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An exploratory study of the relationship between job insecurity and employee engagement focusing on temporary employees in the retailing industry in the United Kingdom | Case study: Marks and Spencer Group plc

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Abstract:

The retailing industry has experienced much economic and social turbulence in the past decade, all of which has had great impact on employees. Employees within the retailing organisation are the face of the business and while they are experiencing job insecurity, they may be reacting with decreased engagement. Organisations need employees; they need a flexible and committed workforce so they must act upon minimising the potential job insecurity experienced by their employees. Within this study, the researchers aim is to identify the signs of job insecurity within employees and to furthermore analyse the subsequent attitudes and behaviours toward engagement. The dissertation examined job insecurity and employee engagement within Marks and Spencer Group plc.

Acknowledgments:

After a challenging yet rewarding 4 years, I am ecstatic of the knowledge, experiences and friends I have made along the way. I would like to thank each and every person who has pushed me to realise my capabilities, without you, I would not be proud of the graduate I am to become. Thank you to the University of Wolverhampton for providing excellent opportunities that have shaped me into the student I am today. To my family and most importantly my mother, you have always found a way. I am appreciative and grateful for your sacrifices.

Lastly, God, thank you for always being there for me.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The relationship between job insecurity and employee engagement has been an area of interest and relevance for many years; more so today as the current business environment and economic sentiment are known to be very volatile and is stirred by change and renewal (Mendes & Stander, 2011). There have been increasing efforts to have recourse to the employees and focus on the engagement of human capital (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). More and more organisations are directing their efforts to help recognise the potential of not only employees but all human capital, that being, employees, customers and partners (Bessant, 2003). The opinion is shared that the human resources within the organisation are in fact the most valuable assets. Van de Ven (1986) shared that the foundation of innovation lies with the employees, those within the company who "develop, carry, react to, and modify ideas". Scott and Bruce, 1994 also shared that it is individual employees, whether alone or in a group that generate, promote, discuss, modify and realise these ideas.

Today, HR managers are facing challenges related to attracting, retaining and engaging good employees. The level of engagement within an organisation highlights the effectiveness of the two-way relationship between the employer and employee (Markos, 2010). An engaged workforce are highly involved within their job role and show great enthusiasm by going beyond their contractual agreements. Research has identified that not only can employee engagement lead to success and advantage for the company, but it also creates a positive working environment and culture to which is important for the smooth operations of the business, very crucial for customer focus retailing organisations (Macey and Schneider, 2008).

Various studies have identified that job insecurity is linked to numerous negative performance outcomes for employees thus negatively impacting organisations. Job insecurity can affect an employee in multiple ways: burnout, reduced work engagement and even decreased safety motivation and compliance which could in turn affect yourself and others around you. Christina (2015) combined a study of self-reported and observational studies where a theoretical model was developed and examined. It was hypothesised that job insecurity influences those outcomes such as burnout and work engagement (Christina, 2015). Research shows that job insecurity along with, unpredictability of hours, part-time and casual contracts and low wages contributes to stress and workplace issues of absenteeism,

low employee retention, workplace conflicts and minimised employee engagement (Zeytinoglu et al, 2005).

The UK departmental store sector remains challenging with many large retailers unable to carve their niche in a saturated retail market (Mintel, 2018). Within the UK, there have been over 28,000 store closures and footfall has been on a downward trend falling further each month (Conversation, 2018). Granted, high street shopping has been in the shadows with the spotlight on ecommerce growth in recent years but retailers who have both a tangible and online presence still process the vast majority of transactions in their tangible stores, albeit at considerable operating costs. Only 18.5% of M&S clothing and home sales are online against Shore Capital estimates of 24% nationally. Comparatively, Sainsbury's and Argos' operations make 60% of sales online even though they are not perfect rivals. High street clothing Next welcomed an 11% growth in 2018 totalling their online sales to 46% (FT, 2018). Blame has been directed towards the flourish of ecommerce, weather conditions and revised spending so retailers are fighting to retain their relevance and market share (Conversation, 2018). Innovation has been centred on creating an attractive in-store environment and whilst this is important, research suggests more should be done to ensure success moving forward (Mintel, 2018). That 'more' could be advancing your human capital, engaging your workforce and maintaining their job security. In spite of such prominence, understanding job insecurity and its relationship to employee engaging behaviour in retailing organisations remains relatively underdeveloped. Thus, this exploratory study will examine the relationship amongst employee job insecurity and employee engagement from the perspective of retailer, Marks and Spencer.

Aim of research
The significant aim of this research is to identify the signs of job insecurity within employees and their subsequent reactions and attitudes and how that is associated to employee engagement. The researcher has taken the case of retailer, Marks and Spencer.

Objectives of research
This research study intends to contribute to the understanding of signs of job insecurity in relation to employee engagement. Furthermore, by adopting a within-person approach and taking reviews from a public domain, the researcher aims to assess and compare the

relationship between job insecurity and employee engagement by exploring experiences, attitudes and behavioural responses.

The following objectives:

- To critically explain the relationship between job insecurity and employee engagement.
- To assess and compare the attitudes and responsive behaviours of M&S employees in relation to experienced job insecurity within their employment and its impact on their engagement.
- To provide recommendations for increasing job security and employee engagement within Marks and Spencer by enforcing techniques and practices to increase job security to emphasise employee engagement

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter two is the discussion of the literature surrounding job insecurity and employee engagement. The researcher will begin with defining job insecurity, employee engagement, and then the researcher will illustrate how the topic of study can be linked between the two. The researcher will then explore the signs and instigators of job insecurity, the measures of engagement and the impact is has on retailing institutions.

Conceptualising Job insecurity

Job insecurity is one of the most common stressors and distressful aspects in the working environment (De Witte, 1999). it is related to lower levels of job satisfaction, decreased engagement and mental health complaints (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005; Näswall *et al*., 2005). There is not one single standing definition of job insecurity which is universally accepted. De Witte (1997, 1999) refers to job insecurity as employees within the workforce who fear they may lose their jobs or become unemployed. Equally, Probst (2002) defines job security as the perceived stability and continuance of one's job. In addition to those definitions, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) define job insecurity as 'powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation'. Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) explained that the sense of powerlessness is experienced by the employees in which intensifies the experienced threat of job insecurity.

Job insecurity is usually conceptualised as either a global or a multidimensional concept (De Witte, 1999). According to the global concept, job insecurity reflects the threat of job loss or job uncertainty (De Witte, 1999; Mauno & Kinnunen, 2002). De Witte (2000) also explains that job insecurity consists of two dimensions: cognitive and affective. Cognitive job insecurity refers to perceptions of possible job loss, whereas affective job insecurity refers to the emotional reactions to the potential change to one's job (Jiang, 2018). It can be argued that De Witte's definition encompasses affective job insecurity whereas Probst offers a definition more so towards cognitive job insecurity. It is important for scholars to apply this distinction between cognitive and affective job insecurity in the conceptualisation and theory development because differentiations are shown within studies. A meta-analysis study based on 535 independent samples found that job insecurity was significantly related to 51 out of 56 outcomes and correlated that affective job insecurity had stronger links with majority of outcomes in comparison to cognitive job insecurity (Jiang, 2018). This outcome demonstrates

that employees more often experienced an emotional experience of being fearful or emotionally distressed about the potential job loss than being aware of the possibility of a job or benefit loss (Huang et al 2012).

