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Job insecurity and employee performance: examining different types of performance, rating sources and levels

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ABSTRACT

We examine the relationship between job insecurity (JI) and performance (i.e., adaptivity, proactivity, task performance) from a multilevel perspective. We suggest that different behavioural responses will be triggered depending on whether the JI refers to an employee's relative JI within a team or a team's collective JI. An individual employee's relative JI within a team may evoke a withdrawal reaction (i.e., diminished performance) because the individual experiences the insecurity as a personal issue (one which does not affect the rest of the team as much; i.e., a "person-at-risk" situation). However, when JI is experienced as a collective phenomenon (one that affects the entire team as a whole because of the shared context, i.e., a "job-at-risk" situation), employees may demonstrate higher performance as they are driven by job preservation motives. We incorporated both individual employee and supervisor ratings as they have complementary value in evaluating performance. Data was obtained from 53 teams, including 403 employees and 53 supervisors. Team's collective JI was associated with higher supervisor-rated performance at the team-level, both in terms of adaptivity and proactivity but not in terms of task performance. The employee's relative JI within a team was associated with reduced self-rated performance in terms of both adaptivity and task performance.

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Job insecurity climate; performance; adaptivity; proactivity; task performance

Under the unstable macro-economic conditions of the past decade, job insecurity (JI), or the experienced threat of involuntarily losing one's job, has become more prevalent (Ahearn, 2012; Eurofound, 2014). JI is viewed as a psychosocial stressor and research has clearly shown that it negatively impacts workers' health and well-being (Shoss, 2017; De Witte et al., 2016). However, less is known about its impact on behavioural outcomes such as employee performance. Understanding this linkage – and in particular unravelling how JI can foster or impede employee performance – is crucial for an organization's functioning and survival (Sverke et al., 2019). Thus far, despite the overwhelming evidence pointing to the negative effect of JI on employee performance, a few studies have found no relationship between the two (see the meta-analyses conducted by Sverke et al., 2019), and a handful of studies have even shown a positive relationship between the two (Feather & Rauter, 2004). The results of these studies suggest that these positive effects are due to employees' attempts to manage the impression their supervisors have of them in an effort to preserve their job (Huang et al., 2013; Probst et al., 2007, 2019; Shoss, 2017; Staufenbiel & König, 2010). While it is clear that JI is mainly an inhibiting factor (has negative consequences), this research suggests that there may be certain circumstances in which JI can drive a higher level of employee performance. Of interest is whether this higher performance is perceived as such by employees and supervisors alike, or whether there is a discrepancy in perceptions that suggests impression management and job preservation motivations come into play.

A recent study (Nikolova et al., 2018) hinted that the level of JI (i.e., individual versus climate) could potentially explain differences in employee appraisals of – and behavioural reactions to – JI. The authors called for more research to be carried out, emphasizing that the ambiguous evidence on the difference between individual-level and collective-level effects limits our current understanding of the reasons why job insecurity sometimes seems to accelerate rather than hamper employee performance. Contextual factors such as working conditions are traditionally regarded as individual-level variables, yet they may bring about a shared understanding among workers who function in the same working environment, i.e., a work "climate" that to some extent overarches idiosyncratic experiences (Van Veldhoven et al., 2002). JI as a collective or climate (i.e., shared sensemaking) level phenomenon refers to a threat to job continuity, a common experience for members of a larger work unit such as a team or organization (Sora et al., 2009). In summary, regardless of whether JI is collective or individual, it can be described as a powerful work stressor that is appraised as threatening by employees (Låstad et al., 2016; Sora et al., 2009). While some of the limited research evidence to date has described the negative effect of individual- and collective-level JI on employee well-being and job attitudes (Låstad et al., 2016; Sora et al., 2009, 2013), other studies have suggested that reactions might be more divergent (Nikolova et al., 2018)

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due to the different strategies the individuals choose to employ in order to deal with this stressor (Bliese & Jex, 2002).

The majority of the studies published to date do not take a multilevel approach. The results of these studies (see the meta-analyses conducted by Sverke et al., 2019) indicate that when individuals are faced with greater job insecurity, they may perform less well at work as they feel that the experienced imbalance in the employee-employer relationship is too large and that their personal resources (e.g., energy, attention) are largely consumed by the negative feelings that have been triggered. In this type of research, it is not possible to know whether the job insecurity is a personal issue (i.e., a phenomenon described as "person-at-risk"), a common concern that affects entire teams (i.e., a phenomenon known as "job-at-risk"), or even something affecting departments or the organization as a whole (Shoss, 2017; Van Vuuren et al., 1991a). Yet, this may be important. We suggest that workers may react differently when they face JI as a part of a collective. In such situations, favourable performance behaviours are more likely to be displayed by workers because breaches in the employee-employer exchange relationship are perceived as being less personal. Furthermore, displaying favourable performance behaviours may be a way for employees to emphasize their personal value to the organization (over and above the value of others), and minimize the chances of job loss (Bolino, 1999; Staufenbiel & König, 2010). It is also worth noting that, as co-workers share the same experience, they may rely on each other's efforts and resources to collectively enhance their performance, with the aim of preserving their jobs or saving the organization. Such behaviours are viable alternatives, particularly when employees value (their positive exchange relationship with) the organization and when they are convinced that the organization will decide who to keep based on the perceived contribution of each individual (Gilboa et al., 2008). Hence, in our view, behavioural responses to JI are likely to differ (in part) depending on whether JI is an individual or a collective experience. This warrants further investigation.

In the current study, we address this issue by focusing on the multilevel embeddedness of the JI – employee performance relationship which, in the literature to date, has been insufficiently explored. In our multilevel analytical approach, we can distinguish between within-level relationships (often referred to as individual effects) and between-level relationships (often referred to as group or team effects) which otherwise remain conflated (Preacher et al., 2016). This decomposition of variance across levels provides different points of reference for interpreting relationships between job insecurity and performance. More specifically, within-level relationships between an *employee's relative JI within the team and their relative performance within the team* can be assessed at the same time as between-level relationships between the *team's collective JI and the team's collective performance*. For the purpose of parsimony, we refer to relationships between individual-level JI and performance and between collective-level JI and performance. This approach has two important advantages. The first relates to the fact that, currently, isomorphism across individual and collective (often studied as climate) levels is often assumed in the literature; in other words, it is presumed that the impact of JI on individual employee performance affects the performance of the team – and eventually organizational performance – by an aggregation of all these individual effects (De Cuyper et al., 2020). In this study, we develop a multilevel approach that can shed more light on this presumed isomorphism across the individual and team levels (Bliese & Jex, 2002), as between- and within-level relationships are distinguished between and analysed empirically. Secondly, by assessing within-level relationships at the same time, perceptions of job insecurity at the individual level are no longer individual's standings of job insecurity and performance in reference to the entire sample, but relative to the teams' mean on those variables. In organizations, teams might be affected by different processes and events (in some departments restructuring may, for instance, affect individuals more than in other departments). Workers sharing the same work context are exposed to these same circumstances and may feel more or less insecure as a whole compared to workers from another department. Yet, individual differences in job experiences across team members are likely to reflect the more personal nature of that experience. Hence, studying job insecurity perceptions at the within-level - denoting co-workers' relative standing compared to the team- adds another perspective on the job insecurity – performance relationship to what is often studied thusfar.

