

# **Organizational Downsizing as a Stressor Event and Psychological Strain Among Survivors: The Role of Work Condition**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Organizational downsizing, commonly known as workforce reduction or layoffs, has become a prevalent strategy in the modern business landscape due to various economic, technological, and competitive factors. Downsizing involves a deliberate reduction in an organization's workforce, often aimed at achieving cost efficiency, enhancing competitiveness, or adapting to changing market conditions. While downsizing may provide short-term benefits to organizations, it often creates a challenging and stressful environment for the employees who remain, leading to significant psychological strain. This paper explores the relationship between organizational downsizing and psychological strain among surviving employees, with work conditions (specifically focusing on job demands like job insecurity and job overload) as a mediator. By investigating the mediating variable, this research aims to shed light on the mechanisms through which downsizing influences psychological strain, offering insights that can guide organizations in managing downsizing processes more effectively and mitigating the negative consequences on employees. This study uses quantitative methods using descriptive analysis where data are collected through surveys distributed to employees who had experienced downsizing within the last year. These surveys included validated scales to measure psychological strain, work condition, and downsizing gain deeper insights into the subjective experiences and perceptions related to downsizing. Further details about the research findings will be elaborated in this paper.

**Keywords:** Organization downsizing; Psychological Strain; Work Condition; Job Insecurity; Job Overload

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## **1. Introduction**

In the current business landscape, organizations have numerous options to enhance organizational performance to be more effective and efficient. To move in that direction, many changes need to be considered. Organizational change is one of the factors that organizations must take into account because it can influence employee performance. Organizations that cannot adapt tend to lag behind in their development and struggle to compete with other companies due to a lack of improvement in the quality and quantity of the organization (Shabrina, 2021). Therefore, organizations need the ability to identify technological and informational advancements to achieve their overall goals. But, organizational change or downsizing can lead to psychological strain.

Psychological strain is the negative psychological impact of stressors on an individual's well-being, which can manifest in various ways, including anxiety, depression, burnout, and physical symptoms such as headaches or stomach problems. Psychological strain is important for performance because it can have significant negative consequences on an individual's health, well-being, and work performance. For example, psychological strain can lead to decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, and higher turnover rates (Zhang, J., 2014), (Tang WG & Vandenberghe C, 2021).

Organizational downsizing refers to the process in which organizations reduce their operational costs by reducing headcount. This may include reducing the workforce's size by offering voluntary separation or early retirement programs, closing facilities, or involuntarily terminating employees through layoffs (Frone, M. R., & Blais, A. R., 2020). Organizations often justify downsizing with the expectation of improved organizational performance. However, research has shown that downsizing can have negative effects on the attitudes and health of employees who remain in the organization. Downsizing survivors may experience psychological strain because of the downsizing process (Dlouhy, K & Casper, 2021).

PT XYZ as a property developer company underwent organizational downsizing as a part of organizational changes. This constituted one of the major change strategies that took place in mid-May 2023, including downsizing and restructuring. The structural changes included streamlining several divisions and altering the work system for the marketing team. This strategy was implemented to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the company in achieving its goals. Such rapid changes had an impact on the company's sales performance in each region.

Initial observations indicated a decline in employee performance due to downsizing, as the streamlining resulted in an increased workload for employees to compensate for those who were laid off. Therefore, it is crucial to consider work conditions such as job demands, like job insecurity and job overload. Based on the research findings, one potential work condition that can mediate the relationship between downsizing and psychological strain is job demands. Downsizing can lead to heightened job demands, such as increased workloads and job insecurity, which can have a negative impact on employee health and well-being (Moore, Sarah et al., 2003). Therefore, it is important for organizations to consider these work conditions when implementing downsizing strategies to minimize the negative impact on employee psychological strain. Based on this background, the researcher will conduct a research titled "Organizational Downsizing as a Stressor Event and Psychological Strain Among Survivors: The Role of Work Conditions."

