

## Organizational Change Communication, Workplace Bullying and Job Insecurity: The Moderating Role of Trust in Management

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**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the relationship between organizational change communication and workplace bullying on job insecurity, as well as investigate the moderating role of trust in management. The objects of this research were employees who work in companies affected by Covid-19 in Indonesia, particularly in the tourism, banking, education, and entertainment sectors. The data were obtained through a survey by distributing questionnaires using a purposive sampling technique to 174 respondents, and it was analyzed using the partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results of the study showed that organizational change communication has a negative effect on job insecurity, workplace bullying has a negative effect on job insecurity, and trust in management moderates the positive effect of workplace bullying on job insecurity. However, there is no moderating effect of trust in management on organizational change communication and job insecurity. There are some limitations and suggestions discussed in this paper.

**Keywords:** Organizational change communication, Workplace bullying, Trust in management, Job insecurity

### INTRODUCTION

The economic restructuring, industrial competition, technological developments, and the economic crisis caused labor market disruptions. This condition causes an increasing number of people to feel job insecurity (Nemteanu et al., 2021). In addition, global competition requires organizations to downsize, labor outsourcing, and fluctuating employee demand can cause employees to feel job insecurity (Shoss, 2017). In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, individual perceptions of Covid-19 psychologically can play an important role in shaping the level of job insecurity they feel (Lin et al., 2021). Job insecurity is defined as a threat to the continuity and stability of the job that is currently experienced, or it can be said that the loss of welfare due to the uncertainty of their job (Castiblanque & Calatayud, 2020).

A prior study remarked that job insecurity occurs when a previously safe job becomes insecure and the continuity and stability of work are threatened (Shoss, 2017). A sense of job insecurity emerges from contextual and individual factors (Lee et al., 2018). Environmental conditions can form threats, while individual characteristics can strengthen awareness of these threats (Shoss, 2017). Sverke and Hellgren (2002) suggested the need to examine environmental factors such as labor market characteristics, economic fluctuations, and organizational changes in employment contracts. Individual characteristics, certain conditions, and the

availability of resources also play a role in the formation of feelings of job insecurity (Lee et al., 2018).

It is expected that these factors (contextual & individual) interact in influencing job insecurity, but previous studies have not obtained strong evidence (Debus et al., 2014). Research on predictors of job insecurity has received little attention (e.g., Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 2010), thus, it is needed to be explored more. To the best of our knowledge, several works of literature divide the antecedents of job insecurity into several categories that broadly refer to contextual and individual factors (e.g., Keim et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2018). Later, Shoss (2017) stated that it is necessary to test further how the conditions of the various antecedents apply correctly. One factor that is considered to influence job insecurity is the lack of clear organizational communication.

To convey organizational policies, especially those related to employee work, it is necessary to have effective organizational communication. Clear organizational communication in crises is useful for employees to adjust to reduce the insecurities they feel about the future (Pratama et al., 2021). In the context of organizational change, a lack of organizational communication can increase employees' feelings of job insecurity (Smet et al., 2016). Conversely, adequate communication of organizational change has the potential to reduce feelings of job insecurity (Kramer, 1999). Inadequate organizational communication or lack of information obtained by employees causes increased job insecurity that employees feel (Vander Elst et al., 2010).

Adkins et al. (2001) found that organizational change communication is negatively associated with job insecurity. When organizational communication about change is deemed lost or does not provide sufficient information, employees will seek information through informal sources such as rumors (DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998). A longitudinal study conducted by Kinnune et al. (1999, 2000) showed different results, which found no evidence of a negative relationship between the two. Organizational changes that occur without organizational communication that provides sufficient information arouse employees' feelings of uncertainty, including the continuity of their work. In this study, organizational communication is more focused on forms of organizational communication during the change process in influencing employee job insecurity.

