Job-related uncertainty and its pernicious effects on employees' well-being: The mediating role of employee job anxiety

Santiago Gutiérrez-Broncano, Pablo Ruiz-Palomino, Pedro Jiménez-Estévez, Benito Yáñez-Araque

Abstract

Employees' affective well-being may be negatively affected by situations in which there is a lack of information on their job future. Yet, further knowledge is needed regarding the mechanisms that underlie this relationship, as it could help managers to counteract the pernicious effects of the emergence of uncertainty situations in firms. One potential underlying mechanism could be the level of anxiety experienced by employees in uncertainty situations, especially when these situations are perceived as threats to their immediate job future. Structural equation modelling, specifically through partial least squares -Smart PLS 4.0-, was used to test this point, and responses from a sample of 205 hotel employees in Spain after the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic were statistically analysed for such a purpose. The findings revealed that, as expected, job-related uncertainty perceptions reduce the affective well-being of employees not directly but rather indirectly by increasing their level of anxiety, which reveals that the predicted full mediating effect of employee anxiety was, therefore confirmed. This study thus demonstrates that job anxiety is increased by job-related uncertainty perceptions, and that job anxiety reduces the affective well-being of the employees, which could be dangerous for the competitiveness of firms. Managers should therefore activate policies and systems that reduce the level of anxiety of employees, so that the well-being of employees will not be reduced when uncertainty arises.

1. INTRODUCTION

Times of change and crisis lead to uncertainty among the population, as shown by the recent COVID-19 pandemic that was declared in March 2020, and this uncertainty was particularly evident in the hospitality sector. The pandemic provoked severe changes and unpredictable challenges in the socioeconomic context, both during and after the declaration of this crisis, with the hospitality sector being one of the industries most affected (Škare et al., 2021). People who find themselves in these types of situations of crisis are gripped by uncertainty, particularly that related to their future in the organisation and specifically in their jobs. Low expectations of employment-related stability abound in situations of this nature (i.e., times of crisis) (Jung et al., 2021), and individuals feel trapped by uncertainty and their inability to accurately predict their future, probably as the result of not having sufficient information or of having ambiguous and contradictory information (cf., Bordia et al., 2004). These workers' affective or emotional well-being (i.e., the

degree to which they experience positive effects with more frequency than negative affects) (Daniels, 2000; Luhmann, 2017), is probably negatively affected as a consequence of this (Venkatesh, 2020), and it may have serious and negative effects on the productivity and competitiveness of the business in which they work. One of the potential strategies that could be employed to combat this situation is that of reducing the anxiety levels that workers may feel when confronting uncertainty in the workplace. As already indicated in previous research, a reduction in levels of anxiety is probably critical if employees are to feel affectively well (Malone & Wachholtz, 2018). It has been shown that anxiety produces a state in which the individual experiences unpleasant feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry (Spielberg & Rickman, 1990, p. 73), which is normally a reaction to their perceived inability to effectively deal with a threatening challenge, and is also a response to a lack of information on what is occurring in a particular situation and how to cope with it (Sarason et al., 1990). Situations in which employees are uncertain about their job security, or opportunities for promotion or their role in their job could, therefore, ostensibly lead to increases in levels of anxiety, and may eventually have an effect on their levels of affective well-being. In theory, the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018) supports this idea. According to this theory, the simple threat of losing a resource such as one's job, or hopeless information concerning one's future in the organisation, may lead to stress and anxiety in individuals. However, no research analysing the effect that job-related uncertainty may have in regard to increasing employees' anxiety levels has been carried out to date, and neither are there any studies analysing whether anxiety can explain this negative relationship between job-related uncertainty and employees' affective well-being. The objective or research question of this study is consequently to test whether employees' anxiety can explain the anticipated reduced level of affective well-being among those employees who perceive job-related uncertainty.

The pursuit of this objective will make it possible to explore the mechanisms underlying the negative relationship between job-related uncertainty and employee affective well-being in greater depth and provide more knowledge on potential strategies that could be employed to maximise employees' affective well-being, even when they perceive job-related uncertainty. The specific basis used in this work was the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), which was employed in order to test a model that encompasses employee anxiety as a mediator. As will be explained, the objective of this model is to provide evidence that job-related uncertainty has a negative effect on employees' affective well-being, and that the only explanation for this relationship is an increase in the anxiety felt by these employees in uncertainty-related situations of this nature. It is, therefore, our intention to show for the first time that job-related uncertainty does not have a direct effect on affective well-being, but that the effect is rather indirect by increasing employees' anxiety levels. The model produced, therefore, contributes to literature by confirming the proposition provided in the COR theory that the lack of resources or the threat of a loss of resources (job-related certainty) may be a potential cause of employees' anxiety and poor affective well-being.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Job-related uncertainty, employee anxiety and employee affective well-being

Affective well-being can be defined as a state in which positive effects such as enthusiasm or happiness are present more frequently than negative effects (e.g., fear, sadness) (Daniels, 2000; Luhmann, 2017), i.e., when the experiences of pleasure and arousal dominate in day-to–day life

(Warr, 1994). This state is easily affected by the experiences that one may have, and one of these experiences is perceived uncertainty with regard to the current job.