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Psychological Strain*

Psychological strain is a construct that refers to the negative psychological impact of stressors on an individual's well-being. It can manifest in various ways, including anxiety, depression, burnout, and physical symptoms such as headaches or stomach problems. Psychological strain can be caused by a variety of factors, including work overload, job insecurity, and social or financial stressors. Research has shown that psychological strain can have significant negative consequences on a surviving employee's psychological and physical health. Therefore, it is

important for organizations to address the psychological strain caused by downsizing to promote a healthy and productive work environment (Lee BH et al., 2022)

## *2.2 Organizational Downsizing*

Organizational downsizing represents a significant organizational change, involving staff reductions within the company or create leaner and more efficient businesses (Cascio, 1993). Successfully downsizing can be challenging and is rarely risk-free, but a strategic and careful approach to downsizing can mitigate potential damage and put a struggling organization on the road to success. Either downsizing can have negative consequences for both the employees who are terminated and those who remain in the organization. Downsizing can create gaps within the workload, which adds pressure to the remaining employees to complete their current job functions and pick up additional work to compensate for the terminated employees. The additional responsibilities, on top of their current ones, can create stress and pressure on remaining employees and negatively affect their morale and motivation. Downsizing can have significant negative consequences on an individual's health, well-being, and work performance (N., Shalini & Maiya, Umesh, 2019).

H1: Organizational Downsizing affects Psychological Strain.

## *2.3 Work Condition*

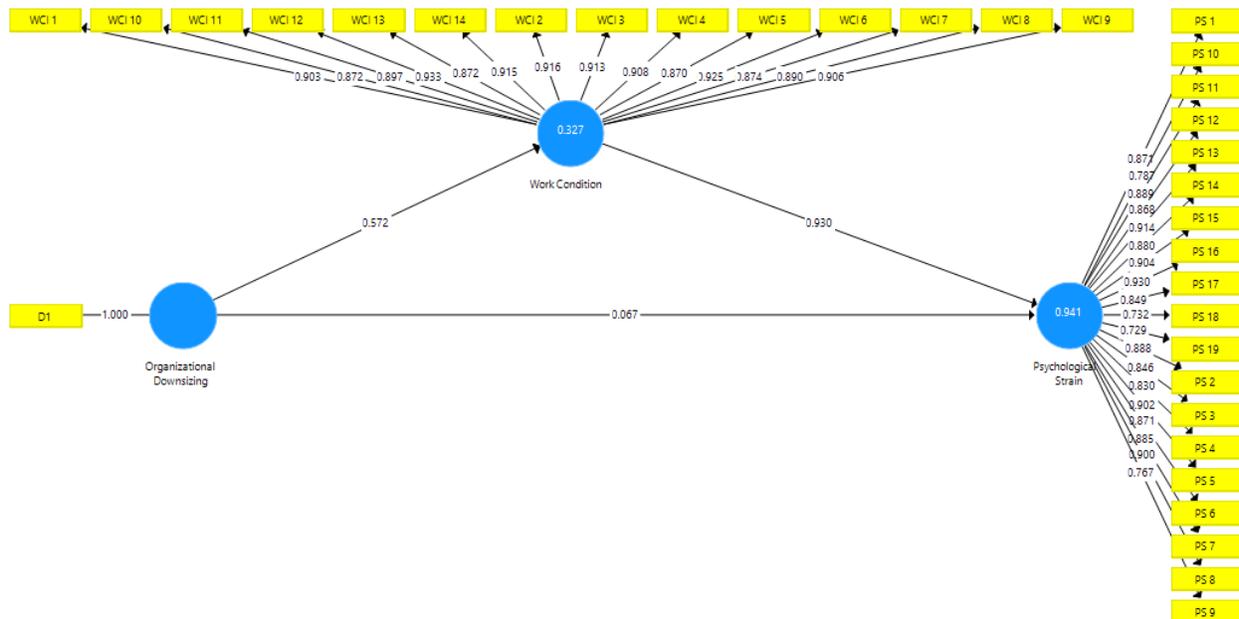
Work conditions play a mediating role in the relationship between organizational downsizing and employee psychological strain : that is, decreases in psychological and physical health is crucial, as they could potentially be the focus of workplace interventions. Downsizing is associated with an increase in work overload and job insecurity, which in turn relates to increases in employee strain. Work overload is a job demand that involves having to do a large amount of work in too little time (Spector & Jex, 1998). Downsizing survivors often have to complete the tasks of downsizing victims in addition to their own (Boyd, Tuckey, & Winefield, 2014; Cascio, 1993; Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002), and the additional tasks are seldom equally distributed and match surviving employees' competencies (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998). (Katja Dlouhy & Anne Casper, 2020).

