

The Importance of Career Insecurity for Turnover Intentions in the Dutch Military

Martijn W. van Eetveldt
Ministry of Defense, Utrecht,
The Netherlands

Niels van de Ven and
Marieke van den Tooren
Tilburg University

Renzo C. Versteeg
Ministry of Defense, Utrecht, The Netherlands

The effects of two dimensions of job insecurity (job loss insecurity and career insecurity) on turnover intentions were tested in a sample from the Dutch armed forces ($N = 3,580$) after a major downsizing operation was announced. Results suggested that especially perceptions of career insecurity increased turnover intentions. Next to this direct effect, career insecurity was also associated with lowered affective organizational commitment which in turn increased turnover intentions as well. Our results imply that, at least during downsizing operations, a multidimensional conceptualization of job insecurity helps to predict important organizational outcomes in the military. Both perceptions of the risk of losing one's job and perceptions of possible future career opportunities are important for employee retention.

Keywords: job insecurity, career insecurity, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, downsizing

The last 20 years the national armed forces of most European Union member states faced regular downsizing efforts (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2013). Even U.S. military spending declined for the first time since 1998, including reductions of approximately 100,000 soldiers (United States Department of Defense, 2012). Large downsizing operations are known to trigger feelings of job insecurity in regular organizations (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011), and job insecurity is detrimental

for the well-being of both employees and the organization itself (De Witte, 2005; Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002). Little research, however, has been conducted on the consequences of downsizing and job insecurity in the armed forces. The current study took place after the announcement of a large downsizing operation in the Dutch military in November 2010 (with an estimated loss of 12,000 jobs, 1/6th of the total jobs, Hillen, 2011). We investigated the consequences of the perceived job insecurity on affective organizational commitment and voluntary turnover intentions.

There are substantial reasons why it is important to test the relationship between job insecurity and turnover in a military sample. First, it often are the most qualified employees that tend to leave the organization if they experience job insecurity (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Losing the best employees is obviously detrimental to organizational performance. Second, voluntary turnover of experienced and skilled soldiers triggers the need to replace them, which is costly and takes a long time. It can take as long as 7 years to be fully trained in specific military jobs (Dupré & Day, 2007).

Martijn W. van Eetveldt, Trends, Research and Statistics Department, Defense Personnel and Organisation Division, Utrecht, The Netherlands; Niels van de Ven and Marieke van den Tooren, Department of Social Psychology, Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Tilburg University, Tilburg, The Netherlands; and Renzo C. Versteeg, Trends, Research and Statistics Department, Defense Personnel and Organisation Division, Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Martijn W. van Eetveldt, Trends, Research and Statistics Department, Defense Personnel and Organisation Division, Utrecht, The Netherlands. E-mail: mw.v.eetveldt@mindef.nl

In the current research we mainly aim to investigate the importance of a specific aspect of job insecurity on turnover intentions, namely career insecurity. *Job insecurity* in general can be defined as “an overall concern about the continued existence of the job in the future” (Sverke et al., 2002, p. 243). It is often measured as a unidimensional variable with a single-item measure concerning the potential permanent loss of the job itself (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). However, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) argued that “loss of valued job features is an important but often overlooked aspect of job insecurity” (p. 441) and introduced the notion of multiple dimensions of job insecurity. One such key distinction between multiple dimensions of job insecurity is from Sverke and Hellgren (2002), who distinguished between quantitative and qualitative job insecurity. *Quantitative job insecurity* can be labeled as job loss insecurity: the perceived threat of potential loss of the current job itself. *Qualitative job insecurity* pertains to the loss of valued job features, with aspects such as decreasing salary development, deterioration of working conditions, and lack of career opportunities. Indeed, in times of downsizing employees might not only fear losing their job, but it also affects perceptions of internal future career opportunities in terms of training and career pathways (Feldman, 1995).

In the current study we focus specifically on the distinction between job loss insecurity and career insecurity. With job loss insecurity we refer to the quantitative aspect of job insecurity as defined by Sverke and Hellgren (2002), namely the fear of losing one’s current job. *Career insecurity* is an aspect of qualitative job insecurity, and we define it here as the perception of a potential threat to career mobility and career progress. Below we will explain why we think this aspect is likely to be important for military employees.

Why Could Career Insecurity Impact Turnover Intentions in the Military?