Those who perceive job uncertainty experience a sense of doubt and a lack of control over future events related to the job (Bordia et al., 2004), and it is probable that these people will consequently believe that they may soon have no control over matters related to their jobs (Rezvani & Khosravi, 2019). Being certain about one's future in a job is, in fact, a highly appreciated resource for people in general, since it provides them with knowledge or information on career advancement opportunities or job security, among others. Since resources are, from the perspective of the COR theory, mostly contributors to well-being, which is a commonly valued and universal resource (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018), it consequently follows that when an appreciated resource of this nature (certainty about one's job) is at risk of being lost, or there are serious threats regarding its loss, people's levels of affective well-being may decrease. The first hypothesis proposed in this paper is, therefore, the following:

H1. Job-related uncertainty has a negative effect on employee affective well-being.

Anxiety is defined as a negative emotional state that is characterised by feelings of worry, tension and apprehension (Spielberg et al., 1983), and often occurs in situations of uncertainty and crisis (Brashers, 2001; Bordia et al., 2004), particularly when those situations are perceived as threats (Brashers, 2001). One reason for serious uncertainty that could be viewed as a threat is job-related uncertainty. Despite being a self-perception that may not affect all employees (Brashers, 2001), for those that it does affect, job-related uncertainty implies uncertainty regarding how to perform the job, how to obtain promotion in the organisation, or one's continuity in the job/organisation (Ruppel et al., 2022). Job related uncertainty is, therefore, a probable cause of anxiety among employees because they are unsure about certain highly valued aspects (their future in the job, how to advance in their working life, which aspects are critical to an excellent performance in the job, etc. (Ruppel et al., 2022). Previous research has, for example, shown that job-related uncertainty increases employees' levels of anxiety (Bordia et al., 2004; Ruppel et al., 2022). The second hypothesis proposed here is, therefore, the following:

H2a. Job-related uncertainty has a negative effect on employee anxiety.

When a person experiences severe anxiety or finds themselves in a stressful situation, they see themselves in a future-oriented state dominated by uncontrollability and unpredictability concerning a situation that greatly affects their lives (Barlow, 2002), and this frequently provokes negative thoughts and concerns. Moreover, being in a temporary state of anxiety leads people to have an unpleasant feeling of fear, discomfort and apprehension regarding something that is unknown (Avey et al., 2011), and this will probably have a subsequent effect on their quality of life and ability to function on a daily basis. The affective well-being of people who have high levels of anxiety may, therefore, be negatively affected, since negativity dominates over positivity (cf., Baruch & Lambert, 2007). Pleasant feelings (e.g., joy, excitement) may consequently not occur, whereas negative emotions (e.g., sadness, anger) may occur frequently. Previous research has, for example, noted that the anxiety associated with the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative effect on the psychological well-being of the individuals surveyed (Silva et al., 2021). Other studies have also noted a connection between the state of high levels of anxiety and its reflection in the poor emotional states of health centre workers (Uncu et al., 2007). This leads to the proposal of the following hypothesis:

H2b. Employee anxiety has a negative effect on employee affective well-being.

The aforementioned arguments suggest that job-related uncertainty may have a negative effect on employees' affective well-being by increasing their levels of anxiety. In fact, the negative effects that job-related uncertainty has on employees' affective well-being could be owing to the lack of control that they may perceive when confronted with an uncertain situation of this nature, and may, therefore, be owing to the increased levels of anxiety they may experience as a result of this lack of control (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2002). Given that, according to the COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), personal control is a key resource that people wish to have at work (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p.108), and given its strong connection with people's well-being (Bordia et al., 2004), its absence could lead to high levels of anxiety, which could seriously harm their affective well-being. According to the COR theory, work-related resources such as personal control over one's job are critical if primary resources such as well-being are to be achieved (Westman et al., 2005); these comprise the driving force that affects and enhance one's well-being (Hobfoll, 1989). Job-related uncertainty may, therefore, harm people's well-being owing to the strong sense of anxiety (the loss of control) that this perception may cause in employees (cf., Hobfoll, 1989). It is, therefore, supposed that the anxiety produced in employees as a result of this lack of control and information will account for the negative effect of job-related uncertainty on their affective well-being. Stated formally:

H3. Employee anxiety fully mediates the negative relationship between job-related uncertainty and employee affective well-being.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

3.1. Sample and data collection

This study tests whether employee anxiety is behind the pernicious effects of perceived job-uncertainty on employee affective well-being in the workplace, for which a quantitative and cross-sectional technique was used to collect and analyse data. The data required were collected by distributing questionnaires to Spanish hotel employees. The scales employed were originally in English, and Brislin's (1980) back-translation procedure was, therefore, used to transform them into Spanish. The items were then translated from English into Spanish by a bilingual language professional, and they were subsequently translated back into English by another professional in order to ensure semantic equivalence. The questionnaire was pilot tested with 5 hotel managers, 4 union representatives and 6 hotel employees, and the focus group method was employed to assess the clarity of the items and their suitability (Choi et al., 2014).