Consideration of the rating source (e.g., supervisor- versus self-rated; Sverke et al., 2019) may be another critical factor in understanding why the predominately negative relationship between JI and employee performance may, in some cases, be positive. These rather incidental positive associations may not simply be a methodological artefact but rather might reflect the various intra- and interpersonal processes that are simultaneously at play when employees are confronted with JI. From a social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964) perspective, we would expect self-rated measures of employee performance to be negatively associated with JI (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015; Vander Elst et al., 2016). At the same time, we would expect a more positive association between JI and supervisor-rated employee performance, as employees – driven by job preservation motives – may succeed in "improving" their performance in the eyes of their supervisor (Bolino, 1999). Employees may resort to window dressing or impression management tactics in order to make a good impression without any change in actual or self-declared performance (Bolino, 1999; Bolino et al., 2006; Rioux & Penner, 2001). Studies from different research fields and traditions (e.g., social psychology, work psychology, neuropsychology) have examined impression management in relation to various outcomes, including stress and coping, motivation, and performance (e.g., Cheng et al., 2014; Chiaburu et al., 2014; Good & Shaw, 2021; Hou et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2013; Peck & Levashina, 2017; Zhang et al., 2019). Although we did not directly measure impression management in this study, evidence from the accumulated body of research on this topic indicates that impression management tactics (e.g., ingratiation, self-promotion and exemplification) can be very effective in helping individuals deal with undesirable circumstances and attain valuable goals such as increased performance ratings, a pay rise, or increased career satisfaction (Cheng et al., 2014; Elliot et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2013). This

evidence lends credence to the underlying assumption that impression management is likely to play a role in how employees deal with job insecurity.

To shed more light on this issue, in addition to investigating individual- and collective-level JI as antecedents of employee performance (operationalized by task performance, adaptivity and proactivity), this study takes a comparative approach, scrutinizing the differences between employee and supervisor ratings of employee performance when JI is on the rise. In this study, we focus on individual workers nested in teams who experience JI to a varying degree but whose organizations are not closing down or planning on large-scale lay-offs (i.e., there is no imminent threat or certainty of job loss).

Theory development

JI as an individual phenomenon and its relationship with performance

Perceptions of fair exchange in the relationship between employee and employer are, according to SET (Blau, 1964), critical to employee job attitudes and behaviours. Positive, beneficial actions directed at employees by the organization can lead to employees feeling socially indebted to their employer (Blau, 1964), and an attempt to reciprocate by engaging in positive behaviours at work. Perceived negative contributions from the organization, on the other hand, can result in poor performance as employees attempt to restore the disrupted balance in their exchange with the employer. Applied to JI, concerns about losing one's job can erode positive work behaviours, because they breach the individual's expectations of long-lasting employment (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2006). An employee's assumption that the organization will demonstrate its commitment by ensuring the stability of his or her job is not uncommon, especially among those employed on a permanent basis (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2006). If workers perceive their organization as incapable or unwilling to secure their employment over a longer period of time, this is likely to result in an adjustment of their work behaviours as a means of restoring the equilibrium in the volatile exchange relationship with their employer (Reisel et al., 2010). In addition, from a stress and strain point of view, an employee is likely to reduce his or her work effort (a sign of withdrawal) in response to feeling unable to cope with the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and the energy- and resource-depleting effects of prolonged exposure to the uncertainty (Stynen et al., 2015). Despite the lack of consensus, the vast majority of the studies on individual-level JI and employee performance point towards a negative relationship between the two (Sverke et al., 2019), in line with the assumptions formulated by stress theories and SET.

JI as a collective phenomenon and its relationship with performance

In contrast to the ample studies exploring the correlates of JI at the individual-level, there is a paucity of research on the effects of JI at the collective level. An organizational climate typically emerges among team or organizational members as a result of the tendency of individuals to internalize social cues from their immediate social environment. The process of sharing and internalizing these organizational cues makes it likely that employees' perceptions of their environment will be coloured or biased by the prevailing views and interpretations regarding the phenomenon in question (Jones, 1984). In relation to JI, a climate of insecurity may arise when employees collectively believe that their work context is affected by unpredictable circumstances that may lead to job loss (Sora et al., 2009). Exploring JI at the collective level may enable us to explain effects beyond those accounted for by individual-level constructs (Jones, 1984; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). This is because "climate is a function of the interplay between individual and contextual difference effects" (Nikolova et al., 2018, p. 1177).

In this study, we examine JI climate as a construct derived from the aggregate individual perceptions of the team members (of their personal JI). In this way, we align with the direct consensus approach used by Sora et al. (2009) and we view JI climate as a collective experience: the similarity across individual experiences of team members regarding their own JI. Other studies (e.g., Låstad et al., 2016) have measured JI climate by using the alternative referent-shift model (Låstad et al., 2018) which taps into individual perceptions regarding the experienced JI of the rest of the team members. The advantage of the direct consensus approach is that, because the referent is the individual ("I"), relationships can be unambiguously analysed at both the individual and group levels. In addition, climate scores determined via direct consensus tend to have a stronger affective (as opposed to cognitive) basis as compared to the referent-shift approach, which fits, in our view, with the conceptualization of JI as a threat (Wallace et al., 2016). Clearly, concerns related to JI can be felt or experienced by different team members. This makes it highly likely that the individuals within the team will become aware of the collective fears of job loss (or that there will be a "shared" fear) because in a social context such as a working team, processes such as social comparison, interaction synchrony, behavioural entrainment and emotional contagion tend to spontaneously emerge (Curseu & Fodor, 2016).