With the current research we aim to help expand the literature on the relationship between the importance of internal career opportunities and employee retention, as Steel and Landon (2010) noted that this relationship is often ignored. Several theoretical frameworks discuss that internal career opportunities are alternatives to actually quitting one’s job (Hulin, Roznowski, & Hachiya,

1985; Jackofsky, 1984). For example, an employee who is dissatisfied with the contents of his current job can deal with this dissatisfaction by looking for another job both in- and outside of the organization. Meta-analyses found mixed support for the importance of perceived career opportunities on turnover: Where Carson, Carson, Griffeth, and Steel (1993) found no significant effect, Griffeth, Hom, and Gaertner (2000) did find that an increase in perceived chances for promotion reduced turnover. Further testing of this relationship between perceived career insecurity and turnover intentions thus seems important.

There are two main reasons why we expect career insecurity to impact turnover intentions in the military. First, the organizational structure in, for example, the Dutch and U.S. military is such that threats to career progress are important for future job retention. Our sample consists of Dutch soldiers and the Dutch armed forces use a flexible personnel system (FPS), which can be summarized as an “up or out” approach. After a certain period of time (e.g., 8 years for privates), military employees in lower ranks either have to be promoted to a next rank or they are expected to leave the organization. The idea is that this career system motivates employees to keep improving themselves, and that it allows for continuous new openings for recruits at all levels (Van der Knaap, 2003).

In times of downsizing in an organization with a system akin to this FPS, an employee might not directly fear the loss of his or her current job. However, if the employee perceives that there are less future career opportunities this can elicit the fear of not being able to make the required promotion necessary to stay in the organization later on in one’s career. After all, if the downsizing lowers a private’s perceived chance to make a promotion in the upcoming years, he probably feels that it is less likely that he will make the promotion that is expected of him within the 8-year period. Employees working in an “up-or-out” organization might thus not only fear losing one’s current job during a downsizing operation, but might also fear that there will be less future career opportunities, which in turn increases the chance of having to leave the organization at a later time. We therefore expect that a perceived threat to future internal career opportunities might be an equally important predictor for turnover intentions as the actual threat of a direct job loss in the Dutch military.

A second reason why we expect perceptions of career insecurity to be important for turnover intention in the military is that threats to career opportunities are likely to be seen as a breach of the psychological contract that exists between an employee and the organization. A *psychological contract* is defined as “an individual’s belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party” (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994, p. 246). It encompasses “the idea that workers expect their employer to offer a reasonably secure job in exchange for loyalty” (Bernhard-Oettel, De Cuyper, Schreurs, & De Witte, 2011, p. 1867). Providing career development opportunities is part of what an organization gives in terms of the psychological contract (Rousseau, 2004). When employees perceive career insecurity they feel that the psychological contract is violated (De Witte, 2005), as the organization is seen to violate its responsibility to take care of the employee. A perceived breach in the psychological contract lowers the affective commitment of the employee (Ng, Feldman, & Lam, 2010), and a lower commitment typically increases turnover intentions (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Indeed, Rousseau (2004) argued that poorly managed breaches of the psychological contract likely lead to turnover. We thus expect that for military employees perceived career insecurity lowers affective commitment, which in turn increases turnover intentions.

To summarize, the combination of (a) the use of the FPS in the military that makes career progress important for future job security with (b) the lower affective commitment caused by the perceived breach in the psychological contract due to career insecurity, lead us to the prediction that career insecurity is an important antecedent of turnover intentions in the military. In the next

section we discuss the proposed model that we will test in our sample in more detail.

Proposed Model

Our proposed conceptual model involves the relationship of job loss insecurity and career insecurity with both affective organizational commitment and turnover intentions (see Figure 1). We first discuss our reasons for predicting an effect of affective commitment on turnover intentions, then for predicting an effect of job loss insecurity on both commitment and turnover intentions, after which we discuss our main hypotheses on the predicted effects of career insecurity on affective commitment and turnover intentions.

