

The impact of subjective job security on risk perceptions: A comparative study between people with foreign background and native people in Sweden

This paper sets out to investigate the impact of perceived job insecurity, i.e. expectations of job loss within the next 12 months, on current general risk perceptions. The paper builds on earlier research showing that people with foreign background perceive risks higher than native people (cf. the white male effect). It is found that peoples' perception of job insecurity determines their current behaviour, and people vary considerably in their perception of job insecurity. In addition, it is well known that people with foreign background on an aggregated level has a more insecure labour market situation compared to native people. One reason maybe due to the difficulties immigrants face in transferring country-of-origin human skills across national borders. Another reason could be related to discrimination against immigrants on the national labour market. Hence, the assumption is that perceived job insecurity influence risk perception; people with a less secure employment situation will perceive risks as comparably higher than people with a more secure employment. Consequently, the structural difference in job insecurity explains differences in risk perceptions between native people and people with foreign backgrounds. The empirical analyses are based on a Swedish national survey (n=1250) about risk perceptions conducted autumn 2008. The results indicate that there is a relation between perceived job insecurity and risk perceptions in general, and that it is stronger among people with foreign background. Thus, job security is more important for risk perceptions among people belonging to population groups more exposed to unemployment than other groups.

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