Job insecurity is a job demand (Cheng & Chan, 2008) that is defined as a perceived threat to the continuity and stability of employment (Shoss, 2017). It can be triggered by downsizing, which is seen as a warning sign that jobs in an organization are not safe (Amundson et al., 2004; Maertz et al., 2010; Roskies & Louis-Guerin, 1990; Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002). Due to its threatening nature, job insecurity is associated with anxiety and worry (Shoss, 2017), which are indicators of increased activation levels that may cause strain reactions (Meurs & Perrewé, 2011). Supporting this reasoning, previous studies provide evidence that job insecurity is related.

H2: Organizational Downsizing affects work conditions.

H3: Work Conditions affect Psychological Strain.

H4: Organizational Downsizing affects Psychological Strain through Work Conditions.



Picture 1. Model of Research and Loading Factor on Calculate Menu PLS Algorithm

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Procedure, Data Collection and Sample

This type of research is a survey research with a descriptive quantitative discussion approach. Survey research is research by distributing questionnaires. While the descriptive analysis method is the data analysis method using statistics by describing the data that has been collected (Sugiyono, 2013). Researchers did not give treatment to this study. The target population in this study were all 54 employees of PT XYZ as a developer company in Sub Holding I who have worked for at least 1 year in 2023. Taking the number of samples using non-probability sampling technique with saturated sampling. Saturated sampling is a sampling technique if all members of the population are used as samples, Sugiyono (2015: 118).

#### 3.2 Survey Translation, Structure and Measures, Tools

According to a study by Rosid et al., (2020), the questionnaire, which was adapted from an English questionnaire translated into Indonesian aimed to ensure that the meaning of the statements in the questionnaire remained consistent when crossing language and cultural boundaries. To measure downsizing, a single question was used: "In the past year, have there been downsizing or layoffs in your immediate work environment?" at the beginning. Respondents could answer with 1 (yes) or 0 (no) Dlouhy, K, Casper, A. (2021). Given the significance of downsizing's effects on individual employees, using individual-level information regarding downsizing or layoffs was deemed appropriate (Amabile & Conti, 1999). Previous research has also examined longer-term consequences following downsizing because the negative effects of downsizing may take time to become apparent (Allen et al., 2001; Armstrong-Stassen, 2002; Harney et al., 2018; Iverson & Zatzick, 2011; Maertz et al., 2010; Trevor & Nyberg, 2008).

Regarding work conditions (specifically, job demands such as work overload and job insecurity), work overload was assessed using a six-item scale ( $\alpha = 0.76$ ) from the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ; Kristensen, Hannerz, Høgh, & Borg, 2005), an example item was, "Do you have sufficient time for your work tasks?" Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never or hardly ever) to 5 (always). Meanwhile, job insecurity was measured with 8 item scales from Alfianda (2022).

Psychological strain relates to the individual’s reported ability to adjust psychologically and emotionally. Psychological strain can be seen in affective, subjective responses of various types, including: anxiety, depression and lethargy (Osipow, 1998; Osipow & Davis, 1988; Swanson, 1991). Using scales 10 (ten) psychological strain and 9 (nine) physical strain from Layne, C. M., Hohenshil, T. H., & Singh, K. (2004).

### 3.3 Data Analysis Tools

This research was conducted using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis method with SmartPLS software. The research went through several stages in interpreting the results of the SmartPLS SEM analysis, which include measurement model evaluation (outer model), structural model evaluation (inner model), direct influence and mediation hypothesis testing.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Respondent Profile

Respondents in this study were 54 employees of developer company PT XYZ in Purwokerto. The age of workers is between 21-48 years with 47.3% male respondents and 52.7% female respondents from various divisions and average of 1 years working in the company.

