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# Effect of Self-esteem on Perceived Job Insecurity: The Moderating Role of Self-efficacy and Gender

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## Abstract

The high rate of job loss in most crude oil dependent countries, which may be attributed to the recent drop in the price of this commodity in international markets, has intensified the perception of threats associated with potential job loss among the employees who are still employed. Hence, perceived job insecurity, its associated outcome, coupled with how it can be mitigated has become a global phenomenon, which requires the attention of managers and practitioners alike. In this work, we built upon Hobfall's conservation of resource theory (CRT) to present a research model that links employee's self-efficacy and gender to the strength or weakness of the relationship between self-esteem and self-perceived job insecurity. Research data were collected from 153 randomly selected Nigerian Bank employees out of 217 drawn from a total population of 509. Based on the results from relevant statistical analysis, it is discovered that, while increase in self-esteem would lead to a significant decrease in job insecurity perception, such significant decrease is, however, not associated with self-efficacy and gender meaning that these variables are not moderators in the self-esteem/perceived job insecurity relationship. In line with these outcomes, we conclude by recommending that managers should focus on developing intervention strategies aimed at improving employee self-esteem with a view of reducing perceived job insecurity. In addition, important areas in need of future research were also identified.

**Keywords:** self-esteem, perceived job insecurity, self-efficacy, gender, moderator

## Introduction

The dynamism associated with events in the work-place these days has brought the issue of insecure working conditions to the forefront (Shoss, 2017). According to Smith (2013) these activities, most especially among internationally competitive organizations is characterized by the need for information dissemination at a fast speed, the need for consistency in operations and an overbearing pressure to enhance organizational performance. As a result of this competitive landscape and the need to save costs, these organizations have resulted into downsizing and restructuring (Laszlo *et al.*, 2010). Meaning that, in addition to trying to optimize workplace performance, employees also have to lurk in the shadow of uncertainty regarding the security of job positions. By highlighting the work of Stoner, Robins, and Russell-Chapin (2005), it may be argued that, when the perception of job insecurity is high, the demand of work and associated lack of organizational

commitment will have a negative effect on individuals and the organization. Based on the authors' observation, the negative physiological responses are insomnia:- over-eating and poor nutrition, depression, physical health complaints, and hypertension, which could translate into absenteeism, high turnover, and low job performance. Its effect could carry over into the family domain (see spillover theory by Leiter and Durup, 1996). By comparing a potential job loss perception with actual job loss, Borra and Gomes-Garcia (2014) indicated that the fear of experiencing the former can be more harmful than the latter in that those who are already out of job might have become normalized to the situation and, hence, be less stressed as compared with others who are still faced with the uncertainties associated with potential job loss (see Hobfoll, 1989).

For the Nigeria banking industry, the banking consolidation exercises in the year 2006 and 2009 have completely changed the operational basis of the industry and have also reduced the previous total of 89 independent banking institutions to just 21, through reorganizations, mergers, and acquisitions (Okurame, 2014). According to Okurame (2014), this has resulted in the retirement, retrenchment/summary dismissal of about 26.6% representing about 55,000 of the total employees in the industry with those still in service facing a daily threat of sack, casualization, or demotion by their employers. In reaction to this unpleasant trend, Kolawole, Ajani, and Adisa (2013) lamented that it has put these employees in uncertain working conditions with a resultant fear of losing their jobs at anytime. Consistent with this view, Kunle, Shittu, and Kolawole (2013) stressed that, when labor forces are subjected to such workplace reorganization, it creates fear and uncertainty among those who are still employed. In addition to this inevitable reorganization is the current drop in the price of crude oil, which accounts for about 90% of the nation's foreign earnings, the subsequent loss in value of the national currency, coupled with a significant drop in consumer power and ability to save, it has resulted in mass retrenchment and pay cut across banks (Vanguard, August, 2016). This is likely to intensify the threat of job loss among those who are still employed (Okurame, 2014; Borra & Gomes-Garcia, 2014), thereby making the perception of job insecurity an important area of concern within the industry circle and the academia. With the view that job insecurity can be harmful to employee and organizational well-being, it has become important to place emphasis on those factors that may aid in its predictability (Cheng, 2013). In this regard, the literature has proposed some important drivers: (1) the environmental or "nurture-like" determinants of job insecurity, which can be in form of perceived economic situation and precarious employment conditions of the company (De-Witte, 2005); (2) the nature-like characteristics such as people's attitudes, beliefs, and values that determine how they generally view the world and respond to external

stimuli around them (Debus, Konig, & Kleinman, 2014). Other identified factors are personality traits (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 2010), job status (Shoss, 2017), employability (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011); and social support (Clark, 2005). In this research, the focus shall be on self-esteem as a personality characteristic with a view to determine its effect on perceived job insecurity among employees in the Nigerian banking industry. In addition, the potentiality of self-efficacy and gender as a moderator in this proposed relationship would be investigated.