Although individual-level research largely suggests that JI has a negative effect on employee well-being and performance (Sverke et al., 2019; De Witte et al., 2016), views on collective-level effects are far from unified. On the one hand, it has been argued that the collective-level experiences of JI and the social behaviours associated with this – for example, the spreading of rumours – have ties to individual experiences and therefore that relationships across levels are isomorphic (i.e., in the same direction) (Låstad et al., 2018). From this perspective, it is presumed that similar psycho-social processes account for appraising JI as a work-related hindrance stressor (De Witte, 2005) at the individual as well as at the collective level, and that employees will respond in the same way to both individual- and collective-level JI (Låstad et al., 2018). Indeed, some empirical contributions from the past decade have supported the proposed (uni)directionality of effects across levels (e.g., Mauno et al., 2013; Sora et al., 2013). On the other hand, recent evidence (Nikolova et al., 2018) suggests that individual- and collective-level effects of JI might be more divergent than initially thought. The authors reasoned that while individual- and collective-level JI can both trigger stress appraisals, the

behavioural response to this appraisal might well be different. Employees may be more likely to respond with a higher level of instrumental performance – either for self-suiting or pro-social purposes – if JI is a collective concern for co-workers (Nikolova et al., 2018).

In order to study the individual- and collective-level effects of JI, a multilevel analytical framework is warranted. When co-workers are nested in teams, within-level (i.e., individual) relationships can be separated from between-level (i.e., team) relationships in MLM (Preacher et al., 2016). Within-level relationships concern – in this case – an individual employee's relative JI within the team and their relative performance. In our view, the theories outlined earlier are relevant here and can explain why more insecure workers diminish their performance. If a worker, when comparing him/herself to salient others, feels insecure about the future of his or her job, this may result in feelings of unfairness because the uncertainty is likely to be viewed as a personal issue (i.e., a worker may feel more threatened, in comparison to co-workers within the team). Experiencing uncertainty can ultimately demotivate individuals and can trigger withdrawal reactions (i.e., result in a reduction in performance) as a means of restoring the disrupted balance in the exchange relationship with the organization. Furthermore, from a stress and coping perspective (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), job insecurity may be harder to deal with when experienced as an individual issue, due to its highly personal nature and degree of emotional involvement. Literature on work stressors (mostly the hindrance type, Podsakoff et al., 2007) and strain in relation to motivation and performance provides strong support for a negative effect between stressors and performance (Kim & Beehr, 2018; LePine et al., 2004; Lepine et al., 2005; Yang & Li, 2021). It is also worth noting that while stronger individual feelings of insecurity may require more personal coping resources, resources like one's degree of control might be appraised as insufficient in the face of job insecurity. In line with earlier research in the field of job insecurity, we assume that, at the within-level of analysis, reduced task performance – as a form of withdrawal behaviour – may occur either as a result of employees attempting to restore the balance in their exchange with the organization, or because their coping capacity is exceeded by the stressor (Staufenbiel & König, 2010; Stynen et al., 2015).

At the between-level of analysis, a different pattern may emerge. If job insecurity is perceived as a shared concern rather than an individual one, it is unlikely that these feelings of insecurity will be attributed to "personal" issues, and it is therefore less likely that they will have a strong negative effect on the individual. In addition to the importance of the perceived personal meaning of the job insecurity experience, the access to resources that an individual or the team (collectively) has can affect how they cope with the demanding situation. In contrast to the individual experience, when the entire team is confronted with increased job insecurity (i.e., they are all in the same boat together), they have access to more (i.e., collective) resources and can draw on them to cope with the situation and gain more job security.

When discussing JI as a collective phenomenon, it is important to note that our findings may not apply to situations in which organizational closure and mass lay-offs are imminent. This study focuses on situations where workers find themselves confronted with varying mild to average degrees of JI. In these instances, higher collective insecurity implies that the uncertain work conditions are unlikely to trigger appraisals of the situation across team members in which the breached exchange between them and their employer is interpreted as personal failure or injustice. An important conceptual distinction that can be made in this regard is the "job-at-risk threat" versus the "person-at-risk threat" (Jacobson & Hartley, 1991; Shoss, 2017). "Job-at-risk threat" refers to job insecurity linked to the job itself and can be the product of prevailing economic conditions (e.g., economic slowdown, the rise of automation, the level of unemployment in the sector), or internal restructuring. "Person-at-risk threat", on the other hand, refers to feelings of job insecurity which have a more person-specific nature. This may occur, for instance, because an employee has been performing poorly or due to the conflictual nature of relationships he or she has at work (Koen et al., 2020; Shoss, 2017). Carusone et al. (2021) argued that "in comparison to job-at-risk threats, perceptions of person-at-risk threats are deeply personal, because they concern the specific employee's value to the organization. With the singular employee being threatened more, person-at-risk threats can call into question personal characteristics such as one's ability to do their job well or their value and worth as an employee." (p. 3). It can be argued that when job insecurity is a shared concern (i.e., there is a climate of job insecurity), the salience of a "job-at-risk-threat" is higher because it is unlikely that all individual employees will have a personal reason to feel insecure. In this situation, rather than lowering performance to rebalance the employee-employer relationship, employees may respond in a different way. As job-at-risk situations are more likely to be viewed as a threat to the collective self, such situations are likely to evoke a collective response oriented towards dealing with the stressor (Carusone et al., 2021). In line with attribution theory (Heider, 1958), we thus assume that the salience of attributions (i.e., "job-at-risk-threat" versus 'person-at-risk) may differ across situations where either an individual or a collective unit (e.g., a team) experiences JI.

Furthermore, employees' behavioural responses to collective JI might also involve different psychological processes (other than contract breach experiences), as employees are then more likely to use impression management and competitive behaviours instead of withdrawal as effective strategies to cope with the uncertain situation (Hunag et al., 2013). When JI is a concern shared by many employees within the team or the organization, favourable performance behaviours may be displayed by team members for self-suiting purposes. To prevent actual job loss, workers who share this feeling of job insecurity may feel tempted to visibly exhibit a greater work effort in an attempt to emphasize their personal value to the organization. The likelihood of this may increase when a worker is convinced that the organization will decide who to keep based on the perceived contribution of each individual within the organization (Gilboa et al., 2008). Such proactive and potentially highly beneficial behaviours may be quickly embraced by other co-workers in the team. According to Consiglio et al. (2013), such synchronization of behaviour in teams can be explained either in terms of similar responses to the same work environment or

as the result of social exchange processes (i.e., emotional contagion). Furthermore, in our view, an improvement in collective performance following team-level JI may, in part, be a prosocial response, and hence serve a collective aim. If JI affects many co-workers simultaneously, it might be appraised across team members as being market-driven (e.g., due to economic slowdown, or changing consumer needs). Realizing that the employer is not targeting single individuals and, in fact, relies on their (joint) work contributions to overcome the difficult situation, employees might attempt to help the organization by engaging in prosocial response in an attempt to secure their own and their colleagues' jobs (Staufenbiel & König, 2010). Prosocial motivation concerns the desire to protect and foster the well-being of others in the workplace (Grant & Berg, 2012). In a situation where social group stressors are at play and prosocial behaviours are seen as adaptive, these behaviours might trigger affiliative responses (Buchanan & Preston, 2014). Furthermore, in the context of work teams, prosocial motivation has been linked to enhanced job performance and extra-role behaviours (Hu & Liden, 2015). In addition to collective demands, resources in teams may also have a collective nature (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018) and may therefore add to the coping capacity of team members to deal with common job stressors (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). Through frequent interactions in teams, valuable support networks can be formed (Hunter et al., 2010), and these networks can act as collective resources enabling problem-focused coping behaviours (instead of withdrawal behaviours). This view would also fit with research on teams under stress which suggests that some stressors may lead to an increase in team performance (Pearsall et al., 2009). However, this reasoning will not hold for individuals who believe that there is no chance of saving their job (i.e., perceived certainty of job loss e.g., due to organizational closure), as they will have no incentive to invest (through their work effort) in the organization; in fact, individuals in such situation are likely to withdraw as a means of restoring the balance in the exchange relationship with the organization, and in an effort to prevent further loss of energy associated with JI.