The data were collected between August and October 2020 using a survey that was uploaded to the LimeSurvey platform. The questionnaire was distributed to the associate members of one of the main national unions in Spain. A total of 205 employees filled in the questionnaire, thus providing a sample size that was sufficient to obtain a sampling error below the threshold of ±7.0 (Aaker & Day, 1990), bearing in mind that there were 1,486,000 people working in the Spanish hospitality sector in the third quarter of 2020 (344,200 in hotels, Spanish National Institute of Statistics, 2021). The sampling error for 205 workers was 6.78% (confidence level of 95%, $p = q = 0.5$), and this guaranteed that the sample size would be sufficiently representative of the population of workers in the Spanish hotel industry. According to Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara and Ruiz-Palomino (2019), the length of employment at a hotel is a key aspect in regard to being familiar with the variables of a hotel (one of which is supervisor servant leadership), and we therefore excluded those respondents who had worked for less than 6 months. Any questionnaires from which a large

percentage of responses were missing were also discarded.

With regard to demographics, as will be noted in Tab. 1, approximately 58.2% of the respondents were female, and over half of them (53%) had attained qualifications above the level of secondary education, since approximately 52% held either a professional qualification or a university degree. The respondents were not, in general, particularly young, since only 2.10% of them were under 26, and more than 57% were over 45. In the case of service, 76.4% had been employed at the hotel for a long period and had been at the same hotel for at least 6 years. Only a small number of them (2.80%) stated that they had been employed at the hotel for between 6 months and 1 year. Finally, the components of the sample worked in a large variety of departments (i.e., restaurant, kitchen, reception, cleaning, maintenance, entertainment), with maintenance and entertainment representing only 2.4% and 1%, respectively.

Tab. 1 – Sample profile

Variable		Total sample (% of Total) n= 205
Education level	Primary education	17.3
	Secondary education	29.9
	Intermediate vocational training	19.3
	Advanced vocational training	20.3
	Graduate	10.7
	Postgraduate degree	2.5
Gender	Male	40.8
	Female	58.2
Age	20-25 years old	2.1
	26-35 years old	19.6
	36-45 years old	21.1
	46-55 years old	32.5
	Over 55 years old	24.7
Hotel department	Restaurant	34.1
	Kitchen	19.0
	Reception	28.3
	Cleaning services	15.1
	Maintenance	2.4
	Entertainment	1.0

3.2. Measures

All of the variables were Mode A composites formed by means of linear combinations of their reflective indicators (Hair et al., 2022). As stated below, all the scales employed five-point Likert response formats and were obtained from previous studies (see items descriptions in Tab. 2).

Job-related uncertainty. The certainty with which the employees viewed both the future of their position in the organisation and what they would have to do in order to advance in it (1 = very uncertain; 5= very certain) was evaluated using the 2-item scale by Bordia et al. (2004). The higher the score obtained in this scale, the stronger the perceived job-related uncertainty.

Employee anxiety. This was assessed using the four-item scale designed by Caplan et al. (1980), which has proved to have good psychometric properties, as demonstrated in previous research (Spector et al., 2015). The extent to which the respondents had lately felt or felt a series of negative emotions was rated from 1 (not at all) to 5 (every day). For example, one item was "I feel nervous." When the employees felt greater anxiety, this was indicated by higher scores.

Employee affective well-being. We used the 5-item short scale designed by the World Health Organization (1998), which has proved to have good psychometric characteristics in previous research (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018). This scale provides an efficient reflection of affective well-being (Kusier & Folker, 2019) and includes, "the pleasantness dimension of emotions (e.g., feeling cheerful, in good spirits), along with the arousal dimension of emotions (e.g., vigour)" (Kusier & Folker, 2019, p. 4). The respondents were requested to evaluate their emotional state in the last month, and one sample item was "I have felt active and vigorous." The higher the scores on this scale, the greater the affective well-being of the employees surveyed.

Finally, three control variables used as antecedents of affective well-being in previous research were used in order to demonstrate that our predicted links to employee well-being had explanatory power beyond those controls. These were specifically gender, educational level, and age. The three-step process designed by Bernerth and Aguinis (2016), however, indicated that it was not necessary to include these control variables, since the analysis carried out showed that there were no significant differences among the three models analysed (a model containing all the control variables, a model containing only those control variables with a significant effect on the dependent variable, and a model containing no control variables).

Common method variance (CMV) in the data was mitigated by employing procedural remedies when designing the questionnaire (i.e., Podsakoff et al., 2012). This was confirmed by applying the marker variable approach, as recommended in Lindell and Whitney (2001), since a variable that was, in theory, unrelated to any of the study variables (i.e., "When I want to buy things on the web, I find information from other consumers online by accident," 1= totally disagree, 5= totally agree), had non-significant correlations with any of the other study variables. Moreover, having partialled out the second-smallest correlation between the marker variable and the study variables (rm = –0.004) from the uncorrected correlations, all the correlations that had previously been significant remained significant, so CMV was of no concern in our study.

