

## Effect of Role Clarity and Work Overload on Perceptions of Justice and Job Insecurity after Downsizing

Crispen Chipunza<sup>1</sup> and Michael O. Samuel<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Human Resource Department, Central University of Technology, Free State P. Bag X20539, Bloemfontein, 9301, South Africa*

<sup>2</sup>*School of Economic & Business Sciences, Division of Management & Human Resource Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa*  
*E-mail: <sup>1</sup><cchipunza@cut.ac.za>; <sup>2</sup><olorunjuwon.samuel@wits.ac.za>*

**KEYWORDS** Survivors. Organisational Strategies. Volatile Environment. Perceptions

**ABSTRACT** This study investigated the relationship between justice perceptions and job insecurity and how such relationship was affected by the perceptions of role clarity and work overload amongst survivors of downsizing in an economically volatile environment. The research was conducted in selected public and private sector organisations in Zimbabwe. Using a quantitative research approach and a sample of 100 survivors, the results showed correlations amongst workers' perceptions about the relationship, on one hand, between justice and job insecurity and on the other hand, between work overload and role clarity. The study revealed that survivors of the organisations investigated in this study received treatment that exposed them to job insecurity, which is synonymous to injustice. Exposing workers to this type of treatment during and after downsizing created negative perceptions about downsizing exercise and the attendant effect on workplace justice and job security in the volatile work environment.

### INTRODUCTION

The competitiveness and survival of companies now requires human resource management principles and practices that are just, fair and create the sense of job security for employees. This is, however, an illusion in management principles and practices used by most companies today. Most management practices expose workers to unjust treatment during and after downsizing creating negative perceptions about downsizing, and the attendant effect on workplace justice and job security. Contemporary management functions have been amplified by the adoption and usage of technology support in an effort to overcome the change and challenges associated with economic recession and globalization (Kleynhans et al. 2009). Other phenomena such as, political instabilities and social changes, in the Middle East, USA and EU and most especially, the socio-political situation in Africa, have played a significant role in the way

organisations conduct their businesses (Southall 2008). Therefore, in order to remain competitive in the face of such volatility, organisations tend to resort to cutting costs through downsizing using the involuntary workforce reduction strategy (Cameron et al. 1991, 1993). When downsizing takes place, employees who remain (survivors) are concerned with their future in terms of, among other issues, performance in their new roles, the nature of work they will do, and on the one hand, job security, based on 'how' the downsizing process unfolded (Cascio 1993) On the other hand, organisations become concerned with the economic and organisational benefits on their business, often putting the concerns of survivors at the very bottom of their priority lists (Heenan 1989).

Different interests create different priorities and therefore different reactions. While survivors of downsizing and volatile work environment are more concerned with justice and job security, organisations are concerned with competitiveness and organizational success. The interplay between these two differences is area of academic interest and has been given succinct review, consideration and attention in this paper.

Research by Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) showed that involuntary workforce reduction can have negative perceptions of or-

---

*Address for correspondence:*

Crispen Chipunza,  
Central University of Technology,  
1 Park Road, Willows,  
Bloemfontein, 9301, South Africa  
*Telephone:* 051 507 3218  
*Fax:* 051 507 3133  
*E-mail:* cchipunza@cut.ac.za

organisational justice and trust that have the potential to adversely impact survivors' level of commitment and satisfaction with the organisation. Similarly, researchers on downsizing have documented on organisational justice and its interactions with outcome favorability, the nature of work, individual differences of survivors and social ties with victims (Elovainio et al. 2000; Chen et al. 2003); the relationship between trust and justice after downsizing (Brockner 2000; Bews and Rossouw 2002); the relationship between justice, satisfaction and performance (Fischer and Smith 2004) and the role of organisational justice in predicting job satisfaction, organisational commitment, motivation and performance (Robinson 2004). These studies were all done in environments that can be described as stable, politically and economically. To our knowledge, no study has investigated the relationship between justice perceptions and job insecurity and how such a relationship is affected by the perceptions of role clarity and work overload among survivors of downsizing in a politically and economically volatile environment. Given the large scale downsizing that takes place among organisations operating in volatile political and economic environments, and the attention that is paid to the laid-off, that is, victims of the downsizing exercise, it is important to determine how downsizing taking place in such environments affect survivors perceptions on a number of work and job - related variables. In addition, studies have indicated that survivors of downsizing exercise are often neglected in the whole process under the assumption that they have retained their jobs (Heenan 1989). The present study was therefore both exploratory and descriptive in nature.