In the global concept, job insecurity simply reflects the threat of job continuity (De Witte, 2005). The first issue is concerning job insecurity as an objective concept vs. a subjective concept (Van Vuuren, 1990). Observations from over time have shown that not every employee, where their job is at risk experience job insecurity. Subjective job insecurity demonstrates that individuals can perceive situations differently. Some employees may experience job insecurity while there is no objective reason for this. Also, some employees may feel secure while there is a threat to continuity of their job (Gümüş, 2016). Van Vuuren (1990) argues that job insecurity has a purely subjective element. He explores that even in working establishments where there is little objective insecurity, some employees experience subjective job insecurity. Whilst this is ongoing, you must recognise the predominant personality factors such as self-esteem or pessimism that determine feelings of insecurity in the workplace. Furthermore, once it has been established that jobs are indeed at risk, personality factors become irrelevant and instead factors such as education, age, job position, ethnic background - all factors that impact on someone's chances to lose their job - become important. Vuuren concludes to say that "*insecurity is both an objective state a company can bring its workers in and a subjective estimate of someone's chances to lose one's job*" (Klandermans & Vuuren, 1996). You may wonder why some employees remain optimistic about their future even if the company's future looks bleak. Opposedly, you can also question why some employees remain pessimistic although the company's performance could be positive and promising. Focusing on only one element of job insecurity would allow for a one-dimensional perspective. Focusing on one element loses sight of the 'real' insecurity and eliminates the interesting questions that sprout.

It can be argued that job insecurity depends on the context. As explored, individuals react differently to perceived and emotional threat of job loss, but other factors also must be considered. Personal circumstances of the individual such as family life and dependency dynamics and the regional labour market all influence the severity of the job loss and therefore what the individual would be fearful of. Correspondingly, pertaining to the case of Marks and Spencer, factors such as organisational climate, economic cycles and governmental policies will influence the perceived insecurity of an individual. Again, it is

important to consider these characteristics in order to provide a more appropriate view of job insecurity in relation to employee engagement (Klandermans & Vuuren, 1996)**.** To summarise, like Vuuren's definition, all definitions imply that job insecurity is a subjective topic to explain that it is circumstantial based on the context and individual. Furthermore, individuals will experience different levels of job insecurity even if in a perfect scenario they all were exposed to the same level of factors (Cheng & Chan, 2008).

The multidimensional view explains that what the employers may perceive as a potential loss of stability in the work environment can be both loss of the job itself and loss of some subjectively important job dimensions. Therefore, it can be argued that job insecurity is not only related to what extent an employee has uncertainty about his or her job stability, but also it is related to the loss of job features like promotional opportunities and benefits which is often overlooked within research (Gümüş, 2016). Hartley et al., (1986) explains that job insecurity is "*the discrepancy between the level of security a person experiences and the level he or she prefers*". In the matter of M&S, employees have experienced loss of job features in forms of department transfers due to redundancy after the implemented cost reduction strategy. Affecting 1,891 employees, with 1,591 of them being redeployed to other parts of the business (BBC, 2019). You can argue that change within the organisation may cause loss of status for the employee, less autonomy, limited career opportunities or reduction of resources (Gümüş, 2016). In this sense, the multidimensional view is important to identify that loss of job dimensions can also contribute to job insecurity (Holm & Hovland, 1999).

Conceptualising Employee Engagement

Much like job insecurity, employee engagement holds varying definitions. This is evident due to the multiple definitions from credited and well-known research organisations and academics. Perrin's Global Workforce Study (2003) defines engagement as an "*employees' willingness and ability to help their company succeed, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis.*" According to the study, engagement is affected by many factors which involve both emotional and rational factors relating to work and the overall work experience. You could argue that discretionary effort may change depending on the individual and their attitudes. Gallup Research organisation defines engaged employees as those who are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace. Enthusiasm is related to having great eagerness; but generally, if you were to ask employees, they would not correlate eagerness with employment. Kahn (1990) defines engagement as

"*an employee's ability to harness their 'full self' at work*". According to Kahn (1990), engagement means to be psychologically as well as physically present when occupying and performing an organisational role. Kahn believes employee engagement is a multi-faceted construct and while this is widely acknowledged and accepted, Truss et al (2006) defines employee engagement simply as a 'passion for work', a psychological state which is seen to encompass the three dimensions of engagement discussed by Kahn (1990), and captures the common theme running through all these definitions. Much like the criticism to Gallup's definition, enthusiasm and passion can be influenced by factors outside of the working environment which could cause effect on an individual's attitude towards their job responsibility. It would be hard to measure if an employee is not disengaged by managerial direction or whether they are disengaged because they are passionate about a different career path entirely. Both examples can influence the level of discretionary effort, enthusiasm and passion an employee demonstrates.

Employee engagement is believed to be "the level of commitment and involvement of an employee towards the organisation and its values" (Sundaray, 2011, p.53). William Kahn's engagement theory has been widely credited with the first application and practice of the theory within the workplace (Harter et al., 2002; Rich et al., 2010). As well as defining engagement, Kahn's (1990) primary aim was to identify the conditions which enabled engagement to occur, in other words, he explored how engagement was implemented within the workplace and what prevented it. While an employee is engaging within their job role, they are expressing themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally which further identifies the importance and surrounding positivity of this work-related state of mind. Engagement is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Bakker and Demerouti, 2009).

With the varying definitions of employee engagement, it blurs the lines making it difficult to determine as each research study may examine employee engagement under different lenses and context. This introduces a problem on whether without universally defining or measuring employee engagement, can you identify if the efforts implemented to improve it are indeed working. Implementation of employee engaging practices within an organisation can be identified in the measured performance of an employee or the organisational performance of the company (Ferguson, 2017). Furthermore, whilst it is acknowledged that employee engagement has been defined in many different ways, it is also argued the definitions often

sound similar to other better known and established constructs such as 'organisational commitment' and 'organisational citizenship behaviour' (OCB) (Robinson et al 2004). The conversation surrounding employee engagement was introduced in recent years, as a result, employee engagement has the appearance of being yet another trend, or what some might call "old wine in a new bottle" where the concept is offered as though it were a new one.

Linking job insecurity and employee engagement

Research indicates that job insecurity is a hindrance and a challenge stressor. Job insecurity is treated as a negative phenomenon since a large body of research has demonstrated the effects of negative job attitudes and health-related problems relating to when employees feel insecure about their job (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002). Majority of studies suggest that job-insecure employees perform worse than job-secure employees, arguably linking to temporary and permanent employees (Cheng & Chan, 2008). Job insecurity led to an abundance of disadvantageous outcomes including negative attitudes towards the company and most relevant to the current study; reduced job performance (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Gilboa, Shirom, Fried & Cooper, 2008; Sverke et al., 2002). It is proposed to have a harmful effect on engagement and it is argued that these effects mediated by reduced work attitudes (Staufenbiel and Konig, 2010). A few decades ago, several studies conducted found positive results on employee security and employee engagement relationship. When an employee is entrusted that their job is secure, they do not hesitate to work hard for the organisation (Darwish, 1998). Furthermore, certainty of an employee's job continuation will make them more committed to their organisation. On the other hand, (J.F. Bolt 1983) argued that no relationship exists between employee job insecurity and employee engagement however, many studies have reported that job insecurity wears down employee performance in the organisational setting. It is believed that employees who are contempt with their job contribute more to the organisation and those who feel insecure have an unwillingness to do more in the workplace.