Despite the matter of this theme, research on the relationship between job insecurity and its interpersonal antecedents is still lacking (Shoss, 2017; Glambek et al., 2018). Lee et al. (2018) investigated antecedents of job insecurity, such as demographic variables, individual traits, employability/career adaptability, and behaviors. Saeed et al. (2021) reported that emotional exhaustion affects increasing job insecurity but did not find evidence that perceived employability did not affect job insecurity. Another finding stated that higher change-related self-efficacy was related to lower job insecurity (Roczniewska et al., 2020). Several studies have found a positive effect of burnout on job insecurity, where the higher the level of burnout felt by employees, the higher the job insecurity (Zeida et al., 2022; Opera & Iliescu, 2019).

Another interpersonal factor that may have a significant effect on job insecurity is workplace bullying. The impact of bullying in the workplace has not been widely studied, even though it has the potential to have a significant impact

on those who have experienced it (Glambek et al., 2018). Bullying at work is defined as the continuous unwanted treatment of someone by other people at work and creates social pressure that interferes with mental health for individuals and causes work problems such as job insecurity (Jalali et al., 2020). Workplace bullying is a disturbing factor for the object, so it can have negative impacts such as reduced mental health (Hauge et al., 2010), decreased dedication, and job satisfaction (Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2009).

Several research results regarding the effect of organizational change communication on job insecurity show inconsistencies. For instance, a study by Adkins et al. (2001) showed that organizational change communication is negatively associated with job insecurity. Indeed, Vander Elst et al. (2010) found that inadequate organizational communication received by employees led to increased perceived job insecurity. However, different results were shown from a longitudinal study conducted by Kinnunen et al. (1999, 2000), who revealed no evidence of a negative relationship between the two. The inconsistency of the results of this study can be clarified by including other factors in the study. Trust in management is one of the factors that weaken the influence of organizational change communication and workplace bullying on job insecurity.

The effect of organizational change communication on job insecurity is likely to be weakened by trust in management (Smet, 2016). Employees who receive inadequate organizational change communication are expected to have low job insecurity if they believe that management can provide certainty about their work. Bullying at work has the potential to weaken its effect on job insecurity if the object experienced has trust in management. This study aims to examine the effect of organizational change communication and workplace bullying on job insecurity. It also investigates the moderating effect played by trust in management on the effect of organizational change communication and workplace bullying on job insecurity.

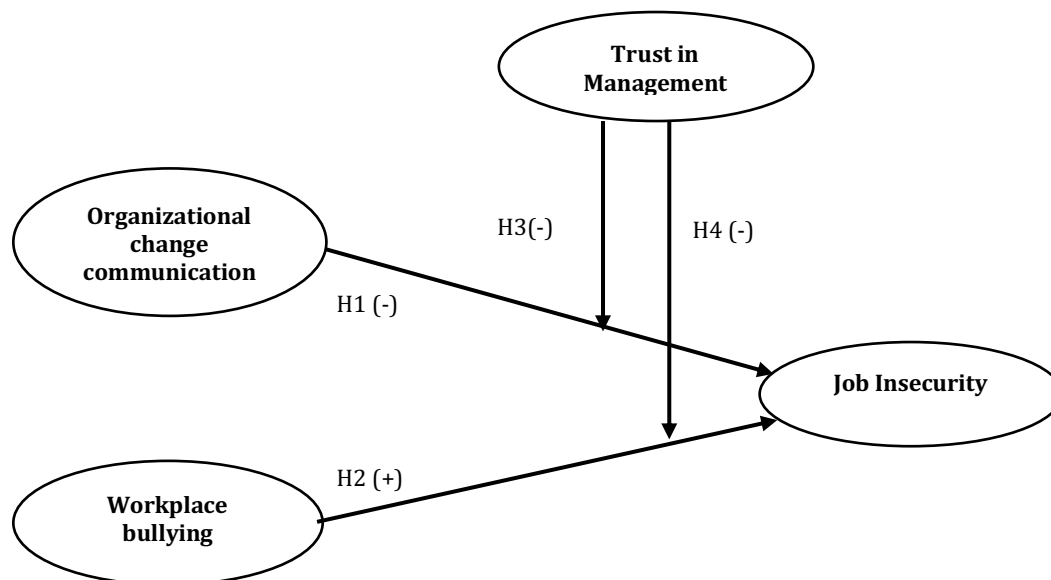
This study contributes significant implications to enriching the literature on job insecurity, specifically by exploring the factors that become its antecedents. This study adds empirical evidence to the antecedents of job insecurity by examining the impact of organizational change communication and workplace bullying. It also examines the role of trust in management in moderating the effect of both antecedents on job insecurity. Practically, it adds a reference for organizational managers in carrying out and implementing organizational communication properly and adequately, especially on ongoing organizational changes to prevent perceived job insecurity among employees. It also serves as guidance for preventing bullying in the workplace and reducing feelings of job insecurity by increasing employee trust in management.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study was designed as explanatory research since the purpose of the research was to examine the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable. The independent variables are organizational change communication and