Affective Organizational Commitment

Affective organizational commitment is the positive emotional attachment that an employee feels toward the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). We chose to include affective commitment in our model, as one of the reasons for our prediction that perceptions of job loss insecurity and career insecurity would lead to turnover intentions in the military is based on the theories on the psychological contract. This theory implies that the perception of career insecurity, in addition to perceived job loss insecurity, can also be seen as a breach of the psychological contract (De Witte, 2005; Rousseau, 2004). Research shows that such breaches of the psychological contract lower affective commitment (Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2006). Furthermore, research consistently finds that affective commitment is an important determinant of turnover intentions (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnysky, 2002; Steel & Lounsbury,

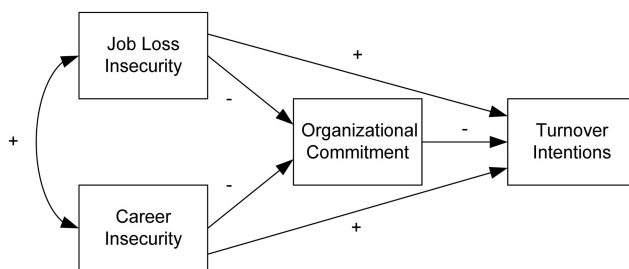


Figure 1. Proposed model.

2009; Tett & Meyer, 1993). The more committed people are to their organization, the less likely they want to leave it. We thus also expect such a relationship to be present in our study.

Job Loss Insecurity

A considerable amount of research finds a relationship between job loss insecurity (the fear of losing one's job) and turnover intentions (e.g., Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2011; Staufenbiel & König, 2010). This makes sense, as people who fear that they might lose their job are likely to be more open to new opportunities. We thus expect a direct effect of job loss insecurity on turnover intentions in our sample as well.

Furthermore, an association between job loss insecurity and affective commitment has been found to exist in prior studies as well. For example, when employers are unable to provide job security, employees are inclined to withdraw from the organization and feel less committed (Emberland & Rundmo, 2010). This also fits with the theory of the psychological contract, as the failure of the organization to provide a secure job is seen as a breach in the psychological contract (Rousseau, 2004). Given the relationship between such breaches and affective commitment that we discussed earlier, we therefore also expect that job loss insecurity lowers affective commitment. Such a finding would be consistent with earlier work as two meta-analyses found a moderate negative association between job insecurity and affective commitment (e.g., Sverke et al., 2002; Cheng & Chan, 2008). We thus expect that job loss insecurity has a direct effect on turnover intentions, as well as an indirect effect via its influence on affective organizational commitment.

Career Insecurity

The most important test in our study is the relationship between perceptions of career insecurity and turnover intentions. Steel and Landon (2010) already noted that internal career opportunities are likely to be of vital importance in the military, but that its influence on turnover decisions is mostly ignored in studies so far. Given the reasons we had described before (the "up or out" personnel system and the importance of the "psychological contract"), we follow the reasoning of Steel and Landon and think it is likely that there is

an important direct effect of perceptions of career insecurity on turnover intentions.

Furthermore, the perception of having career opportunities has been found to be positively related to affective commitment (Weng, McElroy, Morros, & Liu, 2010). Findings of Littler, Wiesner, and Dunford (2003) suggest that the perception that the organization blocks one's career development is seen as a breach in the psychological contract. Such a breach typically results in lowered affective commitment (Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2006). We thus expect that career insecurity leads to a lower affective organizational commitment, and thereby also to higher turnover intentions via the expected link between affective commitment and turnover intentions.

Additional Exploratory Analyses

We expect the relationships between the variables under study to be similar across various subgroups of our sample (e.g., for various degrees of tenure or rank). The FPS is present at all levels in the organization that provided our sample, so for example for both troopers and officers it is important that career opportunities exist. Similarly, at all levels in the organization we expect that employees feel that they contribute and are loyal to the organization and that the organization in return will care for them as psychological contract theory suggests. So, although we have no direct reasons to expect different relationships in our model for various subgroups, we do think that exploratory tests could provide valuable insights for follow-up studies and for practical purposes. We include subgroup analyses for length of tenure (≤ 4 years, 5–10 years, ≥ 10 years), contract type (permanent vs. temporary), job type (combat arms, combat support, combat service support), and rank (troopers vs. officers/noncommissioned officers).

To conclude, our main hypotheses (see Figure 1) are that we expect direct effects of job loss insecurity and career insecurity on turnover intentions, as well as indirect effects via affective organizational commitment. Because job loss insecurity and career insecurity are both supposed to be part of a multidimensional job insecurity construct, we expect that they will be correlated as well (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002).