### **Context of the Study**

The study was done in the context of a country experiencing violent land reform programme, recurrent interference with, and intimidation of the judiciary, as well as the maintenance of unrealistic price controls and exchange rates, leading to a sharp drop in investor confidence. There was virtually no direct foreign investment resulting in 94% unemployment and spiraling hyperinflation (Mail and Guardian 30 January 2009). The inflationary figure stood at 230 million percent, a figure that surpassed the inflation of all other nations. The country had the lowest Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) compared to real growth rate of any country. The country's decision to compulsorily acquire white-owned farms led to a massive reduction in farm produce which in turn affected the availability of inputs to the key manufacturing sector. For example, overall agricultural production in the 2006/07 season was less than 30% compared to the previous seven years (21%) (Zimbabwe Business Watch 2008). A report by the Confederation of Zimbabwe's Industry (CZI) Survey showed that manufacturing continued to under-perform. The sector was estimated to have declined by 7% in 2007 compared to 3.2% in 2005. Thus, a decline in agricultural production had a significant effect on productivity in the manufacturing sector.

One of the organisations that responded to the above external factors was the country's electricity utility company. The organisation experiences a lot of financial constraints as a result of foreign exchange shortage and unsustainable sub-economic electricity tariffs. To make-up for the shortfall in local electricity generation, the organisation entered into power import agreements with the electricity utilities in neighbouring countries. When the utility company failed to pay for the imported electricity, the utility companies from neighbouring countries cut back on the amount of power supply. In addition, the utility company failed to pay its employees a decent salary. Against all these problems and, in order to remain focused in supplying electricity to the population, the organisations had to find ways of reducing costs and remain efficient. This was done by targeting labour costs, through downsizing.

In a similar study by Kivimaki et al. (2001), downsizing also known as involuntary workforce reduction represents a major transition not only for the displaced worker (the victim) but also for the employee who remains in the organisation (survivor). Despite this evidence, most organisations do little in terms of taking care of victims (Heenan 1998). This management practice creates perceptions of injustice and job insecurity amongst survivors with the resultant negative and intended consequences on employees and employers. For example, decreased perceptions of organisational justice during downsizing have been found to adversely impact on survivors' level of commitment and satisfaction with the organisation afterwards (Cooper-Hakim

and Viswesvaran 2005). Similarly, seeing others lose their jobs, survivors may think that the whole downsizing exercise was conducted in an unfair manner and that management ill-treated them. This may result in job insecurity, job dissatisfaction and high turnover rates among survivors (Noer 2000). Survivors may also not know their new roles in the new organisation. There might be too much work to do since there will be fewer employees left. Thus, Mabey and Salaman (2000) contend that downsizing is often perceived by individuals as being threatening. The process requires careful planning to overcome some misperceptions that might have an impact on survivors' behaviour in the new work environment. The interplay between or among the aforementioned perceptions of job insecurity, role ambiguity and work overload might undermine the savings or improvements the organisation hoped to gain through downsizing (Mabey and Salaman 2000).

### **The Concept of Downsizing**

Corporate downsizing represents one of the most problematic issues facing organisations and their employees (Carbery and Garavan 2005). According to Cascio (1993) as cited by Armstrong-Stassen (2002), downsizing can be defined as a set of planned activities undertaken by management to eliminate positions or jobs and eventually head counts. The process may occur by reducing work, eliminating functions, hierarchical levels, or units. It might also involve changing the way employees approach their work so that the core principles of downsizing, for example, simplification and continuous improvement, are embraced as 'way of life' in the behavioural routines of employees (Cameron et al. 1991). The most common used definition of downsizing, which has also been used in this study, is the reduction of lower-level operational staff. Dumaine (1991) posits that organisations that are likely to downsize are those that are struggling to get through hard times, saddled with more debt than ever. When organisations downsize using the workforce reduction strategy, they expect to yield economic as well as organisational gains (Cascio 2000). Economically, it is seen as a safe bet to increase earnings, while in terms of organisational benefits the expected outcomes are lower overheads, less bureaucracy, faster decision making, smoother

communication, greater entrepreneurship and increased productivity (Kernan and Hanges 2002). Whether downsizing brings about these benefits or no, is still a contention among researchers and academics and the debate is still ongoing. However, what is evident is that survivors of a downsizing process develop survivor syndrome – a set of negative experiences and perceptions such as reductions in job security and organisational justice (Hebdon and Brown 2008); increased task demands and feelings of overburdened (Kozlowski et al. 1993). The severity and magnitude of these aspects of survivor syndrome are a function of how the downsizing procedures was carried out. For example, research shows a relationship between procedural justice, job security, and turnover among survivors (Thornhill and Saunders 1998). Similarly, survivors' perception of their new roles was found to be related to distributive justice during downsizing (Mishra and Spreitzer 1998). As such, the current study examines the possibility of interplay among the various survivors' negative or positive reactions to downsizing. Specifically, we examined the possibility of a relationship between justice and job security perceptions, and whether such a relationship is affected by survivors' perceptions of role clarity and work overload.