workplace bullying. The dependent variable is job insecurity, while trust in management acts as a moderating variable. The research model and hypotheses developed are shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Research Model

- H1: Organizational change communication has a negative effect on job insecurity  
 H2: Workplace bullying has a positive effect on job insecurity  
 H3: Trust in management moderates the negative effect of organizational change communication on job insecurity  
 H4: Trust in management moderates the positive effect of workplace bullying on job insecurity

### Sampling and Data Collection

The population in this study are all workers who work in companies affected by Covid-19 in Indonesia, including tourism, finance, fashion, entertainment, education, and other sectors. This population was chosen because it was considered to be able to capture phenomena related to change and job insecurity in accordance with the research context. The workers who work in these sectors have experienced organizational change policies in response to the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. The total number of workers in companies affected by Covid-19 is not known with certainty, so the sampling technique used is non-probability sampling with the respondent criteria, namely: (1) work in companies directly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic (i.e., industrial tourism, entertainment, finance, education, and retail) and (2) a minimum of one year working period.

The data used was primary data obtained by distributing questionnaires to respondents. Data analysis was performed using the partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), and as suggested by Hair et al. (2010), the minimum sample size when using this technique is ten times the number of conceptual framework paths. This research framework has six paths, so we set a minimum sample size of 150 respondents to increase statistical power. From the results of distributing the questionnaires, the obtained data exceeded the minimum number

of samples set with a total of 174, therefore all incoming data was used for the subsequent data processing.

### Measurement

Job insecurity was measured using an instrument developed by De Witte et al. (2014), which consists of four question items. The organizational change communication variable was measured using a 12-item instrument developed by Colquitt (2001). Workplace bullying is measured using the Short-Negative Affective Questionnaire developed by Notelaers et al. (2018), which contains nine questions. Trust in management was measured using an instrument developed by Robinson (1996) consisting of seven questions.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out by first testing the validity and reliability tests. The validity test consists of convergent validity and discriminant validity. Instrument reliability is known by looking at the composite reliability value and Cronbach's Alpha. Hypothesis testing was performed using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) technique with the Partial Least Square (PLS) approach. The model is said to be fit if the Average Path Coefficient (APC), Average R-squared (ARS), and Average Adjusted R-squared (AARS) have significant P-values and Tenenhaus GoF values.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic of Respondents

The characteristics of the respondents include age, gender, work tenure, and industrial sectors. Most respondents were aged 26-30, namely 77 people (44.2%). Based on gender characteristics, the majority of respondents were female, with a total of 97 people (55.8%), while male respondents were 77 people (44.2%). Most respondents have been working for 1-3 years, with a total of 105 people (60.3%). The sectors of industry in which the respondents worked varied, with most respondents working in the hospitality sector, with a total of 48 people (27.5%). The summary of the characteristics of the respondents can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic of Respondents

