. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; PA = positive affectivity; NA = negative affectivity; T1 = time 1; T2 = time 2. \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 4.** Results for the path coefficients of the mediation and moderation models

Variable	Affective job insecurity (T2)	Affective job insecurity (T2)	Job performance (T2)
	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)
Gender (T1)	-.12 (.13)	.60 (.33)	-.11 (.08)
Age (T1)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Job tenure (T1)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.02)	-.01 (.01)
Positive affectivity (T1)	.05 (.08)	.06 (.08)	.09 (.05)
Negative affectivity (T1)	-.01 (.07)	.00 (.07)	-.02 (.04)
Affective job insecurity (T1)	.51 (.10)**	.49 (.09)**	
Job performance (T1)			.56 (.06)**
Cognitive job insecurity (T1)	.18 (.10)	.29 (.10)**	.09 (.05)
Cognitive job insecurity (T1) × Gender (T1)		-.30 (.13)*	
Affective job insecurity (T2)			-.11 (.04)**
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	35.1%	36.8%	36.9%

Moderated Mediation Index: Cognitive job insecurity (T1) × Gender (T1) → Affective job insecurity (T2) → Job Performance (T2):  
*b* = .034 [.003, .100]

Note. *N* = 211. *b* = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; T1 = time 1; T2 = time 2. Gender: 0 = women, 1 = men. \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01.



**Figure 1.** Results of mediation analysis. \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. For parsimony, we omitted the results for the control variables.

between T2 affective job insecurity and T2 job performance was significant as well ( $b = -.11$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In addition, as shown in Table 4, gender significantly moderated the effect of T1 cognitive job insecurity on T2 affective job insecurity ( $b = -.30$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Furthermore, Hypothesis 2 predicted that the negative indirect effect of T1 cognitive job insecurity on T2 job performance through T2 affective job insecurity would be stronger for female service employees than male service employees. Since the magnitude of the indirect effects significantly differed between females and males ( $b = .034$ , 95% CI = [.033, .100]), it supported Hypothesis 2 (see Table 4). A simple slope analysis showed that the indirect relationship was significant only among female service employees (female:  $b = -.033$ , 95% CI = [-.088, -.005]; male:  $b = .000$ , 95%

CI = [-.029, .033]). Figure 1 illustrates the results of the hypothesis testing.

## Discussion

The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic brought about economic recession and a steep increase in job insecurity across diverse sectors. With a focus on employees in the service industry, which the pandemic has severely impacted, the results of our two-wave survey demonstrated that pre-COVID cognitive job insecurity indirectly impaired mid-COVID job performance via mid-COVID affective job insecurity; this indirect effect was significant only for female service employees.

## Theoretical Implications

This paper is one of the first to uncover the roles of cognitive and affective job insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consistent with prior studies, including meta-analytic findings in nonpandemic contexts (Blomqvist et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2012; Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018), affective job insecurity was a key mediator of the cognitive job insecurity–job performance relationship. The results suggest that the cognitive job insecurity that existed before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was powerful enough to predict long-term affective job insecurity, even after controlling for pre-COVID affective job insecurity. Thus, service employees' preexisting perceptions of job insecurity significantly affected their emotional reactions to job insecurity threats after the onset of the pandemic; such emotional reactions were, in turn, detrimental to their job performance. As such, by validating the relationship between cognitive and affective job insecurity and job performance in pandemic settings for a longer timespan, our research highlights the long-term effects of cognitive job insecurity. The current findings are in line with the vast literature utilizing the cognition-affect-behavior framework, which helps us to understand fundamental mechanisms for translating cognitive experiences through affect into performance (Chae & Lee, 2019; Frijda, 1986; Han et al., 2011; Harré, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Qin et al., 2021). While the present study adds to a growing empirical knowledge of the sequential relationship between cognitive and affective job insecurity (Huang et al., 2012; Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018), further confirmation of the long-term effects of cognitive job insecurity is warranted beyond the pandemic settings.

Our research further contributes to a detailed understanding of job insecurity by uncovering the moderating effect of gender. In line with occupational and chronic stress research (Matud, 2004; Michael et al., 2009), our findings indicate that the adverse effect of cognitive job insecurity on job performance via affective job insecurity is present only among female service employees. Conversely, although male employees experienced cognitive job insecurity, their job performance did not diminish. These findings suggest that, as with other stressors, women are more vulnerable to job insecurity than men.

## Practical Implications

Given that cognitive job insecurity has long-term negative consequences, maintaining a low level of cognitive job insecurity among employees is critical. Scholars claim that reducing uncertainty in the workplace is essential for alleviating cognitive job insecurity (Binyamin & Carmeli, 2010). Clarifying employees' roles and performance criteria helps reduce their perceived uncertainty (Shin & Hur, 2021).

In addition, participative decision-making, open communication, and a trustworthy climate can protect employees against job insecurity threats (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018; Shoss, 2017). In times of extreme uncertainty and volatility, such as the COVID-19 outbreak, managers are recommended to attend to the affective side of job insecurity as it tends to directly impact work outcomes. In the organizational change context that usually entails job threats, Huy (2002) emphasized the importance of a compassionate approach and attending to change recipients' emotions to alleviate resistance to change.

Based on the finding that job insecurity is more harmful to women than to men, service organizations need to pay closer attention to female employees' job insecurity. Because female employees tend to have more caring responsibilities and experience more work-family conflict than their male counterparts (Hwang et al., 2021), work-family support programs can alleviate female employees' work stressors and enable them to maintain their job performance levels even under job insecurity threats. These types of support interventions can help female employees view job threats as controllable (Schreurs et al., 2012), thereby reducing their feelings of precariousness toward their jobs.

## Limitations and Future Directions

Our findings must be viewed considering several limitations. First, our study sample mainly consists of service employees with permanent or fixed-term contracts and excludes self-employed, temporary, or on-call workers. Indeed, a recent finding notes that temporary workers might acknowledge insecurity as an inherent characteristic of the job (Van Vuuren et al., 2019). Given the rapidly growing proportion of "gig workers" or platform laborers in the labor market, whose jobs are inherently precarious (Petriglieri et al., 2019), further research is warranted to explore how these individuals cognitively perceive and affectively react to their job insecurity.

In addition, the current study relied on self-reported data. Although we have applied measures to reduce common method bias, such as implementing a two-wave study design and conducting Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2012), we recommend a longitudinal design to verify the causal relationships among the variables.

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### Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

### Open Data

Data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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