Method

We had the opportunity to conduct secondary data-analysis on data from a large employee survey conducted by the Netherlands' Defense Services Centre Behavioral Sciences. The primary purpose of this survey is to determine well-being and perceptions of the work situation for the units involved. The survey was administered between June and October 2011, which was 7 to 11 months after announcement of a large downsizing operation, but before (most) details of specific lay-offs were decided.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 4,372 active military employees from three units of the Royal Netherlands Army. The mean response rate for subunits of the three units varied from 52% to 91%. Because the focus of the current study is to investigate feelings of respondents facing job insecurity, subunits for which it was already known that they would be eliminated in the upcoming downsizing operation were excluded from the analysis ($n = 65$, 1.5%). The sample consisted of employees from combat arms (infantry and artillery), combat support (e.g., combat engineering, intelligence, security, and communications), and combat service support (e.g., supply chain management, maintenance, and health services). Soldiers in the current study were predominantly male (93%), with the majority aged 34 years or younger (81%). Of the sample, 42% reported having completed less than 5 years of service, with 16% having completed 15 years or longer. A large percentage of respondents were junior privates to corporals (64%), and 10% were commissioned officers. The proportion of permanent employees (indefinite term contracts) was 23%.

Measures

Because the survey was not set-up directly for our research purpose, our measures were somewhat restricted by the choices made by the organization. The response categories for all questions (except for turnover intentions) ranged from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally*

agree). For all questions, there was a do not know/no opinion option in the original survey that we coded as a missing value.

Job loss insecurity was assessed with the item "I am worried about my job."

Career insecurity was measured with three (reverse coded) items: "The Royal Netherlands Army offers me sufficient opportunities for personal development," "I can exert enough influence on my career in the armed forces," and "I am satisfied with my career opportunities in the armed forces" ($\alpha = .87$).

Affective organizational commitment was measured with three items: "Toward friends, I show that I find the Royal Netherlands Army a good organization to work for," "I am proud to tell that I belong to the Royal Netherlands Army," and "I am glad I chose for the Royal Netherlands Army and not for another organization" ($\alpha = .88$).

Turnover intentions were measured with the item "I am lately considering looking for another job outside the Royal Netherlands Army." Response options associated with this item were "no," "yes, within the armed forces," "yes, outside the armed forces," and "yes, both within and outside the armed forces." We recoded responses to this question, so that it reflected whether or not people were (also) looking for a new job outside the military.

Data Analytic Approach

We tested the conceptual model using Amos 19. Because turnover intentions were measured as a dichotomous variable, a probit model was estimated using Bayesian estimation. To transform the dichotomous outcomes into a cumulative normal distribution, Amos uses Markov chain Monte Carlo simulation. This analysis cannot deal with observations with missing values. Because of this we had to delete all participants for whom there was a missing value on any of our items ($N = 727$, 16.6%). This left a total set of 3,580 respondents. Via Bayesian estimation the probit regression coefficients and intercepts (with their 95% confidence intervals) were estimated. Relationships between dimensions of job insecurity and organizational commitment are reported as regular linear standardized regression coefficients.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for all variables are listed in Table 1. Note that half the employees indicated to be looking for a new job outside the military, supporting our reasoning that this is an important topic to study. Furthermore, we found the expected relationship between the two dimensions of job insecurity, job loss insecurity and career insecurity. To test whether our proposed model fitted the data, we calculated the posterior predictive p value. Values close to .50 indicate a good model fit (Lee & Song, 2003). The posterior predictive p value for our observed data was .50 and therefore indicated a good fit of our hypothesized model.

Table 2 shows the results of the linear and probit regression analyses. Looking at the estimates and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) of the direct effects of job loss insecurity, career insecurity, and organizational commitment on turnover intentions, it is clear that all these variables were significantly related with turnover intentions in the hypothesized direction; stronger feelings of job loss insecurity, stronger feelings of career insecurity, and a lower organizational commitment were all associated with higher turnover intentions. Note that the 95% CIs of the estimated coefficients for the effect of job loss insecurity and career insecurity on turnover intentions did not overlap, suggesting that career insecurity had a significantly larger effect on turnover intentions than job loss insecurity in our study. In addition, the marginal effects (as an indicator of effect size, see Nagler, 1994) show that adding 1 scale-point to the sample mean of job loss insecurity was associated with

a 4.4% increase in the probability of turnover intentions (with all other variables held constant). The marginal effects of career insecurity and organizational commitment are 8.0% and -12.3%, respectively.