In summary, JI at the individual level may cause feelings of unfairness because it is viewed as a personal issue (i.e., an individual feels (more) threatened, in comparison to co-workers with whom he or she is working with in the context of a team) and can ultimately demotivate employees, triggering withdrawal reactions (i.e., a reduction in performance) as a means of restoring the balance in the exchange relationship with the organization (Carusone et al., 2021). As mentioned previously, prior research indicates that reduced task performance can be a form of withdrawal behaviour which occurs either because employees strive to restore the balance in their exchange with the organization, or because their coping resources are exceeded by the stressor (Staufenbiel & König, 2010; Stynen et al., 2015). We expect to find this pattern of behaviour at the within-level of analysis. However, when job loss is a shared concern for multiple co-workers in teams, even though it will still cause stress and in time perhaps even strain, employees might collectively display different behavioural responses; they may attempt to demonstrate their personal or joint value to the organization (by, for instance, improving their performance or creating the impression of doing so), in order to minimize the risk of being laid off (Staufenbiel & König, 2010). We expect to find this pattern at the between-level of analysis.

The role of the rating source: individual- vs supervisor-rated performance

Employee performance comprises various facets ranging from established aspects such as task performance, contextual performance (i.e., organizational citizenship behaviour), counterproductive work behaviour, and safety behaviour to more novel aspects like adaptive and innovative performance. We draw on the work of Griffin et al. (2007) to make a distinction between *adaptivity* (i.e., accommodating changes in work roles or systems at work) *and proactivity* (i.e., self-directed action to anticipate or initiate change in the work system or work roles) and *task performance* (i.e., meeting the requirements of formalized roles). Particularly in relation to these novel types of performance, research in the field of JI is still scarce (Sverke et al., 2019; for notable exception see, Fischmann et al., 2015). However, such research is important as these three aspects of performance are highly relevant in the contemporary performance-driven workplace.

In addition to the complexity of the multi-dimensional nature of employee performance, differences in the rating source can create even more nuanced picture of how JI affects performance. Debates on the usefulness of incorporating different perspectives (i.e., different rating sources) on employee performance and how they can complement each other are ongoing in the literature (Conway & Huffcutt, 1997; Xia et al., 2018). Studies on multi-source performance ratings thus far have indicated low to moderate agreement in performance ratings of the same construct across sources (e.g., employee vs supervisor ratings; Conway & Huffcutt, 1997; Staufenbiel & König, 2010). This fairly low level of agreement has prompted many discussions about the possible causes for such inconsistencies (Heidemeier & Moser, 2009; Sverke et al., 2019). Two frequently raised concerns that pertain to rater source bias and measurement method effects (which are seen as sources of contaminating variance) led to some researchers arguing that performance ratings when provided by different sources are flawed and highly biased. In line with the evidence provided by Lance et al. (2008), we maintain the stance that performance ratings from different sources (i.e., self and supervisor ratings) are valuable because differences between raters hold additive (i.e., differentially valid) information which can contribute to the richness of the data. Mapping individual as well as supervisor perceptions of employee performance is paramount because each of these rating sources may shed light on the observed differences in employee reactions to JI (Lance et al., 2008). A stronger correlation between employee performance and job stressors such as JI has been shown when based on employee as compared to supervisor ratings (Abramis, 1994). Consideration of the rating source may be another critical factor in understanding discrepant findings in some of the earlier studies and may help to further unravel the relationship between JI and employee performance. We would like to emphasize that both employee self-ratings and supervisor ratings are key, and suggest that they may have complementary

value (rather than one being correct and the other flawed) because some of the motives that drive employee performance behaviours – and even some of the behaviours themselves – might not be easy, or indeed possible, for the supervisor to observe.

We posit that when individuals face more JI, although they may report lower levels of self-rated performance, they may try to conceal this from others, meaning that their supervisors will be less likely to pick up on their diminished performance. Individuals typically appraise JI either as a threat that outweighs their coping resources or as an act of unfairness. In line with stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and social exchange (Blau, 1964) theories, these individuals will either try to balance the situation by reducing their actual efforts, or compensate psychologically by lowering their intentional efforts (Staufenbiel & König, 2010). Yet, we maintain that supervisors might perceive a different, more positive picture of their subordinates' performance in times of JI; this is in line with the notion of Lance et al. (2008) that different raters contribute to a more comprehensive view of the researched phenomenon. Even though diminishing one's own performance may be a logical response to JI, it seems unlikely that individuals who perceive that their job is at stake will openly misbehave and visibly become more negligent in conducting their work. While employees might actually want to relax their work effort as an expression of their discontent, in order to prevent further worsening of their precarious situation, they are likely to choose a less observable outlet for expressing their dissatisfaction. Alternatively, they may resort to decreasing the less visible aspects of their performance (e.g., extra-role behaviours such as advocating for their organization in front of others), or even the visible aspects, if performance lapses can easily be covered up or window dressed in front of management. We therefore expect that, at the within-level of analysis, employees will be more likely to self-report that they are performing at a lower level (withdrawing) in response to enhanced JI. While impression management may go some way towards explaining the positive link between JI and employee performance (see, Huang et al., 2013), it is important to note that supervisor ratings can not be considered highly subjective or flawed, and are beyond doubt worth exploring. Because of their position as observers who are in a hierarchical relationship with employees, supervisors have a unique and valuable perspective on employee performance (including a better overview of, and a better opportunity to compare, the performance of everyone in the team).