### 4.2 Outer Model Evaluation

#### 4.2.1 Convergent Validity

In this study, the loading factor threshold used is based on a value greater than 0.7. This classification is according to Ghozali and Latan (2015:74), where values above 0.7 are considered suitable for confirmatory research, and loading factors within the range of 0.6 to 0.7 are still acceptable for exploratory research. The detailed results of the convergent validity testing can be seen in the following table:

**Table 1. Result of Convergent Validity**

	Organizational Downsizing	Psychological Strain	Work Condition
D1	1,000		
PS 1		0,871	
PS 2		0,888	
PS 3		0,846	
PS 4		0,830	

PS 5		<b>0,902</b>	
PS 6		<b>0,871</b>	
PS 7		<b>0,885</b>	
PS 8		<b>0,900</b>	
PS 9		<b>0,767</b>	
PS 10		<b>0,787</b>	
PS 11		<b>0,889</b>	
PS 12		<b>0,868</b>	
PS 13		<b>0,914</b>	
PS 14		<b>0,880</b>	
PS 15		<b>0,904</b>	
PS 16		<b>0,930</b>	
PS 17		<b>0,849</b>	
PS 18		<b>0,732</b>	
PS 19		<b>0,729</b>	
WCI 1			<b>0,903</b>
WCI 2			<b>0,916</b>
WCI 3			<b>0,913</b>
WCI 4			<b>0,908</b>
WCI 5			<b>0,870</b>
WCI 6			<b>0,925</b>
WCI 7			<b>0,874</b>
WCI 8			<b>0,890</b>
WCI 9			<b>0,906</b>
WCI 10			<b>0,872</b>
WCI 11			<b>0,897</b>
WCI 12			<b>0,933</b>
WCI 13			<b>0,872</b>
WCI 14			<b>0,915</b>

Source: primary data processed, 2023

In this case, all variables with loading values greater than 0.7 can be considered to meet convergent validity. If indicator variables have loading values less than 0.7, it indicates a low level of validity.

Therefore, it can be concluded that all indicators in this study have loading values > 0.7, and all indicators can be considered to meet convergent validity.

The second step in testing convergent validity is to evaluate the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each statement instrument of the indicators used in the study. According to the rule of thumb, the AVE value should be greater than 0.5. Here are the results of the convergent validity testing through AVE values.

**Table 2. Result AVE**

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<b>Organizational Downsizing</b>	<b>1,000</b>
<b>Psychological Strain</b>	<b>0,734</b>
<b>Work Condition</b>	<b>0,810</b>

Source: *primary data processed, 2023*

It is known that a good AVE value exceeds 0.5. Based on the data processing results table, it is observed that the AVE values for all variables have AVE > 0.5. Therefore, it can be concluded that each instrument of the indicators in this research variable is considered valid and can proceed to the next stage.

#### 4.2.2 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is determined based on the AVE values of measurements with constructs. Discriminant validity can be obtained from the cross-loading values. Here are the results of the cross-loading values.

**Tabel 3. Crossloadings**

	Organizational Downsizing	Psychological Strain	Work Condition
<b>D1</b>	<b>1,000</b>	0,599	0,572
<b>PS 1</b>	0,597	<b>0,871</b>	0,888
<b>PS 2</b>	0,540	<b>0,888</b>	0,904
<b>PS 3</b>	0,497	<b>0,846</b>	0,846
<b>PS 4</b>	0,487	<b>0,830</b>	0,842
<b>PS 5</b>	0,448	<b>0,902</b>	0,893
<b>PS 6</b>	0,552	<b>0,871</b>	0,870
<b>PS 7</b>	0,511	<b>0,885</b>	0,883
<b>PS 8</b>	0,527	<b>0,900</b>	0,850
<b>PS 9</b>	0,490	<b>0,767</b>	0,711
<b>PS 10</b>	0,435	<b>0,787</b>	0,747
<b>PS 11</b>	0,527	<b>0,889</b>	0,869