Table 2 also contains the effects of job insecurity and career insecurity on affective organizational commitment. Contrary to our expectations, the results indicated that feelings of job loss insecurity did not influence organizational commitment. Career insecurity, as hypothesized, was negatively related to organizational commitment ($sr^2 = .21$), which in turn was negatively associated with turnover intentions. Analyses confirmed an indirect relationship between career insecurity and turnover intentions (95% CI: .11, .16) but not for job loss insecurity (95% CI: -.00, .01). Our analyses thus showed a direct effect of career insecurity on turnover intentions, but also an indirect effect via organizational commitment.

Exploratory Analyses

Besides this main analysis of the model we proposed, we explored whether this pattern of relationships occurs for various subgroups as well. We tested this model for various degrees of tenure (≤ 4 years, 5–10 years, and ≥ 10 years), for the type of contract the employee has (temporary vs. indefinite term), for job type (military branches: combat arms, combat support, or combat service support), and for rank (trooper vs. officer/noncommissioned officer). Although we did not pose specific hypotheses, these analyses could provide additional insights for follow-up research or practitioners. Table 3 contains the data for tenure and type of contract, Table 4 contains the

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for the Studied Variables

Measure	Descriptive statistics		Correlations		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4
1. Job loss insecurity	3.03	(1.13)	.33	-.18	.21
2. Career insecurity	3.04	(0.91)		-.50	.32
3. Organizational commitment	3.37	(0.81)			-.34
4. Turnover intentions	50.4	—			

Note. $N = 3,580$. Job loss insecurity, career insecurity, and organizational commitment measured on scales from 1 to 5. Turnover intentions reflects the percentage of respondents who indicate to be looking for a job outside the military (without missing values). All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 2
Results of Linear and Probit Regression With Marginal Effects for Turnover Intentions

Measure	Organizational commitment			Turnover intentions			Marginal effect
	Regression coefficient	95% CI		Probit coefficient	95% CI		
		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper	
Intercept	—	—	—	.12	-.21	.44	—
1. Job loss insecurity	-.02	-.04	.08	.11	.07	.15	4.4%
2. Career insecurity	-.43	-.46	-.41	.20	.15	.26	8.0%
3. Organizational commitment	—	—	—	-.31	-.37	-.25	-12.3%

Note. Standardized regression coefficients for the effects on organizational commitment represent the results of multiple linear regression analyses and the effects on turnover intentions concern probit coefficients. The marginal effect indicates the change in probability of turnover intentions when adding 1 scale-point to the sample mean of an independent variable, holding the other predictors constant at the sample means.

data split by job type (military branch) and by rank. In each of these subgroups career insecurity was an important predictor of both affective commitment and turnover intentions. The only relationship for which we found some variance between subgroups in the strength of the relationship was for the association between career insecurity and affective commitment. We will come back to this in the Discussion section.

Discussion

We examined the relationship between job insecurity and organizational commitment and between job insecurity and turnover intentions in times of downsizing in a sample of military employees. The purpose of this study was to examine the associations between two specific dimensions of job insecurity and turnover intentions. Results suggested that both job loss insecurity (a fear of losing one's job) and career insecurity (a fear of losing future career opportunities) were associated with higher turnover intentions. Besides this direct relationship with turnover intentions, career insecurity also had an indirect influence via affective commitment. Employees who were more uncertain about their future career opportunities had a lower organizational commitment, which in turn was associated with higher turnover intentions.

Theoretical Implications

The current study demonstrates the importance of career insecurity in times of downsizing in a military organization. In our data, the relationship we found between career insecurity and turnover

intentions is almost twice as large as that between job loss insecurity and turnover intentions. Because career insecurity was measured with a three-item measure and job loss insecurity with only one item, interpreting the relative importance of these variables requires caution. Nonetheless, we do think the conclusion is warranted that the concern for future career opportunities is likely to be at least as important as the fear of losing one's current job in organizations with an up-or-out type organizational culture. The relationships we found also demonstrate the importance of considering job insecurity as a multidimensional construct, for both future research and for the retention of valuable employees.

The strong associations between career insecurity and both turnover intentions and organizational commitment during a downsizing operation signal that career insecurity might be an important construct to add to theories on the retention of military employees in general. Although this is likely to be especially the case in times of downsizing, we think it seems worthwhile to further examine this relationship in normal times as well. Our research confirms the earlier findings of [Steel and Landon \(2010\)](#) that career opportunities are important for military employees. Especially because a military career is only available in one unique organization, professional self-development and promotion are only possible within that one organization.