The choice of self-esteem as a potential driver is predicated on three major arguments by previous researchers: (1) Semmer (2003) who indicated that it has been previously recognized by stress researchers that differences in cognitive processes play a key role in the understanding of stressors in organizational settings; (2) Lasdat (2010) who highlighted the construct of self-esteem as a core self evaluation that is related to the way we perceive and create meaning about the world in general, and therefore also influence our perceptions of insecurity within the work context; (3) the theory of behavioral plasticity, advanced by Brockner (1988), which states that individuals lower in self-esteem are prone to exhibit more responses to external stimuli such as social cues meaning that, in an organizational context, it is likely that employees higher in self-esteem would be less responsive to negative information related to job loss threat, when compared with their counterparts, who have less of this attribute (Hui & Lee, 2000). Nonetheless, because very few studies have focused on these variables in an empirical atmosphere, and coupled with the fact that results from these few studies have been inconsistent (see Kinnunen, Feldt & Mauno, 2003; Orpen, 1994; De-Paola & Charkhabi, 2016; Lasdat, 2010). One issue that came to the attention of this researcher is that it appears that the nature of the relationship between the two constructs is inconclusive and can still derive some measures of benefits from further empirical testing by focusing on investigating potential or undiscovered moderators (see Selenko, Mäkikangas, & Kinnunen, 2013).

In this study, it is proposed that because the perception of job insecurity varies across individuals (Kekesi & Agyemang, 2014), and because self-esteem has been identified as a characteristic whose effect varies across situations and individuals (Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, & Dunham, 1989), it is likely that those factors, which aids in definition of human beings, based on their unique characteristics, may assist in explaining the highlighted variation in the self-esteem/ perceived job insecurity relationship. Considering that self-efficacy has been identified as a cognitive resource, differing across individuals (Debus, Haeusler, Lendenmann, & Kleinmann, 2010) in addition to (1) having the potential to mitigate the perception of job insecurity (Smith, 2013) and (2) the

existence of strong connections between this construct and self-esteem (Bayani, 2016; de Souza & Huts, 2016). Then, it may be reasonable to suggest that the proposed negative relationship between self esteem and perceived job insecurity would be stronger among individuals with a higher perception of self efficacy. Additionally, based on the recommendation by De-Paola and Charkhabi (2016), which indicated the need for future studies to consider the role of demographic information in the self-esteem and perceived job insecurity relationship, the declaration by Okurame (2014) and Cheng (2013), which both link the concept of gender to the perception of job insecurity, coupled with the empirically generated data by (see Aregu, 2013; Nupur & Mahapatro, 2016) showing evidence that males are significantly more superior than females in perceived self esteem, we draw on previous studies to also propose that the strength or weakness of the relationship would be determined by gender differences. In the subsequent sections, the literature review, methodology, results, and conclusion of the findings are presented.

## Literature Review

### Perceived Job Insecurity

In a view to conceptualize job insecurity, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) indicated that it is the “perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation”. In this regard, Huang *et al.* (2016) declared that job insecurity is subjective in that, even at a comparable objective organizational situation, individuals tend to perceive different levels of job insecurity. Accordingly, De-Witte *et al.* (2012) lamented that this subjective feeling represents the difference between the level of security individuals prefer and the level they experience. Thus, the broader the discrepancy between these two extremes, the higher the insecurity perception that is experienced (Lucia & Denisa, 2015). While building up on this line of reasoning, Goretzki (2016) maintains that job insecurity encompasses both the events involving loss of the whole job in addition to events involving the loss of any specific aspect of the job:–, i.e, loss of income, and promotion opportunities. This is in consistent with the earlier observation by Sverke, Hellgren, and Naswall (2002) in which two facets of this construct were identified: multidimensional and uni-dimensional. While the latter, also referred to as quantitative job insecurity focuses on the perceived lack of control of future job loss itself, the former, on the other hand, examines job insecurity as a combination of future job loss and the loss of aspects of the job (Lee, Huang, & Arshford, 2018). Nevertheless, despite its implications for theory and practice in organizational settings, the majority of perceived job insecurity researches

have focused on its consequences with a relatively large neglect of its antecedents (Shoss, 2017). In this particular investigation, the focus shall be on (1) self-esteem, which constitutes an important personality attribute with a view to determine its effect on perceived job insecurity and (2) the moderating influence of self-efficacy and gender in this relationship.