PS 12	0,562	<b>0,868</b>	0,813
PS 13	0,532	<b>0,914</b>	0,844
PS 14	0,523	<b>0,880</b>	0,833
PS 15	0,547	<b>0,904</b>	0,861
PS 16	0,576	<b>0,930</b>	0,924
PS 17	0,519	<b>0,849</b>	0,810
PS 18	0,458	<b>0,732</b>	0,635
PS 19	0,395	<b>0,729</b>	0,662
WCI 1	0,492	0,881	<b>0,903</b>
WCI 2	0,436	0,877	<b>0,916</b>
WCI 3	0,551	0,891	<b>0,913</b>
WCI 4	0,538	0,874	<b>0,908</b>
WCI 5	0,580	0,825	<b>0,870</b>
WCI 6	0,455	0,900	<b>0,925</b>
WCI 7	0,555	0,832	<b>0,874</b>
WCI 8	0,542	0,857	<b>0,890</b>
WCI 9	0,495	0,869	<b>0,906</b>
WCI 10	0,429	0,860	<b>0,872</b>
WCI 11	0,425	0,864	<b>0,897</b>
WCI 12	0,558	0,913	<b>0,933</b>
WCI 13	0,571	0,850	<b>0,872</b>
WCI 14	0,562	0,904	<b>0,915</b>

Source: *primary data processed, 2023*

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that the crossloading value is greater than 0.7. So it can be concluded that all of these constructs are declared valid and have good discriminants.

#### 4.2.3 Composite Reliability

To evaluate composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, the value is required to be greater than 0.7 for confirmatory research and a value in the range of 0.6 – 0.7 is still acceptable for exploratory research.

**Tabel 4. Composite Reliability dan Cronbach's Alpha**

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Organizational Downsizing	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>

<b>Psychological Strain</b>	<b>0,980</b>	<b>0,981</b>
<b>Work Condition</b>	<b>0,982</b>	<b>0,983</b>

Source: *primary data processed, 2023*

Based on the table above, the test results in this study show that the measurement variables used are declared reliable because they have composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values > 0.7.

#### 4.3 Inner Model

##### 4.3.1 R-Square ( $R^2$ )

**Tabel 5. Hasil Pengujian R-Square Adjusted**

	<b>R Square</b>	<b>R Square Adjusted</b>
<b>Psychological Strain</b>	0,941	0,939
<b>Work Condition</b>	0,327	0,314

Source: *primary data processed, 2023*

From the table above, it can be seen that the R - Square Adjusted value for the Psychological Strain variable is 0.939, which means that the Organizational Downsizing and Work Condition variables influence the Psychological Strain variable by 93.9%, the remaining 6.1% is influenced by variables outside this research model. Referring to Hair et al. in Ghozali and Latan (2015) that the R - Square Adjusted value makes the model fall into the high category because it is above the value of 0.75.

The R - Square Adjusted value for the Work Condition variable is 0.314, which means that the Organizational Downsizing variable has an influence on the Work Condition variable of 31.4%, the remaining 68.6% is influenced by variables outside this research model. Referring to Hair et al. in Ghozali and Latan (2015) that the R - Square Adjusted value makes the model fall into the weak category because it is above the value of 0.19 to 0.33.

##### 4.3.2 Q- Square ( $Q^2$ )

**Tabel 6. Hasil Pengujian Q - Square ( $Q^2$ ) Predictive Relevance**

	<b>SSO</b>	<b>SSE</b>	<b><math>Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)</math></b>
<b>Organizational Downsizing</b>	54,000	54,000	
<b>Psychological Strain</b>	1026,000	329,064	0,679
<b>Work Condition</b>	756,000	563,247	0,255

Source: *primary data processed, 2023*

A Q-Square value > 0 has a good predictive relevance value, whereas if the Q Square value < 0 then the model does not have good predictive relevance. Based on the calculation results above, the Q - Square value for the two endogenous variables is 0.679 and 0.255, which are respectively more is greater than 0 so that the Organizational Downsizing variable on Psychological Strain with Work Conditions as a mediating variable has good predictive relevance.

4.4 Hipotesys

**Tabel 7. Significancy**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Organizational Downsizing -> Psychological Strain	0,067	0,065	0,033	2,049	<b>0,041</b>
Organizational Downsizing -> Work Condition	0,572	0,569	0,099	5,803	<b>0,000</b>
Work Condition -> Psychological Strain	0,930	0,932	0,018	51,379	<b>0,000</b>

Source: primary data processed, 2023

From the table above it can be seen that:

- The Organizational Downsizing variable on Psychological Strain is known to have a statistical t value of 2.049 > 1.96 and a p value of 0.041 < 0.05 and the original sample has a positive value (0.067), meaning that the alternative hypothesis that Organizational Downsizing has a positive and significant effect on Psychological Strain is accepted.
- The Organizational Downsizing variable on Work Conditions is known to have a statistical t value of 5.803 > 1.96 and a p value of 0.000 < 0.05 and the original sample has a positive value (0.572), meaning that the alternative hypothesis that Organizational Downsizing has a positive and significant effect on Work Conditions is accepted.
- The Work Condition variable on Psychological Strain is known to have a statistical t value of 51.379 > 1.96 and a p value of 0.000 < 0.05 and the original sample has a positive value (0.930), meaning that the alternative hypothesis that Work Condition has a positive and significant effect on turn Psychological Strain is accepted. .

4.5 Mediation test

**Tabel 8. Mediation test**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Organizational Downsizing -> Work Condition -> Psychological Strain	0,532	0,531	0,094	5,672	<b>0,000</b>

Source: primary data processed, 2023

To determine whether there is a mediating role for the Work Condition variable in the causal relationship between Organizational Downsizing and Psychological Strain, the results of the Specific Indirect Effect are used. From the table above it can be seen that Work Conditions are

able to mediate Organizational Downsizing on Psychological Strain with a p-value of less than 0.05.

## **5. Discussion**

The results of this research reveal that in the first hypothesis, Organizational Downsizing has a direct effect on Psychological Strain. Several studies have shown that downsizing can have effects on the psychological and physical health of surviving employees, as indicated by Andreeva et al. (2017). Specifically, Dlouhy, K., & Casper, A. (2021) found that downsizing is linked to increased psychological strain.

For the second hypothesis, Organizational Downsizing has a direct effect on work conditions. According to Frone, M. R., & Blais, A. R. (2020), Organizational downsizing can significantly impact work conditions for surviving employees. Downsizing can affect work conditions in several ways, such as increased workload and pressure on remaining employees. When companies downsize, gaps in the workload are created, which puts pressure on the remaining employees not only to complete their current job functions but also to take on additional work to compensate for terminated employees. These added responsibilities, on top of their existing ones, can create stress and pressure on remaining employees, negatively impacting team morale and motivation. Downsizing can also instill a sense of job insecurity among surviving employees, leading to decreased job satisfaction and increased stress.

In the third hypothesis test, Work Conditions affect Psychological Strain. Job demands, like work overload and job insecurity, can lead to psychological strain in employees. This finding is supported by the research of Akbari, J. et al. (2017), which showed that high job demands combined with low job control can result in physical and psychological strain known as job stress. Another study found that job demands such as workload and emotional demands can deplete employees' mental and physical resources, leading to energy depletion and psychological and physical health problems (Gauche, C. et al., 2017). Job insecurity, which refers to the perceived threat of involuntary job loss, can also lead to psychological strain and negative stress reactions, potentially resulting in behavioral withdrawal and decreased performance (Adekiya A, 2023).

The fourth hypothesis, Organizational Downsizing affects Psychological Strain through Work Conditions. This means that downsizing has an effect on psychological health that is mediated by work conditions, specifically job demands like work overload and job insecurity. This is supported by the research of Dlouhy, K., & Casper, A. (2021), which found that downsizing has a small to moderate effect on psychological health, mediated by workload and job insecurity.

## **6. Conclusion**

Overall, the research suggests that downsizing can have negative effects on the psychological well-being of surviving employees, but the extent of these effects can be influenced by job resources and job demands. Employers can mitigate the negative effects of downsizing by providing employees with adequate job resources and managing job demands effectively.

To mitigate the negative effects of job demands on psychological strain, employers can provide employees with adequate job resources and manage job demands effectively. This can include providing social support, opportunities for growth and development, and organizational support. Additionally, employees can focus on building their organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) as a

mediator to reduce the negative effects of job insecurity on their occupational and general well-being.

However, the negative effects of downsizing can be mediated by job resources, such as social support and opportunities for growth and development, and job demands, such as workload and role ambiguity. One study found that job resources mediate the negative relationship between downsizing and employee engagement. Downsizing can have a significant impact on work conditions for surviving employees. Employers should be aware of these potential effects and take steps to mitigate them, such as providing adequate job resources and managing job demands effectively.

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