3.3. Data analysis

Our hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling (SEM) techniques, and particularly partial least squares (PLS), which were implemented by employing Smart PLS 4 (Ringle et al., 2022). PLS-SEM is a robust statistical procedure in which no demanding assumptions regarding the distribution of the variables are required (Hair et al., 2022). We also performed a power analysis using G*Power 3 (Faul et al., 2007) for the regression with the largest number of independent variables in the model (2 independent variables). This yielded a power of 99.99%, thus showing that there was a sufficiently large number of informants with which to test the relationships proposed and to detect medium effect sizes (Cohen, 1988) without sustaining Type II errors. We used 10,000 subsamples in order to generate standard errors and bootstrap t-statistics with n – 1 degrees of freedom (where n is the number of subsamples) so the statistical significance of the path coefficients could be properly assessed (Hair et al., 2022).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Evaluation of the measurement model

The analyses demonstrated that the measures used in the research model were both reliable and valid. For example, in the case of the reliability of the items, there were no serious problems, since the values attained were higher than the recommended threshold of 0.707 (Hair et al., 2022, Tab. 2). Moreover, the composite internal consistency, composite reliability indices and Cronbach alphas were all above the 0.70 cut-off (Hair et al., 2022), which supports the internal consistency of all the constructs (Tab. 2). Support was additionally attained for convergent validity, since the average variance extracted (AVE) was also above 0.5 for all the constructs (Hair et al., 2022, Tab. 2). Finally, in the case of discriminant validity, all the mode A composites were different from each other, since the AVE exceeded the square correlations between the composites, and the HTMT indices were below 0.85 (Hair et al., 2022, Tab. 3).

Tab. 2 – Item Loadings, Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Composite/Items	Loading	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability rho a	AVE
Job-related uncertainty (UNCER)…to what extent do you feel, or have you felt uncertainty regarding the following aspects in your organization? […]		0.74	0.75	0.79
UNCER1. About the future of your position in the organization.	0.91			
UNCER2. About what you need to do to advance within the organization.	0.87			
Employee anxiety (ANX). Please indicate the extent to which you feel or have felt the following emotions lately…		0.90	0.91	0.76
ANX1. I feel (have felt) nervous.	0.90			
ANX2. I feel (have felt) jittery.	0.88			
ANX3. I feel (have felt) calm. (reversed)	0.86			
ANX4. I feel (have felt) fidgety.	0.84			
Employee affective well-being (AWB; positive mood, vitality, general interest)		0.90	0.91	0.71
Please indicate the degree to which you feel or have felt the following, lately… […]				
AWB1. I have felt cheerful and in good spirits.	0.85			
AWB2. I have felt calm and relaxed.	0.87			
AWB3. I have felt active and vigorous.	0.82			
AWB4. I woke up feeling fresh and rested.	0.87			
AWB5. My daily life has been filled with things that interest me.	0.80			

Notes. AWB = affective well-being; ANX = employee anxiety; UNCER= Job-related uncertainty

Tab. 3 – Descriptive statistics, correlation matrix and discriminant validity

Constructs	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Job-related uncertainty	3.20	1.08	**0.89**	*0.25*	*0.13*	*0.06*	*0.05*	*0.03*
2. Employee anxiety	2.98	1.00	0.23**	**0.87**	*0.47*	*0.11*	*0.05*	*0.03*
3. Employee affective well-being	3.31	0.92	-0.08	-0.40**	**0.84**	*0.14*	*0.06*	*0.05*
4. Gender	---	---	0.01	0.11	-0.13	**----**	*0.18*	*0.12*
5. Age	4.58	1.12	-0.02	-0.07	0.05	-0.18*	**----**	*0.24*
6. Education	2.85	1.35	-0.02	0.08	-0.04	0.13	-0.25*	**----**

Notes. **$p < 0.01$ or better (two-tailed test). SD = standard deviation. Bold values on the diagonal are the square roots of the AVE. Off-diagonal elements below the diagonal are correlations between the constructs. Off-diagonal elements in italics and above the diagonal are the HTMTs. Gender (0= male, 1 = female), Age (1= 20-25 years, 5= Over 56 years), Education (1= Primary, 6 = Postgraduate).

4.2. Structural model evaluation

As will be noted in the results obtained for the structural model for the total sample shown in Fig. 1, almost all the path coefficients are significant. The results particularly showed that those hotel employees who perceive job-related uncertainty are more likely to experience anxiety, thus supporting H2a ($\beta = 0.202$, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, and as predicted, employee anxiety had a negative influence on the employees' positive mood, vitality and general interest in life (i.e., affective well-being) ($\beta = -0.442$, $p < 0.001$), thus supporting H2b. The prediction that job-related uncertainty would have a negative effect on employee affective well-being was not, however, confirmed ($\beta = -0.001$, ns), signifying that it was not possible to support H1. In fact, when an empirical analysis of the structural model was carried out without including the mediator (i.e., employee anxiety), no significant relationship was found between job-related uncertainty and employee affective well-being either ($\beta = -0.132$, ns., R^2affective well-being $= 0.017$). However, and as foreseen, this was owing to the full mediation effect of employee anxiety on this relationship, as revealed by our findings. In fact, we discovered a significant negative indirect effect of job-related uncertainty on employee affective well-being (indirect effect $= -0.084$, $p < 0.05$), and H3 (that employee anxiety has a mediation effect on the relationship studied) was, therefore, supported. The data specifically revealed that there was a full negative mediation effect of employee anxiety on this relationship, which was medium to large as regards size ($f^2 = 0.22$, Cohen, 1988, Tab. 4), and that this increased the explained variance of affective well-being by approximately 200% (from $R^2 = 0.017$ to $R^2 = 0.196$, Fig. 1).