### **Justice Perception and Job Insecurity**

Greenberg (2000) explains that the term organisational justice pertains to the function that fairness has as a consideration in the organisation. For survivors of downsizing, justice at work revolves around fairness of outcomes of decision-making, fairness of procedures used to make decisions and fairness of how employees were treated during downsizing that is interactional justice (Mishra and Spreitzer 1998; Thornhill and Saunders 1998; Kernan and Hanges 2002). The outcomes commonly associated with distributive justice during downsizing are outcomes of the victims, since survivors often identify with the victim as colleagues, and distribution of resources among remaining survivors (Mishra and Spreitzer 1998). The procedures used to arrive at layoff decisions should be seen as fair by employees. For example, when the layoff decision is based on individual success or ability, survivors are more likely to perceive or evaluate downsizing as predictable and less

threatening. If the decision is seen as politically driven or at random, it is less likely to be perceived as fair and survivors are likely to react negatively towards their jobs, work, and the organisation. Similarly, survivors' perceptions of how victims were treated makes them react positively or negatively to the downsizing process (Kernan and Hanges 2002). A study carried out by Hopkins and Weathington (2006) actually examined perceptions of distributive justice, procedural justice, trust, organizational commitment, organizational satisfaction, and turnover intentions among survivors after downsizing. Results showed that trust partially mediated the relationship between distributive justice, organisational satisfaction and affective commitment. The relationship between procedural justice and turnover intentions was also mediated by trust perceptions. It is therefore prudent to conclude that fairness decisions during downsizing can have implications, negative or positive among the remaining employees pertaining to their jobs, future stay with the organisation and commitment.

Greenhalgh (2000) defined job insecurity as a subjective phenomenon that is based on the individual's perceptions and interpretations of the immediate work environment. In contrast to a job loss, job insecurity refers to the anticipation of a stressful event in such a way that the nature and continued existence of one's job are perceived to be at risk (Greenhalgh 2000). Perceived levels of job insecurity among survivors can be quantitative or qualitative (Hellgren et al. 1999). Quantitative job insecurity include perceived threats to the future existence of one's job, while qualitative insecurity refers to perceived threats of impaired quality in one's employment relationship such as decline in working conditions, decrease in salary assigned to a lower level job position or to another job at the same organisational level but with a reduced job scope or depth. Survivors may also perceive a threat to the future existence of their jobs when some or all functions of a department or division are outsourced (Schermerhorn 2001). Support for the two categories of job insecurity after downsizing has been documented in literature (Moore et al. 2004).

Although limited research on the relationship between organisational justice and job insecurity is available, related studies indicate that negative justice perceptions about the down-

sizing procedure very often lead to distrust of top management and consequently, fear regarding the survivor's security within the organisation (Allen et al. 2001). Additionally, a perceived unfair procedure may be viewed by employees as a violation of the psychological contract, a contract that implies long-term employment in return for hard work and loyalty (Leung and Chang 2002). According to Leung and Chang (2002), this implies that, from the survivor's perspective, the feeling of dependency on the company is transformed into a sense of betrayal as the employer is no longer willing or able to promise job security, pay and benefits, or promotion opportunities. Generally employees expect to be treated fairly and violations of such a psychological contract result in reduced emotional attachment and job security. Leung and Chang (2002) argued that negative reactions of the downsizing process take the form of lower commitment to the organisation and survivors tend to feel insecure and have an increased propensity to leave the organisation. On the other hand, if the organisation is perceived as having been fair to the dismissed employees in the lay-off process, survivors will react positively and the propensity to feel job insecurity will be reduced. As such, within the context of the study, we sought to examine the existence of a relationship between perceived organisational justice and job insecurity.

### **Role Clarity and Job Insecurity**

According to Minda (2000), role clarity can be defined as the subjective feeling of having as much or not as much role relevant information as the person would like to have. After downsizing, survivors may feel uncertain of their roles within the new organisation. They may be assigned new positions which are totally different from what they previously did or what they were trained to do. This may impact heavily on their feelings of job insecurity as they will not be sure of their performance. The effect of role clarity on performance was revealed in a study by Fried et al. (2003) where results showed that job performance increased over time under higher levels of role clarity. Moreover, and, in relation to job security, increase in performance was maximised when both role clarity and job security were high, while deterioration in performance was greatest when role clarity was low and job security was

low (Fried et al. 2003). Research has also found that survivors of a downsizing tend to develop negative perceptions of justice as they may feel that it is unfair for them to be asked to do work they were not trained to do. The concept of role clarity is crucial in all these studies. However, the present study is not interested in the performance of survivors, but whether role clarity affects the observed relationship, if any, between justice perceptions and job insecurity after a downsizing process in an economically volatile environment.