Job insecurity is also said to affect engagement behaviours in the opposite way which is referred to as the 'suppressor effect' where employees are instead motivated to make themselves more valuable to the organisation by being more engaged (Staufenbiel and Konig, 2010). If an employee feels their job is at jeopardy, they may choose to engage further as a way to cope with the threat whereas others may choose to cope with the threat by withdrawing further. A study conducted by (Van Vuuren, Klandermans, Jacobsen and

Hartley 1991) with over 500 employees in Israel and the Netherlands demonstrated that employees in both countries believed that a high personal output protects them best. (Gilboa, Shirom, Fried and Cooper 2008) also argued that job insecurity could also result in increased efforts if employees believe that higher individual performances would benefit the organisation and therefore protect their jobs (Staufenbiel and Konig, 2010). Empirical evidence has further shown that job insecurity as a challenge stressor can result in positive behavioural outcomes. Fischer et al. (2005) and De Cuyper et al. (2008) identified that job security was correlated to longer working hours. Probst also found that in two laboratory experiments, participants threatened with termination displayed increased productivity in comparison to employees who were not threatened (Probst, 2002; Probst, Stewart, Gruys, & Tierney, 2007).

Signs of job insecurity

Most employees find themselves at least a little bit concerned about their job security. National workplace expert Lynn Taylor shared that "*employees generally have a sense when their jobs are at risk*" (Forbes, 2013). Pertaining to M&S, it has been highly documented within the media of the retailer's 5 year plan to close down more than 100 stores by 2022 (BBC, 2019). Now M&S stores are seeing fewer formats and less employees being brought into the workforce. Employees can experience more subtle forms of job insecurity, that being situations where employees experience job insecurity indirectly. For example, experiences of favouritism, unprofessionalism and limited communication are not directly threatening one's job but situations of uncomfort can reduce your job satisfaction and consequently decreased engagement.

Subjective job insecurity: Experiences within the workplace

Favouritism creates inequality within the workplace and this unfair treatment can affect how employees work together (Khatri & Tsang, 2003). Ford and McLaughlin (1986) believe that this perception of inequities could lead to "*unfavourable interpersonal relationships between paired employees and their co-workers*". A survey conducted with 2,700 survey offered various findings on nepotism. Firstly, nepotism does not have a positive image within organisations. Secondly, nepotism can affect the behaviour and engagement of current employees and managers will be shown as unprofessional when showing favouritism to specific employees (Ewing, 1965). Recent studies have demonstrated the consequences of nepotism which are limited morale, job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Khatri,

Tsang, & Begley, 2003; Melé, 2009). In the short-term employees may express their uncomfort but in the long-term, employees may begin to feel alienated and experience further inequality due to nepotism. Furthermore, these unfair actions will undoubtedly erode the organisational structure.

Feeling pressured within the workplace is certainly uncomfortable for employees. Beyond that, feeling pressured due to demands from work also makes you feel unappreciated. A common practice within the workplace is working overtime or picking up extra shifts. In the UK, 38% of employees are under pressure of presenteeism (Green, 2018). Out of fear of job insecurity or as a way to protect ones job, employees fear that declining work opportunities will make it harder for them to progress ahead. Furthermore, a study reported that 53% of employees reported that they felt obliged to '*engage in workplace politics*' as they felt it was important in receiving a promotion or a permanent contract (Frith, 2017). Another form of job insecurity within the workforce is lack of advancement. When you are unsure of your contractual status, employees are unable to plan and consequently feel confident in their financial decisions. According to FEMA and the New York State Internal Control Association, lack of opportunities within the workplace creates engagement problems.

Further than the objective threat towards job insecurity, there are some demographic factors which may also clash with job insecurity. The first to consider are the different age brackets: an employee in their 40s will mostly likely not bear the same circumstances and dependents of an employee in their 20s. For example, a 33 year old woman who is raising children will experience more imposing job insecurity within M&S than a 20 year old who has no such responsibility. Of course, this is a general view but high job insecurity is experienced by old age employees (De Witte, et al., 2003). On the topic of gender, some studies have identified that men face more job insecurity that women (Kinnunen, et al., 1999). You could argue that this is due to the traditional view of the men being the sole financial provider within the household. You could argue that if women were to have the full financial responsibility of earning for the household, they too may encounter the same insecurity (De Witte, 1999). Another demographic factor is an individual's socioeconomic status and how it is led to believe that employees who have lower status within society feel the threat against their job. This statement is relating to how employees with low status are perceived to be less educated which are objective forms of job insecurity to therefore make them concerned with the security of their job (Sverke, et al., 2006).

Objective job insecurity: Contractual arrangements

Employment contracts are a big influencer towards job insecurity as it is believed that full time employees have comparatively less level of job insecurity than temporary employee (Barling, et al., 1996). Over the years we have seen the nature of employment change and more specifically temporary employees. Traditionally, temporary employees were brought in to fill the gap of fluctuations in demand, to temporarily increase the workforce in special seasons like Christmas, or to replace permanent employees due to sickness or pregnancy (I. Silla, F. Gracia, J. Peiro, 2005). Today, you see a lot of organisations, like M&S, staffed with a large amount of temporary employees, a practice which has been enforced as cost reduction strategy (von Hippel et al., 1997).

The Human capital theory argues that "*individuals do not invest in skills development unless the present value of the returns is greater than the present value of the costs*" (Becker, 1992). In addition, Marler et al. (2002) contributed to the argument by adding that permanent employment implies you gain higher returns from the company, so the only individuals who will apply for temporary arrangements would be those with few human capital investment and lower skills. Furthermore, it is believed that temporary employees experience poor working conditions, lower wages, no benefits, no possibility for advancement and were subsequently forced into temporary employment in the first place due to circumstances that make it difficult for them to find permanent jobs (Kunda et al., 2002; Segal and Sullivan, 1997). There have been several studies in various countries and sectors which have found that majority of employees would prefer a permanent contract (Gustafsson et al., 2001; Remery et al., 2002; Tremlett and Collins, 1999). On the other hand, there is still a sizable minority of employees who prefer temporary contract over a permanent one. Feldman et al., (1994) and Polivka (1996) both explored studies that argued that temporary employees are not always forced into temporary arrangements due to the labour market but rather, they in fact consider it to be the more attractive option based on their own personal circumstances. There are various reasons as to why an employee may seek temporary working arrangement than a permanent one: it may be due to the flexibility it provides. Temporary contracts provide the opportunity to balance work alongside your family life and personal commitments, they offer the opportunity to learn or further a skill and they also provide "*pathways into the labour market for individuals who would otherwise not have this opportunity*" (I. Silla, F. Gracia, J. Peiro, 2005).