### Self-esteem and Perceived Job Insecurity

Self-esteem refers to an individual’s overall self-evaluation of his/her competencies (Rosenberg, 1965). It reflects the degree to which the individual “sees self as competent, and need-satisfying” (Korman, 1970, pp.12). In line with these conceptualizations, Afari, Ward, and Khine (2012) identify the construct as one of the major factors in self-image and consider it to be an important determinant in human behavior. Accordingly, Ferkany (2008) stressed that the possession of high self-esteem has numerous psychological and behavioral benefits that include independence, responsibility taking, and toleration of frustration, resistant to peer pressure, willingness to attempt new tasks and challenges, ability to handle positive and negative emotions, and willingness to offer assistance to others. For Khan and Quazi (2015), the high self-esteem individual is characterized by a sense of personal adequacy and a sense of having achieved need satisfaction in the past.

Lasdat (2010) lamented that because it has been sufficiently proven that the interpretation of job insecurity differs among individuals, it may be succinctly stated that those personal characteristics, which can aid in distinguishing among individuals would provide a better understanding of the underlying mechanism of job insecurity. In conformity with these views, De-Keyser, Vlerick, and D’hoore (2011) indicated that self-esteem may affect the perception of work situations, the choice of coping strategies, or the intensity with which a given individual takes action, while Mraz (2013) stated that those who attach more sense of worth to their-selves are more likely to see stress as a challenge or opportunity for growth. Following this line of reasoning, this study deduces that employees high in self-esteem should exhibit less perception of job insecurity.

Additionally, because self-esteem has been identified by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as an emotional-based coping strategy, which can aid in handling negative emotions associated with the stressful situation, we contend that individuals with a higher sense of esteem should demonstrate more active coping toward any stressed-induced situation than their counterparts who have lower sense of esteem and may thus, find it more desirable to engage in avoidance coping. Additionally, this research would like to make inference

to the behavioral plasticity theory advanced by Brockner (1988). This theory is grounded on the assumption that people's attitudes and behaviors can be determined by the nature of their attention and response to the external factors within their environment. Brockner identified self-esteem as one of these human attributes and declared that people with low self-esteem are likely to react more to external cues than their counterpart who exhibit more of this attribute. Thus, in the context of an organizations, because change related issues such as reorganization, restructuring, retrenchment, downsizing, and introduction of new technology are cues within the work environment, which may manifest in the perception of job insecurity, it could be expected, then, that while a higher level of self-esteem should be less reactive to these cues, and also exhibit less of the outcomes associated with them (perceived job insecurity); on the other hand, those who have lower self-esteem should demonstrate more sensitivity and reactions to this negative information, thereby leading to an increase in the perception of job insecurity (Hui & Lee, 2000). Following this line of reasoning, it is expected in this study that an increase in perceived self-esteem is associated with a corresponding decrease in perceived job insecurity. Thus, in keeping with the aforementioned theoretical arguments, we hypothesize that:

H1: There is a significant relationship between self-esteem and perception of job insecurity.

### **Self-efficacy as a Moderator between Self-esteem and Perceived Job Insecurity**

According to Bandura (1997, p.8) "Self-efficacy are those beliefs in self capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action aimed at producing some specific outcome". Self-efficacy is the judgment of how well an individual thinks he or she can finish a task to completion based on one's assessment of previous success with such task (Filemoni, 2017). Consistent with this view, Bertrams, Baumeister, and Englert (2016) identified the construct as the degree to which people believe they are capable of doing what is needed for success. Thus, from this conceptualization, it may be safe to conclude that, within the organizational settings, it is an employee's overall assessment of self capability in terms of executing job-related tasks. Based on the theoretical argument that this perception of capability exercises a linear and direct relationship with both self-esteem on one side, and perceived job insecurity on the other (cf; Smith, 2013; König, *et al.* 2010; Goretzki, 2016), it is thus suggested that the strength or weakness of any relationship between self-esteem and perceived job insecurity is contingent on perceived self-efficacy. For example, when people are confronted with the incidence of using self-esteem to confront the perception of job insecurity, they may turn to

the evaluation of their capability, and the probability of obtaining new employment in order to decide on how to react to this perception. because those who are higher in self-esteem are less likely to respond to external organizational cues, such as factors associated with threat of job loss (see behavioral plasticity theory by Brockner, 1988) and in view of the fact that perceived self-efficacy should also foster perceived employability (Adekiya, 2015; Van Hootegem, De Witte, De Cuyper, & Vander Elst, 2018).

Further, it may be logical to concede that, in any situation that concerns using the perception of self-esteem in countering the perception of job insecurity, this form of intervention is likely to be more effective among those with higher self-efficacies, who are more of the belief that they are employable both within the internal and external labor market. Consistent with this view, Berntson *et al.* (2010) indicated that, when employees perceive many rather than few job opportunities, they tend to react less to the perception of job insecurity. Following the conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which stresses that individuals with a higher level of resources are less negatively affected by stress owing to resource loss, then, as self-efficacy may be classified as a resource within the context of this study due to its ability to enhance the perception of employability, it is arguable that it is a resource with a stress-buffering effect and that employees will exhibit less stress response as a result of this perceived capability. Accordingly, this second hypothesis is also formulated:

H2: Self-efficacy is a moderator in the relationship between self-esteem and perceived job insecurity.