As argued earlier, when anticipated job loss is a collective concern, motivation for job preservation – whether self-suited or prosocial – tends to increase. Although jobs may be on the line, it's not an issue that these employees should take personally and hence is not yet a "done deal". When individuals find themselves with others in the same precarious situation, they are collectively more inclined to highlight their personal or joint value for the organization in order to prevent actual job loss (Staufenbiel & König, 2010), or prevent further damage to the team or company at large. Employees are likely to become even more preoccupied with visibly (i.e., for the benefit of their supervisor) upscaling their performance as a means of proving their worth to the management. Under these conditions of JI, we expect that this display will result in more favourable supervisor ratings of performance as compared to self-ratings at the between-level of analysis. Based on the above argumentation, we hypothesize that:

H1: At the within-level: An employee's relative JI within a team will be negatively associated with their relative performance within the team (i.e., task performance, adaptivity and proactivity). This negative relationship will be more pronounced for self-ratings as compared to supervisor ratings.

H2: At the between-level: A team's collective JI will be positively associated with the team's collective performance (i.e., task performance, adaptivity and proactivity). This positive relationship will be more pronounced for supervisor ratings as compared to self-ratings.

Method

Sample and procedure

Data were collected from eight large international organizations active in Belgium (min. 1500 employees) from various industries (i.e., health care, consultancy, car assembly, technology, glass production, finance and insurance, and the aviation industry) in 2011. Within each organization, higher management representatives selected teams or work groups consisting of a supervisor and a minimum of five and a maximum of twenty members who work together on a regular basis and all report directly to this supervisor. In total, company representatives selected 122 teams and provided the email addresses of 122 supervisors and 1536 employees. Employees were contacted via email, and asked to complete an online survey. A reminder was sent after one week. In parallel, supervisors from the same companies were approached with the request to take part in an online survey where they were asked to answer questions, amongst others, regarding the performance of all their subordinates individually. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured that only aggregated results on the company level would be reported to company representatives. Of those we contacted, 641 employees (42%) and 85 supervisors (70%) completed the survey. The ethical guidelines as prescribed by the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki were followed during data collection. As taking part in the survey was entirely voluntary (this was communicated clearly to all invited employees), an individual's participation was interpreted as informed consent. Individuals' responses were fully anonymized and could not be identified at any point.

For further analyses, we only retained teams if least three workers within the team and their supervisor had completed the survey. In total, we analysed the data of 53 teams comprising the matched data of 403 employees and 53 supervisors. The mean team size was seven, ranging from three to sixteen workers. The age of participants taking the employee survey ranged from 20 to 65 years old ($M = 42.21$; $SD = 10.44$), and for the supervisor survey from 32 to

59 years old (M = 47.56; SD = 7.99). The majority of the respondents in both the employee sample (55%) and in the supervisor sample (67.4%) were female. Precisely 19.1% of the employee sample had achieved a higher level of education (an academic bachelor's or master's degree), 37.5% had achieved a mid-level of education (a professional bachelor's degree), and 43.5% had achieved a lower-level of education (high school level diploma). The employee sample comprised of manual and operative workers (56.8%), clerical workers (17.4%), professional staff members (18.6%) and line managers (7.2%). Almost all employees (98%) had a permanent contract with their employer.

Measures

JI was measured among employees with a four-item scale, developed by De Witte (2000). A sample item was: "I feel that my job will be at risk in the near future". Responses were recorded on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha, used to measure internal consistency of the items, was .85.

Task performance was rated by both the employees and their supervisors with a four-item scale, developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). A sample item was "I (employee name) carry (carries) out the core parts in my (his/her) job well". Responses were recorded on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha was .88 for self-rated task performance and .95 for supervisor-rated task performance.

Adaptivity was assessed in both surveys with a three-item scale, developed by Griffin et al. (2007). A sample item was: "I (employee name) have (has) adapted well to the changes in my (his/her) core tasks". Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (totally not) to 5 (frequently, (almost) always). Cronbach's alpha was .81 for self-rated adaptivity and .87 for the supervisor-rated adaptivity.

Proactivity was measured in both surveys with a three-item scale, developed by Griffin et al. (2007). A sample item was: "I (employee name) came up with ideas to improve the way in which my (his/her) core tasks are done". Responses were provided on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (totally not) to 5 (frequently, (almost) always). Cronbach's alpha was .87 for self-rated proactivity and .94 for the supervisor-rated proactivity.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) supported the construct validity of a seven-factor model comprising the following factors: JI, self-rated task performance, adaptivity and proactivity; and supervisor-rated task performance, adaptivity and proactivity. All items loaded substantially on these factors ($\chi2(231) = 1095.08$; $p < .001$; CFI = .89; RMSEA = .10; SRMR = .06). The factors in this model were allowed to correlate. This model fitted significantly better compared to a single factor model ($\chi2(252) = 5153.84$; $p < .001$; CFI = .35; RMSEA = .22; SRMR = .20; $\Delta\ \chi2(21) = 4058.76$, $p < .001$) and compared to a two-factor model in which the two factors represent the different rating sources (i.e., self-rated versus supervisor-rated) ($\chi2(251) = 4097.63$; $p < .001$; CFI = .49; RMSEA = .20; SRMR = .16; $\Delta\ \chi2(20) = 3002.55$, $p < .001$).

Confounders

As potentially confounding variables, we took respondents' gender, age, occupational level and job discretion into account. Due to the heterogeneous nature of our sample, we wanted to control for variation in personal demographic factors, while ruling out associations between job insecurity and performance ratings that could be attributed to differences in occupational status (by doing so we complied with the recommendation of Bernerth and Aguinis (2016) to control for potential relationships between the control and a focal variable, when there is a good rationale that can support such relationships).To provide an example, employees (grouped in teams) with a lower occupational status may systematically perceive more job insecurity. Furthermore, supervisors may also systematically evaluate performance of these workers (as compared to high-status workers) in a different way (i.e., more or less leniently). Job discretion was also added as this variable is closely linked to occupational level and taps into the underlying psycho-social dimension of formal status differences. All participants reported their age in years and their gender (reference category: female). Respondents were asked to indicate their formal occupational level: senior management, middle management, professional staff (e.g., expert role), operational personnel or administrative support staff. Job discretion was measured with a four-item scale very similar to the SIMPH (Notelaers et al., 2007). Respondents rated the extent to which they are able to influence decisions about their job. An example item was: "I can decide how I perform my work". All items were scored on a six-point response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree); Cronbach's alpha was .76.

Analyses

Due to the fact that our data was nested and our hypotheses were multi-level (i.e., test both within- and between-level relationships), we used multi-level modelling (MLM (Preacher et al., 2011). An important feature of MLM is that it disentangles between-group and within-group relationships in nested data, simultaneously estimated in one model (Preacher et al., 2011, 2010). Here, within-level refers to the relationship between an employee's relative JI within the team and their relative performance within the team. Between-level relationships refer to a team's collective JI as a predictor of the team's collective performance (Preacher et al., 2016). Collective performance here refers to the team's mean performance, although it is important to emphasize that, in MLM, this is not the observed team's mean but the latent standing of the team on performance, as in MLM measurement error in the group means is accounted for (Lüdtke et al., 2008; Preacher et al., 2016).