Tab. 4 – Size of the mediating effect of employee anxiety

Variance explained (Employee affective well-being)			Size of the mediation effect
R^2 in an unmediated model	R^2 in a mediated model	Δ variance explained	(f^2)
0.017	0.196	0.179	0.22 (medium-large effect)

Notes. f^2 = (R^2 excluded – R^2 included)/(1 – R^2 excluded); effect sizes of $f^2 \geq 0.02$, ≥ 0.15, and ≥ 0.35 are small, medium, and large, respectively (Cohen, 1988).

With regard to the quality of the model tested for the total sample, the results yielded an R^2 of approximately 0.196 for the key dependent variable employed in the study, i.e., employee affective well-being, which is much higher than the 0.10 threshold (Falk & Miller 1992) (Fig. 1). The model was not, however, able to explain a significant amount of variance of the mediator and explained an R^2 of around only 0.041. Moreover, the PLS predict analysis with k-folds = 10 and 10 repetitions recommended by Shmueli et al. (2016) yielded Q^2 values of over 0 for both employee anxiety (Q^2 = 0.07) and employee affective well-being (Q^2 = 0.02), signifying that these two variables were effectively predicted by our research model for the total sample (Hair et al., 2022). Because the Q^2 predict values of the indicators of these two variables were, in general, positive, and because more than half of them (4 out 5 for affective well-being, 4 out 4 for employee anxiety) in the PLS-SEM model attained RMSE (root mean squared error) values that were smaller than those obtained by a multiple lineal regression model, then the model can be said to have moderate predictive power (Chua, 2023). Finally, the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) value yielded by the model was 0.07 (below the 0.080 cut-off), while its 95% bootstrap quantile was 0.08, and this was higher than the SRMR value, thus showing that the overall model fit was good for the total sample and that it is probable that the empirical data originate from a world that functions as theorised by the model.
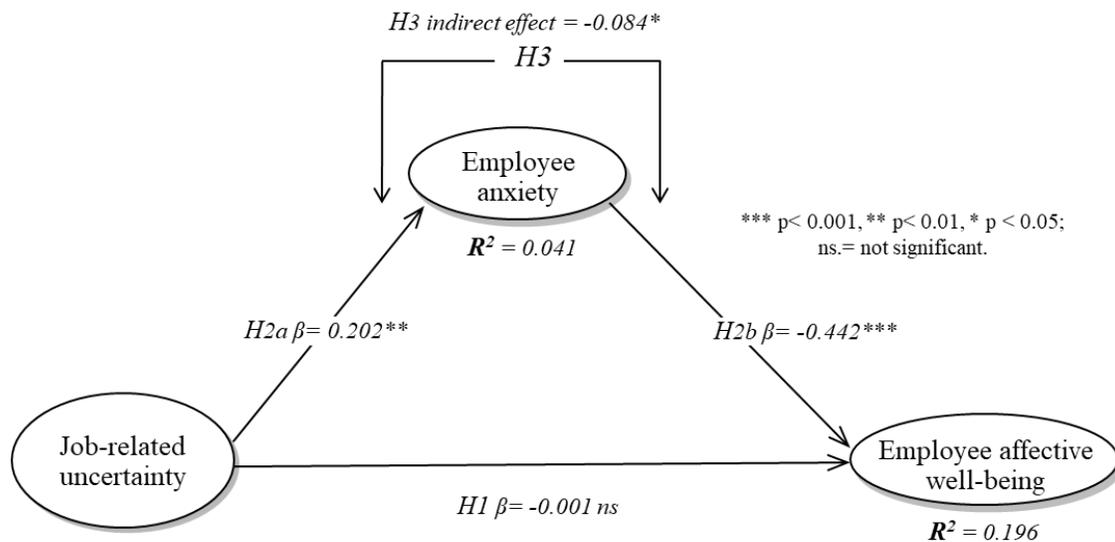

Fig. 1 – Research model. Hypothesis testing

4.3. Discussion

The occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 led to considerable changes and uncertainties in most industries. It was to be expected that employees would perceive job-related uncertainty in such a turbulent situation (Bordia et al., 2004) and that their levels of affective well-being would be reduced (Yang & Ma, 2020), with all that this implies in terms of reduced productivity (Pradhan & Hati, 2019) and firm competitiveness. However, there is little literature regarding how job-related uncertainty may have a negative effect on employees' affective well-being. Our research objective in this study was, therefore, whether the level of anxiety explains the negative impact of job-related uncertainty on employees' affective well-being.