### **Gender as a Moderator between Self-esteem and Perceived Job Insecurity**

While it has been suggested by Okurame (2014) that the concept of gender should be investigated to bring more direction to the variety of findings that previous research has produced regarding its role in the context of job insecurity, it has also been reported that there are evidences to support the existence of variations in perceived job insecurity according to critical demographic characteristics: age, gender, income level, occupational status, and educational qualification (e.g: Cheng, 2013; Richter, 2011; Dachapalli & Parumasur, 2012). Furthermore, based on the suggestion put forward by Yang and Zheng (2015) that women face more difficulties than men in finding new jobs or re-employment after periods of unemployment, it can be theoretically argued that women would experience more job insecurity than men even at the same level of self-esteem. Conversely, Petrongolo (2010) agrees with this notion by maintaining that the disadvantages associated with women positioned in

the labor market has made them more involved in precarious and non-standard types of work, including part-time work, which is often associated with lower pay, insecurity, and poor career possibilities. Hence, this may make them more reactive to situations that foster the perception of job insecurity when compared with their male counterparts, on the same level of self-esteem. Another factor that has been suggested as potential determinants in the perceived job insecurity versus self-esteem relationship is the concept of work family responsibilities. For instance, it being viewed that women carry a higher overall workload, as they take on a larger portion of family duties along with their full-time job responsibilities (Okurame, 2014). By and large, it is possible that this higher workload may result in insufficient time for organizational contribution and may pose a threat to career opportunities, advancement, and organizational relevance, thereby culminating in a perception of more job insecurity, and the tendency that self-esteem will be less useful as a predictor of this perception among them.

Contrastingly, the male bread winner theory by Lewis (2001) emphasizes that because the family represents an economic unit in which different members take on different roles to optimize family and work life, men and women take on different roles and therefore have different sources for their self-esteem and identity: gender role theory (Gaunt & Benjamin, 2007). According to this theory, men are expected to derive their self-esteem and identity from their activities as bread-winners of the family, while their female counterparts

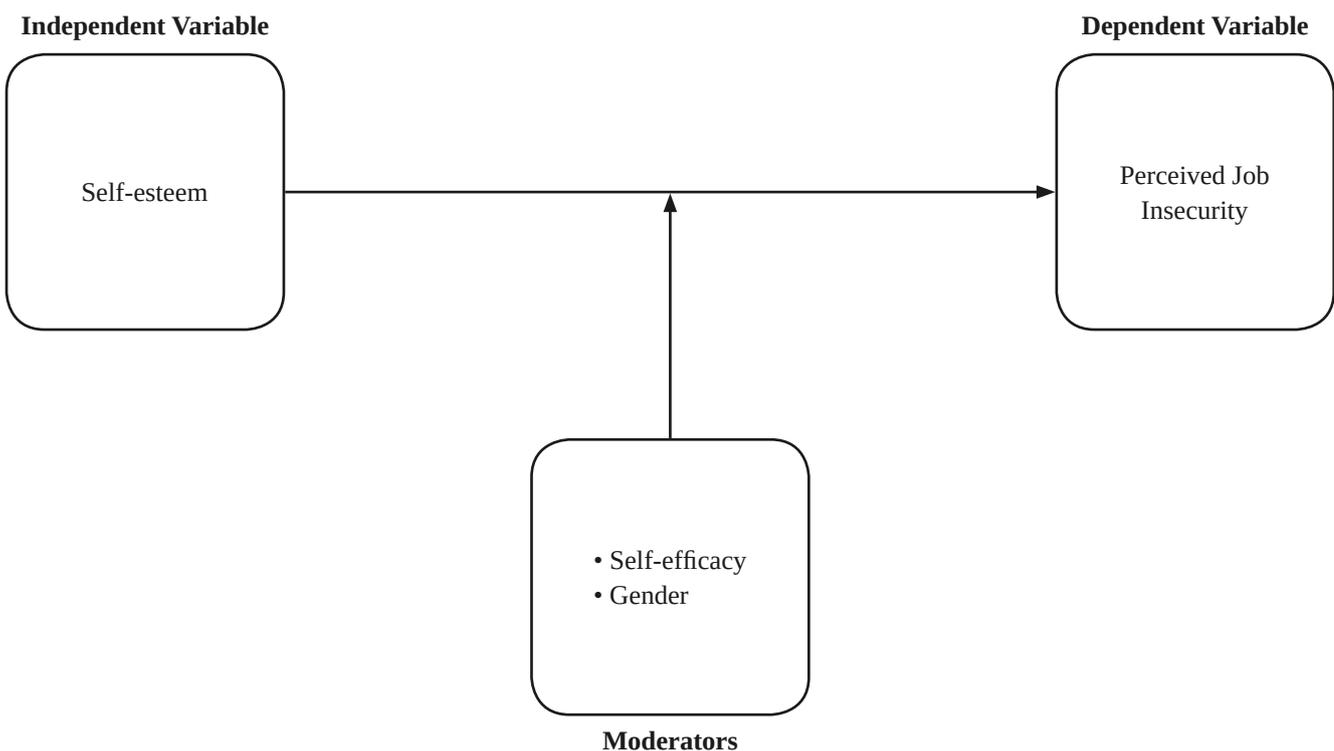
are expected to be involved in the traditional home keeping activities. Consistent with this view, we build on this theory and suggest that, in the event that an employee is confronted with the situation of using self-esteem in countering the perception of job insecurity, it is likely that the outcome of this would, to a large extent, be determined by the perceived responsibilities, associated with their gender affiliation. Put in another way, it is likely that, among females, self-esteem would be more effective in predicting the perception of job insecurity as a result of gender roles, which restricts them to traditional home keeping activities, compared with the men, whose traditional role of bread winning allows them to attach more importance to a secured employment situations. By and large, it could be inferred from the above arguments that one might derive better understanding of the relationship between self-esteem and perceived job insecurity by focusing on gender differences. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that:

H3: Gender is a moderator in the relationship between self-esteem and perceived job insecurity.

### Conceptual Framework

In this study, we expand on the job insecurity literature by presenting a framework that highlights self-efficacy and gender as potential moderators in the relationship between self-esteem and perceived job insecurity (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



## Methods

### Design and Participants

This cross sectional study consists of employees of four Nigerian commercial Banks (Zenith Bank, Skye Bank, Guaranty Trust Bank, and United Bank for Africa) presently operating within the Kano metropolis, and randomly selected from a list of a total of 20 banks that are within the Nigerian Banking industry. As of July 2017, the total population of employees in this regard is (509), and it's adopted as the population of the study. From the total number of usable responses which is 153, descriptive statistics shows that 64.7% are males while 35.3% are females, and range in age from 20 to 44 and above. Also, they have various academic qualifications that cut across the senior secondary certificate, national diploma, first degree and post-graduate qualification. Regarding their occupational status, some are junior staff, some are middle-level staff and senior staff, while some others occupies different forms of managerial positions. Items were administered on the employees of selected banks in the banking premises during their working hours. Each employee was encouraged to make a request for clarification on any of the items presented, which may seem not clear to their understanding.

### Sampling Approach

The multistage sampling technique was considered most appropriate in this study based on the recommendation by Asika (1991), as it assured precision and thoroughness. At the first stage, the four randomly selected commercial banks were divided into four strata. At the second stage, the proportionate sample technique was employed to determine the total number of employees that will be picked from each stratum while the selection of primary sampling unit was achieved by utilizing the simple random sampling technique to pick these units from a comprehensive list of staff obtained from the management of each Bank. All in all, the sample size total 217 (Zenith Bank = 46, Skye Bank=38, Guaranty Trust Bank = 30, United Bank for Africa [UBA] = 103 md was arrived at by following the recommendation of Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

### The Measures

Here, the instruments that were utilized in the measurement of the main variables in addition to their respective psychometric properties are presented.

**Perceived job insecurity.** This consist of nine items based on Hellgreen *et al.* (1999) and Kurhnet and Vance, 1992) items on job insecurity. In a previous study by these authors, a Cronbach Alpha internal consistency value of .705 was obtained for the items. Sample items include "I believe that I can keep my present job as long as I want", "I always feel the danger of joblessness while working in this organization" etc.

**Self-esteem.** For the measurement of self-esteem, 10 items were adapted from the original 25 items from Coopersmith (1967). Based on the fact that these items focused more on the measurement of the generalized self-esteem, and as self-esteem exists at different levels of specificity: general--, and task or situation-specific self-esteem (Simpson & Boyle, 1975). The items were re-modified to be in line with the work and organizational settings, which are the focus of this study. These items ask questions like "Things usually don't bother me in this organization", "I can make up in this organization without too much trouble", and "It is pretty tough to be myself in this organization".

**Self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy was made up of nine items adopted from Sherer *et al.*'s (1982) Self-efficacy Scale (SES), which was primarily developed for clinical and personality research and later adopted in organizational settings (Imam, 2007). From the results obtained through samples of University Students and managers, Chen, Greene, and Crick (1998) reported internal consistencies of .88 to .91 in a test-retest reliability study. However, as work related self-efficacy measures are better suited to the context under investigation and tend to have a stronger predictive value than general self-efficacy measures (Earley & Lituchy, 1991). These items were modified to suit the requirements of the organizational setting in focus. Sample items include "When I make work related plans in this organization, I am certain I can make them work", "I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me", and "In this organization, if I can't do a job the first time I keep trying until I can".