The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient or ICC (1) of the endogenous variables indicated that: 4% in self-rated task performance, 2% in self-rated proactivity and 2% in self-rated adaptivity; 28% in supervisor-rated task performance, 32% in supervisor-rated adaptivity and 49% in supervisor-rated proactivity resides at the between-group level. The ICC (2) mounts to .32, .18, .28, .78, .81, .89, respectively. For JI, the ICC (1) mounts to 9% and the ICC (2) to .42. Although there is no rule of thumb, these measures give an indication of the proportion of variance due to group differences. Due to the hierarchical nature of the

data, and the fact that ICC (1) are clearly different than zero, multilevel modelling was warranted (Bliese, 2000; Hayes, 2006). Model fit was evaluated by the comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) separately provides the SRMR for the between- and within-level parts of the model. Indications of acceptable model fit are CFI values larger than .90 (Bentler, 1990), and RMSEA and SRMR values below .08 and .10, respectively (Byrne, 2001; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Grand mean centring was applied. All confounders were added to the within-level part of the model. For occupational level, dummy variables were created and operational personnel was set as a reference category at the within-level. At the between-level part of the model, the team's collective degree of job discretion was taken into account as well as the teams' average occupational level. The latter was computed by calculating per team the shares of workers in these different occupational positions. As there is a formal rank order in these occupational statuses, the shares were weighted to their place in the rank order, so that higher scores on this team's compositional variable indicate, on average, a higher occupational level across the team members. To test for differences in the strength of relationships as predicted by our hypotheses, we used the Wald chi-square difference test to evaluate the equal fit hypothesis of nested models (i.e., models in which parameters like beta coefficients are estimated freely versus constrained to be equal) which can be easily implemented in Mplus by means of the MODEL CONSTRAINT specification (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Finally, it should be noted that between-level relationships tend to be stronger. This is because measurement error among aggregated constructs ("ecological correlations") is often lower as compared to within-level relationships (Ostroff, 1993). In this study, comparisons regarding the size of the coefficients were only made within and not across levels of analysis.

Results

Descriptive results

Means, standard deviations and correlations are depicted in Table 1. JI was negatively associated with self-rated task performance ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$), and self-rated adaptivity ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$). The correlation between JI and self-rated proactivity was not significant. JI was negatively associated with supervisor-rated task performance ($r = -.11$, $p < .05$) but unrelated to supervisor-rated adaptivity and proactivity.

Hypotheses testing

Whereas correlational analyses do not account for the nested structure of the data, relationships between JI and the three indicators of performance were modelled and estimated simultaneously at both the individual (within) and the team (between) level. Standardized coefficients of the model ($\chi2(0) = 0.74$; $p < .001$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00, SRMR within = .01 and SRMR between = .01) are depicted in Table 2.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be a negative association between an employee's relative JI within a team and their relative performance within the team, in particular for self-rated as compared to supervisor-rated outcomes. At the within-level of analysis, no positive associations were found between JI and individual task performance. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, JI was negatively associated with self-rated task performance ($\beta = -.20$, $p < .001$) and self-rated adaptivity ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .05$). The association between JI and self-rated proactivity was not significant. As expected, associations between JI and supervisor-rated performance were less negative, more specifically JI was unrelated to supervisor-rated task performance, adaptivity and proactivity. The Wald statistic was used to test for statistically significant differences between the coefficients across rating sources. The coefficients for task performance were significantly different across rating sources at the within-level as a model in which beta coefficients from job insecurity to both self-rated and supervisor-rated task performance are freely estimated fits the data significantly better compared to a model in which both coefficients are constrained to be equal (Wald $\Delta\ \chi2(1) = 3.91$, $p < .05$). In a similar vein, Wald tests for the beta coefficients from job insecurity to adaptivity and proactivity across both rating sources were computed. However, both the coefficients for adaptivity (Wald $\Delta\ \chi2(1) = .19$, $p = .66$) and proactivity (Wald $\Delta\ \chi2(1) = .08$, $p = .78$) were not significantly different across rating sources at the within-level. In summary, partial support was found for Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that, in contrast to the individual-level, a *team's collective* JI would be positively associated with the team's collective performance, and that this association would be stronger for supervisor ratings of performance as

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender	0.45	0.50	-											
2. Age	42.21	10.44	.05	-										
3. Occupational level	2.16	.79	.29**	.04	-									
4. Team occupational level	2.16	.52	.33**	.00	.66*	-								
5. Job discretion	3.87	.86	.13*	.06	.21**	.16**	-							
6. Job insecurity	2.27	.80	.15*	−.00	−.05	.01	−.24**	-						
7. Task performance (SER)	6.00	.67	.01	.02	.08	−.02	.16**	−.24**	-					
8. Adaptivity (SER)	3.53	.82	−.06	.02	.04	.01	.19**	−.17**	.17**	-				
9. Proactivity (SER)	3.07	.87	.11*	.06	.19**	.12**	.29**	−.08	.12*	.64**	-			
10. Task performance (SUR)	5.97	.99	−.07	.01	.03	−.04	.26**	−.11*	.09	.13**	.11*	-		
11. Adaptivity (SUR)	3.65	8.1	.05	−.10*	.01	−.08	.26**	−.05	.07	.13**	.16**	.61**	-	
12. Proactivity (SUR)	3.1	1.06	.16**	.04	.15**	.09	.27**	.07	.01	.06	.17**	.49**	.74**	-

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$
(SER) = Self-rated; (SUR) = Supervisor-rated

Table 2. Results of the multilevel regression analysis.