Profile	Category	Amount	Percentage (%)
Age	≤ 20	1	0.6%
	21-25	51	29.3%
	26-30	77	44.3%
	31-35	27	15.5%
	36-40	7	4.0%
	≥ 41	11	6.3%
Gender	Male	77	44.3%
	Female	97	55.7%
Work tenure	1-3 years	105	60.3%
	4-8 years	51	29.3%
	9-12 years	10	5.7%
	13-16 years	4	2.3%

Profile	Category	Amount	Percentage (%)
<b>Sectors</b>	≥ 16 years	4	2.3%
	Finance	48	27.6%
	hospitality	30	17.2%
	Retail	22	12.6%
	Education	12	6.9%
	Health	9	5.2%
	Communication	9	5.2%
	Entertainment	8	4.6%
	Other	36	20.6%
<b>Total</b>		<b>174</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Measurement Model

The validity test is provided in two ways, namely convergent validity and discriminant validity. The indicator criteria are accomplished to be convergently valid if each data is grouped into one construct (Hair et al., 2014). Another requirement is that the indicator has a loading factor value of more than 0.7 with a P-value below 0.05 (Hair et al., 2014). Several indicators that did not meet the requirements were excluded from the data analysis process. Table 2 shows the loading factor value of each indicator along with its P-value.

**Table 2.** Combining Loading Factor and Cross Loading

	OCC	WB	Jl	TM	P value
OCC3	(0.75)				<0.00
OCC5	(0.76)				<0.00
OCC6	(0.72)				<0.00
OCC9	(0.77)				<0.00
OCC10	(0.62)				<0.00
WB1		(0.67)			<0.00
WB3		(0.73)			<0.00
WB5		(0.66)			<0.00
WB6		(0.65)			<0.00
WB7		(0.71)			<0.00
Jl1			(0.85)		<0.00
Jl2			(0.78)		<0.00
Jl3			(0.83)		<0.00
TM2				(0.70)	<0.00
TM3				(0.78)	<0.00
TM4				(0.69)	<0.00

Note. OCC=Organizational change communication, WB= Workplace bullying, Jl= Job insecurity, TM= Trust in management

Another requirement for testing convergent validity is that the average variance extracted (AVE) value for each variable must be greater than 0.5. From the results of data analysis, it was obtained that the AVE value of each variable was higher than cut-off value, so all variables were declared convergently valid. Table 3 displays the AVE value of each variable.

**Table 3.** AVE Value

	<b>OCC</b>	<b>WB</b>	<b>JI</b>	<b>TM</b>
AVE	0.62	0.53	0.72	0.58

*Note.* OCC=Organizational change communication, WB=Workplace bullying, JI=Job insecurity, TM=Trust in management

The following process is the discriminant validity test to ensure that each variable differs from the other variables. The main requirement for a variable to have discriminant validity is if the indicator has the highest loading value (AVE root) in its variable group (Hair et al., 2014). The results show that each construct has a higher AVE root value than the correlation values between the constructs (see Table 4). Thus, all the variables in this study are discriminantly valid, or in other words, they can explain their constructs.

**Table 4.** AVE square root value for discriminant validity

	<b>OCC</b>	<b>WB</b>	<b>JI</b>	<b>TM</b>
OCC	0.79			
WB	-0.38	0.72		
JI	-0.28	0.54	0.85	
TM	0.54	-0.34	-0.31	0.76

*Note.* OCC=Organizational change communication, WB=Workplace bullying, JI=Job insecurity, TM=Trust in management

A variable is considered reliable when it has a Cronbach's Alpha value and composite reliability greater than 0.60 (Hair et al., 2014). Based on the results of data processing, Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values were obtained for all variables above 0.60, so it can be concluded that all variables are reliable. Cronbach's Alpha value and composite reliability of each variable are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Variable Reliability Value