Nonetheless, as a result of minor modifications that were effected on the original version of these items, it was considered appropriate to seek the opinion of some experts who are well versed in the subject areas under focus. Thus, in line with their suggestions, some minor changes were made, before undertaking a pilot study involving a total of 30 employees drawn from a similar commercial bank to the four banks, from where the main research respondents were drawn. By and large, after ensuring that all items are well understood by these employees, they were consequently adopted. All items were presented in a form through which respondents are expected to respond by showing their level of agreement or disagreement on a 5-point Likert scale. The

Likert scale is designed to examine how strongly subjects agree or disagree with statements on a scale, ranging from 3 to 7 points (Sekaran, 2008). However, the reason behind this choice of a 5- point scale is because of its ability to yield positive, negative, or neutral responses while also allowing for simplicity and easy understanding (Sekaran, 2008).

**Data Analysis**

The Pearson moment correlation was utilized in determining the nature of the relationship if any between self esteem and perceived job insecurity. This is as a result of the need to satisfy the key assumption underlying any regression analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986). to identify the outcome variable: perceived job insecurity as a function of self-esteem, self-efficacy and gender, the three-steps hierarchical moderated regression analysis was utilized as recommended by Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003). To do this, the centering procedure was utilized by subtracting the mean value of the variables from scores across variables. Thus, it is assumed that the effect of self-esteem (*X*) on perceived job insecurity (*Y*) would be changed by the proposed moderators (*Z*) in a linear way. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), this linearity represents a gradual, steady change in the effect of *X* on *Y* as the moderator changes. For instance when the effect of the product of self-esteem and self-efficacy or self-esteem and gender (interaction terms) is significant while job insecurity, and these variables are controlled, thus the moderation hypothesis is supported.

0.710, 0.706, and 0.801 was obtained for self-esteem, self-efficacy, and perceived job insecurity respectively. Variance inflated factor is 1.237 for both self efficacy and self esteem while a tolerance value of 0.808 was also obtained for the two constructs. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.828 which is within the acceptable range of 1.5 and 2.5 (Norusis, 2004).

The correlation statistics for these variables are displayed in Table 1. As shown in the table, none of the paired variables have correlation values that are up to ( $r > 0.9$ ) which is an indication that there is no serious multicollinearity issues in the model.

**Table 1.** Bivariate Correlation of Variables

	1	2	3	4
1 Self-efficacy	1			
N	153			
	0.438**	1		
2 Self-esteem	0.000			
N	153	153		
	-0.126	-0.295**	1	
3 PJI	0.121	0.000		
N	153	153	153	
4 Gender	-0.068	-0.063	0.056	1
	0.404	0.441	0.492	
N	153	153	153	153

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

**Results**

Before embarking on the moderation analysis highlighted above, it was first, ascertained that all variables are normally distributed, posses an acceptable range of internal consistency, and that the assumptions of both heteroscedasticity and multicollinearity are satisfied. A Cronbach alpha value of

**Hypotheses Testing**

A hierarchical moderated regression analysis, which attempts to determine perceived job insecurity as a function of self-esteem and self-efficacy on one side, and self-esteem and gender on the other side was carried out. The output from the analysis is displayed in Tables 2 and 3 below.

**Table 2.** Hierarchical Regression Showing Perceived Job Insecurity as a Function of Self-esteem and Self-efficacy

Variables	Beta	S-Error	R <sup>2</sup>	Change in R <sup>2</sup>	F-stat	F-change	Sig
Model 1			0.087		14.396		0.000
Self-esteem	-0.295		0.085				
Model 2			0.087	0.000	7.152	0.002	0.961
Self-efficacy	0.004		0.113				
Model 3							
Self-esteem							
.X	0.0120		0.0910	0.0039	7.6442	0.6176	0.4332
Self-efficacy							

**Table 3.** Hierarchical Regression Showing Perceived Job Insecurity as a Function of Self-Esteem and Gender

Variables	Beta	S-Error	R <sup>2</sup>	Change in R <sup>2</sup>	F-stat	F-change	Sig
Model 1			0.087		14.396		0.000
Self-esteem	-0.323		0.085				
Model 2			0.088	0.001	7.278	0.232	0.631
Gender	0.038		1.052				
Model 3							
Self-esteem							
X	0.2931		0.1053	0.0168	5.1376	2.5456	0.1127
Gender							