	Task performance (SER)		Adaptivity (SER)		Proactivity (SER)		Task performance (SUR)		Adaptivity (SUR)		Proactivity (SUR)	
Within-level	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Gender	.03	.06	−.08	.06	.06	.06	−.12	.07	.03	.06	.05	.07
Age	−.00	.05	−.02	.05	.01	.05	−.06	.06	−.26***	.05	−.10	.06
Middle management$^{\delta}$	.01	.06	.03	.06	.08	.06	.11	.06	.10	.06	.11	.06
Professional staff$^{\delta}$	−.04	.05	.04	.06	.09	.05	.12*	.06	.13*	.06	.15**	.06
Administrative support staff$^{\delta}$	−.21***	.06	.01	.06	−.07	.06	.06	.06	.05	.06	−.03	.06
Job discretion	.12*	.05	.15**	.05	.20***	.05	.17**	.06	.15**	.05	.17**	.05
Job insecurity	−.20***	.05	−.11*	.05	−.05	.05	−.03	.05	−.09	.05	−.03	.05
Between-level	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Team occupational level	−.51	.28	−.01	.41	−.22	.30	−.10	.16	−.33*	.14	−.15	.13
Job discretion	−.02	.31	.32	.45	.77*	.36	.62***	.18	.67***	.18	.61***	.17
Job insecurity	−.28	.33	−.43	.50	.33	.34	−.17	.22	.44*	.22	.65**	.20

B = Standardized coefficients
SE = Standard error
(SER) = Self-rated; (SUR) = Supervisor-rated
δ = Operational personnel as the reference category
* p < .05. ** p < .01, ***<.001

compared to self-ratings of performance. In line with these predictions, positive associations were found at the between-level: the team's collective JI was positively related to the team's collective adaptivity (β = .44, p < .05) and proactivity (β = .65, p < .01), as rated by the supervisor. However, the association between JI and task performance, as assessed by the supervisor, was not significant at the team-level. As expected, associations at the collective level between JI and performance as assessed by employees were less positive: none of the associations were significant. Again, pairwise Wald tests were computed to test for the equality of beta coefficients across rating sources. The coefficients between job insecurity and adaptivity (Wald Δ $\chi 2(1) = 5.36$, p < .05) and between job insecurity and proactivity (Wald Δ $\chi 2(1) = 6.25$ p < .01) were significantly different across rating sources at the team-level. The coefficients for task performance, however, were not significantly different across rating sources (Wald Δ $\chi 2(1) = .16$, p < .69) at the team-level. In summary, partial support was found for Hypothesis 2.

Discussion

Despite the fact that much attention has been given to the topic of job insecurity, research to date still falls short of understanding how JI relates to employee performance. We draw attention to two key issues in job insecurity (JI) research that might offer further insights. First, we focused on the level of JI and disentangled individual (within-level) and collective (between-level) feelings of JI as a determinant of both individual and team performance. We theorized that an individual's performance response to stronger feelings of job insecurity would be different to a team's collective performance response to shared feelings of job insecurity. By this, we challenge the prior isomorphic assumption (e.g., Låstad et al., 2018) that an employee's behavioural response to individual-level JI is akin to the response that the team-level construct (measured in line with the direct consensus approach used by Sora et al. (2009)) evokes. By distinguishing between within- and between-relationships in a multilevel analytical framework, we also shed light on the nature of the job insecurity-performance relationship. At the within-level, relationships concern employees' relative experiences of job insecurity and performance in reference to the team's mean. This perspective captures the more personal nature of feelings related to job insecurity. At the between-level, the relationship between team levels of job insecurity and performance are assessed; which refer to the situation of the teams (i.e., capture the more collective dimension) regarding feelings of job insecurity and perceived performance. Our approach is novel, firstly because, in studies on job insecurity research thus far, the "reference point" has been the average employee in the entire sample, not taking into account the nested structure of insecure employees in their work context. Second, we maintain that a multi-source evaluation of employee performance is key to understanding employee behaviours in the context of JI, because it holds unique information that can only be obtained if different rating sources are involved (Lance et al., 2008).

A core contribution of this paper is that our approach enables a parallel exploration of the impact of individual- and team-level JI on employee performance. In this way, we can tap into divergent effects of the "person-at-risk threat" versus the "job-at-risk-threat" on employee work behaviours. In summary, our findings show that collective-level JI was positively associated with supervisor perceptions of favourable employee work behaviours (i.e., proactivity and adaptivity) of the team as whole. Higher degrees of individual-level JI (i.e., the individual in the team feeling relatively more job insecure than the rest of the team), on the other hand, was associated with lower levels of individual self-rated performance on two of the three indicators – task performance and adaptivity. These results corroborate findings from prior research (i.e., Fischmann et al., 2015; Nikolova et al., 2018) and align with stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and social exchange (Blau, 1964) frameworks alike.

Specifically, when individual feelings of JI are high (in comparison to other team members), this is more likely to be interpreted as a personal issue, and these individuals may relax their work effort as a means of safeguarding their well-being (i.e. reduce energy and resource expenditure) and restoring the disturbed balance in their exchange relationship with the employer. Higher levels of perceived individual JI (i.e., "person-at-risk threat"), because it pertains to the personal chances of sustaining one's employment (while other team members have fewer job-loss concerns), might indicate that one's own employability and value for the team and

organization are viewed as suboptimal. Owing to its inherent unfairness, such a situation might discourage the individual to "fight" for his or her position within the organization, and instead trigger a flight response (i.e., a behavioural withdrawal expressed through a lower level of performance). Collective JI at the team level, however, is associated with an increase in supervisor-rated performance. Even though JI as a stressor might, in the first instance, trigger a hindrance appraisal and a self-protection reflex among individuals (i.e., a desire to withdraw behaviourally), when employees share this experience with other team members, they seem to engage collectively to implement an alternative action strategy. Our results suggest that team-level JI (i.e., "job-at-risk-threat") may evoke an active coping response among employees (Aschford & Taylor, 1990; Van Dam, 2013), as JI was associated with higher supervisor ratings of proactivity and adaptivity across co-workers. This could be explained as a "fight" response to the collective threat as employees might believe that they have a fair chance of dealing successfully with the stressor at hand when the threat of job loss is shared among team members. If team members either believe that they can save their own job, while co-workers will be let go (i.e., individualistic motivation), or that they can save the employment of everyone (i.e., prosocial motivation), the result is likely to be an increase in performance as a functional response. Enhancement of at least those personal contributions that are visible to the supervisors and other gate-keepers in the organization might signify an individual's attempt to secure the continuity of their own employment (even if in reality they do not exert a greater work effort as reflected in the individual's own performance ratings).

We also touch upon the broader debate regarding the validity and usefulness of dual-source ratings (employee and supervisor) for evaluating employee performance (Mount et al., 1998; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). In keeping with researchers who emphasize the added value of two-source data (Gilboa et al., 2008; Lance et al., 2008), we contend that the complementarity of the information captured through the different ratings sources (i.e., employee and supervisor) will enable us to shed more light on employee work behaviours.

Based on the supervisor ratings, we found higher levels of proactivity and adaptivity (but not task performance) at the team level. However, these results were not reflected in the self-ratings, as we found no significant link with employees' self-rated performance at the team level. The positive significant relationships we found between JI and two of the study outcomes – proactivity and adaptivity, align with our theoretical rationale; we predicted more favourable *supervisor-rated* employee performance ratings in situations where JI is a collective concern among employees. This is because individuals may strive to prove their value to the organization by presenting themselves in the best possible light. Managing the supervisor's impression of them in times of uncertainty, even if they feel demotivated or depleted by the overall climate of JI, is essential for an employee's chance to remain employed (i.e., job preservation motivation; Shoss, 2017). This finding extends and nuances earlier views on the way JI affects employee work behaviours (i.e., Shoss, 2017). Specifically, it seems that, as JI drains one's energy, individuals might attempt to preserve both their job and their energy by increasing only the visible aspects of their performance (while not changing their actual performance work behaviours very much).