	<b>OCC</b>	<b>WB</b>	<b>JI</b>	<b>TM</b>
Composite reliability	0.86	0.84	0.88	0.81
Cronbach's Alpha	0.79	0.77	0.80	0.64

*Note.* OCC=Organizational change communication, WB=Workplace bullying, JI=Job insecurity, TM=Trust in management

The model fit test is carried out by checking the P-value on the Average Path Coefficient (APC), Average R-squared (ARS), Average Adjusted R-squared (AARS), and whether there is multicollinearity by looking at the Average Block VIF (AVIF) and Average Full values. Collinearity VIF (AFVIF) (Kock, 2018). A model can be considered strong or weak by looking at the size of the Tenenhaus GoF (GoF) value. As shown in Table 5, the model meets the standards of conformity with the criteria so that further analysis can be conducted to test the hypothesis.

**Table 6.** Goodness of Fit Model

Indicators	Value	Requirement	Conclusion
APC	0.20***	<i>P-sig</i>	Accepted
ARS	0.37***	<i>P-sig</i>	Accepted
AARS	0.36***	<i>P-sig</i>	Accepted
AVIF	1.64	Accepted if $\leq 5$ , Ideally $\leq 3.30$	Ideal
AFVIF	1.53	Accepted if $\leq 5$ , Ideally $\leq 3.30$	Ideal
GoF	0.45	Weak $\geq 0.10$ , Medium $\geq 0.25$ , Strong $\geq 0.36$	Strong Model

Note. APC: Average Path Coefficient, ARS: Average R-squared, AARS: Average Adjusted R-squared, AVIF: Average Block VIF, AFVIF: Average Full Collinearity VIF, GoF: Tenenhaus GoF.  $P < .001 = ***$ ,  $n = 174$ .

### Hypothesis Testing

After conducting a fit model analysis, the next step is testing the structural model to test the proposed hypothesis. Hypothesis testing with structural models was carried out by analyzing the path coefficient value ( $\beta$ ), the coefficient of determination (adjusted R-squared), the level of significance (P-value), along with the effect size for the path coefficient. The results of testing the structural model for testing the hypothesis are shown in Figure 2. The moderation hypothesis is carried out by looking at the path coefficient value and its significance level. A positive path coefficient indicates that the moderating effect is strengthening, while a negative moderating effect indicates that the moderator variable plays a role in weakening the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