### Downsizing and Work Overload

Beehr (2000) argues that one of the effects of downsizing is the exacerbation of work overload, for example, longer hours, pressure to work overtime, doing tasks in addition to the regular work and, sometimes, at a faster pace. According to Leung and Chang (2002), work overload situation arises when tasks exceed the amount of time and resources available for their accomplishment. The argument is that while downsizing through workforce reduction reduces an organisation's workforce, the same amount of work may remain, which may result in survivors experiencing role overload. Moreover, the remaining employees may be required to perform more tasks or activities they normally do not take part in. In line with this assertion and, according to Fong and Kleiner (2004), a firm's effective management of downsizing is intricately related to the possible strategies of alleviating work overload, among other issues. This is particularly important both during and after the downsizing exercise (Fong and Kleiner 2004). Work overload perceptions can thus lead to unwanted results and harm the restructuring and revitalising efforts of the organisation after a downsizing process. Specifically, survivors can perceive that they are being treated unfairly by being given excess work which might lead to change in work effort and increase in intention to leave. According to Sparrow and Cooper (2003), work overload, job insecurity and intention to leave are all related reflections of discomfort after downsizing and can be high if the downsizing process is poorly handled. If work overload is linked to perceived fairness in the downsizing process and also to job insecurity, one may therefore ask whether survivor's perceptions of the relationship between the two may be affected by perceptions of work overload in a differ-

ent context other than in which the documented relationship were observed.

### Objectives of the Study

In view of the above literature the objectives of the study were:

1. To investigate the relationship between justice perceptions and job insecurity of survivors after downsizing
2. To determine the effect of work overload perceptions on justice and job insecurity perceptions, respectively, after downsizing
3. To determine the effect of role clarity perceptions on justice and job insecurity perceptions, respectively, after downsizing
4. To make recommendations on how survivors should be managed when organisations decide to downsize.

Given the above objectives, this study hereby hypothesized as follows:

*Hypothesis 1:* There is a significant relationship between justice perceptions and job insecurity among survivors after downsizing.

*Hypothesis 2:* Role clarity perceptions have significant positive effect on justice and job insecurity perceptions, respectively, after downsizing.

*Hypothesis 3:* Work overload perceptions have a significant positive effect on justice and job insecurity perceptions, respectively, after downsizing.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Approach

The research was conducted within the positivist paradigm. Specifically, a quantitative approach was employed. This allowed the researcher to formulate the study hypotheses. The study was descriptive in nature. The aim was to establish the existence of a relationship between survivors' perceptions of justice and job security after downsizing and how such determined relationship is affected by perceptions of work overload and role clarity or ambiguity.

### Research Participants

The population for the study consisted of 300 employees employed by the organisation at the time of the study. These were both perma-

nent and casual employees. From the total population, 150 were permanent employees who had survived the downsizing. This constituted the sampling frame of the study. According to Bryman and Cramer (2005), a relatively smaller population would need a large percentage of population to draw representative and accurate predictions and conclusions. They recommend that with a population of between 150 and 200, 66% should constitute the sample. A sample of 100 employees was therefore randomly selected for the study.

In the sample, 68% of the respondents were males and 32% were females. Furthermore, 90% of the respondents were middle level employees and 10% were low level employees. The age range of the sample was between 25 and 56. In the sample, the highest educational qualification was a master's degree and the lowest was ordinary level. The tenure for the sample ranged between 2 and 21 years of employment with the organisation.