Furthermore, the null finding regarding the relationship between team-level JI and supervisor-rated task performance might signify that employees will not visibly increase all aspects of their performance. While adaptivity and proactivity may reflect one's personal contribution and might be a subject to impression management due to the individual's desire to present him or herself to his/her supervisor in a good light (i.e., as possessing valuable personal qualities), demonstrating enhanced task performance might be undesirable or subject to a ceiling effect. It is possible that employees might refrain from emphasizing their task performance because they realize that their supervisor is also aware of (or perhaps even experiences him or herself) the high JI and might view the exaggerated display as an indication of prior suboptimal performance. Clearly, from an impression management point of view, this is not something to draw attention to. An alternative explanation is that, most workers may fulfil their core job requirements (delivering good task performance), leaving little room for improvement on this aspect of performance compared to adaptivity and proactivity.

In contrast to the (predominantly) positive supervisor ratings, we argue that a lower level of performance is to be expected when employees are asked to self-rate their work behaviours. The self-ratings allowed us to probe for employees' candid self-evaluation of their work effort. Our results align with the findings of Fischmann et al. (2015), who established that individual-level JI reduced self-reported employee performance in terms of task performance but not in relation to proactivity. In addition, we found a significant negative relationship between individual-level JI and adaptivity, an association that was not significant in the study conducted by Fischmann et al. (2015). In line with our expectations, the negative relationship between individual JI and performance was captured through the individual's own ratings because these self-ratings reflect the genuine evaluation of an individual's own work effort. In line with our expectations, this is likely to be a reflection of the re-balancing of social exchange relationships that, in the minds of more job insecure individuals, have become unbalanced. Yet, these more job insecure employees seem able to conceal performance lapses from their supervisor, as we found no relationship between JI and the supervisor ratings of employee performance.

Limitations

Three limitations of the current study warrant attention. First, while we incorporated supervisor ratings of employee performance to overcome some of the drawbacks inherent to the use of self-reports, this choice might be questioned by the proponents of the implicit stress theory, who believe that the associations between supervisor-rated performance and stressors can be inflated (Westman & Eden, 1991). Such inflation is likely to occur as a result of the supervisor's biased impression that employees performing under stressful conditions might carry out their work poorly. Our findings did not corroborate this theory (for team-level JI, two

supervisor's rated performance indicators were positive). In line with prior meta-analytic evidence (Gilboa et al., 2008), our results indicate that the validity of the supervisor ratings are not compromised by the perceptions of high-stress exposure of their subordinates.

Second, in our theory development, we make some assumptions that we could not test empirically. For instance, we posit that impression management and strain could help explain why JI affects performance. However, we did not measure impression management or hindrance appraisal in the present study. In addition, despite the multi-level and two-source nature of our data, which is a strength we capitalize on in this study, our design was cross-sectional and the testing of a mediation model on single-measurement data could be open to criticism. Even though we were not able to test the role of impression management or hindrance appraisal in our model, our rationale that these explanatory mechanisms could underly the findings in our study was based on empirical evidence from JI research. We encourage future research to explore the processes (e.g., the role of impression management and hindrance appraisal) underlying the relationship between JI (at both the individual and team level) and self and supervisor ratings of employee performance.

Third, the non-probabilistic nature of our sample impedes us from generalizing from our results to the general working population. Despite the fact that our data was collected among Belgian employees working in a variety of industries, caution should be exercised when extrapolating our conclusions to workers in other sectors. It should also be noted that our sample consists mainly of workers with a permanent contract. Levels of job insecurity and relationships may be different among temporary workers (Jiang et al., 2021). Similarly, our findings may not apply to the relationship between JI and performance in other countries, as the countries' social structures and policies may buffer or aggravate the consequences of JI.

Fourth, the cross-sectional nature of our study prevented us from testing for causality, even though our theoretical rationale suggests that a causal relationship may exist (i.e., that JI will predict performance) and aligns with the reasoning provided by several prior contributions (e.g., Carusone et al., 2021; Probst et al., 2020; Stynen et al., 2015; Sverke et al., 2019). Yet, it is possible that self-evaluations of performance can affect how (in)secure employees feel about their employment. If an employee thinks that his or her performance is good (and is seen as good by their supervisor), they might feel confident that they will be able to secure their position in the future. Previous research (Probst et al., 2020) has shown that reversed effects between job insecurity and impression management exist (e.g., impression management at time 1 predicted levels of job insecurity at time 2). The possibility also exists that the relationship between JI and performance is reciprocal; that is, insecure employees perform less well, and those with poor performance are more insecure – effects that might continuously power each other on and result in a downward spiral. With a longitudinal design, future studies might wish to examine cross-lagged relationships between JI and performance in order to shed light on potential causality concerns.

Fifth, in the current study, we did not control for or test individual differences. However, as individual characteristics have been found to predict JI (Debus et al., 2014; Jiang et al., 2021), it is possible that they play an important role in how insecure employees deal with their work situation and how well they perform. A potential avenue for future research might be to explore the personality traits (e.g., openness and agreeableness, the dark triad of personality or regulation focus) that may contribute to how an employee is able to cope with JI.

Practical implications

The current study suggests that, in the context of job insecurity, supervisor ratings are not aligned with employee self-ratings of their performance. Our results show that employees exposed to more job insecurity provided more negative evaluations of their own performance. We suggest that this might reflect an affective component (i.e., anger, disappointment or helplessness caused by the uncertain situation) that is apparently *concealed* from supervisors. At the collective level, it seems that supervisors *believe* their workers are acting in a more proactive and adaptive manner in insecure times, although this is not reflected in the self-ratings of the employees themselves. Our data suggests that, in order to obtain a clearer picture on employee functioning in times of job insecurity, one cannot rely on supervisors or on employee perceptions alone. It is therefore important for companies to be cautious of potentially negative affective reactions (Reisel et al., 2010) which could result in reduced pro-social behaviours and negative attitudes (e.g., increased absence due to sickness, high turnover, lack of trust) and ill health. In times of job insecurity (e.g., when the economic situation is unstable or when lay-offs or mergers are announced), there are several steps organizations can take. They should be alert for performance lapses that may be detrimental to overall organizational performance, as this is key in times of economic turmoil. It is also important, however, that they provide additional support to employees that helps them to enhance their adaptivity and task performance.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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