According to our findings, it was possible to confirm that the levels of anxiety experienced by employees as a response to perceptions of job-related uncertainty explain the negative relationship between job-related uncertainty and employees' affective well-being. There were no direct effects, and only an indirect effect via employee anxiety, which assists in understanding the role played by uncertainty as regards affecting employees' affective well-being. The findings shown therefore contribute to existing literature in one principal way. New light is shed on how job-related uncertainty affects employees' affective well-being. It has particularly been possible to show that the negative effect of job-related uncertainty is not direct but rather indirect, via the level of anxiety that employees tend to experience when confronted with this perceived uncertainty. This is a new contribution to the literature, since only one recent piece of research has demonstrated the positive effect of job-related uncertainty on employees' job-related anxiety (Ruppel et al., 2022). Moreover, although the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018) supports the idea that job-related uncertainty (i.e., the perception that personal control no longer exists) has a negative effect on employees' well-being, and despite previous studies having proved it (e.g., De Witte et al., 2015), the objective of many of these studies was to predict other measures of well-being (e.g., mental health, Nelson et al., 2018).

In addition to the theoretical contributions of this study, two principal implications for managers emerge. First, the negative effects of job-related uncertainty on employees' affective well-being could be avoided by focusing on the design and implementation of a strategy that would incorporate procedures and systems oriented towards reducing their employees' anxiety levels. It would, for example, be possible for managers to ensure that their employees receive participant-driven mental fitness training, thus allowing them to improve their resiliency, self-awareness and emotional regulation and consequently reduce their anxiety levels. They could also offer mental wellness webinars or handouts on potential resources that might help to reduce their employees' anxiety (e.g., daily exercise, good sleep habits, etc.), or even onsite health services or employee assistance programmes (telehealth options, onsite medical care, etc.). Second, and most importantly, managers should also make a considerable effort to provide their employees with educational resources (how to regulate emotions, etc.) (Hernández-Perlines et al., 2016) in order to reduce their anxiety, and managers could even provide workplace structures that are flexible, decentralised and not excessively formalised, thus avoiding work alienation and consequently favouring a good atmosphere that reduces their levels of anxiety in general.

4.4. Limitations and further research directions

Despite the limitations of this study, they could be useful with regards to suggesting some future compelling lines of research. For example, the cross-sectional design of the study does not make it possible to provide strong causal inferences. However, the reason for not carrying out a longitudinal

study was the great sensitivity of one of the variables (level of anxiety), which obliged us to guarantee the respondents' anonymity, since some previous research (Randall & Fernandes, 1991) has stated that this is critical if responses are to be obtained and the social desirability bias in this type of analyses avoided. Nevertheless, it might be advisable to carry out longitudinal research on this subject in order to provide stronger causal inferences.

Another important limitation is related to having focused only on explaining the affective dimension of employee well-being (i.e., when positive (as opposed to negative) affects are experienced frequently). Other well-being related measures were not, however, analysed, including life satisfaction -quality of life, attitude towards life- and eudaimonic well-being, i.e., the degree to which individuals have fulfilled their potential as humans or have flourished as humans (Vladisavljević & Mentus, 2019). Despite the fact that negative links between job-related uncertainty variables, such as the effect of job insecurity on life satisfaction (Lee & Tsai, 2022) and eudaimonic well-being (van Dam et al., 2020), have been shown in previous research, these other well-being measures could be included in future research models in order to verify whether the mediator(s) or the path employed to explain these outcomes are different from those found here for affective well-being (i.e., employee anxiety).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, this paper shows that job-related uncertainty has a negative influence on employees' levels of affective well-being. However, this effect is not direct, but rather indirect, signifying that the aspect that fully explains why job-related uncertainty reduces employees' affective well-being is the anxiety that they feel when perceiving uncertainty as regards their future in a job. The principal conclusion of this study is that hotel managers should not overlook the huge benefits of utilising various mechanisms that will reduce their employees' levels of anxiety, as this can provide the entire workforce with a defence if (and, more probably, when) confronted with uncertain times that may undermine their affective well-being.

References

1. Aaker, D., & Day, G. (1990). *Marketing research*. Wiley.
2. Ariza-Montes, A., Arjona-Fuentes, J.M., Han, H., & Law, R. (2018). Work environment and well-being of different occupational groups in hospitality: Job demand–control–support model. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *73*, 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.01.010
3. Avey, J. B., Wernsing, T. S., & Mhatre, K. H. (2011). A longitudinal analysis of positive psychological constructs and emotions on stress, anxiety, and well-being. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 18*(2), 216-228. https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051810397368
4. Barlow, D. H. (2002). *Anxiety and its disorders: The nature and treatment of anxiety and panic* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
5. Baruch, Y., & Lambert, R. (2007). Organizational anxiety: Applying psychological concepts into organizational theory. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22*, 84-99. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710721956