Our findings might be especially pronounced in an organization such as the military. For example, a study across several nonmilitary organizations and occupations found that internal career opportunities were typically only weakly

Table 3
Exploratory Subgroup Analyses for Tenure and Contract Type With Means and Standard Deviations per Variable and the Relationships Between the Variables

	Full sample (<i>N</i> = 3,580)		Tenure (years)				Contract type					
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	≤4 (<i>n</i> = 1,289)		5–10 (<i>n</i> = 955)		≥10 (<i>n</i> = 859)		Temporary (<i>n</i> = 2,412)		Permanent (<i>n</i> = 691)	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Job loss insecurity (JI)	3.03	1.13	2.88	1.09	2.98	1.13	3.26	1.15	2.96	1.12	3.19	1.15
Career insecurity (CI)	3.04	0.91	2.97	0.89	3.08	0.93	3.05	0.90	3.04	0.91	2.98	0.88
Organizational commitment (OC)	3.37	0.81	3.35	0.81	3.37	0.80	3.47	0.77	3.34	0.82	3.55	0.72
Turnover intentions (TI)	50.4		50.3		55.3		46.1		54.6		37.2	
Predicted relationships												
JI ↔ CI	.33		.28		.38		.33		.33		.34	
JI → OC	-.02 (-.04, .08)		.01 (-.03, .05)		-.04 (-.08, .00)		-.05 (-.09, -.01)		-.01 (-.04, .01)		-.05 (-.09, .00)	
CI → OC	-.43 (-.46, -.41)		-.49 (-.54, -.45)		-.37 (-.42, -.32)		-.39 (-.45, -.34)		-.45 (-.48, -.42)		-.32 (-.38, -.27)	
OC → TI	-.31 (-.37, -.25)		-.35 (-.46, -.25)		-.38 (-.50, -.26)		-.20 (-.33, -.07)		-.33 (-.40, -.25)		-.19 (-.34, -.04)	
JI → TI	.11 (.07, .15)		.15 (.08, .22)		.09 (.01, .17)		.13 (.05, .21)		.14 (.09, .19)		.13 (.04, .22)	
CI → TI	.20 (.15, .26)		.16 (.06, .26)		.26 (.16, .37)		.27 (.16, .39)		.22 (.15, .29)		.25 (.12, .38)	

Note. Sample sizes reflect the number of employees for whom there were no missing values, as that sample was used to be able to conduct the probit regression to test our model. Full sample thus refers to the full sample without missing values on any of the main variables. The sample size for the subgroup analyses (*N* = 3,103) is the sample without missing values for both the main variables and the demographic variables under study. Predicted relationships are standardized regression weights or probit weights (if TI is the dependent variable), reported with 95% confidence intervals. All the tested relationships between variables are significant at *p* < .05, except those for the effect of JI on OC. Only the > 10 years tenure subgroup effect of JI on OC is significant at *p* < .05.

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Table 4
Exploratory Subgroup Analyses For Job Type and Rank With Means and Standard Deviations per Variable and the Relationships Between The Variables

	Job type												Rank					
	Full sample (N = 3,580)			Combat (n = 1,444)			CS (n = 653)			CSS (n = 1,006)			Troopers (n = 1,984)			Officers (n = 1,119)		
	M	SD		M	SD		M	SD		M	SD		M	SD		M	SD	
Job loss insecurity (JI)	3.03	1.13		2.84	1.08		2.89	1.09		3.35	1.15		2.98	1.12		3.08	1.15	
Career insecurity (CI)	3.04	0.91		3.00	0.92		2.93	0.84		3.13	0.91		3.06	0.93		2.96	0.87	
Organizational commitment (OC)	3.37	0.81		3.41	0.82		3.46	0.75		3.32	0.80		3.27	0.82		3.60	0.72	
Turnover intentions (TI)	50.4			49.5			49.0			53.5			56.1			41.1		
Predicted relationships																		
JI ↔ CI	.33			.39			.26			.26			.34			.32		
JI → OC	-.02 (-.04, .08)			-.04 (-.07, .00)			-.04 (-.09, .00)			.04 (.00, .08)			-.02 (-.05, .01)			-.03 (-.06, .01)		
CI → OC	-.43 (-.46, -.41)			-.46 (-.50, -.41)			-.37 (-.43, -.30)			-.42 (-.47, -.37)			-.45 (-.49, -.42)			-.35 (-.40, -.30)		
OC → TI	-.31 (-.37, -.25)			-.29 (-.38, -.19)			-.38 (-.53, -.23)			-.33 (-.45, -.21)			-.32 (-.41, -.24)			-.20 (-.32, -.09)		
JI → TI	.11 (.07, .15)			.13 (.06, .20)			.09 (.00, .19)			.11 (.03, .18)			.13 (.07, .18)			.13 (.06, .20)		
CI → TI	.20 (.15, .26)			.30 (.21, .39)			.10 (-.04, .23)			.19 (.09, .30)			.22 (.14, .30)			.25 (.15, .35)		