### Measuring Instruments

Four questionnaires, using a Likert scale and worded differently for the different sections in each questionnaire, were used to collect data from the respondents. The first questionnaire was a closed-ended questionnaire developed by Ashford Lee and Bobko (1989) to measure survivors' perceptions of job insecurity. The sections in the questionnaire measured (1) importance of job features (*How important are the following features to you personally?* - Physical demands your job places on you) (2) perceptions of threats to various job characteristics or features (I may lose my job and be moved to a lower position within the organisation) and (3) probability that changes could occur that would negatively affect each of these job characteristics or features (*Looking to the future, what is the probability that changes could occur that would negatively affect the freedom to schedule your own work?*) The second questionnaire was a thirteen items scale on role overload developed by Reilly (1982) with questions like: *There are too many demands on my time.* The third questionnaire, developed by Rizzo et al. (1995) contained thirteen items on role clarity. Example of question in the questionnaire was: *My job has clear, planned goals and objectives.* The fourth questionnaire, developed by Moor-

man (1991) had nine items on justice perceptions. Example of question in the questionnaire was: *To what degree do you feel your organisation was fair in carrying out the lay-off process?* The reliability coefficient for the job insecurity scale was 0.90; justice perceptions 0.80, role clarity 0.86 and work overload 0.84. A Cronbach alpha co-efficient level of 0.50 and above is regarded as acceptable.

### Research Procedure

The questionnaires were put together to form one large questionnaire for the study. The combined questionnaire was randomly distributed with the help of a human resources person identified by the organisation at each station. Distribution was done during the lunch breaks to avoid disrupting the normal flow of work.

## RESULTS

### Statistical Analysis

Measures of central tendency and dispersion for the responses of each variable under investigation in the study were computed to assess survivors' perceptions of role clarity, work overload, job insecurity and justice perceptions. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to examine the relationship between job insecurity and justice perceptions. It was also used to ascertain whether a statistically significant relationship existed between work overload and justice perceptions, work overload and role clarity, job insecurity and role clarity, justice perceptions and role clarity. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the effects of role clarity and work overload on justice perceptions and job insecurity, respectively. All tests were carried out at a 5% level of significance.

### Descriptive Statistics

The median point of 3.0 for the Likert scales used in the study was regarded as the score against which the means obtained were compared. The higher the mean score value obtained, the more positive or negative survivors' perceptions were, depending on how the questions were worded. The lower the mean score, the negative survivors' perceptions were.

With a mean score of 4.0, Table 1 shows that survivors felt threatened in the current environment after downsizing. Survivors felt insecure regarding their job characteristics with a mean score of 3.61. A mean score of 3.57 indicated that survivors were clear regarding their roles. With a mean score of 3.26, survivors felt they were overloaded with work after downsizing. Overall, survivors felt insecure in their current jobs as indicated by a mean score of 3.21. The degree of job insecurity in relation to negative change in the survivors' current environment was shown by a mean score of 2.60. In addition, job security in terms of changes in survivors' job characteristics had a mean score of 2.59. These results indicate positive perceptions regarding job security after downsizing. Justice perceptions had a mean of 2.20 showing that survivors had negative perceptions regarding the fairness exercised by management during downsizing.

*Hypothesis 1:* There is a significant relationship between justice perceptions and job insecurity among survivors after downsizing.

As indicated in Table 2, there was a significant inverse relationship between justice perceptions and job insecurity in the current environment ( $r = 0.199$ ;  $df = 98$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). There was also a significant direct relationship between justice perceptions and job insecurity due to change ( $r = 0.521$ ;  $df = 98$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). There was a significant but inverse relationship between jus-

tice perceptions and job insecurity due to change in job characteristics ( $r = 0.235$ ;  $df = 98$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). These results indicate that the hypothesis was partially rejected.

*Hypothesis 2:* Role clarity perceptions have significant positive effect on justice and job insecurity perceptions, respectively, after downsizing.

**Table 3: One way ANOVA for effect of role clarity**

Model	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Regression	4.74	1	4.74	11.62	0.05*
Residual	4.90	12	.408		
Total	9.64	13			

Table 3 shows that role clarity does have an effect on the relationship between justice perceptions and job insecurity.  $F(11.62) = 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ). The hypothesis was therefore not rejected.

*Hypothesis 3:* Work overload perceptions have a significant positive effect on justice and job insecurity perceptions, respectively, after downsizing.

Table 4 shows that work overload had a positive effect on the relationship between justice perceptions and job insecurity  $F(36.42) = 0.000$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The hypothesis was therefore not rejected.

**Table 1: Mean scores (Descriptive statistics)**

	<i>N</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>		<i>Std.</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	
	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Statistic</i>	<i>Std. error</i>
Work overload	100	3.38	1.62	5.00	3.2623	972E-02	.7972	.120	.241
Role clarity									
Justice perception	100	3.18	1.82	5.00	3.5755	190E-02	.6190	.403	.241
Job insecurity (current environment)	100	3.22	1.00	4.22	2.2033	168E-02	.8468	.469	.241
Job insecurity (due to change)	100	2.60	2.40	5.00	4.0070	371E-02	.5871	.657	.241
Job insecurity (job characteristics)	100	3.30	1.00	4.30	2.6080	650E-02	.7650	.200	.241
Job insecurity (post future characteristics)	100	3.90	1.10	5.00	3.6130	903E-02	.8903	-1.097	.241
Overall job insecurity	100	2.90	1.00	3.90	2.5920	457E-02	.7457	-.480	.241
Valid N (listwise)	100	1.92	2.25	4.18	3.2050	532E-02	.4532	-.336	.241