The three-step hierarchical regression analyses are displayed in Tables 2 and 3. The main effect of self-esteem on perceived job insecurity was tested by entering the variable in the first step. Hence, considering the fact that the basic assumption for testing moderation effect was met due to a significant relationship  $b = -0.295$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ,  $p < 0.05$  which was uncovered between the predictor and criterion variable (Holmbeck, 1997), it was considered imperative to proceed to the second step of the analysis. In the second step, self-efficacy was entered to observe its interaction effect in the model. Remarkably, it was observed that the interaction effect of this third variable failed to account for any significant proportion of the variance in perceived job insecurity,  $R^2$  change = 0.000,  $p = 0.961$ ,  $p > 0.05$ , (see Table 2). Nevertheless, in order to take care of any potential benefit of doubt, we embarked on a moderation analysis by adding the interaction/product terms of self-esteem and self-efficacy in line with the recommendation by Baron and Kenny (1986). Both the predictor and moderating variables were centred (Aiken & West, 1991). In line with our expectation, the change in the proportion explained variance of perceived job insecurity after adding the production term of self-esteem and self-efficacy is not significant in that only 3.9% more was explained,  $B = 0.0120$ ,  $p = 0.4332$ ,  $p > 0.05$  which is suffice to say that self efficacy is not a moderator in the relationship between self-esteem and perceived job insecurity. Also, the proportion explained variance of the outcome variable after adding the production terms of self esteem and gender is 1.68%, while the standardized beta weight associated with this model is 0.2931,  $p = 0.1127$ ,  $p > 0.05$  meaning that gender is also not a significant moderator in the relationship between self-esteem and perceived job insecurity.

## Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between self-esteem and perceived job insecurity and to advance self-efficacy and gender as a possible moderator in this relationship. The findings suggest that increase in

employee's self-esteem will tend to lead to a significant decrease in the perception of job insecurity, thereby leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis 1. These finding provide a robust empirical background for the conservation of resource theory by Hobfoll (1989), where personality traits such as self-esteem have been identified as a resource which can act to reduce the perception of job insecurity in addition to its negative outcomes. It is also in line with the transactional stress model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), where this type of cognitive resource is identified as being capable to act as a coping strategy to manage the demands that may arise from situations such as the threat of job loss. It also laid credence to the argument by Lasdat (2010), Judge, Erez, Bono, and Thoresen (2003) that individuals will tend to perceive and interpret job insecurity in different ways as a result of the overbearing influence of their personal characteristics. This study has demonstrated that self-esteem can be useful as a personal resource to cope successfully with stressful situations that may affect the perception of a work situation. Thus, when threatened by perceived job uncertainty, individuals with high self-esteem are likely to see such situation as a challenge and may engage in active coping strategies such as improving work performance to prove self-worth within an organization or increasing organizational citizenship behavior, while those with low self-esteem would see it as a threat and engage in avoidance coping strategies such as absenteeism, intention to quit, lowering organizational commitment and intrinsic motivation (Hui & Lee, 2000).

In order to identify if there is a boundary through which self-esteem may exercise an effect on perceived job insecurity, we highlighted two individually based characteristics, which may be classified as having close relations with self-esteem and perceived job insecurity:- (i.e self-efficacy and gender) and present them as potential moderators. It was discovered, contrary to our prediction that the product term of self-esteem and self-efficacy is not statistically significant. Thus, as the effect of self-esteem on perceived job insecurity does not exhibit any significant change as a result of the interaction of the former and self-efficacy, we do not accept Hypothesis 2.

The implication of this is that, regardless of high or low level of self efficacy, the relationship between these two variables remains constant. This is, however contrary to the earlier assumption that in the face of organizational job insecurity, people with high self-esteem would tend to assess the degree of their employability both within the internal and external labor market in deciding on how to react to this insecurity (Van Hootegem, De Witte, De Cuyper, & Vander Elst, 2018). Similarly, it was discovered that the product term of gender and self-esteem is of no significance. Thus, as the effect of self-esteem on perceived job insecurity does not exhibit any significant change with the introduction of the gender variable, we also do not accept Hypothesis 3, which predicted that gender would exercise a moderating effect in the relationship between self-esteem and perceived job insecurity. The implication of this is that being male or female would not make any significant contribution in these incidences, where self-esteem is expected to act as a predictor of perceived job insecurity. This finding thus fails to provide support for researchers (e.g. Gaunt & Benjamin, 2007; Bleidorn *et al.*, 2015; Lewis, 2001), which stresses the need to focus on gender differences in order to have a better understanding of how different individuals may react to events in the labor market. While it was expected that self-efficacy and gender would exercise a moderating influence in our research model, a possible explanation for this contradictory outcome may be due to the influence of some other unknown competing moderating variables which may cancel out their effect.