Note. Combat = combat arms. CS = combat support. CSS = combat service support. Sample sizes reflect the number of employees for whom there were no missing values, as that sample was used to be able to conduct the probit regression to test our model. Full sample thus refers to the full sample without missing values on any of the main variables. The sample size for the subgroup analyses (N = 3,103) is the sample without missing values for both the main variables and the demographic variables under study. Predicted relationships are standardized regression weights or probit weights (if TI is the dependent variable), reported with 95% confidence intervals. All the tested relationships between variables are significant at $p < .05$, except all the effects of JI on OC and the CS subgroup effect of JI on TI and CI on TI.

correlated with organizational commitment and turnover (Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Glomb, & Ahlburg, 2005). It should be noted, though, that their sample was confined to workers with more human capital, higher mobility, and lower costs of turnover than most military employees have. Future research can examine whether perceptions of career insecurity are an important factor for employee retention in non-military organizations as well. Similarities may be found for other occupations that can be performed exclusively within one unique organization like for example firefighters or policemen.

In the current study, psychological contract theory was put forward as the theoretical framework from which we derived the hypothesized relationships between the job insecurity variables, affective commitment, and turnover intentions. Perceptions of potential job loss and low career opportunities are likely to be seen as a breach in the psychological contract between the employee and his organization, in that the organization is perceived to fail in taking care of its employee. Psychological contract theory predicts that such a breach lowers commitment and increases turnover (Rousseau, 2004). Although our predictions followed from this theoretical framework, we did not test perceptions of a breach in the psychological contract itself as there were no questions added in the employee survey for this construct. We would have liked to be able to test this, for example to help identify why job loss insecurity did not have the expected effect on affective commitment. One possible reason why we did not find an effect of job insecurity on affective commitment is that the downsizing operation might not be seen as a violation of the psychological contract, as the downsizing was not caused by the military organization itself, but by a choice by politicians to cut funding. This would imply that if layoffs are attributed to circumstances outside of the organization (an economic recession might be another example of such an external cause), job insecurity would not have a negative effect on affective organizational commitment. It would be recommendable to include the perceptions of the psychological contract or its breach and violation (Robinson & Morrison, 2000) in future studies to gain deeper understanding of the underlying psychological processes.

Practical Implications

Employees who are fired during a downsizing operation typically receive compensation, benefits, and support (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). Usually, little is done to introduce programs to promote the motivation of “surviving” employees, those who are expected to remain in function after the downsizing is over (Beylerian & Kleiner, 2003). Our analyses suggest that perceptions of career insecurity might be just as detrimental (or perhaps even more so) as job loss insecurity in the military. On the basis of our results, it seems recommendable to focus more attention on offering prospects for the future, both during and after the downsizing operation. Managers are probably likely to realize that employees might fear losing their job during downsizing operations and try to alleviate the stress associated with it. They might, however, not realize that the perceived threat of losing career opportunities is at least as important for employee retention.

For employees to feel that career opportunities will still exist after a downsizing operation, it seems essential that lay-offs also occur at higher levels in the organization. For example, if none of the brigadier-generals is being laid off, the colonels that remain after the downsizing operation know that it will be more difficult for them to achieve their next promotion to become a brigadier general. After all, if the organization becomes smaller because of the downsizing, but there are no cuts at a certain level it is likely that there is little space for new promotees to join that rank. A good downsizing operation thus makes sure that at all levels in the hierarchy people are (perceived to be) laid off in a similar relative proportion, to make sure that everyone still feels that there will be room at the next level for career advancement.