This demonstrates that the preference for temporary contracts is circumstantial and highly dependent on the individual, therefore it must be taken into consideration when understanding the implications of temporary work on different outcomes. In 1998, Ellingson et al. conducted a study which investigated whether voluntarily or involuntarily pursuing temporary work is related to satisfaction and performance. This study found that those who sought out temporary employment were positively associated with pay satisfaction and were satisfied with their temporary job. Furthermore, Krausz (2002) found that the employees who preferred temporary working arrangements and who did not want permanent employment actually showed the "*highest levels of overall intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction and the lowest levels of stress (role conflict and role ambiguity)*". You could argue that as the employees are going into employment only expecting the flexibility it provides and the chance to earn extra income, they are satisfied and content with what they are receiving. Again, this links to Hartley et al., who explained the "*discrepancy between the level of security a person experiences and the level he or she prefers*".

Measures of employee engagement

Many organisations will use surveys as a way to give themselves an opportunity to develop a better understanding of their workforce. It is normally carried out as a way to maximise your workforce efficiency by determining how they react to the work environment (Van Rooy, Whitman, Hart & Caleo, 2011). Questionnaires are used to measure the levels of engagements and the factors relating with it. Within the questionnaire, the questions would normally consist of a Likert scale which is used to represent individual's attitudes towards a matter by introducing different concepts such as cognitive vs. affective statements. For example: a cognitive one `I am sure I can keep my job', and an affective one `I'm afraid I will get fired' (H. De Witte and K. Naswall, 2003). You can measure your employee engagement through feedback, satisfaction, wellness and relationships with managers. Furthermore, organisations will use this as a foundation to consequently develop and implement engagement strategies, through analysing and assessing the information collected, and then taking action by implementing strategies (Armstrong, 2012).

Marks and Spencer

The UK department store sector growth remains flat in 2017. For department store brands, store categories continue to grow and pressure is mounting on UK consumers. Mintel has

forecasted the market to reach £17.8bn by 2022. The sector has been bleak but market drivers focus on an ageing UK population, growth in inflation which puts consumers under pressure but despite this, consumers spending continues as they remain confident about their finances. Post Brexit vote, the value of the sterling falls which minimises spending and there has been a flux of UK household private renting increases thus creating less disposable income (Mintel, 2018). M&S holds over 1,000 stores and online in the UK and has an international presence trading in over 50 marks, 400 stores, almost all franchises and online in 25 markets. (Mintel, 2018). M&S currently holds 28% of the market (Mintel, 2017) but over the last five years, M&S has been steadily losing share of the clothing market (Mintel 2018). Instead, growth at present is being driven by John Lewis and the luxury department stores, like Harrods and Selfridges presumably due to their continued efforts to evolve with customers and to understand their customers buying behaviour. Furthermore, comparing Harrods and Selfridges supposed growth strategy vs M&S's retrenchment strategy. Notably, the luxury department sector has also been boosted by increased inbound tourism in the UK in 2017 (Mintel, 2017). In 2016, newly appointed M&S CEO Steve Rowe implemented a strategy to restore pricing integrity and to cut costs in the business as sales were falling so overhead costs had to be cut also. Online sales now account for a quarter of the sector so there has been an emphasis on M&S to develop their online business (Mintel 2018). Many organisations in industrialised countries find themselves engaging in restructuring and 'rightsizing' activities when facing economic pressure. This is accompanied by a workforce reduction in the form of store closures and the need for a more flexible use of labour i.e. part-time or temporary employees (Hirsch & De Soucey, 2006). As a result of this workforce transition, many employees begin to feel insecure in the future existence of their jobs (Burchell, 2002). With the gloomy economic outlook, job security - even amongst those who are employed - is a great concern.

The effect of limited employee engagement on Marks and Spencer
M&S and other retailing organisations struggling to survive in today's market can generate job insecurity that will ultimately affect employee engagement. Hopefully, these implications to the employees and subsequently the organisation can be counteracted by HRM initiatives (Gilbreath, 2008). At its core, job insecurity is when one's future job is uncertain and uncertainty is defined as when "an individual's perceived inability to predict something accurately (Milliken, 1987). As you can imagine, this is threatening to one's financial stability and people generally feel the need to either eliminate this uncertainty or to find a

way to make it '*tolerable and cognitively manageable*' (Van den Bos & Lind, 2002). The truth is that majority of employees today still expect job security to be a basic element of their 'psychological contract', referring to an 'old deal' predominantly characterised as providing job security on the part of an employer in exchange for loyalty on the part of the employee (Rousseau, 1995).

In an attempt to reduce costs and increase competition and efficiency, M&S are involved in a phase of restructuring and downsizing which is geared towards greater organisational flexibility (Purcell and Purcell, 1998; Sparrow and Marchington 1998). M&S have therefore imposed store closures resulting in large-scale reductions or transfers of staff members which has affected thousands of employees with redundancies, involuntary part-time work and fixed-term employment contracts. For many employees, this new flexible working life means increased insecurity and uncertainty pertaining to the nature and existence of your job, with important psychosocial implications (Hartley et al., 1991; Jacobson, 1991). For an employee, whether permanent or temporary, uncertainty evokes feelings of powerlessness, alienation and lack of control over the situation (De Witte, 1999; Sverke et al., 2002). You can argue that as a result, employees may begin to perceive the working environment as stressful or have an increased amount of negative emotional responses thus contributing to more strain (Spector, 2002).

Hobfall's (1989) conservation of resources theory argues that from experiencing high levels of job insecurity, employees will try to limit loss of job resources. To explain, employees will begin to develop detached and unmotivated attitudes towards their job role. (Bakker,Van Emmerik, & Van Riet, 2008). To put into context, if an employee held these views, they may respond by working much slower on time-sensitive tasks or by limiting their professionalism when interacting with customers which would therefore taint the standard of the company. These explanations above further supports that feelings of job insecurity can hinder the psychological and physical resources of the individual employee, and thus resulting in decreased individual engagement.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Chapter three outlines the methodological structure with regards to research approach, research strategy and data collection, ethical considerations and time frame. Williams and May suggest that "*research may be characterised as methodological investigations into a subject or problem. To 'research' is to seek answers that involve understanding and explanation*" (Williams and May 1996). The research design details how the researcher will approach meeting the objectives stated in the introduction. The researcher has approached the research methodology with reference to "the research process onion" as a guideline (see appendix 1) (Saunders et al, 2009).

Interpretivism

Positivism relies on quantitative data rather than qualitative, so it allows for more reliability and is seen to be 'scientific' and therefore more trustworthy. The main disadvantage with this is that positivist research is not so flexible, and this exploratory study is complex and multi-dimensional; so, allowing for other perspectives and conclusions is important. Many positivists believe that everything can be measured or calculated, however the researcher disagrees. You have to allow room for unexplained phenomena. This approach could result in minimised lateral thinking which is how you find conclusions creatively and the research wants that element present in the study (Bashir, M, 2018). Saunders, et al, (2007), describes Interpretivism as an epistemology. Epistemological discussions focus on how we can capture or gather information about human reality and make sense of that information (Johnson and Duberley 2000; Silverman 2005). In other words, it is concerned with "*what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study*" (Saunders, et al, 2007). This definition highlights the difference between conducting research on people rather than objects. The researcher has determined to use an interpretivist approach as with the objectives in question, it allows for a more thorough understanding of the relationship between job insecurity and employee engagement with the retailing industry in the UK. This will allow for varying perspectives on job insecurity and engagement which as expressed in the literature review is multifaceted. In support of the research, Saunders, et al, (2007), expressed that "*interpretivist perspective is highly appropriate in the case of business and management research, particularly in such fields as organisational behaviour, marketing and human resource management*".