6. Becker, J. M., Proksch, D., & Ringle, C. M. (2022). Revisiting Gaussian copulas to handle endogenous regressors. *Journal of the Academy of the Marketing Science*, *50*, 46–66. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-021-00805-y

7. Bernerth, J. B., & Aguinis, H. (2016). A critical review and best practice recommendations for control variable usage. *Personnel Psychology*, *69*(1), 229-283. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12103

8. Bordia, P., et al. (2004). Uncertainty during organizational change: Types, consequences, and management strategies. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *18*(4), 507-532. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JOBU.0000028449.99127.f7

9. Brashers, D. E. (2001). Communication and uncertainty management. *Journal of Communication, 51*(3), 477-497. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2001.tb02892.x

10. Brislin, R. W. (1980). Cross-cultural research methods. In I. Altman, A. Rapoport, & J. F. Wohlwill (Eds.), *Environment and culture* (pp. 47–82). Springer.

11. Caplan, R. D., et al. (1980). *Job demands and worker health*. University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research.

12. Chen, H.-T. & Li, X. (2017). The contribution of mobile social media to social capital and psychological well-being: Examining the role of communicative use, friending and self-disclosure. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *75*, 958-965. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.06.011

13. Choi, B., et al. (2014). Short-term test-retest reliability of the job content questionnaire and effort-reward imbalance questionnaire items and scales among professional firefighters. *Ergonomics*, *57*, 897-911. https://doi.org/10.1080/00140139.2014.904008

14. Chua, Y. P. (2023). *A Step-by-step guide. PLS-SEM data analysis using SMARTPLS 4*. Researchtree Education.

15. Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Lawrence Erlbaum.

16. Daniels, K. (2000). Measures of five aspects of affective well-being at work. *Human Relations*, *53*(2), 275-294. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726700532005

17. De Witte, H., Vander Elst, T., & De Cuyper, N. (2015). Job insecurity, health and well-being. In J. Vuori, R. Blonk, & R. Price (Eds.), *Sustainable working lives. Aligning perspectives on health, safety and well-being*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9798-6_7

18. DiFonzo, N., & Bordia, P. (2007). Psychological factors in rumor spread. In N. DiFonzo & P. Bordia (Eds.), *Rumor psychology: Social and organizational approaches* (pp. 69–87). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/11503-003

19. Falk, R. F. & Miller, N. B. (1992). *A primer for soft modelling*. University of Akron Press.

20. Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A-G., & Buchner, A. (2007). G*Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior Research Methods*, *39*(2), 175-191. https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03193146

21. Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2022). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Sage.

22. Hernández-Perlines, F., Moreno-García, J., & Yáñez-Araque, B. (2016). Training and business performance: The mediating role of absorptive capacities. *SpringerPlus, 5*(1), 2074. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40064-016-3752-6

23. Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist*, *44*(3), 513-524. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.3.513

24. Hobfoll, S. E. (2001). The influence of culture, community, and the nested-self in the stress process: advancing conservation of resources theory. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, *50*(3), 337–70. https://doi.org/10.1111/1464-0597.00062

25. Hobfoll, S. E, Halbesleben, J., Neveu J. P., & Westman, M. (2018). Conservation of resources in the organizational context: The reality of resources and their consequences. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior 5*, 103–128. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104640

26. Jung, H. S., Jung, Y. S., & Yoon, H. H. (2021). Covid-19: The effects of job insecurity on the job engagement and turnover intent of deluxe hotel employees and the moderating role of generational characteristics. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *92*, 102703. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102703

27. Kusier, A. O., & Folker, A. P. (2020). The well-being index WHO-5: Hedonistic foundation and practical limitations. *Medical Humanities*, *46*(3), 333–339. https://doi.org/10.1136/medhum-2018-011636

28. Lee, M. H., & Tsai, H. Y. (2022). A study of job insecurity and life satisfaction in COVID-19: The multilevel moderating effect of perceived control and work–life balance programs. *Journal of Men's Health*, *18*(1), 21. https://doi.org/10.31083/j.jomh1801021

29. Lindell, M. K., & Whitney D. J. (2001). Accounting for common method variance in cross-sectional research designs. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *86*(1), 114–121. https://doi.org/10.1037//0021-9010.86.1.114

30. Luhmann, M. (2017). The development of subjective well-being. In J. Specht (Ed.), *Personality development across the lifespan* (pp. 197–218). Elsevier.

31. Malone, C., & Wachholtz, A. (2018). The relationship of anxiety and depression to subjective well-being in a mainland Chinese sample. *Journal of Religion and Health, 57*, 266–278. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0447-4

32. Nelson, A., Cooper, C. L., & Jackson, P. R. (2018). Uncertainty amidst change: The impact of privatization on employee job satisfaction and well-being. In C. L. Cooper (Ed.), *Managerial, occupational and organizational stress research* (pp. 345-359). Routledge.

33. Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2012). Sources of method bias in social science research and recommendations on how to control it. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *63*(1), 539-569. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100452

34. Pradhan, R. K., & Hati, L. (2019). The measurement of employee well-being: Development and validation of a scale. *Global Business Review*, *23*(2), 385-407. https://doi.org/10.1177/0972150919859101

35. Randall, D. M., & Fernandes, M. F. (1991). The social desirability response bias in ethics research. *Journal of Business Ethics,10*, 805–817. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00383696

36. Rezvani, A., & Khosravi, P. (2019). Emotional intelligence: The key to mitigating stress and fostering trust among software developers working on information system projects. *International Journal of Information Management, 48*, 139–150. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2019.02.007

37. Ringle, C. M., Wende, S., & Becker, J.-M. (2022). *SmartPLS 4*. SmartPLS.

38. Ruppel, C., Stranzl, J., & Einwiller, S. (2022). Employee-centric perspective on organizational crisis: How organizational transparency and support help to mitigate employees' uncertainty, negative emotions and job disengagement. *Corporate Communications,* 27, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-04-2022-0045

39. Sarason, I. G., Sarason, B. R., & Pierce, G. R. (1990). Anxiety, cognitive interference, and performance. *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality,5*(2), 1–18.
40. Shmueli G., Ray, S., Velasquez Estrada, J. M., & Chatla, S. B. (2016).The elephant in the room: Evaluating the predictive performance of PLS models. *Journal of Business Research*, *69*(10), 4552-4564. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.03.049
41. Silva, W. A. D., de Sampaio Brito, T. R., & Pereira, C. R. (2021). Anxiety associated with COVID-19 and concerns about death: Impacts on psychological well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *176*, 110772. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.110772
42. Škare, M., Ribeiro-Soriano, D., & Porada-Rochoń, M. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on the travel and tourism industry. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, *163*, 120469. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120469
43. Spanish National Institute of Statistics. (2021). *Economically active population survey, third quarter 2020*. https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Tabla.htm?t=4128.
44. Spector, P. E., Yang, L.-Q., & Zhou, Z. E. (2015). A longitudinal investigation of the role of violence prevention climate in exposure to workplace physical violence and verbal abuse. *Work & Stress*, *29*(4), 325-340. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2015.1076537
45. Spielberger, C. D., et al. (1983). *State-trait Anxiety Inventory for Adults*. Mind Garden.
46. Spielberg, C. D., & Rickman, R. L. (1990). Assessment of state and trait anxiety in cardiovascular disorders. In D. G. Byrne & R. H. Rosenman (Eds.), *Anxiety and the heart*. Taylor and Francis.
47. Uncu, Y., Bayram, N., & Bilgel, N. (2007). Job related affective well-being among primary health care physicians. *European Journal of Public Health*, *17*, 514–519. https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckl264
48. van Dam, A., Noordzij, G. & Born, M. (2020). Thriving under uncertainty: The effect of achievement goal orientation on job insecurity and flourishing. *Social Indicators Research*, *150*, 659–678. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02337-4
49. Venkatesh, V. (2020). Impacts of COVID-19: A research agenda to support people in their fight. *International Journal of Information Management, 55*, 102197. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102197
50. Vladisavljević, M., & Mentus, V. (2019). The structure of subjective well-being and its relation to objective well-being indicators: Evidence from EU-SILC for Serbia. *Psychological Reports*, *122*(1), 36-60. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294118756335
51. Warr, P. (1994). A conceptual framework for the study of work and mental health. *Work & Stress*, *8*, 84–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678379408259982
52. Westman, M., et al. (2005). Organisational stress through the lens of conservation of resources (COR) theory. *Research in Occupational Stress and Well Being*, *4*, 167–220.https://doi.org/10.1016/S1479-3555(04)04005-3
53. World Health Organization. (1998). Wellbeing measures in primary health care / The Depcare project. WHO regional office for Europe.
54. Yang, H., & Ma, J. (2020). How an epidemic outbreak impacts happiness: Factors that worsen (vs. protect) emotional well-being during the Coronavirus pandemic. *Psychiatry Research*, *289*, 113045. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113045
55. Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, P., & Ruiz-Palomino, P. (2019). How servant leadership creates and accumulates social capital personally owned in hotel firms. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 31*(8), 3192-3211. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2018-0748

Contact information

Prof. Santiago Gutiérrez-Broncano, Ph.D.
University of Castilla-La Mancha
Faculty of Social Sciences
Talavera de la Reina, Spain
E-mail: Santiago.Gutierrez@uclm.es
ORCID: 0000-0002-4557-4628

Prof. Pablo Ruiz-Palomino, Ph.D.
University of Castilla-La Mancha
Faculty of Social Sciences
Cuenca, Spain
E-mail: pablo.ruiz@uclm.es
ORCID: 0000-0002-0413-8512

Prof. Pedro Jiménez-Estévez, Ph.D.
University of Castilla-La Mancha
Faculty of Legal and Social Sciences
Toledo, Spain
E-mail: Pedro.JEstevez@uclm.es
ORCID: 0000-0001-7295-4127

Prof. Benito Yáñez-Araque, Ph.D. - Corresponding author
University of Castilla-La Mancha
School of Industrial and Aerospace Engineering
Toledo, Spain
E-mail: Benito.Yanez@uclm.es
ORCID: 0000-0002-1967-7244