**Table 2: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation testing**

	<i>Work overload</i>	<i>Role clarity</i>	<i>Justice percep- tions</i>	<i>Job inse- curity/ current environ- ment</i>	<i>Inse- curity (due to change)</i>	<i>Job inse- curity (job chara- cteristics)</i>	<i>Job inse- curity (possi- ble future change)</i>	<i>Overall job inse- curity</i>
<i>Work Overload</i>								
Pearson correlation	1.000	.041	-.260**	.166	-.301**	.062	.093	.004
Sig. (2-tailed) N	.100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Role Clarity</i>								
Pearson correlation	.041	1.000	.333**	.200*	.226	.215*	-.085	.231*
Sig. (2-tailed) N	.689	100	.001	.046	.024	.031	.400	.021
<i>Justice Perceptions</i>								
Pearson correlation	-.260**	.333**	1.000	-.199*	.521*	-.235	-.170	-.030
Sig. (2-tailed) N	.009	.001	100	.047	.000	.019	.091	.767
<i>Job Insecurity (Current Environment)</i>								
Pearson correlation	.166	.200*	-.199*	1.000	.002	.512**	.248*	.678*
Sig. (2-tailed) N	.098	.046	.047	100	.983	.000	.013	.000
<i>Job Insecurity (Due To Change)</i>								
Pearson correlation	-.301**	.226*	.521**	.002	1.000	.023	.220*	.502*
Sig. (2-tailed) N	.002	.024	.000	.983	100	.818	.028	.000
<i>Job Insecurity (Job Characteristics)</i>								
Pearson correlation	.062	.215*	.235*	.512**	-.023	1.000	.026	.658*
Sig. (2-tailed) N	.0540	.031	.019	.000	.818	100	.796	.000
<i>Job Insecurity (Possible Future Characteristics)</i>								
Pearson correlation	.093	.085	-.170	.248*	.220*	.026	1.000	.597**
Sig. (2-tailed) N	.360	.400	.091	.013	.028	.796	100	.000
<i>Overall Job Insecurity</i>								
Pearson correlation	-.004	.231*	-.030	.678**	.502**	.658**	.597**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed) N	.965	.021	.767	.000	.000	.000	.000	100

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.005 level (2-tailed)



**Table 4: One way ANOVA for effect of work overload**

<i>Model</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Regression	19.23	1	19.23	36.42	.000*
Residual	51.75	98	.528		
Total	70.98	99			

The aforementioned results indicate the fulfillment of objectives 1, 2 and 3 as they occur.

### DISCUSSION

Justice perceptions had a direct relationship with job insecurity due to change associated with downsizing. The more employees perceived the organisation to have been unfair in carrying out the downsizing exercise, the more insecure they felt. These results concur with Hellgren and Pettersson (1999) who argue that change from a traditionally secure working environment to a rapidly changing and insecure one could be expected to have an impact on the well being, work attitudes and behaviour of survivors. Uncertainty might be triggered by the non-participation of survivors in the downsizing process as well as not knowing when the next wave of downsizing will take place.

Justice perceptions had an inverse significant relationship with job insecurity due to changes in job characteristics such as autonomy, flexibility, reporting lines and so on. Even though survivors perceived the organisation to have been unfair in carrying out the downsizing exercise, they were more secure with their jobs in the current environment. Schermerhorn (2001) contends that survivors might feel secure with their jobs after downsizing because organisational membership and all that such membership means to the individual would have been lost. Thus, even though survivors felt that the organisation was unfair in carrying out the downsizing exercise, they felt secure because they managed to survive and they still had their jobs.

Role clarity and work overload had an effect on justice perceptions and job insecurity. This means that the addition or removal of either role clarity or work overload affected perceptions of justice and insecurity. When the survivors are clear with their jobs, their perceptions of injustice and job insecurity are reduced. On the other hand, when survivors perceive work overload,

their perceptions of justice and job insecurity increase. Beehr (2000) argues that survivors are likely to find that their jobs have been significantly modified or eliminated after downsizing. In such cases, perceptions of unfairness and insecurity may result as employees think about the negative consequences of not having enough information about their jobs. This may result in anxiety and stress. If there are no proper channels of communication and feedback, survivors will suffer from role ambiguity which will in turn lower their feelings of justice towards the organisation.