Research approach

Using an inductive or deductive approach is important to determine as it is necessary to know which will be most effective when analysing data (Saunders, et al, 2007). Quantitative research generally refers to the study consisting of numerical data in which a deductive approach is favoured. In contrast, qualitative research normally commands an inductive approach when looking into theory that emerges from data also meaning the data is not numerical and consists more so of interviews, observations and such (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher has decided to take an inductive approach in accordance with the interpretivist philosophy which was adopted. The research will begin with collecting data to explore a phenomenon to then the researcher generates and builds the conceptual framework (Bashir, M 2018). Furthermore, as the inductive approach is qualitative in nature, it will be easier to allow for more interpretative and flexible analysis of data.

Research strategy

Choosing your methodology strategy is finding something suitable to your research as your approach is dependent on the nature of the research and the philosophical approach (Nolan, 1997). As the research title and objectives suggest, the researcher has taken various variables into consideration pertaining to what strategy would be best adopted. Based on the existing knowledge, time constraints and resources available at the time the research was conducted and also the topic of research, the researcher has adopted to use an exploratory approach. Robson (2002) defines an exploratory study as "what's happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess the phenomena in a new light". Furthermore, this approach is suggested to enable the researcher to effectively address the research objectives. The researcher began the study with analysing various academic literatures such as peer reviewed journals, books, news publications appropriate to the area of study, government reports, employee surveys from researching organisations, employee reviews from public domain platforms and company information (Saunders, et al, 2007). An observational first-hand account was kept in the form of a diary by the researcher. The documentation gives voice to the experiences of customer assistants who have formed attitudes and levels of engagement within the workplace. The objective of this data collection was to share the individuals experience as a part-time employee and how it has affected their attitudes and engagement within the working environment. Adopting this approach provided valuable data in which is truthful and unfiltered. This data was collected and analysed. The research was conducted in

an objective manner, free from forced and unsolicited opinions, interpretations and prejudice in order to unwaveringly present their experience.

Data Collection

The research study took place over three months from February to May 2019. The researcher conducted the study into two phases, the first being an extensive literature review exploring job insecurity and employee engagement literatures with a specific focus on the characteristics, behaviours and drivers of the employee. The literature review was structured by the research objectives and was categorised to explore specific topics. The literature review was academic in nature so as mentioned prior, the researcher explored varying forms of material including academic publications and journals. Throughout the literature review the researcher analysed and synthesised using comparative methods to identify the relationship between the research topic components. In support of this exploratory study, the methods used were especially effective in discovering the meaning in existing data without restrictions, therefore promoting the discovery of minute characteristics within data (Merriam, 2001).

In the second phase, the researcher collected secondary data from a public domain of employee reviews which was left unedited. Primary data was also gathered via a diary from the researcher as an employee which occurred alongside phase one of data collection. A one-to-one semi-structured interview is flexible and would allow the researcher to explore and gain a detailed understanding of the employee's attitudes and engagement level (Quinlan, 2011). The diary account was chosen instead because as an employee of M&S, managerial permission would be necessary to approach employees in a non-work-related fashion. In order to conduct these interviews, the researcher would have preferred to allow complete anonymity to all participating employees however, this element could not be guaranteed. Due to the nature of the study, the researcher did not want to introduce and factors that may contribute to the subjective or objective job security within the employees working environment. Furthermore, the researcher doubted the honesty the employees would disclose on their workplace experiences and how their attitudes have influenced their engagement out of fear of their opinions and identity being disclosed to the managers. Alongside that, as explored in the literature review, influencing factors of perceived job insecurity can become very personal and individuals may not be comfortable with sharing. In conclusion, the researcher conjoined secondary data from the literature review, M&S employee reviews

available on a public domain and the personal account of the researcher in a part-time temporary employment.

Limitations

The researcher had decided to verify the data with more than one data source in order to avoid high amounts of bias from the data collection method. In the literature review, the research also explored alternative explanations to findings.

Ethical considerations

Through conducting this research ethical principles and standards were adhered to. The researcher mainly explored secondary research and primary research in the form of an observational-like diary account. While keeping a diary within the workplace, the researcher did so with honestly and any individual mentioned within the diary remained their confidentiality and anonymity. The reviews on the public domain indeed.com were also considerate of ethical considerations. The employees were identified by their job title, location and status of employment, thus keeping their identities anonymous. Diener and Crandall (1978) states that no harm should come to the participants either directly or indirectly by ensuring privacy.

Time Frame

The schedule for the research study was in cognition with the University of Wolverhampton's academic course where there was a time constraint.

Chapter three: Methodology analysed and explained the agreed research design and how the data collection will be conducted. Chapter four: Data Presentation and Analysis will explore the data collection process and findings.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

Chapter four: Data Presentation and Analysis will explore the data collected in order to interpret its findings in relation to Chapter two: literature review.

In this research study, the researcher has looked into former and current employee reviews available on public domain: Indeed.com. This provides great insight for looking into the attitudes of current employees and former employees whether they left voluntary or involuntary. The researcher simplified the scope from this domain to match that of a Customer Assistant working within the United Kingdom. Therefore, only the following filters were applied: former/current Customer Assistants within the United Kingdom, between 2016-present and under the category of 'Job security and Advancement'. Additionally, the researcher has applied a within-person design to examine the relationship between job insecurity and employee engagement. Diary data was gathered by the researcher who is also an employee at M&S who spoke of their experiences of job insecurity as a part-time temporary employee. This diary contributes to the research on the relationship between job insecurity and employee engagement that has primarily focused on inter-individual experiences and their associations with employee engagement.

When analysing this data, the researcher opted to use a thematic approach. Braun and Clarke (2006) have defined the thematic analysis approach as a method for "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data". It captures the patterned responses or meanings within the data, so instead of just summarising the data, you can interpret and make sense of it. The Indeed.com platform provided 5,035 employee reviews for those who worked at M&S. In simplifying the results to only Customer Assistants within the United Kingdom, the data pool became 841. The researcher then decided to look into reviews surrounding the category of 'Job security and advancement' and from the period of 2016-present making the data pool 141. The objective was to capture the narratives of the employees since the announcement from M&S of their 5 year plan to close over 100 stores. The researcher noticed very quickly the recurring themes and commonalities between the seemingly negative reviews. Comments surrounded management, favouritism, limited communication, salary, working conditions and limited staff. More comments spoke on the lack of advancement opportunities, shift patterns, no consideration for work-life balance and working too much overtime. As a result, the researcher chose to simplify these reviews into two themes:

Management and Contractual agreements, effectively objective and subjective experiences of job insecurity.