The Dutch military, as many other military organizations as well, is an organization that operates in a rapidly changing political and international environment. Because this environment changes so rapidly and it thus becomes increasingly difficult to guarantee relative job security, it may be important to communicate clearly what employees may realistically expect from their organization. For example, the military organization might focus on a new type of psychological contract that does not focus on job security in exchange for loyalty, but rather on personal development and employability in

exchange for flexibility (Bernhard-Oettel et al., 2011; Rousseau, 2004). The military can present itself as a unique organization with a strong focus on employee training and growth, which ensures a good chance of a high-quality new job, even if there is no longer place for that person in the military at a certain point in time. With a psychological contract with a focus on personal growth and training in return for flexibility, job insecurity itself is no longer seen as a breach of the psychological contract. In the transition phase to such a new type of psychological contract, special attention might be required for incumbent employees who are traditionally used to the more traditional relational psychological contracts (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2006).

Another practical implication emerges from our results with regard to the relationship between career insecurity and organizational commitment. In the military, organizational commitment has been shown to act as a buffer from typically negative effects of physical risks, work-home interference, and other strains (Lytell & Drasgow, 2009). The sizable relationship between career insecurity and organizational commitment might make this construct thus not only important for turnover intentions, but also for other organizational outcomes that have been found to be affected by organizational commitment.

Limitations

A possible limitation of our study is that we focused on the Dutch military that is characterized by a flexible personnel system, a system in which employees are typically expected to leave the organization if they do not improve in rank after a certain number of years. Although the United States, for example, also uses such an up-or-out approach, not all military organizations likely do. Whether the same effects will be found in these organizations remains to be tested. However, note that the armed forces of many other countries obligate employees to military service for preordained intervals of time (Steel, 1996), but also in these countries the military typically tries to reenlist experienced employees. We expect that career insecurity may also influence these types of reenlistment decisions.

Turnover intentions can be regarded as the strongest single predictor of turnover, but using intent as a surrogate for turnover leaves out po-

tential mediators and moderators (Hom, Mitchell, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012). In addition to focusing solely on intentions, it would have been better to include actual leaving behavior (Allen, 2003). However, the sizable percentage of employees who indicated in our sample that they were open to a job outside of the military makes it likely that factors that influence turnover intentions are also likely to influence actual turnover.

Regarding the tests in our study, the current cross-sectional analysis is technically limited to suggesting evidence of associations. A design that captures the longitudinal covariation in all the predictor variables and turnover intentions would provide better insights into their interrelationships. Furthermore, in an ideal design of the study we would have added multiple item measures for turnover intentions and job loss insecurity.

Exploratory Analyses

We conducted exploratory analyses to see whether the tested proposed model holds in various subgroups of our total sample. Although career insecurity turned out to be importantly related to affective commitment across different subgroups, interesting differences between subgroups emerged from the analyses. First, confidence intervals of regression coefficients for the effect of career insecurity on affective commitment in Table 3 and 4 suggest that this relationship is less strong for officers than for troopers, for those in the organization for 5 years or longer, and those with a fixed contract compared to those with a temporary contract. Thus, it seems that the more embedded an employee is in the organization (longer tenure, higher rank, fixed contract), the less strong the relationship between career insecurity and affective commitment is.

A possible explanation for this can be found in theories on job embeddedness. Job embeddedness represents the reasons why an employee would not leave a job (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001, p. 1108). Long tenured permanent employees in general might score higher on social integration, fit with the corporate culture, and on perceived sacrifices or costs of quitting a job. They might find it challenging to replicate those assets in a new organization (Smith, Holtom, & Mitchell, 2011). If more factors for strongly embedded employees are important for commitment, one specific as-

pect (such as career insecurity) might be (relatively) less important. Do note that even for these groups that show a less strong relationship between career insecurity and affective organizational commitment, the relationship remains $-.32$ or stronger, suggesting that it certainly is important.

Conclusion

We found that, during a downsizing operation, both job loss insecurity and career insecurity were associated with higher turnover intentions in the military. Furthermore, career insecurity, but not job loss insecurity, was associated with less affective organizational commitment. Based on these findings, we recommend to not only communicate clearly about the potential job loss that results from a downsizing operation, but also what the influence of that operation will be for the career opportunities of the employees that remain in the organization during and after the downsizing operation.

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