### CONCLUSION

The uniqueness and strength of this study is its focus on investigating downsizing in an economically unstable environment. In summary, the paper has directed attention towards further investigation of the variables in other similar environment, in Africa or other parts of the world. Results of this research have identified both direct and inverse relationship between job security and justice perceptions among the survivors. The inverse relationship is unique to this study as no previous studies have reported such a relationship, even in stable economic environments. The results also indicate that when organisations downsize in an unstable economic environment, survivors' role clarity and work overload perceptions affected the relationship between justice perceptions and job insecurity. Although future research might be welcome to clarify this finding, the managerial implications clearly showed that downsizing planners in unstable environments may benefit from instituting policies that focus on considering justice, role clarity, work overload and job insecurity perceptions before, during and after downsizing.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of these results, management should involve both victims and survivors of downsizing during and after the downsizing process. Although survivors will not be losing their jobs, they have as much right to know what will be going on in the organisation as victims. Involvement of survivors in decision making results in positive perceptions of justice which is healthy for the organisation. Survivors will feel that they

belong to the organisation, thus minimizing their job insecurity. In order to make survivors aware of the roles and duties within the new organisation, management should consider holding training workshops and communicate each individual's roles. Since some employees will be doing jobs they were not trained to do, they need on-the-job training to enable them to perform their duties well. Organisations should consider instituting performance management systems in order to ensure that survivors develop positive justice perceptions before and after downsizing. This enhances their job security perceptions.

### REFERENCES

- Allen TD, Freeman DM, Russell JEA, Reizenstein RC, Rentz JO 2001. Survivor reactions to organisational downsizing: Does time ease the pain. *J of Occ and Organl Psych*, 74: 145-164.
- Armstrong-Stassen M 2002. The effect of repeated management downsizing. *Oxf Univ*, 10: 79-80.
- Ashford SJ, Lee C, Bobko P 2000. Content, causes and consequences of job insecurity: A theory-based measure and substantive test. *Acad of Managt J*, 32(4): 803-829.
- Beehr TA 2000. Perceived situational moderators of the relationship between subjective role ambiguity and strain. *J of App Psych*, 61: 35-40.
- Brockner J 2000. The effects of work layoffs on survivors: Research, theory and practice. In: BM Staw, LL Cummings (Ed.): *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 10(1): 213-255.
- Bews N, Rossouw D 2002. The role of business ethics in facilitating trustworthiness. *J of Bus Eth*, 39(4): 377-390.
- Bryman A, Cramer D 2005. *Quantitative Data Analysis with SPSS 12 and 13: A Guide for Social Scientists*. UK: Routledge.
- Cameron KS, Freeman SJ, Mishra AK 1991. Best practices in white-collar downsizing: Managing contradictions. *Acad of Managt Exe*, 5(3): 57-73.
- Cameron KS, Freeman SJ, Mishra AK 1993. Downsizing and redesigning organisations. In: G Huber, W Glick (Eds.): *Organisational Change and Redesign*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 19-63.
- Carbery R, Garavan TN 2005. Organisational restructuring and downsizing: Issues related to learning, training and employability of survivors. *J of Europ Industl Tr*, 29(6): 488-508.
- Cascio WF 1993. Downsizing. What do we know? What have we learned? *Exe*, 7(1): 193-204.
- Cascio WF 2000. Downsizing. What do we know? What have we learned? *Acad of Managt Exe*, 7(5): 1-14.
- Chen Y, Brockner J, Greenberg J 2003. When is it a "pleasure to do business with you?" The effects of status, outcome favourability and procedural fairness. *Organl Beh and Hum Dec Proc*, 92(4): 1-21.
- Cohen-Charash Y, Spector P 2001. The role of justice in organizations meta-analysis. *Organl Beh and Hum Dec Proc*, 6: 278-321.
- Cooper-Hakim A, Viswesvaran C 2005. The construct of work commitment: Testing an integrative framework. *Psych Bull*, 131(2): 241-259.
- Dumaine B 1991. How to manage recession. *Fort*, 5(11): 58-60.
- Elovainio M, Kivimaki M, Vahtera J 2000. Organisational justice: Evidence of a new psychological predictor of health. *Amer J of Pub Health*, 92(1): 105-108.
- Fischer R, Smith P 2004. Values and organisational justice performance- and seniority-based allocation criteria in the United Kingdom and Germany. *J of Cross-Cult Psych*, (6): 669-689.
- Fong K, Kleiner BH 2004. New Development Concerning the Effect of Work Overload on Employees. *Managt Res News*, 27(4): 9-16. From <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/10.1108/01409170410784419> (Retrieved September 13, 2008).
- Fried Y, Slowik LH, Shperling Z, Franz, C, Ben-Dav HA, Avital, N, Yeverehyahu U 2003. The moderating effect of job security on the relation between role clarity and job performance: A longitudinal field study. *Hum Relat*, 56: 787.
- Greenberg J 2000. Cultivating an image of justice: Looking fair on the job. *Acad of Managt Exec*, 2: 155-158.
- Greenhalgh L 2000. Organisational decline. In: SB Bacharach (Ed.): *Research in the Sociology of Organisations*, 1: 2-5.
- Hebdon R, Brown TC 2008. *Industrial Relations in Canada*. Toronto: Thomson Nelson.
- Heenan DA 1989. The downside of downsizing. *The J of Bus Strat*, Nov-Dec: 18-23.
- Hellgren J, Pettersson P 1999. A two-dimensional approach to job insecurity: Consequences for employee attitudes and well being. *Europ J of Work and Organl Psych*, 8(2): 134-149.
- Hellgren J, Sverke M, Isaksson K 1999. A two-dimensional approach to job insecurity: Consequences for employees attitudes and well-being. *Europ J of Work and Organl Psych*, 8(2): 179-195.
- Hopkins SM, Weathington BL 2006. The relationships between justice perceptions, trust, and employee attitudes in a downsized organization. *The J of Psych*, 140(5): 477-498.
- Kernan M, Hanges P 2002. Survivor reactions to reorganization. Antecedents and consequences of procedural, interpersonal and informational justice. *J of App Psych*, 87(5): 916-928.
- Kivimaki M, Vahtera J, Pentti J, Thomson L, Griffiths A, Cox T 2001. Downsizing, changes in work, and self-rated health of employees: A 7-year 3-wave panel study. *Anx, Stress and Cop*, 14: 59-73.
- Kleynhans R, Markham L, Meyer W, van Aswegen S, Pilbeam E 2009. *Human Resource Management. Fresh Perspective*. Cape Town: Pearson.
- Kozlowski SW, Chao GT, Smith EM, Hedlund J 1993. Organisational downsizing: Strategies, interventions, and research implications. In: CL Cooper, IT Robertson (Eds.): *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. New York: Wiley.