Appendix 3 shows a total data pool of 141 reviews. 31 out of 141 reviews commented on the management within M&S. Additionally, 39 out of 141 reviews commented on Contracts pertaining to the type of contract they had: temporary. The remaining data pool were positive reviews which spoke favourably of their experiences within M&S.
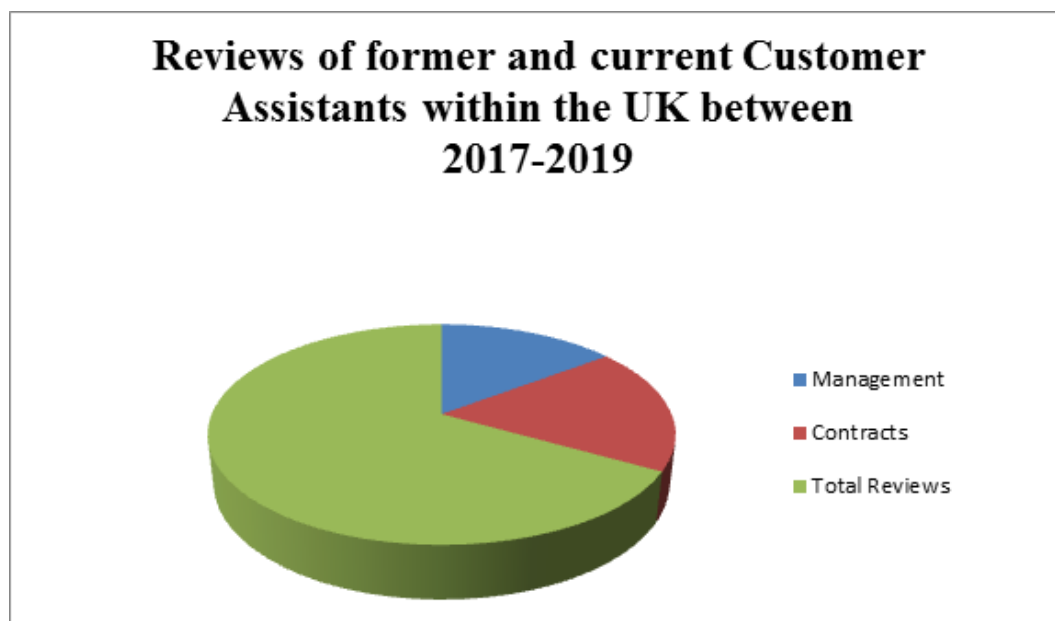
Title: Reviews of former and current Customer Assistants within the UK between 2017-2019

Appendix 3: Reviews of former and current Customer Assistants within the UK between 2016-2019

Reviews of former and current Customer Assistant within the UK between 2017-2019	
Themes:	
Management *Favouritism, Incompetence,* *Communication, Unprofessionalism*	31
Contractual Arrangements *Salary, Working patterns, No opportunity* *for advancement*	39

Management:

<u>Favouritism</u>

Employee Review 1 (indeed.com):

Bad thing about working here is management. Completely treat employees based on favouritism. Also find it unfair that it takes so long to become "permenant" staff, they just keep extending your contract and don't tell you whether it's extended until a couple of days before, meaning your constantly in the dark about your own job and not knowing when you're going to be unemployed. **- Customer Assistant (Current Employee) – Yorkshire – 21 February 2019 [Source: Indeed.com]**

During one of my shifts, I was asked if I could clock in for a fellow member of staff by my department manager. I was a little stunned by this but I did so anyway. After I came back onto the shop floor, I saw the member of staff I clocked in for and she was heading towards the exit of the building wearing her coat and scarf. Immediately I questioned to myself why she was not preparing to start her shift but I did not voice these concerns to my manager. This employee did not return for the rest of the day to which I assumed she was going to be paid for a shift while she was absent. I felt unsettled by this but as a new temporary employee, I did not want to create a situation that would possibly reflect negatively on me so I did not report this incident as I was trying to protect my job. **- [Diary entry of researcher]**

Employee review 1 speaks of favouritism and lack of job clarity within their experience working at Marks and Spencer. Additionally the researcher has spoken of an incident they experienced referring to unprofessionalism and actions of favouritism. Behaviours of favouritism is a bad management practice and breeds resentment, limits employee morale and creates sense of limited good performance. It creates a culture where an employee can recognise the benefits that can flow from being on the manager's 'good side' rather than from working effectively which may introduce a thought of 'there is little point in working hard'. Furthermore, favouritism much like job insecurity can lead to limited productivity as it diverts employees from working effectively to gossiping about the unfair treatment at work amongst specific employees. This can manifest into lower morale, desertion, overlooked potential, stunted growth and even legal implications. As mentioned in Chapter two: Signs of job insecurity, research has shown that employees will show negative attitudes towards nepotism and cronyism. Where favouritism is introduced, it creates an inequality within the

workplace. In the long term, employees can harbour feelings of inequality and alienation which will erode morale and the employee engagement within the workforce.

<u>Communication</u>

Employee Review 2 (indeed.com):

The thing that topped It off was on my final day and there was no communication to whether they were keeping me on or not no exit review interview no thanks for the hard work and good luck I found it rude and disrespectful and wouldn't recommend to anybody thinking about joining that store. - Customer Assistant (Former Employee) – West Bridgford, Nottinghamshire – 29 December 2017

I have experienced a lot of errors pertaining to my wages, access to employee portals, shift allocation (additional shifts other than contracted one) and booking holiday pay. There were times where I was short paid. For a long time, even while informing my manager, I could not access the company portal to view my wage slips and book holiday. I am contracted to work 16 hours per week, accounting to 2 days work and I never have the opportunity to speak with a manager whilst on my shift. For the majority of my shifts, we have not had our normal department manager, reasoning being is that they are not working that day. Instead, we would often have no manager or they would reallocate a manager from a different department to assist us for the day. In worse situations, there will be one manager for the entire store, responsible for eight departments. In the meantime, you cannot approach this manager to help resolve your issue as they will only suggest you speak with your department manager so your issues go unresolved for days or weeks until you are able to speak with your departmental manager. - **[Diary entry of researcher]**.

Employee review 2 speaks of poor communication from managers leading up to their contract termination. It is clear that this employee was disengaged whilst working at M&S and this employee was given no direction pertaining to the status of their employment. In addition, the researcher has spoken of situations they have experienced where communication between management and employee had been poor and limited. In relation employee review 2, the poor communication they received created confusion, uncertainty and overall job insecurity. When employees are uncertain due to limited management communication, inefficiency and lack of productivity is likely. When you can identify experiences where you have been treated less than satisfactory, this will contribute to subjective job insecurity. As

mentioned in Chapter two: Signs of job insecurity, employees rely on their managers to offer direction, feedback and effective communication. When this is poorly implemented, it creates a further divide between management and employees and limits morale and eventually employee engagement.