### Limitations and Future Research

Despite the fact that it has been theoretically argued that personal characteristics (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) have the potential to reduce reactions to the perception of job insecurity, part of our findings in this study contradicts this assumption. While it was discovered that the perception of job insecurity among employees in this study would tend to reduce in the face of increasing self-esteem, it was also revealed that gender and self-efficacy do not excise any buffering effect in this relationship. Due to the fact that (1) self-efficacy has been identified as a contextual variable whose effect varies across situations and occupation (Judge, Shaw, Jackson, & Rich, 2007) and that (2) gender affiliation may fail to make any significant difference in attitude, behavior, and reactions due to social constructions arising from cultural orientation (see Korman, 1976; Hofstede, 1980). We invite prospective researchers to further investigate by replicating this research model either in another occupational setting or cultural environment.

Second, as the generality of our finding is limited due to the cross-sectional survey design employed, which has the tendency to attract various forms of respondent bias, it is advised for caution to be utilized in interpreting our findings.

In this regard, a longitudinally designed study which has the capacity to determine the actual effect of both the predictor and moderating variables over time should be employed.

Lastly, because it was assumed at the beginning of this study that the inconsistency in findings regarding the relationship between self-esteem and perceived job insecurity would be better understood by focusing on the proposed moderators, and, as our findings have failed to lend any support for this argument, it is recommended that future researchers should examine the influence of other potential moderators: emotional intelligence, marital status, and locus of control.

### Implications for Theory and Practice

This study makes many theoretical contributions. First, we investigate the influence of self-esteem on perceived job insecurity, and also investigate the moderating influence of both self-efficacy and gender in this relationship. This research model has not been investigated by any previous researcher to the knowledge of this researcher. Though, few researchers have investigated the influence of self-esteem on perceived job insecurity, the results from these investigations have been mixed and inconsistent, thereby calling a need for investigating the influence of yet unknown moderators. Hence, this study makes a contribution by introducing self-efficacy and gender as probable moderators while also examining their moderating influence. It also gives an impetus to future researchers to investigate other unknown competing moderators, which may have contributed to the unexpected results uncovered in this study. All in all, the study also contributed towards advancing the behavioral plasticity theory (Brockner, 1988) by showing the usefulness of perceived self-evaluation in confronting those cues that may have arisen as a result of the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature of the modern day societal issues.

In regard to practice, as organization continues to face turbulent times in addition to the change mantra that characterizes these times, a higher level of self valuation may help employees in these organizations to cope with the resultant high levels of job insecurity, which have been brought about by cost-cutting, downsizing, and various mergers. Hence, while carrying out any intervention program focused on boosting self-esteem with the aim of using this to mitigate the perception of workplace insecurity, managers and practitioners are encouraged to channel their resources on improving higher-order needs such as acknowledgment of efforts and achievements from employees, positive feedback, decision making involvement, promotion, and delegation of duties. Also, it should be noted that the effectiveness of these self-esteem enhancement strategies, is not contingent on the enhancement of self-perceived job efficacy or the consideration of gender differences.

## Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is declared in this article.

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# Učinek samospoštovanja na zaznano negotovost zaposlitve: vloga moderiranja samoučinkovitosti in spola

## Izvleček

Visoka stopnja izgube delovnih mest v večini držav, ki so odvisne od surove nafte, kar je mogoče pripisati nedavnemu padcu cen tega blaga na mednarodnih trgih, je okrepilo zaznavanje grožnje, povezane z morebitno izgubo delovnih mest med zaposlenimi. Zato lahko zaznano negotovost zaposlitve in s tem povezane posledice ter blaženje le-teh pojmujeemo kot globalni fenomen, ki zahteva pozornost vodilnih delavcev in strokovnjakov v praksi. V tem delu smo gradili na Hobfallovi teoriji ohranjanja virov, da bi predstavili raziskovalni model, ki povezuje samoučinkovitost zaposlenih in spol s prednostmi in slabostmi odnosa med samospoštovanjem in zaznano negotovostjo zaposlitve. V raziskavi so sodelovali uslužbenci nigerijske banke, in sicer 153 od 217 naključno izbranih v populaciji 509 uslužbencev. Na podlagi rezultatov ustrezne statistične analize smo ugotovili, da čeprav bi povečanje samozavesti lahko privedlo do znatnega zmanjšanja zaznane negotovosti zaposlitve, tako pomembno zmanjšanje ni povezano s samoučinkovitostjo in spolom. To pomeni, da te spremenljivke niso moderatorji odnosa med samospoštovanjem in zaznano negotovostjo zaposlitve. V skladu s temi rezultati zaključimo s priporočilom, naj se vodstvo osredotoči na razvoj intervencijskih strategij, katerih namen je izboljšati samospoštovanje zaposlenih, da bi zmanjšali zaznano negotovost zaposlitve. Poleg tega so bila opredeljena tudi pomembna področja nadaljnjih raziskav.

**Ključne besede:** samospoštovanje, zaznana negotovost zaposlitve, samoučinkovitost, spol, moderator