- Leung ASM, Chang LMK 2002. Organizational downsizing: psychological impact on surviving managers in Hong Kong. *Asia Pac Bus Rev*, 8(3): 76-94.
- Mabey C, Salaman G 2000. *Strategic Human Resource Management*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Mail and Guardian –Zim Unemployment Skyrockets. *Mail and Guardian*, Weekly, January 30 2009, P. 14.
- Minda G 2000. Opportunistic downsizing of aging workers: The 1990's version of age and pension discrimination in employment. *Hast Law J*, 4: 23-26.
- Mishra A, Spreitzer G 1998. Explaining how survivors respond to downsizing: The roles of trust, empowerment, justice and work redesign. *Acad of Managt Rev*, 23: 567-589.
- Moore S, Grunberg L, Greenberg E 2004. Repeated downsizing contact: The effects of similar and dissimilar layoff experiences on work and well being outcomes. *J of Occup Health Psych*, 9(3): 247-257.
- Noer DM 2000. *Healing the Wounds. Overcoming Trauma of Layoffs and Revitalising Downsized Organisations*. USA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Reilly E 1982. Working wives and convenience consumptions. *J of Cons Res*, 8: 407- 418.
- Rizzo JR, House RJ, Lirtzman SI 1995. Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organisations. *Adm Quart*, 15(7): 150-163.
- Robinson K 2004. *The Impact of Individual Differences on the Relationship between Employees' Perceptions of Organizational Justice and Organizational Outcome Variables*. PhD Dissertation. Alliant International University, San Diego, CA.
- Schermerhorn J 2001. *Management*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Southall R 2008. Doing business in Africa. *J of Contemp Afr Stud*, 26(2): 223-238.
- Sparrow P, Cooper CL 2003. *The Employment Relationship: Key Challenges for HR*. UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Thornhill A , Saunders MNK 1998. The meanings, consequences and implications of the management of downsizing and redundancy: A review. *Pers Rev*, 27(4): 271-295.
- Zimbabwe Business Watch: Week 11. Zimbabwe Situation. March 11, 2008. From< [http://www.zimbabwe-situation.com/marc11a\\_2008.html# Z8](http://www.zimbabwe-situation.com/marc11a_2008.html# Z8)> (Retrieved March 17, 2008).