Contractual Arrangements:

Pressure in the workplace: Working beyond contractual agreements

Employee Review 3 (indeed.com):

Job security can be strange as people are hired in contracts and you may not find out if you have been extended to possibly a day or two before you are due to leave, if you are looking to be kept on, ask for more hours as this is seen as desirable and don't pass up extra hours also if you are on the shop floor being able to get credit card referrals is also seen as a desirable trait. ***- Customer Assistant (Current Employee) – Lisburn – 9 April 2019***

Employee Review 4 (indeed.com):

However, in my experience at M&S I have never stuck to my contract hours (8 hours a week) as I am currently a student. I find it difficult to say no (although you are within your rights to do so) because I am continually rostered for extra hours and it seems it can be seen as negative if you cancel shifts. Also negotiating time off can be difficult if you are temporary but now I am permanent I have no problem at all booking holidays. Would recommend if you want a lot of hours. ***- Customer Assistant (Current Employee) – Grantham – 27 January 2019***

I am contracted to 16 hours per week have worked far beyond that. I am contacted by my manager each week asking to pick up 2-3 more shifts. When I could afford time to, I agreed to these shifts but when I was no longer able to apply my time solely to working at M&S - as my University studies come first -, I had to inform my manager that my availability had changed. Being asked to work extra shifts was extremely pressuring and while I certainly have the ability to say no, there is a part of me that felt it was rude to decline extra shifts. If I were to say no, I would be prompted at least twice to change my mind by insisting they were desperate which was very constraining. On top of this, I was always expected to provide a reason as to why I could not work a non-contracted shift which felt very invasive. I personally felt inclined to accept shifts and to 'prove myself' to the organisation in order to

protect my job and avoid job insecurity. Even so, when I would decline, I would always feel that I have just entered my managers 'bad books'. **- [Diary entry of researcher]**

Employee review 3 spoke of the confusion surrounding the status of their contract and the job insecurity that arose from this. Additionally, they recommended asking for more hours which can be seen as 'desirable' and to not pass up additional hours as a way to impress your employer. As mentioned in Chapter 2: Signs of job insecurity, this situation has demonstrated that individuals can perceive situations differently. Employee review 3 had responded with increased efforts within the organisation, thus demonstrating even when experiencing job insecurity, it can result in positive behavioural outcomes; 'suppressor effect'. This could indicate that this employee believes a higher individual performance would benefit the security of their job. Employee review 4 and the researcher's diary entry are more correlated in that they speak of their experiences of being prompted to take on extra shifts and feeling pressured. As mentioned in Chapter 2: Signs of job insecurity, employees feel pressured to adhere to the damaging workplace culture of long hours. Furthermore, workplace expectations put pressure on employees to abandon their work-life balance to follow the expectation of their managers beyond their contractual agreements. Employees may fear that failing to accept these additional hours may jeopardise their possible advancement towards a permanent employee. An employee on a temporary contract is already trying to work effectively to protect their job. Additionally, this pressurising environment will create unwelcomed negative attitudes and behaviours which may consequently reduce employee engagement. It could be interpreted that employee review 4 spoke of becoming a permanent employee as if it solved some of her workplace issues. You could argue that this employee alleviated some job insecurity after becoming a permanent employee.

Opportunity for Advancement

I have worked at M&S for a total of 6 months while my original temporary contract was 6 weeks. Since then I have been extended upon the grounds of being a valued team member and while I am appreciative, it provides no job security. When I tried to book time off work on the employee portal, I was declined because I was a temporary employee. When I approached my manager, I asked how much holiday I have accumulated - seeing as I had been working with the organisation for almost 6 months - but was told I could not be given days off. When I explained it was necessary for my University, they eventually agreed but it was subsequently non-paid holiday. Being a temporary employee for almost 6 months accumulated me no

benefit and was extremely frustrating. It feels like I am a temp employee only to save the company money. I asked how long my contract would be extended further to which I was told in a joking manner "just until I say so". I thought a lot about terminating my employment because of this, I no longer wanted to work there. From then on, I was no longer concerned with trying my best. I just wanted to complete my tasks and clock out. **- [Diary entry of researcher]**

Employee reviews 1 - 4 all spoke of experiences of lack of advancement to a permanent role and the frustrations this has caused. Additionally, the researcher explained their discomfort with being an employee for 6 months only to not accumulate any benefit. Unfortunately, as you are not a permanent employee, you are not eligible for company 'benefits'. As a result, employees feel very unappreciated. Instinctively, many employees react with decreased engagement as despite your efforts, you are not being recognised. Being informed that you will or will not be extended without any notice offers no job security. No health related issues were identified in this study which was unexpected but seeing as the reviews were available on a public domain, it could mean that individuals were not comfortable with disclosing this.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Discussion

In chapter five: conclusions and discussion, the researcher will discuss the findings of the employee data analysed and compare the findings presented in chapter four.

The research objectives for this study were; To:

- Critically explain the relationship between job insecurity and employee engagement.
- Assess and compare the attitudes and responsive behaviours of M&S employees in relation to experiences of job insecurity within their employment and its impact on their engagement.
- Provide recommendations for increasing job security and employee engagement within Marks and Spencer by enforcing techniques and practices

Conclusion

This study examined and showed patterns within the relationship between job insecurity and employee engagement within temporary employees. The findings from this study show that there is a significant relationship between these two factors demonstrating job insecurity as a cause for decreased employee engagement. The study also explored the consequences of two job insecurity operationalisations: temporary employment - an objective variant - and the subjective perception of job insecurity deriving from more subtle experiences within the workplace. While temporary employment is seen to have a negative effect on employee engagement, some of the data conflicted with the idea that temporary employment is only problematic. Employees expressed disdain toward temporary contracts but others spoke of some attractive features. Depending on suitability and work-life balance, some employees appreciate the limited commitment it offers. The researcher found that objective job insecurity in itself was not related to lower employee engagement, but the employee's subjective perception and responses of job insecurity affected their engagement negatively. The global concept concerning subjective and objective job insecurity has proven more fitting for this data analysis. The observational approach has demonstrated that not every employee whether or not their job is at risk experiences job insecurity. The data explored is highly subjective and depends on the context. Job insecurity has a purely subjective element and M&S showed little objective job insecurity, instead showing more subjective job insecurity. The characteristics and personality factors of the employees have contributed to how one determines feelings of insecurity in the workplace. The data has shown that job

insecurity can result in positive behavioural outcomes by showing increased productivity which is in agreement to (Fischer et al. 2005) and (De Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, De Witte, and Alarco 2008). The data shows that current and former employees working at M&S have experienced different forms of job security, but the severity of it is dependent on the individual and their characteristics. There was no correlation amongst this data pool that recognised the objective threat of M&S store closures. Moreover, while the employees spoke on job insecurity, almost all experiences were rooted to experiences within the workforce where the common denominator was managers. You could therefore argue that the job insecurity experienced is due to unprofessionalism within the workplace. Furthermore, the researcher was able to conclude that job insecurity breeds lower job satisfaction and engagement, but it can also breed positive outcomes of increased engagement. Specific to temporary employment, the researcher believes it is dependent on what you expect from the contractual arrangement and what you expect from job security which will subsequently determine if you will respond with increased engagement or limited engagement.