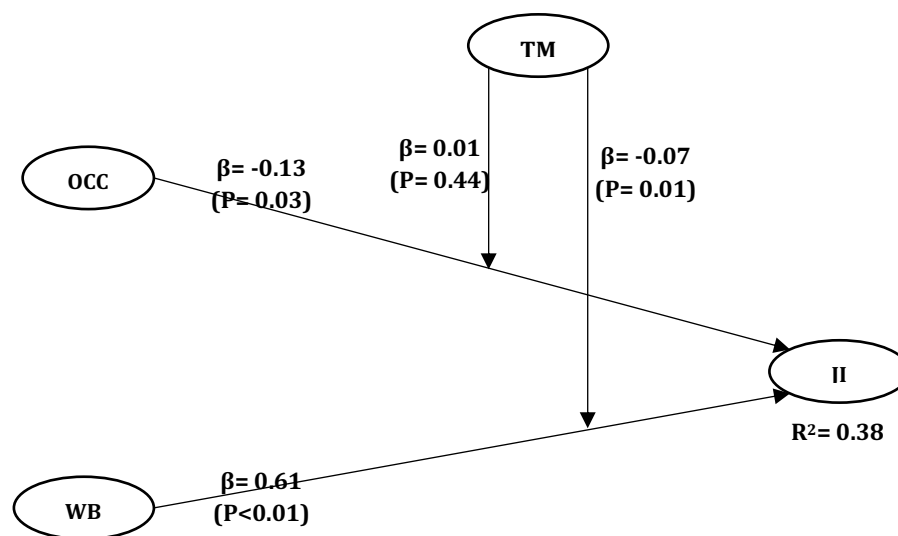
**Figure 2.** Full Model

Figure 2 exhibits the results of structural model testing used to test hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2, hypothesis 3, and hypothesis 4. Figure 2 shows the coefficient value ( $\beta$ ) of the effect of organizational change communication on job insecurity is  $-0.13$  ( $P$ -value =  $0.03$ ), so H1 is supported. Workplace bullying perceived by employees is proven to have a path coefficient value of  $0.61$  with a  $P$ -value  $< 0.01$ . It can be concluded that H2 is supported. The path coefficient value of trust in management moderates the effect of organizational communication on job



insecurity, that is, 0.01 (P-value= 0.44). The P-value of the path coefficient is greater than the threshold, it can be concluded that trust in management does not moderate the effect of organizational communication on job insecurity. Thus, H3 is not supported. The results show that the path coefficient value of the moderating variable of trust in management in the effect of workplace bullying on job insecurity is -0.07, with a P-value of 0.01. It means that there is a moderating effect of the variable trust in management on the effect of workplace bullying on job insecurity, so H4 is supported. The moderating effect of trust in management in this relationship is negative, indicating that trust in management can reduce the negative effects arising from workplace bullying on job insecurity. The summary of the hypothesis testing results is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

	<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>Result</b>
H1	OCC → JI	-0.13	0.03	Supported
H2	WB → JI	0.61	<0.01	Supported
H3	OCC*TM → JI	0.01	0.44	Not Supported
H4	WB*TM → JI	-0.07	0.01	Supported

*Note.* OCC=Organizational change communication, WB=Workplace bullying, JI=Job insecurity, TM=Trust in management

## Discussion

The first hypothesis is that organizational change communication has a negative effect on job insecurity. The results prove that the first hypothesis is supported. The results of this study affirm a prior study by Pratama et al. (2021), who found that organizational communication in times of crisis has a negative effect on job insecurity. In addition, these results are in line with Bordia's (2004), which remarked that the quality of organizational change communication is negatively related to job insecurity. Another study by Vander et al. (2010) also remarked evidence for a negative relationship between organizational change communication and job insecurity. Jiang and Probst (2014) also revealed that positive organizational communication can reduce the level of job insecurity.

The results of this study indicate that employees who receive inadequate organizational change communication will have a higher sense of job insecurity. Feelings of job insecurity can be influenced by organizational environmental factors such as organizational communication. If the organizational communication received by an employee is inadequate and results in unclear information, uncertainty and ambiguity about all matters can trigger job insecurity. The uncertainty that someone feels will occur if the organization does not communicate clearly what to prepare in the face of change (Elving, 2005). The results of this study indicate that there is a negative influence of organizational change communication on job insecurity. It indicates that the more inadequate the communication of organizational change received by employees will promote to the higher the level of job insecurity felt by employees and vice versa.

The second hypothesis states that bullying in the workplace has a positive effect on job insecurity. Based on the test results showed that the second hypothesis is supported. These results reinforce Jalali et al. (2020); Park and Ono (2016), who revealed evidence that bullying behavior positively correlates with

job insecurity. The results of this study corroborate the research of Glambek et al. (2018), who found that workplace bullying has a significant effect on job insecurity. Bullying that is felt continuously by the survivor can trigger the object to feel that the continuity of his work is threatened, thus increasing the level of job insecurity (Glambek et al., 2014). Based on the results, the more workplace bullying employees feel, the higher the level of job insecurity.

The feeling of job insecurity can be caused by pressures from one's social environment. Someone who obtains bullying can be seen by the presence of verbal, physical, or social intimidation from co-workers. The workplace bullying experienced by victims' triggers feelings of anxiety and loss of hope for their future work. Bullying behavior at work usually occurs because survivors do not have equal power to retaliate, and this is a threat to working (Glambek et al., 2018). This increased sense of worry and reduced hope for the continuation of his work in the future is what then creates job insecurity. Bullying behavior in the workplace can cause victims to perceive the continuity of their work as being threatened and therefore show high levels of job insecurity (Jalali et al., 2020).