Recommendations

Retailing organisations need a flexible workforce for their own benefit and since the sector is so uncertain, temporary contracts are currently the adopted answer. Job insecurity whether objective or subjective is unavoidable within the workplace and amongst temporary employees but management must conduct themselves professionally and try to focus on the moderating factors which can reduce the relationship between job insecurity and decreased employee engagement. While the researcher recognises that there are employee engaging models, the main concern from this data spoke on unprofessionalism at best. Unprofessionalism when interacting with managers and unprofessionalism toward employees contractual arrangements. In this circumstance, the researcher proposes that the organisation devise a communication plan to strengthen the two-way relationship between managers and employees and to introduce it to the organisation HR policies. The organisation must recognise that employees are willing to engage further within an environment that is fair and trustworthy. Combating this problem within M&S is incredible feasible. Within this communication framework, goals and objectives must be generated and communicated to employees and managers so that individuals are aware of the dynamics of this relationship. Employees must be given the opportunity to express their concerns within the workplace without fear of job insecurity or trying to protect their employment.

Strengths and Limitations

The employee reviews extracted from indeed.com were very beneficial to this study as it allowed for honest data: in that the employees wrote honestly without knowing their review could contribute to a research study. The data for this study was not influenced in anyway. This data allowed the introduction of complex and interpersonal experiences to explain behaviours and attitudes towards job insecurity which accompanied the secondary research conducted in the literature review. Unfortunately, despite extracting reviews from indeed.com from 2016, there was no indication on whether the announcement of M&S store closures affected employees and their objective job insecurity. As no employee within that time frame spoke of this threat, it is difficult to determine if employees recognised it as a threat. A considerable limitation within this study the researcher became aware of is the reliability of the data. As the within-person diary was collected from the researchers perspective, this can therefore be interpreted as extremely biased. The researcher introduced bias avoiding elements explained with the Methodology but perceived bias is inevitable. The researcher reviewed their findings with peers which provided affirmations that the conclusions were reasonable given the data collected.

Further Study

Job insecurity will continue to be a predominant employment issue, therefore research will only increase in importance and relevance. In relation to this study, the researcher would like to introduce questionnaires as another approach to gather data. Indeed.com was great at introducing specific attitudes and responses but the researcher would like a bigger data pool of employees at present. Looking into data from several years ago does not speak entirely to the experiences of today. The questionnaires would be directed exclusively towards employees with M&S organisation where they can answer in confidence on their experiences of job insecurity, if any, and how they are engaged. As a result, this will allow for more reliable data and elimination of some bias, to determine the levels of engagement within the retailing industry. The researcher would also like to arrange more temporary Customer Assistant employees within M&S to also keep an observational diary like the researcher, detailing their experiences honestly and over a longer period of time to understand the long term effect with temporary contracts.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: "The research process onion"
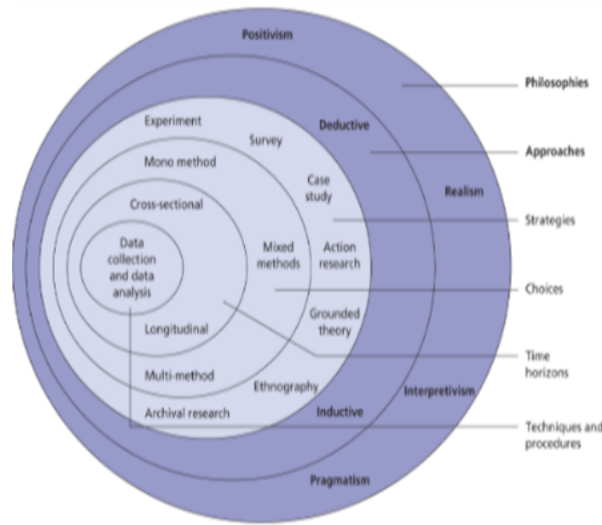
Saunders, M; Lewis, P and Thornhill, A (2009). Research methods for business students. 5th ed. Essex: Pearson Education Limited

Appendix 2: UG Independent Project Supervision meeting record

To be completed by students with a record of a minimum of 6 meetings. Then place in the final submission as Appendix 2.

UG Independent Project
Supervision Meeting Record

UNIVERSITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
BUSINESS
SCHOOL

Student Name:	AHECIA TAYLOR		Student No.	1510998	Start Date:	
Supervisor:		DR WEN WANG				
Module Code	6BU013	Module Title	Independent Project			
Subject Area	International Business and Management: HRM					

Contact Type	Date	Feedback	Signature	
Face-to-face, telephone etc.		Please record outcome of meetings making specific notes on agreed actions to be completed.	Supervisor	Student
Face-to-face	12/2/19 11:10 - 11:50	Agreed changes to dissertation question. Agreed to begin literature review research on new topic.	*(signature)*	*(signature)*
Face-to-face	27/2/19 13:00 - 14:00	Discussed objectives and primary research	*(signature)*	*(signature)*
Face-to-face	13/3/19 15:30 - 16:30	Discussed Chapter 2: literature review structure	*(signature)*	*(signature)*
Face-to-face	27/3/19 14:00 - 14:30	Discussed chapter 1 - 3 after 1st draft submission	*(signature)*	*(signature)*
Face-to-face	30/4/19 10:20 - 11:00	Discussed dissertation so far and the structure of Chapter 4	*(signature)*	*(signature)*

Appendix 3: Reviews of former and current Customer Assistant within the UK between 2017-2019
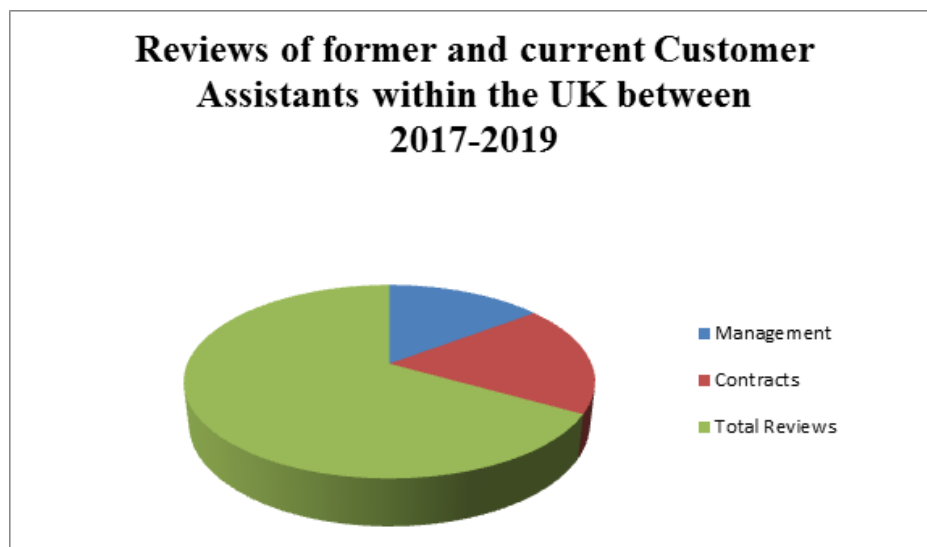
Appendix 4:

Reviews of former and current Customer Assistant within the UK between 2017-2019	
Themes:	
Management *Favouritism, Incompetence,* *Communication, Unprofessionalism*	31
Contractual Arrangements *Salary, Working patterns, No opportunity* *for advancement*	39