The third hypothesis is that trust in management has a moderating role in the influence of organizational change communication on job insecurity. However, the result shows that this hypothesis is not supported. The effect of organizational change communication on job insecurity cannot be strengthened or weakened by trust in management. This phenomenon indicates that trust in management cannot overcome the effect of a lack of organizational change communication on the emergence of feelings of job insecurity in employees. This can happen because employees who feel that the communication carried out by the organization needs to be improved will have a little significant impact that can reduce job insecurity because management is considered a representation of the organization.

Even though employees trust management, they will not receive more organizational change information. When the communication of organizational changes received by employees is lacking, they tend to seek information through informal channels such as rumors (Smet et al., 2016). This is in line with the Job Insecurity Framework developed by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984), which explained that rumors evolve in the context of a lack of formal communication. Rumor is a group talk process that discusses something, assesses an unclear situation, and tries to clarify it (Shibutani in Smelt et al., 2016). In an organizational context, employees will discuss and seek clarification regarding the lack of change communication received through the rumor medium (DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998).

The final hypothesis in this study is that trust in management moderates the positive effect of workplace bullying on job insecurity. The result supports the fourth hypothesis. This indicates that trust in management can play a role in strengthening or weakening the effect of workplace bullying received by employees on perceived job insecurity. Dirks and Ferrin (2001) found that trust in management can reduce the stress level felt by employees. The feedback that employee obtains from the trust in their management will acquire the support that strengthens them from social and psychological pressures. Employee may feel that their job will not be safe in the future if he is continuously bullied at work.

The negative impact of work bullying experienced by employees will be minimized when employees acquire support from management as a result of their trust in management. The result showing that the path coefficient is negative proves the role of trust in high management will weaken the influence of workplace bullying felt by employees on the emergence of job insecurity. Conversely, low trust in management will strengthen the perceived influence of workplace bullying on perceived job insecurity.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that organizational change communication has a negative effect on job insecurity, workplace bullying has a negative effect on job insecurity, and trust in management moderates the positive effect of workplace bullying on job insecurity. However, there is no moderating effect of trust in management on organizational change communication and job insecurity. This study has several theoretical contributions to the development of the literature. First, job insecurity can arise when the formal communication of organizational changes is inadequate. In addition, work bullying received by employees at work is also one of the triggering factors for the emergence of job insecurity. In the context of the influence of inadequate organizational change communication, trust in management cannot strengthen or weaken its influence on the emergence of job insecurity.

The findings of this study make a practical contribution to the practice of human resource management. Practitioners are advised to provide adequate information on organizational change plans and processes to minimize the possibility of job insecurity being felt by employees. With the research finding that bullying in the workplace has an impact on increasing levels of job insecurity, organizations should create a conducive and friendly social work environment for all employees. Management can develop an organizational culture that upholds equality and respect for all individuals to ensure that no employee is subjected to bullying treatment. This study is inseparable from limitations that need to be corrected in future research. First, the data collected is cross-sectional, so it cannot explore in detail how the process of bullying in the workplace occurs and influences the formation of job insecurity. Retrieval of cross-sectional data cannot reveal this phenomenon in detail.

Second, there are many unfavorable question items which, if the respondents do not understand carefully, tend to be filled with the same answers as the favorable question items. This causes many instrument items that must be removed from the data processing. Third, the adjusted R-square value on the dependent variable, which is relatively small, indicates that there are many other variables outside of this study that may affect job insecurity. Future research is advised to use longitudinal data to reveal the phenomenon of bullying in the workplace in shaping job insecurity. Fourth, it is recommended to choose instruments that have few unfavorable question items to minimize bias in filling out the questionnaire by respondents who tend to rate all question items well.

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